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# Review of the Book : "What's Where" in Manchu Literature

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## Review

Sary, Giovanni. *“What’s Where” in Manchu Literature*. (Aetas Manjurica 11)  
Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. 2005. XXI, 369pp. ISBN 3-447-05195-7

Giovanni Sary’s *“What’s Where” in Manchu Literature* is an attempt to survey the known corpus of Manchu literature. In some respects, as will be seen, the title is kind of a misnomer. The book actually provides little direct information as to precisely *where* these texts are located. However, it does an admirable job of surveying *what* texts are actually known to be available. As stated in the Introduction, this book is intended to be the first step towards creating a union catalogue of Manchu literature. It is not itself a union catalogue but rather is a guide to catalogues that “aims at offering a simple bibliographical list based on the maximum available number of catalogues, inventories, and book-lists” (p. VII).

A variety of catalogues were excluded in the creation of this guide, including (1) those that mention the Chinese translation of the Manchu work without indicating the original title, (2) those offering a general description without any precise bibliographical information, and (3) older catalogues which have been newly described in more recent publications. Also routinely excluded are diplomas, patents, stone-rubbings, and “all temptative [sic] translations into Manchu of titles which are available in Chinese only” (p. VIII).

The bulk of the Introduction consists of descriptions and, where available, complete bibliographic citations for a fair number of works that are known to exist but that for various reasons are not listed in any catalogue. These include works that have been recently published, unpublished works recently discovered in libraries, and Manchu manuscripts coming from the Sibe community of the Ili Valley.

Following the Introduction, there is a list of catalogues that have been utilized in compiling this guide. There are 75 of these, each numbered and presented in alphabetical order by the first author’s surname. Complete bibliographic citations are given for each of the 75 catalogs.

The greater part of this book consists of a list of all of the Manchu works listed in the 75 catalogues that were consulted. These are listed in alphabetical order by romanized Manchu title when available. Where there is no Manchu title, the work is alphabetized by the Chinese title romanized according to the Wade-Giles system. All Manchu titles are given in the Hauer romanization, and are immediately followed by the Chinese title, when available, in Wade-Giles romanization. All Chinese titles are repeated in (traditional) Chinese characters. For titles that are given in Chinese only, the romanized form is italicized. Each title is then followed by a list of the catalogues in which the work is found. The catalogues are referenced by numbers corresponding to the numbers in the list of catalogues that follows the Introduction. Each “catalog number” is accompanied by the page number where the work is found in the catalogue and in many

cases also by an abbreviation indicating the format (e.g., “ms” or “xyl.”). Notes regarding variant titles and the like are also given here. The “uncatalogued” works described in the Introduction are included in this list too, referenced by the page number from the Introduction where they are discussed.

Following the main bibliographic list is a Chinese-Manchu Concordance, which lists all of the Chinese titles alphabetically by Wade-Giles romanization. Each romanized Chinese title is followed by the title in traditional characters, which is in turn followed by the romanized Manchu title so that it can be located in the primary list. Finally, since many of the Manchu titles in the primary list begin with an initial formula such as *Han-i araha*, *Hesei tokto buha*, *Ubaliyambuha*, etc., the book ends with an alphabetical list of all of the Manchu titles without such initial formulas. Each such “short title” in this list is referenced to the initial formula under which it can be found in the primary list.

This book can be invaluable for those wishing to know what kinds of Manchu materials are available somewhere in the world. It can also be of great use in finding those materials. However, it is only useful for the latter purpose if one also has access to the 75 catalogues that were used in compiling this list. This is because this book itself does not give complete bibliographic citations for the works listed (with the exception, of course, of those “uncatalogued” works discussed in the Introduction), nor does it generally give any clear indication of where the materials are located. For that, one needs to consult the catalogues, and that is the one drawback to this work. Obviously this drawback could only be eliminated by actually creating a union catalogue, which was not the author’s intention. Nevertheless, this may limit the usefulness of this book for many potential users.

As an example of this, a survey was made to see which of the 75 listed catalogs might be available locally. It was found that only one of the catalogues was available in our local library. Fortunately this library is part consortium of academic libraries in two states that facilitates borrowing among all of the member libraries. Among these member libraries there are at least three that have extensive East Asian collections. It was found that there were an additional 30 catalogues available for loan from at least one of these libraries. There were 9 other catalogues that were also located at these libraries; however, these were not available for loan, thus requiring one to travel to the various libraries in order to consult them. This leaves 35 of the catalogs that are not available anywhere in the two-state region, thus requiring one to travel even greater distances, or attempt to obtain them through interlibrary loan, in order to consult these 35 catalogues.

This is not, however, to belittle the work that Stary has done here. Obviously one’s task would be that much more difficult if one actually had to consult all of these catalogues oneself just to find the information that Stary has compiled in this work. Nevertheless, one has to hope that some day a true union catalog of Manchu literature will become available.

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