



Guide to the Robert White Collection of Chinese Cultural Revolution Materials, 1920s-2000s and undated

This collection guide was produced in **2015**.

This PDF version was created on **May 8, 2026**.

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Summary

Collection Title:

Robert White collection of Chinese Cultural Revolution materials, 1920s-2000s and undated

Creator:

White, Robert A., 1946- (collector)

Abstract:

Robert White is an Appalachian State University professor who studied and taught in China during the 1980s and 1990s. The collection contains pins, posters, objects, textiles, and printed material, largely produced for a Chinese audience, promoting the ideals and persona of Mao Zedong, the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Extent:

15 Linear Feet (2 flat boxes; 9 trays; 2 document cases; 1 tube; 2 custom boxes)

Language:

Materials are in Chinese and English

Collection ID:

RL.11084

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1z601>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Robert White Collection of Chinese Posters, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

Collection consists of posters, pins, buttons, flags, objects, and ephemera, most featuring representations of Mao, acquired by White in the 1980s while he participated in academic exchanges with China during his research at Appalachian State University and Duke University. Most of the materials were created and printed in China and intended for the Chinese public. A small

number of printed items were intended for an American or global audience, printed in English by the government's Foreign Languages Press. The majority of items were produced during the Cultural Revolution period, and celebrate or promote the ideals and persona of Mao Zedong. Other themes or events idealized in this collection include the creation of political collectives around the country; the establishment of the Red Guard; army service; atomic power; traditional farming; the Down to the Countryside Movement; the Foolish Old Man fable; and other political events and personas within the Chinese Communist Party during the mid-twentieth century. Other notable references include the Three Red Banners; the Sixteen Points program; the Red Guards' eight mass rallies in Tiananmen Square in Beijing during 1966; Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung (also known as the Little Red Book); and community performances, particularly the 8 Model Plays. Mao is prominently featured on the majority of the posters; another notable figure is Lin Biao. Other figures represented include Mao's wife Jiang Qing, exiled Cambodian king Norodom Sihanouk, as well as pre-Cultural Revolution leaders Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Hua Guofeng.

Many Little Red Books, along with other printed materials and publications, were removed from the original collection for individual cataloging. Consult the DUL catalog (suggested search term: "White, Robert A., 1946-") to locate these items.

Biographical/Historical

The political history represented and referred to in this collection includes the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), the chairmanship of Mao Zedong (1949-1976), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

In 2016, Robert White wrote the following reflection about his research interests and time in China:

"I first had the chance to travel to China as part of the Appalachian State University - Dong Bei Gong Xue Yuan, now Northeast University in Shenyang academic exchanger program. This relationship was established in 1980 and is among the first US / China University exchanges established in 1980. The Chinese Ministry of Education referred to it regularly through the 1980s as the "first" of those new relationships with U.S. institutions after normalization of relations between our two countries.

My wife and I lived, taught, and conducted research in Shenyang in 1983-84 as the third members of a program of year long faculty exchange between our institutions. It was during this journey that my academic interest in China, its Revolution, and the Symbols of that revolution was first established.

After returning to the U.Ss I completed a long delayed Undergraduate Degree in International studies in 1985. In 1987 I was accepted into the Duke History

graduate program to focus on Chinese History. Funded by a Jacob Javits Fellowship I completed course work and language exams in 1989 and finished my Masters thesis examination of the symbolic import of the philatelic output of the so-called Liberated Areas. I returned to China in 1990 for my PhD research.

Although I did not complete the PhD, I began teaching Chinese and Asian History part time at Appalachian State in 1992, and in 1995 I assumed a position as Executive Director of ASU's International Education Office. I combined those duties and kept my hand in teaching and research by leading student trips to China and maintained that set of responsibilities until I retired in 2011.

My interest lies in, and consideration of the range of Propaganda output of the Chinese Communist efforts from its founding, through the World War and Civil war periods, the establishment of New China in 1949, and the first decades following. I worked particularly the Third Revolutionary Civil War period in the Northeast, in the years between 1945 and 1949.

When I first began to consider China, Mao had been dead for only five years, but the psychological cloak of Maoism was yet very firmly in place upon the shoulders of the Chinese People. The great luck of my career was stepping into that dynamic and having a modicum of understanding its portent, both for China and for the world. The nearly 4 decades since those first steps to teasing out a personal perspective of this astonishing place and its people, aided in no small measure by my marriage to my Anthropologist wife, has continued to fascinate and fuel my engagement."

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Arrangement

Materials are arranged and boxed by format and size. Posters are loosely sorted by content.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Robert White collection of Chinese Cultural Revolution materials were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift in 2014, 2016, 2025.

Processing Information

Processed by Meghan Lyon and Qianwen Zhang, Nov. 2015. Updated by Meghan Lyon and Luo Zhou, April 2017. Most published/printed materials removed for individual cataloging in 2026.

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2015-0142, 2017-0036, 2025-0136.

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Related Materials

Separated Material

Many published and printed materials were separated from this archival collection and cataloged individually for Duke Libraries Catalog in 2026. Consult the DUL catalog (suggested search term creator: "White, Robert A., 1946-") to locate separated single items.

