DIY: Value-added Archive Processing

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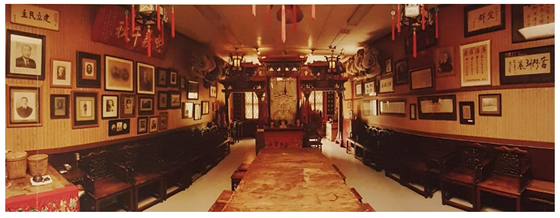
Introduction

The C.V. Starr East Asian Library, UC Berkeley received a highly valuable archival collection from Chee Kung Tong (致公堂, also known as Chinese Freemasons) of San Francisco in May, 2018. Established in 1848, Chee Kung Tong has over 170 years now, and the Society well-known for its connection with Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his fellow revolutionaries and network in its early history in the United States.

The collection of the archives contains over 5,000 items, covering over 100 years. Most of the items are in critical condition and not organized. It is the common goal of both Chee Kung Tong and the Library's to process the collection and make them available to the public as soon as possible.



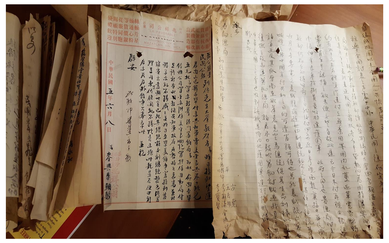
The interior view of the Chee Kung Tong in San Francisco (courtesy to Mr. Shanlin Zhao)

Objectives

- Create inventory list and sort out the whole collection within one year
- Identify highly valuable items and preservation needs
- Prepare for the digitization project
- Prepare for a draft of finding aids

Challenges

- No archivists with language specialty could guide us.
- Majority of the items were not in order when we picked them up.
- Considerable items are in critical physical condition.
- It is hard to identify Illegible writings, indiscernible transliterated place names/personal names, dates, etc.
- We cannot work full time on the project and time is limited.



Project Design/Procedures

- Look for examples of finding aids for brainstorming
- Consult faculty for research needs assessment and create working sheets
- Design classification scheme after sorting and close reading each item
- Add file number to each item and box the items by category
- Prepare for digitization project
- Create finding aids

Classification of Chee Kung Tong Archives:

A. Organization records

A1- Articles of Incorporation, registration, regulations, etc.
A2- Tong Notices, conferences/meetings
A3- Membership documents
A4- Directories
A5- Ledgers & account books
A6- Donor records, acknowledgement, etc.
A7- Bills & receipts
A8- Others (prospectus, stocks, checks, cards, envelops, tickets, etc.)

B. Publications and printed materials (books, newsletters, clippings, etc.)

C. Correspondence

D. Telegrams

E. Photographs

F. Graphics (calligraphy, paintings, etc.)

G. Miscellaneous (court files, games, immigration records, poems, etc.)

Designed worksheet:

Box#	Date	Place	Names	Title/Topic	Category	Items	Notes

Value-added processing: some examples

Verify information:

- Date: One receipt (1929) does not have date, but mentioned "蒲节"(on May 5th in lunar calendar). So the date should be June 11, 1929.
- Place: The photo中华民国十四年四月十二日洛居埠国民党分部追悼孙中山先生大会摄影 was taken in 洛居埠 (Locke, California), although now it is called 乐居镇.
- Person: 美洲金山致公总堂立案凭照（Dec.7, 1916）was signed by the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce谷钟秀. But his name was covered by the seal. (《中国近现代史名人辞典》，北京档案出版社，1993，p.311)

Highlight hidden information:

- 五洲洪门第三次恳亲大会代表团修订连络根本章程（Oct.10, 1923）has an inserted sheet of 五洲恳亲大会代表团决组党案. (Add to "note" field.)
- 美洲金山洪门救济总局议事草案錄部(Oct.29, 1914) has a note "商议汇款给孙中山2,000元".
- Several important Chee Kung Tong events were recorded in the minutes 民国二十一年议案部are heighted in "note", "讨论了会长李韵琴丧事办理; 罗省五色旗被拆事件; 派代表參加抗日后援总会; 《公论（晨）报》宣布破产等".

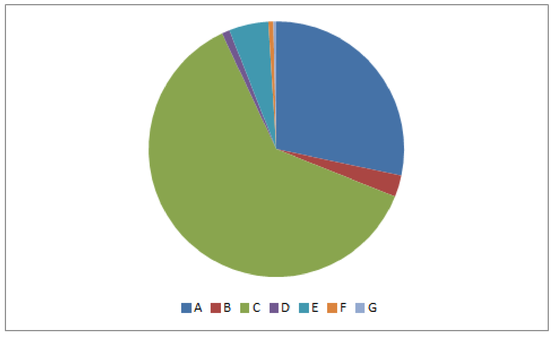
Be perceptive to capture useful information as much as possible:

- Photo studios: such as 少吟美术照相Kem Lee Studio, 768 Clay Street, San Francisco
- Book list: One letter sent from Mexico (Oct.16, 1918) asked for help with a book list , "所购书单: 黄克强历史一套, 孙中山历史一套, 汪精卫历史一套, 蔡松坡历史一套, 广东起义一套, 四才子玉尺楼一套. . . "
- Address information (Chee Kung Tong network)
- Paratext (letterhead, stamps, seals, etc.): for example, one letterhead of the Chinese National Railway Corporation (1912.6.27) list Dr. Sun Yat-sen as Director-General.

Link records with published catalogue:

- The photo 中华民国二十年双十节中国致公党中央党部成立纪念 is on page 189 of 五洲致公总堂革命历史图录--170周年纪念特刊（2018）.

Statistics/Results



Total: 5,169 (by preliminary count)
A: Organization records 1,471 (28%)
B: Publications and printed materials 141 (3%)
C: **Correspondence 3,194** (62%)
D: Telegrams 52 (1%)
E: Photographs 258 (5%)
F: Graphics 33 (0.6%)
G: Miscellaneous 20 (0.4%)

Next steps

- Consolidate and review the whole collection
- Provide access to the worksheets (subject guide, etc.)
- Facilitate digitization and conservation project
- Complete and publish finding aids
- Enhance cross reference for personal/place names

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