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Far Away from Home: A Study of the Catalogues of Leiden University Libraries' Van Gulik Collection

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Far Away from Home:
A Study of the Catalogues of
Leiden University Libraries' Van Gulik Collection

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Master's Thesis, Book and Digital Media Studies

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Abstract

The Van Gulik collection at the Leiden University Libraries consists of approximately ten thousand volumes of books in Chinese and Japanese collected by the Dutch diplomat and sinologist Robert van Gulik in mid twentieth century. It was first catalogued by Van Gulik himself, and later by librarians of the Sinological Institute of Leiden University. This thesis provides a detailed chronological examination of the catalogues of the collection, regarding them as a device for libraries to construct knowledge. In doing so, it addresses the research question of how cataloguing practices are an instrument of power, focusing in this case on the power exerted in a Western academic library context over an overseas, Chinese, collection. Key findings include traces in the treatment of the collection left by its colonial background and the marginalization of cultures that have been overshadowed from Westernized library management perspectives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Question

Leiden University has long been the hub of Chinese studies in the Netherlands, and its libraries (Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, ‘UBL’ hereafter) boast the largest number of China-related books and other text material in the country.¹ Among the UBL’s Chinese collections, there is the distinguished Van Gulik collection (‘VGC’ hereafter), previously a large part of the private library of the sinologist and diplomat Robert van Gulik (1910–1967). It consists of nearly ten thousand volumes of basic reference works, collections of reprints, and books of literature, fine arts, and music from ancient China, including books that are the only extant copy of the title. The catalogues of the VGC have been evolving over the past half-century. Firstly, Van Gulik himself made a set of cards as the catalogue. After the collection was acquired by the Sinological Institute of Leiden University in 1977, librarian John Ma reorganized the collection and updated the catalogue. In the 1980s, the Inter Documentation Company (‘IDC’ hereafter) published a short catalogue alongside microfiche reproductions of selected titles in the collection.² Now bibliographical information of items in the collection is available via the UBL online catalogue. A full list of the contents prepared by librarian Koos Kuiper was also made accessible online in 2016.³

Particularly since the early modern period, catalogues have played an important role in Western European libraries as they order sources of knowledge collected by the institutions and make them accessible to users.⁴ However, as Thomas Cridford argued, libraries can be seen ‘as part of a knowledge regime that privileges and justifies dominant values at the expense of all others’.⁵ Therefore, catalogues as a device for libraries to organize knowledge are reflective of the powers behind the cataloguing choices made, powers that ultimately construct knowledge. For the VGC, the situation is especially intriguing: a collection of Chinese books first curated by

¹ Wilt L. Idema, ‘Chinese Studies in the Netherlands’, in *Chinese Studies in the Netherlands: Past, Present and Future*, ed. by Wilt L. Idema (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 1–25; ‘Chinese Studies’, *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/subject-guides/chinese-studies#about-the-collection>> (20 December 2024)

² Joyce Y.T. Wu and John T. Ma, *Van Gulik Collection: Chinese books on microfiche* (Leiden: IDC, 1992).

³ Koos Kuiper, ‘Collection guide of the Robert Hans van Gulik collection’, *Leiden University Libraries*, 5 August 2016. <<https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/resources/ubl250>> (20 December 2024)

⁴ Heather Macneil, ‘Catalogues and the Collecting and Ordering of Knowledge (I): ca. 1550–1750’, *Archivaria*, 82 (2016), pp. 27–53.

⁵ Thomas J. Cridford, ‘Cataloguing, Knowledge, and Power’, *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, 5 (2019), p. 68.

a Dutch sinologist and then processed and maintained by professional librarians of a Dutch academic institution, it has been exposed to interactions between different powers, individuals and institutions, Chinese and Western. This thesis provides a detailed examination of the catalogues of the Van Gulik collection. In doing so, it addresses the research question of how cataloguing practices are an instrument of power, focusing in this case on the power exerted in a Western academic library context over an overseas, Chinese, collection.

1.2 Historical Background and Literature Review

The history of the VGC is closely related to that of the Sinological Institute (*Sinologisch Instituut*) at Leiden University. Van Gulik was a graduate of the Institute, and the training he received there prepared him to work for the Dutch Foreign Service, giving him opportunities to be stationed in China, Japan, and other countries where he purchased books and built up a personal library.

It is also the institution that later acquired the collection. Wilt Idema has pointed out the close ties between Chinese studies in the Netherlands and the Dutch colonial administration up to the 1940s: in the first place, the establishment of the Sinological Institute had served the purpose of training China Affairs officers who were to work in the Dutch East Indies.⁶ The situation changed after the Second World War, when the chairs of the Institute were no longer diplomats, but scholars who stay(ed) in academia throughout their career.⁷ However, lingering effects of colonialism are still visible in the institutional context of the VGC, as I will discuss in Chapter 5.

In this thesis, the colonial backdrop of the VGC shall be explored. Its history reflects a context where colonial powers, such as the Netherlands, asserted epistemic control over subordinate cultures, such as China, by constructing knowledge based on their own priorities. This particular case study centres around the library catalogue, a venue where power and knowledge interact with each other. Knowledge is constructed in the form of the library catalogue, while knowledge reinforces power by imposing a given episteme on catalogue users. This is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge:

⁶ Wilt L. Idema, 'Studies on the History of Dutch Sinology: A Bibliographical Essay', *Journal of Chinese History*, 7 (2023), pp. 327–347.

⁷ Idema, 'Chinese Studies in the Netherlands', p. 10.

We should admit ... that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.⁸

There are two key points in Foucault's theory that are relevant to my research. Firstly, he deemed discourses as non-static, because the dynamic relations keep generating knowledge regimes and gaining authority from them.⁹ The evolvement of the catalogues over time is reflective of these dynamics. Secondly, his arguments constitute a new framework to reconceptualize knowledge regimes like libraries, which were considered to be neutral according to early twentieth-century positivism.¹⁰ Following Foucault's view, catalogues as reorganizations of knowledge cannot be neutral, because they are embedded in dynamics of power. Is this really the case in the context of the VGC? I will return to this theme in Chapter 5.

This research focuses on library catalogues, but what benefits does the investigation of catalogues bring about? Heather MacNeil argued that in addition to presenting the contents of a library, catalogues 'contextualized the contents in particular ways, and, in so doing, participated in broader discussions about the collecting and ordering of knowledge'.¹¹ Therefore, by closely examining library catalogues we would be able to investigate how knowledge has been collected and ordered in a given society.

Like I have just hypothesized, catalogues are by nature not neutral. There are existing studies that echo this argument. For example, from the perspectives of race and gender, Hope Olson proved that names of categories in library catalogues reflect social values, and that the process of naming lacks neutrality.¹² Moreover, in other research she set out from a postcolonial perspective to argue that most of the knowledge organization systems currently used in libraries,

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 27.

⁹ Michael R. Olsson, 'Michel Foucault: Discourse, Power/Knowledge, and the Battle for Truth', in *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines*, ed. by Gloria J. Leckie, Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2010), pp. 67–68.

¹⁰ Gary P. Radford, 'Positivism, Foucault, and the Fantasia of the Library: Conceptions of Knowledge and the Modern Library Experience', *Library Quarterly*, 62, no. 4 (1992), pp. 408–424.

¹¹ MacNeil, 'Catalogues and the Collecting and Ordering of Knowledge', p. 28.

¹² Hope A. Olson, *The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 2.

like catalogues, are products of European or American cultures, and the application of them in other contexts can lead to biases and marginalization of some groups.¹³

As mentioned in the previous section, the cataloguing history of the VGC shows great potential for explorations into the power dynamics behind knowledge construction. However, there is only a limited number of scholarly discussions on this collection. In 2008, Mei-yen Lee cooperated with UBL librarians Koos Kuiper and Hanno Lecher to summarize books concerning ancient Chinese fine arts in the VGC as well as Van Gulik's own writings on the same topic, highlighting his role as a book collector and a sinologist.¹⁴ Written in Chinese, this article provides a brief account of the different catalogues of the VGC originally drafted by Kuiper.¹⁵ Kuiper has also authored an English introduction to the collection accessible on the UBL website, including a section on its cataloguing history.¹⁶ Shi Ye's 2017 monograph on Van Gulik dedicated several chapters to either individual items or a selection of books on the same topic in the VGC. However, her emphasis lies in Van Gulik as a sinologist, and discussions on titles in the VGC serve to explore Van Gulik's personal and scholarly interests.¹⁷

To sum up, the organization and presentation of the contents of the collection have not been thoroughly studied. A scarcity of attention to cataloguing-related activities is also present in Van Gulik's detailed biography, written by two authors both of whom knew him personally, *Dutch Mandarin: The Life and Work of Robert Hans van Gulik*.¹⁸ It means that the cataloguing efforts of Van Gulik, as well as those of the librarians that later handled the collection, are yet to be examined in depth. More importantly, efforts are yet to be made to investigate the epistemological implications of the cataloguing practices of the collection. My research will fill in a gap in existing literature by examining the understudied catalogues of the VGC while

¹³ Hope A. Olson, 'Mapping Beyond Dewey's Boundaries: Constructing Classificatory Space for Marginalized Knowledge Domains', *Library Trends*, 47 (1998), pp. 233–254.

¹⁴ Mei-yen Lee, P. N. Kuiper, and Hanno E. Lecher, 'Helan Gao Luopei zai gudai Zhongguo ya wenhua fangmian de cangshu yu lunzhu' [Books collected and authored by Robert van Gulik from the Netherlands regarding traditional Chinese fine arts], *Newsletter of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 18, no. 3 (2008), pp. 143–169. For Chinese reference materials, in the footnotes I will provide the romanized title in *pinyin*, followed by its translation enclosed in square brackets, and the original title and author name(s) in Chinese can be found in Bibliography.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145. For the acknowledgement of authorship, see the first footnote on p. 143.

¹⁶ Koos Kuiper, 'Van Gulik collection Introduction', *Leiden University Libraries*, July 2016. <<https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/1918723>> (20 December 2024)

¹⁷ Shi Ye, *Helan hanxuejia Gao Luopei yanjiu* [The Study on Dutch Sinologist Robert Hans van Gulik] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2017).

¹⁸ C. D. Barkman and H. de Vries-van der Hoeven, *Dutch Mandarin: The Life and Work of Robert Hans van Gulik*, trans. by Rosemary Robson (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2018).

contributing to postcolonial discourse by investigating the cultural complexities of the treatment of overseas collection by Western libraries.

1.3 Methodology and Outline

The study takes a qualitative approach, which allows in-depth analysis of a complex phenomenon from unique perspectives that are culturally sensitive. The primary sources for the research are the catalogues of the VGC, from which descriptive data will be derived to support analytical arguments. Among them, Van Gulik's catalogue, with John Ma's revision incorporated, is kept by the UBL as part of the VGC.¹⁹ The IDC catalogue is also available in hard copy in the UBL collection. On the other hand, the UBL online catalogue is an online database, and Kuiper's list is available online in PDF format.²⁰ Besides, I often refer to the collection introduction composed by Kuiper ('Kuiper's introduction' hereafter) and the article co-authored by Lee, Kuiper, and Lecher ('Lee's article' hereafter). As Kuiper was the librarian and Lecher was head of the Sinological Library, I deem them institutional insiders with first-hand knowledge of the collection. Therefore, I treat this article as a semi-official account of VGC's cataloguing history.

This chapter introduces the research topic by specifying the research question, outlining existing literature relevant to the topic, and explaining the thesis's methodology. Then in Chapter 2 I will provide an overview of the historic treatment of Chinese collections in Western libraries, to contextualize the treatment of the VGC that will be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 will go back in time to the birth of the collection, when it had been Van Gulik's personal library. It is first necessary to know who Van Gulik is and how he became a sinologist and diplomat. My account of his life is primarily based on the detailed biography of his by Barkman and De Vries-van der Hoeven; it frequently quotes his autobiographical notes, which

¹⁹ Van Gulik's catalogue consists of 37 booklets, and John Ma added one to it. These materials are separated into two entries in the online catalogue, https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990026673680302711 (for the 33 *congshu* booklets) and https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990026673700302711 (for the other booklets; the description speaks of 3 volumes, but after I requested this item, I accessed 4 booklets made by Van Gulik and 1 by John Ma, so 5 in total). Both entries share the same shelf mark 'Van Gulik Kamer'. For a detailed discussion of the booklets, see Section 3.3.

²⁰ 'Leiden University Libraries Catalogue', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <<https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/>> (20 December 2024); Koos Kuiper, 'Van Gulik collection catalogue', *Leiden University Libraries*, July 2016. <<https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/1918695>> (20 December 2024)

were originally written in English.²¹ Then I go on to discuss what books he collected and how he used the collection. Next I study the catalogue prepared by him by analysing its form, preface, classification, and metadata.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the cataloguing practices after Leiden University's acquisition of the collection, and chronologically examine different versions of its catalogues. Following a brief account of the library of the Sinological Institute of Leiden University, I examine the evolution of the post-acquisition catalogues.

Based on the discoveries of Chapters 3 and 4, in Chapter 5 I will reflect on the treatment of the VGC and critically analyse various cataloguing practices. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge, I investigate whether there is a power asymmetry reflected in the catalogues of the VGC, and identify the subaltern voices that have been subdued or silenced in this construction of power.

With this study, I hope to explore how books in the VGC have been organized and presented to users at different periods of time along with the underlying choices made by relevant cataloguers or librarians. Additionally, I wish to examine the broader dynamics of knowledge construction and identify instances of systematic epistemic violence that distort subaltern cultures. The ultimate aim is to prove my hypothesis that the omnipresent power asymmetry behind the catalogues leads to the marginalization of subordinate cultures, and to call for attention to nuances in the treatment of overseas collections.

²¹ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. ix.

Chapter 2: An Overview of the Treatment of Chinese Collections in Western Libraries

2.1 Introduction

Nathalie Monnet, curator of the Chinese rare book at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, observed that there are three stages in the European idea of collecting Chinese books. Firstly, seventeenth-century collectors regarded them as curios and exotic objects to be sold for profits. Next, Christian missionaries saw them as cultural treasures that contained knowledge from the East. Finally, with the advent of sinology as an academic discipline in Europe in the nineteenth century, scholars started to use them as research materials.²² This classification implies a close relationship between Chinese collections at academic libraries and the development of Chinese studies. Libraries needed to cater to broadening research interests and changing research methodologies of users of these collections, and this posed challenges for librarians, especially as Chinese collections continued to expand.²³

In this chapter I outline how overseas collections of Chinese books are treated by Western libraries by talking about the mainstream classification, cataloguing, and romanization practices. The aim is to put the treatment of the Van Gulik collection in a broader historical context and to provide enough background information for my analysis of the cataloguing of this collection in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.2 Classification

To understand the difficulties in classifying Chinese books in Western libraries, it is necessary to first know how books were classified in ancient China. Shuyong Jiang conducted a comprehensive study of the prevailing Chinese classification system, *sibu fenlei fa* (four-division classification scheme), outlining its historical development, exploring its organizing principle,

²² Nathalie Monnet, 'The Chinese Books in the French Royal Library: An Essential Element in the Birth of Western Sinology', *Études chinoises*, 37 (2018), pp. 167–187.

²³ John T. Ma, *Chinese Collections in Western Europe: Survey of Their Technical and Readers' Service* (Zug: IDC, 1985), pp. 3–4.

and examining its cultural bearings.²⁴ Originating in 5 BC, the system took its standard shape in the seventh century and reached its peak by the end of the eighteenth century, upon the publication of *Qinding Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* [Imperially commissioned annotated catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries], the Qing-dynasty national bibliography. Despite minor changes that occurred as the system evolved, it always followed the same framework in which books were classified into the four divisions of *jing* (classics, or more precisely, Confucian classics), *shi* (histories), *zi* (masters), and *ji* (collections or belles-lettres), each with their own group of subdivisions. The priority order matters in the system: *jing* is the foremost division among the four, as it contains texts reflecting Confucian beliefs, thus setting forth the core values of the Chinese society. It is important to treat the scheme as a whole, as the arrangement of the divisions was based on their function in the cultural and societal context, not on their subject matter. In this way the system not only provided guidelines for cataloguing books, but also served the more important purpose of promoting and reinforcing social and cultural values.²⁵

The four-division system, however, is seen as outdated by modern scholars and librarians, because its obsolete design cannot accommodate topics in newly emerging fields of knowledge. At the same time, Western classification schemes such as the Dewey or the Library of Congress system proved to not work well with Chinese books.²⁶ Against this historical background, the influential Harvard–Yenching system was established.²⁷ Published in 1943, it was designed by K'ai-ming Ch'iu, the first librarian of the then-called Chinese-Japanese Library of the Harvard–Yenching Institute at Harvard University.²⁸ This system has nine main classes: Chinese Classics, Philosophy and Religion, Historical Sciences, Social Sciences, Language and Literature, Fine and Creative Arts, Natural Sciences, Agriculture and Technology, and Generalia and

²⁴ Shuyong Jiang, 'Into the Source and History of Chinese Culture: Knowledge Classification in Ancient China', *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, 42 (2007), pp. 1–20. The Chinese word *sibu* can be translated as 'four-fold', 'four-division', or 'four-class'. I provide the Chinese characters for all romanized words and names in Appendix 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5–9, and 18.

²⁶ Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, 'A History of Bibliographic Classification in China', *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 22, no. 4 (Oct 1952), pp. 317–318.

²⁷ Eugene W. Wu, 'The Founding of the Harvard–Yenching Library', *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, no. 101 (1993), p. 66

²⁸ Wu, 'The Founding of the Harvard–Yenching Library', p. 66; A. K'ai-ming Ch'iu, *A Classification Scheme for Chinese and Japanese Books* (Washington, D. C.: Committees on Far Eastern Studies, American Council of Learned Societies, 1943).

Bibliography.²⁹ According to Ch'iu, the system was 'a compromise between the old and the new': the main outline was based on the traditional four-division scheme, but he also followed the theories and practices of American classification experts such as Melvil Dewey. For headings of subjects Ch'iu referred to both Eastern and Western classification schemes.³⁰

The Harvard–Yenching system was well received in academia; many considered it a practical scheme that could meet the requirements of organizing Chinese collections, especially those with a large number of classical books.³¹ Its influence was not limited to the United States, but some East Asian libraries in other continents adopted the scheme too, including the Sinological Institute, Leiden University.³²

2.3 Cataloguing

In the late 1930s, the Harvard–Yenching Library printed sets of index cards for Chinese books and sold them at a low price to over twenty institutions worldwide, including the library of Leiden's Sinological Institute.³³ According to Ch'iu, the Harvard–Yenching card catalogue contains 'the reading of the titles and authors', and 'exact date of authors', the first catalogue to do so in Chinese book history.³⁴

The Harvard–Yenching catalogue arranged its books alphabetically following the Wade–Giles romanization of book titles (see Section 2.4 for the discussion of romanization schemes).³⁵ An alphabetical order was also the dominant choice for Western European libraries: in the 1980s, John Ma, librarian of the Sinological Institute, Leiden University, conducted a survey of Chinese collections in Western Europe, and observed that most of them—the Sinological Institute included—arranged the catalogue cards alphabetically following either *pinyin* or Wade–Giles.³⁶

²⁹ Ch'iu, *A Classification Scheme*, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xx–xxii.

³¹ Tsien, 'A History of Bibliographic Classification in China', pp. 321–322; K. T. Wu, review of Ch'iu, *A Classification Scheme*, *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 5, no. 1 (November 1945), p. 87.

