Japan’s Book Donation to the University of Louvain

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The Japanese Book Donation to the University of Louvain

The Destruction of the Library in 1914
On the fateful night of August 25, 1914, the Louvain University Library was set ablaze and laid to waste in the ‘sac de Louvain’, the phrase used in reference to the ‘Strafgericht’ meted out by the German troops occupying the city of Leuven. They ransacked and burned hundreds of buildings in the old city centre, as well as executed civilians in retaliation for the actions of alleged francs-tireurs who had shot down German troops. An estimated 250,000 volumes, including 950 manuscripts and 800 incunabula, all went up in flames.2 Virtually no book was left intact. Both KU Leuven and the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) keep in either their archives or rare book collections a few specimens of charred, now illegible volumes – all that remains from the library as it then was.

International Solidarity for the Reconstruction
The burning down of the library was condemned throughout the world as an act of barbarism and a blow to civilization itself. Response was quick, first in Belgium, where the Flemish writer Emmanuel de Bom (1868-1953), already in September 1914, in yet unoccupied Antwerp, collected 800 books for donation to the university’s library. In November 1914 Robert Fruin (1857-1935), director-general of the State Archives of the Netherlands (algemeen rijkaschivaris) and acclaimed historian, launched the Leuvensch Boekenfonds, which may rightly be considered the first national committee of solidarity towards the university.3 It was soon eclipsed in early 1915 by the initiative of the Institut de France and the French Academy, which launched an international appeal, calling upon the Allies as well as the neutral nations to help in rebuilding the library and restore its holdings. Japan responded very quickly to the French appeal. On July 30, 1915, Baron Kikuchi Dairoku 菊池大麓 (1855-1917), member of the Privy Council and the then president of the Imperial Academy of Japan, wrote to Étienne Lamy (1845-1919), perpetual secretary of the Académie française as well as president of the newly established Comité (subsequently called: commission) d’initiative de l’Œuvre internationale de Louvain. Kikuchi confirmed to Lamy that the Imperial Academy was prepared to join the international effort to reconstruct the library of the University of Louvain.4 As a result, on the sidelines of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, a Comité International de l’Œuvre de Louvain was constituted, comprising leading personalities from the political and scholarly world. It was to coordinate the various activities for the Œuvre internationale de Louvain, the overarching name given the initiatives taken up by national committees in many countries of the world, those similarly in solidarity for the University of Louvain, as well as in support of the library’s reconstruction and the reconstitution or substitution of its holdings. Mgr Simon Deploige (1868-1927), professor in the Faculty of Law and president of the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Louvain, was appointed commissioner-general of Le Comité International pour la restauration de l’Université de Louvain. He was aided by a secretariat set up within his institute.5

Japan Joins l’Œuvre internationale de Louvain6
Japan’s Minister Plenipotentiary to Belgium Adachi Mine’ichirō 安達峰一郎 (1870-1934) urged the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pledge

its participation in the projected international Comité d’initiative. He proposed a list of fifteen members, including Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望 (1849-1940) and Hozumi Nobushige 穂積陳重 (1855-1926) as honorary members of the International committee, in addition to thirteen other prominent academics as regular members. Saionji, scion of a noble family and senior statesman, who had been prime minister in 1906-1908 and 1911-1912, was Japan’s chief delegate to the Paris Peace Conference; while Hozumi, a professor of philosophy of law at Tokyo Imperial University, was the incumbent president of the Imperial Academy of Japan. The other academics were mostly presidents of universities and members of the Imperial Academy.8 From May through July 1919, the committee gathered in Paris. Japan was represented at the meetings by Captain Yamamoto Shinjirō 山本信次郎 (1877-1942),9 naval attaché to the Japanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference,10 a man whom we shall meet again below. While in Paris, Saionji Kinmochi made the promise to Jules Van den Heuvel (1854-1926), plenipotentiary delegate of the Belgian Government at the Conference and professor of law at the University of Louvain, that he would undertake to set up a national committee in Japan. The Japanese members of the international committee held their first meeting in Tokyo in March 1920.

Adachi, promoted to the rank of ambassador to Belgium in 1921,12 had a clear vision of what the Japanese contribution to l’Œuvre internationale de Louvain would ideally have to be: He wanted a spacious room exclusively reserved for books and documents “concernant la civilisation

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du Japon et de l’Extrême Orient”. He argued that a small amount of money would not do, given the important donations that the other major nations intended to make. In order to avoid unfavourable comparisons with these countries, he not unwisely proposed to make a contribution in kind. Japan was to donate books and models that would explain aspects of Japan’s unique culture. The models would be put in a small museum annex to the library. Initially, as Rector Paulin Ladeuze (1870-1940) stated in a letter to Adachi, the university would have preferred a financial contribution.

Visit of Crown Prince Hirohito to Belgium and the Ruins of the Louvain Library

In 1921, Crown Prince and future Emperor of Japan Hirohito made a tour of Europe. In those days, battlefields and spectacular ruins were fixed fare on the menu for important foreign visitors. Consequently, a visit to the library’s ruins could not be missing from the itinerary of the Japanese crown prince. Accompanied by his great-uncle Prince Kan’in no Miya Kotohito and Yamamoto Shinjirō, who had been designated Hirohito’s teacher of French and his personal aide, he visited the ruins on June 20, 1921. Yamamoto’s counterpart in Louvain was Louis de Schaetzen van Brienlen (1900-1958), the second secretary of the university (from 1931 to 1958), and the secretary of l’Oeuvre internationale de Louvain on the Louvain side. Incidentally, Yamamoto was a devout Catholic, who allegedly harboured the conviction that his country should convert to Catholicism wholesale and subsequently lead the Far East along the same path of conversion. After Japan had established diplomatic ties with the Vatican, he did indeed become chargé de mission to the Holy See.

On March 17, 1922, a meeting was held in Tokyo by the Japanese members of the international committee to pass the following resolutions:

1. It would donate books and periodicals published in Japan, of old printed books, classical documents, and drawings of ancient works of art. The donations were to be placed in a room especially reserved for the Japanese donation.
2. A committee for the restoration of the library was to be set up. It would consist of the Japanese members of the international committee as well as illustrious persons from all walks of life.
3. An appeal was to be launched to schools and academic institutions, libraries, and private persons, calling for the donation of books and money.
4. A vetting committee was to be charged with the selection and the classification of the donated books and objects.
5. An executive committee was to be set up to carry out the project.17

The Japanese National Committee
On October 23, 1922 the international committee formally instated what was literally called a domestic committee (Naikoku iinkai 内国委員会), but which we will henceforth call the “National Committee”, charged with the implementation of Japan’s contribution to the Oeuvre internationale de Louvain. On its first meeting the Committee appointed the business tycoon Shibusawa Eiichi 渋沢栄一 (1840-1931) as its chairman; Furuichi Kimitake 古市公武 (1854-1934) as vice-chairman; Saionji as honorary chairman; and Hozumi and Adachi as honorary vice-chairmen. Shibusawa’s function was de facto equally honorary. It was actually Furuichi who was the driving force in this National Committee. He was a civil engineer and entrepreneur and Japan’s first doctor of engineering. Both he and Shibusawa had connections with France, and this at least partly explains their interest and involvement in this enterprise, which had been initiated by the French Academy.

By end 1922, the National Committee apparently had already collected the estimated equivalent of 700,000 Belgian francs. It wanted to use this money for the purchase of “classical books” and “old drawings”, but it also wanted to spend part of the amount for interior decoration and for furnishing the special room that was to be reserved for the Japanese donation.18 On July 27, 1923, the National Committee held its first working session in the Ministry of Education.19

The Great Kantō Earthquake
However, another disaster was lurking. A good month later, on September 1, 1923, the Great Kantō Earthquake hit. In the Kantō area many libraries and bookshops went up in flames; several millions of books and manuscripts were lost. The Tokyo Imperial University Library was completely lost and was now itself in need of donations, but since so many offers of support had come in from the West, the Japanese National Committee decided that it had to carry on with its work. On January 8, 1924, a secretariat was set up in the library of the Tokyo Academy of Arts in Ueno Park,20 which sent out an appeal for donations of money, books, and works of art.21 Wada Mankichi 和田万吉 (1865-1934) – formerly head of the Tokyo Imperial University Library – and
Urushiyama Matashirō 漆山又四郎 (1873-1948) – specialist in Japanese literature and translator of classical Chinese poetry – were put in charge of the actual selection and acquisition of the books.

The secretariat started its activities in January 1924, thanks to substantial financial contributions from the Ministry of the Imperial Household (Kunaishō 宮内省) and the entrepreneur Sumitomo Kichizaemon 住友吉左衛門 (fifteenth head of the Sumitomo family, 1865-1926), who presided over the Sumitomo conglomerate. Other support came from the Iwasaki 岩崎, Mitsui 三井, Furukawa 古川, and Suenobu 陶延 families, all of whom led industrial conglomerates or other major businesses and contributed 10,000 yen each. The Shibusawa 渋沢 family contributed 1,000 yen and the Bank of Japan 2,000 yen, while a number of universities, individual academics, and other institutions or citizens contributed smaller sums. The total monetary donation amounted to about 63,000 yen, a considerable sum in the 1920s.

