



East Asian Library

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IMAGES OF REVOLUTION



As inseparable as fish and water. During the Cultural Revolution political messages were disseminated through performance as well as print. Here, a propaganda team stages an opening scene from the "model opera" *Shajiabang Village*, celebrating the close ties between the people and the People's Liberation Army. *Yushui qingshen.*

In January of this year, the East Asian Library added the Ann Tompkins (Tang Fandi) and Lincoln Cushing Chinese Poster Collection to its holdings.

Ann Tompkins traveled to Helsinki in 1965 as a member of the United States delegation to the World Peace Conference. Her participation in the conference led to an invitation to visit the People's Republic of China later that year, a visit that ended only in 1970 and that spanned the most turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution. Unlike most foreign experts working in Beijing in those days, who typically lodged in hotels, Ann lived where she worked, at the Beijing Institute of Languages. This put her into closer contact with the events of the Revolution; it also allowed her a closer view of the ideals she believed were driving it.

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Letter from the Director



The best research libraries possess collections of both depth and richness that continue to grow in significant ways. As the articles in this issue of the Library's newsletter demonstrate, the East Asian Library is one of them.

Berkeley's *banzuke* collection is one of the lesser-known aspects of the Mitsui acquisition, an acquisition whose breadth is perhaps not fully appreciated. A better-known part of the acquisition is the Asami library. The KBS program mentioned in "Beyond the Asami" aired last August when I happened to be in Seoul. Soon after the broadcast, I was approached by Korean scholars and government representatives wanting to send researchers to Berkeley to examine the Asami materials. I readily agreed. The result is the joint research project described in these pages.

Since last summer, the Library has acquired the Ann Tompkins (Tang Fandi) and Lincoln Cushing Chinese Poster Collection through the generosity of both former owners. The collection contains approximately five hundred posters, most of them dating to the years of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution has been called the largest social

engineering effort in the history of mankind. Perhaps the only undisputed aspect of the Revolution is the scope of its impact, which affected over 600 million Chinese.

To some, the Cultural Revolution was a period of utopianism and experimentation, a time to clean the slate and start anew. "Serve the people" was an ideal everyone should aspire to; creating a "classless society" was the objective that should be shared by all. To many others, however, the Cultural Revolution was a period of violence, tragedy, and catastrophic social upheaval, which ultimately did not deliver the lasting institutional and social change promised.

As I recall, newspapers, position papers, pamphlets, and propaganda in every form and format, both official and unofficial, deluged the country during those years. Surprisingly few of these publications have survived. Perhaps their ephemeral nature is the reason for their scarcity today. Perhaps as a society we failed to preserve them in an unconscious effort to forget the trauma of those years. There is a danger, however, to such deliberate amnesia. We have much to learn from the Cultural Revolution—why events unfolded as they did, and how to prevent such wide-scale violence from occurring again.

The Ann Tompkins (Tang Fandi) and Lincoln Cushing Chinese Poster Collection preserves a genre of art that was known to and accepted by hundreds of millions of Chinese during the years of the Cultural Revolution. The posters' images and the directives they supported once influenced a quarter of world's population. Anyone attempting to understand this period will want to study these posters, not simply as illustrations of the era but as expressions of its ideals and vicissitudes. These posters were everywhere in China during the Cultural Revolution. Although seldom encountered today, they occupy an important place in history and are a valued addition to the East Asian Library's collections.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Zhou". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and last name "Zhou" clearly distinguishable.

Peter Zhou
Director, East Asian Library

Ann saw the artistic expression of those ideals in the posters then commonly sold in bookstores and department stores: posters promoting women, workers, science, and study. They struck a chord and they were cheap, so she began to buy them on impulse. After some time, noticing changes in the posters' emphases, Ann bought more deliberately. Between this and subsequent



Chairman Mao's finest soldier—Lei Feng. Bland depictions of the exemplar Lei Feng abound. Artist Wu Qiangnian's portrait stands out for its forcefulness of line and image. Wu's woodblocks have been exhibited in Japan, the United States, and the European Union. *Mao zhuxi de hao zhanshi—Lei Feng.*

visits, including another extended stay between 1980 and 1983, she collected over five hundred of them. Back in the United States, Ann occasionally displayed some of the posters. Most remained in the neat, tight rolls she had carried them home in, and are consequently in extremely good condition.

