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History of Modern Librarianship in East Asia

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Abstract

Cultural Hegemony

The central purpose of the study is to “locate” the historical evolution of modern librarianship in the broader context of the societies in which it emerged, in this instance, East Asia, encompassing the sub-regions of Northeast and Southeast Asia, and to consider Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony as the foundation for viewing that evolution. Cultural hegemony, as explained by Antonio Gramsci, speak of a dominant power, spreading and maintaining its dominance, culture, and otherwise through “consensual” and “spontaneous” control and consent. Thus it can be said hegemony is established through economic dominance, intellectual and moral leadership and the role performed by human agency, or in other words, people find another culture attractive, for whatever reason.

The presentation will offer a modern scholarly interpretation of how the profession has developed in three widely different cultural environments, with diverging social, ideological and political dynamics and its contribution to the on-going process of creating cultural legacies.

Pre-19th Century East Asian Libraries

China, prior to the 19th century, was the dominant power in East Asia. The Chinese system of education based upon the Chinese classics was followed and mastered by scholars in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The Chinese model of archival libraries, followed by other libraries in East Asia, was accessible and opened only to scholars educated in the classics. Pre-modern libraries in China, Japan, and Korea thrived and comprised wholly of royal collections, academic, and private collections. Different types of libraries may have been present in the kingdoms on the Malay Peninsula. The public did not have access to these “libraries”.

Modern Librarianship

The beginnings of modern librarianship in East Asia dates back to the nineteenth century. As Western European, Russian, Japanese and American cultural influences were introduced, new institutions, values, and techniques were gradually instituted. By presenting a history of modern librarianship in East Asia, China and Japan in the north and Singapore, and Malaysia in the south, we see the profession’s historical interaction with forces outside the library. The study will show practicing and aspiring librarians the cultural determinants of their professional history and help them gain a better understanding of the complex roots in the development of libraries globally. Three themes will be examined among the four case studies: (1) The impact of external influences beginning in the colonial era during the nineteenth century, through the post World War II period and the Cold War years; (2) the role of human agency in library development; and (3) modern technologies and the impact of national libraries upon the cultural heritage of the region.

I. External Influences

A. Malaysia and Singapore: The Colonial Period, 1900-1941

British Rule

The British introduced library practices into the Malay Peninsula. Malaysian libraries in the 19th and 20th centuries began as subscription libraries, established by the British to serve the needs of the European community. Subscription libraries were first started in cities such as Penang, followed by Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, and others. The libraries contained exclusively English-language collections. There was an entrance fee and a monthly subscription fee. Borrowing privileges were granted only to subscribers. Europeans almost exclusively used these libraries though the public

(non-subscribers) was permitted to use the resources in the library only. The libraries began as “leisure” centers with the primary requirement that they maintain a collection of books that reflected current tastes i.e. fiction, travel, history, biography, and may or may not have been organized in some systematic order. Books were acquired by placing a standing order with London agents to send all new books published in Britain by specific authors.

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the rapid economic development of rubber in Malaya. The growth of the economy enabled the government to participate more actively in the areas of education, public health, and agricultural research. Thus this period experienced a growth of the inhabitants becoming more literate in English and in the use of the subscription libraries. By lowering subscription rates and rescinding strict admission rules, a larger native Asian population was allowed to participate in library usage, followed by the establishment of vernacular libraries for the local inhabitants.

After World War I, the local Asian population became active members of the subscription libraries founded by the Europeans. In 1904 Dr. R. Hanitsch, Director of the Raffles Library and Museum in Singapore until 1919, reported that Chinese subscribers who were members of the Raffles Library were proficient in English and several vernacular libraries managed by the Chinese provided books in English.

Following World War II, British cultural hegemonic influences continued while the function of libraries gradually transformed from purely “leisure” centers to political and work institutions. The British Council established an office in Malaysia and initiated new library services, by providing gift books, periodicals, and library equipment to the libraries. The British Council, a non-governmental body, formally established by the Royal Charter in 1940, with the main objective of making known to other countries British cultural and intellectual achievements, including music, art, drama, literature, librarianship, education and similar aspects of the British way of life. Most all major libraries in Malaysia benefited from the British Council for it also provided scholarships to Malaysians studying librarianship in England.

The Post Colonial Period

United States cultural hegemonic influences entered the scene in Malaysia following World War II. The USIS (The United States Information Service) first established a library in Kuala Lumpur in 1950. Other such libraries were established in Singapore (1950), then in Penang (1952). The USIS libraries were first established primarily to combat communism, through propagandizing the ways of the West. Their primary importance in Malaysia was to introduce the people to the concept of a free library service.