In the first phase, the Committee drew up a “standard list of books” that it wanted to purchase and donate to Leuven. Yet in the aftermath of the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake in the Tokyo-Yokohama area, books, either new or antiquarian, were hard to come by. To fill in the big gaps, the secretariat of the Committee ventured into the areas of Kyoto, Osaka, and Nara. By May 1924 it had managed to collect a few thousand volumes.

▲ 5. Front page of Le Patriote Illustré, showing a picture of the visit of Crown Prince Hirohito to the ruins of the University of Louvain library. Source: Le Patriote Illustré 26 June 1921, KU Leuven Libraries, Special Collections, J684.
It decided to hold an exhibition of the acquisitions and to invite the Belgian ambassador Albert de Bassompierre (1873-1956), the members of the Committee, and all others who were involved in or connected with the enterprise, as well as the metropolitan press (May 21, 1924).24 This kind of exhibition was subsequently repeated every time a major batch of books was being readied for shipment. Before being shipped, the books were given a (new) fitting wrapper (or: protective book covering, chitsu 秩) in order to keep the many fascicles that constitute one book together. On the back of the wrappers was pasted a rectangular slip bearing the title of the book. Tailoring the wrappers and restoring the binding of old books took a considerable chunk of the budget.25 A clerk wrote out index cards in twofold, one to be sent to Leuven with a view to classifying and cataloguing the books once they had reached Leuven, one to be kept in Tokyo as reference. For the scrolls, the Committee had wooden boxes made.26

**Vetting and Classifying the Donations**

The selection of the books reflected the vision of Wada Mankichi and Urushiyama Matashirō on what was deemed essential in Japanese culture. They determined what had to be purchased, vetted books that were donated, and compiled a catalogue to go with the donation. In that catalogue, they organized the collection into twenty-six divisions, allocating each physical title to one of the divisions, and within each division they listed the entries in alphabetical order. The catalogue was printed in a limited edition, and copies of it were presented to the donors involved. In 2000, Yamazaki Makoto from the National Institute of Japanese Literature compiled a new catalogue, adopting the same organising categories, evidently using a copy of the original catalogue he had been able to secure. We will return to this catalogue later on.

What kind of classification system did Wada adopt? None of the other authors who have studied the collection give the problem more than a passing thought, but as a regular user of the collection, I remained puzzled by the arrangement Wada and Urushiyama employed. In the early days after the Meiji Restoration (1868), there was no standard classification method in Japan. Libraries created their own taxonomy in accordance with the size and type of their holdings. In 1887 (Meiji 20) the Tokyo Library (later the Imperial Library, Teikoku toshokan 帝国図書館) adopted the so-called “Eight gates” (Hachimon 八門) classification system. However, this was a bibliographical classification used only for compiling a classified catalogue, and it lacked a classification code. In the Imperial Library, regardless of the subject of the materials, books were arranged in the order of size and intake (“fixed shelving method”, kotei haika-hō 固定排架法, in a “closed stacks system” heika-shiki 閉架式, similar to the one also used at the Louvain/Leuven University Central Library until the 1970s). There was no particular need to reflect the location of the materials in the subject code.

To be sure, many large libraries with closed stacks at that time also adopted this system. However, as the number of books on the shelves increased, the fixed shelving method increasingly hampered circulation and reference requirements, and the need for a systematic arrangement of the materials on the shelves according to the subject was increasingly felt. It was then that the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) came into the picture. In 1929, then, the librarian Mori Kiyoshi 森清 (1906-1990) published his “Japanese Decimal Classification: Common Classification Tables and Indexes for Japanese, Chinese, and Western Books”, the Nihon jisshin bunrui hō: wa-kan-yō-sho kyōyō bunrui-hyō oyobi sakuin 日本十進分類法：和漢洋書共用分類表及
The English name is “Nippon Decimal Classification” (NDC). It was both based on DDC, and on US librarian Charles Ammi Cutter’s (1837-1903) Expansive Classification System, which uses alphabetic tables to abbreviate authors’ names and generate unique call numbers, called ‘Cutter numbers’. The date of publication was August 25, 1929, the birthday of Mori. The publication of this NDC definitely had a huge impact on the library community and was hailed by many – though not by Wada Mankichi, then an advisor to the Japan Library Association. He argued, “It is quite good to be able to make a good classification table”, but “I do not desire nor is it desirable to create a method that is valid for 500 or 1,000 years and shared by a myriad libraries.”

Wada’s criticism can be seen as representative of those who were skeptical of a standardized taxonomy. Notwithstanding this opposition from a luminary in the librarian community, the NDC gradually gained acceptance and was ultimately adopted by libraries nationwide. However, in the 1920s, NDC was still just one of several library taxonomies. It was not until after the Second World War that it was generally accepted as the standard taxonomy.

My hypothesis is that the system Wada opted for when classifying the Louvain donation was a mixture of Cutter’s Expansive System and the system used by the Imperial Library in Tokyo. Since the Imperial Library was the first “modern” library in Japan, which served as a point of reference for other prefectural and local libraries, its classification system quite naturally was widely adopted as it was (or with some minor adaptations).

In the 1920s Cutter’s system was still considered the most scholarly in Japan. That Wada was an advocate of Cutter’s system transpires from the way he describes it in one of his works. He is full of praise for the system because it is very flexible and allows for gradual and limitless expansion. He describes it as “common sense and modern, clear and easy to adapt”. Especially the fact that it is so easy to adapt to the size of any library was a very attractive feature in his eyes. That is no doubt the reason why he chose it for Louvain. Since he did not know which way the Japanese collection might develop in the future, and since the collection would at any rate be in the hands of a Louvain librarian, he had to ensure that the system chosen at the outset did not require specialized know-how.

It is therefore no coincidence that there are twenty-six divisions (as a matter of fact Wada calls them “gates”) in the catalogue of the Louvain collection. He has arranged the divisions contained within the “gates” of the Imperial Library in such a way that he ended up having twenty-six of them (i.e. one for each letter of the alphabet). He no doubt believed that by arranging the catalogue that way, there would be the least trouble in the future in the event of further additions and expansion at Louvain. Traces of the effort to forcibly reach a total of twenty-six divisions may be seen in the fact that he has included a division ‘Education’ which actually contains only one category of books, namely “educational books for the populace dating from before the Meiji period”. Other features that speak to this effort is the fact that the fifteenth division is ‘Statistics’, normally not expected on the primary division level. Moreover, it only includes five items, all published in the Taishō period (1912-1925). Perhaps even more surprising is the sixteenth division, labelled ‘Colonies’ and listing a meagre three items, one dating from the late Meiji period and two from the Taishō period (See list on p. 291). In the printed catalogue, the lowest level of classification is the alphabetical order of the first letter of the romanised title of the books.

Wada and Urushiyama wanted a selection that would adequately reflect “Japanese classical civilization” in the eyes of the Western public, and they even cherished the secret hope that the old Japanese books would somehow replace the incunabula lost in the fire of 1914. They selected books in the widest possible range of the human sciences, including philosophy, Shintō, religion, literature, fine arts, history, geography, economy, law, physics, arts and crafts, industry, sports (entertainment, games), and so forth. In addition to the printed catalogue mentioned above, which allocated all physical titles to one of the twenty-six divisions, they made out in twofold what they called an index card catalogue, with each card corresponding to a single virtual title (one physical title often contains numerous virtual ones). Each card was allocated to one of the many rubrics each major division was further divided into. Although in card format, this instrument amounted to a real detailed catalogue, comprising a total of between 13,000 and 14,000 cards. One of the two index card catalogues, contained in a wooden filing cabinet (on display in this exhibition), along with a now lost copy of the...
printed catalogue were sent to Louvain. The filing cabinet with the index cards is still extant, but the level of subdivisions has basically been done away with by Joseph Mullie (see below). Fortunately, the original printed catalogue included a chart that shows the entire classification structure.

In the late 1990s, however, the aforementioned bibliographer Yamazaki Makoto stumbled on a rare copy of the original printed catalogue in an antiquarian bookshop in Tokyo. Curiosity set him on a voyage of discovery to Louvain-la-Neuve, where, during a month’s stay, he took a photograph of the title page, the frontispiece, the colophon, or some other prominent page of each physical title in the collection. With these data in his camera, he returned to his institute and checked each title with the corresponding item in the huge database of the National Institute of Japanese Literature. Thus, he was able to supplement the bibliographical information given in the original printed catalogue with additional bibliographical data for each item culled from the database, such as alternative title(s), classification rubric of the National Institute of Japanese Literature, and so on, and published the result in a hefty volume. In it he has replicated the twenty-six major divisions of the original printed catalogue. Within each division he has not tried to reconstruct the subdivisions of the card index (which would have been impossible anyway), but simply listed the items alphabetically, as in the original printed catalogue. In addition, he has added the shelf mark (call number) that the items presently bear in UCLouvain, noting the fictitious shelf mark 00000 if the item is now missing. As we shall explain further on, the present shelf marks, printed on oval labels, were devised and attached to the books by missionary and specialist in Chinese linguistics Joseph Mullie CICM (1886-1976). We shall therefore henceforth refer to them as the ‘Mullie numbers’. Yamazaki’s catalogue is faithful both to Wada and to Mullie. He is faithful to Wada in the sense that he replicates Wada’s original classification structure and faithful to Mullie in that he has also included the Mullie numbers in the data for each item, as well as adding a new division entitled ‘Supplement’ to include books, unrelated to the Japanese donation, that were later added and also given a shelf number by Mullie.

