

Oxford Reference



The Oxford Companion to the Book

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Publisher: Oxford University Press

Print ISBN-13: 9780198606536

Current Online Version: 2010

Print Publication Date: 2010

Published online: 2010

eISBN: 9780199570140

40 The History of the Book in China

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1 The book before paper and printing

Although the early invention of true paper (2nd century BC) and of textual printing (late 7th century) by *woodblock printing profoundly influenced the development of the book in China, the materials and manufacture of books before paper and before printing also left some traces. Preceding the availability of paper as a writing surface, the earliest books in China, known as *jiance* or *jiandu*, were written on thin strips of prepared bamboo and wood, which were usually interlaced in sequence by parallel bands of twisted thongs, hemp string, or silk thread. The text was written with a *writing brush and lampblack *ink in vertical columns from right to left—a *layout retained by later MSS and printed books—after which the strips were rolled up to form a primitive *scroll binding (see 17). The surviving specimens of *jiance* are mostly the result of 20th-century scientific archaeological recovery, and date from around the 6th century BC to the 3rd century AD.

An important and unusual example of *jiance* was discovered in 1959 at Wuwei county, Gansu province. The text of the classic *Yili* (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial) was found in a Han dynasty (206 BC– AD 220) tomb. The text-bearing strips, mostly of wood, are exceptionally long: they record the number of each column, as well as displaying the name and number of each section of text when rolled up. On the basis of very early inscriptions and citations in ancient texts, there is good reason to believe that this book form existed four or

five centuries earlier than the 6th century BC. The subject-matter of *jiance* ranges from mundane archival documents to important historical, philosophical, *medical, and military texts. Some large caches containing thousands of bamboo strips have been discovered in recent decades, and many such texts have not yet been published or made available for study. Because the binding thongs or strings usually disintegrate, some texts have been difficult to put in order. Others found in tombs in humid regions present serious *conservation problems.

Although its use began later, *silk is mostly contemporaneous with bamboo and wood as an important material for pre-paper MS books. By the early Warring States period (403–221 BC), the philosopher Mozi (*fl.* 400 BC) could state that texts written on bamboo and silk or engraved on metal and stone were thus transmitted for posterity. Silk books also took the form of *scrolls, and the continuous weaving of textiles allowed for drawings or diagrams accompanying the text. The early Han tomb at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province, contained *maps on silk as well as silk books. A highly valuable material, silk was used sparingly. According to the *Hanshu yiwenzhi*, the catalogue of the early Han imperial library, compiled by Ban Gu, only about 25 per cent of its holdings consisted of silk scrolls. In fact, the invention of paper probably came about as an economical alternative to silk.

*Script has a history of more than 4,000 years in China, and text was inscribed on objects of diverse materials and forms before and during the development of scroll books of bamboo and silk. The so-called ‘oracle bones’ used for divination since the mid-Shang dynasty (c. 1300–1046 BC) comprise animal bones as well as tortoise shells with brief texts engraved on their surfaces. Mozi’s mention of texts engraved (and also cast) on metal chiefly refers to Shang and Zhou (1046–256 BC) bronze ritual vessels; his mention of texts engraved on stone refers to stone monuments such as the so-called ‘stone drums’ (7th or 8th century BC) still preserved at the Palace Museum in Beijing. The more familiar flat stone tablets with lengthy inscriptions came into being in the Han dynasty. In Chinese culture, the durability of metal and stone serves as a metaphor for the inscriptions’ longevity. Furthermore, inscribed seals of metal (bronze, iron, gold) and stone (especially jade), as well as inscribed stone tablets, probably inspired the invention of printing (see SIGILLOGRAPHY).

Commemorative stone tablets (*bei*) have been erected in China for more than 2,000 years. Chinese stele inscriptions also include tomb inscriptions (*muzhi*), inscriptions on natural stone surfaces, and inscriptions on objects such as Buddhist and Daoist stone sculptures. Engraving of the Han ‘stone classics’ was undertaken in AD 175–183; the tablets were erected in a public place at the capital Luoyang to allow scholars and students to copy standardized versions of the Confucian classics. Three or four centuries later the technique of *ink-squeeze rubbings made from *bei* initiated the primitive duplication of texts that led to the method of xylographic printing.

