

When Two Worlds Meet: East Asian experiences in the West and at Dartmouth
Curated by Hannah Chung
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East Asian and Asian-American students have been the most rapidly growing minority groups at Dartmouth College since the mid-20th century. However, archival records on the communities' experiences are scarce as it was only around the 1970s that these students began to organize collectively around their shared ethnic and cultural identities. This exhibit provides perspective on East Asian and Asian-American student experiences on campus by looking at the archival records of some of the very first students of Asian descent at Dartmouth. To contextualize these students' experiences at Dartmouth, the exhibit also presents glimpses of larger historical conversations between East Asia and the West. These conversations include attempts by East Asians to document and communicate their cultural heritage and life experiences to Western audiences. The other side of the conversation consists of Western perceptions and interpretations of East Asian civilizations, whether accurate or not.

Case 1. East Asian and Asian-American Student Experiences at Dartmouth

Despite their distinct cultural backgrounds, East Asian and Asian-American students tend to be brought together as a single ethnic and cultural entity at Dartmouth, mostly due to the small size of the student body. Establishing an East Asian and Asian-American community at Dartmouth is still an ongoing process. It was only in the 1980s that the College administration began to record the number of international Asian students and Asian American students under a separate enrollment census category. Starting in the late 19th century, students from East Asian countries enrolled at Dartmouth in small numbers and in the mid-20th century that the U.S. national students of Asian descent began to join the Dartmouth community. Concerted efforts to create social and cultural outlets for East Asian and Asian-American students began in the 1970s. The Asian Studies Program at Dartmouth was established in 1974 and was operated by faculty members across multiple departments teaching courses on the topics of Asian history and culture. Dartmouth Asian Organization was founded in 1975. The Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Language and Literature as we know it today only came to life in 1995.

1. Photo of Kan-ichi Asakawa, Class of 1899, undated, from alumni file.

Kan-ichi Asakawa was the first international student at Dartmouth from East Asia. Born in Nihonmatsu, Japan in 1873, Asakawa earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from Waseda University in Tokyo in 1895. Shortly afterwards, he moved to the U.S. to pursue a Bachelor of Letters degree at Dartmouth at the recommendation of his Waseda professors. He completed his doctoral studies at Yale University and later became a lecturer at Dartmouth College, specializing in Japanese culture and history, before returning to Yale for the duration of his career.

**2. Kan-ichi Asakawa's letter to Mrs. Charlotte Cheever Tucker on February 6, 1921.
Mss 921114**

After teaching at Dartmouth for a while, Asakawa returned to New Haven in 1907 and taught as a lecturer in Yale University's History Department. Thirty years

later, he was the first East Asian to become a professor in the United States. Even after his departure from Hanover, he continued his interaction with key figures at Dartmouth College, including William Jewett Tucker, the former president of the College, and his wife, Charlotte Cheever Tucker.

3. Dartmouth College admission application of Samuel Chu '51 from alumni file

Samuel Chu was one of the first known Asian-American students to attend Dartmouth College. He was born in Shanghai, China, in 1929 and moved to the U.S. in 1941. Chu majored in history at Dartmouth and was a member of the Glee Club. After being inducted into Phi Beta Kappa at his graduation, he continued his academic career at Columbia University where he earned Masters and Ph.D. degrees in history. Chu became a history professor at the Ohio State University and was the first director of East Asian Studies at that institution.

4. *Easterly Winds* Summer 1995 from vertical file “Asian Studies”

A project of the Dartmouth Asian Organization, *Easterly Winds* was an Asian literary journal published every spring. In the preface to this volume, the editors note that faculty and students of all race and ethnicity are welcome to submit their literary and artistic works as long as they are about Asian themes. The journal defined “Asian themes” to include those of South Asian and South East Asian as well as East Asian culture, which was more commonly associated in the West with the term “Asia.”

5. Photo of the Dartmouth Asian Organization from [The Aegis](#) 1989.

Founded in 1975, the Dartmouth Asian Organization, also referred to as DAO, was the first organization on campus for students of Asian descent. Along with various social activities, DAO continues to host cultural events, panel discussions and lectures on the topics of Asian heritage, culture, and society.

6. International Student Enrollment Data circa. 1940 from the [Dartmouth College Registrar's Records \(DA-80\) Box 3414](#)

Dartmouth College kept track of international student enrollment statistics in a rather ad-hoc and inaccurate manner up until the late 20th century. For instance, the category titled “Indians” on this sheet refers to Native American students, not the students of South Asian descent. “Asian or Pacific Islander” appears as a distinct category for the first time on an Associate Registrar’s letter from 1984, explaining the racial/ethnic composition of graduating groups from 1980 to 1984. These days, Office of Institutional Research annually publishes the Common Data Set, which provides a more detailed breakdown of domestic student population by their ethnicity. However, it doesn’t include a detailed breakdown of international student population and, as a result, the exact number of students from East Asia are not available.

