

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG LIBRARIES

THE RARE BOOK ROOM COLLECTIONS

The general collection of rare books comprises over 12,000 volumes including many that belonged at one time to the Hankow Club Library. The strength of the collection is principally in its titles on China and the Far East with many accounts of early travellers to Peking, particularly those of the Jesuit missionaries who had a privileged position at the Emperor's Court long before other Europeans were able to reside in China. There are a number of seventeenth century titles and many from the eighteenth century in their original bindings.

Some of these Far East titles were purchased from antiquarian booksellers at a time when prices were quite modest, but the great interest in antiquarian books in the past 20 years has seen an escalation in prices and few titles have been purchased by the Libraries in recent years.

But many titles in the collection have been acquired over the year as gifts from many sources. Many volumes bear the bookplates of previous owners. Often the previous owners were U.K. public libraries who were updating their collections in the 1960s, and discarded items were received by the HKU Libraries through the British National Book Centre which acted as a clearing house for the distribution of books to overseas libraries. Some of the books received are now of considerable value, and it is surprising that they were discarded even in those days.

The Morrison Collection is kept separately in the glass fronted cases around the walls of the Rare Book Room. The history of the collection is given in an article by a former HKU Librarian, Mrs Dorothea Scott, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch*, vol. 1, 1960, pp 50-67.

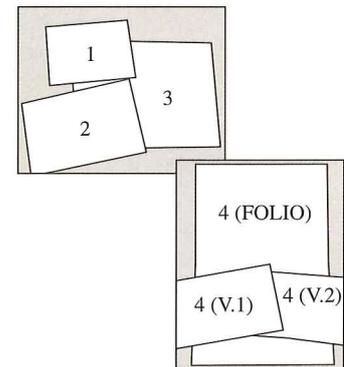
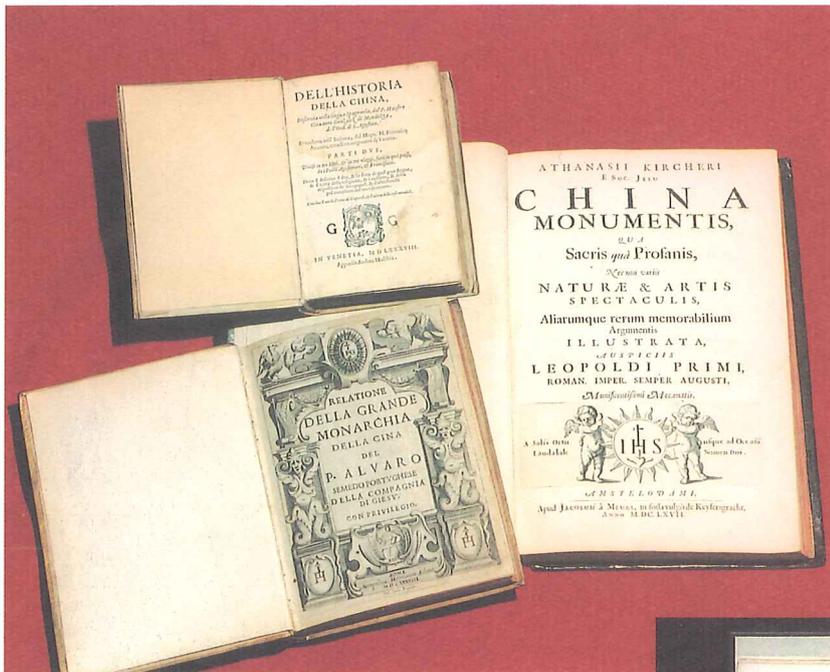
The history of the Morrison Library goes back to 1806 when it was set up by the members of the English Factory in Canton. The collection later formed the basis of the library of the Morrison Education Society set up as a memorial to the Rev. Robert Morrison, D. D. who died in 1834. The library first moved to Macao in 1841 and then to Hong Kong in 1842. At that time it consisted of 3,500 volumes. In 1869 the collection became part of the stock of the newly opened City Hall Library. But a few years later the usefulness of the Morrison Library to the general public was in doubt and it was loaned to the newly established University of Hong Kong in 1914. In 1925 the collection was made over permanently to the University.

A stocktaking done in 2007 showed that the collection consisted of 1,288 titles (2,755 vols.), some volumes having been removed during the Japanese occupation and not recovered.

The Hankow Club, founded by the British, was one of many which grew up to provide amenities for the foreign communities which began to settle in Hankow when the various concessions were made in 1861. The 'China' section of this club library was brought by the University of Hong Kong in 1932 when Sir William Hornell was Vice-Chancellor. As previously noted, the collection has been integrated with the general rare book collection. For an account of the Hankow Collection see Scott, Dorothea, *The Hankow Collection: its history and contents*, *Journal of oriental studies*, vol. 2, 1955, pp 133-141.



SELECTIONS FROM THE RARE BOOK COLLECTION
 THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG LIBRARIES
 香港大學圖書館 珍藏



1. Gonzalez de Mendoza, Juan, 1545-1618.
Dell' historia della China ...
 Venetia: Appresso Andrea Muschio, 1588.

2. Semedo, Alvaro, 1585-1658.
Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina.
 Romæ: Sumptibus Hermann Scheus, 1643.

3. Kircher, Athanasius, 1602-1680.
*Athanasii Kircheri E Soc. Jesu
 China monumentis ...*
 Amstelodami: Apud Jacobum à Meurs, 1667.

4. Staunton, George, 1737-1801.
*An authentic account of an embassy
 from the King of Great Britain
 to the Emperor of China ...*
 London: W. Bulmer and Co. for G. Nicol, 1798.