Precious Items

In a letter (dated May 22, Taishō 13 [1924]), Wada sent to his son-in-law, the political scientist, journalist and postwar politician Sassa Hiroo 佐々弘雄 (1897-1948), we read the following passage:

I am presently overseeing the work of the Japanese book donation which is part of an international enterprise for the reconstruction of the Louvain Library, and which includes among others Great Britain, France, the United States, and Italy. Thanks to the collaboration of the Imperial Household Ministry and others, we have already collected more than 5,000 titles, including a Hyakumantō darani 百万塔陀羅尼, printed in 770 A.D., and a manuscript Buddhist scripture from 740 A.D., commissioned by Empress Kōmyō, the Kōmyō Kōgō go-gankyō 光明皇后御願経. According to the final report of the National Committee, the selection included indeed several rare and precious manuscripts as well as printed editions, listed by the Committee under the twenty-fifth division ‘Rare books’. By far the oldest were two specimens of the Muku Jōkō-kyō Darani 無垢浄光経陀羅尼, dating from the first year of Hōki 宝亀 (770 AD), two copies which belonged to the so-called Hyakumantō Darani. There was also the manuscript Buddhist scripture mentioned by Wada in his letter dating from the twelfth year of Tenpyō 天平 (740 AD), commissioned by Empress Kömyō 光明 (701-760). Additionally, there were three Gozan 五山
(Five Mountains) impressions dating from the fourteenth century, including *Eigen Jakushitsu Oshó Goroku* 永源寂室和尚語録, compiled about the sixth year of Jōjō 貞治 (1367) and printed in the third year Eiwa 永和 (1377), acquired by the Committee for the price of 400 yen, a handsome amount in those days. It also included several copies of *kokatsujiban* 古活字版, books printed in movable type during the first half of the seventeenth century. These books were printed in limited editions, so that nowadays examples are very rare.

In the printed catalogue of the National Committee, we find indeed the two copies of *Muku Jōkō-kyō*, one entitled *Muku Jōkō-kyō Jishin Darani* 無垢浄光経親心陀羅尼 and the other *Muku Jōkō-kyō Sōrin Darani* 無垢浄光経自心陀羅尼, both dated first year of Hōki 北河 (764). The two *darani* donated by the Committee originally were part of a set of *darani* known as *hyakumantō darani* 百万塔陀羅尼 (i.e. a million *dhāraṇī* encased in a million pagodas). In the course of the year 764, the ruling Empress Shōtoku 称徳 (713-770) decided to have one million miniature pagodas made that were to serve as reliquaries for one million *dhāraṇī*. The execution of the commission would take approximately six years. In making this huge gesture of devotion Shōtoku took her inspiration from a Buddhist scripture (*sutra*) generally known in Japan by its abbreviated title: *Muku Jōkō-kyō* 無垢浄光経. This *sutra* taught the magic means to prolong life, to strengthen political rule, and to eliminate enemies.

To achieve these worldly goals, the *Muku Jōkō-kyō* recommended writing out *dhāraṇī* and storing them in pagodas. Each *dhāraṇī* was placed in the upper, hollowed-out part of a miniature wooden pagoda that opened and closed at the spire. The pagodas were not all of the same type; most had three levels (height around 15 cm), but some (one in 10,000) counted seven and others (one in 100,000), thirteen. When this monumental work was completed, the *dhāraṇī* stored in their pagodas were divided into groups of one hundred thousand and distributed among ten great monasteries of that time. Among these monasteries, only the Hōryūji 法隆寺 temple currently has around one hundred examples preserved. Others are scattered throughout the world in public and private collections. We can admire one copy in the Royal Library Albert I in Brussels, which has a three-level pagoda in its possession. Thus spreading across the globe, these documents and their reliquaries are an important testimony to the beginnings of printing and a typical manifestation of the international character that the printing press always had: these *dhāraṇī* are written in an Indian language, transliterated in Chinese characters, and committed to paper in Japan.

Similarly, the seventh scroll of a collection entitled *Sonbasumitsu Bosatsu Sho-shū* 尊場婆須蜜菩薩所集 (dubbed *Tenpyō-kyō* 天平経, “a sutra from the Tenpyō era”) in the catalogue, with a dedication by Empress Kōmyō and dated twelfth year of Tenpyō (740) is listed in the Committee’s catalogue, but cannot be traced in the present collection. The three *Gozan* editions, however, are still extant. The report does not mention any particular title in the category *kokatsujiban*, but the catalogue includes quite a few, most of them still extant. Some of them are included in this exhibition. Worth mentioning are editions of the Zen classic *Hekiganroku* 碧巌録; the historical chronicle *Eiga Monogatari* 弘化物語; the Buddhist dictionary *Honyaku Myōgi Shū* 翻訳名義集 by the Chinese monk Hōun (Fayun 法雲; 1088-1158), said by the Committee to date from the Keichō-Genna 慶長・元和時代 (1596-1624); the *Ressenden* (Liexianzhuan) 列仙伝, comprising biographies of immortals attributed to the Chinese historian and bibliographer Ryū Kō (Liu Xiang 劉向; 77-6 BC); *Ryukō Bukkyō Hennen Tsūron* 勇巖佛教編年通論, a history of Buddhism in China by the monk Soshū 祖琇; *Sūmon Shōtōroku* 宗門正燈録, a collection of traditional biographies of Zen teachers compiled by Tōyō Eichō 東陽英朝 (1428-1504) and edited by his distant successor Gudō Tōshoku 勇堂東宿 (1579-1661); and *Teikan Zusetzu* 帝鑑図説, an illustrated mirror of good and bad conduct for rulers.

The donation also included a number of old printed editions that are not mentioned either in *Kokusho Sōmokuroku* 国書総目録 or in *Kokubun Kokusho Sōmokuroku* 国文学研究資料館典籍ファイル, the database of the National Institute for Japanese Literature used by Yamazaki Makoto – that is, the two union...
catalogues *par excellence* for books produced in Japan before the Meiji Restoration (1868). They include such titles as *Ogura Sanso Shikishi Waka* 小倉山荘紙和歌, a collection of poetry written in Japanese, dated fourth year of Genna 元和 (1618); *Sagoromo 狹衣* (date unknown), a story of the love affairs of a man named Sagoromo; and *Shida しだ* (date unknown), a libretto to a recitative dance.

The donation further contained a fine assortment of *Meisho Zue 名所図会* - illustrated topographical descriptions of scenic beauty and famous places in Japan - including *Kyō Warabe 京わらべ* by the Nakagawa Kiun 中川喜雲 (1636-1705), published in the fourth year of Meireki (1658); *Edo Meisho-banashi 江戸名所ばなし*, published in the seventh year of Genroku (1694); and *Miyako Meisho-zue 都名所図会*, compiled by the Akisato Ritō 秋里離島 (?-?), illustrated by the Takehara Shunchōsai 竹原春朝斎 (?-1801), published in the ninth year of An'ei (1780) (see descriptions in the following chapter 'Selected Books from the 1920s Japanese Donation').

In addition, Wada made a consistent effort to include representative samples of the various genres representative of the ebullient popular literature produced during the Edo period.\(^{43}\)

In the category of manuscripts the final report mentions Buddhist texts from the archives of the temples Nakatomidera 中臣寺, Chūsonji 中尊寺, Jingoji 神護寺, and Tamukeyama Hachimangū 手向山八幡宮. The original catalogue lists indeed two manuscripts from the Jingoji temple, *Bussetsu Ben'i Chōjō-kyō 仏説弁意長者子経* and scroll 35 of *Daichidoron 大智度論*, apparently both lost now. It also lists one from the Chūsonji 中尊寺, entitled *Dai'i Riki Unshō Myōō-kyō Shinmitsujī-hō 大威力菩薩摩訶尼心密法*, adding that it is commonly known as the *Hidehira scripture* (dubbed *Hidehira-kyō* 秀衡経 in the original catalogue), equally missing at present. The manuscript in the original catalogue listed as bearing the seal of the Nakatomidera temple is scroll 16 of a Buddhist scripture entitled *Mishasoku-ku Goburitsu 弥沙塞部五分律第*，also missing at present. The same holds for the two scrolls of the *Daihannya Haramita-kyō 大般若波羅蜜多経*, which according to the catalogue bear the seal of the *Yakushiji 薬師寺* temple. The manuscript that the final report mentions as being from the Tamukeyama Hachimangū 手向山八幡宮 is scroll 476 of the Buddhist scripture *Daihannya Haramita-kyō 大般若波羅蜜多経*. It is said to bear a seal "Tōdaiji Hachimangū" 東大寺八幡宮, i.e. the Hachimangū shrine in the Tōdaiji temple. This linking of a Shintō shrine and a Buddhist temple must be explained in light of the fact that the Shintō deity of Tamukeyama Hachimangū was the tutelary deity of Tōdaiji temple in the city of Nara, until the separation of Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines in the early Meiji period. This manuscript too I have not been able to retrieve so far. Also from the Tōdaiji temple is a manuscript containing scroll 342 of the same *Daihannya Haramita-kyō*, but not of the same set as the aforementioned one. The colophon at the end of the scroll mentions that it underwent a second revision in the first year of Gennin 元仁 (1224). This manuscript, still extant today, has been restored and remounted on a scroll by the National Committee.