Another organization, the Asia Foundation, a semi-U.S. government agency, did much to stimulate library development by giving books and library aid to Asian countries. The Asia Foundation, a non-profit organization incorporated in 1951 in California supports cultural and other activities in Asia. The Foundation set up public libraries in the new villages of the Malayan Federation. It also donated books and money to the libraries and universities in Singapore and Malaysia. The Foundation provided assistance to the University of Singapore library for the cataloguing of books in the Chinese Library. It also made funds available to the Library of the University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur) for the purchase of microfilm and microfiche copies of Malay manuscripts in the libraries of Europe. The presence of the USIS and the Asia Foundation reinforced Western cultural influences.

B. Japan

A system of private libraries was also present in pre-modern Japan. These libraries were only opened to scholars and the collections included Buddhist materials in scrolled, folded, and printed forms numbering more than 10,000. Japan was ruled by Shoguns (1542-1868) who collected books and records and rare manuscripts, and often invited scholars to print books. Later feudal lords, following the Shogun's policy, established provincial schools with libraries. Next came the lending libraries. These lending libraries during the Edo period (1590-1868) were bookmen carrying packs of books on their backs to homes, charging a fee for loan; these books were primarily for the commoners who were avid readers of popular literature, novels, dramas and poetry. Thus the lending libraries during the 16th-19th century served the populace in leisure reading.

The Shogun era came to an end in 1868 and ushered in the Meiji reform period (1868-1912). The Imperial Government was restored to power. This brought open trade with foreign countries, importing not only manufactured goods but also science, technology, and other knowledge from Europe and the United States. This was a definite time for modernization and economic and social changes—an opportunity to modernize and catch up with the West.

Post World War II and American Cultural Hegemony

Wars have their toll on a country, culturally, economically and politically. In Japan's instance, the damage upon libraries was devastating. During World War II, the inadequate underground storage facilities and hasty evacuations caused many major library holdings of the country to suffer mildew and other serious natural causes. Libraries were unable to purchase or lend books during the war due to inflation and diversion of funds to wartime pursuits.

The U.S. Allied Forces occupied Japan after World War II and introduced new policies, including policies relating to Japan's education system. Libraries were re-established and new libraries grew rapidly—national, prefectural, municipal, public, educational libraries at all levels, and special libraries. Library schools on the college and university levels were founded, and librarianship began to be recognized as a profession.

Public Libraries

American influence was seen heavily in the development of Japanese public libraries. In March 1946, the U.S. Educational Mission visited Japan and recommended a number of reforms, referring particularly to public libraries and emphasizing adult education.

Together with the Civil Information and Education Section of the U.S. Occupation Forces and Japan's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, a Library Law based on the new Constitution, the Fundamental Law of Education, and the Social Educational Law was enacted in April 1950. This enabled the establishment of a library law suited to the construction of a new Japan.

The new Library Law provided for the creation and development of modern public libraries in Japan. As new public library buildings were constructed in the 1960s, the public demand grew. Citizen appeals included improvement of user facilities, the procurement of bookmobiles, increased budget for library materials, improved services for children, support to home libraries—these were translated into petitions directed to local authorities. The central government, local autonomies and their related organizations made efforts to improve the basic conditions of library services, namely, facilities, library resources, staff, and others in order that public libraries could serve the citizens better.

Academic and School Libraries

After World War II, the United States Education Mission to Japan report became the basic policy of educational reforms. The new education law of 1947 required the universities be open to more students, unlike the prewar era, where the university existed for the privileged few. By the seventies the academic libraries became more user-oriented, open and accessible. Books were loaned to all students and faculty members with no restrictions. Suggestion was even made by the U.S. Education Mission that a library school in a university be established to train professional librarians. Following the recommendation, a library school was established in the Faculty of Letters at Keio University in 1951 with the assistance of the American Library Association and the Rockefeller Foundation. It was the first library school at the university level established for professional library education in Japan. According to a survey conducted by the Japan Library Association in 1995, there were 264 institutions offering courses in librarianship that trained over 10,000 “qualified” librarians annually.

