

# Guide to the Thomas Torrance Papers

RG 16



Compiled by Joan R. Duffy and Martha Lund Smalley

1996, 2003, 2014, 2016

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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 16

**CREATOR:** Torrance, T. (Thomas)

**TITLE:** Thomas Torrance papers

**DATES:** 1883-2016

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3 linear feet (7 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** These papers document the work of the China Inland Mission and American Bible Society in Sichuan (Szechuan), West China. Also of significance in the collection are primary source accounts of Chinese Christians, and materials related to Torrance's research among the Ch'iang people in the upper Min valley, including relating to Torrance's theory that the Ch'iang people were of Jewish descent. Thomas Torrance was a missionary in Sichuan (Szechuan), China from 1896 to 1934, first with the China Inland Mission and then with the American Bible Society.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.016>

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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.016>.

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 Thomas F. Torrance and M. Elizabeth Newlands

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Thomas Torrance Papers (RG 16), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Processing Information

Place names were modernized in the description, with the name originally used in the collection material or in an older version of the finding aid in parenthesis: e.g. "Beijing (Peking)" or "Benin (Dahomey)".

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## Biographical / Historical

Date	Event
1871	○ Born in Shotts, Lanarkshire, Scotland
1892-1894	○ Attended Hulme Cliff College in Derbyshire
1894-1895	○ Studied at Livingstone College, London
1896 January	○ Rev. Thomas Torrance arrived in Shanghai
1896-1910	○ Stationed in Western Sichuan (Szechuan), working as a missionary with the China Inland Mission, with headquarters in Chengdu.
1909	○ Serious disagreement with members of the China Inland Mission. Finally settled after ten years.
1910	○ Withdrew from China Inland Mission due to disagreement. Returned to Scotland. Later persuaded by Dr. John Hykes, Head of the American Bible Society in Shanghai, to return to China to take over the agency of the ABS in Sichuan (Szechuan), centered in Chengdu.
1911	○ Married Annie Elizabeth Sharp, a missionary with the China Inland Mission, stationed in Kuanshien.
1912-1924	○ Births of Torrance children: Mary, Thomas F., Grace, Margaret, James, David.
1927	○ Torrance family left China due to the early communist troubles under Chiang Kai-shek and returned to Scotland. Later, returned to China to continue missionary work, leaving wife and children in Scotland. Remained for seven years.
1934	○ Returned to Scotland due to Civil War in China. During the revolution, the Ch'iang villages and Christian churches established by Torrance in the upper Min valley were destroyed. Later, Torrance received a New Testament which had been buried to preserve it from the Communists as a symbol of the reestablishment of the Christian Church among the Ch'iang.
1959	○ Died in Edinburgh

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## Scope and Contents

These papers provide valuable documentation of mission work of the China Inland Mission and American Bible Society in Sichuan (Szechuan), West China. Also of significance in the collection are primary source accounts of Chinese Christians, and materials related to Torrance's research among the Ch'iang people in the upper Min valley, including relating to Torrance's theory that the Ch'iang people were of Jewish descent.

The Correspondence of Series I is divided into Family Correspondence and General Correspondence. The correspondence between Torrance and his family dates from the period when he was in West China and the family was in Scotland, for the children's education, 1928-1934. This was a turbulent period in the history of West China, due to the emergence of the Communist party. Torrance returned to Scotland in 1934 and there heard of Mao Zedong's destruction of Ch'iang Christian churches.

The General Correspondence dates from 1906 to 1955 and deals primarily with Torrance's relations with the China Inland Mission and American Bible Society. A section of letters relating to the Vale/Torrance case and Torrance's departure from the China Inland Mission was restricted until 1999 but it now open.

The Writings of Series II include material written by Torrance, the memoirs of his wife, Annie Elizabeth Sharp Torrance, and material collected by Torrance. Torrance's writings include an unpublished manuscript of conversion stories of Chinese Christians, miscellaneous other stories of Chinese Christians, published articles and leaflets, and reports of his work.

