

## **The Bodleian Library's Chinese collection in the seventeenth century**

DAVID HELLIWELL

By contrast with Chinese book collecting in the Far East, or of western book collecting in Europe, the study of Chinese book collecting in Europe has hardly begun. Research into this interesting subject is hampered by an almost total lack of documentation, and especially of published or even manuscript catalogues, apart from a few examples from the nineteenth or early twentieth century, for the most part either incomplete, inadequate, or more commonly both. Any librarian who undertakes to describe the history and contents of the collections in his charge can therefore scarcely fail to produce work of originality if not of value. With this in mind, the present study will therefore begin at the beginning: with the earliest Chinese books to arrive in Europe during the Wanli period of the Ming, which represent, in the main, products of the commercial publishing industry of that time.

There is, moreover, good reason to begin such a study with the seventeenth-century collections of the Bodleian Library, which have been in my care for the past fifteen years. As the central library of Oxford University, the Bodleian is not only the biggest university library in Europe, but also ranks high among the national libraries of that continent. It was founded by Sir Thomas Bodley in 1602, who personally inscribed the first Chinese book to enter the Library in the year 1604, and though small indeed in comparison with similar collections in China and Japan, the Chinese books which were acquired by the Library during the course of the seventeenth century, and which survive almost in their entirety, represent by far the largest single collection of all the Chinese books extant in Europe from that time, perhaps amounting to as much as one fifth of the whole.

### The cabinet of curiosities

In European libraries, Chinese and Japanese books are usually handled by departments which are also responsible for books in Near Eastern languages, both ancient and modern, and even African languages, the criterion for inclusion evidently being the possession of any feature, usually the script, which renders them incomprehensible to the western eye. In surveying such Oriental collections, particularly in Oxford, one is immediately struck by the immense difference in size between the Chinese collections of the seventeenth-century (which amount to fewer than 90 titles in 170 volumes – the Japanese titles can be counted on the fingers of one hand) and the collections of Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts and

printed books, which run into thousands. Whereas the latter were well understood in contemporary Europe, and were in the mainstream of intellectual enquiry of the Anglican divines from whose libraries they largely derived<sup>1</sup>, Chinese books were curiosities, of which not a single word could be read until well into the nineteenth century: not only are many of these early acquisitions inscribed upside down, but there also appears to have been no realisation that Chinese books, like those in Hebrew and Arabic, begin at what in a western book would normally be the end.

Why, then, were they collected? Renaissance learning was preoccupied with the natural world and man's place within it, and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was an intense curiosity in the peoples and cultures not only of the newly discovered Americas, but also of Africa and the Far East, with whom contacts were becoming increasingly frequent. Their products, as representatives of the peoples who produced them, were avidly sought after, and together with manifestations of the natural world were formed into collections known as "cabinets of curiosities" in English, or "Wunderkammer" in German, many of which became the founding collections of modern museums throughout Europe. According to the philosopher Francis Bacon, such cabinets were the essential apparatus of the learned gentleman; in his garden he possessed "in small compass a model of the universal nature made private", and in his cabinet whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion ...".<sup>2</sup>

Chinese books therefore, being rare in stuff and form, if not in motion, clearly qualified for inclusion, and one such cabinet of curiosities, that of John Bargrave (1610-1680), actually did contain two Chinese printed books, but although the collection is still extant in the library of Canterbury Cathedral, where he was a canon, the Chinese books have, alas, gone

---

<sup>1</sup> Mordecai Feingold, in chapter 7 (*Oriental studies*) of *The history of the University of Oxford, vol.IV: Seventeenth-century Oxford* (ed. Nicholas Tyacke, Oxford, 1997) writes:

"The seventeenth century was ... the heyday of such studies at Oxford. During this period the university became a truly major centre for Hebrew and Arabic, drawing from all over Europe students and visitors eager to study with local scholars or use the rich resources of the Bodleian Library. In fact it was in the domain of oriental studies alone that Oxford competed on equal terms with the major philological centres of Europe.

The principal incentive for the study of both languages was their application to scripture and their contribution towards the bolstering of Christianity. Unlike Greek and Latin, which were also harnessed to such ends, Arabic, and especially Hebrew, were rarely commended for the intrinsic merits of their language, literature, and history." (p.449).