Japanese school libraries were influenced in the late 1940s and early 50s by the educational reform led by the U.S. Educational Mission and Civil Information and Education (CIE); the School Library Law was enacted in 1953. School libraries existed in practically all schools, primarily because in large part of the Japanese commitment to education and to the value placed in society upon reading. Those who had great concern in education saw the importance of school libraries and workshops were organized to promote the understanding of school libraries.

Clearly after World War II, the hegemonic powers of the United States had a great impact on the reconstruction and recovery of new public, school and academic libraries in Japan.

C. Chinese Library Development

Initial External Influences

The beginnings of modern Chinese librarianship can be traced to the 19th century, influenced by European, American and Japanese library systems. After the European intrusion in the 1840s, many of the Chinese intellectuals recognized the need to modernize and improve the educational system for China to prosper and grow. Liang Qi-chao, scholar, literary journalist and political figure, emphasized the importance of establishing libraries to spread culture and train talented people; he introduced into China the word “library” from Japan. Liang traveled to the U.S. and visited public, university and national libraries. He noted that public libraries were “an organization for public education.” He saw that libraries were linked directly to America’s educational and economic development.

After the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912, many librarians realized the need to change and discontinue the traditional ways of Chinese library administration. Many Chinese intellectuals were influenced by Japanese culture before 1911, which eventually led to the introduction of Japanese library science into China. In 1910, Yun-Xie translated Library Education, by a Japanese scholar and published by Fengtian Press. This was the first book about library science published in China. From 1919 to 1949, the emphasis was on American public libraries and American librarianship. Sun Yu Xiu introduced the Dewey Decimal Classification system into China.

The Soviet Era

When the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, the new government faced many challenges. The new government immediately set up plans

for national, social and economic reconstruction, adopting Russia's experiences, theories, and principles of reconstruction of library service as a model. Library service was transformed into a socialist library service. "The main tasks of the People's Government in its cultural and educational work are to elevate the cultural standard of the people, train personnel for national construction, eradicate all feudalist, comprador-type and Fascist thinking, and foster thoughts of service." More important, libraries were to serve as providers of political and "work" information.

During the first half of the 1950s Chinese libraries developed rapidly. The Chinese were interested in establishing an effective library system and sought to learn the operations and practices of librarianship from the Soviet Union. In the early 1950s, many works on library science written by Soviet specialists were translated into Chinese. These works were collected in 1957 and published as Translations on Library Science. The Chinese also adopted many of the technical aspects of librarianship, for example, the new classification scheme was based on the four main classes of the 1955 Soviet Classification Model—Marxism-Leninism, social sciences, natural sciences and generalia.

In the 1950s, examples of the most successful newly created libraries were the rural and labor libraries. The slogan, "Culture going to the mountains and the countryside," was everywhere in order to foster Marxist education and the popularization of socialist culture. Libraries were organized to serve the workers and peasants who were the ruling class.

An important indicator of the impact of China's "leaning to one side" policy, can be clearly seen in the foreign language collection development pattern. Soviet influences on collection development were due primarily to Cold War political factors. For example, let us examine two major Chinese libraries, Peking University Library (PKU) and The National Library of China (NLC). PKU is one of China's most progressive institutions of higher education and has been in the forefront of many reforms and patriotic movements. In 1950 the collection at PKU totaled over 1 million volumes; in 1953 Western books totaled 436 and Russian books totaled 1,401. As for NLC which is the leading national public research library in China, having the largest and richest collection in the country, NLC followed a proactive policy of securing foreign language publications, including maintaining a prominent international exchange program with institutions throughout the world. The NLC acquisition of Russian language materials during the 1950s outnumbered all other foreign language materials; for example, in 1954 Western languages constituted 28,945 volumes, whereas Russian languages constituted 49,401. Thus we see China turning toward the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries for library assistance, including collection development for Soviet publications on modern technology, agriculture, and biology to assist China's economic development; this was particularly evident during the First Five-Year Plan, beginning in 1956. The growth of the Russian language collections and Soviet-related materials was a direct result of China's international political alignment, the cultural hegemony and attractiveness of the Soviet Union.

II .The Human Agency

American Librarians

The role of personalities has had a strong influence upon library development in East Asia. One great impact that Americans had on Chinese librarianship is exemplified by the work of Mary Elizabeth Wood and Arthur E. Bostwick. Mary Elizabeth Wood, 1861-1931 came from a family of missionaries. Miss Wood arrived in China to be an English teacher at the Boone College, Wuchang (present day

Wuhan).. She saw the poor library system in China and collected donations to the Boone Library in Wuchang in 1910. She spread American library practices; she advocated open stack access, which set a precedent in Chinese librarianship. She realized the importance of training librarians and with great zest and conviction she financially assisted Shen Zhu Rong and Hu Qing Shen in 1914 and 1917 to go to the United States to study library science. Miss Wood set a precedent for sowing the seeds for the rise of the Chinese Modern Library Movement as well as for the professionally trained librarian in China.