The *Suishu jingjizhi*, the bibliography of the official history of the Sui dynasty (581–618), includes several ink-squeeze rubbings (*taben*), apparently all in the form of scrolls. Rubbings are also sometimes stored as folded *sheets. The earliest extant ink-squeeze rubbing mounted as a primitive scroll is of an inscription commemorating a hot spring entitled *Wenquan ming*. It was written by the Tang emperor Taizong, and is dated 653. This incomplete scroll discovered in Dunhuang is now in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). The vertical orientation of most inscriptions engraved on steles is not directly compatible with the horizontal orientation of scroll and of album binding, which eventually became the favoured form of preserving ink-squeeze rubbings. Rubbings made on large sheets of paper must first be cut into columns of text equal to the height of the scroll or album *leaf, and then arranged to read from right to left by pasting the strips in the correct order. This is a task more often assigned to a scroll-mounter than to a bookbinder. The album binding, which superficially can be mistaken for the *pleated binding, is usually regarded as belonging to the realm of painting and *calligraphy rather than of books. Folding albums of painting or calligraphy are called *ceye* (Japanese *gajō*), and are made from single sheets of stiff paper folded vertically in the centre. The sheets are

then bound by consecutively pasting the edges parallel to the centrefold until the *volume is formed. Covers of wood or textile-covered *pasteboard can be attached to the top and bottom surfaces.

Although archaeological evidence shows that paper existed in China two to three centuries earlier, the first formal acknowledgement of papermaking was made in a report to the emperor, in AD 105, by Cai Lun, a eunuch at the Han court. Most importantly, he encouraged the use of a variety of raw materials such as tree bark, hemp, rags, and fishing nets to produce a writing material to replace silk. After its dissemination in China during the first centuries of the Common Era, paper became the dominant material for MS production. Scrolls of paper gradually replaced rolls of silk. The period from Han to Sui witnessed increased circulation of books and the growth of libraries. The introduction of Buddhism to China at about the same time gave added stimulus to these through the promotion of sutra-copying. As the number of translations increased, the Buddhist canon expanded rapidly and demanded countless copies of texts; this is reflected in the hoard of tens of thousands of Buddhist scrolls discovered at Dunhuang, a cave complex in Gansu province, a desert outpost in Chinese central Asia. There, in 1907, while leading a British archaeological expedition from India, Aurel Stein was shown previously sealed caves containing enormous quantities of mostly Buddhist artefacts dating from the 4th to the 10th centuries. Most of the Chinese objects that he acquired entered the *British Museum, including thousands of Buddhist MSS in scroll binding, as well as a small number of books in *codex forms, and some twenty specimens of Tang xylography. A year later, Paul Pelliot arrived at Dunhuang with a French expedition and acquired a smaller quantity of valuable MSS and several examples of printing, now in the BnF. German, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese teams also collected MSS at Dunhuang. Despite limitations of subject-matter and regional provenance, the magnitude of the discovery, and the fact that the MSS and books had been preserved intact for more than eight centuries, profoundly influenced Chinese textual and bibliographical scholarship. The International Dunhuang Project was established in 1994 at the *British Library, where most of the Stein documents are now housed.

In ancient times, textual seals and pictorial seals, cut in relief or *intaglio, were used for identification and authentication. Seals were impressed in soft clay, which was allowed to harden and display its text while sealing a document. Malleable clay was suited to the uneven surface of books made of bamboo and wooden slats. The use of silk as a writing material made it possible to apply *ink to the surface of the seal and stamp it directly on to the silk. The increased use of paper invited innovations such as the use of vermilion ink—made from cinnabar—to replace black ink from soot, or the use of engraved wooden stamps to replace seals cut in metal or stone. Reproducing a brief text or religious votive image by means of an inked stamp impressed on paper is not far removed from transferring text or illustration by pressing paper on to an inked woodblock. Unlike the relief text of seals cut backward in ‘mirror’ image for stamping, the intaglio text of steles was cut forward and could be read directly. However, at least one stone inscription cut in reverse exists from the first half of the 6th century, implying that it could be treated as a large printing block. The ink-squeeze rubbing method of duplicating the texts of steles, and their assumption of book forms in imitation of MSS, offered further stimulation to the idea of textual printing.

