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Profile of Elizabeth Huff (1912-88). Founding Head of the East Asiatic Library, UC Berkeley

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Author

Berry, Mary Elizabeth

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Elizabeth Huff (1912-1988), From Urbana to Cambridge to Peking to Berkeley

Mary Elizabeth Berry, University of California, Berkeley

Everyone called her “Miss Huff,” even close associates and near-contemporaries. Formal and reticent in manner, although comfortable in command, she stirred deference in the all-male community that she entered in 1947, at the age of thirty-five, as Founding Head of the East Asiatic Library at the University of California, Berkeley.¹ The title just gestures toward her achievement. At the vanguard of the postwar transformation of Asian Studies in this country, Miss Huff built both a collection and an administrative model that girded the burgeoning scholarship in American universities on China, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet.

She disdained the “monstrously vulgar” emphasis on “accession statistics” that served, then and now, as a proxy among librarians for success (255).² She could afford the conceit. Holdings of roughly 75,000 volumes in East Asian languages at the time of her appointment increased to 225,000 within four years and well over 300,000 by the time of her retirement in 1968, consistently establishing Berkeley as one of the two largest university depositories of East Asian materials in North America. (Her successors hewed to the course. The collection surpassed half a million in the early 1980s and now numbers about 1.24 million volumes.)³ What the numbers signify is not pointless competitive counting but an ambition new to the historical moment: the normalization of East Asia as a prime focus of intellectual inquiry in the US with the resources to enable original research.⁴ The quality of the collection was matched in importance by exemplary standards of staff recruitment and technical services. Miss Huff’s hires

¹ Known since 1991 as the East Asian Library. Here and below, I use the proper nouns that appear in Huff’s oral history (see footnote 2), with updates in parentheses. This essay originated as a contribution to a wide-ranging project—“150 Years of Women at Berkeley”—marking the 150th anniversary of the Regental resolution in 1870 that: “young ladies be admitted into the University on equal terms in all respects with young men.” For details and links to the multiple parts of the project, see <https://150w.berkeley.edu>.

² Here and below, numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the transcribed text, “Elizabeth Huff, Teacher and Founding Curator of the East Asiatic Library, From Urbana to Berkeley by Way of Peking,” Interview by Rosemary Levenson in 1976. Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1977. The interviews were conducted between February 3 and May 14, 1976; the edited, annotated, illustrated, and indexed text of 279 pages was completed in 1977 with introductions by Levenson and John Jamieson, <https://digicoll.lib.berkeley.edu/record/217373?ln=en>.

³ For figures from 1957 until the present, consult the Statistics Database of the Council on East Asian Libraries, <https://ceal.ku.edu>. For the early figures, see pp. 262-64 of the oral history, which reproduce Huff’s report on the “Far Eastern Collections in the East Asiatic Library of the University of California” in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 14.3 (May 1955): 443-47. Also see Donald H. Shively, “Elizabeth Huff and the East Asiatic Library at the University of California, Berkeley,” *Journal of East Asian Libraries* 1986.7: 20-26, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1373&context=jeal>.

came to lead academic libraries across the country. Her catalogs were published by G. K. Hall as reference templates for the profession.

When she retired, the scale of Elizabeth Huff's achievement was so clear to so many that the Friends of the East Asiatic Library launched an unparalleled effort to record her experience in an oral history. Led by Felicia Gressett Bock, Ursula Griswold Bingham, and Woodridge Bingham, a total of one hundred fifteen donors funded a series of interviews conducted by Rosemary Levenson in 1976 and overseen by the Regional Oral History Office of Berkeley's Bancroft Library (i-iii). Those donors constitute a litany of eminent scholars and librarians across the country. (For keepers of names, I conjure a sample: James Cahill, Yuen Ren Chao, Alfred Kaiming Chiu, Naomi Fukuda, Mary Haas, Eleanor Hadley, Miwa Kai, Yakov Malkiel, and John Service.)

I joined the Berkeley faculty in 1979, when Miss Huff no longer came to campus. We never met. She loomed large, however, as the routinely-invoked force behind a collection—then overflowing four campus locations and increasingly consigned to off-campus storage—that my colleagues resolved to house in a new, purpose-built library designed by a major architect.⁵ Closer to home, she was a muse to my husband, Donald H. Shively, who moved from Harvard to Berkeley as head of the East Asiatic Library in 1983. His first major project was cataloging and conserving the material Miss Huff had acquired from the Mitsui family in 1950.⁶ I used that material in seminars from my early days at Berkeley and eventually based a book on it (as did one of my graduate students).⁷ But I was most drawn to Miss Huff as a sort of ancestor, as another young woman and new Californian who staked a career on East Asia in a place with few sisters.⁸

⁴ The story of library development is told with exceptional power in *Collecting Asia: East Asian Libraries in North America, 1868-2008*, ed. Peter Zhou (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2010).

⁵ After decades of fund-raising and planning, the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, designed by TOD WILLIAMS BILLIE TSIEN Architects/Partners, opened in 2007.

⁶ A postwar leader of literary and historical studies of Japan, Shively was also appointed to Berkeley's Department of Oriental Languages (now East Asian Languages and Cultures). See footnote 40 for his work on the Mitsui collection.

⁷ *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Oakland and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period* (University of California Press, 2003).

⁸ A lone woman in her circles at the start, Huff would recruit many women to her staff, starting with Elizabeth McKinnon in June, 1947. She would also work closely with Maryon Monahan, who joined the main library administration around 1950. In 1979, three decades after Miss Huff's appointment, I had two female faculty colleagues in East Asian fields (Helen McCullough and Bonnie Wade) and three in the history department (Diane Clemens, Paula Fass, and Lynn Hunt).

Her career is richly detailed in the oral history, a businesslike document spare in the feeling I listened for. Just twice does Miss Huff confide turmoil. Here, her response to a question about remaining unmarried:

There was only one period in my life when I passionately wanted to [marry], and for Puritanical reasons having to do with my respect for my mother, I eschewed it My father would have welcomed an Oriental son-in-law; I mean, it would have made no difference to him what race he belonged to. But I knew that [for] Mother . . . it would have in one sense of the phrase, which I think can be used in many senses, broken her heart. She did so much for me and it would have killed her. I simply couldn't bring myself to do it. Now, if it were this year [1976], it would be different, even with Mother, I think. But it was the 1940s then (259).

This emphatically personal story is also, as Miss Huff emphatically notes, about its time. An informal survey suggests that interracial marriage among scholars of East Asia was rare before 1950, still uncommon during the next decade, and unremarkable only from the 1960s. Even then, of course, partnering across putative divides would remain a source of travail.⁹

A second disclosure addresses the burden of a library job that was not her calling:

I wanted to be doing something else, and that feeling, every few months, would well up almost uncontrollably. I wanted to be translating texts, but it was a pretty selfish feeling. I knew that I'd never work till I was 67 [by electing early retirement to return to scholarship], but I didn't want to leave the library until it was in good condition (146).