Upon the return of Rong and Shen, they joined with Miss Wood to jointly establish the Department of Library Science of Boone College. This was the first institute for modern library education in China and became the premier institution for the training of many librarians in China. It was through the efforts of Miss Wood that a campaign was launched to persuade the American government to return funds from the Boxer Indemnities of 1900 to advance Chinese librarianship.

In 1924, Miss Wood invited Dr. Arthur E. Bostwick, director of the St. Louis Public Library, to visit China and lecture on the philosophy and practices of American libraries. Dr. Bostwick arrived in Shanghai in 1925 and visited more than fifty libraries in China. He lectured on American librarianship accompanied by films. He was so successful in advocating American library philosophy and practices such as open access that almost every librarian in China at that time wanted to emulate the American way of operating libraries.

Plumbe and Lim

Malaysia became independent from the United Kingdom in 1957 and in the post independence era many of the institutions established under the colonial administration continued, with few changes. Malaysia had some very dedicated librarians who persistently drew attention to the government and people that library services were needed. Much credit is given to Wilfred J. Plumbe, the first librarian at the University of Malaya, 1959-1962. Plumbe, from Great Britain, was a pioneer in infusing the development of library services in Malaysia and had a vision of library development, which extended beyond the walls of the library. Plumbe brought in the Library's first photocopier: bromide paper and a liquid developer were used so that a document only needed about ten second's exposure of light to be copied. He also worked hard to obtain support for the establishment of a school of librarianship, which never came to fruition. Plumbe continued to campaign for a national library, for public libraries, and for school libraries. He even planned for the expansion of the University Malaya Library building.

The University of Malaya, first established in Kuala Lumpur in 1957, was reorganized in 1959 into two divisions: the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and the University of Malaya in Singapore, later to be renamed the University of Singapore in 1962. The University of Malaya, under the leadership Wilfred J. Plumbe, developed into the largest academic library in the country, organization, functions, and development.

Beida Lim followed Plumbe as Chief Librarian (1965-1980). Lim very ably directed the Library for fifteen years and continued its expansion. The Library's budget and staff steadily grew every year. By 1980, when Lim retired the Library's collection reached 700,000 volumes and the serial holdings expanded to 9,000 titles; Lim also saw the growth of library facilities -- 215,000 square feet of usable floor space, which included the main library, medical library, and combined law and postgraduate libraries.

The Raffles Legacy

The vision of Sir Stamford Raffles, British colonial governor and founder of Singapore, was for an educated Singapore. After Singapore was founded in 1819, Raffles' goal was to establish an institution of learning and a system to collect and preserve the treasures of the region. The first library in Singapore was Singapore Institution Library, established in 1823. The vision of an educated Singapore was seen when Raffles donated S\$2,000 of his personal funds to the school. There was a subscription library and museum in a room upstairs attached to the school. The library offered free admission, though to borrow books required a monthly subscription of 25 cents. In the 1800s its focus was on East Asia, Malay manuscripts, art, science and literature. During the following decades, the library underwent a series of changes in name, administration and function. It became the Raffles Library and Museum from 1874 until 1960, when it finally adopted its present name as the National Library of Singapore. In 1951, the first professional librarian, Miss Louise E. Bridges was appointed. She succeeded in developing a new system of overdue charges of five cents for each book a day and implemented the Dewey Classification System. Several excellent British librarians followed after Miss Bridges and introduced various modern Western library techniques and functions.

In 1953 an affluent local and prominent person of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and a rubber tycoon, Lee Kong Chian (1893-1967), donated S\$375,000 towards a new National Library building. Conditions of this grant were that no charges were to be made for the loan of books and that all books in the vernacular language, commonly spoken in Singapore, English and other European languages should be provided. In 1955 Mr. Leonard Montague Harrod assumed the position of Director of Raffles Library. During his time, he acquired 14,000 Chinese reference books for the new library building; implemented the Browne system of issuing books, conceived a method of interchanging books among the branches to ensure that varied selection of titles were available. He retired in 1960. It was quite clear that the British played a major role in the development of the 1960 National Library, from the founding, techniques and services, personnel, and architect. The design of the building was by the Public Works Department British Architect, Lionel Bintley. The project architect was Tio Seng Chin. The architecture reflected the red-brick period of British 1950s.