³² Wu, 'The Founding of the Harvard–Yenching Library', p. 67; Ma, *Chinese Collections in Western Europe*, p. 75.

³³ See Serge Elisséeff, 'The Chinese-Japanese Library of the Harvard–Yenching Institute', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 1 (1956), p. 77. The source only mentioned 'some twenty libraries in China, ... Holland', without specifically naming the institute library, but since the Sinological Library was the only one of its kind in the Netherlands, it is quite impossible for other Dutch libraries to need the index cards.

³⁴ A. K'aiming Ch'iu, 'Reminiscences of a Librarian', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 25 (1964–1965), p. 14.

³⁵ Elisséeff, 'The Chinese-Japanese Library', p. 76.

³⁶ Ma, *Chinese Collections in Western Europe*, p. 5 and p. 75.

Western collections of Chinese books can contain extremely valuable books, such as *unica* or rare editions that have been lost in China. These books, however, are the most difficult to catalogue, because the cataloguer needs to balance between ‘the basic principles of Western cataloging’ and ‘the particulars of traditional Chinese descriptive bibliography’.³⁷ In 2000, the bilingual *Cataloging Guidelines for Creating Chinese Rare Book Records in Machine-Readable Form* was published as an official standard in the United States.³⁸ The guidelines cover aspects that are unique to Chinese books, such as the description of book seals, a fascinating feature of Chinese book collecting culture.³⁹ Book collectors’ seals serve to mark the ownership of the book, and one single book can bear multiple imprints. The seals provide important evidence for the study of the book’s provenance and the viewpoints of the book collectors, and are therefore worth including as bibliographical information in library catalogues.⁴⁰

Despite the existence of a detailed set of guidelines, librarians worldwide can still face various difficulties when cataloguing Chinese books. Jian Downing from the University of Auckland Libraries used the example of *Xi xiang ji*, a Chinese drama first published in the fourteenth century, to explain the complexity of titles of old and rare books from China and the consequent difficulties for cataloguers in creating standardized metadata to ensure access to relevant items. The cause of the problem is the existence of various editions of the same work that each bear a slightly different title, a common phenomenon for Chinese books.⁴¹ This testifies to the challenges posed by applying Western library systems to books from other cultures, and I will return to this point in Chapter 5.

³⁷ Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, ‘Preface’, in International Union Catalog of Chinese Rare Book Project, *Cataloging Guidelines for Creating Chinese Rare Book Records in Machine-Readable Form* (Mountain View: Research Libraries Group, 2009), pp. 10–11.

³⁸ Martin J. Heijdra, ‘Cataloging Chinese Rare Books at Princeton’, *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 78, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter 2020), p. 65.

³⁹ See International Union Catalog of Chinese Rare Book Project, *Cataloging Guidelines for Creating Chinese Rare Book Records*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Max Jakob Fölster, ‘Introduction to the History, Use and Function of Chinese Book Collectors’ Seals’, *manuscript cultures*, 8 (2015), p. 25 and p. 44.

⁴¹ Jian Downing, ‘Choice of uniform title in old and rare Chinese books cataloguing: case study on “Xi xiang ji”’, *New Zealand Library & Information Management Journal*, 55 (2014), pp. 3–6.

2.4 Romanization

There is one aspect that cannot be neglected in cataloguing Chinese books: romanization of the Chinese language. If items are to be arranged alphabetically (A, B, C), it is necessary to convert the book titles in Chinese characters into the Latin alphabet. Moreover, romanization provides access points for users who do not understand the original language to retrieve information from the catalogue.⁴²

There are two widely used romanization (or alphabetization) systems, the Wade–Giles one, and *pinyin*. The Wade–Giles system was developed by Thomas Francis Wade (1818–1895), a British diplomat and the first professor of Chinese at Cambridge University, and revised by Herbert Giles (1845–1935), another British diplomat and successor to Wade’s chair at Cambridge.⁴³ Based on Beijing dialect, the system uses English sounds to determine the consonants and continental European pronunciation for vowels. In the early twentieth century it became the prevalent romanization system for Chinese.⁴⁴

Pinyin is short for *Hanyu pinyin fang’an*, or ‘Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Scheme’, whose origin can be traced back to around the early twentieth century. In China it was established as the official way of transcribing Chinese proper names in foreign-language publications on the first day of 1979.⁴⁵ Now *pinyin* is regarded as the standard romanization scheme for Chinese; for example, the UBL online catalogue adopts the ALA-LC romanization system for Chinese, which is largely based on *pinyin*, the only difference being that the former does not include tone marks.⁴⁶

There are several factors that can account for the dominance of *pinyin*. Linguistically, the advantages of *pinyin* over other transcription systems lie in its practicality and accuracy.⁴⁷

⁴² James E. Agenbroad, ‘Romanization Is Not Enough’, *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 42, no. 2 (2006), p. 22.

⁴³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Sir Thomas Francis Wade’, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 21 August 2024. <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Francis-Wade>> (20 December 2024); ‘H.A. Giles’, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 4 December 2024. <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/H-A-Giles>> (20 December 2024)

⁴⁴ Pär Cassel, “‘Spelling like a State’: Some Thoughts on the Manchu Origins of the Wade–Giles System”, *Central Asiatic Journal*, 58 (2015), p. 45.

⁴⁵ Hilary Chappell, ‘The Romanization Debate’, *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 4 (1980), pp. 105 and 108–109.

⁴⁶ ‘Chinese Studies: Romanization’, *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/subject-guides/chinese-studies#romanization>> (20 December 2024); ‘Chinese Romanization Table’, *Library of Congress*, 2012.

<<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/romanization/chinese.pdf>> (20 December 2024)

⁴⁷ Chappell, ‘The Romanization Debate’, pp. 112–115.

Besides, *pinyin* is more suitable as an international standard; phonetically it is understandable not only to English speakers.⁴⁸ As the popularity of *pinyin* increased, more libraries began to use it. For example, in the 1997 announcement of the Library of Congress, it is stated that the conversion to *pinyin* would satisfy the needs of users.⁴⁹

From an ideological perspective, the history of the Wade–Giles system is inevitably associated with orientalism and colonialism.⁵⁰ On the other hand, although developed by Chinese people themselves, *pinyin* initially originated from attempts to ‘modernize’ the Chinese language, and the rationale behind efforts to alphabetize a character-based language is the assumed superiority of phonography over logography.⁵¹ Therefore, romanization in itself is a linguistical technology from the modern Western world, which is reflective of the bigger picture of colonial modernity.⁵²

2.5 Conclusion

The application of Western library systems to Chinese collections brings two fundamentally different cultures together, and naturally problems arise. The publication of a tailor-made classification scheme and that of a specific set of cataloguing guidelines, both for Chinese books, hint at the existence of practical issues that librarians need to solve when dealing with Chinese collections. But more importantly, there are deeper, epistemological issues too. For example, Cao Shunqing and Guo Wei analysed that the adoption of Western library classification system negatively impacted the reception of Chinese classics. The reason is that the traditional Chinese classification system gives a book a ‘catalogue meaning’, implied by the position of the book in the broader cultural context; this meaning is lost in the Western system.⁵³ Similarly, Shuyong Jiang studied how Chinese classics are classified in the Library of Congress system. Her

⁴⁸ Beatrice Ohta and Ben Tucker, ‘Pinyin vs. Wade–Giles for Library Purposes’, *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 61 (1980), pp. 37–38.

⁴⁹ ‘Library of Congress Will Convert to Pinyin for Romanization of Chinese’, *Library of Congress*, 19 November 1997. <<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/pinyin/announce.html>> (20 December 2024)

⁵⁰ Cassel, ‘Thoughts on the Manchu Origins of the Wade–Giles System’, p. 37.

⁵¹ Zhou Youguang, ‘Modernization of the Chinese Language’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 59 (1986), p. 7; Horng-luen Wang, ‘Romanization Movements in Japan and China: Reforming National Language, or Universalizing “Tokens of Enchange”?’’, *Tamkang Review*, 37, no. 2 (Winter 2006), p. 117.

⁵² Kingsley Bolton and Christopher Hutton, ‘Orientalism, Linguistics and Postcolonial Studies’, *Interventions*, 2, no. 1 (2000), p. 3.

⁵³ Cao Shunqing and Guo Wei, ‘From the Imperial Catalogue to Western library science: The loss of meaning for classical Chinese literature’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 73 (2018), pp. 328–340.

conclusion is that this classification, based on a language preference, failed to address the complex subject matter of Chinese books.⁵⁴

Did similar problems occur in the cataloguing history of the VGC? The next chapters will explore this issue.

⁵⁴ Shuyong Jiang, 'Lost in Translation: The Treatment of Chinese Classics in the Library of Congress Classification', *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 45, no. 1 (2007), pp. 3–14.

Chapter 3: Van Gulik and His Collection

3.1 Van Gulik and His Interests in Traditional Chinese Culture

It would be remiss of me to investigate the Van Gulik collection without discussing Van Gulik himself. In addition to being the person who made strenuous efforts to collect the books, he was also the first cataloguer of his collection. In this section I will briefly recount Van Gulik's life with a focus on his interest in traditional Chinese culture.

Born in the Netherlands in 1910 into the family of an officer in the Netherlands Indies Army, Robert Hans van Gulik inherited his interests in the East from his grandfather. Early in his teenage years he began to learn Chinese, teaching himself with a handbook and taking lessons from a Chinese student. He also got a Chinese name, Gao Luopei, which he used throughout his life in a Chinese context. After signing a contract with the Dutch East Indies Government, he received a scholarship to attend Leiden University (1929–1933), where he studied Chinese, Japanese, and law. He complained his interests were not aligned with those of his professor, Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak: the latter was enthusiastic about ancient Chinese history and philosophy, while Van Gulik was 'attracted by the later great periods of the flourishing of Chinese art and letters (Tang, Sung and Ming dynasties), and contemporary China'.⁵⁵ His unwavering passions about Chinese art and literature were to be reflected in his private library.

After a bachelor's degree from Leiden University, Van Gulik received a Master's from Utrecht in 1935, after which he was sent to the East. He was stationed in Japan, China, and Malaysia and deepened his knowledge in a variety of areas outside of his work. His interest in traditional Chinese culture drove him to adopt the lifestyle of Chinese literati of the old times: he became an artisan and connoisseur in painting, calligraphy, and music. His own words, written after he began to work in Chongqing in March 1943, testify to his enthusiasm about living such a life: 'Now for the first time I completely shared the Chinese way of life—and liked it immensely.'⁵⁶ These interests guided him to establish himself as a collector of books and artworks.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, pp. 1, 15, 18–19, and 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁷ Hulsewé, 'R. H. van Gulik (1910–1967)', p. 118.

While living in the twentieth century, he was obsessed with the ancient Chinese culture, with a remarkable predilection for the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).⁵⁸ He refused to write in vernacular Chinese, which had officially taken the place of the classical literary language as the ‘national language’ in 1920, or to use modern punctuation; later in his life he would also oppose the simplification of Chinese characters.⁵⁹ His strong, arch-conservative idea about the East exhibits a tendency towards cultural essentialism, and I will return to discuss his perspectives in Section 5.2.

3.2 Van Gulik: Collecting and Using

Van Gulik began to collect Chinese books in 1935, when he first went to East Asia. During his first visit to Beijing in September 1935, for example, he frequented booksellers in the imperial city.⁶⁰ After Germany occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, in fear of the rapid deterioration of the situation in East Asia, he sent his library to Batavia in the Netherlands Indies to keep it safe, but the whole collection, of ‘some 8,000 books, scrolls and art-objects’, was lost when the Japanese bombed the place in 1942.⁶¹ Fortunately this was far away from the end of his collecting efforts; he continued to accumulate items during his tenure in Chongqing, Japan, and Malaysia in the following two decades, with his autobiographical notes abounding with mentions of visits to bookshops.⁶² The discovery that Chinese books were sold at a low price in Japan when he went back to the country after the Second World War was perhaps especially thrilling to him. He bought a lot of them, which formed the ‘foundations for a second Chinese library’.⁶³ And it is this library, which kept growing in the following years, that constituted the VGC.

Which books did Van Gulik collect? It is helpful to consider for what purposes Van Gulik used the collection. Firstly, Van Gulik used books in his collection to support his research in various topics, which resulted in many scholarly writings that built up his reputation as an eminent sinologist.⁶⁴ Lee observed that one tenth of the VGC are books on Chinese fine arts,

⁵⁸ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 165.

⁵⁹ Tse-tung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 279; Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 105.

⁶⁰ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71; Kuiper, ‘Collection Introduction’, p. 1.

⁶² Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 157 and p. 185; Kuiper, ‘Collection Introduction’, p. 1.

⁶³ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 157.

⁶⁴ Kuiper, ‘Collection guide’.

covering twenty-one topics like music, carving, Chinese chess, and sculpture, but the number of books regarding music, calligraphy, and painting, the three Chinese fine arts that especially fascinated him, is significantly larger than the rest. This shows that he was intentionally curating his collection rather than collecting randomly.⁶⁵ In particular, Van Gulik was engrossed in the musical instrument *qin* (lute): he was a master of the instrument himself and a collector of ancient music scores, and also wrote the first monograph in the Western world on the Chinese lute culture, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*.⁶⁶ Shi Ye has prepared a list of 35 pieces of Chinese writings and lute scores referenced or mentioned in Van Gulik's monograph;⁶⁷ based on my comparison, 10 of them can be found in the current VGC. Given that his monograph was published in 1940, two years before all his entire collection—the 10 titles included—was lost in the war, he must have repurchased the same books afterwards. Therefore, Van Gulik was indeed consciously building a collection.

Van Gulik was not only the first to introduce certain aspects of the Chinese culture to the Western world, but at the same time, with a Western scholar's vision, he also researched areas that were uncommon in traditional Chinese scholarship. His groundbreaking work *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* is the first piece of academic writing on this topic both in the West and in China, and in preparation of its publication, Van Gulik made lots of efforts to buy and reproduce erotic prints from China.⁶⁸ Once again, this shows that his personal and academic interests—which are perhaps difficult to distinguish from one another—motivated him to accumulate books on certain topics and are important to consider in any reflection on his collection practices.

Moreover, the presence of rare books in the collection—and Van Gulik's awareness of and emphasis on their rarity, to which I shall return in Section 3.3.4—indicates that he was making a point of collecting and owning valuable copies. His efforts to preserve ancient text can be exemplified by two items in the VGC. The first one is a manuscript titled *Zhonghe qinshi*

⁶⁵ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 162.

⁶⁶ Shi, 'Gao Luopei yu Zhongguo qin wenhua' [Van Gulik and the Chinese lute culture], in *Helan hanxuejia Gao Luopei yanjiu*, p. 1. The bibliographical information of Van Gulik's book is: *The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay in the Ideology of the Ch'in* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1940).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, see Table 1-1.

⁶⁸ Shi Ye, 'Gao Luopei yu Zhongguo gudai xingwenhua' [Van Gulik and traditional Chinese sex culture], in *Helan hanxuejia Gao Luopei yanjiu*, p. 96; Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 159. The bibliographical information of Van Gulik's book is: *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period: With an Essay on Chinese Sex Life from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty, B.C.206–A.D.1644* (Tokyo: pub. by author, 1951).

qinpu [Lute scores in the Zhonghe Music Room] (SINOL. Gulik 6771.10), which contains the facsimile of four lute tunes hand copied by Van Gulik himself. The second one is a Ming-dynasty folk novel titled *Chunmeng suoyan* [Trifling tale of a spring dream] (SINOL. Gulik E 201), for which Van Gulik used his own money to make two hundred copies to send to research institutes and university libraries around the world. He also checked and punctuated the book and provided a preface for the privately printed version.⁶⁹ Here he not only attempted to preserve the text, but also contributed to its distribution while promoting further academic research.

As a book collector as well as a seal carver, Van Gulik strictly followed the tradition of stamping one or more personal imprints in every book owned by him.⁷⁰ For example, in *Longyin guan qinpu* [Lute tunes of the Hall of Dragon Chanting] (SINOL. Gulik 6771.38), two seals of his can be found in two different spots (see Fig. 1 and 2).⁷¹ The co-existence of Van Gulik's seals and those of the previous owner represents a lineage of collectors, which is useful for studying the provenance of the books. Descriptions of the seals are included in the latest version of the VGC catalogue, as I will discuss in Section 4.4.3.

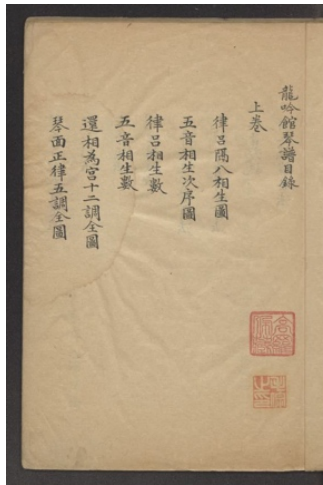


Figure 1: p. [5] of *Longyin guan qinpu*. The upper, larger seal reads *Gao Luopei cang* (*Gao Luopei's collection*). The lower, smaller one reads *Mao Zong zhi yin* (*Mao Zong's seal*).

⁶⁹ Barkman and De Vries, *Dutch Mandarin*, p. 169; Shi, 'Gao Luopei yu Zhongguo gudai xingwenhua', pp. 132–133.

⁷⁰ Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 1.

⁷¹ Figures 1 and 2 are downloaded from UBL digital collections (<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3163959>) and have been cropped for the use of this thesis. Van Gulik's copy was the only extant one of this manuscript, see Dai Xiaolian, 'Helan cunjian de guqin pu yu Gao Luopei' [Ancient lute scores kept in the Netherlands and Van Gulik], *Yinyue yishu* [The art of music], no. 2 (1992), p. 68. More seals of Van Gulik can be found in *Gao Luopei yinpu* [Book of Gao Luopei's seals] (SINOL. Gulik E 501).

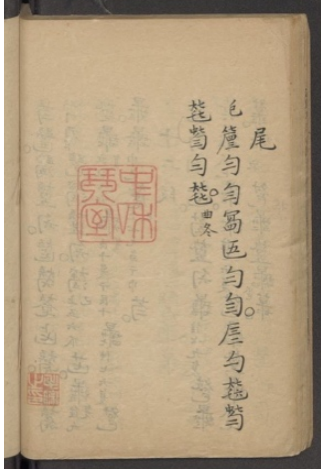


Figure 2: the last page of the manuscript. The upper, larger seal reads Zhonghe qinshi (Zhonghe Music Room). The lower, smaller one also reads Mao Zong zhi yin.

Van Gulik's application of book collectors' seals is in accordance with his other attempts to live 'the Chinese way of life'. To what extent did his traditionalism influence the organization of his collection? I will discuss this in the next section.

3.3 Van Gulik's Catalogue

It is estimated that there are about ten thousand volumes of books in the VGC.⁷² If the books were unorganized and uncatalogued, it could have been a considerable inconvenience for Van Gulik to know what books he had bought and to find a certain book in his extensive library. These practical factors could possibly be what motivated him to produce a catalogue. As we delve deeper into the catalogue, we will have a clearer idea of what purpose it serves.

Van Gulik's catalogue consists of cards now stored in a total of 37 cases measuring 12 x 18.5 x 4.5 cm approximately, among which 2 are marked as *mulu* (literally, 'contents'), 1 as *xiaoshuo* (novels), and 1 as *yinyue* (music), and the rest 33 are dedicated to *congshu* (collections of reprints).⁷³ The first group of *congshu* cards starts with prefaces that comprise a four-page English introduction to the catalogue and a two-page list of abbreviations in Chinese (see Appendix 1 for pictures).

