

The R.F. Price Collection

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The R.F. Price Collection, held in the East Asian Library Rare Books Collection at the University of Melbourne, comprises Chinese educational and children's books published from the 1960s to the 1980s and is unique among western library holdings. It includes a comprehensive collection of primary and secondary school textbooks; books on a variety of educational disciplines such as educational theory, administration, systems, and educational history; biographies of educators; directories of educational institutions in China; and a rich collection of children's books, which are rarely found in Australian libraries. The collection, comprising over 1,000 titles, was donated to the University by Dr Ronald Francis Price in July 2007.

Dr Price is a scholar of comparative education. He has written widely on education in China, including the book *Education in Communist China*,¹ first published in the World Education Series edited by Professor Brian Holmes of the London Institute of Education. Born in the UK, Dr Price taught there, in Bulgaria, and in Ghana. In 1965 he went to teach English at the Second Foreign Languages Institute in Beijing, returning to the UK in the summer of 1967. In 1971 he took up



a post in the School of Education at La Trobe University, where he taught until his retirement in 1991. Some of the materials donated to the East Asian Collection were purchased by Dr Price during his stay in Beijing, others on subsequent visits to China, including periods spent teaching summer schools at the Xi'an Normal University (Xi'an Shifan Daxue) or in Hong Kong.

In 1966, during Dr Price's first period of teaching in China, Mao Zedong launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which led to ten years of chaos in China, with widespread suffering and loss of life. The Cultural Revolution was a struggle for power within the Communist Party between Mao, Liu

Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, and later with Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao, and was only ended by the arrest of the Gang of Four. Red guards were formed by Mao to smash the 'Four Olds' (old ideas, old culture, old habits and old customs).

During the ten chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution, China suffered from a severe shortage of books.² Publications during this period had a strong emphasis on politics: the propagation of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. The R.F. Price Collection has a good coverage of this type of political publication. One of the most important and popular works during the Cultural Revolution was the Little Red Book or *Quotations of Chairman Mao*, 毛主席语录.³ Produced in pocket size with a red plastic jacket, more than one billion copies were printed for the Chinese people to study in schools and at workplaces and to carry at all times. Mao's quotations were cited in boldface or in red in most editions. Other popular works were Mao's *Selected works* 毛泽东选集,⁴ and Mao's *Poems* 毛泽东诗词.⁵ From 1966 to 1969, nearly all schools in China were closed due to political instability. The schools gradually began to function again from late 1968, a process discussed by Dr Price

Previous page: *Chu chu you Lei Feng / hui zhe Guan Jingyu deng* (处处有雷锋 / 绘者关景宇等), Beijing: Ren min mei shu, 1973. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist, Mr Jingyu Guan (图片由绘者关景宇授权引用).

Right: R.F. Price with summer school students at Xi'an Normal University (Xi'an Shifan Daxue), 1983. Private collection.

Below: *Pi Lin pi Kong meng kai pao: Shanghai hong xiao bing er ge xuan / Ben she bian* (批林批孔猛开炮: 上海红小兵儿歌选 / 本社编), Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 1975. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne. Image courtesy of the Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe (图片由上海人民出版社授权引用).



in his book *Education in modern China*.⁶

The collection is particularly strong in textbooks used in primary and secondary schools in the years concerned. There are several hundred of these volumes covering a variety of subjects such as history, geography, politics, arts, moral education, music, Chinese language, English language, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, calculus, geometry, hygiene and women's health. There are texts and basic reference works for vocational groups such as the 'barefoot doctors', workers and peasants. Examination of the school textbooks shows the prevalence of the cult of Mao. For example, in lesson 30 of *Chinese language, v. 1* for primary schools, the text includes 'Chairman Mao loves us. Chairman Mao asks us to study hard ... We need to listen to Chairman Mao and be the Chairman's good Children.'⁷ In lesson 1 of *English, v. 1*, 'Learn to speak', the first and only sentence for the students to learn was 'We love Chairman Mao. 我们热爱毛主席'.⁸ In many secondary school textbooks, Mao's quotations are printed in black boldface, not only in the book's preface, but also in the content of the lessons. Even science textbooks, on subjects such as physics, chemistry and mathematics, include quotations

from Mao. The school textbooks collection is of great value for researching curriculum design and the personality cult during the Mao and post-Mao eras.