Three decades after her first trip to China, Ann happened to hear Lincoln Cushing interviewed on a Bay Area radio station. Cushing is a graphic artist with a special interest in political posters. (His book on Cuban political posters, *iRevolucion!*, published by Chronicle Books in 2003, was published in Japanese translation by Blues Interactions Press in 2005.) As it turned out, both Ann and Lincoln took the view that political posters are a rich resource for the researcher. Both were concerned

with issues of preservation and accessibility, Lincoln generally and Ann specifically—Lincoln eventually entered Berkeley's School of Information Management to study the use of digital tools in archiving, completing a Master's in 2001; and Ann had been looking for a way to put her own collection to others' use for years. Not long after their initial meeting, Ann turned her posters over to Lincoln, asking him to find an appropriate home for them.

A number of features distinguished the Chinese posters from the political posters Cushing was familiar with. From an artist's viewpoint, most were not really designed as graphic images, integrating typography and composition; they were paintings or woodcuts with simple text, printed in large full-color format. From an archivist's viewpoint, they included a surprising amount of information concerning their production—attribution, place, publisher, and date of publication, printer, distributor, the number of the edition or impression, often even the size of the press run, the dimensions of the printer's sheet, and the number of frames per sheet—information that could assist the researcher tracking shifts in style, imagery, and content. Features the Chinese posters shared with their Western



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*This seal was designed and carved for the East Asian Library by Ma Ji, of Xi'an's Beilin Museum, in a form of small seal script known as *tiexian*: "From the Collection of the East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley."



Singing of the commune's beauty. The neat terraces, well-fed stock, and flowering trees are intended as metaphors for the success of the new state; the importance of peasants to the new order is acknowledged in the stature of the commune member. *Gechang gongshe hao fengjing.*

counterparts included their broad appeal and the intention that they serve as instruments for change.

The posters in the Tompkins and Cushing Collection range in date from 1962 to 1988, with approximately 350 dating to the years of the Cultural Revolution, 1967 to 1977. They urge viewers to learn from Dazhai, Daqing, and Lei Feng; to smash imperialism, denounce Soviet revisionism, and expel America from Vietnam. Landscapes may embody the success of the socialist road, the advance of industrialization, or simply the beauties of China's mountains and streams. Vigilance against capitalism and anti-socialist influences, so prevalent in the earlier posters, fades in later years, with posters acclaiming the achievements of Newton, Edison, Franklin, and Einstein. Images of Mao Zedong are ubiquitous, although the variety of depiction and setting employed in the earlier posters is greatly diminished by the 1980s.

The decision to give the posters to the East Asian Library was a logical one, if not automatic. Ann had ties to Berkeley: her uncle, Dr. John Barr Tompkins, had been head of the Bancroft Library's public services, and her

aunt, Dorothy Campbell Tompkins, had been a highly respected bibliographer at the Institute for Governmental Studies for close to fifty years. Lincoln himself had been on the staff of the Institute of Industrial Relations Library and was later a cataloger at the Bancroft. Before deciding on Berkeley, however, they wanted assurance that the posters would be appreciated, accessible, and properly archived. Peter Zhou was able to give them that assurance.

The posters are currently in Conservation, being fitted for folders that will protect them until the move to the new building, where they will be stored in flat files. In the meantime, the collection remains accessible through a digital archive prepared by Lincoln Cushing and available at the Center for Chinese Studies Library. The digital archive saves wear and tear on the original posters while allowing researchers to sort them in various ways. About 150 of the posters will be published in reproduction this fall, when Chronicle Books releases Ann and Lincoln's *Chinese Posters: Art from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. 利