As also mentioned by the final report, a few handsome *Nara Ehon 奈良絵本* were indeed included in the donation. The ones listed in the catalogue and still extant today are *Hachikazuki はちかつき*, *Ohara Gokō 小原御幸*, and *Urashima うらしま*. *Nara Ehon* are horizontal woodblock print books, measuring approximately 16 cm x 22 cm, with hand-printed or printed illustrations of stories. The covers of the books or scrolls are decorated with mist and cloud forms on dark blue paper, often with flowers and grasses painted in gold. The catalogue also mentions a manuscript of the *Ise Monogatari 伊勢物語*, though apparently now missing. *Ohara Gokō*, datable around 1661-1672, is possibly a unique copy. Although not mentioned in the final report, the manuscript entitled *Shōjusanshō 正宗贔屓* and datable about the year 1500 is equally rare and precious. It is a Japanese commentary on a text by the Chinese Buddhist monk Shaoyun 道雲, who lived during the Song period (960-1279). Equally worth mentioning is the manuscript of a Japanese commentary on a Chinese anthology, dated from the first year of Meiō 明応 (1492) and entitled *Shōjū Senkai Kobun Shinpō Kōshū 諸儒箋群書類従*.

It is striking that quite a few manuscripts, marked by Wada and Urushiyama as “rare”, are missing in the collection as it has come down to us today. I will be suggesting a possible explanation below.

Moreover, the donation also included large series, comprising primary resources for historical research, such as *Koji Ruien 齊賢撰* in 355 volumes, *Gunjo Ruijū 奈良撰* in 660 volumes, and *Honzō Zufu 本草図譜* in 95 volumes.
Imperial Donations
The Committee had also received gifts from the Imperial Household, several government agencies, and a number of private individuals. The Prince Regent Hirohito contributed nineteen titles in 301 volumes as well as “an album” from the Library of the Imperial Household, in addition to a porcelain flower vase by Seifū Yohei III, a potter from Kyoto, and a gift of 10,000 yen from the emperor. In the Department for Archives and Mausolea (shoryobu) of the present Imperial Household Agency, there are two files related to the donation of Japanese books to the Louvain Library. From these sources, we learn that the books donated included fine editions of the Six National Histories, including Nihonshoki, Shoku Nihongi, Nihon Kōki, and other important historical and literary works, both printed editions and manuscripts, as well as a few Meiji era publications.

Objets d’Art
Baron Ōkura Kihachirō 大倉喜八郎 (1837–1928) donated a writing-case with ink slab and a tea set, both dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The tea set was stored in a lacquer box whose lid is decorated with a funerary barge. The slab is contained in a lacquer repository of the university we have been able to identify the case: In point of fact, it is an ink slab (suzuri-ishi) whose top section features two embossed carps. The slab is contained in a lacquer box whose lid is decorated with a funerary barge. A contemporary notice in French reads: “Ecrivains à encre de Chine orné de poissons à la Outa Maro (sic). Sur le couvercle barque funéraire d’un samurai. XVIII e. Don du Baron Okura, de Tokio.”

The Vision of the Donors
To what extent did the selection reflect the vision of the Japanese donors? The proper answer would be: to a considerable degree, but certainly not one hundred percent. They simply could not bring together their dream list, even if they had one, because books were in great dearth in the wake of the Great Kantō Earthquake. Additionally, the money was not forthcoming as they had expected. Wada himself admitted that the Committee in the end barely managed to raise one fourth of the original amount they had budgeted.

They had thus to settle for less than their dream list presumably, and the selection somehow came together. Quite a few individuals and institutions donated books. In the Japanese context, it would certainly have been difficult to spurn such an act of goodwill in times of great distress, to refuse the donation out of hand, or to discard it from inclusion. I assume that they rejected some books if they were in poor material condition, or too vulgar, or of mundane content. In order to avoid unpleasant surprises or donation of doubles, the Committee had stipulated in its call that before donating books, the prospective donor had to send in a list of the titles concerned. It expected the first place books written and published in Japanese, but books in Chinese, English, French, German, Dutch, and other languages were also acceptable provided they were published in Japan. It would be interesting to see if, despite all these preconditions, donations were rejected; and if so, which; and how they were disposed of.

Meiji and Taishō Reprints
The Taishō period (1912–1926) is known for its social mood of relative freedom and emancipation. At the same time, it is a period when the reappraisal of Japan’s cultural tradition reached an unprecedented height. That is reflected in the great editorial enterprises of the day: the Buddhist Tripitaka Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō, the reprints of Gunsho Ruijū and its sequels, to name but a few. Furthermore, it included recently edited series and reprints such as those published by Seigeisha 精芸社, Hakubunkan 博文館, and by the Kokusho kankōkai 国書刊行会. There were more than ten of such series, practically all reprints of classical texts. Also reflecting this tendency is the inclusion of reproductions of sixty-five classical paintings on seventy-six scrolls, especially paintings that are connected with the Zen tradition, published by Dōkōkai 同好会.

We also must note the sizeable inclusion of original publications from the Meiji and Taishō periods, that is, from the decades immediately preceding the time of the donation or contemporary
to it. They were mainly on scholarly subjects, including legal and institutional subjects, but upon closer inspection it turns out that the Committee has included original publications from the Meiji and Taishō period in each of the twenty-six divisions. This act suggests a deliberate effort not only to donate an antiquarian heritage but also to promote the fruits of contemporary Japanese scholarship, which in those days was largely ignored by the Western academic community. The donation thus stands as a monument to both Japan's cultural heritage and its contemporary scholarship. Admittedly, the latter is strictly limited to the humanities. We do not see any representative titles of science and technology or cosmopolitan medicine. There is, for instance, no trace of Takamine Jōkichi 高峰譲吉 (1854-1922), who was the first to isolate and purify the hormone adrenaline from animal glands, becoming the first to accomplish this for a glandular hormone. Likewise absent is Kitasato Shibasaburō 北里柴三郎 (1853-1931), co-discoverer of the infectious agent of bubonic plague in Hong Kong in 1894, and co-discoverer of the diphtheria antitoxin serum.

The duality between pre-Meiji and Meiji is also observable in the material make-up of the books. 1868, the year of the Meiji Restoration, marks a watershed in the history of Japan, as it does in that of Japanese printing and publishing. Books before 1868 were bound in one of the traditional Japanese styles of binding. From 1868 onwards, these types of binding became gradually marginalized and were in the end nearly completely supplanted by Western style binding. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries traditional binding was increasingly limited to special editions, when the publisher wished to give his publication a retro,arty, archaic, bibliophile, or antiquarian aspect. The aforementioned mood of reappraisal of traditional pre-modern culture during the Meiji and Taishō eras also manifested itself among other things in publishing books on heritage topics, and among them we find many publications in traditional Japanese binding. Traditional technology and topics connected with 有職故実 - a body of exquisitely bland pseudo-science about codified techniques, precedents, and rules that typified the pre-modern lifestyle of the aristocracy and the samurai class - were popular subjects in this niche of publications. Good examples are Shōka Kojitsu Roku 匠家故実録 and Kōshō Gijutsu no Futokoro 工匠技術之懐, treatises on traditional carpentry and wooden building technology, which are Meiji reprints of earlier books. Another example worth mentioning is Tōki Zukan 陶器図鑑, which highlights traditional decorative designs on ceramics.

That duality in terms of material make-up and format was present in the mind of the donors. In their eyes, books from before 1868 were heritage, whereas books from after that date, certainly in the case of books in Western binding, were data carriers and information resources. I believe that they wanted to impart both those senses in their donation. Due to the earthquake and the resulting scarcity on the book market, we will never know how deliberate their selection was and how much was due to coincidence and expediency. Therefore it is not possible to determine apodictically what vision is embodied in the selection as it came to Leuven.

As a rule Yamazaki’s catalogue, mentioned above, includes photographs of the title page or frontispiece or first page, and/or an illustration of a book if it is Japanese bound (wasōbon 和装本) and predates 1868. For books published after 1868 he does not include a photograph if they are a Western bound book (yōsōbon 洋装本), but he does include photographs of Meiji and Taishō era (1868-1912) books if they are Japanese bound. This practice enables the user of the catalogue to evaluate the quality of the collection, including the portion belonging to the Meiji and Taishō periods. One somehow gets the impression that the National Committee intended to conflate the pre-modern and modern periods, to suggest some measure of continuity between the two. This is borne out, for instance, by the fact that in the second of the twenty-six divisions, entitled ‘Philosophy’, we come across items on Eki 易 (i.e. the Book of Changes), on divination, and on bokuzet 卜筮, fortune-telling, along with “serious” Western-style treatises. The sixth of the twenty-six divisions, ‘Literature’, also includes translations of Shakespeare by eminent writer and literature critic Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935). There is no doubt that these are masterly translations or rather renditions, literature in their own right indeed. Was this the reason for their inclusion in the donation, though, or was this simply a case of expediency, a donation hard to refuse? Likewise, the treatises on Roman law by Viscount Suematsu Kenchō 末松謙澄 (1855-1920) were included more likely owing to the prestige and background of the family.
who donated them (the books bear the stamp “donation from the family of viscount Suematsu”) rather than on account of their connection with classical Japanese culture.