<sup>2</sup> Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgregor use the passage of Francis Bacon from which these lines are taken to introduce their edition of the proceedings of an international symposium on this subject (a work which is now standard) held to commemorate the tercentenary of the opening of the Ashmolean Museum to the public in May 1683 by the Duke of York, later James II: *The origins of museums: the cabinet of curiosities in seventeenth-century Europe* (Oxford, 1985).

missing.<sup>3</sup> The anatomy theatre of Leiden University housed one of the most famous cabinets of curiosities in Europe, which according to an inventory of 1620 numbered Chinese scrolls amongst its exhibits.<sup>4</sup> In a remarkably parallel manner, the Bodleian Library itself had (or at least administered) its own cabinet of curiosities, which was housed in the Anatomy School, now part of the Lower Reading Room where the catalogues are kept. Although there is no evidence that any of the Chinese books were ever exhibited there, a Chinese map certainly was.

This appears to have been the unique and extraordinarily interesting map given by John Selden<sup>5</sup>, and probably brought to England by an East India Company merchant. It must have been quite prominent among the many curiosities kept there, as it was one of the items which caught the attention of Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach during his visit to Oxford in 1710. He singled it out for mention in his *Merkwürdige Reisen*, apparently under the impression that it had been commissioned in China by Edward Bernard (who will be mentioned at greater length below in connection with his famous catalogue):

“Merkwürdiger war die *mappa Geographica* von dem Königreiche China, mit der Feder gerissen, welche *D. Bernard* mit grossen Kosten vor sich habe in dem Lande selbst verfertigen lassen. Sie ist wohl viermal so groß, als unsere gemeine Land-Charten.”<sup>6</sup>

The antiquary and diarist Thomas Hearne was appointed keeper of the Anatomy School in 1712, and in 1721 wrote a list of its contents in which the map was also noted.<sup>7</sup>

### The Dutch East India Company

Strictly speaking, Chinese book collecting in Europe began not in the seventeenth but in the sixteenth century, with the small collection acquired by the Escorial in 1573. These books, amounting only to some half dozen

---

<sup>3</sup> See Sturdy, David & Henig, Martin: *The gentle traveller: John Bargrave, Canon of Canterbury, and his collection* (Oxford, 1983), 2 & 14, where it is noted that the two early Chinese books currently in the Cathedral Library, a Spanish-Chinese manuscript word-list of medicinal plants written in 1553, and section (presumably *juan*) 4 of a herbal compiled by Wang Ang and prefaced 1694, are of unknown origin and do not seem to have been Bargrave's. The latter cannot have been his, as he was already dead before it was written. I have not yet seen these books.

<sup>4</sup> See William Schubach: *Some cabinets of curiosities in European academic institutions*, 170-171, in Impey & Macgregor, 169-178.

<sup>5</sup> MS.Selden Supra 105.

<sup>6</sup> Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach: *Herrn Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niedersachsen Holland und Engelland* (Ulm, 1758, 1759; 3 vols), 3:115.

<sup>7</sup> Bodleian Library, MS.Rawl.B.399\*: "339. A very odd mapp of China. Very large, & taken from Mr. Selden's. On the Professor's Desk."

titles (but among them at least one unique and extremely important item), were presented to Philip II of Spain by his ambassador in Lisbon, Juan de Borja, to whom they had been entrusted by Gregorio González, a Portuguese missionary who for twelve years had been active in Macao, and had later visited the Moluccas and the Philippines.<sup>8</sup> But for this small and entirely discrete collection, acquired under its own peculiar circumstances, and one or two items which had possibly reached the Vatican by this time, few Chinese books came to Europe through the agency of the Jesuits until the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris began to receive books from the French Jesuits based in China in the early eighteenth century. Before that time, until the presentation of 22 titles (numbering 312 *ce* in 45 *tao*) to Louis XIV by Joachim Bouvet in 1697, which he tried to pass off as a personal gift from Kangxi, it is generally believed that the Bibliothèque du Roi contained only the four Chinese books obtained from the library of the Collège Mazarin in 1668.<sup>9</sup>

During the first half of the seventeenth century, what slender evidence exists would seem to indicate that virtually all the Chinese books to reach Europe were imported and sold in Amsterdam either by the Dutch East India Company or the trading expeditions that preceded its incorporation in 1602. Of these, the first reached Sumatra in 1596 under the command of Cornelis de Houtman, who made contact with Chinese merchants in Java as soon as he had anchored off Bantam. He returned home with a cargo that included books, which were deposited in the newly founded University of Leiden. It is not known whether there were any Chinese books among them, and there is now nothing in Leiden that can be identified with this consignment.<sup>10</sup>