⁷² Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 1.

⁷³ Ibid.

3.3.1 Form

Koos Kuiper's introduction to the VGC refers to Van Gulik's cards as 'card catalogues', and Lee's article also speaks of a *kapiian muluce* (card catalogue) made by Van Gulik.⁷⁴ But do the cards really constitute a 'card catalogue'?

Invented in the nineteenth century, the card catalogue replaced the formerly dominant book form of catalogues and prevailed in libraries in the United States and Europe for the majority of the twentieth century, until in the 1980s Machine Readable Cataloguing appeared in response to increased needs for digital catalogues.⁷⁵ The American Library Association describes the card catalogue as 'a catalog in which bibliographic records, references, etc., are on separate cards of uniform size arranged in any desired order in card trays'.⁷⁶ In 1908 it was decided that the international standard for an index card should be 7.5 x 12.5 cm, or 3 x 5 inch, the size of the American postcard.⁷⁷

Although the standardized size for index cards was a recommendation, it would have made sense for Van Gulik to purchase such cards if he had wanted to make a card catalogue. The size of his cards, however, is 10 x 17.5 cm (around 4 by 7 inch), larger than that of standard index cards. Moreover, his cards are punched with two holes on the left (shorter) side and bound with a string as a booklet, with hard covers in the front and at the back. With these characteristics, Van Gulik's catalogue is better described as a sheaf catalogue, which in ALA's glossary is 'made up of sets of slips of a standard size (most typical is 7¾ by 4 inches) fastened together in a loose-leaf binder'.⁷⁸ A 1909 handbook on producing sheaf catalogues advised the use of Manila paper as slips,⁷⁹ and indeed Van Gulik's buff-coloured cards have a similarly soft surface, as opposed to the harder texture of index cards. Therefore, it would be more sensible to consider Van Gulik's cards as a sheaf catalogue instead of a card catalogue.

⁷⁴ Lee, Kuiper, and Lecher, 'Helan Gao Luopei', p. 144.

⁷⁵ Karen Coyle, 'Catalogs, Card—and Other Anachronisms', *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 31 (2005), p. 60.

⁷⁶ Toni M. Carter and Michael Levine-Clark, *ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2013), p. 45.

⁷⁷ Markus Krajewski, 'Institutional Technology Transfer', in *Paper Machines: About Cards & Catalogs, 1548–1929*, trans. by Peter Krapp (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2011), p. 92.

⁷⁸ Carter and Levine-Clark, *ALA Glossary*, p. 232.

⁷⁹ James Douglas Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue: A Practical Handbook on the Compilation of Manuscript Catalogues for Public and Private Libraries* (London: Libraco Limited, 1909), p. 6.

It then invites the question of why he did not adopt the form of the card catalogue, which was dominant in his era. One reason could be that he was inspired by a tradition in academic libraries in his home country, one that originated in his alma mater, Leiden University.⁸⁰ While sheaf catalogues are said to be mainly used in libraries in the United Kingdom,⁸¹ the so-called *Leidse boekjes* (Leiden Booklets) can also be categorized as such.⁸² Felix Reichmann has provided a detailed description of these catalogues:

A bundle of about a hundred slips is placed in a slip holder and firmly held together by a piece of twine which is passed through the notches of the slips; if a new slip is to be inserted, the twine is cut, a new twine inserted and secured by knots.⁸³

The format of Van Gulik's catalogue is similar to that of *Leidse boekjes*. In addition, the size of *Leidse boekjes* is 10.5 x 20 cm, almost the same height as Van Gulik's catalogue.⁸⁴ This brings about convenience for shelving the catalogues together. In addition to following the Leiden tradition, there could be other reasons for him to make a sheaf catalogue, for example, the advantages brought by the form as a compromise option between the printed catalogue and the card catalogue.⁸⁵ Compared with bulky card trays or the cabinets required by a card catalogue, it is convenient to carry cased booklets around, while the binding technique makes it easy to flip, rearrange the cards, remove existing ones, or insert new ones.

To sum up, Van Gulik's adoption of the form of sheaf catalogues appears to be influenced by the common practice in Dutch libraries, which was different from the worldwide dominant choice, while the form was seemingly adjusted according to the needs of cataloguing his specific collection. Similarly, he also designed the card format based on these specific needs, which I will discuss in Section 3.3.4.

⁸⁰ Felix Reichmann, 'The Catalog in European Libraries', *The Library Quarterly*, 34 (1964), p. 35.

⁸¹ Carter and Levine-Clark, *ALA Glossary*, p. 232.

⁸² Coen Marinus, 'The Key to the Library's Collection', in *A Usable Collection: Essays in Honour of Jaap Kloosterman on Collecting Social History*, ed. by Aad Blok, Jan Lucassen and Huub Sanders (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), p. 209.

⁸³ Reichmann, 'The Catalog in European Libraries', p. 35.

⁸⁴ Anneke van Langen and Sybren Sybrandy, 'Honderd jaar Leidse boekjes', *Pictogram*, 3 (June/July 2000), <<https://www.rug.nl/society-business/center-for-information-technology/organisation/pictogram/archief/2000-7-3/leidseboekjes.htm>> (20 December 2024).

⁸⁵ C. D. Gull, 'Substitutes for the Card Catalog', *Library Trends*, 2 (1953), p. 319.

3.3.2 Prefaces

The prefaces to the first volume of *congshu* are presented on slips that are different from those representing the books: the former has rounded corners and the paper is of a light green colour, while the latter has sharp corners and the colour of the paper is buff. The clear distinction made between the paper types used suggests an awareness of the differences in the two types of content. This choice is perhaps even a call for attention to the prefaces, which serve as a ‘user’s guide’ to the catalogue.

The introduction comes with a heading reading ‘Title Catalogue’, revealing the principle of title entry: each slip in the catalogue represents a book in the collection. Composed in English, it establishes the dominant linguistic context for using the catalogue. It mentions the order of the titles, what information is contained in different parts of the card, the meaning of the stamps, the contents of separate boxes. Moreover, it is intriguing to note that the introduction also refers to a catalogue of publishers and another of authors:

The names of Chinese publishers are listed separately and the cards are collected in a card box marked *ts’ang-pan*.

...

The names of the persons who painted c.q. wrote these scrolls have been incorporated in the Authors’ Card Index so that all data available in books, manuscripts, paintings and calligraphic specimens in my collection are coordinated in the Authors’ Card Catalogue.⁸⁶

Where are these two other catalogues? Did they even exist? I will discuss this mystery in Section 3.3.5.

As the wording, like ‘*my* collection’ (emphasis mine), reveals, the introduction was authored by Van Gulik himself. It tells us Van Gulik’s thoughts behind his preparation of the catalogue and provides important insights into the classification and cataloguing of the collection. I will continue to refer to the introduction in the following discussion.

The table entitled ‘Abbreviated Titles of Various Ts’ung-shu’, on the other hand, is rather straightforward. Contents were written in two colours: on the left are abbreviations in red, and on

⁸⁶ See the third and fourth photos in Appendix 1.

the right the full titles of *congshu* in black. There is horizontal ruling to ensure the alignment of the 16 rows; despite the lack of an inside vertical border to divide the two columns, texts in the right column are flushed left and vertically aligned. Contents of the table, all in Chinese, were written in horizontal rows. As a comparison, the traditional Chinese way is to write the script vertically.⁸⁷ Since the catalogue was presented in an English context and targeted an English-speaking audience, it would be only reasonable to adopt the English way of horizontal writing. This once again attests to the linguistic dominance of English over Chinese in the catalogue. Interestingly, starting from the second decade of the twentieth century, some Chinese scholars advocated the horizontalization of Chinese script, to conform with the practice in the ‘modern industrialized world’.⁸⁸ This, together with the promotion of vernacular language and modern punctuation, was part of the language reform that Van Gulik as a conservative was opposed to, but he nonetheless opted for the Western-style presentation of the list of abbreviations. This makes the presentation of this list particularly striking.

The list is a helpful aid for users of the *congshu* booklets and of them only, while the ‘Title Catalogue’ introduction covers information on all the extant booklets. In the next section I will discuss the arrangement of the booklets.

3.3.3 Classification

First of all, it should be noted that according to Van Gulik’s introduction, there was also supposed to be a case of cards marked *shuhua lei* (the category of calligraphy and painting): ‘The card box marked *Shu-hua-lei* contains the descriptive cards of the Chinese scrolls in my collection’.⁸⁹ These Chinese scrolls were dispersed into the possession of individuals and institutions after he passed away, and the said card box is not present in Leiden University’s collection of Van Gulik’s books.⁹⁰ As cards in this box represented paintings and calligraphic works, not books or manuscripts, I will not include it as a class in Van Gulik’s classification scheme in the following discussion.

⁸⁷ Thomas S. Mullaney, ‘Quote Unquote Language Reform: New-Style Punctuation and the Horizontalization of Chinese’, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 29 (Fall 2017), p. 219.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁸⁹ See the third photo in Appendix 1.

⁹⁰ ‘Robert van Gulik’s Collection of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting’, *Koninklijke Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*, n.d. <<https://www.kvvak.nl/en/collection-of-chinese-calligraphy-and-painting/>> (20 December 2024)

Before proceeding to discuss Van Gulik's classification, I will analyse the usage of *mulu*. This Chinese word means 'contents', with no connotations relevant to literature; the two cases marked as *mulu*, however, contain 'books on literature in general'.⁹¹ There is a gap between what the word means and what the books are included in the cases marked with the word. It seems that Van Gulik used *mulu* in its original sense, as the Chinese equivalent to 'catalogue', not as a class name. That is to say, he did not assign a class name to the two cases now marked as *mulu*. For the 33 cases dedicated to *congshu*, Van Gulik did not give them a class name either. Moreover, Van Gulik in his introduction did not explain what *congshu* is, seemingly expecting the user to have had abundant knowledge about such Chinese publications, and did not mention what books are contained in *mulu*. But he did note that the *xiaoshuo* case collects cards of Chinese novels, and *yinyue* collects books on music. These references lead me to suspect that he picked out *congshu* titles, novels, and music books, and that everything that remained constituted *mulu*. By giving names to certain classes, Van Gulik highlighted subjects of particular interest to him.



Figure 3: the first five boxes of congshu

⁹¹ Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 1.



Figure 4: from left to right: the two boxes of mulu, one of xiaoshuo, and one of yinyue

For simplicity's sake, I will say that Van Gulik divided his collection into the following four classes: *congshu*, *mulu*, *xiaoshuo*, and *yinyue*. I put *congshu* first in the list for a reason: the introduction and the list of abbreviations serve as users' guide to the catalogue, which is expected to be read before the user proceeds to look at the cards; therefore, the placement of these prefaces in the first volume of *congshu* suggests that cases containing the *congshu* catalogues should hold the first position in the sequence of cases.

Viewed on its own, Van Gulik's scheme cannot be said to be a systematic one, as the divisions are of varying natures: *congshu* (collections of reprints) is a format of publications; *xiaoshuo* (novels) a literary genre; *yinyue* (music) a subject; *mulu* is even undefined. Was his system derived from the classification schemes for ancient Chinese books that had been established in his time? The table below summarizes my attempts to fit Van Gulik's scheme into the classical four-division scheme and the Harvard–Yenching scheme.⁹²

⁹² In the table I indented the subclasses to create a clearer view. For the four-division system, I refer to Siku quanshu yanjiusuo, *Qinding Siku quanshu zongmu* [Imperially commissioned annotated catalogue of the *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), pp. 35–41. For the Harvard–Yenching scheme, see Ch'iu, *A Classification Scheme*, pp. 4–7.

Van Gulik's classification	Four-Division scheme	Harvard–Yenching scheme
<i>congshu</i>	<i>zi</i> (master) <i>zajia</i> (writers of various topics)	9000–9999 Generalia and Bibliography 9100–9120 Chinese General Series or Collections (Ts'ung-shu)
<i>mulu</i>	Not applicable	5000–5999 Language and Literature 5040–5059 Literature in general
<i>xiaoshuo</i>	<i>zi</i> (master) <i>xiaoshuojia</i> (novelist)	5000–5999 Language and Literature 5731–5769 Chinese Literature: Fiction
<i>yinyue</i>	<i>jing</i> (classics) <i>yue</i> (music)	6000–6999 Fine and Recreative Arts 6700–6799 Music

As titles in one *congshu* can cover subdivisions in one or more divisions, Chinese cataloguers had to deal with the problem of fitting *congshu* into one single division in the traditional scheme. While some resorted to classifying *congshu* as *zajia* under the class of *zi*, some opted to set up a *congshu* division outside the four divisions, an influential adaptation of the classical scheme.⁹³ Ch'iu revealed that he was influenced by it in setting up his last class, 9000–9999 Generalia and Bibliography, in which there is a subdivision for *congshu*.⁹⁴ There is not enough evidence showing that Van Gulik consciously followed this adaptation, but undoubtedly he too considered *congshu* as an independent category.

The comparison does not suffice to prove direct influence posted by the two schemes, despite Van Gulik's possible awareness of both of them. The lack of systematic arrangements and the variance in class names show that Van Gulik took a rather subjective, arbitrary approach to organising his books, creating a class whenever necessary, instead of finding corresponding classes or subclasses in established schemes. This personalized approach is in fact typical among traditional Chinese cataloguers, for whom a class was set up only when there were books on this topic in their collections.⁹⁵ Although it is impossible to determine how much influence established classification schemes or traditional practices had on Van Gulik's divisions, we can conclude from this survey that his own classification catered to the specific needs that his own collection presented.

⁹³ Jiang Xi, 'Zuizao sheli "congshu bu" zhi shumu kaobian' [Investigation of the earliest catalogue with a 'congshu' division], *Tushuguan zashi* [Library Journal], 29, no. 10 (2010), p. 78 and p. 80.

⁹⁴ Ch'iu, *A Classification Scheme*, p. vi.

⁹⁵ Fu Rongxian, 'Zhong Xi muluxue bijiao yanjiu chuyi' [Comparative research on Chinese bibliography and Western bibliography], *Sichuan tushuguan xuebao* [Journal of the Sichuan Society for Library Science], 167 (2009), p. 68.

3.3.4 Descriptive Cataloguing

The cards are ruled with three red lines, one horizontal and two vertical, that divide the card into five parts; for simplicity I will refer to the parts using the Roman letters assigned to them in the graph below:

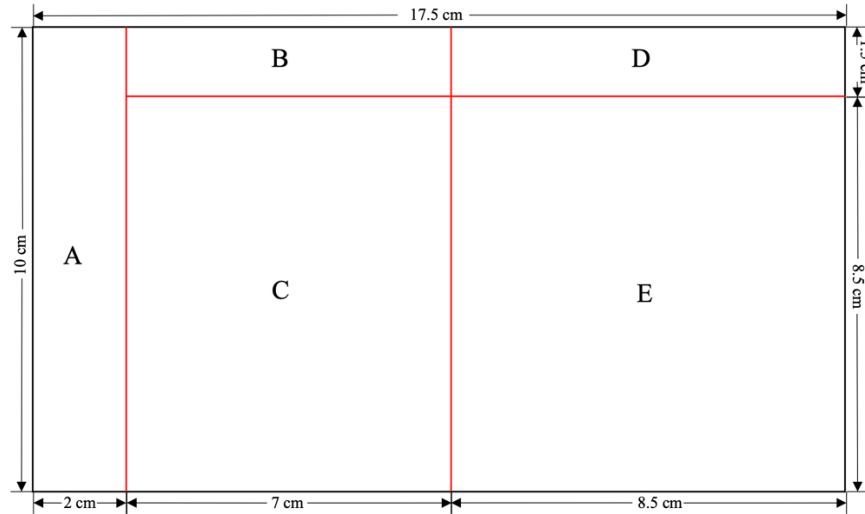


Figure 5: dimensions of the card and the grid

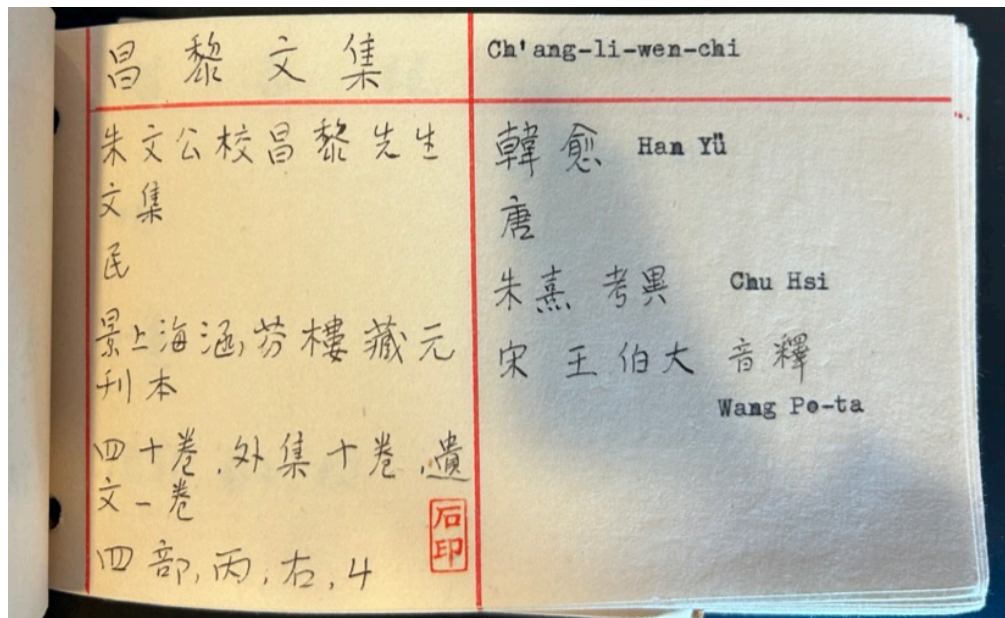


Figure 6: a card from the first congshu booklet

Part A accommodates the two notches used for binding, while the rest contains bibliographical information on the book: Part B shows the Chinese title of the book, Part D its romanization (following Wade–Giles guidelines); Part E shows the author's name and sometimes the period in which they lived, as well as providing names of any other contributor, such as author of the

preface, with the romanization of person names; Part C provides additional bibliographical information other than the author, such as the full title, the period of publication, the edition, and, where relevant, cross-references (marked with a wavy underline). For individual titles in *congshu* there is also a line that serves as finding aid, showing for example the abbreviated name of the *congshu* it belongs to (referring back to the list of abbreviations) along with the number of the wooden case in which it is located, as each *congshu* collectanea is stored in a number of cases.

In his introduction Van Gulik mentioned that ‘each card is divided into two parts’, referring to them as the left (B and C) and right (D and E) halves. The most distinctive difference between the information contained in the two halves is that information in the Western Roman alphabet mostly appears in the right one. Given that the cards are bound on the left-hand side, the right half is more exposed to the catalogue user when they flip through the cards. This arrangement makes information written in the Roman alphabet more accessible. For example, knowing that cards in each booklet are arranged alphabetically (according to their romanized versions), the user will only need to glimpse at Part D when trying to find a card.

As such compartmentalization cannot be found on the loose leaves of *Leidse boekjes* nor on the index cards of Library of Congress or the Harvard–Yenching Institute,⁹⁶ I deem it as a design that specifically addressed Van Gulik’s need to catalogue this collection of Chinese books within a Western environment: it is important to present bibliographical information in Chinese, the source language, but at the same time the catalogue arrangement relies on text composed in the Roman alphabet to enhance its accessibility. The compartmentalization enabled the consolidation of bilingual information in an efficient, user-friendly way.

