

Chinese Maritime Customs Project

Draft catalogue of the Archives of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service at the Second Historical Archives of China, Nanjing

The 55,217 files of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) archives are held in two main series at the Second Historical Archives of China (SHAC) in Nanjing: formally 679/六七九 (1-9) and 2085/二零八五. The small series contains files generated by the Inspectorate General between 8 December 1941 and 23 August 1945 when the CMCS was headed by Kishimoto Hirokichi 岸本廣吉, and took orders from the collaborationist Wang Jingwei regime. The nine sub-series of Series 679 contain the following major sets of Customs central and departmental records, among others: the Reference Library of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, Inspectorate General Central Registry (including the Kishimoto era), departmental archives or records of the Statistical Section, Staff Department, Preventive Service, London Office, Financial Secretariat, Marine Department, the *ad hoc* Chongqing Inspectorate (1942-45), and a number of files dealing with the post-1949 assessment of CMCS property, closure of stations, collation of records, as well as some materials relating to the later political use of the archives in assessment of the activities of individuals or the service generally.

The subjects found in the archive range from the highest level correspondence with the Shuiwuju (税务局), Guanwushu (关务署), and Ministry of Finance 财政部, correspondence with diplomats, individual service records, unsuccessful applications to join, financial records, different levels of correspondence between the Inspectorate-General and Customs Stations (Despatches, Semi-Official letters), ships' log books, maps and plans, dossiers on typewriters, fraud cases, smuggling, duty collection, events and rumours, duty levels, arms imports, etc., etc. All of customs life and work is here. Careful use of the archive can support in-depth biographical study, for example: 'Memos of Service', such as those for the period 1901-26 collated in files 679(9) 2975-3085, can be cross-referenced with Despatches, with Confidential Annual Reports, Central Registry files on individuals etc. The service itself is open for research across all areas of its operations. But the archive generally can underpin a wide range of research about localities, the nation and Sino-foreign relations in China between the 1850s and 1949.

The bulk of the records postdate 1900, when the Inspectorate General archives in Peking was destroyed during the Boxer war. The only material which survived that, famously, was Robert Hart's personal diaries. What is stored in Nanjing is the post-1900 core archive of the CMCS with the addition of nineteenth-century records from Customs stations, which under a 1933 directive, were transferred to the Customs Reference Library in Shanghai. This to create a historical archive for the CMCS was driven by Stanley Fowler Wright, one of the historians whose work on the Service was sponsored by Inspector General Sire Frederick Maze. The Customs Reference Library records, some 2,100 in all, are located in series 679(2). Other nineteenth century records come from the Shanghai-based Statistical Department and the Marine Department. There are also some materials from outside the core administration, such as transcripts of H.B. Morse's letter books donated by John King Fairbank in the 1930s.

The Central Registry survived the war intact. Examination of the archives after August 1945 suggested that very little was missing (although the Customs Reference Library's

holdings of printed volumes had suffered a thorough purge). IG Frederick Maze had transferred many sensitive files to the presumed safety of a bank vault in Singapore in 1941. They were not in fact discovered during the Japanese occupation. Some of these were returned after 1945, while others form the basis of Maze's own archive at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Confidential material still in Shanghai was burnt on the morning of 8 December 1941. Some other material was removed during the period of Japanese control. The specific records of the Kishimoto inspectorate are patchier overall. Where files already existed they continued to be updated with relevant material. New Central Registry files were opened at the Inspectorate in occupied Shanghai. The files of correspondence with Customs stations in Series 2085 are not comprehensive, however, and there was also some judicious culling and destruction of material before the resumption of National Government control over the Shanghai office.¹ The Inspectorate records had a peripatetic career after 1949 before their arrival in the Archives at Nanjing, but the holdings now there appear to be comprehensive. They can be supplemented by IG 'personal' materials in the Maze papers or the L.K. Little collection at Harvard's Houghton Library. These are usually copies of high-level correspondence, but it is not always clear that they are genuinely 'personal'. Other archives in China hold the records of Customs stations (Tianjin's at the Tianjin Municipal Archives, Xiamen's at Xiamen University Library etc).