7. Photo of Korean Culture Night circa. 1995 from vertical file “Korean-American Students Association”

The Korean-American Students Association (KASA) was founded in 1989 and later evolved to include Dartmouth students from Korea as well. Aside from providing social and cultural outlets for students of Korean descent, KASA launched several Korean studies initiatives including Korea Visiting Scholar Program and Korean Language School. This photo was taken at Korean Culture Night, an annual event showcasing various aspects of Korean culture through performances.

Case 2. East Asian and Asian-American Experiences Around the World

The majority of Rauner's collection of materials detailing East Asian and Asian-American experiences in the West is composed of very recent acquisitions, which explains the relative dearth of primary sources about this topic. Most of what we have are from wartime, when different groups of East Asians reached out to Europe and the United States to garner support for their political and diplomatic interests. For instance, two of the items featured in this case are Chinese propaganda graphic novels, one assailing the Communist Party's brutality and another commemorating the feats of the Communist Party's maritime scouts. Other materials are related to East Asian integration and segregation in the West during World War II. Agnes Bartlett, who was an Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery at Geisel School of Medicine, worked at the War Relocation Authority Centers at Poston, Arizona, and Manzanar, California from 1944 to 1945. Rauner has materials from her time at the relocation centers, which provide valuable insights into the Japanese-American wartime experiences. Considering that many of the materials are propagandistic in nature, caution needs to be taken when interpreting them, although they still provide an insightful perspective on Asian interactions with the West and Western perceptions of East Asian culture.

1. **Sören Edgren and Mary Tanenbaum, editor. "19th Century Chinese Newspaper" in *Chinese Book Arts and California*. San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1989. [Presses B644chi](#)**
This second brochure of the *Chinese Book Arts and California*, prepared for the members of Book Club of California in 1989, talks about the first Chinese Newspaper in California, *The Golden Hills' News*.
2. ***Youth of the world unite!* [Rare Book DS 777.533 .P76 Y688 1937](#)**
This miniature booklet is assumed to have been distributed at the World Student Association meeting in 1937 in Paris to raise awareness of Japanese military aggression in China. In the preface to the book, the authors, who identify themselves as "a few who speak for the youth of China", plead with the audience to support their struggles. Though their resistance might appear to be mere violence, the authors argue that this violence is necessary to prevent further atrocities inflicted by the Japanese and to achieve real peace.
3. **王良莹. 海上侦察兵, 第1版. 上海: 上海人民出版社, 1977. [Rare Book DS 777.54 C42](#)**
Published in Shanghai in 1977, this monograph is a compilation of graphic novels honoring the service of maritime scouts during the Chinese Civil War in 1950.

The illustrations were made by students at Shanghai Fine Arts School. These maritime scouts are considered to be the predecessor of China's current People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy.

4. 怒涛.人變鬼, 初版. [香港?]: 思文出版公司, 民國 41, [1952]. [Rare Book DS777.75 .N883 1952](#)

The Chinese Nationalist Party in the mid-20th century published propaganda in the form of graphic novels to convince people of the Communist Party's brutality. The title of this booklet, which attempts to convey the alleged negative influences that the Communist Party had on people, translates into "Men Change into Devils" in English.

5. **Members of the 442nd Combat Team, compiler. *The Story of 442nd Combat Team composed of 442nd Infantry Regiment, 55nd Field Artillery Battalion, 232nd Combat Engineer Company. Information-Education Section, MTOUSA, circa. 1943-1945. From the [Agnes Bartlett Papers \(ML-43\) Box 1 Folder 36](#)***

In 1943, President Roosevelt overturned the previous legislation banning the Japanese-Americans from serving in the U.S. war efforts and announced the formation of 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team, composed solely of Japanese-Americans. The 442nd Infantry was prohibited from fighting in the Pacific theatre and operated only in Europe, primarily in France and Italy. The Information-Education Section at MTOUSA (Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, USA Army) published this pamphlet to commemorate the military achievements of this unit. In the first page of the pamphlet, MTOUSA strongly encourages the readers to send this pamphlet home, which indicates the purpose of this publication was to spread positive words about the 442nd team.

6. ***Manzanar Free Press* (Manzanar, CA), September 8, 1945. From the [Agnes Bartlett Papers \(ML-43\) Box 1 Folder 35](#)**

As the longest running relocation camp newspaper, *Manzanar Free Press* began its publication on April 11, 1942, and ended on October 19, 1945, with the permanent closing of the concentration camp. The publication was temporarily ceased for twenty days during an uprising at the camp in 1942. Like many other local newspapers of a small town, *Manzanar Free Press* covered various events, activities and incidents within the camp as well as updates on laws and regulations that influenced the lives of those at the camp. A Japanese language edition was created in July 1942 but had to pass a censor and be published with an English translation. As the title of the newspaper suggests, the editors of the paper aspired to reinstate democracy and autonomy for the people at the concentration camp. However, the publication struggled to accurately capture the relocation camp experiences as oftentimes they were too intimidated by the camp administration to address the actual injustices in the camp.