Chinese characters on the cards are all handwritten; romanizations are mostly typewritten, while sometimes there are also handwritten sentences in English—I will get back to this later in this section. The position of typewritten romanized names is neither fixed nor aligned to a certain item on the card, but moves around to be adjacent to the Chinese characters they represent. It suggests that handwriting preceded typewriting in the production process of the

⁹⁶ The image of cards in *Leidse boekjes* can be found in Van Langen and Sybrandy, ‘Honderd jaar Leidse boekjes’, p. 2. For Library of Congress index cards, see ‘How to Use the Card Catalog’, *Library of Congress*, n.d. <<https://guides.loc.gov/card-catalog/using-the-card-catalog>> (20 December 2024). As for Harvard–Yenching’s cards, I am yet to find an image of higher resolution, but from the thumbnail of its published card catalogues it is obvious that there is no compartmentalization; see the image on ‘Catalogues of the Harvard–Yenching Library. Chinese catalogue.’, *HathiTrust*, n.d. <<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000796919>> (20 December 2024).

cards, but more importantly, that priority in determining the layout was given to the Chinese characters instead of the romanizations.

Some cards are imprinted with Chinese-character seals that bear bibliographical information, and they only appear in two possible locations. Those located in the right lower corner of Part C, on the left side of the dividing line, are stamps concerning the production of the book. There are five of them, all in rectangular shapes: *chaoben* (manuscript) (Fig. 7), *shiyin* (lithograph) (Fig. 8), *huozi* (moveable type) (Fig. 9), *Riben ban* (Japanese edition) (Fig. 10), and *Riben guanban* (Japanese official edition) (Fig. 11).⁹⁷ The five seals are not parallel; sometimes two of them can appear together. The seals may be divided into two categories: while the last two seals point out the publication place, the first three talk about the printing technique, which can be indicated by not only the seal(s), but also by the lack of it (them). As Van Gulik noted in the introduction, ‘cards that bear no red stamp left of the dividing line refer to block prints’. With these seals Van Gulik set manuscripts and books printed using lithography or the moveable type apart from block prints, and books published in Japan apart from those in China.

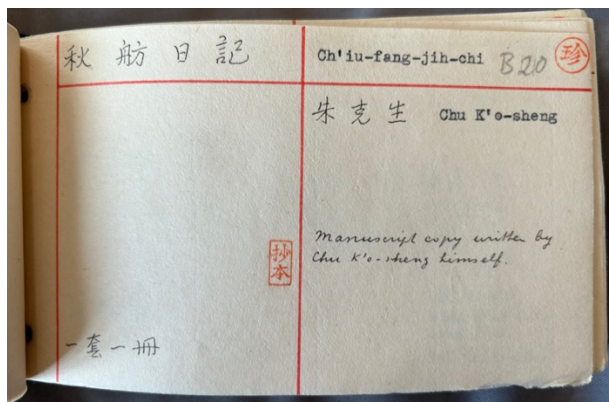


Figure 7: seals of *chaoben* (manuscript) on the right of the vertical ruling and *zhen* (rare) in the top right corner

⁹⁷ Translations are copied from Van Gulik's introduction, except that he translated the last one, *Riben guanban*, as 'Japanese edition of the Shoheizaka Academy of the Tokugawa Shogun'. The Shoheizaka Academy was a government-established school that had its own library, one that was 'heavily sinological in orientation', and also served as a publisher. See Henry D. Smith II, 'Japaneseness and the History of the Book', review of Peter Kornicki, *The Books in Japan: A Cultural History from Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (1998), *Monumenta Nipponia*, 53, no. 4 (1998), p. 508.

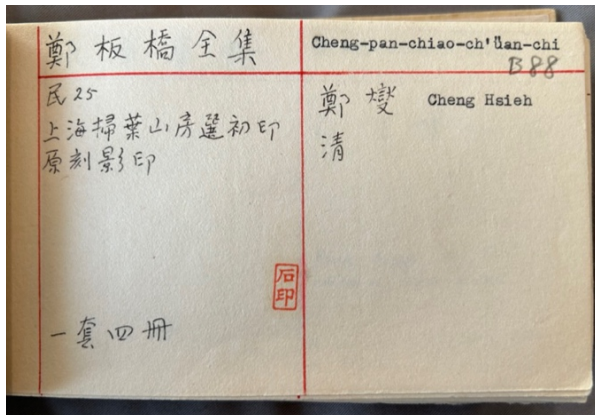


Figure 8: seal of shiyin (lithograph)

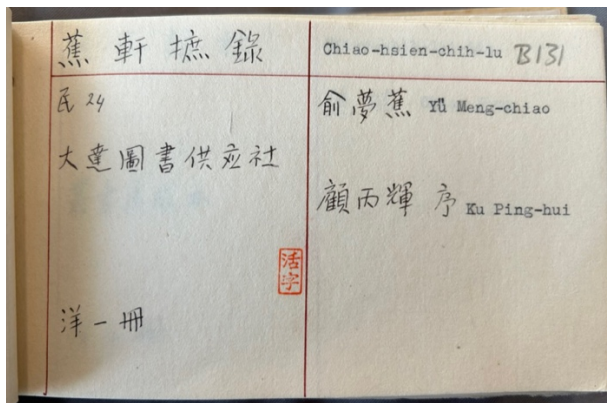


Figure 9: seal of huozi (movable type)

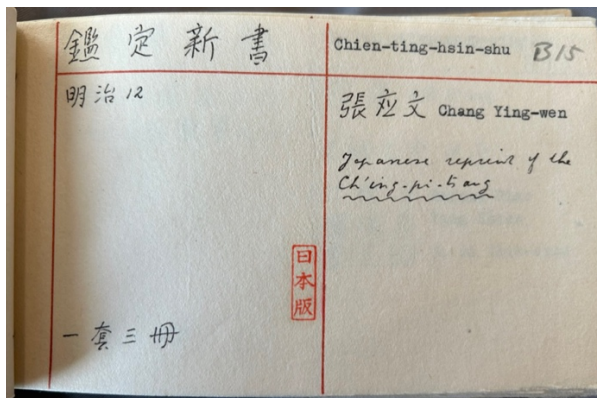


Figure 10: seal of Riben ban (Japanese edition)

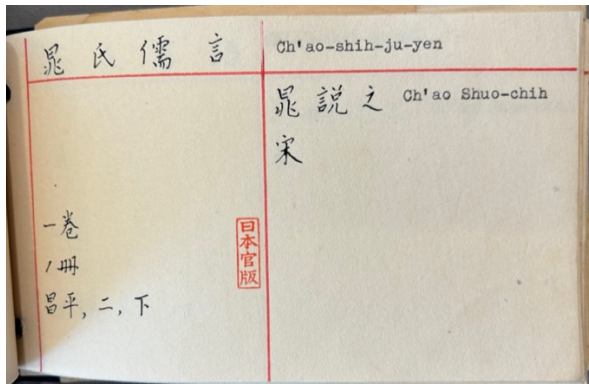


Figure 11: seal of Riben guanban (Japanese official edition)

In addition, occasionally showing up in the top right corner of Part D is a round stamp bearing one single Chinese character *zhen*, meaning ‘rare’ (see Fig. 7); it reflects the (perceived) number of extant copies of a title. Van Gulik was possibly the one who determined whether a book was ‘rare’. The different shape of this seal allows a user who does not understand the character *zhen* to distinguish it easily from other seals; moreover, the special location of the seal makes it attention-catching, even if the user is only quickly flipping through the catalogue. Therefore, when one hoped to locate rare books in the collection, the process would be relatively painless. The unique shape and location of this seal testifies to the special importance that Van Gulik attached to rare books in his collection, as briefly discussed in Section 3.2.

The purpose of seals on the catalogue cards differs from the affixing of personal seals to the books. The cataloguing seals save the cataloguer(s) the trouble of writing down the same Chinese characters time after time, but more importantly, they highlight the publication place, the printing technique, or the rarity of the book with their sharp red colour. From the cataloguer’s perspective, such seals are expected to convenience the user of the catalogue, constituting a quick access to certain information. Moreover, this expectation shows us which pieces of bibliographical information the cataloguer thinks are worth special attention.

As for the English handwritten annotations on the cards, their wording and first-person references suggests it was Van Gulik who authored the notes and very likely he who wrote them down.

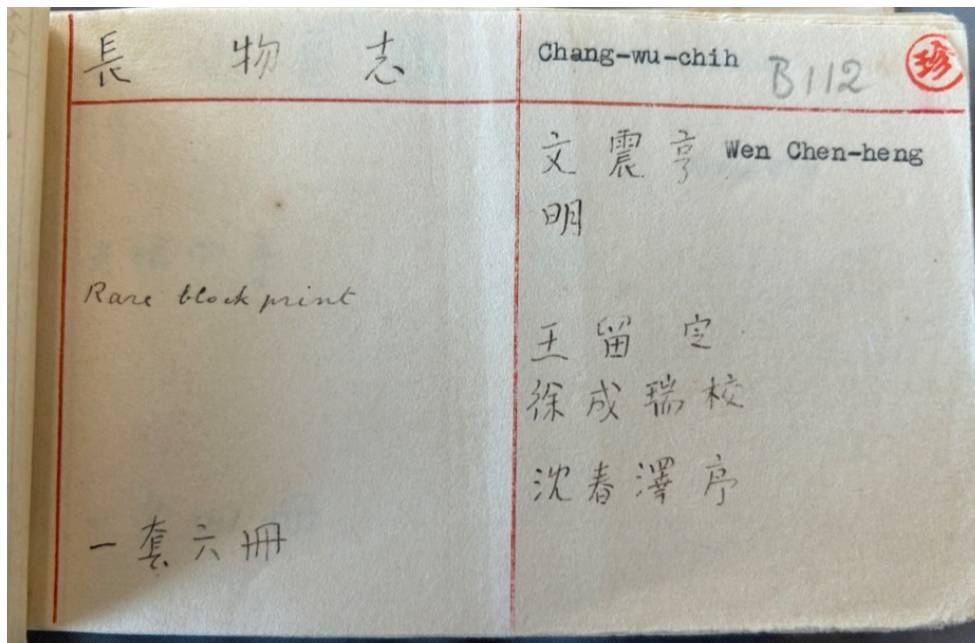


Figure 12. The note reads: 'Rare block print'.

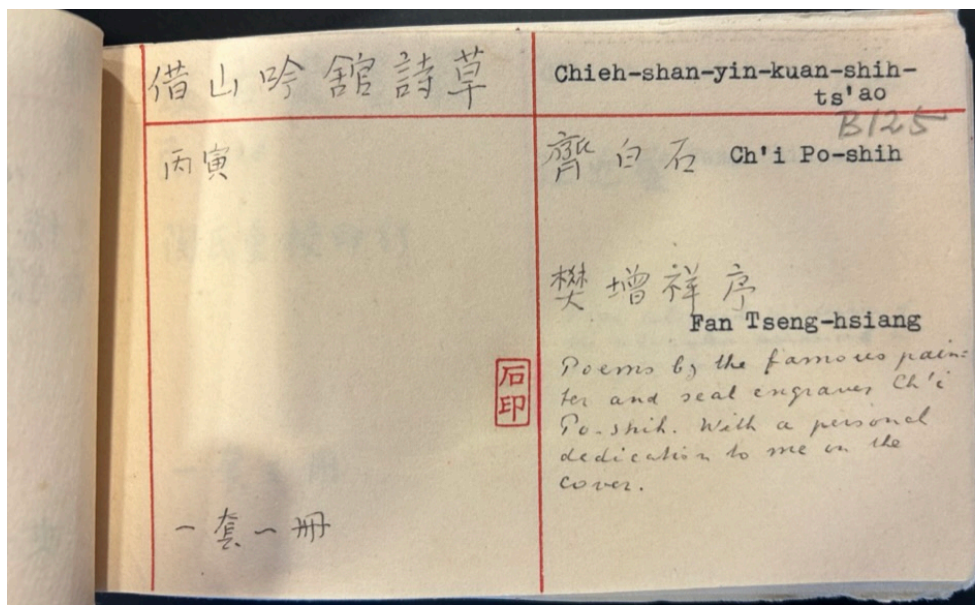


Figure 13. The note reads: 'Poems by the famous painter and seal engraver Ch'i Po-shih. With a personal dedication to me on the cover.'

Even when the information in the note has been contained in the Chinese text or seals (for example, in Fig. 12 the round seal already indicates that the book is a rare copy, and the lack of rectangular seals indicates that it is a block print), the note renders such information available in English. More often than not the notes provide further details, as they cover a wide range of bibliographical information, such as the provenance, value, or bookmaking technique of the book, brief biographies of the author and contributors. They can appear in Part C (Fig. 12), more

often in E (Fig. 13), or occasionally both; the annotator did not limit himself to one location. Although Van Gulik's introduction specified the type of information provided on each part of the card, it seems more of an initial plan that often falls short of implementation. The lack of consistency in location and content of the notes also hints at the possibility that Van Gulik reviewed the cards himself and decided what information should be provided in English. The catalogue appears to be a working document instead of a finalized one.

Moreover, the existence of English text alongside the romanizations suggests that Van Gulik's expected user did not necessarily need to understand Chinese in order to access at least part of the bibliographical information. The romanizations appear on the right side of the cards, implying that Van Gulik even prioritized the needs of such a user. This echoes the linguistic dominance of English in the catalogue that I have observed.

Lastly, while text is usually found on the front side of the cards, with the back side left blank, I have found two cards with information on the back. On the first one is a handwritten sentence, possibly in Van Gulik's hand, that explains that the keyword in the book title *Langji congshu* [Collectanea of roaming around] (SINOL. Gulik B 150.2), *langji*, is derived from a Tang-dynasty poem (Fig. 14). The placement of the note is useful, as the same word also appears in the title of the next entry, *Langji congshan* [Casual chats on roaming around] (SINOL. Gulik B 104.2). In the second example, the back of the card representing the play *Pipa ji* [Tale of the pipa] (SINOL. Gulik C P'I PC) is pasted with a piece of paper, seemingly cut from somewhere, that bears information on another illustrated edition of the same title and an illustration in that publication (Fig. 15).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ There are multiple differences between the two editions; for example, this one has two volumes, while Van Gulik's has six. The piece of paper could have been cut from a publisher's catalogue, as it indicates the price at which the book is sold (25,000 *yuan*, the currency unknown).

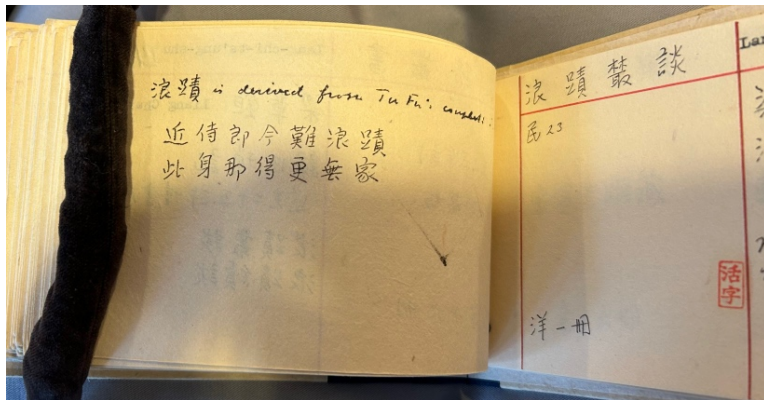


Figure 14: the back side of the card for Langji congshu



Figure 15: the back side of the card for Pipa ji

Whether a cultural reference relevant to the book title or an illustration in another edition of the book, this kind of information does not belong to the types planned to be filled in the grid; that is probably why this information appears on the back. Nevertheless, these two rare examples reveal Van Gulik's intention to provide more information on a book in whatever possible manner. Once again, they illustrate the status of the catalogue as a working document.

3.3.5 Questions Left Unanswered

Now I will discuss two problems presented by the catalogue. Firstly, while the hand of handwritten English text in the catalogue appears consistent, and very likely to be in Van Gulik's own hand, variants in the handwritten Chinese characters suggest there were multiple people responsible for inscribing the cards. This is understandable: given the large number of books in the collection, it was seemingly impossible for Van Gulik himself to undertake all of the handwriting work. Then who are the other scribes? The work required a high level of expertise

and literacy: they must have had an outstanding understanding of classical Chinese, so as to be able to extract bibliographical information from the publication, and also must have known how to write Chinese character. It is very likely they were people of a Chinese origin. But Van Gulik did not even name himself in his booklets, and there is no acknowledgement of the contribution of these anonymous cataloguers, whose identity has been lost as time passes by.

Secondly, as mentioned in Section 3.3.2, in his introduction Van Gulik spoke of a publishers' catalogue and an authors' catalogue. These are no longer extant and it is debatable whether both existed. While I did not find any surviving information relevant to the former, the fact that an authors' catalogue existed can be circumstantially verified by a piece of information present in a few cards:

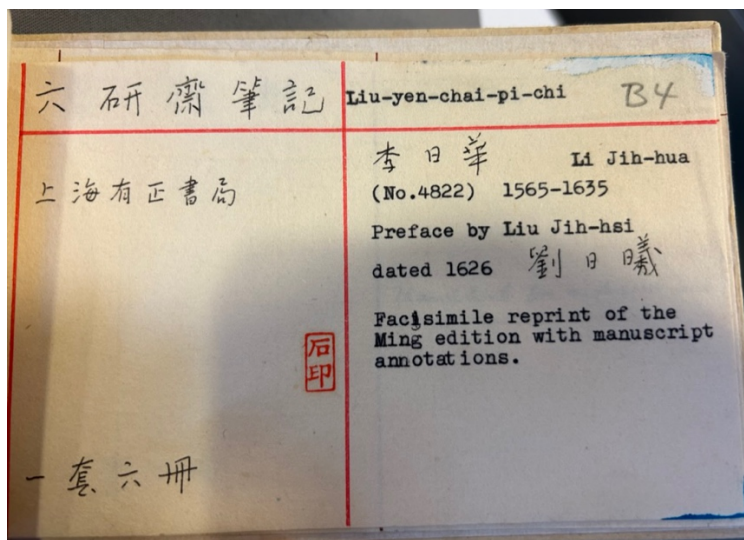


Figure 16. This is also a rare example of text in the Roman alphabet being typewritten.

The placement of the number 4822 underneath the Chinese characters of the author's name Li Rihua (Li Jih-hua), in the upper left-hand corner of Part E, means that it is assigned to the author. For numbers like this to appear in the title catalogue, the ordering of authors for this separate author catalogue must have been completed. What was the order of that catalogue? Based on an examination of select material, I found six further examples of numbered authors, who are listed in the table below in the order of the author's number from low to high:⁹⁹

⁹⁹ As there are a total of 37 booklets containing thousands of cards, I did not have enough time to go through all of them to find every numbered author. Luckily the ones I found already suffice to illustrate how the author index is ordered.