⁹ Examples of interracial unions (culled from on-line memorials and obituaries) include, from the 1940s, Shui Shifang and Robert van Gulik (married in 1943); Chang Ch'ung-ho and Hans Frankel (1948); Ilse Martin and Achilles Fang (1948). None of these parties was a US citizen. Examples from the 1950s include Teruko and Albert M. Craig (1953); Kazuko and Robert J. Smith (1955); Haruko Matsukata and Edwin Reischauer (1956). Each of the men was a US citizen. I have not found an example of a female American scholar of East Asia in an interracial marriage before the 1960s. Analysis of US census data indicates that interracial marriage increased from .44 percent of the total in 1960 to .7 in 1970: Anthony Ripley, Special to the *New York Times*, February 14, 1973, "Intermarriages up 63% in '60s Census Report," <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/02/14/archives/intermarriages-up-63-in-60s-census-reports.html>. Still, both .44 and .7 percent are tiny figures. Huff describes in her oral history, p. 13, the "cold" reception of a Japanese scientist married to an American woman when Huff was an undergraduate at the University of Illinois.

The closest Miss Huff comes to an outburst, these remarks are nonetheless apologetic in tone and free of reproach. Not here is any further reference to time—to the prevailing gender politics that narrowed the choices of this specialist in classical Chinese poetry who, in 1947, was the first woman to receive a PhD in Far Eastern Languages at Radcliffe. Although interviewed in the 1970s, when gender inequality became a flash point of Berkeley activism, Miss Huff declines to tie sexism to her own career. We will hear her refer once and uncertainly to the “limits” of being a woman. Overwhelmingly, she identifies the mentors and colleagues who crowd this oral history as sources of support.

For context, another informal census. I find six female peers born within a decade of Miss Huff who received PhDs in East Asian subjects in the US. All made enduring contributions to scholarship, public policy, and pedagogy. None made easy career progress. One published prolifically on classical Japanese history without a professional appointment (Felicia Gressitt Bock, PhD 1948, UC Berkeley). Two served for years as lecturers on university faculties before receiving professorial rank in the 1970s, following the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Helen Craig McCullough, PhD 1955, UC Berkeley; Rulan Chao Pian, MA 1946, PhD 1960, Radcliffe). One served at high levels in the State Department and the Allied Occupation before being blacklisted for putative Communist sympathies and spending nearly two decades in academic jobs before she cleared her reputation in 1967 and returned to government service (Eleanor Hadley, PhD 1949, Radcliffe). One developed celebrated language-training programs for the US embassy in Tokyo and the Foreign Service Institute in Washington DC before appointment to the Cornell faculty in 1969 (Eleanor Harz Jordan, PhD 1950, Yale). One headed the Chinese collection at Stanford’s Hoover Library before appointment to the Yale faculty in 1959 (Mary Claybaugh Wright, PhD 1951, Radcliffe).¹⁰

Miss Huff knew several of these women well, perhaps all of them casually. Still, comparison was not a concern when, guided by her interviewer, she fashioned the sort of non-fictional Bildungsroman at the heart of much oral history. The focus on the speaker is tight, the march from formation to accomplishment measured as if by a metronome, the strain in both the life and the telling of it tempered by tact.

We meet a precocious Elizabeth who taught herself to read from newspapers, moved early to Dickens, and twice skipped grades. She was encouraged by her father, a superintendent of schools who had abandoned graduate work in English to support two daughters. And she was buoyed by a bookish community of faculty kids in Urbana, where she graduated from University High School in 1928 and the University of Illinois in 1932 (with a major in English, a minor in French, and strong interests in etymology and art history). She enjoyed theatrical performance (something of a refrain in notable female bios); she disliked sewing and athletics; she learned to drive and smoke and (soon) to drink (21).¹¹

¹⁰ I rely for matters of record on memorials and obituaries available on-line.

¹¹ Because the oral history includes a detailed Table of Contents that makes navigation easy, I specify page numbers only in the case of quotations, material out of chronological order, and material likely to invite consultation.

The next four years (1932-1936, ages twenty to twenty-four) took Miss Huff to doctoral study via a path fashioned of will and serendipity. She worked odd jobs (typing manuscripts, lecturing on the “Chalice of Antioch” at the Chicago World’s Fair) before saving enough money to enroll for a semester at Radcliffe in the spring of 1934. The pull eastward dated at least from her sophomore year in college, when a lack of funding foiled a transfer to Columbia (9). The pull to scholarship arose from an interest in Romanesque sculpture. A chance course at Radcliffe on Asian art altered her sights. Incidental but telling of the times was the assurance of Langdon Warner—a field baron with a controversial history of removing frescoes from the Dunhuang caves on the Silk Road—that mastery of East Asian languages was unnecessary for a specialist in art (since “it was what you saw in it that was important,” 18). Miss Huff came to laugh at the counsel about languages and to judge the pillage as “indefensible” (54). Instrumental, however, was Warner’s connection to Alfred Salmony, an authority on Central and East Asian art who had fled Cologne to assume an appointment at Mills College (20). He had two fellowships in his gift. Miss Huff received one of them through her Harvard patrons, spent the academic year 1934-1935 at Mills, and completed an MA degree there in East Asian art history. (She mentions neither a focus nor a thesis.)

More bends in the road. Miss Huff attended an “Oriental Seminar” at Columbia in the summer of 1935 (sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and featuring such luminaries as Carrington Goodrich and Ryusaku Tsunoda) but lacked further academic prospects. So, she took an entry-level job in the periodicals department of the University of Chicago library (1935-1936), eking out time for a Chinese language course (with Herrlee Creel) and, on a budget of \$45, two weeks in London to view the (now legendary) International Exhibition of Chinese Art at the Royal Academy (37-39). The crucial opening to advanced training was the surprise award, possibly set in motion by her mother, of a Kate Neal Kinley Memorial Travelling Fellowship from the University of Illinois (reserved for an alumna or alumnus to pursue graduate study in the arts, 42). Miss Huff took the fellowship to Radcliffe and began work toward the PhD.

Striking in this history, yet resonant with the biographies of many women who embarked early on Asian Studies, are a commitment to the independence offered by paid employment, an appetite for scholarly achievement, and a boldness before opportunity.¹² Once good fortune took her to Mills College, Elizabeth Huff stuck to an unforeseen but congenial calling with tenacity. Her first three years of doctoral study at Radcliffe, which she spent preparing for preliminary exams in the spring of 1939, were the easy part of what proved a tumultuous passage.

A year before she took those exams—three hours of sprawling conversation about East Asian “history, literature, art, and philosophy”—she had already learned from Langdon Warner that she would receive a multi-year award for dissertation research from the Harvard-Yenching

¹² For comparison with US-trained scholars who entered the Japan field from the 1950s to 1970s, see *Women in Japanese Studies: Memoirs from a Trailblazing Generation*, ed. Alisa Freedman (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2023). The chronology is not a match with Huff but the stories often overlap.

Institute (the first made to a woman, 61-62). Critically, Miss Huff had demonstrated the competence in language training (under James Ware in Chinese and Serge Elisséeff in Japanese) at the core of the program. Reading texts with authority was the measure of progress. Preceded by a Scotch-laced dinner at the home of Professor Ware, the prelims themselves appear perfunctory (63). Once done with them, Miss Huff made plans to sail on the Hiei Maru from Seattle to Yokohama in August, 1939. She would not return to the States until July, 1946.

She had had a strong taste of approaching bedlam during the summer of 1937, while studying in Munich for a required reading exam in German. There Miss Huff saw the Tag der Deutschen Kunst and an accompanying parade of nationalist floats, which felt pushed by “a tremendous and evil power.” (The parade crowd was so large and close that she fainted, to be revived by a nearby housewife’s smelling salts). There, too, she saw the exhibition of Entartete Kunst. And there she grew close to the Jewish parents of a Mills College colleague who later disappeared (47-50). The seven years in East Asia took her much deeper into the maelstrom.