The Dutch bibliographer Bert van Selm has suggested that an important consignment arrived as a result of one specific trading expedition, in which

---

<sup>8</sup> See Gregorio de Andrés: *Los libros chinos de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial in Missionalia hispanica* 26(1969), 115-123. The existence of this and several other Spanish collections was first drawn to the attention of modern sinologists by Paul Pelliot: *Notes sur quelques livres ou documents conservés en Espagne* in *T'oung pao* 26(1928), 43-50, and was described to some extent by Fang Hao: *Liuluo yu xipu de zhongguo wenxian* in *Xueshu jikan* 1:2(1952), 149-164 & 1:3(1953), 161-179. In the other collections described (the Biblioteca Nacional, the Biblioteca Real, the Real Academia de la Historia, and the Cathedral library of Toledo), aside from some rare Jesuit archival and printed material, there appears to be little of note in the way of early Chinese printed material.

<sup>9</sup> The interesting tale of Joachim Bouvet and his Chinese books is told by Monique Cohen: *A point of history: the Chinese books presented to the National Library in Paris by Joachim Bouvet, S.J., in 1697* in *Chinese culture* 31:4(1990), 39-48. The history of the impressive contribution made by the Jesuits in the eighteenth century has yet to be written, but that of Jean-François Fouquet has been treated to some extent by J.W. Witek: *Jean-François Fouquet et les livres chinois de la Bibliothèque Royale in Actes du II<sup>e</sup> Colloque Internationale de Sinologie: les rapports entre la Chine et l'Europe au temps des lumières* (Paris, 1980), 145-171.

<sup>10</sup> See J.J.L. Duyvendak: *Holland's contribution to Chinese studies* (The China Society, London, 1950), 5.

two fleets of ships from Amsterdam companies set sail for the Indonesian archipelago on 23rd April 1601. Some of the ships returned to Holland with their cargo in 1602, but the admiral of the fleet, Jacob Heemskerck, remained behind with two vessels, and with intelligence supplied by the local rulers, sighted and captured the Portuguese carrack Catharina on 25th February 1603, on its way from Macao to Malacca with a rich cargo. Heemskerck transferred the most precious cargo to his own ship, filling the carrack Catharina with pepper, and all three ships sailed home, the Catharina and one of Heemskerck's own ships docking in the summer of 1604, the second in the spring of 1605. There followed an extraordinary sale of the cargo in Amsterdam in September 1605, which according to van Selm may be related to the publication in the same year and in the same city of a stock catalogue of Chinese books by Cornelis Claesz, the city's leading bookseller. The Parisian bibliographer Philippe Labbé (1607-1670) gives the title of this catalogue as *Chinensium variorum librorum Bibliotheca, siue libri, qui nunc primùm ex China seu regno Sinarum cum ipsorum atramento & charta admirandae magnitudinis aduecti sunt*. Although there is sufficient evidence to show that the work actually existed<sup>11</sup>, no copy has yet been discovered; this is unfortunate, as the catalogue is the earliest known printed list of Chinese books in Europe, and if found would represent a bibliographical source of the first importance. Soon after the publication of the catalogue, which was designed to promote the sale of the consignment not only locally but throughout Europe, Chinese books were to be found in the collections of several scholars in Leiden.<sup>12</sup>

Several items in the Bodleian collection can almost certainly be traced to one of these very early Dutch East India Company shipments, and from their appearance and nature it is fair to assume that the others also reached Europe in this way. The evidence, admittedly, is based chiefly on the early date of their accession by the Library, which cannot be explained in any other way, or an immediate provenance in Holland. One is no. 5 in Appendix B, inscribed in Bodley's hand: "Donum Henrici Percey comitis Northumbriae Ao 1604" – this, so far as can be told, is actually the first Chinese book to enter the Library; another is no. 51, and bears three inscriptions in Dutch which have yet to be read, but which are clearly dated 1603; a third is no. 59, the much discussed fragment, only a single leaf, of a lost edition of the *Shuihuzhuan* which bears the inscription "A book of China given me at Leyden by Doctor Merla professor in Histories". The

<sup>11</sup> It is cited in Henri Ternaux-Compans: *Bibliothèque asiatique et africaine, ou, Catalogue des ouvrages relatifs à l'Asie et à l'Afrique qui ont paru depuis la découverte de l'imprimerie jusqu'en 1700* (Paris, 1841), 106 (no.934).

