

# Guide to the John Sung Papers

RG 263



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2015

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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 263

**CREATOR:** Song, Shangjie, 1901-1944

**TITLE:** John Sung Papers

**DATES:** 1919-1944

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.5 linear feet (8 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** John Sung (1901-1944) was a prominent Chinese Christian evangelist. This collection consists of a complete collection of his diaries spanning from 1919 to 1944, correspondence and postcards (primarily to his parents), and his writings and notes (such as sermons, Bible stories, reflections on his illness, prayer lists, etc.)

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.263>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.263>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Timothy Wang, 2014

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### Conditions Governing Access

The material is open for research.

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## Processing Information

John Sung Papers (RG 263), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Existence and Location of Copies

Digital copies for some items are available at the repository, restricted to use by qualified academic researchers.

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## Biographical / Historical

John Sung (Song Shangjie, or Siong Ceh Sung in his preferred Anglicization) was born on September 27, 1901 in Xinghua (now Putian), Fujian Province, the son of a Methodist pastor. He grew up in the church and established connections with American missionaries who facilitated his travel to the United States in 1920 to continue his education. Despite working various jobs to support himself, Sung was able to complete a Bachelor's degree in three years at Ohio Wesleyan University and went on to complete a Master's degree (1924) and Ph.D. (1926) in Chemistry at Ohio State University, all with academic distinction.

Sung originally had come to the United States with the intent to study Bible and theology but he was drawn to science. After completing his Ph.D. in Chemistry, however, Sung returned to his religious commitment and entered Union Theological Seminary in New York. Sung had a dramatic conversion experience on February 10, 1927 after attending evangelistic meetings in New York. This "born-again" experience caused Sung to reject the more liberal theology of many of his professors at Union Seminary and his behavior over the next several days was outspoken and erratic. Leaders at Union Seminary determined that Sung had become mentally unstable and eventually he was voluntarily admitted to Bloomingdale Hospital, a psychiatric facility in White Plains, New York. While in the hospital for 193 days, Sung read through the Bible many times and made extensive notes.

An American clergyman facilitated Sung's release from the hospital and he returned to China in October 1927. After teaching chemistry and Bible at a Methodist high school in Fujian for one year, Sung resigned and joined an evangelistic band. He was engaged in preaching and teaching in rural churches for three years under the auspices of the Methodist Bishop of the region. From 1930 to 1933 he served under the Bethel Evangelistic Band, but after disagreements with its leadership he left to become an independent itinerant revivalist and evangelist. Known as a faith healer, Sung attracted huge crowds as he evangelized throughout China and on five journeys to Southeast Asia.

For more than eight years, Sung traveled widely, preaching and teaching, enduring strenuous travel and long periods of separation from his family. He reputedly converted as many as 100,000 people and was known as a faith healer. Sung's own health was compromised by painful anal fistulas or hemorrhoids, which eventually caused his death on August 18, 1944 at the age of 42.

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## Scope and Contents

John Sung's reputation has long been based primarily on his published autobiography and excerpts from his diaries that were selected and published by his daughter. The original correspondence, writings, and extensive diaries of Sung in this collection provide the basis for re-analysis of his life and work.

The documents in Series I, Compilation of Correspondence and Writings, were contained in a hand-stitched bound volume of paper sheets. Postcards and letters to Sung's parents and other documents were glued into the volume or enclosed in it. There are also writings on the sheets of the volume itself. The volume has been disbound for preservation and access purposes, with the sheets and enclosures placed in a series of folders, in their original order.

Series II, Correspondence, contains a small amount of postcards and letters written by Sung to his parents.

The Diaries of Series III include more than fifty hand-bound volumes of closely written journals. Sung's diaries, which make up the bulk of John Sung papers, are enormously valuable for developing a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of Sung. The diaries begin June 30 of 1919, after Sung graduated from the Zheli Secondary School in Fujian, and they end on May 1st of 1944, three and a half months before he passed away.

The miscellaneous, random, and detailed-oriented nature of Sung's diaries may reflect the *biji* or miscellaneous notes genre of Chinese classical literature. He chronicled his numerous ministry trips in China and Southeast Asia and listed all people who were converted, particularly in the later diaries. Sung also recorded his daily schedule, dreams, health issues, personal and family events, and described his observations and opinions of Chinese compatriots, society, culture and politics.