They began in Kyoto (August 1939-September 1940) with an eerie blend of scholarly routine and martial shadow. Amid heavy police surveillance and feverish send-offs of Japanese troops to China, Miss Huff met daily with a tutor, the renowned Kuroha Chitose, to read Japanese scholarship concerning Chinese painting, the presumptive subject of her dissertation. Her account of a trip to major temple sites in Indochina during the summer of 1940 captures the madness. On the one hand, the fall of France and the mounting ascendancy of Japan wrought havoc with transport and induced dread at border crossings. (The route, variously by ship, train, and bus: Nagasaki-Shanghai-Hong Kong-Hanoi-Saigon-Phnom Penh-Siam Reap-Bangkok and back.) On the other hand, Miss Huff paid a relaxed visit to a colleague at l’École Française d’Extrême Orient in Hanoi; spent weeks touring Angkor Wat by bicycle with a Cambodian guide (while lodging at a Japanese hotel); marveled over mangosteens and tropical monkeys; and canvassed book stores in Hong Kong (76-87).

Proceeding on schedule from Kyoto to Peking (Beijing) in September of 1940, Miss Huff ignored advice from friends and diplomats to return home.

[T]here was still a bare chance, I suppose, that there wouldn’t be a war [involving the US]. I decided that I probably had more to lose by going home with the thesis hardly even started than by staying and taking such chances as might come, so I stayed. I never regretted it (108-9).

That thesis, or dissertation, no longer concerned art (since treasures were being removed from view and hidden outside the capital, 103) but translation of a treatise on classical Chinese poetics. Miss Huff made the change at the urging of Achilles Fang, a polyglot genius with texts, a stinging critic of most scholarship (“In the West, they don’t have any good books about Chinese literature”), and an invaluable counselor of foreign students doing research in Peking.

Her Harvard mentors rubber-stamped the new topic: “Anything you select is all right” (96-100). (Later a lecturer in Chinese at Harvard, Fang also became an authority on Ezra Pound.)¹³

During her first fifteen months in Japanese-occupied Peking, until the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Miss Huff was free to work on the translation, attend lectures at the Catholic University of Peking, tour grand sites (the Forbidden City, the Yün-kan or Yungang caves 云冈石窟), and socialize with “frightfully serious” fellow students—particularly Arthur and Mary Wright, who became lifelong friends (98). Japanese soldiers disturbed without destroying an “atmosphere of leisure and scholarship,” which was shared with Japanese colleagues, “fine, unprejudiced people” (101). And, indeed, the fifteen months following Pearl Harbor continued to pass with “a kind of normalcy.” Black-outs became mandatory and enemy alien status constrained movement. Yet not until March, 1943 were civilians of Allied countries living in north China and Manchuria dispatched by train to the Wei-Hsien (Weixian 潍县) internment camp in Shandong. Each was allowed one large piece of luggage and fifty books. Miss Huff’s prison identification was “U.S.A. No. 3-157” (110-112).

Internment lasted from late March of 1943 until August 17 of 1945, close to twenty-nine months. Malnutrition was a problem: Miss Huff weighed under one hundred pounds upon release and her liver was permanently damaged (121). Cold and chilblains were a problem: she discovered through “trial and error” how to fashion “coal balls” (seven parts dug-up clay to one part coal dust, blended with water) for use in “small pot-bellied stoves” (115-116). “Physical fear” was apparently not a problem. The camp, which maintained an effective “internal governance committee,” was free of violence. Miss Huff notes that deaths among internees, though surely hastened by cold and hunger, were natural and mainly among the elderly. Only after two prisoners escaped (one was Arthur Hummel, a future US ambassador to China) did the guards install electric wire around the perimeter and require twice-daily roll calls (119).¹⁴

The human rhythms that rose throughout her time in wartime Asia reasserted themselves in camp. Miss Huff learned to share a room with six other single women and to bathe in a “vast shower room without partitions” (116). She planted a garden of morning glories and night-

¹³ Fang received a PhD degree In Comparative Literature from Harvard in 1958 with a dissertation of almost 900 pages that, writes James Robert Hightower, “tracked down all the allusions” in Pound’s *Pisan Cantos*. Fang never published the work, Hightower continues, since he “was reluctant to document publicly Pound’s slovenly way with sources.” Fang grew close to Pound, with whom he shared regular visits and a lengthy correspondence. A lecturer in Chinese for thirty years at Harvard, Fang, says Hightower, “attracted student disciples who appreciated a master’s guidance and were not deterred by biting criticism.” See Hightower, “Achilles Fang: In Memoriam,” *Monumenta Serica* 45 (1997): 399-413. Fang’s papers are in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

¹⁴ See Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women under Pressure* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) for an account of life in the camp by a missionary (then on the faculty of Yenching University) and distinguished theologian. Among the deceased was the Olympian Eric Liddell, then in missionary service, who died of a brain tumor.

blooming cereus with Mary Wright. And she found a way to make scholarship the spine of her schedule. Apart from solitary work with the fifty books she had carted to camp, she read classical texts with Father Raymond de Jaegher and Arthur Wright; she read modern novels with Richard Irwin. The outside world intruded on occasion, when mail from home and parcels from the Red Cross got through. The intimate world of sex provided more routine relief. Miss Huff observes that births outpaced deaths and that one of her roommates, a “Russian abortionist,” maintained a successful practice (paid “in cash or jewelry,” 115). She is silent on her own experience.

The liberation of the camp occurred two days after the surrender of Japan, when seven US Army paratroopers landed on August 17, 1945 to take command (and blast out, at dawn of the following day, a recording of “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning”). The army also dropped food and Hershey’s chocolate. Local Chinese residents “streamed in” with strong alcohol to barter for camp goods (122-23). Given the tough logistics of relocating a large population of internees, Miss Huff’s return to Peking was delayed until October of 1945. There she recovered possessions that friends had kept for her, found austere lodgings, and stayed on for eight more months to finish her dissertation. “I really just did nothing but meet with tutors and translate things” (127). She finally sailed from Shanghai in June of 1946, arrived in San Francisco on July 16, and rejoined the Harvard community in early fall.

The gritty perseverance in this story is unnerving. Miss Huff repeatedly declined opportunities to return home—whether freely before Pearl Harbor, through negotiated repatriation in later years, or via army transport following liberation. Again and again, she chose to stay in China to complete her dissertation “strictly on my own,” without guidance from faculty mentors (127).

Despite the importance of that dissertation, the oral history tells us little about the contents. We learn that it was a translation of the *Shih-hsiieh* (Poetics) by Huang Chieh (*Shi xue* 詩学 by Huang Xihe 黄節, d. 1935) and that three readers approved it in time for conferral of the PhD in March of 1947. Serge Elisséeff signed off readily. James Ware followed suit reluctantly, since “Chinese studies in the West was not *ready* for such hard translating” without “more and more French Sinology” to ground the text. Francis Woodman Cleaves, a recent addition to the faculty, insisted on endless revisions so “pedestrian” that they robbed the translation of style. We also learn that Miss Huff believed the dissertation to be lost: Elisséeff requested an additional copy when both the typescript and the first carbon went missing from the Radcliffe and departmental archives, possibly spirited away by Achilles Fang, who regularly assigned the work to his students. Miss Huff withheld the second carbon (which lacked the thousands of handwritten Chinese characters essential to understanding) and, given her discomfort with the revisions required by Cleaves, declared herself “happy” to hear of the dissertation’s disappearance. Prodded by her interviewer, she conceded that “it seems rather a waste” (131-32).