<sup>12</sup> Such, in summary, is the argument of Bert van Selm: *Cornelis Claesz's 1605 stock catalogue of Chinese books* in *Quaerendo* 13:4(1983), 247-259.

giver of this present can be identified as Paulus Merula (1558-1607), professor and librarian at Leiden University, but neither its recipient nor the exact date and circumstances of its entry into the Library can be established.<sup>13</sup>

An item acquired slightly later in the century (no. 33) bears the inscription "Ornamento bibliothecae Oxoniensis d.d. Festus Hommius s. theol. doctor Oxon." Festus Hommius was a distinguished Doctor of Divinity from Leiden who was incorporated in Oxford in 1620, and may have commemorated the occasion by giving either the book itself to the Bodleian in accordance with local custom, or a sum of money with which the volume was bought. In 1632, Cambridge University received the books of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who had bought the library of the Leiden scholar Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624), which included a single Chinese volume.<sup>14</sup> These, and doubtless more pieces of evidence yet to be discovered, give further indication of the centrality of Holland in the importation and distribution of Chinese books in the early seventeenth century.

Once imported, the numerous fascicles into which a Chinese book is usually divided were split up to maximise the profit, no doubt, in much the same way as modern dealers will break up a volume to sell its plates individually. A mere glance at Appendix B to this paper will reveal that scarcely any of the items listed are complete, and that very often the missing parts of what is undoubtedly the same copy can be found in other libraries throughout Europe. A good example is no. 34, the *Wanbing huichun*, of which only one copy seems to have been imported. The 3rd and 6th *juan* came to the Bodleian Library quite early in the century, but the 8th came with the Golius books (see below); the 1st is in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (now united with the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz), and a single leaf of another *juan* is bound into a fragmentary copy of the *Shuihuzhuan* in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart. This last institution also has *juan* 9 & 10 of a unique surviving copy of an edition of the *Sanguo zhizhuan*, of which other fascicles are in Cambridge University Library (*juan* 7 & 8), the Bodleian Library (*juan* 11 & 12, Appendix B no. 55), and the British Library (*juan* 19 & 20). It should be noted that the process of identifying and taking stock of what survives in other European libraries has scarcely begun: Appendix B contains only a few observations on this interesting theme, many of them made by Professor Piet van den Loon during the course of

---

<sup>13</sup> See J.J.L. Duyvendak: *An old Chinese fragment in the Bodleian* in *The Bodleian Library Record* 2:28(1949), 245-247.

<sup>14</sup> The volume is described as "Liber Sinensis" by Bernard (see below, vol.1, pt.3, p.274) in his list of the additions to Cambridge University Library from the library of Thomas Erpinus.

his long and distinguished bibliographical career.

In all probability, the Chinese books acquired for the Library by Sir Thomas Bodley himself were bought from London dealers, who in turn had obtained them from sources in Amsterdam. The covers were then inscribed with the names of those who had donated the money with which the books were paid for. The 49 volumes thus obtained by Bodley were all given limp vellum bindings (which now, alas, are destroying the very pages they were intended to protect), perhaps done in London to his order. The Chinese books acquired after his death in 1613 were usually either left in their original paper covers, or had their Chinese paper covers replaced with covers of European paper.<sup>15</sup>

There were Chinese books in the great collections acquired from William Laud (in 1639), John Selden (in 1659), and William Thurston (in 1661), and although they came to the Library rather later in the century, most of them are clearly of the same ultimate provenance as the earlier purchases by Bodley himself; indeed, it is one of the Laud items (no. 51) which bears the three Dutch inscriptions with the date 1603. Among the Thurston books however are two Christian doctrinal works (nos. 77 & 78) with elaborate inscriptions in Portuguese and personal dedications to William Thurston by P. Andre Xavier.