Digital copies of the diaries from 1927 November to 1944 are available at the repository for use by qualified researchers. Consult with the Special Collections Librarian regarding use. Materials may not be disseminated or published without the permission of the Sung family.

Series IV, Writings and Notes, includes handwritten sermons, lists of individuals for whom Sung prayed, and Sung's reflections on his illness.

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## Arrangement

- I. Compilation of Correspondence and Writings, 1919-1927
- II. Correspondence, 1923-1926
- III. Diaries, 1927-1944
- IV. Writings and Notes

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Compilation of Correspondence and Writings

The documents in this series were contained in a hand-stitched bound volume of paper sheets. Postcards and letters to Sung's parents and other documents were glued into the volume or enclosed in it. There are also writings on the sheets of the volume itself. The volume has been disbound for preservation and access purposes, with the sheets and enclosures placed in a series of folders, in their original order.

b. 1, f. 1	Sheets 1-10 Sung's early diaries are dated using the Chinese lunar calendar. These diary entries are dated the 3rd day of the 6th month to the 20th day of the 6th month.	1919 Jun 30 - 1919 Jul 17
b. 1, f. 2	Sheets 11-20 Diaries entries, dated by the Chinese lunar calendar as 6/21 - 7/23	1919 Jul 18 - 1919 Aug 18
b. 1, f. 3	Sheets 21-30 Sheets include diary entries and correspondence. Diary entries are dated 7/25 - 12/15 by Chinese lunar calendar.	1919 Aug 19 - 1920 Aug 16
b. 1, f. 4	Sheets 31-34 Correspondence	ca. 1921
b. 1, f. 5	Sheets 35-38 and enclosures Includes correspondence and a program related to the YMCA.	1922-1926
b. 1, f. 6	Sheets 39-46 Correspondence	1923
b. 1, f. 7	Sheet 47 Correspondence	1921
b. 1, f. 8	Sheets 48-52 Correspondence	1925
b. 1, f. 9	Sheets 53-56 Diary entries and correspondence	ca. 1921, 1923
b. 1, f. 10	Sheets 57-59 Correspondence	1924
b. 1, f. 11	Sheet 60 and enclosures Correspondence and a list of names associated with diseases that is undated and may have been written at a later time or by someone other than Sung.	1921, 1923, no date
b. 1, f. 12	Sheets 61-63 and enclosures Correspondence and annotated map of Delaware, Ohio	1922-1926
b. 1, f. 13	Sheets 64-66 Correspondence	1926-1927
b. 1, f. 14	Sheets 67-76, back cover These are blank sheets at the end of the volume.	no date

Series II: Correspondence

b. 1, f. 15	Four postcards from Sung to his parents in Fujiann, written from Ohio and Niagara Falls	1923-1926
b. 1, f. 16	Sung's letter to his parents regarding his decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Chemistry at Ohio State University	1924

**Series III: Diaries**

Digital copies of the diaries for 1927 November to 1944 are available. Consult with repository regarding their use.

b. 1, f. 17	English-language diary from period in Bloomingdale Hospital	1927 February 17 - March 15
b. 1, f. 18	English-language diary from period in Bloomingdale Hospital, with drawings, diagrams, magazine clipping	1927 March 16 - April 11, 22
b. 1, f. 19	English and Chinese-language entries from period in Bloomingdale Hospital (loose sheets)	1927 June 23 - August 31
b. 2, f. 1	Primarily Chinese-language entries (loose sheets) The entries dated October 15 to November 4 describe Sung's journey back to China.	1927 September 2 - November 4
b. 2, f. 2	Volume 1 The bound volumes are all in Chinese language. They consist of sheets of paper with a stitched binding and covers constructed from sheets taken from magazines or from plain paper. A special sign marks the beginning of a new entry in the diaries.  Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1927 November 9 - 1928 February 17
b. 2, f. 3	Volume 2 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1928 February 17 - April 11
b. 2, f. 4	Volume 3 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1928 April 12 - June 7
b. 2, f. 5	Volume 4 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1928 June 8 - August 10
b. 2, f. 6	Volume 5 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1928 June 26 - November 29
b. 2, f. 7	Volume 6 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1928 November 29 - 1929 January 26
b. 2, f. 8	Volume 7 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 February 13 - March 16
b. 3, f. 1	Volume 8 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 March 25 - May 27
b. 3, f. 2	Volume 9 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 May 29 - July 22
b. 3, f. 3	Volume 10 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 July 22 - August 24



