

The Chinese Special Collection of John Rylands Library

By Xiaomei Holder

History of the John Rylands Library

<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/>

- Built in 1889
- In memory of John Rylands
- Lavishly decorated in Gothic style
- Spencer & Crawford Collections are the early foundations



St. John fragment

<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/stjohnfragment>

- Less than 9cm high
- Papyrus Manuscript
- Discovered in Egypt originally
- Dated early 2nd Century A.D
- Earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language



Chinese Special Collection

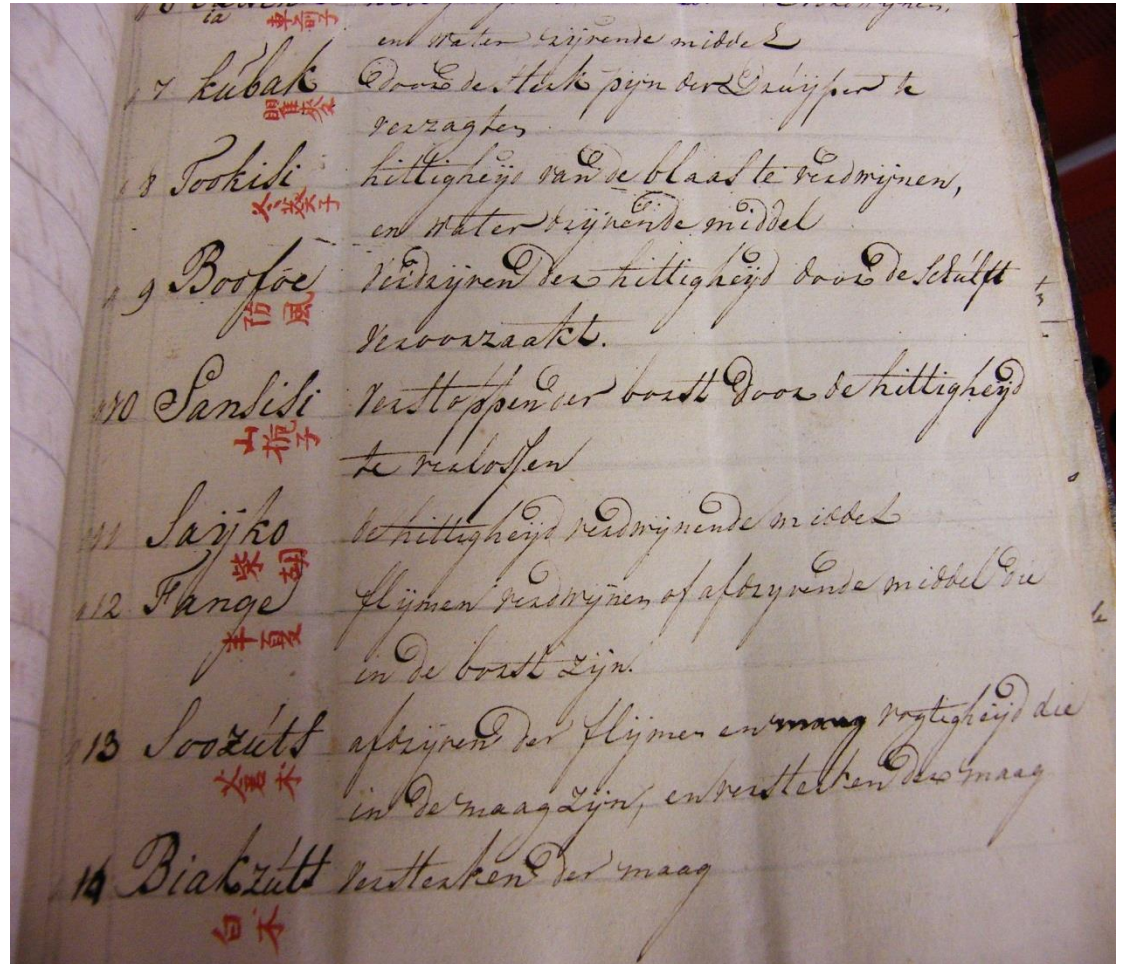
<http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/guide/atoz/chinese/>

- 500 items
- Acquired in 1901 with Crawford Collection
- Originally purchased from the Library of Pierre Leopold van Alstein in 1863
- Most dated 18th & 19th C
- 28 items are dated before 1600