Author's number	Author's name	Author's date	Book title in romanization	Case of the card	Book call number assigned by Ma
4822	Li Jih-hua	1565–1635	Liu-yen-chai-pi-chi	<i>mulu</i>	B4
4904	Ch'en Jen-hsi	1581–1636	Ch'ien-ch'üeh-chü-lei-shu	<i>mulu</i>	B149
6076	Xia Jingqu ¹⁰⁰	±1750	Yeh-sou-p'u-yen	<i>xiaoshuo</i>	C116
6086	Shih Chen-lin	±1752	Ch'ien-ch'ou-chi	<i>xiaoshuo</i>	C31
6269	Tu Shen	1744–1801	Yin-shih	<i>xiaoshuo</i>	C108
6414	Ch'en Ch'iu	±1800	Yen-shan-wai-shih	<i>xiaoshuo</i>	C17

Based on this sampling, it can be hypothesized that the author catalogue was arranged chronologically by the lifespan of the author. However, the number 4822 suggests there are 4821 authors listed before the year 1565, which does not seem very likely. Further research would be needed to confirm the chronological order.

Unlike most other cards, where the author's date was simply represented by the period during which they were alive or active, usually in one Chinese character, the birth and death years of these numbered authors are provided in the format of the Gregorian calendar, for example '1565–1635' (see Fig. 16). While the conversion into the Gregorian calendar would make the hypothesized chronological ordering easier, the piece of information also hints at extra efforts in creating detailed author profiles.

As can be told from the above table, the numbers move between the two cases of *mulu* and *xiaoshuo*, showing an order imposed beyond classification. At the same time, author numbers can only be found on a few title index cards, meaning that the cross-referencing between author and title catalogues was not fully completed.

The introduction tells us that Van Gulik originally had intended to establish a set of catalogues that allowed for cross-referencing and multiple points of access. Despite all the efforts made in its preparation, it is regrettably impossible to tell in what state the authors' catalogue existed, when or if it was lost or even if it existed in a definitive form at all, and we have no idea how the production of the publisher catalogue went, for which no traces remain.

¹⁰⁰ As on the card there is no romanization provided for this name, I followed the *pinyin* guidelines to romanize it.

3.4 Conclusion

We can now return to the question of Van Gulik's expected usage of the catalogue. At the start of Section 3.3 I have tentatively suggested that he wanted to use the catalogue to inventory his collection, but now I would rebut myself, because a handlist, which costs much less effort to prepare, would better serve this purpose. Moreover, if collecting books and using the collection can still be considered as individualistic activities, the prefaces in the first volume of *congshu* catalogues imply that Van Gulik's expected user of his collection was more than himself: if the books were intended for his own use only, it would not have been necessary to elaborate on the order in which the cards are arranged and the kinds of information available in the catalogue. The detailed bibliographical information, including the handwritten annotations, as well as the cross-references within the title catalogue and between the title and the (alleged) author and publisher catalogues, lend the catalogue a strong analytical, scholarly quality. Therefore, I would now argue that Van Gulik was expecting other scholars to use his catalogue and access his collection.

With expected users in mind, it is important that Van Gulik built a catalogue that was useful to his fellow scholars. The natural choice would be to follow established practices which have been made familiar to academics. As I have analysed, Van Gulik's classification and cataloguing practices do betray traces of Western library traditions, like his use of a card format similar to that found in the *Leidse boekjes*. He was presenting the collection to a Western audience after all. But occasionally there were also traditional Chinese elements, such as the application of seals, probably because of his personal preferences as an enthusiast of traditional Chinese culture. In the meantime, Van Gulik came up with customized adjustments to suit the specific needs of cataloguing his own collection. The individuation is not only reflected in the overall design of the cards, but the catalogue also features the capacity to individuate each card.

Van Gulik can be considered as an amateur when it comes to library science. How would the library professionals handle the collection after the acquisition by an academic institution? It will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: After the Acquisition

4.1 Leiden University's Sinological Institute and Its Library

In his examination of early Dutch sinologists, Kuiper concluded that the study of Chinese was officially launched in Leiden in early 1854 when a student, C. F. M. de Grijs, was acknowledged as a full-time student of Dr J. J. Hoffmann. A Chinese and Japanese language specialist, Hoffmann was to be appointed as chair for Chinese and Japanese by the university by the end of the same year; the need of the Netherlands Indies government of European interpreters and translators, as opposed to Chinese ones, was therefore addressed.¹⁰¹ In December 1930, the Sinological Institute was formally established by Professor J. J. L. Duyvendak, and it then became centre of sinology in the Netherlands.¹⁰²

Upon its establishment, the Institute had had a reading room that provided access to books on China, both Chinese and Western ones, from the UBL.¹⁰³ The Institute's own library, the only one of its kind in the country, started with a modest collection, which grew substantially as time passed by, the number of Chinese titles increasing from 850 in 1930 to 240,000 in 1996.¹⁰⁴ Notably, in the 1970s the library rapidly expanded, and simultaneously multiple personal libraries were acquired.¹⁰⁵ The Van Gulik collection was acquired by the Institute in 1977, ten years after Van Gulik's death.¹⁰⁶ In 2009 the Sinological Library was incorporated into the UBL, but the ordering and cataloguing of its books were still handled by its own staff.¹⁰⁷ Collections of the Sinological Library were transferred to the UBL in 2016.¹⁰⁸

In the following sections I will discuss practices of the cataloguers who handled the VGC from 1977 to 2016: John Ma, Joyce Wu, Wang Yi, and Koos Kuiper. All working for the Sinological Library, to some extent they are the embodiment of its institutional power.

¹⁰¹ Pieter N. Kuiper, 'The Early Dutch Sinologists: A Study of their Training in Holland and China, and their Functions in the Netherlands Indies (1854–1900)' (doctoral thesis, Leiden University, 2015), pp. 11 and 20–22.

¹⁰² W. L. Idema, 'Preface', in *Leyden Studies in Sinology: Papers Presented at the Conference held in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Sinological Institute of Leyden University, December 8–12, 1980*, ed. by W. L. Idema (Leiden: Brill, 1980), p. vii.

¹⁰³ Kuiper, 'The Early Dutch Sinologists', p. 618.

¹⁰⁴ Joyce Yung-tzu Wu, 'The Library of the Sinological Institute at Leiden University', *IIAS Newsletter*, no. 7 (1996), p. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Barend ter Haar, 'Rediscovering Chinese Religion and Contemporary China', in *Chinese Studies in the Netherlands: Past, Present and Future*, p. 120.

¹⁰⁶ Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ter Haar, 'Rediscovering Chinese Religion and Contemporary China', p. 120.

¹⁰⁸ Kuiper, 'Collection guide'.

Examining their cataloguing practices will shed light on how this power influenced the organization and presentation of the VGC.

4.2 John Ma and His Cataloguing Practices

John T. Ma (1920–2021) was born into a Chinese family with a traditional artistic legacy in Wenzhou. His grandfather was a Chinese lute specialist, his father an established painter and calligrapher.¹⁰⁹ He started his career as a well-respected librarian in 1956 in the United States, and joined the Sinological Institute, Leiden University in 1976.¹¹⁰ In October of that year the Van Gulik library was brought in for his examination, after which he wrote a report, listing subjects that he thought the collection was especially strong in (literature, fine arts, and music) and highlighting the existence of rare books in the collection.¹¹¹

Following the acquisition of the collection by the Sinological Institute, John Ma made efforts to re-classify and re-catalogue the books.

4.2.1 Classification

As mentioned in Section 2.2, the Sinological Library followed the Harvard–Yenching classification scheme. As an independent collection of the library, however, the VGC was classified in another way.

John Ma re-divided Van Gulik’s collection into six classes, and his classification scheme remains approximately how the collection is organized now.¹¹² In retrospect, he laid the foundation for a treatment of the VGC that has also been accepted by later generations of librarians.

Below is a table comparing Ma’s classification with Van Gulik’s and to the Harvard–Yenching scheme. I have included the Chinese names of the classes and their translations for comparison, and will address the differences between the English and Chinese class names.

¹⁰⁹ Xie Xiaoping, ‘Haiwai faxian *Longyin guan qinpu* guben: wei qingzhu Mei’an qinshe chuangjian liushi nian er zuo’ [The overseas discovery of the only extant copy of *Longyin guan qinpu*: written in celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of Mei’an Music Room], *Yinyue yanjiu* [Music Research], no. 2 (1990), p. 55.

¹¹⁰ Liu Wen-ling, ‘In Memoriam: John T. Ma’, *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, no. 173 (2021), p. 15.

¹¹¹ See Kuiper, ‘Collection Introduction’, p. 1.

¹¹² See Kuiper, ‘Van Gulik collection catalogue’. There are a few minor adjustments, which will be discussed in Section 4.4.2.

John Ma's classification		Van Gulik's classification	Harvard–Yenching scheme
in English	in Chinese		
A Classics	<i>jing zi</i> (classics and masters)	Not a class in Van Gulik's system	0100–0999 Chinese Classics
B Literature in general	<i>wenxue</i> (literature)	<i>mulu</i>	5000–5999 Language and Literature 5040–5059 Literature in general
C Novels (and other fiction)	<i>tongsu xiaoshuo</i> (folk novels)	<i>xiaoshuo</i>	5000–5999 Language and Literature 5731–5769 Chinese Fiction
D Music	<i>yinyue</i> (music)	<i>yinyue</i>	6000–6999 Fine and Recreative Arts 6700–6799 Music
E Fine arts	<i>qita</i> (others)	Not a class in Van Gulik's system	6000–6999 Fine and Recreative Arts 6000–6019 Fine and recreative arts in general
T Ts'ung-shu	<i>congshu</i> (collectanea)	<i>congshu</i>	9100–9120 Chinese General Series (Ts'ung-shu) 9100 Of a Composite Nature

The most significant change made by John Ma is the introduction of two new classes of A and E. I investigated eight out of thirty-two items in Class A, and they are all individual titles in the *congshu* called *Shōhei sōsho* [Collectanea of the Shōheizaka Academy].¹¹³ While more research is needed to confirm whether other items in Class A also came from the same *congshu*, we can tell John Ma at least went through the titles in *Shōhei sōsho*, selected some, and moved them into Class A. Moreover, among these eight items there is one entitled *Chunzheng mengqiu* [Accounts of enlightenment and pursuit of the pure and upright], and in the traditional four-division system it was categorized in *zi* (masters), not in *jing* (classics).¹¹⁴ Therefore, I argue that the Chinese class name of A, *jing zi* (classics and masters), is more reflective of what Ma classified into the class than the English class name.

Similarly, while Class E is called 'Fine arts' in English, its Chinese class name *qita* (others) suggests that it accommodated books that were not classified under any other class. I will use the book *Tangchao xiaoshuo daguan* [Novellas from the Tang dynasty], with call number E188, to illustrate the inclusiveness of Class E. The book contains fictional works, and a line on the copyright page indicates that it belongs to *zi* (masters) in the traditional four-division

¹¹³ In the UBL online catalogue, the title is romanized as 'Masahira sōsho', but I think it is a mistake in romanization. More discussions can be found in Section 5.5.

¹¹⁴ See Siku quanshu yanjiusuo, *Imperially Commissioned Annotated Catalogue*, p. 1789.

system.¹¹⁵ It could have been reasonable to classify it under either A or C, then how did it end up in E? The arrangement of Class C appears straightforward, as it corresponds with Van Gulik's *xiaoshuo* class, and possibly Ma did not want to add new items into it. As for Class A, we can now tell that instead of including all items that fall into the scope of 'classics' and 'masters', Ma established the class based on a very selective principle. Although Class A is deeply rooted in the four-division system, Ma's exclusive approach uniquely modifies the traditional presentation and, consequently, influences how the user sees 'classics' in a Chinese collection. On the other hand, the inclusiveness of Class E is only reflected in the Chinese class name, not the English one.

John Ma not only selected some titles in *congshu* to be placed in Class A, but also rearranged Class T, the one dedicated to *congshu*. More specifically, he labelled two *congshu* items as B, and two items not in the list of abbreviations of *congshu* as T, showing an opinion different from Van Gulik's of what can be categorized as *congshu*.¹¹⁶ As we can see from the latest catalogue of the VGC, Ma's decisions overrode Van Gulik's, which represents a shift from the subjective categorization by an individual to the institutional prerogative.

In addition to names, John Ma also gave the classes numbers using an alphabetic numeral system: he assigned the first five letters in the English alphabet to the first five classes, but for the last class, *congshu*, he skipped a number of letters that follow E and jumped directly to T. One possible reason for not making use of the letters between E and T could be to reserve space for any addition of classes in the future, but more importantly, 'T' seems to have been taken from the first letter of the Wade–Giles transliteration of the class, *tsung-shu*.

Compared with Van Gulik's (lack of) order of the classes, John Ma's ordering is more prominent, with an implicit hierarchy indicated by the letters. A, as the first letter in the alphabet, corresponds with 'classics', the first classifications in the Chinese traditional four-division system. At the same time, *congshu* was moved from the first in Van Gulik's sequence to the last in Ma's. Although the class numbers John Ma used differ from those in the Harvard–Yenching

¹¹⁵ 'Tangchao xiaoshuo daguan', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990037861640302711> (20 December 2024)

¹¹⁶ The first two are *Songlin congshu* [Collectanea of the pine's neighbour], now SINOL. Gulik B 133, and *Shuofu* [Persuasion of the suburbs], now SINOL. Gulik B 158.1 and 158.2. The two items newly marked as *congshu* are *Xiangyan congshu* [Collectanea of the amorous], now SINOL. Gulik T 7, and *Ershisi shi* [Twenty-four histories], now SINOL. Gulik T 16.

scheme, the ordering of classes, especially the placement of classics as the first and *congshu* as last, seems to have been influenced by the Harvard–Yenching scheme.

4.2.2 Ordering and Numbering

Van Gulik ordered books in each class alphabetically but did not assign call numbers to the entries; this is a step that John Ma did not miss when organizing the collection for the Institute library. As discussions on call numbering arose following the development of modern library theories in the West that concerned open access to library shelves, I consider the use of call numbers to be an institutional way of organizing books.¹¹⁷ Therefore, it seems necessary for the Institute library to adopt a ‘set of symbols identifying a particular item in a library collection and indicating its location’.¹¹⁸

John Ma’s call numbers use a combination of the English alphabet and Arabic numerals, like ‘B20’: the former to represent the class, the latter as the book number. I noticed that Ma did not arrange the titles alphabetically, meaning that he opted not to follow Van Gulik’s ordering. To understand what motivated Ma to abandon the existing order, it is important to discover the new order. Unfortunately, from my observation I can only tell that the items are neither arranged in the alphabetical order of titles or authors, nor in the chronological order. It could be a thematic order, but I lack the knowledge and time to explore further.

Although Ma numbered every *congshu* in Class T, he did not do so for the individual titles in each collectanea, except for those relocated to Class A. He treated each *congshu* as one entity and at the same time dismissed the individuality of the independent texts—except for those that are special enough to be classified as ‘classics and masters’—an approach significantly different from Van Gulik’s. A possible reason is the amount of work required to organize the numerous individual titles totalling over 2,500, which in turn accentuates Van Gulik’s great determination to catalogue each of these books, as the preparation of cards, even with the help from other scribes, must have taken him a great deal of time and efforts.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Aida Slavic, ‘Call Numbers, Book Numbers & Collection Arrangements in European Library Traditions’, in *Library and Information Science in Digital Age: Essays in Honour of Professor M. P. Satija*, ed. by J. Singh, I. Malhan and T. Kaur (New Delhi: Thomson Publishers, 2009), p. 261.

¹¹⁸ Carter and Levine-Clark, *ALA Glossary*, p. 44.

¹¹⁹ I follow the figure stated in Lee, Kuiper, and Lecher, ‘Helan Gao Luopei’, p. 145.

4.2.3 Updating the Cards

John Ma wrote down call numbers on Van Gulik's cards in pencil, and also checked the books against the catalogues and made corrections.

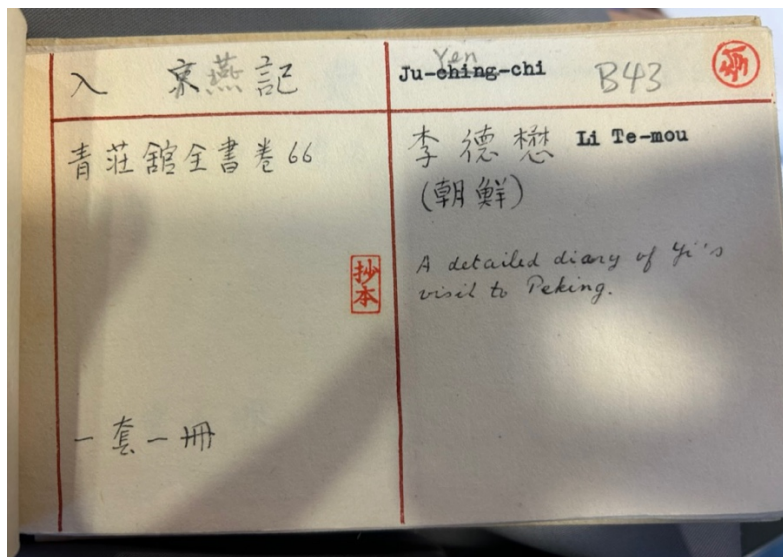
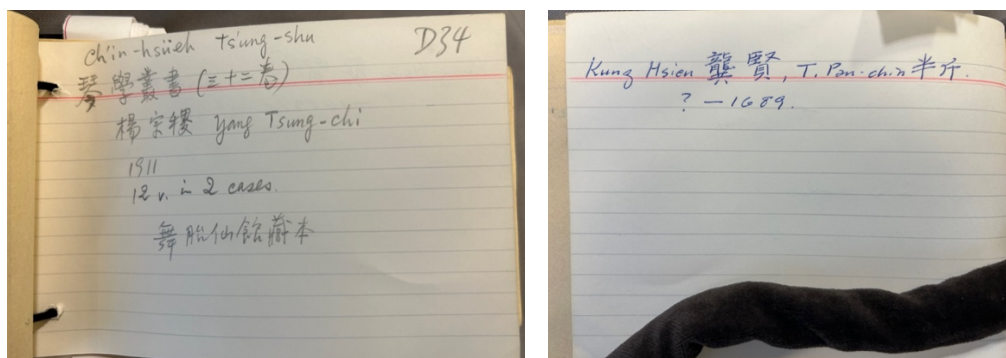


Figure 17: A card catalogue with John Ma's correction and call number in pencil

As Van Gulik's catalogue did not cover every book in his collection, new cards were made and inserted into the catalogue. For example, in the D booklet there are new index cards that are sharply different from old ones: their size is smaller, they are not compartmentalized, their text is written in pencil on the front and in ballpoint pen on the back.



Figures 18 and 19: front and back of D34 (now SINOL. Gulik 6771.42)

The new cards are still arranged in alphabetical order, following Van Gulik's practice.

In addition, John Ma made a new case of Class E of the same size as other cases, prepared new index cards for items E1 to E200, and made an inventory list for the remaining ones, 201–352. For the booklet he followed Van Gulik's practice: the form is also a sheaf catalogue, the cards continue to be arranged in the alphabetical order instead of Ma's order, and

each card is similarly divided into left and right halves, although the information contained is much more limited—on the left are the call number and the book title provided in Chinese characters, and on the right the Wade–Giles romanization. No information on the author, date, or edition is provided.