The Packing and Shipping of the Donations and Their Reception in Leuven

From the National Committee’s final report we also learn that the donation was sent in six shipments. The shipping company Nihon (Nippon) Yūsen 日本郵船 took on the shipping at half the regular rate. The first shipment of 324 titles in 1,977 fascicles/tomes was shipped on August 7, 1924; the second of 587 titles in 3,354 fascicles/tomes on December 8, 1924; the third of 560 titles in 3,175 fascicles/tomes on April 14, 1925; the fourth of 810 titles in 2,818 fascicles/tomes on October 15, 1925; the fifth of 791 titles in 2,194 fascicles/tomes on April 5, 1926; the sixth of 130 titles in 164 fascicles/tomes on August 30, 1926. Even after the final shipment, a number of books still had to be sent on by mail, because they had been ordered but not yet published at the time of shipment. It totalled 3,202 titles, in 13,682 volumes. In that enumeration, each fascicle belonging to a title in traditional binding was counted as one, whereas an entire collection or series of books in Western binding was counted as only one. Conversely, in the index cards, there was only one card for one title in traditional binding; notwithstanding how many fascicles they may have comprised, they constituted just one title. A collection, series or even single tome in Western binding comprise multiple individual titles, and so here each title was given an index card. Hence, the number of physical tomes or fascicles in total exceeded 20,000. Scrolls, maps and rubbings were counted as one title and one volume each. In addition, the donation also included ten printing blocks (hangi 版木) of classical works. Each index card mentioned at the top of the first line the title of the book in romanized transcription to make searching easy for a Western reader. In Japan it is customary to search for Japanese and Chinese books by title, and one generally does not search by the author’s name. Wada assumed it was best to follow the Japanese practice for Japanese books. Only in the twenty-sixth division, ‘Works in Western languages’, did he follow the Western practice of arranging in alphabetical order by the initial of the author’s family name. This cabinet was shipped to Leuven to serve as the catalogue for the collection there. Since no cataloguer in Louvain could be expected to read Japanese, the cabinet was essential because it contained on index cards the virtual catalogue in romanized transcription of the collection. Even so, the Committee planned to send an expert to Leuven to classify and arrange the books in situ once the new library building would be completed. The plan, however, never materialized.

Apart from the financial contributions already mentioned, books were donated by prominent individuals, various universities, associations, government departments, and regional administrations. In March 1926 the Committee sent out a communiqué to the European legations and embassies, as well as to Ambassador de Bassompierre. The total sum of donations to the Committee was 63,189 yen and 90 sen. It spent 36,005 yen and 67 sen on the purchase of books; 3,728 yen and 99 sen on restoration and binding; 899 yen and 75 sen on tools and index cards; 1,507 yen and 15 sen on shipping to Leuven; 18,314 yen and 28 sen on personnel costs; and 408 yen and 44 sen on sundry costs. 2,325 yen and 44 sen were donated to Louvain University with an eye to fitting out and decorating the ‘Japanese room’.

The fate of the donation after its arrival in Leuven

In his article Koyama Noboru 小山騰 (1948-) has rightly stated that this sizeable donation of Japanese books to Leuven, which included a considerable portion of manuscripts and rare printed books, was probably the largest such donation to an overseas library before the Second World War. Moreover, it is also remarkable for its high profile, involving as it did prominent personalities, and its high degree of organization. Although not directly financed by the government, it may arguably have been the first case of organized support by Japan for Japanese Studies abroad.

After having arrived in Leuven the books first remained in the cases until the library was ready. They were probably unpacked according to packing lists that went with the cases. That might explain the orderly arrangement of the books on the only photograph we have of the collection in situ before the Second World War. This photograph, a picture postcard of the “Collection japonaise Japaneesche verzameling” by Ernest Thill (Brussels), was taken some time between
1928 and 1933 (see below), and features wooden ‘orientalist’ stacks, in addition to some of the reproductions of classical paintings hanging on the wall. On the far end of the room, we also see the vase of Seifū Yohei III and an illustrated narrative hand scroll hung up against the wall. On the side of the nearest right-hand stack hangs what looks like a sword, whose provenance and whereabouts since are unaccounted for. On the photograph it is even possible to discern some book titles. From a sample of readable titles, it is clear that the books were not arranged according to Wada’s catalogue, because we can discern books from widely differing divisions arranged close to another. Quite readable is, say, the title *Sakai Manroku 茶会漫録* from the ‘Entertainment/sports/games’ division next to *Manyōshū Daishōki 万葉集大正紀*, a book in the ‘Literature’ division. What they have both in common, however, is that they are Meiji period publications. Other books close by – such as *Yōkyoku Tsukai 音楽通解* and, on the shelf below, *Tokugawa Jūgodai-shi 徳川十五代史* – are likewise Meiji publications. They were all shipped in the third shipment, as can be confirmed from the alphabetical packing list preserved in the archives. They are not put in alphabetical order, however, which suggests that they were simply taken out of their boxes and arranged on the shelves in the order of unpacking.

**The Satsuma Chair**

During the period leading up to the First World War, more and more languages and cultures had been added to the curriculum of both the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Letters at the University of Louvain, where numerous eminent Oriental Studies scholars were trained and subsequently taught. The number of Orientalists in Belgium had grown sufficiently large for the rector Monsignor Paulin Ladeuze (1870-1940) to found the “Belgian Society of Oriental Studies” in 1921. The eminent Buddhologist Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1869-1938) became its first president and the Egyptologist Jean Capart (1877-1947) its first vice-president. On the ever-growing list of courses offered, though, neither Japan’s language nor its culture was included until the academic year 1928-1929. The eminent Buddhologist Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1869-1938) became its first president and the Egyptologist Jean Capart (1877-1947) its first vice-president. On the ever-growing list of courses offered, though, neither Japan’s language nor its culture was included until the year 1928. Previously, in 1927 - the year the university celebrated its 500th anniversary (after a two-year delay, see illustration) - the university had awarded an honorary doctorate to Mr Adachi Mine’ichirō, who in that year changed his post as the ambassador to Belgium to France. The honour was given him as a token of gratitude for Japan’s generous help in the reconstruction of the university library after its destruction during the war, as well as in recognition of his personal contribution.

A few days after receiving his honorary doctorate, Ambassador Adachi informed the chancellor of the university that one of his fellow countrymen intended to endow a chair for the study of the history of Japan’s civilization. Already the *Commission d’initiative* had proposed that the various national committees were welcome to endow chairs to teach their national language(s), history, and literature.61 The donor in question was Satsuma Jirōhachi 薩摩次郎八 (1901-1976),62 commonly known in the West as “Baron Satsuma”, the son of a well-known Tokyo industrialist, who resided in Paris and had previously made his intention known to Baron Édouard Descamps (1847-1933), professor at the University of Louvain and vice-chairman of the Belgian Senate. (Satsuma had in fact also been present at the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the university in July 1927.63) Baron Descamps, Ambassador Adachi, and Rector Ladeuze were the threesome who defined the format the chair would and could take. Satsuma’s endowment was 100,000 BF - according to Descamps’ note not enough to sponsor a regular course of study, but only adequate to pay a series of six lectures, though this was apparently deemed sufficient. The Belgian side did not ask for much and was not overly ambitious. In his letter of November 21, 1927, Adachi writes that he has recently met “Satsuma fils” (Satsuma Jirōhachi), who has declared himself prepared to increase the endowment.

It would seem, however, that the request for an increase was actually never made. Nevertheless, the academic authorities immediately approved the proposal and decided to inaugurated the proposed chair in the academic year 1927-1928. Due to circumstances, the chair could not be inaugurated until the beginning of the academic year 1928-1929. The first incumbent appointed was R.P Pierre Charles (1883-1954), a professor of missiology at the Gregorian University of Rome who had a strong interest in the history of religions and ethnology. During the subsequent quarter century he was to fill the chair until his death, apart from the war period (1940-1945), during which time the courses of the Satsuma Chair were suspended.64
The forgotten Chinese Donation

It is less well known that the Chinese Republic likewise participated in the *Oeuvre internationale de Louvain*. Quite early, as of October 1920, the Chinese Legation in Brussels notified the university that it was donating a collection of books, including the Chinese classics, the history of the Qing dynasty, catalogues, dictionaries, and books by individual authors. The National University of Peking would also make a donation, and the famous scholar, philosopher, and politician Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) would donate a set of his own works. The Chinese donation also included a Chinese typewriter together with instructions for use.