The detachment reflects, I think, Miss Huff’s absorption in a different project, one that had first captured her imagination in China, made her subsequently impatient with work in the Berkeley library, and moved her finally to early retirement: translating the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙, a seminal and punishingly complex treatise on literary theory written by Liu

Xie 劉勰 in the sixth century. I return later to this project, which was close to completion at the time of the oral history interviews. It apparently eclipsed interest in a dissertation decades-old and happily lost.

Well, the dissertation was not lost. It survived in a microfilm copy available at Harvard (recently shared with Berkeley) and deserves attention as both a daunting display of learning and what I find a sacrificial labor of service.¹⁵ The dissertation is an annotated translation of a work Miss Huff describes as a “handbook” or a “textbook”—written by a prominent professor of Chinese literature at the National University of Peking for his students—that surveys canonical critiques of Chinese poetry from the Han through the Ming dynasties (c. 200 BC-1644 AD). The project required not only a virtuosa competence in the poetic and critical styles of vastly different eras but the bibliographic expertise (and ardor) to track down and evaluate often uncited sources. Here, two quotations from the Abstract that begin to suggest the intellectual sophistication Miss Huff brought to the challenge.

The annotations to the translation, which comprise more than half of the thesis, show the variety of writings over a thousand years and more which are taken by one author as accepted criticism. The search for his sources led through the *shih-hua* “discourses on poetry,” the commentaries to collections and anthologies, the standard histories and catalogues. It showed how far removed from the original text many of the quotations were, and how in some cases there were careless mistakes in attribution—how the author’s interest was in the judgment rather than in the precise origin of the source. In disclosing the wealth of materials to be drawn on, the notes also show the unanalytical method of a book which points to problems it does not attempt to solve.

It is hoped that, besides its giving a summary of Chinese poetry and traditional criticism upon it, this annotated translation will be of use in pointing to some of the problems which await research: semantic study of the critical and technical terms, the history and classification of the types of prosody, analysis of content and the influences of thought in different periods.¹⁶

For the narrow circle of scholars and students with access to it, the dissertation delivered riches: the Romanization of countless proper nouns, the translation of poetic critiques across centuries, the identification and interrogation of major sources, and the formulation of key questions about the frameworks and contexts of poetic analysis. But for Miss Huff, the personal scholarly satisfaction did not, could not, extend to the status-building success of publication. Who would bring out a pedantic translation of a knotty modern textbook? (The dissertation really

¹⁵ Cataloged in HOLLIS as Shih-hsüeh; Huff, Elizabeth, Ph.D. Radcliffe College 1947; Huang, Chieh, -1935. Cataloged at UC Berkeley as Shih-hsüeh/Huang Chieh; [translated by] Elizabeth Huff.

¹⁶ The Abstract appears on three unnumbered pages following the conclusion of the dissertation on p. 229. See the “Translator’s Introduction,” p. ii, for the “handbook” and “textbook” descriptions.

is close to unreadable.) So, I am puzzled by a project that combined awesome technical difficulties with negligible opportunities for authorial reward. Translating a text aimed at pedagogues does stand out to me as sacrificial labor, as a bad misdirection of a big talent. The text had been urged on Miss Huff by (a perhaps self-interested) Achilles Fang, an informal advisor in China not yet affiliated with Harvard. But the project was also “rubberstamped” by the same mentors in Cambridge who directed male students to translations of primary sources likely to be readily published.¹⁷ Miss Huff expresses gratitude to her advisors, especially Fang, with whom she shared a lifetime of respect and trust. Still, they set her to work on a thankless task. Small wonder that she so readily put the dissertation behind her.

So, too, she suspended hopes of an academic career with a decision made, under pressure, in 1947: “I had to leave [Harvard] as soon as I could because I had to start earning money” (131). Elisséeff offered Miss Huff a staff position with the Chinese-English Dictionary project of the Harvard-Yenching Institute (a Sisyphean labor begun in the 1930s and abandoned in 1955) but nothing more substantial. She does not note, though surely smarted under, the contrast with both Francis Cleaves and James Hightower, fellow students in Peking who received faculty appointments at Harvard once they completed their own PhDs there. (Did their dissertation subjects make the difference?) Entry to academic posts elsewhere was vexed as well: “There was no machinery [for placement], at least for women students.” At a time when personal communication among senior professors underlay most hiring, active patronage was indispensable. If exerted on her behalf, it was fruitless. Did she “feel limited by being a woman?” Yes, “I felt it. [But] I didn’t do any investigating to be sure that my feeling was valid. I think you had to be much more aggressive than I was.” With no scholarly position in view, Miss Huff followed two leads—to libraries (133-34).¹⁸

A good interview at Columbia ended with bad news about the salary range.¹⁹ So, with no ado, she accepted a telegraphed offer from Donald Coney, the University Librarian at Berkeley.

¹⁷ Consider two of Huff’s contemporaries. The dissertation of James Robert Hightower, “*Han Shih Wai Chuan: Han Ying's Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs*,” was published as a Harvard-Yenching monograph in 1952. The dissertation of Francis Woodman Cleaves, “The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1362,” was published in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12.1-2 (1952): 1-123.

¹⁸ A trip to Harvard while the oral history interviews were proceeding prompted this remark: “I wished sometimes that I had taken [the dictionary job] because the Institute was quite benign, really, and I probably would have been kept on in some capacity even after the dictionary ended” (133).

¹⁹ Carl M. White, Director of Libraries at Columbia, interviewed Huff in February for the headship of the East Asiatic Library. Asked about the salary and the range, he said, remembers Huff: “You might get up to as much as five thousand dollars.” She adds: “even then that seemed awfully little,” p. 133. It was actually good pay for many full professors at the time. Did Huff misremember? Or find it inadequate as an aspirational career ceiling? Or inadequate period?

After a two-week crash course on librarianship with A.K. Chiu at Harvard-Yenching, Miss Huff began work on April 15, 1947 as Founding Head of the East Asiatic Library.

To understand the job she did at Berkeley and the sacrifices she made to do it, there is, I think, an essential consideration: Miss Huff effectively started at the top—with the title she would hold until retirement, a role in senior management, and the ear of President Robert Gordon Sproul. Although lacking an office or a single staff member, she enjoyed from the beginning an autonomy and authority suited to her temperament and unimaginable had she been recruited as an assistant professor. She took to the high altitude immediately, making decisions of transformative importance.

Two factors were crucial. First was the backing of President Sproul and University Librarian Coney. As Miss Huff learned later, her appointment followed a survey of the East Asian holdings at Berkeley by Harvard's A. K. Chiu, who concluded that they constituted "a good enough nucleus to justify its being built upon." Sproul consequently supported Coney in hiring a library head and continued such support "right down the line." He approved impressive start-up budgets for Chinese and Japanese acquisitions. He secured Regental consent for purchases of several private libraries. (More, below.) Sproul brought to these initiatives, observes Miss Huff, "a very sensitive awareness of the fact that the war had changed everything so much" that American universities in the west, as in the east, must establish "strong footholds" in Asian Studies. He also brought, I suspect, an intuitive confidence in Miss Huff. Although Sproul resigned as president in 1952 and retired from the university in 1958, his early support of her and her work remained definitive for Miss Huff. She spent the final moments at her desk, before her own retirement a decade later, writing Sproul a long letter of gratitude and reflection on the library's growth ("the least I could do," 166).

