

[NO.69 SPRING 2006](#)
[BENE LEGERE](#)
[NEWSLETTER OF](#)
[THE](#)
[LIBRARY](#)
[ASSOCIATES](#)

- [A Milestone for our Readers](#)
- [PLoS Computational Biology](#)
- [Second Biblia Rabbinica](#)
- [Theos Bernard Collection](#)
- [The Borel Manuscript](#)
- [Signed letter from Friar Junípero Serra](#)
- [Additions to the Tebtunis Papyri Collection](#)
- [The H. K. Yuen Social Movement Archive](#)
- [Swiss Enlightenment Collection](#)
- [Oral history of Ernest Kuh](#)
- [Śūrangama Sutra](#)

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Śūrangama Sutra

East Asian Library

“After listening to the Buddha's profound instruction, Ananda and the assembly realized that their bodies and minds were now free from all obstructions. Each understood that self mind pervades the ten directions of space, this clearly seen like a leaf held in the hand. All things were seen as the wondrous and bright fundamental Mind of Bodhi. While this essence of Mind embraced all and contained the ten directions, Ananda looked back at his own body given him by his parents, and beheld it like a speck of dust dancing in the great void sometimes visible and sometimes not, like a bubble rising and falling aimlessly in a boundless clear ocean.”

--from the *Śūrangama Sutra*, translated by Charles Luk

In 1769, over 100 years after Qian Qianyi's death, the Qianlong emperor in China — who reigned until his death in 1799 — declared that the scholar-official's writings reflected opposition to the Manchu dynasty and decreed that Qian's works be eradicated from the corpus of Chinese literature. All copies of his books were to be burned; every citation of his work, every instance of his name was to be excised from anthologies and cut from the woodblocks that produced them. Yet some of the writings of this major figure in Ming-Qing political and intellectual history survived in Japan and in China, including this hand-copied and annotated study in red and black ink on ruled paper — with collectors' seals — of the *Śūrangama Sutra*, a basic text of Buddhism, presented in several volumes. This manuscript embodies the efforts and interests of generations of owners who took the trouble, even risk, to preserve it, thereby endowing something as frail as paper with the strength to withstand an emperor's decrees.



A prominent literatus and statesman of the Ming-Qing transition, Qian Qianyi has long been a figure of scholarly interest as well as controversy. His manuscripts are rarely encountered and highly coveted, by libraries and private collectors alike. This gift is a significant addition to the East Asian Library's already-rich rare book collection.

--Dr. Peter Zhou, *Director of the East Asian Library*

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