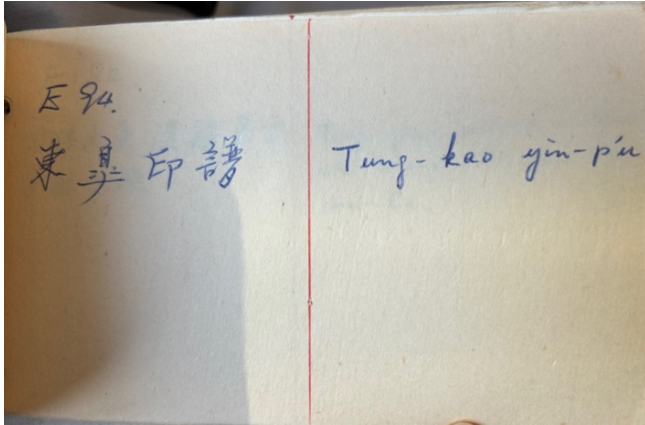


Figure 20: a card in the E booklet

The handwritten inventory list is four pages long, folded up to fit the size of the case for E booklet, and appears to be a photocopy of the original. Titled ‘Continue to E’, it contains information that is even simpler than in the E booklet, with only the call number, the book title in Chinese, and occasionally the number of volumes. There are two entries with the same title, *Chunmeng suoyan*, E201 and E267, but the lack of bibliographical information makes it impossible to tell if they are of two versions.

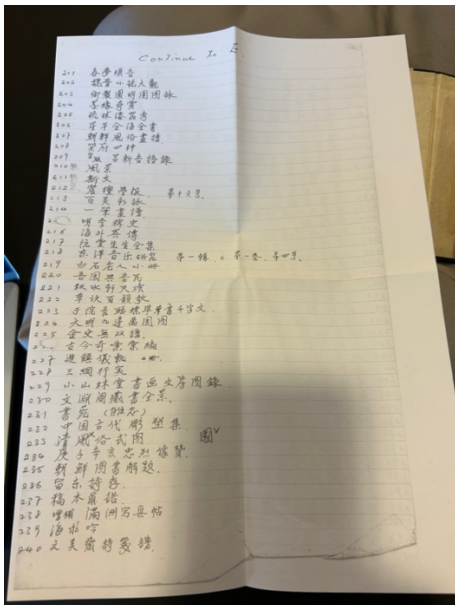


Figure 21: first page of the list

While the formats of the list and the E booklet are quite different, their functions are similarly limited: they provide too little information to be of use for any external user. It seems the list and the E booklet were used as merely a stopgap while a more comprehensive catalogue was in preparation; as Joyce Wu mentioned in 1996, the cataloguing work of the VGC was not yet complete.¹²⁰

Despite the imposition of a new classification scheme and ordering, the cards remained in their original cases and order, even if the titles they represented had been classified in another way. For example, on the card of *Tuibeishu* [The back-pushing book], below the handwritten call number B74 is another number E109 following a rightward arrow (see Fig. 22), showing that the book was once classified as B but now has a new classification of E. Regardless of the change of classification, there is no newly made card in the E booklet representing the title, and this card stays in the B booklet, with no other item taking its old number. It can then be deduced that the numbering of items in Class B preceded this specific case of change that constituted part of the classification of Class E, which was then followed by the numbering of items in Class E.

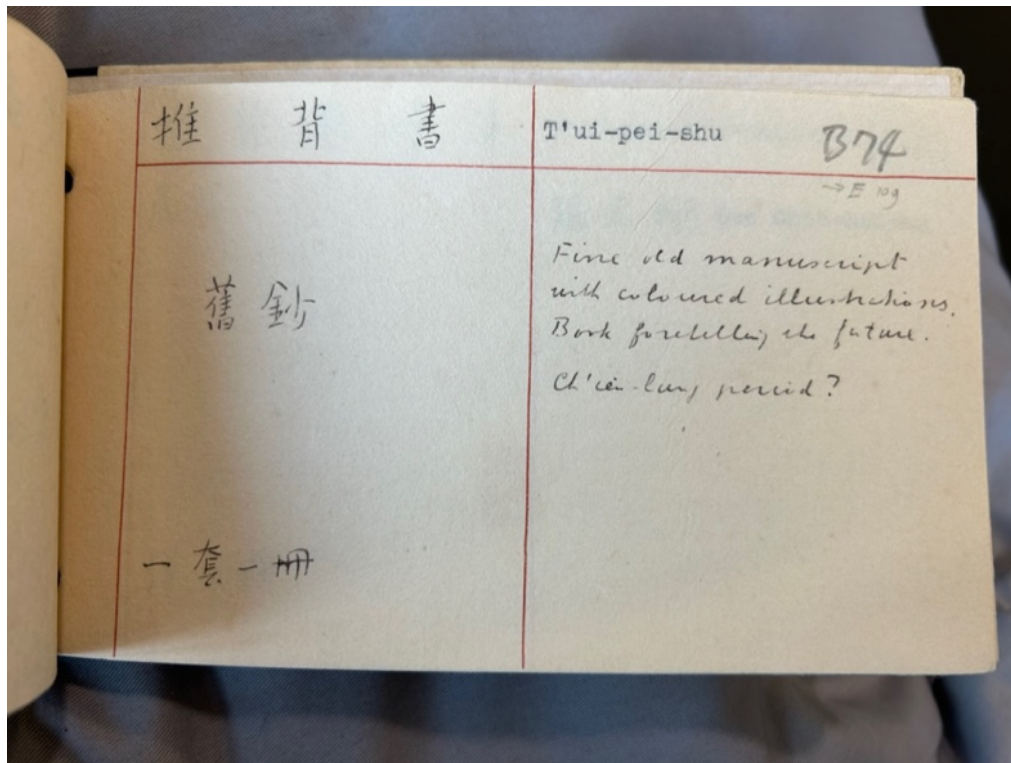


Figure 22: 'B74' is in Part D, and '→E109' below the horizontal ruling

¹²⁰ Wu, 'The Library of the Sinological Institute', p. 40.

All the updates aside, John Ma did not change the physical arrangement of Van Gulik's catalogue. If we consider his usage of a pencil instead of a pen when he jotted down the call numbers on the cards, the rationale can be multi-fold. Visually it helps differentiate the newly added information (handwritten in pencil) from the existing text (either typewritten or handwritten in pen). Moreover, as writing in pencil can be easily erased without leaving noticeable traces, Ma seemed quite sensitive to preserving details of the cataloguing history of the VGC. Additions in pencil enabled Ma to balance between preserving Van Gulik's catalogue and continuing to use it to organize the VGC. In other words, starting from this point, Van Gulik's catalogue not only serves as a guide for the collection, but also constitutes a historic part of the collection.

Marking the transition of the VGC from a private collection to one in an academic library, Ma's classification and cataloguing efforts represent the first-time exertion of institutional power on this collection. A large part of his work, including classification and ordering, has been preserved in the current VGC catalogue, showing the longstanding influence of the contribution from this revered librarian. Ma's practices at this stage can be regarded as revisions of Van Gulik's catalogue, as he did not produce a new catalogue, but this is not yet the entirety of his contribution, as we are about to find out in discussions about new catalogues in Sections 4.3 and 4.4.

4.3 IDC's Partial Catalogue

In autumn 1980, the Inter Documentation Company selected 'the most interesting, important, and unusual books' in the VGC and reproduced them in microfiche form, accompanied by a catalogue. The selection is composed of three parts:

1. 117 rare folk novels
2. 132 titles on literature and the fine arts
3. 53 titles on Chinese music¹²¹

¹²¹ Wu and Ma, *Van Gulik Collection: Chinese books on microfiche*, p. [i].

As the selection contains merely a small part of the entire VGC, its catalogue will be studied only briefly in this section.

The IDC catalogue was prepared by two librarians: the first two parts by John Ma, in around 1983 and 1985 respectively, and the third in 1992 by Joyce Yung-tzu Wu (b. 1940), John Ma's successor at the library of the Sinological Institute.¹²² Born in Taipei, Joyce Wu is a specialist in library science and *banben xue*, 'the traditional Chinese study of editions';¹²³ she had worked at Fung Ping Shan Library, the Chinese library of The University of Hong Kong, before coming to Leiden and succeeding John Ma in 1986.¹²⁴ These two names appear on the cover of the catalogue as editors, although Koos Kuiper and H. W. Chan contributed to the cataloguing too.¹²⁵

Titles in Part 1 come from John Ma's Class C, those in Part 2 come from Class E, and those in Part 3 come from Class D; this catalogue closely followed Ma's classification. In each part, entries are listed in an alphabetical order following the Wade–Giles romanization of the book title. The Chinese title is also provided, as with author names in Chinese and romanization, publisher, publication place and year (in Gregorian calendar), and a short line of description. Occasionally Van Gulik's annotations are quoted, enclosed in a pair of quotation marks, without acknowledgement of the author. Cross-references to other entries are provided in the format of the romanized book title. A number comprised of the letters 'CH' and four digits connected by a hyphen appears last in the grid; this is an 'IDC number'. According to Kuiper's introduction of the VGC, the selected items published in microfiche form have all been renumbered in the institutional catalogue;¹²⁶ the new call numbers cannot be found in the IDC catalogue, but rather in the most up-to-date catalogues of the VGC, and will be discussed later in Section 4.4.2.

¹²² Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 2.

¹²³ William Sheh Wong, 'Pan Pen Hsüeh and Chinese Rare Book Librarians', *The Journal of Library History (1974–1987)*, 18, no. 2 (Spring 1983), p. 178.

¹²⁴ 'Details of Foreign Scholars: Joyce Yung-tzu Wu', *National Central Library*, n.d. <https://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/ccs2/scholars_detail.aspx?sn=114> (20 December 2024); 'Joyce Yung-Tzu Wu', *Prabook*, n.d. <https://prabook.com/web/joyce_yung-tzu.wu/610671> (20 December 2024).

¹²⁵ Kuiper prepared 'large grey cards' with descriptive metadata for items in Class E, and Chan made 'library cards'. As I have no access to either set of cards and it seems that the information they carry has been transferred to the IDC catalogue, I am excluding these cards in my analysis of the VGC cataloguing history. See Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

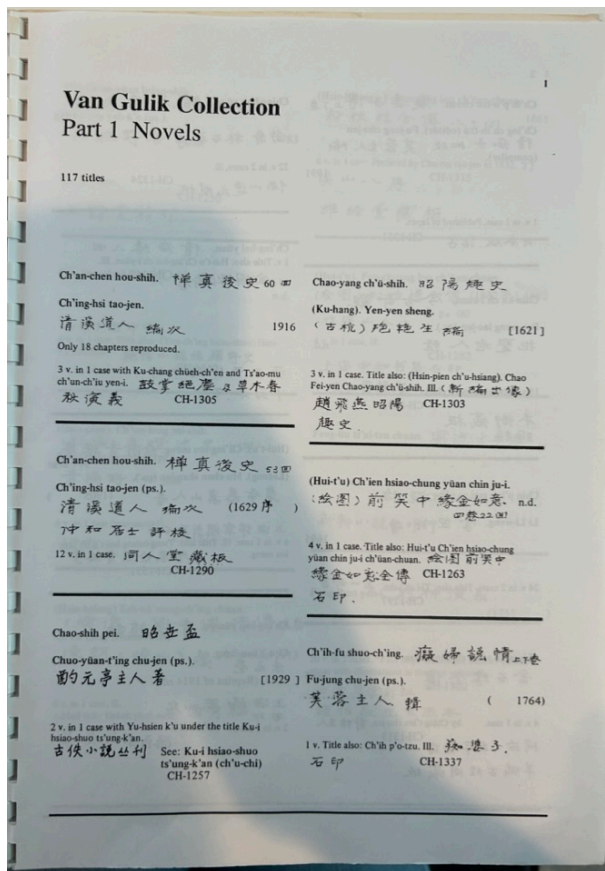


Figure 23: the first page of the IDC catalogue

For potential buyers of the IDC microfiche, the catalogue informed them what titles were available in microfiche and served as an advertisement; for those who have purchased it, the catalogue provided selective metadata of the titles. The catalogue is in essence an alphabetic handlist that does not aim to be comprehensive, and its brief entries offer a quick entry point for the user to access the selected reproduced items.

The catalogue does not mark any item as rare; instead, the whole selection is claimed to be ‘unusual’ and Part 1 in particular contains titles ‘representing almost all of the *rare* folk novels’ (italics mine).¹²⁷ As a result, the emphasis on the rarity of individual items, which was prominent in Van Gulik’s sheaf catalogue, has been replaced with a proud presentation of an entirely rare selection, which highlights the value of the selection and likely aims at promoting the sales of the microfiche. On the other hand, it may reflect a shift in perception. For Van Gulik, titles marked as ‘rare’ are the ones relatively rarer than others in his collection, but for librarians

¹²⁷ Wu and Ma, *Van Gulik Collection: Chinese books on microfiche*, p. [i].

of the Sinological Institute, they may have thought of the entire VGC as rare, compared with other Chinese books in the Institute's library or in the world.

4.4 UBL's Online Catalogue and Kuiper's Inventory List

4.4.1 Introduction

As of 1996 the cataloguing of the VGC had not yet been complete, but at that point the Institute's library was already seeking to produce an online catalogue for its Chinese materials.¹²⁸ After the 2009 incorporation of the Sinological library into the UBL, in 2013 to 2015, a 'full digital description' of the VGC was produced with contributions from Dr Wang Yi from the Institute of History, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who is an expert in the fields of Chinese classics and Chinese cultural history. In 2016 the description became part of the UBL online catalogue.¹²⁹

The UBL online catalogue is an all-encompassing one that contains information of every item in the UBL collection, and within it there is no individual catalogue dedicated to the VGC. At the same time, the library website sets up separate pages titled as collection guides, describing 'the items of a collection or archive on a general level' and informing users 'about its history, acquisition, other finding aids and related material'.¹³⁰

As a landing point, VGC's collection guide, composed by Koos Kuiper and last updated in August 2016, provides a useful overview of the collection.¹³¹ In particular, under the subheading 'Other Finding Aids', there are links to the online version of the collection introduction and catalogue. In the previous discussions I have repeatedly referred to Kuiper's introduction, and now I would like to talk more about the catalogue. Compiled also by Koos Kuiper in July 2016, the 33-page list has five columns, giving call number, year, title in Chinese (in traditional Chinese characters), title in transcription (in *pinyin*), and number of volumes/pages.

¹²⁸ Wu, 'The Library of the Sinological Institute', p. 40.

¹²⁹ 'Yi Wang', *International Institute for Asian Studies*, n.d. <<https://www.ias.asia/profile/yi-wang>> (20 December 2024); Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 2. The catalogue can be accessed at https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/discovery/search?vid=31UKB_LEU:UBL_V1.

¹³⁰ 'Collection Guides', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <<https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/>> (20 December 2024)

¹³¹ Kuiper, 'Collection guide'.

The list and the online catalogue complement each other, in that the list allows a quick glance at all the books in the collection while the online catalogue offers more bibliographical information in fields such as form and description. Therefore, in the following subsections I treat them as a whole, unless it is necessary to mention the respective aspects of them.

4.4.2 Classification, Ordering, and Numbering

The current classification of the VGC, as shown in Kuiper's list, follows John Ma's six-class scheme discussed in Section 4.2.1, but Ma's original Class E has been divided into three parts. 'Fine Arts, IDC' is self-explanatory; 'Fine Arts, Appendix 1' contains books in the original Class E but not included in the IDC selection; as for 'Appendix 2', it accommodates books previously uncatalogued. The division of the three parts is not based on subject and is rather arbitrary.

Class name	Class number (old)	Class number (new)	Book number changed?
Classics	A	A	No
Literature in general	B	B	No
Novels, IDC	C	C	Yes
Music, IDC	D	No class number	Yes
Fine Arts, IDC	E	E	Yes
Fine Arts, Appendix 1	E	E	No
Fine Arts, Appendix 2	E	E	No
Congshu (Ts'ung-shu)	T	T	No

While in the table I marked some classes as having been re-numbered, in fact after the integration of the Sinological library into the UBL, the call number of all the books in the VGC was updated, with 'SINOL. Gulik' added to precede the original call number. But in particular, items in the three classes marked with IDC have been given a new book number. Among them, those in 'Novels, IDC' and 'Fine Arts, IDC' are numbered using the Roman alphabet, following the Wade-Giles romanization of the book title: first the class number is given, then the romanization of first character, lastly the first letters of the next two or three characters.¹³² For example, the call number of *Ruyi jun zhuan* [Lord of Perfect Satisfaction] (*Ju-i-chün-chuan* in Wade-Giles romanization) was C77 in Ma's numbering system, but 'C Ju ICC' in the current catalogue. In this way, the order of the books is once again presented alphabetically, which can be considered as a restoration of Van Gulik's arrangement.

¹³² Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 2.

At the same time, items in the class of ‘Music, IDC’ are numbered according to the Harvard–Yenching scheme.¹³³ But it should be clarified that only part of the call number follows the scheme. For example, the call number of *Yangchun tang qinjing* [Zither tunes of Warm Spring Hall], which used to be D8, is now 6771.28. In the Harvard–Yenching scheme, 6771 falls under the main class of ‘Fine and Recreative Arts’ (6000–6999) and the subclass of music (6700–6799), and refers specifically to books on ‘Ch’in or Kin (Koto) (Horizontal Psalteries)’ in the category of ‘stringed instruments’ (6770–6779),¹³⁴ in this way the group of four digits, replacing the previous class number, provides more information than the mere letter ‘D’ for people with abundant knowledge about the Harvard–Yenching scheme. There are three groups of four-digit class numbers for ‘Music, IDC’: 6730, 6771, and 6773, further dividing books in the class into three sub-classes. The number following the decimal point, 28, represents the position of the book among all those with the same sub-class number. It is yet unclear how the books are ordered in each sub-class, it is neither alphabetical nor chronological.

In fact, ‘Music, IDC’ is not the only class in the VGC where direct influence of the Harvard–Yenching scheme can be found. For some books in ‘Fine Arts, Appendix 2’, the prefix of their call number is ‘SINOL. 9100.163 Gulik’. The composition of this number is not explained in Kuiper’s introduction, but it is obvious that ‘9100’ refers to ‘[Chinese General series or Collections] Of a Composite Nature’ in the Harvard–Yenching classification scheme.¹³⁵ As previously mentioned, the Sinological Library adopts the Harvard–Yenching classification scheme, and it is a practice so standardized in use in this library that it needs no specification. On the other hand, Kuiper does state that the reason for assigning this group of call numbers is to save space in the stacks.¹³⁶

The current numbering system of the VGC is complicated, with items in different classes numbered in different ways. IDC’s reproduction project seems to have created an opportunity for the librarians to adjust the old call numbers assigned by Ma. John Ma and Joyce Wu, both experienced librarians, adopted two different approaches to generate new numbers: Ma’s method, applied to ‘Novels, IDC’ and ‘Fine Arts, IDC’, is based on the Wade–Giles romanization. As for ‘Music, IDC’, the items in which were renumbered at a later stage, Wu partly followed the

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ch’iu, *A Classification Scheme*, p. 279.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 317.

¹³⁶ Kuiper, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

Harvard–Yenching guidelines. Wu’s choice to conform with the Harvard–Yenching system seems natural; it is more convenient to arrange items numbered according to the same system if one day the VGC is to be shelved together with other items in the library.

The varied numbering and ordering systems likely poses little obstacle for the user. For books on open shelves, a catalogue ordering determines which books are placed together, allowing the user to browse adjacent ones that are expected to be relevant. Items in the VGC, however, are stored in a closed system, accessible only by request and retrieved for consultation in the Special Collections Reading Room. Given the lack of browsing opportunities, the ordering does not hold an immediate significance to the user, especially when the online catalogue does not allow sorting by shelf mark. In comparison, classification and ordering had a huge influence on the material presentation of Van Gulik’s catalogue. The knowledge of the class and ordering would bring great convenience to the user when they looked for a card, so it is practical that Van Gulik mentioned the ordering in the very first sentence of his introduction. In the modern online catalogue with a powerful search function, the role played by classification and ordering in information retrieval is minimal. Therefore, neither the introduction nor the collection guide needs to explain it to the user.