2 Tang to Yuan (7th–14th centuries)

The actual circumstances of the invention of printing in China are not known; however, Tang dynasty (618–907) references to printing and the corpus of undated specimens of printing from Tang tombs all point to an approximate date no later than AD 700. Thanks to datable specimens of printing, such as the *Pure Light Dharani Sutra (*Mugu chōnggwang tae taranigyōng*, c.751) from neighbouring Korea and the Empress Shōtoku’s printed charms (**Hyakumantō darani*, 764–70) from Japan, printing is known to have spread to both places by the mid-8th century (see 41, 42). Chinese scholars recently have regarded the Pure Light Dharani Sutra as imported into Korea from the Tang capital, Luoyang, but they have not presented satisfactory evidence for this.

There is no doubt that the widespread availability and diverse uses of paper before the 8th century provided the necessary basis for xylographic printing. The corps of artisans skilled at cutting text on seals and steles, as well as workers in decorative architectural wood carving, provided a ready source of labour needed to engrave the wooden blocks for books. The selective inclusion of the names of scribes and block-cutters on the woodblocks used for printing was inherited from the tradition of engraving stone tablets. Among the early single-sheet prints from Dunhuang, a block-cutter is referred to as *jiangren*, a general term for craftsman, together with his personal name.

The names of *patrons and publishers also appeared quite early. The *Jingang jing* (*Diamond Sutra), published in 868 (on the fifteenth day of the fourth month, i.e. 11 May), is regarded as the world's oldest complete printed book. The dated *colophon by a certain Wang Jie records that he printed the book in honour of his parents. It too was discovered at Dunhuang, and is now in the British Library. In the mid-10th century, large-scale publishing of printed Buddhist texts was sponsored in Hangzhou by Qian Hongchu, fifth prince of the Wu-Yue Kingdom. He published the dharani-sutra text *Baoqieyin tuoluonijing* in 956, 965, and 975, each in a purported edition of 84,000 miniature scrolls. Each version contains a dated colophon before a small *frontispiece woodcut clearly stating his aims. The 956 edition was reprinted in Korea in 1007, which provides further evidence of the early transmission of printed texts from China to Korea (see 41). Around the same time as Qian Hongchu's Buddhist activity in eastern China, two officials in other realms independently completed publication of the Confucian classics. Feng Dao published his canon at the National Academy in Kaifeng in 953, and a little later Wu Zhaoyi published his version in the Shu Kingdom (Sichuan), but specimens of neither exist today. Shortly thereafter, printing of the first Buddhist canon was begun in Sichuan in 971 during the Kaibao reign period (968–75). Called the *Kaibao Tripitaka*, its c.5,000 volumes were in scroll form, and several are still extant. The first *Tripitaka Koreana* of the early 11th century was based on the *Kaibao Tripitaka*, imitating both its printed style and its scroll binding.

Up to the early Northern Song (960–1127), the majority of published books and prints were either religious or official governmental publications. At the same time, there were ephemeral private publications such as dictionaries, *almanacs, and *calendars. Nearly all of the above appeared as unbound single sheets or were bound as scrolls or pleated books. By the mid-11th century there was a new-found growth of secular printing and commercial publishing in China due to the relaxation of government restrictions. Traditional Chinese *bibliography divides publishers into three general categories: *guanke* (official publishing), *sike* or *jiake* (private publishing), and *fangke* (commercial publishing). Although religious publishing might be taken as a type of private publishing, it deserves a category of its own as a significant form of non-governmental institutional publishing.