Annie Torrance's memoirs date from 1883 to 1927; they document her work as a missionary serving under the China Inland Mission and the period following her marriage to Torrance. The writings collected by Torrance include reviews of his writings, Chinese manuscripts, and numerous articles related to West China and the Ch'iang people.

The Personal Items and Memorabilia of Series III include Chinese travel passes and a Chinese scroll tribute to Torrance.

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## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence, 1909-1935
- II. Writings, 1883-1984
- III. Personal Items and Memorabilia, 1897-2013

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**Collection Contents**
**Series I: Correspondence, 1909-1987**

## Family Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1a	From future wife, Annie Elizabeth Sharp (called Betty) To wife, Betty	1909, 1912 May 12
b. 1, f. 1b	To wife, Betty	1912 May 12
b. 1, f. 1c	To wife, Betty	1928 Mar-Aug
b. 1, f. 2	To wife, Betty	1928 Sep-Dec
b. 1, f. 3	To wife, Betty	1929 Jan-May
b. 1, f. 4	To wife, Betty	1929 Jun-Dec
b. 1, f. 5	To wife, Betty	1930 Jan-May
b. 1, f. 6	To wife, Betty	1930 Jun-Oct
b. 1, f. 7	To wife, Betty	1931 Jan-May
b. 1, f. 8	To wife, Betty	1931 Jun-Dec
b. 1, f. 9	To wife, Betty	1932 Jan-Jun
b. 1, f. 10	To wife, Betty	1932 Jul-Dec
b. 1, f. 11	To wife, Betty	1933 Jan-Jun
b. 1, f. 12	To wife, Betty	1933 Jul-Dec
b. 2, f. 13	To wife, Betty	1934 Jan-Jun
b. 2, f. 14	To wife, Betty	1934 Jul -1935 Jan
b. 2, f. 14a	To niece, Annie Thomson	1911, 1913, 1922
b. 2, f. 15	To children (Mary, Thomas F., Grace, Margaret, James, and David)	1928 Jan-Mar
b. 2, f. 16	To children	1928 Jul-Dec
b. 2, f. 17	To children	1929 Jan-Jun
b. 2, f. 18	To children	1929 Jul-Dec
b. 2, f. 19	To children	1930 Jan-Jun
b. 2, f. 20	To children	1930 Jul-Dec
b. 2, f. 21	To children	1931 Jan-Jun
b. 2, f. 22	To children	1931 Jul-Dec
b. 2, f. 23	To children	1932 Jan-Jun

## Family Correspondence (continued)

b. 2, f. 24	To children	1932 Jul-Dec
b. 3, f. 25	To children	1933 Jan-Sep
b. 3, f. 26	To children	1934 Jan-Jun
b. 3, f. 27	To children, including one letter from Annie Elizabeth Torrance to Mary; undated letter from Mary (ca. 1917)	1934 Aug-1935, 1952-1957, no date

## General Correspondence

b. 3, f. 28	American Bible Society (primarily to John R. Hykes, Agent)	1911 Aug-Dec
b. 3, f. 29	American Bible Society (primarily to John R. Hykes, Agent)	1912 Jan-Apr
b. 3, f. 30	American Bible Society (primarily to John R. Hykes, Agent);	1912 May-Oct
b. 3, f. 30	American Bible Society: CD of scans of Thomas Torrance papers held by American Bible Society (64 documents)	1911-1929
b. 3, f. 31	British Museum, Department of Ceramics and Ethnography (R. L. Hobson)	1931
b. 3, f. 31	Cameron, Mr.	1928-1932
b. 3, f. 31	Ethnographic Museum, Munich	1914
b. 3, f. 32	Hykes, John R. (American Bible Society)	1917-1920
b. 3, f. 33	Lacy, Carleton	1923-1931
b. 3, f. 34	To "Friends"	1906-1931
b. 3, f. 35	Koo, D. Z. (secretary to Madame and Gen. Chiang Kai-shek)	1937 Jun
b. 3, f. 35a	Plewman, T.E.	1935
b. 3, f. 36	Ramsey, Clarence H. C.	1935
b. 3, f. 37	Reynolds, Johanna Madson	1955
b. 7, f. 95-116	Vale/Torrance Case: China Inland Mission and American Bible Society	1909-1923