The second factor was the existence, already, of a significant "foothold" in Asian Studies at Berkeley. Regent Edward Tompkins created the university's first endowed chair—the Agassiz Professorship in Oriental Languages and Literatures—with a donation in 1872 that generated sufficient income by 1896 to support the appointment of faculty specialists. The early holders of the chair (John Fryer, Kiang Kang-hu, E.T. Williams, and Ferdinand Lessing) enriched their professorial contributions with gifts of their large personal libraries. The renowned Ferdinand Lessing, who introduced the study of Mongolian and Tibetan to the US and spearheaded the Mongolian-English dictionary project, accelerated growth by scouting sinological collections potentially available for purchase and using sabbatical time in China to acquire research material in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan. Helping to fund development was a bequest made in 1918 by Horace W. Carpentier. And amplifying it were both continuing gifts and exchanges with university libraries in Asia. At the time of Miss Huff's arrival, East Asian holdings numbered, by her count, about 77,000 volumes—the largest such library west of Chicago and competitive with most Ivies (135-40, 262-64).²⁰ The faculty, too, if still modest in number, was

²⁰ For further detail see Zhou, *Collecting Asia*, pp. 66-79. I am indebted to Deborah Rudolph, Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library at Berkeley, for the information concerning Ferdinand Lessing. For the Carpentier endowment, see the "Annual Report of the President of the University on behalf of the Regents to His Excellency the

outsized in ambition. In addition to Lessing, it included, among others, Peter Boodberg and the recently appointed Edward Schafer.

With good support and a good foundation, Miss Huff moved swiftly on three fronts: structure, technical development, and acquisitions. Structurally crucial were Miss Huff's decisions to bring together as a distinct collection (almost) all East Asian material held by Berkeley; to concentrate it in one primary location; to intersperse, rather than physically separate, the material in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese; and to establish a large, non-circulating reference section open to all users. These decisions, most far from obvious at the time, proved highly influential in the still nascent field of East Asian librarianship.²¹ The consolidation of the holdings made something of a public splash in 1952, when the East Asiatic Library took over a campus landmark—a building designed by John Galen Howard and recently vacated by the law school that featured marble stairs and columns, bronze chandeliers, oak paneling, and a vaulted ceiling. Winning the coveted building (rechristened as Durant Hall) was a coup, surely tipped by Sproul and Coney.²²

The labor of consolidation, long preceding the move to the landmark building, had been underway from Miss Huff's first days on campus. Sheer scatter was one challenge, since much of the East Asian collection was distributed throughout the nine tiers of the main library stacks and a sizeable fraction in improvised spaces occupied by the Department of Oriental Languages (since 1998, Far Eastern Languages and Cultures). Calculating loss and attempting recovery were challenges as well, since a combination of inconsistent and deferred cataloguing, erratic record-keeping, and unsupervised access meant that hundreds, possibly thousands, of volumes had gone missing. A proprietary culture among faculty members, ever notorious in academic

Governor of the State of California, 1918-19," https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb600006hj&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text .

Noted there is this gift:

“Carpentier, Horace W., New York City, \$100,000, without conditions. At the suggestion of President Emeritus Benjamin Ide Wheeler, the Regents approved a recommendation that the income of the bequest should be used by preference for the purchasing of books and other materials of instruction and research relating to the five great areas of Asiatic civilization, particularly China, Japan, India, Arabia, and Babylonia.”

²¹ Some East Asian material remained diffused in specialized branch libraries. Space constraints, pressing from the mid-1950s, required spill from EAL's primary location into secondary locations and storage. Huff's decisions about interspersing material in different languages both on the shelves and in the catalog were her most influential.

²² Opened in 1911 as the Boalt Memorial Hall of Law, the classical revival building was renamed in 1951 in honor of Henry Durant, the founding president of the university. It is listed on the National Register of Historic places. The offices of the Department of Oriental Languages were also moved into the building. Huff notes competition for the space from the Bancroft Library without explaining the outcome. She herself worried from the outset about the inadequacy of the tiers for a steadily expanding collection, pp. 151, 199-200.

circles, aggravated the situation. Colleagues piled up volumes in homes and offices; they monopolized reference works in a locked seminar room.

Nonetheless, Miss Huff made steady progress in assembling the books on the ninth tier of Doe Library, the vast space initially assigned to the East Asian collection. There she faced the more daunting challenges of technical development: the intertwined tasks of reclassifying the collection to a rigorous standard and selecting a staff able to perform that and other library services.²³ She was essentially starting from scratch, insofar as no regular personnel had overseen the growth of the East Asian holdings and no consistent rubrics had guided the cataloging that occurred.²⁴ Among the many cataloging decisions made by Miss Huff, two were fundamental. She chose the Harvard-Yenching system of classification, better suited at the time to East Asian material than the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal systems. And she chose to arrange cards—interfiling rather than separating them by language—according to the radical-stroke order of the characters used in titles rather than the alphabetical order of Romanized transcriptions. Romanization remained very much a work in progress (209-13). The staff sustaining such efforts had already grown to five by the fall of 1947 and would number fourteen by 1952 (143, 172).²⁵ At its heart were the master catalogers Charles Hamilton and Richard Irwin.

The pioneering—and evolving—character of the venture deserves emphasis. National standards for classifying East Asian material would emerge jaggedly in the 1950s, take hold contentiously, and require continual refinement. Professional training in East Asian librarianship was mainly on-the-job: the first graduate program was offered by the University of Chicago in 1963, the first summer institute in 1969.²⁶ In this context, the work at Berkeley made a national (and international) difference. As early as 1951 Hamilton and Irwin collaborated on the “East Asiatic Library Draft Code for Descriptive Cataloging,” which was shared with over eighty libraries worldwide.²⁷ Extensively circulated, too, were the photographic reproductions of the library’s author-title catalog (thirteen volumes) and subject catalog (six volumes), which were

²³ The staff was organized into five divisions: cataloging, current serials, reference, circulation, binding, p. 203.

²⁴ Huff mentions with respect two early “curators:” Michael Hagerty and Diether von den Steinen, pp. 141-42. The latter was a particularly accomplished scholar, trained in Berlin and long resident in China, who was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Oriental Languages.

²⁵ Also see Shively, “Elizabeth Huff,” p. 23.

²⁶ For a good introduction to a now formidable literature, see Eugene Wu, “Organizing for East Asian Studies in the United States: The Origins of the Council on East Asian Libraries, Association for Asian Studies,” *Journal of East Asian Libraries* 1996.110: 1-14, <https://www.eastasianlib.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/OriginsofCEAL.pdf>.

²⁷ Shively, “Elizabeth Huff,” p. 23, indicates that the “Draft Code” was distributed to 33 libraries and subsequently requested by 51 more. Find the text at “East Asiatic Library Draft Code for Descriptive Cataloging,” University of California, Berkeley, East Asiatic Library, 1951, 12 pp., <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015030783297&seq=3>.

published by G. K. Hall in 1968. The combined cost, domestic and post-publication, was \$1,255 (over \$11,000 today).²⁸ Even in Asia and Europe, “Everyone bought a copy that I ever heard of,” notes a still surprised Miss Huff (228-30). The subject catalog, with English-language headings, was a Berkeley innovation. None preceded it (207).