### Golius

A small but interesting corpus of seventeenth-century Chinese material is found in the collection of Jacobus Golius (Jacob Gool, 1596-1667), an early Dutch Orientalist who had been professor of Mathematics and Arabic in Leiden. These books did not in fact reach the Library until 1714, but the evidence points to an ultimate provenance as early as that of the first acquisitions. Inevitably, Golius did not know Chinese, but in 1654 conversed with Martinus Martinius (Martino Martini, 1614-1661, a Tirolean Jesuit missionary who had served in China from 1643 to 1650), who doubtless provided him with descriptions of his Chinese books. The story of their meeting is recounted by Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer (1694-1738) in the preface to his famous *Museum sinicum*:

"Jacob Golius had acquired a nice collection of Chinese books, but he did not understand a single character in them, for he had never met anybody

---

<sup>15</sup> This is set out in some detail by A.F.L. Beeston: *The earliest donations of Chinese books to the Bodleian* in *The Bodleian Library Record* 4:6(1953), 304-313. Beeston's excellent contribution should perhaps be brought up to date. Since it was written the shelfmarks have been changed, and more importantly, two of the items he describes as lost (SC2787 & 2836, nos. 19 & 62 in Appendix B) have now been found, the latter being a unique printed copy.

who knew Chinese, either in Europe or in Asia. When he heard that Martini was in Amsterdam he could hardly wait to join him there. However, as he knew that he was very busy at the time with preparing the edition of his *Atlas Sinensis*, he preferred to wait for him in Leiden. Martini came there on his way to Brabant, greeted Golius very warmly and took him with him so that he could entertain him each day for a whole week. While in Antwerp Martini provided Golius with all kinds of information, and Jacques Edelheer, the mayor of the town, invited both of them to the Chinese studio he had arranged in his house, where they engaged in learned discussions among the many things he had collected."<sup>16</sup>

The heirs of Golius did not succeed in selling his books until almost thirty years after his death, when they were sold by auction in Leiden in 1696. The catalogue used pages which had already been printed in 1668 in anticipation of a quick sale, the last two containing lists of his Chinese manuscripts and printed books, incorporating the descriptions which had probably been obtained from Martini.<sup>17</sup> The sale was attended by Dr Edward Bernard, the former Savilian Professor of astronomy at Oxford and author of the famous catalogue which will be described presently, acting as agent for Archbishop Narcissus Marsh of Dublin. For the sum of £200, Bernard secured 274 of the 407 items offered. Marsh died in 1713, and bequeathed all his books to the Bodleian Library; they arrived on 12th August 1714. Of the Chinese manuscripts and printed books listed in the sale catalogue, the Library appears to have almost all, with the exception of the printed Christian doctrinal works.

The ultimate provenance of the Golius books is as obscure as that of the earliest Chinese books to arrive in the Library, but the notion that he acquired them all from Martini<sup>18</sup> is almost certainly incorrect. Indeed, one of them (no. 41 in Appendix B) bears the important inscription "Chines boeck, den 20 Junio 1620 van Amsterdam gebrocht." It would therefore appear from this evidence, and also from their nature and date of printing, which is Wanli, that they came with the early wave of importations by the Dutch East India Company. Bayer's evidence also points to this. The manuscripts, however, which include the exceedingly interesting vocabularies (nos. 84-87) and the miscellany (no. 80) may well have come

---

<sup>16</sup> Translated by Knud Lundbæk in *T.S. Bayer (1694-1738), pioneer sinologist* (London & Malmö, 1986; Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies monograph series, 54), 52-53. For more on the subject of Golius and Martini, see J.J.L. Duyvendak: *Early Chinese studies in Holland* 298ff., in *T'oung pao* 32(1936), 293-344.

<sup>17</sup> *Catalogus insignium in omni facultate linguisque Arabica, Persica, Turcica, Chinensi, &c. Librorum M.SS. quos doctissimus clarissimusque D. Jacibus Golius ... collegit* (Lugduni Batavorum, apud Joannem du Vivié, 1696), 26, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Just Witkam: *Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) en zijn handschriften* (Leiden, 1980; Oosters Genootschap in Nederland, 10), 61.



from Martini.

### The English East India Company

By contrast with the larger portion of the seventeenth-century acquisitions, which represents the biggest single part of the European stock, with which it shares a common if uncertain provenance, a small number of diverse yet highly interesting and possibly unique items have a precise provenance which is itself fascinating. They are five in number: two copies of a calendar, two maps (one of which is a set of two), and a popular almanac. All came to the Library through the English East India Company, and so far as can be told, represent the totality of what was acquired through that agency, which in view of the extent of the East India trade indicates a lack of curiosity which defies all charitable explanation.