4.4.3 Descriptive Cataloguing

Since 2015, the UBL has been using Ex Libris Alma, an integrated resource management service supporting many worldwide academic libraries.¹³⁷ As part of the service, the online catalogue powered by Alma is capable of accommodating a considerable amount of information divided into various fields. Below is the entry of a rare book, *Tian shu ji* [Record of the celestial book], in the UBL online catalogue, and that of the same book in Van Gulik’s sheaf catalogue, and I will talk about the major differences between the two entries.

¹³⁷ ‘Leiden University becomes the 500th Institution to Select Ex Libris Alma’, *ExLibris*, 7 July 2025. <<https://exlibrisgroup.com/press-release/leiden-university-becomes-the-500th-institution-to-select-ex-libris-alma/>> (20 December 2024)

Details	
Title	天書記 : [46 齣]
Title	Tian shu ji : [46 chu]
Full title	880-01 Tian shu ji : [46 chu] / Ming xin du Wuwujushi Wang Tingna Changchao shi bian, Wenling xinghai wai shi Zeng Yuanming Yonghuifu jiao.
Author/Creator	<p>Wang, Tingne, active 16th century-17th century, author. ></p> <p>汪廷訥, active 16th century-17th century, author. ></p> <p>Zeng Yuanming, proofreader. ></p> <p>Huang, Yingzu, 1563- woodcutter. ></p> <p>曾元明, proofreader. ></p> <p>黃應組, 1563-, woodcutter. ></p>
View digitized version	SINOL. Gulik C T'ien SC
Publisher	<p>[Place of production not identified] : Huan cui tang</p> <p>[Place of production not identified] : 環翠堂</p>
Date	[16th or 17th century]
Form	2 volumes in case : illustrations; 25 cm
Language	Chinese
Description	<p>Note : Blockprint in Chinese binding; title page: 天書記; beginning: 天書記卷上 明 新都無 無居士汪廷訥昌朝氏編 溫陵星海外史曾元明用晦父校.</p> <p>Note : Contains 18 illustrations, each one occupies two half-page, carver's name Huang Yingzu (黃應組鑄) in first one; text with meipi (眉批)</p> <p>Note : Description: "25 × 13.8 cm, 白口單邊, 10欄22字, 小字雙行; banxin: 上題"環翠堂樂 府", 中題卷次, 下題頁數".</p> <p>Note : Seals: "鈐印二 : "高羅佩藏" 朱文方印, "北晶千鶴芳草" 朱文方印."</p>
Identifier	This item in WorldCat : 1293054379

Figure 24: a screenshot of the 'Details' part of the entry of Tian shu ji¹³⁸

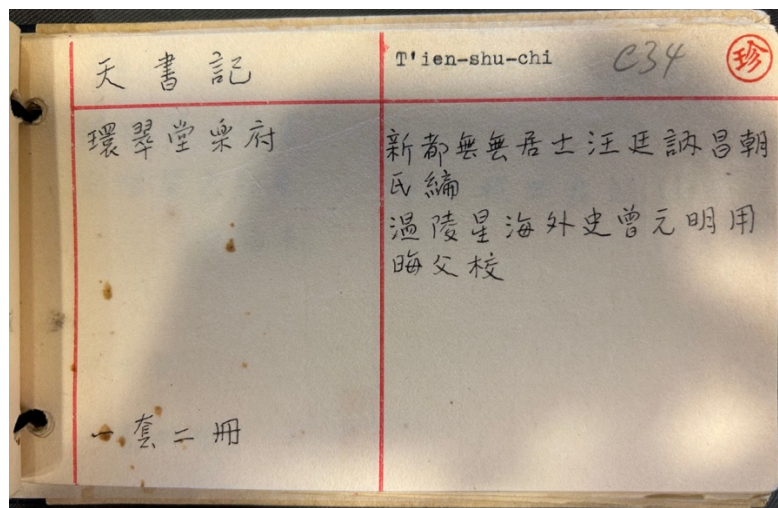


Figure 25: the entry of Tian shu ji in Van Gulik's catalogue

¹³⁸ 'Tian shu ji: [46 chu]', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d.
https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma9939773804502711 (20 December 2024).

The book title in the online catalogue is provided in both traditional Chinese and romanization. Whereas the previous generations of the VGC catalogues follow the Wade–Giles guidelines when it comes to romanization, both the online catalogue and the inventory list adopts the *pinyin* romanization scheme. As explained in Section 2.4, *pinyin* is currently the prevalent romanization scheme, and it is no surprise that the most up-to-date catalogues of the VGC prefer *pinyin*.

The notes in ‘Description’, very likely the work of Wang, provide metadata essential to old Chinese books, such as the printing technique, authorship information on the title page or in the preface, the number of illustrations and their artist, the size of the book and the number of lines on each page, and seals. For instance, the last ‘Note’ in Fig. 24 describes in Chinese the characters, format, and shape of two seals in the said title, which Van Gulik did not mention in his sheaf catalogue. One of the seals is Van Gulik’s own book collector’s seal, meaning that traces of his book-collecting activity is now an important part of the bibliographical information.

While entries in the online catalogue can be much more informative than handwritten cards, the emphasis on rare books, highlighted in the sheaf catalogue and diluted in the IDC catalogue, is now almost completely absent in each entry in the online catalogue or the inventory list, although a few sentences in the collection guide or introduction concern the topic. For example, the collection guide introduces that ‘the collection contains about 90 rare books and manuscripts, ten of which are unica’, without naming which.¹³⁹ In other words, cataloguers do not consider the value of an individual publication as a necessary field in the online catalogue. We can see the changes in the cataloguers’ perception of rare books over the years. For Van Gulik, he had his own opinion as to which book are considered rare. For IDC, the entire selection was labelled as rare for marketing purposes. For the UBL, it may not be feasible to apply a universal criterion of ‘rare’ to all of its collections from different cultures, and this is another example of how the institutional power influences the presentation of a collection.

4.5 Conclusion

From Van Gulik’s sheaf catalogue to the modern online catalogue, from handwritten cards to text displayed on electronic screens, the presentation of contents of the VGC has undergone

¹³⁹ Kuiper, ‘Collection guide’.

tremendous changes. As I have analysed in this chapter, after the acquisition, John Ma made a lot of efforts to reorganize the collection by reclassifying, reordering, and renumbering the items, his treatment of the collection sometimes quite different from Van Gulik's. Ma's work laid the foundation for future generations of librarians to complete cataloguing the VGC, the completion of which took decades. Even as the catalogue took its current standardized form, in certain aspects it still betrays traces of impact from the Chinese culture. How should we interpret the evolving cataloguing practices? I will discuss it in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Reflections

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I will delve deeper into the treatment of Chinese collections overseas and generalize the findings in the previous two chapters. I hope to critically examine how the process of cataloguing and making available such collections reflects broader dynamics of power and knowledge and how it impacts subaltern voices. The Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge mentioned in Section 1.2 is particularly relevant to the discussions here as Foucault saw power and knowledge as two entities that intertwine with each other. Foucault did not see discourses as static; instead, the power/knowledge concept provides a context for discussions of the dynamic elations behind the creation, dissemination, and weighting of texts.¹⁴⁰ This chapter will centre around the keyword ‘power’, and will eventually show that an asymmetry of the distribution of power is almost omnipresent throughout the cataloguing history of the Van Gulik collection.

I do not aim to polemically criticize any individual cataloguer, but instead wish to look at cataloguing acts on an institutional level. As I will show, libraries and cataloguing processes shape knowledge hierarchies, and such processes construct knowledge in a non-neutral way. Section 5.2 explores such processes from the perspective of cultural appropriation to examine whether the inclusion of Chinese elements constitutes appropriation and, if so, what the implications are. In Section 5.3 I review the classification practices and investigate the asymmetries of power between Chinese and Western intellectual traditions. Section 5.4 examines the making uniform of publication dates to illustrate that the homogeneous application of Western systems perpetuates cultural misrepresentations and devalues subordinate cultures. In Section 5.5, I extend the findings of preceding chapters and discuss how the choice of a romanization scheme reduces the visibility of Japanese books in the collection. Last but not least, Section 5.6 relies on Spivak’s subalternity theory to highlight the importance of involving originating communities in cataloguing practices. Together these sections will reveal how the library catalogues of an overseas collection echo the asymmetries of power that have long been influential between the West and the East, and prompt us to reflect on how to recover and elevate voices that have been marginalized in cataloguing practices.

¹⁴⁰ Olsson, ‘Michel Foucault: Discourse, Power/Knowledge, and the Battle for Truth’, p. 67.

5.2 Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Essentialism

There are often Chinese elements in Van Gulik's book collecting and cataloguing practices, such as the use of book collectors' seals inside the books and the application of Van Gulik's own seals in the sheaf catalogue. After the institutional acquisition, elements of Chinese culture continued to be present in the cataloguing practices, such as John Ma's introduction of the 'classics' class. This then invites the question: can and should these acts be considered as cultural appropriation, or do they reflect a sympathy to the originating culture?

Richard Rogers in his conceptualization of appropriation gives the word a broad definition, that it refers to 'the use of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture—regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome'.¹⁴¹ In this sense, Van Gulik as a member of the Dutch culture can be considered as an appropriator, but how about John Ma? Should he be considered as an insider, because of his personal background, or as an outsider, given his service in a Western institution? Erich Hatala Matthes contended such that efforts to distinguish between members and nonmembers risk 'fall[ing] prey to a harmful cultural essentialism'.¹⁴² Indeed, it is already questionable whether Van Gulik can be regarded as a sheer outsider of Chinese culture, considering his lifelong efforts to live like a traditional Chinese literatus and his closeness with the Chinese community. Moreover, his original intention of collecting the books was for his own use, unlike, for example, his contemporary Harvard scholars who believed that they were obligated to preserve the Chinese cultural heritage, as the native Chinese were not qualified for the task.¹⁴³ To solve the dilemma of cultural essentialism, Matthes proposed that the key task in identifying instances of cultural appropriation is not to name the oppressor(s), but rather to examine the appropriative harm and its cause, ultimately 'fighting systematic social marginalization'.¹⁴⁴

As I will show, there exist examples of appropriative harm in the historical and current presentation of the VGC, such as the erroneous depiction of the appropriated culture (see Section 5.3), the problematic preservation of cultural elements (see Section 5.4) and the wrongful

¹⁴¹ Richard A. Rogers, 'From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation', *Communication Theory*, 16 (2006), p. 476.

¹⁴² Erich Hatala Matthes, 'Cultural Appropriation Without Cultural Essentialism?', *Social Theory and Practice*, 42, no. 2 (April 2016), p. 345.

¹⁴³ Liu Qing, 'Whose Books? The Harvard–Yenching Institute's library and the question of academic imperialism', *History of Education Review*, 50, no. 1 (2021), p. 57.

¹⁴⁴ Matthes, 'Cultural Appropriation Without Cultural Essentialism?', pp. 363–364.

exploitation of cultural products for financial gain (such as the commodification of the books when the IDC reproduced them in microfiche form).¹⁴⁵ Indeed, it is undeniable that Van Gulik, John Ma, and the like have contributed to the preservation and dissemination of ancient Chinese texts or rare Chinese books by taking books out of China when the country was struggling in decades of wars and unrest, keeping them intact, and making them accessible to worldwide users. Nevertheless, in line with Rogers's strict analysis of cultural appropriative practices, the treatment of the collection is 'without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation', and is thus systematically exploitative.¹⁴⁶ The appropriative nature of the treatment of the VGC, whether in the hands of Van Gulik or the librarians illustrates the advantage in power of a dominant culture over that of a subordinated culture.

Last but not least, Van Gulik's selective appreciation for Chinese culture reflects his essentialist mindset. As mentioned in Section 3.1, with a nostalgic ideal in mind, he saw the Ming dynasty as the peak of Chinese culture and opposed cultural reforms that took place in his own era. When collecting and cataloguing books, he positioned himself as a gatekeeper by defining which books were worth preserving and which aspects of bibliographical information were worth mentioning in the catalogue. For example, whereas the Chinese literary scene in the first half of the twentieth century teemed with rising stars, there is almost no contemporary fiction in the VGC. His class name *xiaoshuo* (novels) fails to indicate the exclusion of later works and creates a misleading impression that it covers Chinese novels from the past to the present. We can see this as a filtering of knowledge. In Foucauldian terms, Van Guilk established a reductive standard in alignment with his own predilection, and exerted power over cultural narratives. While his static vision of the Chinese culture may have been a personal preference, as soon as the collection became accessible to a wider audience via the library, this personal, non-neutral attitude was augmented in the institutionalized presentation of the collection impacting the user's perception of Chinese culture.

¹⁴⁵ Rogers, 'Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation', pp. 486–487.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 477.

5.3 Classification

Hope Olson has argued that the nature of classification as social construct accounts for bias in classification.¹⁴⁷ In a given classification scheme, one text can be assigned a higher value than another, and the difference in value can manifest itself through ordering, class names, or even the existence or non-existence of a class. For example, by selecting specific titles in *congshu* and placing them in the foremost ‘classics’ class, Ma draws the user’s attention to these selected titles, which were then privileged over the remaining individual titles in *congshu*. As we have seen, these ‘left-out’ titles then ended up uncatalogued in later generations of catalogues. Setting up the ‘classics’ class was an intentional choice made by Ma, which was obviously influenced by the traditional Chinese four-division system. His classification practice to some extent reinforced the Chinese hierarchy of knowledge. Nevertheless, in Foucauldian terms, this does not mean that the Chinese culture overpowered the Western culture in Ma’s classification scheme; instead, taking the entire classification system into account, the Chinese traditional hierarchy has been distorted in two aspects.

Firstly, as explained in Section 4.2.1, the Chinese name *jing zi*, or ‘classics and masters’, is more reflective of the contents listed under Ma’s Class A. Moreover, the widely used translation of *jing* as ‘classics’ is also reductive in nature, because *jing* refers specifically to Confucian classics.¹⁴⁸ The discrepancy, whether it results from renaming or translation, reveals a difference in the powers accorded to Chinese and English in the classification descriptions of the VGC: the collection is presented in an English context in which all other languages, Chinese included, are marginalized. Thus, the Chinese language is denied the power of naming the class. The English class name is neither an equivalent of its Chinese counterpart nor a faithful representation of contents under the class, but it directly shapes the user’s perception of the class. It is not a neutral description, but a product of a Western-centric system that dictates how to classify and understand knowledge about a Chinese collection.

Secondly, in Ma’s classification scheme, the one that is still adopted in Kuiper’s list, ‘classics’ runs parallel to other classes such as ‘novels’, which in the traditional four-division system are listed as subclasses. At the same time, Ma dismissed the two other main classes *shi* (histories) and *ji* (collections). However, as Shuyong Jiang pointed out, it is important to treat the

¹⁴⁷ Olson, ‘Mapping Beyond Dewey’s Boundaries’, p. 233.

¹⁴⁸ Tsien, ‘A History of Bibliographic Classification in China’, p. 323.

Chinese traditional classification as a whole, because the relationships of individual divisions and the priority order reflect the Chinese worldview.¹⁴⁹ As Ma integrated merely a part of the traditional Chinese system into Van Gulik's classification, the revised scheme erased the original logic underpinning the four-division system and created a distorted presentation of Chinese culture. This issue also exists in the Harvard–Yenching system, which features a 'classics' class alongside eight other classes.

The evolution of the classification scheme once again shows the dynamics between powers behind the construction of knowledge. In general, on an institutional level, questions around class names marginalized Chinese intellectual traditions and privileged Western ways of knowing.

5.4 Publication Date

Publication dates in old Chinese books, if any, are often marked using the Chinese calendar. They can include the name of the dynasty, the cyclical year, the name of the reign, the year of reign, and/or the month and day. Dates in the VGC catalogues are given according to the Western Gregorian calendar, but when date information other than the year is neglected, there can be mistakes in the converted date, because a Gregorian calendar year does not entirely overlap with a Chinese one.¹⁵⁰

For example, the book *Yinpu kao* (SINOL. Gulik E Yin PK) was dated to 1933 in the online catalogue, while the publication date mentioned in the book reads *Guiyou jidong*, meaning the third winter month, or the twelfth month, of the year Guiyou.¹⁵¹ With the help of an online tool converting between Chinese Gregorian calendars, I found out that the twelfth month of Guiyou year in the Republican era corresponds with 15 January 1934 to 13 February 1934.¹⁵² In

¹⁴⁹ Jiang, 'Into the Source and History of Chinese Culture', p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ Multiple scholars have explained in detail how to understand the Chinese calendar. See for example Helmer Aslaksen, 'The Mathematics of the Chinese Calendar', *National University of Singapore*, 28 August 2023. <https://www.xirugu.com/CHI500/Dates_Time/Chinesecalender.pdf> (20 December 2024)

¹⁵¹ 'Yinpu kao [4 juan]', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990037860870302711> (20 December 2024)

¹⁵² 'Liangqian nian Zhongxili zhuanhuan' [Conversion between Chinese and Gregorian calendars across two thousand years], *Academia Sinica Centre for Digital Cultures*, n.d. <<https://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw/>> (20 December 2024). For more guidelines on manually converting a Chinese date, see Xinjiang Rong, 'Appendix: Converting Chinese Dates into Western Ones', in *The Silk Road and Cultural Exchanges between East and West*, trans. by Sally K. Church (Boston: Leiden, 2022), pp. 587–592.

other words, even if the book was published on the very first day of the twelfth month, it was already 1934, not 1933.

The mistake in the converted date is not an accident, but an inevitable result of an arbitrary conversion that undermines the cultural specificity of the Chinese calendar. The reductionist conversion is even seen in the guidelines made specifically for cataloguing Chinese rare books.¹⁵³ It shows that the imposition of Gregorian calendar, a Western-centric system, as the default option for dates in the online catalogue is institutionally engrained beyond the immediate context of the UBL. This widespread phenomenon attests to the dominance of Western epistemologies in cataloguing practices, and exemplifies the problematic preservation of cultural elements when artifacts are taken out of their original context. Another example of power asymmetry, it also showcases the lingering effects of colonialism, as a Western system is deemed universal while the original, local system is marginalized.

5.5 Japanese Books

The VGC is a multifaceted collection, in that there are Chinese-language books authored by Japanese people or printed in Japan, and even books originally written in Japanese, but it is nevertheless listed as a ‘Chinese special collection’ on the UBL website.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, the subtitle of the IDC catalogue reads ‘Chinese books on microfiche’, despite the inclusion of Japanese books in their selection.¹⁵⁵

In this section I will first take a linguistic perspective, the homogeneous application of Chinese romanization schemes, to illustrate how the Japanese identity of a book can be erased. In Van Gulik’s sheaf catalogue, titles of Japanese books are romanized in the Chinese way. For example, there is a book titled 小說辭彙 [Vocabulary in novels], written in Japanese and Chinese, authored by a Japanese person, and published in Japan. On the card the typewritten romanized title reads ‘Hsiao-shuo-tz’u-wei’, following the Wade–Giles guidelines (see Part D in Fig. 26).

¹⁵³ International Union Catalog of Chinese Rare Book Project, *Cataloging Guidelines for Creating Chinese Rare Book Records*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Chinese Special Collections’, *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d.
<<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/subject-guides/chinese-special-collections>> (20 December 2024).