More significant than the publication was the staff Miss Huff attracted and trained with salaries second only to the Library of Congress (204) and, with edifying regularity, dispatched to head East Asian libraries elsewhere. A short list: Fang Chao-ying went to Canberra; Hiroko Ikeda to Hawai‘i; Janet Krompart to Oakland University in Michigan; Emiko Moffitt to the Hoover Library at Stanford; William Osuga to UCLA; Yukihiisa Suzuki to Michigan; and Chang-su Swanson to the Smithsonian (203-04).²⁹ Charles Hamilton, the illustrious (and famously shy) head cataloguer, resisted raids from the Library of Congress but, from 1958 to 1970, exerted great influence as chair of the Committee on Far Eastern Materials of the American Library Association.³⁰

Yet if Miss Huff’s structural and technical decisions underlay the development of Berkeley’s East Asiatic Library, the story of acquisitions holds the drama. Some of it comes from giddy numbers. Coney and Sproul had approved initial budgets of \$25,000 each for Chinese and Japanese material (a combined value of over \$600,000 today). With those funds, faculty and library staff went on buying “expeditions” across postwar Asia. Woodbridge Bingham, Ferdinand Lessing, and Richard Irwin bought books in China. (Irwin alone sent home 948 titles in over 26,000 volumes, 170, 188.) Delmer Brown and Elizabeth McKinnon bought books in Japan. The first recruit to Miss Huff’s staff (in June, 1947), the Japan-educated McKinnon was a prime player in two big acquisition dramas.³¹

McKinnon learned in Tokyo—through her network of booksellers, librarians, collectors, and consultants—of the availability of the Murakami Library. Assembled by the industrialist and

²⁸ University of California, Berkeley. Library. *East Asiatic Library. Author-Title Catalog; and Subject Catalogue* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1968). Huff had originally specified that titles be used as main entries but had switched to authors well before 1968. Although the catalog cards had come to include increasing amounts of Romanization, the main entries continued to be arranged in radical stroke order. Huff and Hamilton foresaw that Romanized main entries in alphabetical order would prevail (p. 213). That change occurred in the 1970s, as did a conversion from Harvard-Yenching classification to (improved) Library of Congress classification for new acquisitions.

²⁹ Huff also singles out Hugh Bursleson (recruited to the State Department), Paul Chen, Christa Chow, Yuki Monji, and Harry Nishio (recruited to the sociology department of the University of Toronto). Also see Shively, “Elizabeth Huff,” pp. 23-24, for the later careers of the Huff staff.

³⁰ Wu, “Organizing for East Asian Studies,” p. 10.

³¹ Before coming to Berkeley, McKinnon taught Japanese in Navy language programs at Harvard and Boulder as well as the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

bibliophile Murakami Hamakichi 村上濱吉 (b. 1885), the collection included roughly 10,000 first and early editions of major works by Japanese authors published primarily during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and into the Taishō Period (1912-1926). The cost was high, \$2,500 (over \$30,000 today), so McKinnon asked an acquaintance in Tokyo, Harvard's Edwin O. Reischauer, if his library would want the collection. "He said certainly," remembers Miss Huff, "if Harvard had the money." Miss Huff got the money from Coney and Sproul; McKinnon purchased the collection, unmatched of its kind, in 1948. "It was a huge thing. And a great loss to Japan," occasioned by the economic extremity and financial reform of the postwar years (170).

McKinnon also learned in Tokyo of the possible availability of a stunning holding: the library of the main branch of the Mitsui house 三井家, one of the principal financial and industrial conglomerates of prewar Japan (known as *zaibatsu* 財閥), which had been dissolved by Occupation authorities and ordered to divest itself of capital assets.³² The Mitsui needed cash from the sale of private resources. In December of 1948 McKinnon visited the library, a concrete building that had survived the Tokyo firebombing, to skim what she would discover was a vast assembly in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean of books, manuscripts, rubbings, maps, and miscellanea.³³ Potentially on the market were eight sections (or individual collections) within the Mitsui library that encompassed roughly 100,000 items.³⁴ Many of the items dated from the medieval and early modern periods; many of them were significant independently but peerless collectively as a research and reference corpus with manifold dimensions. Ready to explore a purchase, Miss Huff and her team entered "harrowing" negotiations (159) with Mitsui representatives that would continue for eighteen months. At the insistence of the Mitsui, they were conducted in secrecy.

³² See Huff's oral history pp. 172-88. I also rely on Roger Sherman, "Acquisition of the Mitsui Collection by the East Asiatic Library, University of California, Berkeley," *Journal of East Asian Libraries* 1982. 67: 1-15, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1240&context=jeal>. Distilled from Sherman's 1980 "specialization paper" for UCLA's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, the article is based on the "bulging" Mitsui acquisition file in the East Asian Library.

³³ The miscellanea and ephemera include copperplate prints, *sugoroku* 双六 (board games), theater programs, tiny books, postcards, and calendars.

³⁴ The Basic Collection, the Gakken 鵜軒 Collection, the Imazeki 今関 Collection, the Motoori 本居 Collection, the Sōshin 完宸 Collection, the Japanese Historical Maps Collection, the Asami 浅見 Library, and the Chinese Rubbings Collection. For details, see Huff's oral history, pp. 178-86; Sherman, "Acquisition," pp. 7-13; Shively, "The Mitsui Bunko and the Murakami Bunko," *Waseda daigaku toshokan kiyō* 早稲田大学図書館記要 35 (January 1992): 1-13; and Toshie Marra, "Revealing the Hidden: Uncataloged Japanese Manuscripts at the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley," in *Beyond the Book: Unique and Rare Primary Sources for East Asian Studies Collected in North America*, ed. Jidong Yang (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2022), pp. 239-58.

The need for secrecy appears based on some mix of wavering Mitsui commitment to specific terms, discord among the Mitsui branch families, fear of public backlash, and the procedural complexity of arranging large transactions in occupied Japan. It apparently had to do, too, with overtures to Yale, unknown to Berkeley, that came to light in July of 1949. A package sent that month from the “Yale University Library” to the “Librarian, University of California” landed (after detours) on Miss Huff’s desk. It contained, as a subsequent letter from Yale’s Head of Acquisitions stated, “the catalogue of the Mitsui Library which is for sale and which we have had here under consideration.” He had been instructed by a contact in Japan to forward the catalog to Berkeley, perhaps because Yale had decided not to proceed. Whatever the murky backstory, the discovery that Berkeley’s presumptive right of first refusal to the collection might have challengers spurred hectic action to seal an agreement.³⁵

In a letter to President Sproul drafted on July 24, Librarian Coney and his deputies requested \$60,000 (roughly \$720,000 today) to purchase the Mitsui library at the stipulated cost of \$45,000 and cover related expenses, including packing, transport, and insurance. They noted: “We learned on 12 July that Yale had become interested in the library. We believe we have the inside track, but—if we are to acquire the collection—we should act soon.” Sproul responded by contacting each of the University of California regents individually. They approved the full request by August 4, 1949.³⁶ One of those regents was Chester W. Nimitz, appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt as Commander in Chief of the US Pacific Fleet shortly after Pearl Harbor. Nimitz held that position throughout the war and represented the US at the formal surrender of Japan, conducted on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, October 5, 1945. He retired to Berkeley in 1947 and devoted himself, among many projects, to improving American relations with Japan.³⁷

Despite Berkeley’s firm offer to purchase, negotiations dragged on for most of another year as relentless ordeals—involving payment methods and transport, the demands of vendors, clearance with Japanese and Occupation authorities—threatened failure. Miss Huff kept a tired team resolute (“Give it one more chance!” 175) and helped secure letters from President Sproul to General Douglas MacArthur (Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces) with bona fides for the Berkeley representatives in Tokyo.³⁸ Finally, the Mitsui Library was dispatched to San Francisco in six shipments that left Yokohama between June and October of 1950. The last of the cargo—which totaled 496 huge crates—reached campus on November 22.³⁹ Press coverage

³⁵ Sherman, “Acquisition,” pp. 3-4.