Buddhist and Daoist books continued to follow the conventions of scroll and of pleated binding;



Click to view larger

Traditional East Asian book forms. **A** (top):

*scroll binding

: 18th-century printed Buddhist sutra (Japan). **B** (2nd from top):

*pleated binding

, 17th-century printed Buddhist sutra (Japan). **C** (3rd from top left):

*butterfly binding

: 16th-century Buddhist MS (Japan). **D** (3rd from top right):

*butterfly binding

: contemporary printed book bound in traditional style (China). **E** (bottom left):

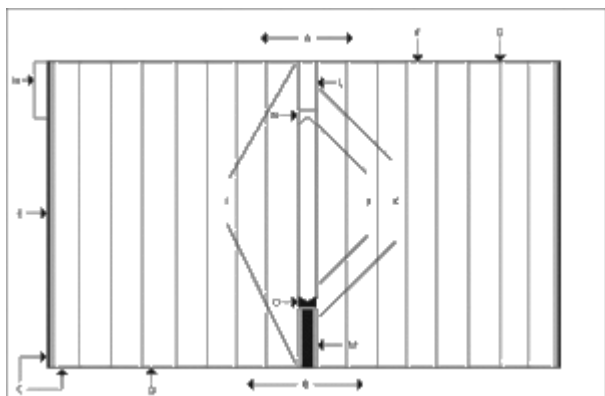
*wrapped-back binding

with original printed title label: 17th-century printed book (China). **F** (bottom centre):

*thread binding

: 18th-century printed book (China). **G** (bottom right): protective folding case, MS title label: early 20th century (China). © J. S. Edgren

but to serve the new demands of secular publishing, *butterfly binding was conceived, for ease of reading as well as for convenient sales and distribution. In scrolls and pleated books, the right- and left-hand borders of printed sheets were concealed in the course of binding to provide continuous text, but the butterfly binding left all four borders exposed and provided an advanced codex format with conveniently divided units of text. This new format of the Chinese printed book (one leaf to be folded into two pages) that is meant to be bound upright



Click to view larger

The traditional format of the Chinese printed book (one

*leaf

to be folded into two pages) that is meant to be bound upright as a

*butterfly binding

, a

*wrapped-back binding

, or a

*thread binding

. Some MS books follow this model, with bordered and lined

*stationery

, but many are written on blank paper without borders or dividing lines. Books to be bound as

*scroll

or

*pleated bindings

share a few of the same elements as the traditional format. The area of the sheet of paper (one leaf) is called *zhimian* (paper face or surface). The woodblock printed area is called *banmian* (block face or surface). The space above the printed area is called (A) *tiantou* (heavenly head or upper margin). It is also called *shumei* (book eyebrow), and the space below the printed area is called (B) *dijiao* (earthly foot or lower margin). The border lines (upper, lower, left, right) of the rectangular woodblock are called (C) *bianlan*. A single line is called (D) *danbian* or *danlan*; double lines are called (E) *shuangbian* or *shuanglan*. The columns to accommodate vertical rows of text are called (F) *hang*, and the vertical dividing lines between them are (G) *jie* (boundary lines). The small rectangular box attached to the upper-left or upper-right corner of the woodblock printed area is called (H) *shuer* (book ear), *erge* (ear box), or simply *erzi* (ear). The column in the centre of the woodblock is called (I) *banxin* (block heart), or *bankou* (block mouth). When the leaf is folded and bound with other leaves as a book, the area is called *shukou* (book mouth). The *banxin* is usually divided into three segments: the middle is called (J) *zhongfeng* (central seam). *Zhongfeng* can also refer to the *shukou*. The upper and lower segments of the *banxin* are called (K) *xiangbi* (elephant trunk). If the space is left blank, it is called (L) *baikou* (white mouth); if it contains a black column of varying width, it is called (M) *heikou* (black mouth). A thin line of black is called *xian heikou* (wire black mouth) or *xi heikou* (fine black mouth); a thick line of black is called *da heikou* (big black mouth) or *cu heikou* (coarse black mouth). Small segments called *yuwei* (fish tails), flat on one side and V-shaped on the other, can appear above the lower *xiangbi* and/or below the upper *xiangbi*. If left blank, they are called (N) *bai yuwei* (white fish tails), and if blank but outlined with double lines, *xian yuwei* (wire fish tails). If they are filled in with black, they are called (O) *hei yuwei* (black fish tails). Line drawing by Chartwell Illustrators

—initially as a butterfly binding, and later as a *wrapped-back binding, or a *thread binding—is always a ‘folio’ binding in Western terms. Some MS books followed this model from printed sheets, with bordered and lined stationery, but many were written on blank paper without borders or dividing lines.