In 1927, Lou Tseng Tsiang (Lu Zhengxiang) 隆徵祥 (1871-1949), former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister of the Republic of China, entered the Benedictine convent of Saint-André near Bruges. His monastic name was Dom Pierre-Célestin Lou O.S.B. He befriended King Albert I (1875-1934), Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851-1926), members of the clerical elite, the diplomatic elite, and others. He cherished the hope to get Chinese Studies started in Belgium, more specifically "dans le monde laïc", for he evidently was well aware of the Chinese proficiency of the Belgian missionaries, but their expertise was of little use to Belgian society. Before leaving the diplomatic service, he visited Rector Ladeuze to donate his personal Chinese library to the university as "un premier modeste fond d'une section de sinology en Belgique". We learn this from a letter he addressed to Raoul Pontus, chairman of the *Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises*.

A Japanese Room

The new library, rebuilt with American funding, was inaugurated on the symbolic date of July 4, 1928, an event that was even covered in a Chinese newspaper founded by the Belgian missionary Vincent Lebbe in 1915. However, from that moment on, little is heard of the Japanese collection. In the annual report made for 1927-28, the librarian Van Cauwenbergh cursorily mentions the arrival of the Japanese books, but in the subsequent yearly reports about the activities of the library, nothing is reported on them, not even on the Japanese room. Strangely enough, between 1929 and the outbreak of the Second World War, not once did he refer to the Japanese library in the wing along the Blijde Inkomststraat. Here the administration was located on the ground floor, while the upper floors housed the Japanese room, the precious works room, and a few seminar rooms. Admittedly, if the room was more or less a closed one, and the collection was equally closed, there was little to report. Nevertheless, some sporadic additions were made, like the books by the bibliographer and cultural historian Kawase Kazuma 川瀬一馬 (1906-1999), sent by the Yasuda Library (*Yasuda Bunko* 安田文庫); moreover, there was the major batch of books that made up the *Da Qing shilu* (*Daishin Jitsuroku*) 大清實錄 (chronicling the Manchu dynasty), a superb piece of movable type printing from Japan's Ministry of Finance. While both additions were sent and received in 1937, no mention of them is made in the yearly reports.

All this seems to suggest that the Japanese room was something of a sealed salon. Since there was no foot traffic going in or out, it was always a neatly arranged interior and therefore ideal for showcasing. Although not a soul could read the books, they were nevertheless an object of pride. A special issue of the periodical *Le blé qui lève*, whose manifest aim was to highlight the vibrant life and scholarship of the Catholic University of Louvain among its readership, bears out this function as a salon, utilising the very same Ernest Thill photograph of the “Collection japonaise Japaneesche verzameling” without even mentioning that it was the Japanese collection. Since there was no Japanese Studies programme, the special issue cannot have aimed to promote this particular discipline, but this manifestly impressive arrangement of stacks was presumably the university library’s ‘best room’. At any rate, this special issue of the above mentioned periodical proves that the Japanese Room was put in place between 1928 and 1933.

The Orientalist Institute

With the Satsuma Chair established, the university now offered a course of study that could claim to cover the further end of the Asian continent. However, all courses related to Asia in the broadest sense of the term remained scattered over two faculties and did not lead to a regular degree in Oriental Studies as such. Some felt that the time had come to bring lecturers and courses together under one and the same roof. Thus, the *Orientalist Institute* was established in 1936, integrating all branches of Oriental Studies conducted in the faculties of Theology and Arts into a programme of philological instruction for
all ancient languages and the critical instruction of the history of the ancient peoples of East Asia.

The new set-up hardly affected the status of Japanese Studies, however. It remained restricted to the one Satsuma Chair. Nevertheless, Far Eastern Studies, including the study of China, in the broad sense did make a step forward thanks to the monumental contribution of Professor Étienne Lamotte (1903-1983).

The Second Burning of the Library

At the beginning of the Second World War, the library again fell victim to enemy bombs. Starting with May 14, 1940, the Germans had been bombing the town of Leuven. On May 17, the day the German army entered the town, at half past one in the morning, fire broke out in the library. The building sustained massive damage. The tower had been hit some twelve times during the bombardment. Little more remained of the magnificent building than calcined walls, twisted beams, and heaps of scrap. Of the 900,000 volumes in its holdings, of its rich collections, of its 3,000 series of journals, very little could be kept from the flames: Only 15,000 volumes were saved from the blaze in the tower, and in some rooms on the first and the second floor, in the wings that run along the Arendstraat and along the Blijde Inkomstraat respectively. The reader will notice that the number of 15,000 volumes comes close to the number of items in the Japanese donation. Yet the Japanese collection was not the only one to be saved. The “Toponymie” collection was likewise rescued, but I have not been able to verify how many volumes this category included.

The Japanese Donation Saved

When the dust had settled, the occupying forces turned over the books and objects that had been recovered from the ruined library to the town burgomaster and the librarian. The inventory of the transfer, written in German,72 includes a page entitled “Japanische Bibliothek”, which lists five items:

1. 5346 Bände und Broschüren
2. 108 Faksimile-Schriftrollen
3. 10 Druckplatten
4. Eine Schreibmaschine
5. Eine Kartothek.

The figures given in the inventory of transfer by the German command do not seem to tally with the figures we have mentioned above, but this is
not surprising. The Germans no doubt counted wrappers, physical tomes and fascicles, whereas the printed catalogue lists physical titles and the index card catalogue inventories all virtual titles (in many cases one tome includes multiple titles). I assume Bände denotes both wrappers (chitsu 帙) as well as tomes in Western-style binding. Faksimile-Schriftrollen refers to no doubt to the reproductions of Japanese classical paintings, while Druckplatten obviously to the 10 printing blocks, Schreibmaschine to the Chinese typewriter, and Kartothek to the filing cabinet. Broschüren is less straightforward, but it probably refers to the Japanese-style fascicles. The fact that the Chinese typewriter is mentioned here suggests that it was placed in the Japanese room, presumably together with all the Chinese books that had been donated by the Chinese Legation in Brussels in the early 1920s and by Dom Lou. Though not mentioned in the German list, the vase (now at KU Leuven) had also escaped unharmed. The fact that it was not mentioned was probably because it had been transferred to the section of mainly Chinese ceramics, which was housed elsewhere. It seems that the vase had even been mistakenly considered a piece of Chinese porcelain.

Although it is hard to verify whether the Japanese collection was saved in its entirety, that it was rescued at all remains something short of a miracle – as well as not without a measure of irony, given the fact that Japan was a member of the Axis Powers. If the arrangement of the Japanese library in wooden stacks on a parquet floor was permanent, as depicted in the Ernest Thill’s photograph, how could it have survived the flames? In addition, if it did, how did it withstand possible degradation from dampness or rain, even given the fact that the spring and summer of 1940 were exceptionally fair? Indeed, according to the annual report of 1941-42 by Van Cauwenbergh, it took two months before the Germans released the ruined library. Does that mean that the two only surviving collections, ‘Toponymie’ and the Japanese donation, remained in the ruins, exposed to the elements for two months? Perhaps not. In the same report the Japanese library is said to have been salvaged and transferred to the University Hall.73 That only seems to contradict the claim of the German document that the Japanese library had been transferred to the city authorities, since the University Hall was and still is property of the municipality of Leuven.74 It was however not safe there, either. On May 11, 1944, the University Hall sustained heavy damage, this time from Allied bombing. On the next leg of its journey, the Japanese library was located in the subterranean floor (sous-sol) of the Institut de Spoelbergh. The Spoelbergh Institute is the building at Krakenstraat 3, where the general administration (Algemeen Beheer) for KU Leuven is now located.

The question whether the Japanese donation escaped unscathed is relevant in regard to the present collection. Namely, twenty-six items listed under the twenty-fifth division ‘Rare books’ in the original catalogue (and the Yamazaki catalogue) are missing. They include the two Muku Jōkōkyō Darani, the sūtra dedicated by Empress Kōmyō, two Buddhist manuscripts from the Jingoji temple, two from the Yakushiji temple, one from the Nakatomidera, one from the Hachimangū, and one from the Chūsonji temple. As already mentioned, these are some of the precious items explicitly mentioned in the final report of the National Committee. Perhaps the absence of at least some of these items ties in with the report about damages and losses that the university authorities filed with the Commissariat provincial du Brabant, at the request of the Commissariat général à la Restauration du pays, on December 24, 1942.75 In this report there is an item labelled “Fonds Lefort et Japonais” in the category “Manuscrits”. Obviously, we can only surmise what this may have meant. Fact is that numerous items classified under the twenty-fifth division ‘Rare books’ in the catalogue happened to be manuscripts. Being manuscripts, they may have been separated from the main collection and, together with the Fonds Lefort, stored with the manuscripts on the underground level of the library. On that level during the fire, molten glass flowing down from the stack rooms reduced everything to ashes. The estimate of the loss in the amount of 169,750.00 Belgian francs is, in comparison with other categories, not particularly high; therefore, the envisaged number of manuscripts subsumed under this line item cannot have been very high, again confirming my assumption. Though the lost Japanese manuscripts represent a sizeable proportion of the “rare” category within the Japanese donation, in absolute terms it was a modest number, much lower than for the collections of Western manuscripts.