b. 3, f. 4	Volume 11 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 August 24 - November 2
b. 3, f. 5	Volume 12 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 November 3 - December 29
b. 3, f. 6	Volume 13 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1929 December 30 - 1930 February 24
b. 3, f. 7	Volume 14 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1930 February 24 - May 14
b. 3, f. 8	Volume 15 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1930 May 15 - July 14
b. 4, f. 1	Volume 16 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1930 July 15 - September 10
b. 4, f. 2	Volume 17 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1930 September 11 - November 6
b. 4, f. 3	Volume 18 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1930 November 7 - 1931 January 8
b. 4, f. 4	Volume 19 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1931 January 8 - May 15
b. 4, f. 5	Volume 20 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1931 May 15 - August 18
b. 4, f. 6	Volume 21 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1931 August 18 - November 19
b. 4, f. 7	Volume 22 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1931 November 20 - 1932 April 11
b. 5, f. 1	Volume 23 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1932 April 12 - June 7
b. 5, f. 2	Volume 24 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1932 June 8 - July 23
b. 5, f. 3	Volume 25 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1932 July 24 - September 22
b. 5, f. 4	Volume 26 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1932 September 24 - 1933 January 17
b. 5, f. 5	Volume 27 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1933 January 18 - April 29

b. 5, f. 6	Volume 28 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1933 April 28 - November 13
b. 5, f. 7	Volume 29 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1933 November 14 - 1934 February 19
b. 6, f. 1	Volume 30 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1934 February 18 - June 23
b. 6, f. 2	Volume 31 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1934 June 14 - October 13
b. 6, f. 3	Volume 32 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1934 November 14 - 1935 April 16
b. 6, f. 4	Volume 33 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1935 April 17 - September 23
b. 6, f. 5	Volume 34 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1935 September 24 - 1936 March 23
b. 6, f. 6	Volume 35 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1936 March 24 - September 20
b. 7, f. 1	Volume 36 Volume 36 includes entries for October 20, 1936 through January 25, 1937 and September 21 through October 18, 1937. Entries for the intervening dates are in Volume 37.  Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1936 October 20 - 1937 October 18
b. 7, f. 2	Volume 37 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1937 January 26 - June 12
b. 7, f. 3	Volume 44 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1939 August 27 - 1940 May 23
b. 7, f. 4	Volume 45 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1940 May 23 - December 3
b. 7, f. 5	Volume 46 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1940 December 2 - 1941 December 19
b. 7, f. 6	Volume 47 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1941 December 20 - 1942 March 17
b. 7, f. 7	Volume 48 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1942 March 18 - June 13

b. 8, f. 1	Volume 48 Illustrations of Bible stories Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1942 May 17 - November 4
b. 8, f. 2	Volume 49 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1942 June 14 - August 30
b. 8, f. 3	Volume 50 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1942 August 31 - December 22
b. 8, f. 4	Volume 51 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1942 December 23 - 1943 March 26
b. 8, f. 5	Volume 52 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1943 March 27 - June 20
b. 8, f. 6	Volume 53 Digital copy available. Consult with repository regarding use.	1943 June 21 - 1944 May 1

**Series IV: Writings and Notes**

b. 8, f. 7	Sung's reflections on his illness	1943-1944
b. 8, f. 8	Sermons by Sung	no date
b. 8, f. 9	Prayer request from a Chinese woman in Quanzhou, Fujian	no date
b. 8, f. 10	Sung's lists of names of individuals for whom he prayed, with subjects of prayers	no date
b. 8, f. 11	Volume listing names of people for whom Sung prayed, in Shantou, Guangdong, and in Fujian Some entries are not in Sung's handwriting.	ca. 1936-1937
b. 8, f. 12	Preface to the publication of "Bible Stories," by Sung's wife	ca. 1941

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Evangelistic work -- China -- History -- 20th  
Century  
Evangelistic work -- Southeast Asia -- History --  
20th Century

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Names**

Song, Shangjie, 1901-1944