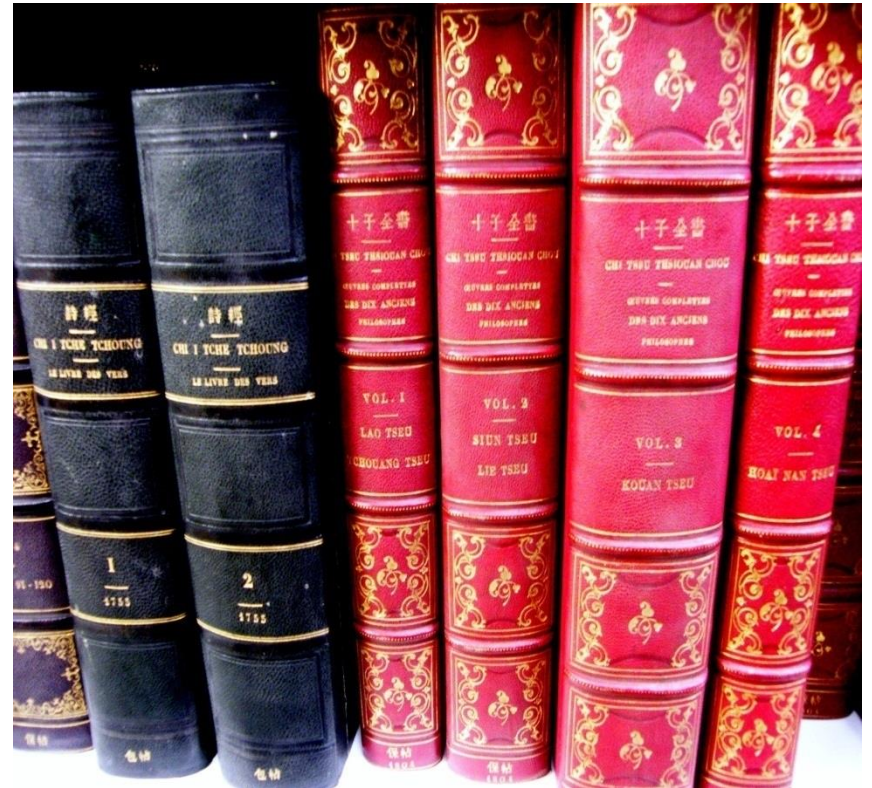


European Connection

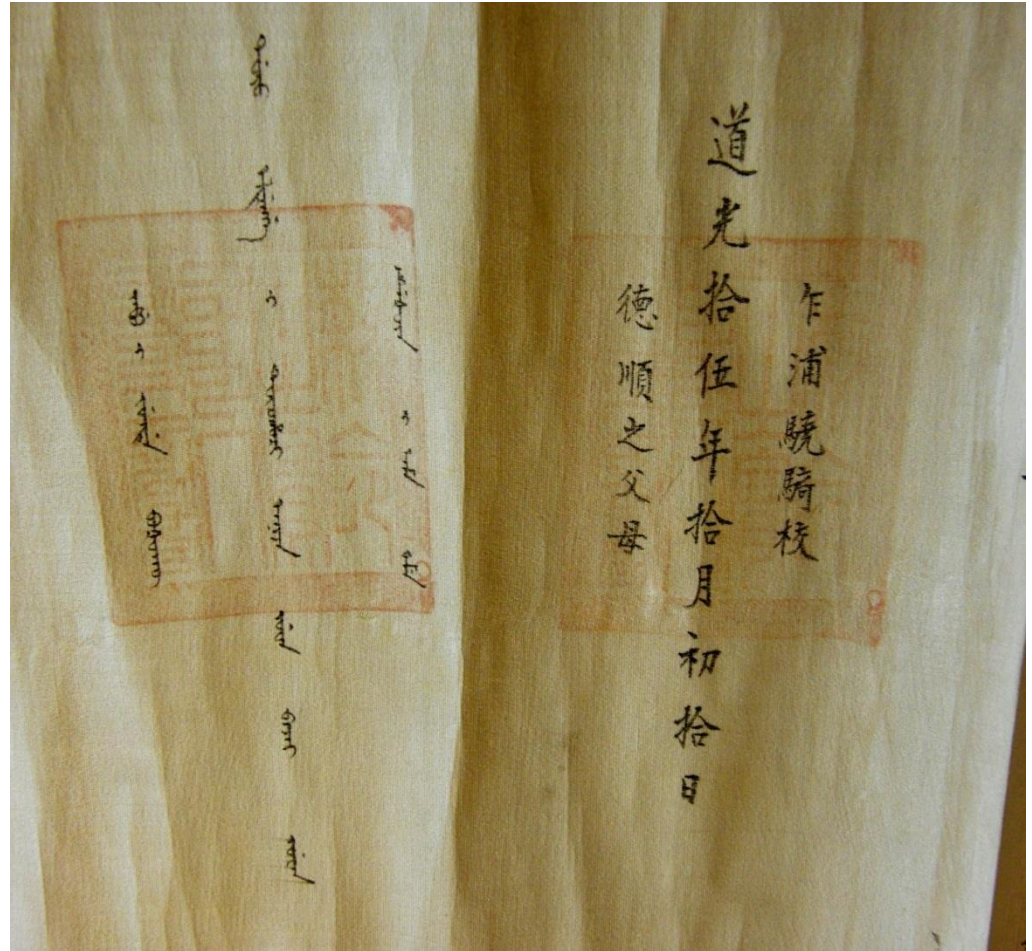
- Early study notes of European sinologists
- Some associated with French sinologist, Jean Pierre Abel Rémusat (d 1832).



Different styles of binding



Chinese Diploma dated 1835 A.D.



文寿衢歌乐商

(2 scrolls, no date, a busy street preparing for Kang Xi's 60th birthday)



Extended Chinese Collection

Tibetan Manuscripts

- 15 items
- Collection mostly includes ritual texts and prayer-wheels.
- MS 6 and MS 14 are the most remarkable items
- <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/guide/atoz/tibetan/>

Moso Collection

- 135 items
- Second largest Mo-So collection in Europe
- Acquired between 1916 and 1920 from the botanist George Forrest (lived in Lijiang)
- Performance of secret ritual ceremonies
- <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/guide/atoz/moso/>

Potential projects

Evaluation

- The whole collection has only been grossly utilised so far
- Experts needed for a thorough evaluation

Cataloguing

- Online open access catalogue needed for both manuscripts and printed books

Digitisation

- Our current image collection on ***luna Insight***
<http://enriqueta.man.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/>
- Digitising Chinese Manuscripts

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