³⁶ Sherman, “Acquisition,” 4-5.

³⁷ I identified Nimitz by scanning a list of “The Regents of the University of California,” <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/pdf/regentslistb.pdfregents>. For a brief biography, see the website of the Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/biographies-list/bios-n/nimitz-chester-w.html>.

³⁸ Sherman, “Acquisition,” p. 5.

³⁹ Marra, “Revealing the Hidden,” p. 239. The number is included in Huff’s report, “The Mitsui Library,” in *CU News* 5.50 (December 20, 1950): 1-2 (p. 282 in the digital file),

in Japan was harsh: Miss Huff recalls front-page headlines on the order of “Great Mitsui Library Washed Away to the United States” (176).

She went no further but might have remarked, had now-insistent questions about national patrimony arisen, that a sale to Berkeley at a good price kept much of the Mitsui library together (when other collections were being dispersed among secondhand booksellers and private parties) and, more important, opened it to public access (unlike Mitsui practice). If its immediate neighborhood was now California, international scholarship profited from efforts to conserve, catalog, and publish data about the collection as well as to microfilm and later digitize major holdings.⁴⁰ Shively addressed the point in a lecture to scholars and publishers in Tokyo during 1991.

The Murakami and Mitsui materials came to Berkeley because of . . . tragic conditions in Japan in 1948 It is a privilege for us to have these materials in our care. But we understand that they belong, ultimately, to the civilization of the world. We want to do whatever we can to make them available to scholars everywhere.⁴¹

Surely important, too, for Miss Huff—this art historian sharply aware of the misconduct of Langdon Warner—were issues of both volition and provenance. In the first instance, the sale was not only (protractedly) consensual but selective: the Mitsui excluded their business records from purchase from the outset of negotiations; they subsequently culled many significant items

<https://digioll.lib.berkeley.edu/record/3517?ln=en>.

⁴⁰ Huff commissioned and edited a masterful catalog by Chaoying Fang, *The Asami Library: A Descriptive Catalog* (University of California Press, 1969). She also brought Ogura Chikao from Kyoto to begin cataloging the manuscript holdings, an undertaking continued by both Shively (EAL head 1983-90) and Marra (Librarian for the Japanese Collection, 2012-). For details concerning the manuscript projects, see Marra, “Revealing the Hidden.” Shively outlines his work on fund-raising, conservation, cataloging, publication, and reproduction on four fronts (woodblock printed books, other books, maps, and rubbings) in “Mitsui Bunko,” pp. 9-12 and the front matter to *Edo Printed Books at Berkeley, Formerly of the Mitsui Library in the Collection of the University of California at Berkeley*, comps. Oka Masahiko, Kodama Fumiko, Tozawa Ikuko, and Ishimatsu Hisayuki (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 1990), pp. 1-7. See the results of Marra’s efforts to provide online databases and digitized images of substantial parts of the collection (Japanese printed books, historical maps, manuscripts, *sugoroku*, copperplates, and portions of the Murakami Library) at “Japanese Studies, About the Collection” on the website of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library, <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/c.php?g=4428&p=15707>. Texts can be found in the UCB Library Digital Collections <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/find/digital-collections> and the platform provided by the Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University, [Japanese Special Collections in the C. V. Starr East Asian Library](https://www.arts.ritsumeikan.ac.jp/en/collections/).

⁴¹ Shively, “Mitsui Bunko,” p. 12.

from the collection sold to Berkeley before shipping it from Japan.⁴² Uniquely valuable material was consequently scarce. In the second instance, much of the material sold to Berkeley had been bought by the Mitsui themselves from other collectors. The most prized was the Asami Library, which the Mitsui acquired around 1943 from the heirs of Asami Rintarō 浅見麟太郎, a lawyer employed by the colonial administration in Seoul from 1906 to 1918. He assembled there a magnificent personal library of Yi Dynasty imprints, rubbings, and documents. In effect, and well before the Berkeley chapter, the story of the Mitsui library was the story of scholarly material in motion – of material circulating through attested exchanges in an international marketplace.⁴³

Quieter stories of routine replaced these early dramas as Miss Huff and her growing staff settled into Durant Hall and regularized the new protocols for technical and public services. Most acquisitions came to be handled through correspondence with agents across Asia. Hong Kong was one gateway for purchases of material from the People's Republic of China, although direct purchases—with (reliable) approval from the US Treasury Department—occurred through the National Library in Beijing and the government printing house (189-90). And funding, no longer a matter of extraordinary appropriations, relied on annual allocations from the main library. Miss Huff never had “as great an amount to spend as Harvard and Chicago, for example, but I was generously treated proportionately” (192). Indeed, “some of the branch heads thought that [East Asian funding] was too generous (239).” She amplified her budget with foundation and government grants as well as income from the Carpentier endowment. Gifts continued, including a donation from “Japan’s Imperial Household Ministry of copies of all of Emperor [Hirohito’s] marine biology publications” (225). Notably, the library became in 1959 the second national depository (after the Library of Congress) of official Japanese government documents (216).

Let me single out two matters of “routine.” One concerns serials, which grew to a startling total of over 2,000 titles by the time of Miss Huff’s retirement (216), most of them complete runs because of her zeal in “filling in” missing numbers with retrospective purchases. That growth had resulted, in part, from a commitment to academic synergy. Miss Huff made Berkeley “perhaps the most active library in the fifties in arranging exchanges to obtain a large number of Japanese journals in the social sciences and, far more remarkable, the physical sciences.”⁴⁴ A second matter concerns symbiosis of a different sort. In the early 1950s, Berkely

⁴² For the substantial culling, see Sherman, “Aquisition” pp. 8-9; Shively, “Mitsui Bunko” pp. 5-8; and Marra, “Revealing the Hidden,” pp. 244-46. Much of the culled material was acquired by the National Diet Library, the University of Tokyo, and other depositories in Japan.

⁴³ Other than the General Collection (of disparate material, much for reference, assembled by many hands), only three of the eight sections of the Mitsui library purchased by Berkeley were personally built by members of the Mitsui house: the Sōshin, Japanese Historical Maps, and Chinese Rubbings Collections. Purchased from others were the Asami Library of Korean material, the Imazeki collection of Chinese material, the Gakken collection (assembled by a professor of medicine and rich in the history of thought), and the Motoori collection (kept by successors of Norinaga 宣長 and rich in material on National and Chinese Learning).

⁴⁴ Shively, “Elizabeth Huff,” p. 23.

and Stanford—through Elizabeth Huff and the Hoover’s Mary Wright—made a trailblazing agreement to share purchases of (numerous and expensive) Chinese local histories by dividing geographical coverage between the two institutions (167). Such collaboration has been rare among East Asian (or any academic) libraries.

The Hoover’s Mary Wright figures indirectly in the only quarrel, a bad one, to surface in the oral history. At a meeting during 1955-1956 of East Asian faculty members to discuss allotments from the Carpentier endowment, the political scientist Robert Scalapino became “quite uncontrollably unpleasant” and “almost irrational” in accusing Miss Huff of slighting acquisitions in the social sciences. A complaint signed by fellow social scientists and dispatched to Mr. Coney invoked Wright as a laudable contrast. A “shaken” Miss Huff spent a weekend alone in the library charting recent acquisitions title by title and demonstrating that fully fifty percent of them were in the social sciences. Given substantial purchases in technical fields and the natural sciences, no more than a third belonged to the humanities—the putative object of favor (232-34).