Japanese Librarianship and External Influences

In Japan, the Shogun era came to an end in 1868 and ushered in the Meiji reform period (1868-1912). This brought open trade with foreign countries, importing science and technology, and other knowledge from the West.

During the Meiji period, two prominent national figures, Yukichi Fukuzawa and Fujimaro Tanaka were responsible for Japanese public library development. Mr. Fukuzawa, founder of Keio University, was the first major observer of foreign libraries and their relationship to democratic life. Fukuzawa was a renowned educator and author of western studies; he published his impressions of Western libraries in Seiyo Jijo.

Mr. Tanaka, as Minister of Education, emphasized the importance of schools and libraries in the Meiji reform movement. Western library practices were introduced and municipal, prefectural, local and private libraries were founded throughout Japan. Tanaka toured a number of countries, including the United States, England, France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark and Russia. Both of the educators, Fukuzawa and Tanaka, showed unusual interest in Western libraries and advocated the establishment of public libraries modeled after those that they saw in

their travels. Tanaka and Fukuzawa considered that libraries were agents of schools where lending of textbooks were made available to those students who could not afford to buy these resources.

Another notable leader during the Meiji period was Inaki Tanaka (1856-1925) who traveled to the United States to study library science. He returned to Japan in 1890 full of ideas about library services.

Mr. Inaki Tanaka was later appointed Director of the National Diet Library (1890-1921). He was responsible for organizing the Japan Library Association (JLA) in 1892. In the nineteenth century, the JLA was the third library association in the world to be organized, following the American Library Association and the Library Association of the United Kingdom. Thus by 1868 Japanese libraries came under strong Western influence. Concepts of the value of libraries were introduced as part of the modernization process of Japan. Library leaders were anxious for Japan's international participation and recognition in the world arena. Schools and libraries were thought highly as important tools for the reform movement.

The character of the Japanese Diet Library went through a great transformation after World War II to adjust to the democratic principles expounded in the Constitution of 1947. With the aid of distinguished American librarians, Japan embarked upon a period of library rehabilitation. For example, Mr. Verner W. Clapp, Assistant Librarian of the U.S. Library of Congress and Dr. Charles H. Brown, Chairman of the Oriental Committee, American Library Association, visited Japan to consult and render advice for the establishment of a National Diet Library, with a dual function to serve the Diet and the public as well. On the basis of their recommendations, the National Diet Library Law was enacted on February 1948, marking the founding of the National Diet Library of Japan.

In July 1948, at the suggestion of the U.S. Library Mission, Dr. Robert B. Downs of the University of Illinois Library went to Japan to render advice on technical matters and to accelerate the progress of work in the National Diet Library. Much of the basic structure and services of the Library were due to Dr. Downs' recommendations.

III. Technologies and Cultural Heritage

National libraries in the twenty-first century are truly repository of their national culture, a national bibliographic center, a national center of library information networks, and a library research and development center. They have been transformed from national centers for collecting materials produced within or about the country or region in which the national library resides as well as providing direct personal service to governments, research institutes and the general public while developing further as the central national institution for the promotion and preservation of national identity and culture. Through the modernizing influences of Western science and technology the national libraries of China, Japan, and Malaysia have successfully adapted practices, procedures, and new technologies to maintain the cultural heritage of the country's past.

The National Library of China

The National Library of China (NLC) has the largest collection of Chinese books in the world. It is a comprehensive research library and national repository of all books published in China. The NLC plays a leading role in the standardization, digitization and networking of communities in China. Similar to other major national libraries, numerous items of microforms and AV materials, hundreds of CD-ROM databases and thousands of electronic publications have been collected.

With the use of modern technology various kinds of bibliographical databases, including subject databases were being created and improved. With their national databases, retrospective and current, together with those of the West (OCLC), records of Chinese books were made available.

Since 1995, NLC has kept up with the latest development of digital libraries. In November 2001, the State Council officially approved the 1.2 billion RMB “National Library of China Phase II & National Digital Library of China Project,” which was a part of China’s Tenth Five-Year Plan.

