

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

TIBETAN STUDIES

I. SCOPE

This overview of the Library's Tibetan collection covers all material in the Tibetan language, regardless of country of origin. Reflected in these holdings are all aspects of Tibetan culture and literature, ancient and modern.

II. SIZE

The Tibetan language collection consists of approximately 10,300 cataloged volumes. Each volume may itself consist of hundreds of individual titles. The major portion of the collection, an estimated 6,000 volumes, consists of reprint editions acquired through the Library's New Delhi Field Office between 1962 and 1985 under the PL-480 program. Uncataloged original xylographs (books printed from wooden blocks) and manuscripts, acquired between 1900 and the present, constitute about 3,000 volumes. Current PRC imprints and new acquisitions from the Special Foreign Currency Acquisitions Program of the New Delhi Office account for the rest. In addition, there are about 50 serial titles, 760 reels of microfilm, and 14,481 sheets of microfiche.

The general collections also contain extensive works relating to Tibet in Western languages. The Library's collection is generally considered to be one of the largest and best-organized collections in the West.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The Library's Tibetan collection is representative of the entire corpus of Tibetan literature from the 8th-century to the present: Buddhist and Bon-po philosophical texts and their commentaries, history, biography, traditional medicine, astrology, iconography, musical notations, the collected works of over 200 major Tibetan authors, bibliographies, traditional grammars and linguistic sciences, modern science, social sciences, and secular literature. In addition to works by native Tibetan authors, the Tibetan literary tradition has preserved intact the great Buddhist philosophical treasures whose Sanskrit originals, written between 500 BC - 900 AD, were faithfully translated into Tibetan in a manner so exacting as to make reconstruction of the originals possible for texts which would otherwise be lost to the world.

The collection is particularly strong in traditional Tibetan literature and culture. Recognizing the value of one of the world's most highly developed classical literatures; the Library's collection policy has been consistently comprehensive. Within the past several years exchange agreements with scholarly institutions in Tibet and China are enabling the Library to acquire currently printed xylographs, monographs, and serials

which may be unavailable elsewhere for study, and to gain insights into current holdings of rare xylographs and printing blocks still available in Tibet.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

Canonical literature:

Among the Library's holdings are several rare xylograph redactions of the Buddhist canonical literature, *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*, as well as newly published editions of the *Bon-po Kanjur* and *Tanjur*. The *Derge Kanjur* was acquired for the Library by William Rockhill in 1908; the *Narthang Tanjur* was acquired by Berthold Laufer in 1928. The complete *Choni* redaction (317 volumes) was acquired by Joseph Rock in 1928, and is one of only a few known to still exist today. The entire *Choni Tanjur* and several volumes of the *Kanjur* have been preserved on microfilm. Notable holdings and special collections in canonical literature:

- *Derge Kanjur*
- *Narthang Tanjur*
- *Choni Kanjur* and *Tanjur*
- Peking *Kanjur* and *Tanjur* (photoreproduced)
- Bon-po *Kanjur*
- Bon-po *Tanjur*

Indigenous Tibetan literature:

Approximately 300 original xylographs and manuscripts were acquired for the Library between 1900-1928 by William Rockhill, Berthold Laufer, and Joseph Rock. The presence of LC's New Delhi Field Office at the time of active Tibetan publishing in India, Nepal and Bhutan between 1960 and 1985 enabled the Library to build a large collection of Tibetan texts in modern reprint editions, covering all aspects of the Tibetan literary heritage. Notable holdings and special collections in Tibetan literature:

- Rockhill collection
- Rock collection
- Laufer collection
- PL-480/SFC reprint collection

Currently printed material:

In addition to the active acquisitions program in LC, New Delhi, the Library's relationships with scholarly institutions in Tibet and China have enabled it to collect a substantial percentage of currently available books from those areas where Tibetan publishing, including revived xylography, is active today. Of special interest is a collection of 340 volumes of currently printed xylographs acquired for the Library in 1990 from monastic printerries inside Tibet and about 1,500 current PRC imprints. This collection includes the collected works of numerous great Tibetan scholars some of which have never before been seen in the West, as well as the rare *Bon-po Kanjur* mentioned above. Efforts are underway to increase these contacts and exchange

information to preserve Tibetan literature and to improve coverage of current Tibetan studies. A donation from Mr. Alo Chhonzed of papers and documents acquired in Tibet and China in the 1980's, adds additional material for modern historical study.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Asian Division has received over 6,000 volumes of digitized Tibetan texts as part of the "Research library of scanned Tibetan literature" from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC). These are available through the Asian Reading Room where readers can also access the TBRC knowledge database of comprehensive bibliographic information for the collection. The collection includes many of the original PL-480 texts held by LC in hard copy. Several collections from TBRC are also available on CD's, including the complete *Derge Kanjur* (103 volumes) and the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (111 volumes). Links to major online collections of Tibetan, such as the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library, are provided in the Portals to the World. Other Tibetan CD's held in the Asian Division include Release IV of the Asian Classics Input Project, "A Thousand Books of Wisdom," and ACIP's "The St. Petersburg Catalog," and limited holdings of *Bod Gyalo* a monthly Tibetan video news magazine and *Ladags Melong* a *Ladakhi* video news magazine.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

Due to political complexities it is difficult to acquire non-trade publications, particularly local histories and monastic publications, which appear in limited runs that are only available locally. Efforts to acquire these publications by working with individual scholars are more difficult for LC, as a government institution, than for academic libraries such as Columbia University, University of Virginia, Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center and Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library, all of who can rely on graduate students and NGO personnel to enhance their collections. Particularly lacking are holdings of current periodicals from Tibet and other Tibetan areas of China such as Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. The collection is also weak in locally published literary magazine and books.