In total about fifty items appear to be missing from the collection as it now stands. About what was lost in 1940, the only information I have

10. Tentative reconstruction of arrangement on a shelf as seen on the nearest right-hand stack in the Ernest Thill picture postcard (III. 9). Source: Photograph by Willy Vande Walle.

found is the following letter from the librarian Van Cauwenbergh to the rector:

Monseigneur,

[...]

Dans l’incendie de la bibliothèque, le 17 mai 1940, ont péri 6 rouleaux manuscrits japonais sur fond noir et d’autres, à images de Nara, fortement coloriés, de l’époque de Yedo et 3 fragments de manuscrits du canon bouddhique du 9ᵉ et du 10ᵉ siècle, provenant des temples de Nakatomidera, de Chusonji et de Jingoji. Tous les livres ont été sauvés, mais des officiers allemands en ont emportés quelques-uns à titre de souvenir...

Le service à thé et le service à encre de Chine (écritoire) offerts à l’Université par le baron Okura en mai 1923, par l’intermédiaire du Baron de Bassompierre, ont été sauvés.

Il en est de même du vase en porcelaine Satsuma[sic], offert par l’Empereur du Japon et ramené comme les deux autres objets, par Mr de Bassompierre.

[...]

Van Cauwenbergh

While this letter sounds surprisingly knowledgeable for someone with no background at all in this regard, it is addressed to a ‘Monseigneur,’ who can be none other than Rector Monseigneur Van Waeyenbergh. It was in fact the reply to an enquiry by the latter, who had been asked for information about the whereabouts of the donation by Ambassador de Bassompierre.96 However, the number of the items listed by Van Cauwenbergh does not nearly add up to fifty, and the majority remains unaccounted for. Yet another question concerns what happened to the Taishō-period reproductions of the classical paintings, many of which are now missing as well. Were some of them kept outside the Japanese room, thus falling victim to the flames?

The Restoration of the Library

Very soon after its destruction, new plans for the restoration of the burnt-out building were drawn up, with construction authorized by the Germans already in 1941. Thanks to the work of the Comité tot Herstel der Bibliotheek van de Universiteit te Leuven, led by Professor Jan Vanderheyden, the library could boast a book fund of inventoried and catalogued items between 250,000 and 300,000 by the end of 1944.77

When the restoration was completed in 1950, the Japanese collection was returned to the library and returned to its pre-war location. Floor plans of the building, which were drawn up in connection with a fire insurance policy taken out in 1959, confirm that the Japanese library was located on the third floor of the wing along the Blijde Inkomststraat. Its pre-war location on the second floor cannot be ruled out, but Vanderheyden says it was the top floor (i.e. the third). The Seifū Yohei vase was exhibited in the Petit Musée, an exhibition room within the library, above the general reading room, as is evidenced in a contemporary photograph.

Before the war, the Japanese books had been arranged on wooden ‘orientalist’ stacks, but during the turbulent phase between 1940 and the return to the restored library in 1950, the stacks were apparently separated from the books and stored somewhere else. When around 1950 the restoration was complete, and all the books were moved back into the Warren Whitney building on the Ladeuzeplein, the ‘orientalist’ stacks were apparently not recovered and, from the look of it, metal stacks were chosen instead, as can be seen from another unique photo, “Vue intérieure de la Section japonaise”, reproduced in Rodica Doina Pop’s book.97 It is to my knowledge the only photograph of the Japanese library between 1950 and its transfer to Louvain-la-Neuve in the 1970s. One notices the slanted ceiling of the room on the third floor along the Blijde Inkomststraat,80 which now houses the “Illuminare Centre for the Study of Medieval Art”. The bookshelves are not the original historical ‘orientalist’ bookshelves, but more modern, ostensibly metal ones, standing back to back in double rows. On the side of the nearest stack, one notices a Japanese hanging scroll (kakemono), a reproduction of a classical painting. On a low table a hand scroll is half-unrolled. This is manifestly a staged photograph.

Mullie’s Classification System

If we compare the Ernest Thill photograph (before 1933) with the Rodica Pop photograph (1958), we notice that in contrast to the former, the books on the latter photograph bear what looks like oval labels. These are the shelf marks that were applied to the books by Joseph/Jozef Mullie (1886-1976), as already pointed out at the beginning of this essay. He was a Scheut missionary active in Northern China from 1909 to 1931. He was trained as a philologist in Leuven by Colinet, and before he left for China, he had already studied Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, and Tibetan. He discovered the imperial tombs of the Liao dynasty
(eleventh century), collaborated with Sven Hedin and Teilhard de Chardin, and published numerous contributions in European and Chinese journals. After his return to Europe, he was appointed extraordinary professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Utrecht (1939-1956) and inducted as member of the Royal Flemish Academy (1955).

Mullie had no status at the university, but had permission to work in the library. Ostensibly having no knowledge of the Wada catalogue, he set out to rearrange the books according to his own system, integrating them into a more comprehensive library of Far Eastern Studies. He conceived the classification system that is embodied in the oval labels, but it remains puzzling. To some extent it puts books of the same or related subject together, but some books end up in a totally ‘alien’ environment. Although he was a consummate sinologist, he did not know Japanese and may have read wildly different meanings into some of the Japanese characters. When his reading was correct, he usually put the books with germane titles in the same order on the shelves. On the other hand, the arrangement also suggests that he was following the system of fixed shelving in a closed stacks system, thus putting books of the same size together. The order of chronological intake obviously did not apply to the Japanese donation, since it was terminated. However, by merging it with new arrivals and the donation of his own sizeable collection of Chinese books, he gradually developed it into a comprehensive library for Far Eastern Studies. Since by now there were two professors dealing with the Far East, the aforementioned Mgr Étienne Lamotte and Robert Shih, it gradually took on the function of the putative research library, or seminar library, of the ‘Section de l’Extrême Orient’.

As already pointed out, the Chinese donation and the Dom Lou donation must have been put in the same room as the Japanese donation at an early stage. The fact that for instance the Chinese typewriter is mentioned together with the Japanese books in the inventory of the German command suggests that they were in the same

![12. Floor plan showing location of the Japanese library in 1959.](image)

Source: UCLouvain Archives de la Bibliothèque centrale, Fonds Fl 067 A 13
room. If the Chinese typewriter was in the same room, then the Chinese books must have been in the same room as well. The annual report of Van Cauwenbergh also bears that out.

That Mullie is the author of the classification with the oval labels is confirmed both by his own statement to that effect, and by a letter from Jacques Ryckmans (1924-2005), president of the Institut Orientaliste, to the Head Librarian of the University (i.e. Professor Joseph Ruwet). This letter is also instructive regarding the make-up of the library. Writing at the time of the split of the university, Ryckmans significantly calls it the ‘séminaire japonais’, a point which confims my interpretation about the transformation of the nature of the library into the research library of the ‘Section de l’Extrême-Orient’. The letter gives a list of six specific divisions constituting the library in the ‘séminaire japonais’:

1. A sizeable collection of Chinese works published in Japan [sic] and given by the Japanese government after the First World War (these books have escaped the fire of 1940). They are arranged on stacks that bear numbers ranging from 1 to 68. The volumes bear an oval label with the number of the stack, of the shelf, and of the volume (summary catalogue drawn up by Father Mullie). Some of these numbered stacks (notably no. 9) contain works belonging to the collection described below under no. 6.

2. Gift by Dom Lou before his death in 1949. The gift includes two series of original boxes (with accompanying inscribed wooden panels), arranged to the left and right of the door, containing the texts of the “collection des quatre dépôts”. Other boxes (against the wall on the left) contain works of calligraphy and of Chinese seals.

3. Gift of Mgr Lamotte. Collection of 47 volumes of a historical series in blue and brown binding, offered to Mgr Lamotte by Mr Tsiang Fu-Tsung, director of the Central Library of Taipei. These books are placed at the far end of the seminar, opposite the entrance. These volumes do not bear any shelf mark, but some of them bear the label “Non Evertetur” of the library, with the indication D.D. E. Lamotte. This gift is claimed on behalf of the UCLouvain in the accompanying letter.

4. The collection Hien Tai Kouo Min Ki Pen Tehe Che Ts’ong Chou (book of the fundamental knowledge of present-day citizens), a donation
from the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) [...].

5. A collection of Buddhist texts ordered by the library at the request of Mgr Lamotte and R. Shih.

6. Brochures and varied works sent since 1955 by the Chinese government to the Institut Orientaliste at the request of R. Shih. These works are dispersed across certain shelves of the numbered stacks of the Japanese donation. From this list, one important component is missing: the Chinese, Mongolian, and Tibetan books owned by Mullie and added in the course of time to the library in the ‘séminaire japonais’. Indeed, at the time of the split – on October 19, 1969, to be precise – Mullie had had his books removed from the library of the ‘séminaire japonais’. Numbered 60A1 through 68G63 and numbered 57B1 through 57G40, they were donated to the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, along with his Mongolian and Tibetan books. They could therefore not figure on the list of Jacques Ryckmans, writing in February 1971. This brings us
directly to the split of the unitary university of Leuven/Louvain.