While the NLC adapted many modern library concepts and practices from the West, it continues to utilize practices from the traditional preservation and conservation techniques combined with those of modern microfilming technology. For example, restoration and conservation were being applied by the staff for the Library’s collection of rare books dating back to the royal collection of the Southern Song Dynasty of the 8th century, the 270,000 rare book volumes, the 1,600,000 volumes of general ancient books, and 2,000,000 volumes of thread-bound books. The Library has maintained the cultural heritage of the country by preserving the books of the past.

The National Diet Library

In 1998 the National Diet Library in Japan was transformed into an electronic library which provided access to bibliographic databases and digitized primary information. Beginning 2002, digital images of books published in the Meiji Era began—texts were shown in image files, while bibliographic data and table of contents were shown in text format to enable users to search for materials. Also included were database of rare books images, including 31,000 images from 698 titles in 2003. As a library serving the National Diet, the NDL offered resource information useful to the Diet members; full-text databases of the Diet session proceedings, going back to the first session (May 1947), are available to the public.

The National Library of Malaysia

As noted earlier, it was Wilfred J. Plumbe that saw a need to establish a national library for Malaysia. However, it was not until 1962 that the first real indication came when the Government gave attention to the establishment of a National Library of Malaysia (NLM). In 1977 the NLM became a fully independent Federal Department with its very own Director-General, providing collections of monographs, serials, government publications legislation and gazettes as well as electronic resources on Malaysia, authored either by Malaysians or published in Malaysia or overseas.

Among NLM’s major collection is the National Center for Malay Manuscripts, established in 1985. These are collection of handwritten documents, discovered in the beginning of the fifteenth century until the end of the early twentieth century; these documents are in the Malay language, inscribed in Jawi script on various forms of materials, such as paper, parchment, and tree bark usually over a hundred years old. These manuscripts reflect the rich cultural heritage of the past in Malaysia and have been rescued, stored and preserved. The manuscripts are acquired in original form, within and outside the country. Microfilm copies of the Malay manuscripts are available for those researchers who are unable to travel to examine the original documents. These rare manuscripts have been published in catalog form and disseminated widely to countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, France, USA, Singapore and South Africa.

Conclusion

East Asia has undergone multiple transitions in the history of library development, both in terms of transitions over time and transitions under various hegemonic cultural influences, including Chinese, Anglo-American, Russian, and Japanese. We have examined Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony against a backdrop of three themes: external influences over historical periods, the role of the human agency and the significance of modern technologies and national libraries upon the cultural heritage of the country.

Beginning in the 19th century and continuing into the twenty-first century, the common thread in the three themes was the concurrent spread of Western power in East Asia. The Western intrusion introduced not only the modernizing influences of science and technology, but also the divisive forces of Western cultural, political and economic values. Through colonialization, economic exploitation and wars, the very Western hegemonic forces that dominated transformed the countries of East Asia.

The development and transformation of Asian libraries were no exception to this rule. However, traditional cultures were preserved. Consider Malaysia and Singapore, where notwithstanding the British and American influences, the indigenous culture remained intact in the region. The libraries were creative, social and cultural institutions, reflecting the life of the community they served. As seen in this study, the libraries sought ways to preserve the Malaysian, Indian, and Chinese cultures, in spite of the strong Western and other external cultural hegemonic influences

China and Japan represent two distinct cases of multiple transitions over time and under disparate cultural hegemonic influences. China's library development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries first came under Japanese and Anglo-American influences, then Soviet domination, and following World War II, again under Western ideologies and practices, including the transformation of the library profession into that of an electronic place/organization. Following the war, Japan came under American hegemony, introducing and adopting many American library institutions and practices.

Though it can be argued that the modern libraries of East Asia developed through varied historical stages, against a backdrop of Western cultural economic and political intrusions and domination, it can also be claimed that East Asia has adopted, with revisions, Western librarianship and practices on the basis of their "attractiveness." As seen in the role of national libraries, their contributions were not only to make available for the use of present and future generations a national collection of library resources but also to facilitate nationwide access to library resources available within the country and abroad.

More important, as exemplified in this study, national libraries have successfully preserved rare books, manuscripts and other library materials relating to the cultural heritage of the respective countries. It was through digitization techniques and other modern technologies for preservation and conservation, transformation of heritage collection onto microfilm and multimedia CDs, that we are able to "locate" the historical and cultural evolution of each country's legacy. Indeed, libraries have been transformed through Western influences into a place where information is accessible to the world; yet it is through these modern tools and practices that the national, even academic, special, and public libraries have been able to promote and preserve their respective cultures.

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