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Names and Subjects

- China -- Politics and government -- 1949-
- China -- History -- Cultural Revolution -- 1966-1976
- Propaganda -- China
- Buttons (information artifacts)
- Political posters
- Communism -- China
- Statesmen -- China -- 20th century
- Busts (figures)
- Flags
- Literature in propaganda -- China
- Revolutionary operas -- China -- Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976
- Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976
- Lin, Biao, 1908-1971
- Jiang, Qing, 1914-1991
- Zhou, Enlai, 1898-1976
- Liu, Shaoqi, 1898-1969

Collection Inventory

Posters, 1953-1978

Physical Description: 2 Linear Feet
1 flat box 24x30 inches

Pre-Cultural Revolution, 1953-1965, undated Box 1

Physical Description: 6 items

Cultural Revolution, General, 1966-1976,
undated Box 1

Physical Description: 21 items

Scope and Contents

Includes Down to the Countryside (reeducation); Red Guard; Foolish Old Man fable; marches/parades; general Communist propaganda

8 Model Plays/Jiang Qing, 1967-1969 Box 1

Physical Description: 8 items

Mao Zedong, 1966-1978, undated Box 1

Physical Description: 18 items

Scope and Contents

Includes portraits, images of Mao at Red Guard receptions, military reviews, and quotes by Mao.

Mao Zedong and Lin Baio, 1966-1971, undated Box 1

Physical Description: 19 items

Other political leaders and events, including
Post-Cultural Revolution, 1966-1978 Box 1

Physical Description: 8 items

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Buttons and Pins, 1920s-1990s

Sample assortment of pins and medals,
1960s-1970s Box 2
Box 3

Scope and Contents

Two artifact boxes with an assortment of pins selected from Robert White's materials intended for use by classes or surveying by researchers. Contains variety of buttons and pins with Mao's profile, image, or photograph, backings include metal, plastic, and ceramic buttons and pins. Also includes enamel pins asserting Chinese nuclear power, featuring atomic bombs and missiles; two pins with Lenin's profile; pins featuring the Little Red Book; pins including Mao, Lin Biao, and ? (presumably before their purge); metal medals; and other pins selected as a representative of the larger collection.

Metal and plastic pins, 1960s-1970s Box 4
Box 5
Box 7
Box 8
Box 13

Scope and Contents

Trays of hundreds of loose metal or plastic pins, most typically red background with Mao's profile in gold. Also includes some metal pins with white background and color printed photographs of Mao from various

stages of his life. Sizes range from 1" to 4" diameter; some have trim or accompanying Cultural Revolution imagery, and some are plain. Materials include enamel, metal, and resin. Additional examples are located in the Class Sample boxes.

Medals, 1920s-1950s Box 6

Scope and Contents

Approximately 15 assorted metal medals and awards, some including ribbons for pinning. Appear to be largely awards for military service. Additional medals are located in the Class Sample boxes.

Ceramic pins, 1960s-1970s Box 6
Box 15

Scope and Contents

Ceramic buttons, typically with white background and printed photographic image of Mao. Most are between 1.5 and 2 inches in diameter. Additional examples are in the Class Sample boxes.

Commemorative gold coin set, 1993 Box 11

Scope and Contents

Fabric-covered case with gold coins commemorating the 100th birthday of Mao (1893-1993).

Empty pin cases, undated Box 12

Physical Description: 2 folders
2 cases

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Figures (Representations), 1950s-1970s

Ceramic bust of Mao, undated Box 13

Metal portraits of Mao's head Box 13
Box 16

Scope and Contents

Large metal discs with colored enamel coating, featuring Mao; ranging in size from 4" to 14" in diameter.

Ceramic upright memorials with portrait of Mao, undated	Box 14
Ceramic upright memorial with portrait of Mao and Lin Baio, undated	Box 14

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Textiles, 1960s-1970s

Flags, 1960s-1970s	Box 9
Scope and Contents	
Fabric Chinese and Communist flags.	
Armbands, 1960s-1970s	Box 9
Scope and Contents	
Red fabric armbands with yellow, black, or white printed Chinese text.	
Purse, undated	Box 9
Silk banner (blank), undated	Box 17
Scope and Contents	
Black silk banner with post, formerly used to display White's pins.	

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Miscellaneous Objects, 1960s-2000s

Alarm clock, undated	Box 14
Scope and Contents	
Clock featuring propaganda image of students waving the Little Red Book	
Chunghwa Cigarettes package, 1980s?	Box 8
Scope and Contents	
Unopened package from Shanghai Tobacco (Group) Corporation.	
Cigarette lighter, with Mao's photograph, undated	Box 8

Matchbox from Match Paradise, Hong Kong, 2000s	Box 8
Cigarette case with holographic Mao picture, undated	Box 8
Coated masonite cards with printed images of Mao, 1960s-1970s	Box 8
Red Years deck of cards, 2006	Box 11

Scope and Contents

Deck of cards featuring images of Cultural Revolution posters and paintings, with both Chinese and English captions. Printed in China by HCG.

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Printed Materials, 1968-1973, undated

Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, by Lin Piao, 1969	Box 10
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Scope and Contents

Little book with red paperback cover; printed in English by the Foreign Languages Press, Peking.

On the Proletarian Revolutionaries' Struggle to Seize Power, 1968	Box 11
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Scope and Contents

Paperback booklet printed in English by Foreign Languages Press, Peking.

Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Communist Party of China, 1971	Box 11
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Scope and Contents

Paperback booklet published in English by Joint Publishing Co., Hong Kong.

Wu si yi lai fan dong pai, di zhu zi chan jie ji xue zhe zun Kong fu gu yan lun ji lu : 1969 nian 11 yue bian, 1973 nian 10 yue zeng bu.	Box 11
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