‘La Splitsing’: The Division of the University and Its Library
Writing in 1960, Gonzague Ryckmans (1887-1969) had concluded his article “Bis Diruta, Bis Restituta” on the two fires that destroyed the library in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, with a pious wish. He noted that the second half of the century had started under much luckier stars, and he prayed that his successors in the year 2000 might bless God for having allowed them to pursue their work in serenity and peace in the shadow of the library tower. In the year 2000, to be sure, the library did indeed offer a spectacle of busy professors, students, and library personnel in unprecedented numbers and ditto scale, if not of serenity or peace. Before the decade of the sixties was over, however, the library had to face yet another ordeal, which has often Ironically been dubbed “the third fire”.

During the 1960s the university went through a period of fast growth. The student population increased spectacularly and its structure encompassed a French-speaking and a Dutch-speaking section, which gradually expanded into two separate entities. The division of the university was not unlike a divorce, painful and acrimonious, a story that has been told elsewhere. In 1968, as the result of a political decision, the two entities became two legal persons. The decision also entailed the eventual relocation of the French-speaking entity. The Dutch-speaking university would remain in Leuven, the French-speaking university would, after a period of transition, move out to the French-speaking part of Belgium, to a site renamed Louvain-la-Neuve. The unitary Orientalist Institute was divided along the same linguistic lines. Awaiting its transfer to Louvain-la-Neuve, it relocated to Redingenstraat 16.

The split of the former unitary library proved to be a Gordian knot. The central holdings were divided in half, but separate collections were adjudicated to one or the other university.

Where does that leave the Japanese donation? As I have pointed out, the library in the ‘séminaire japonais’ had gradually evolved into a research library serving the professors of the ‘Section de l’Extrême Orient’. On the Dutch-speaking side there was no one teaching or doing research in that field. As Jacques Ryckmans stated in the letter quoted above:

The teaching of Buddhist languages (Chinese and Tibetan) has been assured since 1934 only by Mgr Lamotte; the courses of Classical Chinese and Introduction to Chinese Philosophy have been given by Mr Shih, the courses of Japanese have been given by Mr Durt, and subsequently, since 1964, by Mr Van Campenhoudt. KUL[euven] has not been able to appoint a teacher for any of these courses since the split. The gift of the Japanese government has been made at a period when there was no Dutch-speaking section. Moreover, the three doctorates that have been submitted to the Far Eastern division of the Orientalist Institute (Masson, Hofinger, Durt) have been defended in the French-speaking section. It seems to me that these considerations must be taken into account in the event of deciding to divide the content of the Japanese seminar.

The few professors involved in the study of the Far East were indeed French-speaking and had always been, and the donation had indeed been done at the time of the monolingual French-speaking university. These arguments seem to have weighed heavily with Head Librarian Prof. J. Ruwet. It was his judgment that the Japanese donation and the donation of Dom Lou were destined for UCLouvain. In April 1971 part of the library of the ‘séminaire japonais’ was transferred to 16 Redingenstraat. The Far Eastern section, together with the Japanese donation, eventually moved to the new site of Louvain-la-Neuve, where Lamotte, Shih, and Van Campenhout continued to teach Buddhist languages, Classical Chinese, and Japanese.

Two Sister Universities
The Japanese books were thus transferred to UCLouvain, but the Japanese objets d’art remained at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and so did the ‘orientalist’ bookshelves, which had presumably been stored in the attic since the 1950s. As one of the few remaining items of historical furnishings from the University Library during the interwar period, they were subsequently reused when the East Asian library of KU Leuven was moved from the Faculty of Arts into the KU Leuven University Library in the academic year 1980-1981. Here Mullie’s donation also found its final destination. The vase, donated by Crown Prince and later Emperor Hirohito, now belongs to the artistic heritage of KU Leuven, as does the writing set that Baron Ōkura had donated. There is no trace of the tea set, but its gold lacquer box is still extant.
The Satsuma Chair had also been divided and, at Louvain-la-Neuve, continued to be filled by Professor J. Masson, who had held it since 1955. On the Dutch-speaking side the Satsuma Chair was filled irregularly. In 1974 the Orientalist Institute of KU Leuven expanded its programme to a four-year curriculum. In 1978 it gained the full status of a department within the Faculty of Letters and started a four-year programme in Far Eastern Studies, with an emphasis on Chinese Studies, offering courses in Classical Chinese, modern Chinese, and modern Japanese, in addition to a number of courses dealing with the history, art history, and literary history of the Far East. In 1981 a chair of Japanese Studies was founded, to which the author of this essay was appointed, and in 1986 a fully-fledged four-year programme of Japanese Studies was launched, which over the years has attracted an increasing number of students. In 1995 a second chair was established to teach subjects related to present-day Japan.

The “Rediscovery” of the Japanese Donation

After its transfer to UCLouvain, the Japanese donation was stored in the closed stacks room of its huge underground book silos, in the ‘Réserve précieuse’ there. In the early 1980s, Harry Dewit, then cataloguer at UCLouvain, invited me to have a look at the collection. Although I had obviously heard about it from KU Leuven’s Head Librarian Prof. Jan Roegiers (1944-2013), among others, this was the first time I set eyes upon it myself.

Around the same time, Japanese bibliographers, having largely exhausted the prospective pool of collections that could be discovered, explored, catalogued, and classified in Japan, started turning their eyes abroad. That sparked a spate of explorations and visits by Japanese scholars of Japanese book collections, especially repositories of pre-Meiji documents, abroad. Thus a number of Japanese bibliographic ‘explorers’ visited the UCLouvain collection, among them: Koyama Noboru from the Japanese library of Cambridge University; Yamazaki Makoto from the National Institute of Japanese Literature, whom I already mentioned above in conjunction with the catalogue he published in 2000; and Yamaguchi Yōji, as research assistant for the project Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books in Europe, coordinated by Hayashi Nozomu (then assistant professor at Toyoko Gakuen Women’s College) as well as Peter Kornicki (then lecturer of Japanese Studies, Cambridge University). Koyama Noboru made a presentation about the donation at the Annual Conference of the European Association of Japanese Resource Specialists of 1994, held at the Japanologisches Seminar of Germany’s Bonn University. He later published the text in Shibusawa Kenkyū. I myself made a presentation about the collection to the EAJRS conference, mainly drawing on the KU Leuven archives and my own experience, and published a digest of my findings in EAJRS Newsletter no. 8 (2001).

Already quite some time before Yamazaki’s visit, however, in the early 1990s Yamaguchi Yōji had spent about one year carefully drawing up index cards for the books and documents of the Japanese donation in UCLouvain, as well as the Japanese collection in the Royal Library, i.e. the Winieder Collection. His appointment as assistant to the Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books in Europe being limited to four years, Yamaguchi, after the completion of his contract, transferred the index cards he had made of French, Belgian and other collections to Cambridge, with a view to entering them into the database of the Union Catalogue. According to the website of the Union Catalogue, the inputting of the data into the database was first carried out by Kornicki in Cambridge, but discontinued in 2001. Since then the National Institute of Japanese Literature, Tokyo, has taken over the data entry under the direction of Professor Itō Tetsuya. In November 2001 the Union Catalogue became freely accessible on the web. The data retrieval systems were created by Mr Ōuchi Hidenori.

Data input and revision are continuing. It would appear that, as I write these lines (February 2020), this data entry process has not been completed yet. A sampling test yielded the following result. Of 108 items, including ninety-nine items selected in an initial stage for this exhibition catalogue, forty-three did not return a hit. For eight of them, UCLouvain turned out to be the unique holding location in Europe. Allowing for possible no-hits due to variations in the title, this result would at least seem to bear out not only that the entry of the UCLouvain data is still far from complete, but at the same time that these forty-three items are nowhere else in European collections, in the unlikely assumption of course that the Union Catalogue covers exhaustively all other relevant collections. If that assumption were correct, it would effectively mean that for these forty-three
items, plus the eight items that returned a unique UCLouvain location, mentioned above, UCLouvain is the unique holding location in Europe, which would come down to about one half of our total sample.

As the heirs of the former unitary university, the universities of Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve celebrated their 575th anniversary during the academic year 2000-2001. One of the events marking this anniversary was a joint exhibition, held between February 1 and March 31, 2001, and entitled “Orientalia”. It featured a selection of ninety-seven precious works from the various ‘Oriental’ collections held in the two university libraries. I acted as one of the editors of the catalogue for the exhibition (Dutch and French versions), which includes descriptions of all exhibited items, photographs of one or two pages of each exhibit, and four essays covering different episodes in the history of ‘Oriental Studies’ at Louvain/Leuven. I contributed one of these essays, dealing with the historical circumstances and the actual execution of the Japanese donation, and selected forty-seven items from the Japanese donation. It was the first time that the Japanese donation was presented to the European public.

According to the preface of the catalogue, in an environment where contacts with China and Japan seem completely dominated by commercial considerations, it is of paramount importance that the universities draw attention to the cultural aspects of the East-West relations. The purpose was to provide a real encounter with the specific of the other culture, regardless of everything that we take for granted based on our own. The exhibition was described as a stepping stone on an adventurous journey of discovery. We hope that this new exhibition will mark another stepping stone in that journey of mutual discovery and recognition.

15. Lacquer box donated by Baron Ōkura. Source: Collection Kunstraum Leuven.