7. ***Anniversary Booklet: A Year at Gila. Rivers, Arizona: July 20, 1943. From the [Agnes Bartlett Papers \(ML-43\) Box 1 Folder 35](#)***

This booklet highlights the Gila concentration camp residents' achievement of transforming a barren land into a booming town by establishing basic infrastructure and educational and cultural institutions at the camp during its first year. In the preface, the supervisor of the camp, who is referred to as a "project manager," appreciates the constructive manner in which the Japanese-Americans channeled their frustrations about discriminatory acts they had previously experienced. Once again, though the internees themselves wrote the contents of this booklet, their writings do not provide a balanced representation of the internment camp experience. Despite the ongoing difficulties and mistreatment plaguing the internees' lives, the writings describe the concentration camp experience as positive.

8. Henry Mori, editor. *Poston: Notes and Activities*. Circa. 1942. From the [Agnes Bartlett Papers \(ML-43\) Box 1 Folder 35](#)

This is the first magazine published in the Poston Relocation Camp and is a collaborative piece by news editors and reporters from nine other relocation centers besides Poston. The residents of the Poston camp narrate the progress they had made at the camp during its first twelve months in various areas including agriculture, industry, education, religion, and self-governance. Similar to other publications from the relocation camps, this magazine also reflects only the positive perspectives, if any, of the concentration camp experience.

9. Brinkley, F., editor. *Japan Described and Illustrated by the Japanese*, Tokyo edition. Boston: J.B. Millet, c1897-c1898. [Rare Book DS 809 .B86 1897](#)

Arthur J. Mundy notes in his introduction that inaccurate and conflicting descriptions of Japanese civilization in the western world motivated the editor to publish this book. In order to prevent further dissemination of such inaccurate information, Mundy gathered groups of Japanese illustrators, photographers and writers to make this book, rather than having himself or other westerners write about the civilization. Published in 11 volumes, *Japan Described* explores various aspects of Japanese culture, economic structure, religion, tradition, history and society in great detail.

Case 3. Western Civilization's Initial Contact with Asia

Interaction between Western and East Asian civilizations can be traced all the way back to the Roman Empire. But it was not until the 16th century that western travelers explored Asia in a modern sense, through the development of sea routes and maritime technology. It was during this period that European explorers disseminated their observations and experiences in Asia to their fellow Westerners. As journeys outside of the Western world increased, an growing number of Europeans not only informed their home countries of the new world across the Atlantic but also sought to spread their culture's values and ideas to Eastern civilizations. Some travelers went as far as to learn the native language of Asian regions in order to produce materials meant to spread Western thoughts and ideas.

1. **Nieuhof, Johannes. *Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium, modernum Sinae imperatorem*. Amstelodami: apud J. Meursium, 1668. [Rare Book DS 708 .N69](#)**

Johannes Nieuhof was a traveler who worked for the Dutch West India Company in the mid- and late 17th century. He published books illustrating natural landscapes, traditional costumes and members of the local population based on his journey along the coastal region of China from what is now Guangzhou all the way north to Beijing. During the 17th century, Europeans began to have a more concrete concept of civilizations in Asia, and heated competitions over sea trade led more European travelers, like Nieuhof, to explore the previously unknown areas of the globe.

2. **Hulbert, Homer B. *사민필지*. 한성: 조선 육영공원, [1895]. [Alumni H877p](#)**

Homer Hulbert, a member of Dartmouth's class of 1884, was a missionary in Korea from 1886 to 1907 who advocated for the independence of Korea. Initially, he taught English to the children of aristocratic families at the Royal English School in Seoul. However, when the Empire of Japan attempted to make Korea its protectorate, he quit his position at the school and became a political activist. Hulbert penned letters to Theodore Roosevelt and other eminent newspapers protesting Japan's encroachment and was subsequently dispatched to the Second International Peace Conference in The Hague in 1907 as a part of the secret delegate from Emperor Go Jong. Hulbert wrote this textbook while working as a teacher at the Royal English School. It contains political, economic, social, geographical and cultural information on different countries across the world that Hulbert believed was essential for future leaders of Korea.

3. **Hulbert, Homer B. *The History of Korea*. 1908. [Alumni H877hi](#)**

In this textbook, Hulbert relates the entire history of Korea from its very beginning to the beginning of the 20th century. The exterior appearance of this book is typical of books published in Korea around the time.

4. ***China in Miniature*. Boston: Clapp and Broaders, 1834. [1926 Coll C5711](#)**

The colored engravings of Chinese people above explain the Chinese manners and customs. The preface of this book notes that it seeks to compensate for the lack of information about China in the West by helping American children learn more about Chinese culture.

5. ***Drawings of Chinese Costume*. Circa. 1820. [Codex 002005](#)**

The compilation of pen and water-color drawings above depict Chinese and Japanese costumes and lifestyles. These illustrations became the basis for the volumes of Frederic Shoberl's *The World in Miniature* that focus on China and Japan.

6. **Collection of postcards from various missionary groups from Great Britain to various locations in Africa and Asia between 1875 and 1925. [Iconography 1698](#)**

Missionaries played a significant role in introducing Asia to Europe. Not only did they seek to spread Christianity in the East, but they also recorded their interactions with the local people. These narratives were often published in various forms such as books, articles and photos and became the window for many Westerners' initial encounters with the Asian civilizations.