¹⁵⁵ Wu and Ma, *Van Gulik Collection: Chinese books on microfiche*.

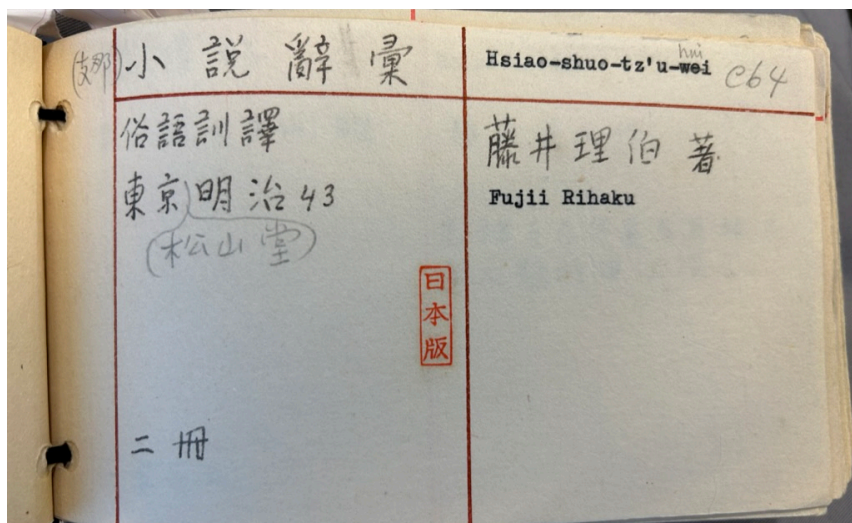


Figure 26: In the Wade–Giles scheme the last character should be romanized as ‘hui’ instead of ‘wei’, and on the card it has been corrected by John Ma.

After the acquisition, the item was classified under Class C. Its current call number, based on the Wade–Giles romanization of the book title, is ‘C Hsiao STH’. Meanwhile, the romanization of this title in the online catalogue, ‘Xiaoshuo cihui’, is in *pinyin*.¹⁵⁶ That is to say, throughout the cataloguing history of the VGC, the romanization of the title of this book has never been done in the Japanese way (or, in *rōmaji*), which should read ‘Shōsetsu jii’.¹⁵⁷

The homogeneous Chinese-style romanization of book titles may have had one advantage: Chinese and Japanese books with the same first character in their titles would be arranged together in the sheaf catalogue or under classes ‘Novels, IDC’ and ‘Fine Arts, IDC’, as they are listed in an alphabetical order. And titles having the same first character can sometimes mean that the books concern the same topic, so arranging them together could bring convenience to users who are looking for thematically similar books in the collection.

The Chinese-style romanization of Japanese-language metadata happens not only to book titles but also to entries concerning dates, people and places. For example, in the online catalogue the place of publication of the book *Chunzheng mengqiu* is ‘Dongdu’, the publisher ‘Chuyunsi Wancilang’, both supplied in *pinyin*.¹⁵⁸ However, this is a title in the Japanese *Shōhei sōsho* collectanea. The book itself was written in Chinese, but it was published in Japan. Therefore,

¹⁵⁶ ‘Xiaoshuo cihui [2 juan]’, *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990037857630302711> (20 December 2024)

¹⁵⁷ See for example ‘Shina shōsetsu jii: zokugo kunyaku’, *WorldCat*, n.d. <<https://search.worldcat.org/title/22818127>> (20 December 2024)

¹⁵⁸ ‘Guan ban chun zheng meng qiu: [3 juan]’, *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d. <https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990037855270302711> (20 December 2024)

here the *rōmaji* of the place and publisher's name should read 'Tōto' and 'Izumoji Manjirō' respectively.

Even when book titles are romanized in the Japanese style, there can be mistakes. For example, in an entry of the collectanea *Shōhei sōsho* in the online catalogue, the transliterated title reads 'Masahira sōsho'.¹⁵⁹ While the two *kanji* characters 昌平 can be pronounced as *masa* and *hira* separately, in this context the word should be read as 'shōhei', as it refers to the Shōheizaka Gakumonsho (or Shōheizaka Academy), a publisher of books bearing the seal meaning 'Japanese official edition'.¹⁶⁰

In addition, there are absences of metadata that should have been made available in *rōmaji*. Let us now take another look at the entry of the title *Shōsetsu jii* in the online catalogue. The name of the author (Fujii Rihaku), the place of publication (Tōkyō), and the publisher (Shōsandō) are not provided, although they can be found on Van Gulik's card, in either Chinese characters or romanized (see Fig. 25).

Kuiper admitted in his introduction that 'books from Japan could only be summarily described' and that 'the titles are transcribed in pinyin obscuring their Japanese origin'.¹⁶¹ The cataloguing process of the VGC has already engaged its originator community at different stages, like John Ma, Joyce Wu, or Wang Yi, but they are all from a Chinese background instead of a Japanese one. The lack of participation of Japanese librarians or scholars can account for the negligence in metadata, or, interpreted on a deeper level, the silencing of the Japanese voice.

5.6 Identifying the Subaltern

With a focus on power asymmetry, reflections in this chapter have identified voices that have been systematically overwritten in the context of later cataloguing practices of the VGC.

Subalternarity theory seeks to highlight these underrepresented or silenced voices.

By 'subaltern', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak means 'the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women

¹⁵⁹ 'Masahira sōsho', *Leiden University Libraries*, n.d.

<https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LEU/18s3931/alma990037863850302711> (20 December 2024)

¹⁶⁰ The romanized title *Shōhei sōsho* can be found in scholarly writings such as T. H. Barrett, 'The Background to the First Modern *Li Wengong ji* 李文公集', *T'ang Studies*, 25 (2007), pp. 147–155.

¹⁶¹ Kuiper, 'Collection Introduction', p. 2.

among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat'.¹⁶² In the case of the VGC, the identity of the subaltern is multi-fold. Firstly, in the Western cataloguing system, the Eastern culture can be regarded as the subaltern, as its intended context is dismissed in the dominant framework. We may see, for example, the imposition of the Gregorian calendar to dates (even when misleading) as a form of epistemic violence where the subaltern knowledge system is marginalized.

Secondly, within the VGC, when compared with the Chinese culture, the Japanese culture is the subaltern. As discussed in Section 5.5, the representation of Japanese books is mediated in various cataloguing rounds through the imposition of the Chinese romanization schemes, which aligns with the linguistic priorities of the cataloguers. This is another example of epistemic violence, in which Chinese linguistic conventions are normalized and Japanese ones are subjugated.

5.7 Conclusion

In retrospect, the treatment of overseas collections like the VGC calls for special attention to the cultural nuances on various levels. With a critical analysis of the power structures and representation in the VGC, I have shown that the presentation of the collection at times exhibits colonial tendencies by reinforcing dominant power dynamics. Practices of cataloguing marginalize subaltern cultures and prioritize Western audiences. The implications of my findings in this thesis apply beyond the scope of the VGC, as similar treatments are expected to be found in other overseas collections. In the meantime, there are yet more aspects of the cataloguing history of the VGC that await further investigation, such as the effacement of Chinese amanuenses who contributed to the preparation of Van Gulik's sheaf catalogue. It is a pity that I am unable to delve deeper into these topics due to the limit of the scope of the thesis, but I am eager to see future research addressing them.

¹⁶² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), p. 283.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this research I studied catalogues of the Van Gulik collection of Chinese books at Leiden University Libraries, aiming to address the research question of how cataloguing practices are an instrument of power, focusing in this case on the power exerted in a Western academic library context over an overseas, Chinese, collection.

To this end, I conducted a chronological examination of the catalogues of the VGC that consist of two parts. Firstly, I examined how Van Gulik organized his personal library, what catalogue he made, and what purposes the catalogue served. The conclusion was that with a Western academic audience in mind, Van Gulik made a sheaf catalogue, the form of which was influenced by Western traditions. In the presentation of bibliographical information, in addition to elements of traditional Chinese practices, there are individualized adjustments that cater to the needs of cataloguing this specific collection.

Secondly, I studied how the Sinological Library treated the collection after the acquisition, how Van Gulik's organization of the collection was revised, and what newer catalogues were made by its librarians. The earliest institutional cataloguing practices of the VGC included reclassification, reordering, numbering, and updating the sheaf catalogue; currently bibliographical information of all the items in the VGC has been entered into the online catalogue of Leiden University libraries, complemented by a separate inventory list. I noted that the institutional cataloguing practices departed from Van Gulik's preferences in various ways.

In general, this chronological survey showed that the cataloguing history of the VGC is reflective of broader trends in Western academic libraries, such as the transition from a physical catalogue to a digital one. But more importantly, with the descriptive data, I went on to carry out a critical analysis of the cataloguing practices. I showed that the colonial background of the collection left many traces in its treatment. Catalogues of the VGC represent the imposition of Western library systems on a collection of Chinese books. I provided some examples of how this entails the marginalization of cultures that have been overshadowed from Westernized perspectives. In particular, I used the arbitrary conversion of Chinese publication dates into the Gregorian calendar and the homogeneous treatment of Japanese items in the VGC as Chinese books, to demonstrate that the cataloguing process not only silenced subordinate voices, but also led to mistakes in metadata. I argued that there is an omnipresent asymmetry of powers behind the catalogues of the VGC. This discovery has implications for the broader context of treatment

of overseas collections at Western libraries. For example, it underlines the importance of involving originator communities in cataloguing.

Admittedly, there are some limitations in my research. My primary materials do not include accounts from Van Gulik and the other cataloguers involved in the cataloguing practices that explain the decision-making process behind their cataloguing choices. The lack of the cataloguers' perspective resulted in a limited, subjective interpretation of their practices, and left some questions unresolved, such as the identity of the Chinese scribes who helped Van Gulik prepare his cards. Additionally, I focus solely on one collection, without a comparative analysis of similar collections. Future research can build upon this study and explore the cataloguing practices of other overseas collections in the UBL or other academic libraries in the West.

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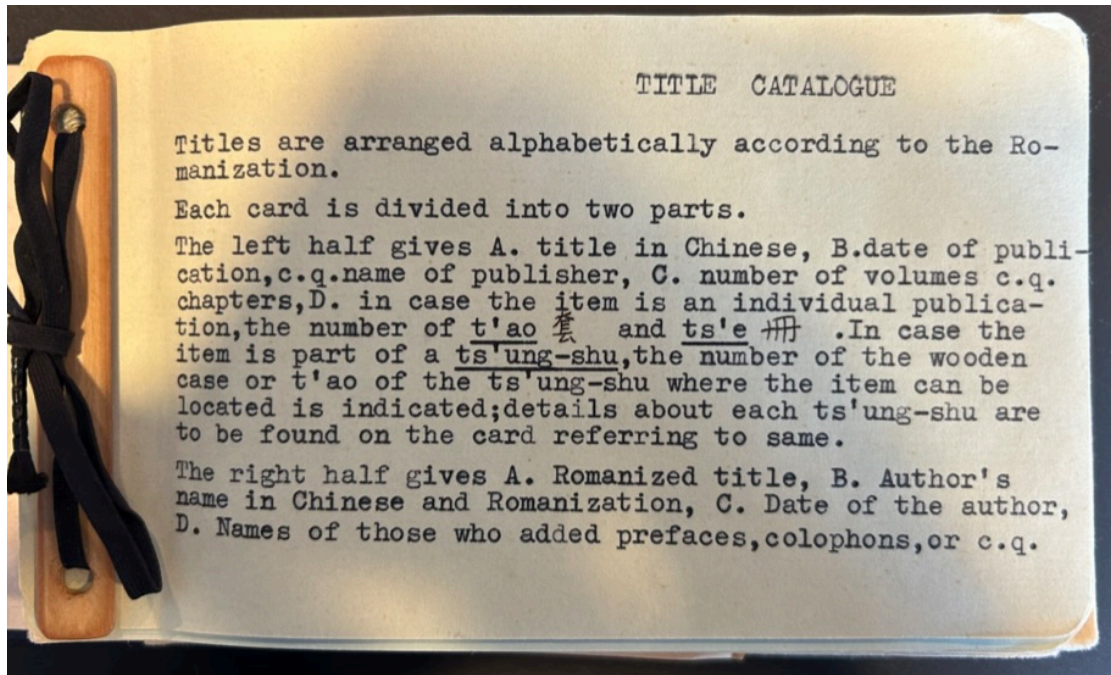
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Appendix

1. Photos of the Prefaces

Below are the page-by-page photos of the prefaces at the start of the first *congshu* booklet, the one marked with 'A Che', in Van Gulik's catalogue (see Fig. 3).



p. 1

edited the text.

Red stamps left of the dividing line mean:

<u>ch'ao-pen</u>	抄本	"manuscript"
<u>shih-yin</u>	石印	"lithograph"
<u>huo-tzu</u>	活字	"moveable type"
<u>jih-pen-pan</u>	日本版	"Japanese edition"
-- kuan-pan	官版	"Japanese official ed. of the Shoheizaka Academy of the Tokugawa Shogun"

Cards that bear no red stamp left of the dividing line refer to block prints.

A round stamp chen 珍 in the right corner refers to a rare book.

p. 2

Title cards of Chinese novels - except those forming part of a ts'ung-shu - are collected together in a separate card box, marked Hsiao-shuo-lei 小說類.

The names of Chinese publishers are listed separately and the cards are collected in a card box marked ts'ang-pan 藏版.

Books on music are collected in a card box marked Yin-yüeh-lei 音樂類, except those items which are embodied in ts'ung-shu.

The card box marked Shu-hua-lei 書畫類 contains the descriptive cards of the Chinese scrolls in my collection. The names of the persons who painted c.q. wrote these scrolls have been incorporated in the Authors' Card Index so that all data available in books, manuscripts,

p. 3

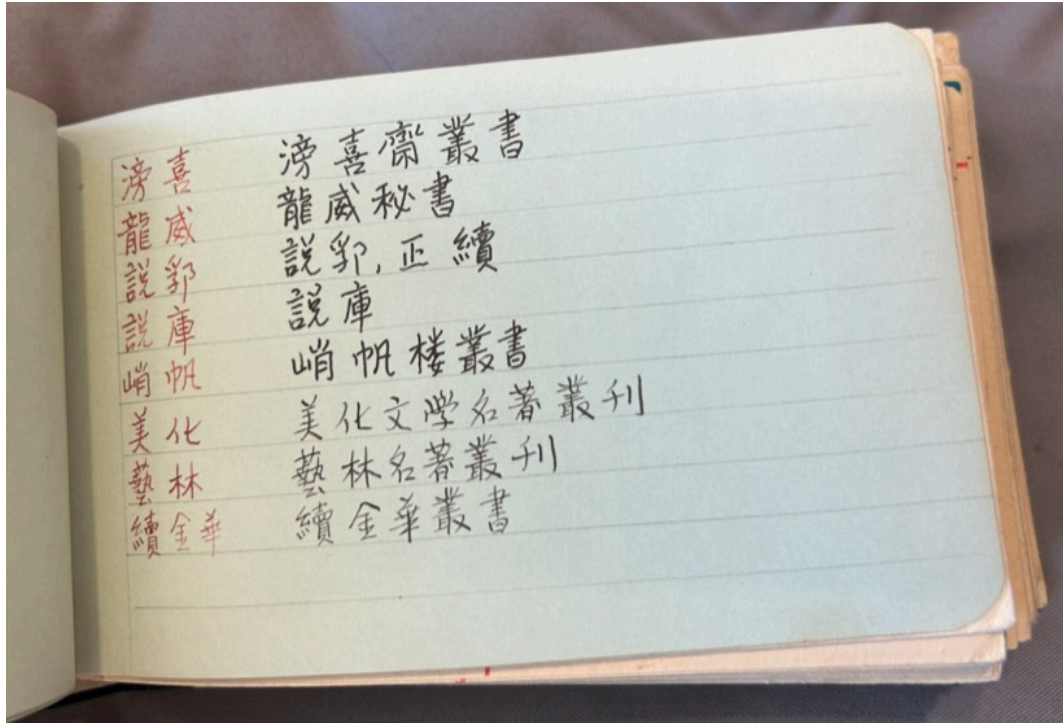
paintings and calligraphic specimens in my collection
are coordinated in the Authors' Card Catalogue.

p. 4

ABBREVIATED TITLES OF VARIOUS TS'UNG-SHU

四部	四部叢刊, 正編, 續編
昌平	昌平叢書
檀几	檀几叢書
松鄰	松鄰叢書
平津	平津館叢書
讀畫	讀畫齋叢書
武林	武林掌故叢編
大觀	筆記小說大觀

p. 5



p. 6

2. Glossary for Romanized Chinese Words

Here I provide an alphabetical list of Chinese and Japanese words and names in *pinyin*, Wade-Giles, or *rōmaji* that appear in the thesis and their corresponding Chinese characters—in traditional Chinese, following the preference of Van Gulik, creator of the collection.

banben xue 版本學

chaoben 抄本

Ch'en Ch'iu [Chen Qiu] 陳球

Ch'en Jen-hsi [Chen Renxi] 陳仁錫

Ch'i Po-shih [Qi Baishi] 齊白石

Ch'ien-ch'ou-chi [Qian chou ji] 欠愁集

Ch'ien-ch'üeh-chü-lei-shu [Qianque ju leishu] 潛確居類書

Chuyunsi Wancilang 出雲寺萬次郎

Chunmeng suoyan 春夢瑣言

Chunzheng mengqiu 純正蒙求
congshu 叢書
Dongdu 東都
Gao Luopei 高羅佩
Gao Luopei cang 高羅佩藏
Guiyou jidong 癸酉季冬
Hanyu pinyin fang'an 漢語拼音方案
huozi 活字
ji 集
jing 經
kapan muluce 卡片目錄冊
Langji congshu 浪跡叢書
Langji congtan 浪跡叢談
Li Jih-hua [Li Rihua] 李日華
Liu-yen-chai-pi-chi [Liuyan zhai biji] 六研齋筆記
Longyin guan qinpu 龍吟館琴譜
Mao Zong zhi yin 毛儆之印
Ming 明
mulu 目錄
pinyin 拼音
Pipa ji 琵琶記
qin 琴
qita 其他
Qinding Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao 欽定四庫全書總目提要
Riban ban 日本版
Riban guanban 日本官版
Ruyi jun zhuan 如意君傳
shi 史

Shih Chen-lin [Shi Zhenlin] 史震林
shiyin 石印
Shōhei sōsho 昌平叢書
shu-hua-lei [shuhua lei] 書畫類
Sung [Song] 宋
T. Ma 馬大任
Tang 唐
Tangchao xiaoshuo daguan 唐朝小說大觀
Tian shu ji 天書記
tongsu 通俗
ts'ang-pan [cangban] 藏版
ts'ung-shu [congshu] 叢書
Tu Shen 屠紳
Tuibeishu 推背書
Wang Yi 王藝
wenxue 文學
Xi xiang ji 西廂記
Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠
xiaoshuo 小說
xiaoshuojia 小說家
Yangchun tang qinjing 陽春堂琴經
Yeh-sou-p'u-yen [Yesou puyan] 野叟曝言
Yen-shan-wai-shih [Yanshan waishi] 燕山外史
yinyue 音樂
Yinpu kao 印譜考
Yin-shih 印史
yue 樂
Yung-tzu Wu 吳榮子

Zhonghe qinshi 中和琴室

Zhonghe qinshi qinpu 中和琴室琴譜

zajia 雜家

zhen 珍

zi 子