## Of Thomas F. Torrance (son)

b. 6, f. 83a	With Archie Crouch re. Crouch's correspondence with David A. Leventhal; includes photo of Nestorian monument	1987
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**Series II: Writings, 1883-1984**

Thomas Torrance

## Newspaper articles, bibliography

b. 3, f. 38 Published newspaper articles, including "Rock Cut Tombs of Szechuan", 1908-1923, n.d.  
"The Man-Tsi Caves of Western Szechuan"

b. 4, f. 39 Bibliography of Published Works

## Unpublished writings

b. 4, f. 40 Book (unpublished): *Conversions Stories of Chinese Christians*

b. 4, f. 41 *Drafts of book chapters*:: Chapter 1: The Story of Tang Kuang-Ching

b. 4, f. 42 Chapter 2: The Story of Ko Ta-Niang

b. 4, f. 43 Chapter 3: The Story of Han Shen-Chih

b. 4, f. 44 Chapter 4: Eventide Conversions

b. 4, f. 45 Chapter 5: The Story of Teacher Ho

b. 4, f. 46 Chapter 6: The Story of Pan Ting-Shan

b. 4, f. 47 Chapter 7: The Story of Mrs. Pan Been-

b. 4, f. 48 Chapter 8: The Story of Hsu Wan-Liang

b. 4, f. 49 Chapter 9: The Lord's Day Experiences

b. 4, f. 50 Chapter 10: The Story of Chen Yuen-Chang

b. 4, f. 51 Chapter 11: The Story of Yui Bow-Chen

b. 4, f. 52 Chapter 12: The Story of Liu Han-Chang

b. 4, f. 53 Chapter 13: The Story of Jacob Jang

b. 4, f. 54 Chapter 14: Cases of Sudden Conversion

b. 4, f. 55 Chapter 15: The Story of Daniel Deow

b. 4, f. 56 Chapter 16: The Story of Ho Kin-Shan

b. 4, f. 57 Chapter 17: The Story of Chen Fu-Kuan

b. 4, f. 58 Chapter 18: The Story of Ong Gwang-Ming

b. 4, f. 59 Chapter 19: The Story of Ren Jen-Bang

b. 4, f. 60 Chapter 20: The Story of Chen Bing-

b. 4, f. 61 Chapter 21: The Story of Isaac

## Miscellaneous stories



## Thomas Torrance &gt; Miscellaneous stories (continued)

b. 5, f. 62	"Free Translation of a letter from Colporteur Hou Li-Teh who was caught and impressed as a soldier"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 62	"The Question of Baptism"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 63	"The Story of Gow Sho-Be and His Family"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 63	"The Story of Hsiung K'in An"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 63	"The Story of Rev. Jo Pei-Lin"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 64	"The Story of Liu Been-Hsui"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 64	"The Story of Yo Bay-Yin"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 64	Story fragments, poems	n.d.
Published articles, books, and leaflets		
b. 5, f. 65	"The Basic Spiritual Conceptions of the Religion of the Ch'iang"	1934
b. 5, f. 65	"The Bible in China"	1939
b. 5, f. 65	"Burial Customs in Szechuan"	1910
b. 5, f. 66	"Chang Hsien Chong: The Spoiler of Szechuan"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 66	"China's First Missionaries"; incl. essay about this book written by Thomas F. Torrance	1937, n.d.
b. 5, f. 66	"The Chinese Cat"	1926
b. 5, f. 67	"The Early History of Chengtu" (Chengdu)	undated
b. 5, f. 67	"The Emigrations of the Jews: Israel in China"	1940
b. 5, f. 67	"The Eternal Ten Commandment"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 67	"Evangelism in West China"	1930
b. 5, f. 67	"The Forgiveness of Sin"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 67	"Free Translation of a Stone Tablet at Lifan"	1933-1934
b. 5, f. 68	<i>The History, Customs and Religion of the Chiang</i>	1920
b. 5, f. 69	"The History of the Shuh: A Free Translation of the Shuh Chi"	1924
b. 5, f. 69	"My Work Among the Tribes"	1935
b. 5, f. 69	"Notes on the Cave Tombs and Ancient Burial Mounds of Western Szechwan"	1930-1931
b. 5, f. 69	"Notes on Monotheistic Beliefs in the Far East"	1952
b. 5, f. 69	"Notes on the West China Aboriginal Tribes"	1932
b. 5, f. 70	"On an Evangelizing Tour Among the N. W. Tribes"	n.d.
b. 5, f. 70	"The Origin and History of the Irrigation Work of the Chengtu Plain"	1924