The catalogue of the Archive at SHAC is based on transcription of the hand-written Chinese-language lists volumes which predated computerisation. All file titles were translated for these lists. It is not yet available for public access, and no indication has been given about when it might be. The version of the catalogue prepared by this project team was generated from the original files themselves, and represents a recataloguing of the entire collection, rather than the computerisation of the existing Chinese version. The original file title was used, regardless of the language (although for practical purposes we had to use simplified characters). Original Central Registry numbers were also inputted, allowing for the re-creation of that central archive, and for easier cross-referencing.

The draft catalogue made available on this disk is therefore the most efficient way of locating materials in this vast archive. It uses the rigorously narrowed subject headings generated by the CMCS records' keepers, which enable the searcher to be quickly confident that major caches of material have been found. When working on the files the cross referencing systems (Despatch numbers, for example, or Central Registry numbers), can further aid location of material. Searches ought always to be conducted in roman and Chinese script, however. A copy of Sun Xiufu's guide to customs terminology is useful (陈诗启,孙修福(主编),中国近代海关常用词语英汉对照宝典 (北京:中国海关出版社, 2002)). Sun has also recently produced a guide to senior office holders (孙修福(编译),中国近代海关高级职员年表(北京:中国海关出版社, 2004). An index of the entire cadre of Service Listed staff has been developed and is being made available on the Chinese Maritime Customs Project website (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/history/customs/>). Some 22,500 names and basic career details have been entered. Other allied resources are also available through this site.

The catalogue can also profitably be used in conjunction with the lists of materials microfilmed by Thomson/*Primary Source Microfilm* from SHAC. 350 reels of material have been copied (IG Circulars, London Office materials, 4 sample runs of Semi-official

¹ 679(1) 27184 '由沪运京档案清册', 'Archives taken over from Bogus Customs' [undated memo].

correspondence (Shanghai, Swatow, Hankow, Harbin), materials on the policing of trade, and on the Sino-Japanese war. Lists of these are online on the project site.

The catalogue was designed by the 'History of the Chinese Maritime Customs' team. This was a project funded variously by the AHRC, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and Cambridge University. Inputting was undertaken by collaborators at the Second Historical Archives. Subsequent editorial work (proofing, ensuring consistency etc) has been undertaken by Robert Bickers and Hans van de Ven.

At the time of writing the Archive at SHAC is closed temporarily, whilst a digitization project is undertaken. Scholars might note that archives of individual stations of the customs are located in other Chinese archives: the Tianjin Municipal Archives, and the Guangdong Provincial Archives hold large numbers of files.

How to use the catalogue

On the basis of advice from the UK National Archives, the catalogue was created as an MS Access database. The catalogue will be found on this disk as a single table, labelled 'Master Catalogue'. On opening the file you may need to go to Format/Font and select MingLiu, so as to be able to view the Chinese text. The file may take a short while to open.

On opening it you will find 11 fields of information in each record:

1	Class mark
2	Call number
3	Department
4	Title
5	Language
6	Period covered
7	Index check box
8	Central Registry number
9	Place
10	Class of official document
11	Type of material

The key fields are 1, 2, 4, 6, 8. For the purpose of locating these files at SHAC or on the Thomson films, you will need fields 2,3 and 5: Classmark, Call number and title.

You can search this file either through the simple search facility (ctrl-F), and/or the filters. To use a filter highlight a required search term and press the filter button (net to reverse alphabetical sort), or create a filter form. This is very efficient, but limited to the exact term you indicate. You will get more out of creating a Query. I have added an appendix with a step by step guide to making a simple query. Queries can search for multiple terms, and multilingual searches. Once created a query also remains intact.

When searching/constructing queries do be aware of the official Chinese terms for the various stations. The Canton Customs was, for example, 粤海关, Swatow Customs was 潮海关. Do use the contemporary official Customs transliterations: Swatow, Amoy etc. Do use wildcards in queries (*粤*). There is of course no *pinyin* here, but we have had to use

simplified characters. Most searches will need to be conducted in Chinese and in English, if they are to be complete.