The quarrel provides an arresting look at a woman not to be bullied. Miss Huff’s description of Scalapino twenty years after the event is even sterner than the remarks included in the 1955-1956 Annual Report (the complaint was “wordy without pointed examples or precise details” and its “motive remains dark,” 234). That description is also out of character for both combatants. (I certainly saw Scalapino angry on occasion but never out of control.) Beyond the words, of course, is the empirical rebuttal undertaken at speed to put a critic in his place.

The quarrel is arresting, too, I suspect, as a climate test—not just of field priorities but of campus mission. Here is a current but historically consistent introduction to the Hoover Institution Library, the engine of East Asian acquisitions at Stanford: “Our collections contain the most important materials on war, revolution, and peace and social, political, and economic change in the modern era.”⁴⁵ Consider, for comparison, a Berkeley collection famous, when Scalapino erupted, for costly purchases of the Murakami and Mitsui Libraries, both dominated by literary and historical material, much of it antique. In taking issue with the “personal interests of the Librarian,” the Scalapino complaint may have lodged negligibly in “precise details” but existentially in the profile of Asian research at Berkeley (234).

As it happens, in 1957 Scalapino helped establish at Berkeley both the Center for Chinese Studies and the Center for Chinese Studies Library. With major funding from the Ford Foundation, the CCSL began building a superior collection of social science material—from economics and politics to regional security and trade—on modern, mainly Communist China. The proximity of this initiative to the quarrel is surely not coincidental.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ <https://www.hoover.org/library-archives>, accessed September 28, 2023.

⁴⁶ I am indebted to Peter Zhou, Director of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at Berkeley, for drawing my attention to the timing and the details. The CCSL was incorporated in 2008 into the C. V. Starr Library.

Yet that moment of combat aside, the emphasis in the oral history falls on collegiality. Miss Huff the humanist and classicist was welcomed with particular cordiality by members of the Oriental Languages faculty. She joined them for Monday lunches at the Faculty Club. She was appointed at their recommendation to the editorial board of the university's Chinese Dynastic Histories Translation Series (257). She was pressed to teach, nearly from the outset, an annual and acclaimed course on Chinese bibliography.⁴⁷ And, following the unexpected death of Chen Shih-hsiang in 1971, she was recalled from retirement to teach a lecture course and a graduate seminar on Chinese literature (212, 254).

The focus of retirement, however, was the return to scholarship she had longed for. At the time of the oral history interviews in 1976 (some years after her retirement in 1968 at the age of 56), Miss Huff reports that: "I'm now working on the text that I started working on in 1941, and my hope to have the final draft of that complete by the end of this year depends, I think to a large part, upon how much my vision improves." (Cataract surgery was looming.) She mentions, too, that she had shown her translation of the text to Achilles Fang, who judged it "marvelous" (257). Although the title of the text is not mentioned in the interviews, the two introductions to the oral history (by John Jamieson and Rosemary Levinson) identify it as the "monumental" *Wên-hsin tiao-lung* (*Wenxin diaolong*). Two pieces of evidence confirm the identification, I believe. First, Miss Huff notes in her dissertation Abstract that "scholars have for centuries couched their [literary] criticism" in a "vocabulary common in critical writings since, notably, the *Wên-hsin tiao-lung*," written by Liu Hsieh (Liu Xie, d. 522).⁴⁸ Here she puts this source at the core of Chinese poetics, a point revealed by her PhD research and a logical focus for a bolder undertaking. Second, the East Asian Library's "rare book room has three early editions of *Wenxin diaolong*, all containing [Elizabeth Huff's] Chinese seal, so probably acquired during her years in Beijing. One of these is heavily annotated in EH's distinctive hand, and another came to EAL only after her death."⁴⁹

There can be little doubt that Miss Huff committed herself to a text she had come to understand as "the most important Chinese treatise on literature." Although an English translation had appeared in 1959, a lacerating critic dismissed it as no more than "provisional."⁵⁰ Enter Miss Huff, ready to do the work justice. But if we can assume the trenchancy of her translation ("marvelous" from Achilles Fang is unmatchable), we cannot read it. As far as I

⁴⁷ See Huff's oral history, pp. 248-50 for samples from the course notes, which indicate scholarly control of an impressive range of material.

⁴⁸ Regarding the Abstract, see footnote 16.

⁴⁹ Email correspondence from Deborah Rudolph on October 12, 2023.

⁵⁰ For the translation, see Vincent Yu-chung Shih, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons by Liu Hsieh, A Study of Thought and Pattern in Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). For the criticism, see a review by James Robert Hightower in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 22 (1959): 280-88. The first quotation appears in the Hightower review on p. 280, the second on p. 287.

know, the manuscript disappeared with Miss Huff's death in 1988. I wonder if poor eyesight compounded the challenges of annotating a text so complex that no full English translation has yet replaced the 1959 venture.⁵¹

Did the return to scholarship, the completion of the draft translation, and the kudos of Achilles Fang provide a sense of fulfillment? Miss Huff does not tell us. Personal disclosure remains spare in the oral history until the end. I opened this essay with two moments of revelation and now squeeze out two more. Reflecting on advice from Peter Alexis Boodberg (a former Russian baron) that foreign scholars should ground their analyses of Asia in their own "cultural heritage," Miss Huff confides: "I didn't tell him that all the time I lived in China I wanted more than anything to be Chinese" (149). Responding to the interviewer's question about avocations, Miss Huff speaks of "redecorating apartments and houses," specifying that "Maryon Monahan and I bought and lived in a succession of five houses, of which this is the last" (258).

Wanting to be Chinese—like the foresworn marriage prospect—leads into unnavigable waters. Living with Monahan is only slightly less mysterious. Impossible to miss is the avidity for interior engineering, exemplified by the creation of the East Asiatic Library, that extended to those five houses. The number also intimates a restlessness of character remarked by colleagues ("I was thought to work insanely") that drove Miss Huff to daily overtime (164). But crucial is the gift for durable friendship. Miss Huff may have met Monahan when she was studying at Mills College. (President Aurelia Henry Reinhardt was a relative, Miss Huff notes, of Monahan's then-husband, Thomas, 23). Collaboration began in Berkeley, where Monahan—known as Miss Monahan—would head the Acquisitions Department of the general library.⁵² She is invoked throughout the oral history (as a stalwart during the Mitsui negotiations, for example, and the master planner of the move into Durant Hall), although we never learn when and how deeply a professional alliance advanced into shared lives. The oral history keeps us at a distance.

Asked at one point to "describe your administration," Miss Huff answers with laughter but no hesitation: "autocratic" (237). Donald Shively focusses in his obituary on nerve: "[S]he was quick to grasp the value of what was available, and she had the courage to seize the moment and go after funding."⁵³ Clearest in the interviews, I believe, is the fusion of big thinking with unflinching care for fundamentals. (Miss Huff spent part of most days at the public reference desk.) We find there a woman, however guarded, who took ownership of the library she headed—at the top from her first until her final day at work—with an authority both welcome personally and generative for the university and Asian scholarship across the globe.

⁵¹The text is excerpted in Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992). It is also the subject of *Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in Wenxin Diaolong*, ed. Zong-Qi Cai (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁵² Email correspondence from Thomas C. Leonard and Peter E. Hanff on April 23, 2023. Monahan died in 2004, age 96.

⁵³ Shively, "Elizabeth Huff," p. 21.