In addition to the textbooks, the R.F. Price Collection includes 250 volumes of children's books. Young children in Mao's time did not escape the Mao cult and communist ideology. Ranging from nursery rhymes to story-telling, children's books were used as propaganda to brainwash children into loving the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, thus promoting Mao's ideological campaigns. The children's book collection includes picture books and children's literature. There is a good coverage of books on anti-Confucianism and the anti-Lin Biao campaign of 1973–1974, books about revolutionary heroes such as Lei Feng (1940–1962), the Little Red Guards and anti-USA imperialism.

As well as this propaganda material, Dr Price collected a good sample of juvenile science literature. This aims to promote young children's exploration of scientific knowledge. *The 100 thousand whys* 十万个为什么 series,⁹ and the *We love science* 我们爱科学 series,¹⁰ both published by Shaonian ertong chubanshe in Shanghai in the 1960s and 1970s, were very popular

children's books. Critics considered *The sparking red star* 闪闪的红星 by Li Xintian, published by Beijing Renmin chubanshe in 1972, to be an excellent work.¹¹ During the Cultural Revolution there was very little literature for children. What was published was compiled under the political dictates of class struggle.¹² However, Dr Price's collection of children's books offers a rare insight into social and political trends in children's literature for researchers studying the Cultural Revolution and post-Cultural Revolution eras.



Gan Xiao, *Kong lao er zui e de yi sheng / bian wen Xiao Gan; hui hua Gu Bingxin, He Youyi* (孔老二罪恶的一生 / 编写萧甘; 绘画顾炳鑫, 贺友宜), Shanghai: Ren min chu ban she, 1974. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
Image courtesy of the Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe (图片由上海人民出版社授权使用).

The R.F. Price Collection is held in the East Asian Rare Books Collection in the Baillieu Library. Cataloguing of the collection was made possible by the generous support of the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund and a cultural collections grant funded by the University's Annual Appeal. Bibliographic information on the books can be searched from the University of Melbourne library catalogue <http://cat.lib.unimelb.edu.au/>. Because of their rarity, the books are not available for loan, but may be used in the Cultural Collections Reading Room on the 3rd floor of the Baillieu Library. Material can be ordered at the East Asian Information Desk or by calling (03) 8344 5365, or by email to Bick-har Yeung on bhy@unimelb.edu.au.

Bick-har Yeung is the East Asian Librarian at the University of Melbourne Library.

Notes

- 1 R.F. Price, *Education in Communist China*, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970. Second edition published as: Ronald Francis Price, *Education in modern China*, London and Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979.
- 2 Geremie Barmé, 'Notes on publishing in China 1976 to 1979', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 4, July 1980, pp. 167-174.
- 3 For example: Zedong Mao, *Mao zhu xi yu lu* 毛主席语录, Beijing: Zhongguo ren min jie fang jun zong zheng zhi bu: Shanghai shi yin shua san chang yin shua, 1966. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 4 Zedong Mao, *Mao Zedong Xuan Ji* 毛泽东选集, 1964 nian 4 yue di 1 ban, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi chubanshe, 1966. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 5 Zedong Mao, *Mao Zhu Xi Shi Ci* 毛主席诗词, Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1966. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 6 Price, *Education in modern China*.
- 7 Ren min jiao yu chu ban she. Xiao xue yu wen bian ji shi, *Yuwen* 语文, Beijing: Ren min jiao yu chu ban she, 1963: Shandong ren min chu ban she, (1964 printing), p. 65. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 8 *Ying yu. Di 1 ce*. 英语, [Xi'an: s.n., 197-?]. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 9 *Shi wan ge wei shen me* 十万个为什么, Shanghai: Shao nian er tong chu ban she, 1965. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 10 Zhongguo shao nian er tong chu ban she, *Wo men ai ke xue* 我们爱科学, Beijing: [Zhongguo shao nian er tong chu ban she], 1960. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 11 Xintian Li, *Shan shan de hong xing* 闪闪的红星, Beijing: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 1972. Gift of Dr R.F. Price, 2007, East Asian Rare Book Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 12 Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p. 295.

