



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

MS 7414 Alice Tracy Thayer collection of
Chinese banknotes, joss paper, and prints

National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	MS 7414 Alice Tracy Thayer collection of Chinese banknotes, joss paper, and prints
Date:	1882-1886 undated
Identifier:	NAA.MS7414
Creator:	Thayer, Alice Tracy, 1869-1959 (Collector)
Extent:	15 Items
Language:	Chinese .

Administrative Information

Provenance

The items in this collection were donated to the United States National Museum as part of a larger collection of archaeological and ethnological objects, fossils, plants, shells, and coins from China, Japan, Korea, Africa, India, Turkey, and Armenia by Alice Tracy Thayer on December 11, 1925 (USNM Accession 89606). The items may have been collected by Thayer and her family while living abroad in the late nineteenth century. This collection was transferred from the object collections of the Department of Anthropology to the National Anthropological Archives between July 1986 and November 1994.

Related Materials

Objects from the Thayer collection are held in the Department of Anthropology object collections, and by the Department of Vertebrate Zoology and the National Museum of American History.

Processing Information

The items in this collection were originally cataloged individually by the NAA under numbers MS 7414, MS 7415, MS 7593-a, MS 7594, and MS 7600. English translations and other data were furnished by Chang-su Houchins, Emily Hoover (summer volunteer), and Huey-ing Jeng (Museum intern).

In 2023, the collection was reprocessed and all items were incorporated into a single collection under MS 7414.

Preferred Citation

MS 7414 Alice Tracy Thayer collection of Chinese banknotes, joss paper, and prints, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of a Chinese banknote, joss paper money and clothing, a calendar, and a print, all dating from the late nineteenth century.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Local Numbers

NAA MS 7414

USNM Accession 89606

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Chinese

Cultures:

Chinese

Types of Materials:

Calendars
Paper money
Prints
Works of art

Places:

China
East Asia

Container Listing

Box 7414, Folder 1

Banknote, 1886

1 Print (color woodblock; 3.75 x 9.75 inches)

Notes: Color woodblock print banknote, Yuankun (the trade mark of the bank) in blue at top. Added inscriptions read: Pingpiao zhigian ershiliu? in blue and black at left (it will be paid twenty-six ? [money unit]); and Quangxu shiyinian wuye sanri panzi?? at right (May 3, the eleventh year of Guangxu [reign] period [1886], Qing dynasty), Panzi is banking code, and the ?? (illegible) at the bottom part should be the signature of the banker. Inscribed around the border of the frame: the money can be used everywhere by anyone, no matter what occupation he has, and it will enrich the person who uses it, etc.

USNM Catalog 329767

Box 7414, Folder 2

Jingyi

5 Pages (black ink on paper; 5.5 x 5.5 inches)

Notes: Five examples of jingyi, a type of joss paper with images of items needed by the dead as daily necessities, such as clothes, shoes, cups, and scissors, printed on the surface.

USNM Catalog 329766

Box 7414, Folder 2

Money for the dead

3 Items (paper; 3.25 x 8 inches; 6 x 13 inches)

Notes: Three rectangular pieces of paper with incised designs of strings of coins in the centers. They are meant to be burned so that the dead will receive holy blessings and have money for use in the afterlife.

USNM Catalog 329763

USNM Catalog 329764

Box 7414, Folder 2

Miniature clothing for the dead

7 Items (colored paper; various sizes; approximately 8 x 7 inches)

Notes: Miniature men's and women's clothing made of paper in various colors. Includes two pants, one skirt, and four robes. They are meant to be burned for use by the dead in the afterlife.

USNM Catalog 329765

Box 7414, Folder 3

[Chinese calendar for the year 1882](#)

1 Print (black, blue, red, and yellow ink on thin paper; 12.75 x 19.75 inches)

Notes: The calendar is divided into several panels. Tables in Chinese writing occupy small rectangular panels in the four corners and pictures occupy the remaining panels. The table in the two top corners marks months and seasonal dates, such as the spring equinox, summer solstice, and so forth. The table occupying the two bottom corners note forbidden, or unlucky, days and auspicious days. Symbols of good fortune and prosperity are written in various places on the calendar. The border drawings show the gods of wealth and good luck, and the drawings at the top show immortals in the South Heaven

Portal, possibly dead relatives of the original owner of the calendar. In the center is a drawing of a man and a woman, probably the Kitchen Gods.

Underneath the gods of the kitchen kneels a man giving offerings. This man is probably supposed to represent the owner of the calendar. Calendars such as these were mass-produced and sold to Chinese families to be pasted on the kitchen wall to keep track of important dates and as a reminder to worship the gods and the dead.

NAA INV 10000077 USNM Catalog 329704

Folder 7414

[Design relating to a long good life](#)

1 Print (purple ink on yellow paper; 14 x 23 inches)

Notes:

In the center of the print is the round mystic symbol for shou, which means long life. In each of the four corners is a bat, a symbol of longevity, prosperity, and happiness. In the borders are plum blossoms and bamboo leaves, both of which represent longevity, strength, and endurance. A fifth bat appears in the border. The five bats represent the Five Blessings--age, health, wealth, virtue, and a natural death.

NAA INV 10000076

USNM Catalog 329762