## Thomas Torrance &gt; Published articles, books, and leaflets (continued)

b. 5, f. 70	"The Peach Garden Pact" (by TTT?)	n.d.
b. 5, f. 70	"The Religion of the Ch'iang"	1923
b. 5, f. 70	"Religious Life in China from Ancient to Modern Times"	1928
b. 5, f. 71	"The Survival of Old Testament Religious Customs Among the Ch'iang People of West China"	1939
b. 5, f. 71	"The T'ieh-Ch'i Earthquake of August 1933 and Afterwards"	1933
b. 5, f. 71	"The Use of Stones in Primitive Worship"	1936
b. 5, f. 71	"Work Among the Ch'iang Tribesmen"	1930
Reports of work		
b. 5, f. 72	Chengdu (Chengtu), West China	1915-1933, undated
b. 5, f. 73	Songpan, Sichuan (Szechuan)	1932
b. 5, f. 73	Sichuan (Szechuan)	1933-1934
b. 5, f. 74	Unidentified	1934
b. 5, f. 75	Hospital Work	n.d.
Related Writings Collected by Torrance		
Book reviews of Torrance's writings		
b. 5, f. 76	Reviews of <i>China's First Missionaries</i> by: Dye, Daniel S and unidentified	1937, n.d.
Chinese manuscripts		
b. 5, f. 77	<i>Ch'iang Sacrificial Rites</i> by Joseph T. (copy of small book)	1925
b. 5, f. 78	Old Testament is Just the Same as the Practice of Our Tribe", including English translation	n.d.
b. 5, f. 79	Prayer by Anbang Yang	1922
Chinese tracts		
b. 6, f. 80	Including "World's Foremost Question" and tract by Ch'iang-min convert	pre 1935
Annie Elizabeth Sharp Torrance		
b. 6, f. 81	Memoirs	1883-1927
Thomas F. Torrance (son)		
b. 6, f. 82	"The Visit of Thomas F. Torrance to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, and to Weichow and Chiang Villages in Wenchuan County, the upper Min Valley, Sichuan, 1986 Oct 4-18"	
b. 6, f. 83	"Journal of my Visit to Hong Kong, Chengdu and Wenchuan, April 22 - June 3, 1994"	