The calendars (nos. 68 and 69) are for the 25th year of the Yongli period (1671) of the Southern Ming. They are printed in indigo and have yellow silk covers bearing the large vermilion imperial seal. Fifty copies of the calendar had been presented by the "King of Formosa" (i.e. Zheng Jing, 1642-1681, eldest son of Coxinga) to Ellis Crisp, who had been sent with the Pink Bantam and the sloop Pearl from the East India Company factory in Bantam in May 1670 in order to establish a trading factory in Taiwan.<sup>19</sup> Of these fifty copies, two are now in the Bodleian Library (one was presented by the scientist Robert Boyle in 1671, the other by Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church), one is in Magdalen College, Cambridge (from the Pepys Library), and another is in the British Library (from the Hyde collection, and ultimately the Royal Library).

The almanac (no. 70) was printed in the Canton region, and is also for the year 1671. An item of such ephemeral nature must have been acquired at the time of printing, so it is tempting to think that it was picked up on the same voyage as the calendars, unless we accept the most extraordinary coincidence.

Documentary evidence points quite explicitly to the provenance of the two maps, which in both cases were picked up by East India Company merchants. The first (no. 66) is a set of two hanging scrolls, comprising maps of the earth and of the heavens, presumably very rare if not unique, and it is amazing that such large items on very thin paper have survived relatively unscathed from the earliest century of the Library's existence.

---

<sup>19</sup> This information is derived from papers in the Public Record Office which were selected and published in Taiwan in both the original and in Chinese translation in the series *Taiwan yanjiu congkan*, no.57: *Shiqi shiji taiwan yingguo maoyi shiliao* (compiled by Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, Taipei, 1959). See especially p.75ff, 133ff, 189ff.

According to the Benefactors' Register they were given by George White, "ad Indiam orientalem mercator", in the year 1684. There then follow several lines of precise description, leaving their identification in no doubt.

The second (no. 65) was printed in Peking in 1679, and a label pasted on to the back of the map before restoration (and now kept separately) reads: "[Map of Chin]a given by Mr Brown [an East Indi]a merchant, who also gave severall Indian Books and writings", and the Benefactors' Register notes that Alexander Brown, "mercator ad Indos", gave this map among other things to the Library on August 10th 1698.

Excepting the Golius books, which as we have shown represent an earlier phase of Chinese book collecting in Europe, the acquisition of the large map from Alexander Brown brings the Library's first period of Chinese book collecting to a close, right at the end of the seventeenth-century.

### Shen Fuzong

Not the least interesting aspect of the seventeenth-century acquisitions is the matter of their identification (– it is scarcely possible to speak of their cataloguing at this time) by the Chinese visitor Shen Fuzong. Shen was the son of Christian converts, and had come to Europe at the instigation of Fr Philip Couplet, Procurator of the China Jesuits in Rome. Having left Macao in 1681, Shen travelled first in Italy and France, and then came to England where he became a well-known figure at court. He left England in 1688 for Lisbon, where he entered the Society of Jesus, and died near Mozambique on his way back to China in 1691. Shen Fuzong came to Oxford in 1687, and the Library accounts for the year 1686-87 contain an entry recording an item of £6 "Paid the Chinese for making catalogues to the China Bookes, for his expences and Lodging."<sup>20</sup> He conversed with Thomas Hyde in Latin, the language in which his descriptions of the Chinese books were also expressed.

When James II visited Oxford in September 1687, Shen Fuzong was the subject of an after dinner conversation with the Librarian, the record of which is worth quoting in full:

"After his majesty was sate, he asked the vice-chancellor (standing by him) for certaine books. To which the vice-chancellor answered that Dr. Hyde the library-keeper could answer him more fully than he. Whereupon he was called from the other part of the library where his study was, and being come, he kneeled downe, whereupon the king gave him his hand to

---

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Beeston, 307 n.4.

kiss. Which being done, his majesty said, 'Well, Dr. Hyde, was the Chinese here?' To which he answered, 'Yes, if it may please your majesty; and I learned many things of him.' Then said his majesty, 'He was a little blinking fellow, was he not?' To which he answered, 'Yes,' and added that 'all the Chinese, Tartars, and all that part of the world was narrow-eyed.' Then the king said that 'he had his picture to the life hanging in his room next to the bed chamber.' Then his majesty told Dr. Hyde of a book of Confucius translated from China language by the Jesuits (4 in number) and asked whether it was in the library? to which Dr. Hyde answered that it was, and that 'it treated of philosophy, but not so as that of European philosophy.' Whereupon his majesty asked whether 'the Chinese had any divinity?' To which Dr. Hyde answered 'Yes, but 'twas idolatry, they being all heathens, but yet that they have in their idol-temple statues representing the Trinity, and other pictures, which shew that ancient Christianity had been amongst them.' To which he assented by a nod. After that, his majesty left off asking any more questions."<sup>21</sup>

