

Andrew C. West, compiler. *Catalogue of the Morrison Collection of Chinese Books*. London: University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1998. xxxix, 375 pp. Hardcover £30, ISBN 0-7286-0292-X.

This is a catalogue of the Chinese-language books purchased by John Robert Morrison (1782–1834), England's first Protestant missionary to China, during his first stay in Guangzhou (Canton), from 1807 to 1823. West's Introduction informs us that the items listed here were assembled with a view to their usefulness in training future scholars and missionaries as well as for Morrison's long-standing and cherished projects of translating the Bible into Chinese and compiling a dictionary. The Introduction tells us that the collection, amounting to almost one thousand titles and containing approximately ten thousand string-bound fascicles, was an enormous assemblage for its time, particularly for a foreigner to have obtained in the book markets of Guangzhou and Foshan (as a foreigner living in China, Morrison would not have been allowed to travel freely around the country). In Morrison's time, Guangzhou—along with some of the Jiangnan cities—was one of the outstanding publishing centers in China. (Beijing during the Qing, less plentifully forested and thus lacking the timber necessary for printing, would have been at a disadvantage in this regard.)

When Morrison returned briefly to England at the end of 1823, he shipped the works already in his possession, hoping to donate them to Oxford or Cambridge in exchange for the founding of a chair in Chinese. The two universities, however, did not evince much enthusiasm for either the books or the chair, so eventually, after Morrison's death, a home was found in University College, London. The collection is now held by the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. Chinese books that Morrison purchased after returning to Asia in 1826 as well as all his English-language works are now in the University of Hong Kong.

The catalogue itself is arranged in the traditional Chinese four categories of literature (*sibu*, 四部)—Classics, History, Philosophy, and Literature (*jing* 經, *shi* 史, *zi* 子, and *ji* 集)—with many of the standard works of Confucianism, histories and geographies, administrative regulations, and the like. But even with his limited budget, Morrison cast his net wide, so there are discourses on Buddhism and Daoism, as well as works concerned with Buddhist sects (pp. 194–200), legal decisions (pp. 52–54), the musical pitch system (p. 8), astrological almanacs, three Chinese-Manchu texts, and several dictionaries (pp. 166–168). Most works date from the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns (1736–1820). A few late-Ming editions are represented, but this is not the collection of prized rare editions that a wealthy Chinese scholar would have owned. Instead, Morrison had to purchase inexpensive and in some cases ephemeral titles popular in the Guangzhou market at the time of his residence there. As a result, without the Morrison Collection, some of these materials would be even more difficult to locate today than the Chinese scholar's rare finds.

Of particular interest will be nine manuscript works that are thought never to have been printed—these include volumes of color drawings, medical notes and spells, legal treatises, and vocabulary lists once used by interpreters.

The catalogue itself is clearly presented, with Chinese characters as well as the English. Titles are wisely not translated—instead there are brief annotations describing content. In addition to the catalogue (pp. 1–294), there are indexes of titles (pp. 295–331) and of authors (pp. 333–370). There is also an appendix of missing books (works listed on earlier inventories but no longer in the collection).

The compiler and financial backers (chiefly the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange) are to be commended for offering this catalogue in both a hardcover edition and via the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). Libraries will wish to purchase the published version, and, through RLIN, researchers will be able to consult it as well.

Beatrice S. Bartlett

*Beatrice Bartlett is a professor of history at Yale University specializing in the history of China since 1550 and in the research resources of the field.*