## Writings of others

b. 6, f. 84	Wong How-Man, "Peoples of China's Far Provinces, <i>National Geographic</i>	1984
b. 6, f. 84a	Plewman, T. E., "The Red Terror in the Tribes Country", "Report of a Journey to Weikiu, Lifan and Tzagulas"	1935
b. 6, f. 85	"China and the Old Testament", <i>N.C. Daily News</i> , Shanghai	1923 Jan 19
b. 6, f. 86	Re. Discussions about Isaiah 49:12 concerning "Sinim", meaning China or Syene, Egypt	n.d.
b. 6, f. 87	McGovern, William M., Pages from <i>The Early Empires of Central Asia</i>	1939
b. 6, f. 88	Lowenthal, Rudolf, "The Jews in China: a Bibliography", <i>The Yenching Journal of Social Studies</i> , Vol 1, No. 2, Peking, China	1939
b. 6, f. 89	Bergen, P.D., "The Sages of Shantung: Confucius and Mencius"	1913
b. 6, f. 89	Cheng Te-K'un, "Szechwan Pottery", from <i>Apollo Annual</i>	1948
b. 6, f. 89	Edgar, J.H., <i>High Altitudes: Missionary Problems in Kham or Eastern Tibet</i> , Chengdu, Sichuan (Chengtu, Szechwan)	undated
b. 6, f. 89	Ferguson, Peter Blair, Index to the <i>Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> Vo. I to Vol. LIV (supplement)	1924
b. 6, f. 89	Graham, David Crockett, "The Ancient Caves of Szechwan Province, China", <i>Proceedings of the United States National Museum</i> , vol. 80, Art. 16, pp. 1-13, plates 1-16	1932
b. 6, f. 90	Hartwell, Dr. (Grandpa Ho), <i>A Rhyming Journey from Chengtu, Szechuan to "Merry Old", England</i>	undated
b. 6, f. 90	Hykes, John R., <i>List of Translations of the Scriptures into the Chinese Language</i>	1915
b. 6, f. 90	Lacy, Carleton, "A Century of Bible Work in China", <i>The Chinese Recorder</i>	1934
b. 6, f. 90	Lessing, F., <i>Ostasiatische Plastiken</i>	n.d.
b. 6, f. 91	Liljestrand, S.H., "A Resume of Border Research and Researchers", <i>Journal of the West China Border Research Society</i>	1934
b. 6, f. 91	Pollak, Michael, <i>Mandarins, Jews, and Missionaries: The Jewish Experience in the Chinese Empire</i>	1980
b. 6, f. 91	Robin, Dr. "Let's Drop Education and Just Preach the Gospel", Reprint from S.P.G. <i>Mission Field</i> , Shantung Christian University, Jinan (Tsinan), China	undated
b. 6, f. 91	Rock, Joseph F., "The Land of the Tebbus", Reprint from <i>The Geographical Journal</i> , Vol. 81, No. 2	1933 Feb
b. 6, f. 91	Seligman, C.G., "The Roman Orient and the Far East", Reprint from <i>Antiquity</i>	1937 Mar
b. 6, f. 91	Vale, Joshua, "Irrigation of the Ch'eng-tu Plain", <i>Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , Vol. 33	1902

## Writings of others (continued)

b. 6, f. 92	Border Mission Bulletin (in Chinese, with English translations of some articles)	1945-1947
b. 6, f. 93	"The Late Dr. J.H. McCartney of Chungking" (author unidentified)	undated
b. 6, f. 93	List of Directors, Members of Councils, Missionaries and Stations of the China Inland Mission, Shanghai	1937
b. 6, f. 93	The West China Missionary News, Vol. 28, No. 7-8	1926

**Series III: Personal Items and memorabilia, 1916-2016**

b. 6, f. 94	Wills of Thomas Torrance and Annie Elizabeth Torrance; Statement of Investment Certificate; calling cards, marriage and memorial cards for relatives, article found in TTT's Bible; two cross-stitched mementos	1897-1934, n.d.
b. 6, f. 94	Obituary of TTT; biographical statement re. Torrance written by his son, Thomas F. Torrance; letter from M Elizabeth Newlands (granddaughter) that includes biographical information	1959, 1996, 2013
b. OV-d	Four travel passes in Chinese	1916-1935
b. OVd-5	Chinese scroll - tribute to Thomas Torrance Tributes written by 12 of his friends/colleagues in China. A copy has been engraved on stone at the church he established.	1927 December 25
b. OVd-5	Replica drawing of Map of Sites of Missionary Work in Aba Region (陶然士手绘阿坝州传教所到处地图).  The original work, drawn by Mr. Thomas Torrance, is kept by Mr. Xichun Wang, a resident of Wenchuan District, Aba Region, Sichuan Province, China.	no date
b. 6, f. 95	Booklet of photographs from Sichuan University Museum Special Exhibition: The Rev. Thomas Torrance (1871-1959), International Museum Day, May 18, 2016. Taken by Torrance's granddaughter Grace Torrance Lennox.	2016

## **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**

Missionaries  
Missions -- China

### **Names**

Torrance, T. (Thomas)