The portrait of Shen had been painted for the king by Sir Godfrey Kneller earlier that year, and is first referred to by the naval surgeon James Yonge in his description of the king's audience of the Papal Nuncio in St George's Hall, Windsor Castle, on July 3rd. As the various dignitaries were leaving, Yonge observed that in one of the coaches was " ... the Chinese, a young, pale-faced fellow who had travelled from his country and become a papist (his picture being done very well like him in one of the King's lodgings) ... ". Of the artist, Horace Walpole records that "Of all his works, Sir Godfrey was most proud of the converted Chinese at Windsor". The painting is still extant in the Royal Collection, and was exhibited in the National Gallery in 1991.<sup>22</sup>

It is remarkable enough that a native Chinese should have catalogued books in a European library in the seventeenth century, but astounding that there should also be a portrait of him of such quality and likeness.

### Bernard's catalogue

Shen Fuzong's descriptions of the Chinese books in the Bodleian Library were published in Edward Bernard's stupendous bibliographical work *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hibernae in unum collecti, cum indice alphabetico*, which was published posthumously in Oxford in 1697, the year of his death. This great union catalogue included, as its

---

<sup>21</sup> Clark, A. ed.: *The life and times of Anthony Wood*, vol.3 (1894), 236-237.

<sup>22</sup> Lloyd, Christopher: *The Queen's pictures: royal collectors through the centuries* (National Gallery Publications, London, 1991), 114.

name suggests, not only all the manuscripts then in the Bodleian Library, but also collections in the possession of the various Oxford colleges, of Cambridge University and its colleges, of Cathedral libraries, and even of individual scholars both in England and Ireland (hence the inclusion of the Golius books, which were still in the possession of Narcissus Marsh when the catalogue was published, and which Bernard had himself purchased for Marsh at the sale in Leiden). Fortunately, Chinese printed books were then sufficiently rare to be counted as manuscripts and included in the catalogue, through which it has been possible to identify with certainty not only the Chinese books then in the Bodleian Library, but also a good many fragments preserved elsewhere. These, however, having not been seen and described by Shen Fuzong, have simply "Liber Chinensis" given against their entry in the catalogue. The descriptions of the Golius books were transcribed verbatim from the sale catalogue.

Remarkably, all the Chinese books in the Bodleian Library described in Bernard's catalogue can still be found, with scarcely a single exception. Conversely, there are no Chinese books currently in the Library and not in Bernard's catalogue which can be said with certainty to have been there in the seventeenth century, with the exception of the two maps given by East India merchants – the latter, in any case, not having arrived until the year after his death. The catalogue may still serve, therefore, as a definitive statement, albeit in Latin and a little dated, of the Library's seventeenth-century collections of Chinese books. The Chinese entries have therefore been transcribed in their entirety in Appendix A, and correlated with my more recent and annotated listing of the same material in Appendix B to this paper.

### Postscript

During the eighteenth century, very little was added to the seventeenth century collections of not only the Bodleian Library, but even of the newly established British Museum, whose "founding" collection of Chinese books was itself more a product of the seventeenth than the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> In view of the increasing intercourse with the Far East that took place during this period, this may at first appear paradoxical, but it is paralleled by a corresponding decrease in the collecting of curious objects: "The collecting of curiosities was less evident in the eighteenth century, though not unknown, for with the great increase in trade, curiosities were no longer

---

<sup>23</sup> See Frances Wood: *Curiosities of the British Library Chinese collection*, 99 in *Chinese studies: papers presented at a colloquium at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 24-26 August 1987* (London, 1988; British Library occasional papers, 10), 97- 105.

curious".<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the spirit of scientific enquiry that had characterised the Restoration period (exemplified in Oxford by the work of figures such as Robert Hooke, his mentor Robert Boyle, and Sir Christopher Wren) was now dead, and most of the century was a period "when political and religious controversy combined with academic indolence and internecine college quarrels almost to preclude learning in the University"<sup>25</sup>. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that the study of China should have counted for very little.

---

<sup>24</sup> Oliver Impey: *Chinoiserie* (London, 1977), 60.

<sup>25</sup> R.F. Ovenell: *The Ashmolean Museum, 1683-1894* (Oxford, 1986), i.