Tang bibliographies in the official histories—arranged according to the quadripartite classification scheme of *jing* (classics), *shi* (histories), *zi* (philosophers), and *ji* (literature)—contain an immense variety of titles. These and many other works were available to early Song readers and scholars in the form of original and transcribed MSS. In the 11th century, after exposure to limited categories of printed books, and after laws prohibiting the private printing of certain types of book had been rescinded, the concept of printing and distributing multiple copies of all kinds of text took hold. This stimulating environment encouraged the Song polymath Shen Gua to describe in detail the mid-11th-century invention of printing with movable *type made of earthenware. He tells of a commoner named Bi Sheng, who during the Qingli reign (1041–8) made movable type of clay hardened in a

kiln. He further explains each step of setting and levelling the type, and finally of printing. It is not known whether this experimental method was used at the time, but Shen's vivid account has influenced later generations throughout east Asia.

Despite resistance from conservative scholars who feared the wide dissemination of faulty texts by private and commercial publishers, the desire for convenient and cheaper access to texts and the lure of profit from commercial publishing prevailed. Indeed, by all accounts the growth of xylographic printing, invented 300 years previously, was surprisingly rapid. A level of demand that exceeded the printed output, and the persistence of respected associations attached to MSS, meant that handwritten books continued to coexist with printed books for a long time. Nevertheless, by the end of the century the celebrated statesman and poet Su Shi, among others, commented on the prevalence of printed books in society. However, the Northern Song's violent demise has resulted in a paucity today of actual examples of secular books that circulated at the end of this dynasty.

Buddhist books from the late Northern Song have survived much better because they often were published in larger quantities, and because two voluminous Tripitaka editions were published in Fujian province in the south of China, where the woodblocks were stored for continual use. The first, called the *Chongning Tripitaka*, was begun at the Dongchansi Temple near Fuzhou around 1080, and the second one, known as the *Pilu Tripitaka*, commenced publication at the Kaiyuansi Temple, also in Fuzhou, about three decades later. When completed, each of these Tripitaka editions contained c.6,000 volumes in pleated binding form, and nearly complete sets and many individual volumes are held by major libraries. The names of patrons, block-cutters, and printers appear in most of the volumes, providing valuable material for the study of Song Buddhist books. The *Pilu Tripitaka* was not completely published until the mid-12th century, and the woodblocks for individual titles from both Tripitaka editions continued to be made available as a form of printing on demand. Unlike these institutional publications, privately published Buddhist books of the Northern Song often have splendid woodcut frontispiece illustrations. The first Daoist canon was published (1113–18) in Fuzhou at the Tianning Wanshou Temple under imperial patronage. Unfortunately, the books and woodblocks were transported to the Northern Song capital, and nothing survived its downfall.

In 1127, when Kaifeng fell to the nomadic Nüzhen, founders of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), the fleeing Chinese were not able to save many printed books. The printing history of other border states such as the Qidan-Liao (907–1125) and the Tangut-Xia (1038–1227)—as well as of the Tibetans, the Uygurs (Uighurs), and the Mongols, all of whom were interactive contemporary with Song China—needs to be included in any comprehensive understanding of Chinese book culture spanning the period from late Tang to Yuan (1279–1368). Among these peoples there survive unique Chinese texts and editions of books imported to those regions from China proper, but no longer extant in China itself. The influence of Chinese printing technology is apparent; indeed, the Uygurs and the Tangut made early use of movable-type technology. In the cases of the Qidan (Khitan), the Tangut, and the Nüzhen (Jurchen), the influence of Chinese institutions and their need to deal directly with China led all of them to publish Chinese-language educational and Confucian texts. More importantly, however, they had a great need for Buddhist texts, usually available in Chinese-language translations, and they reprinted many of them. The Liao and Jin editions of the Tripitaka were both based on the *Kaibao Tripitaka* and were published in scroll bindings. Among these three border groups, the Tangut presents an especially interesting case, because its population in the Xi Xia state contained few ethnic Chinese, and because a great number of its printed books exist. Unlike Dunhuang, Xi Xia imprints discovered in 1908–9 by the Russian P. K. Kozlov at Karakhoto greatly outnumber MSS. The books and documents are housed in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the works of art and cultural objects are kept in the Hermitage Museum, both in St Petersburg. After the Xi Xia state was established, it quickly created a complex system of script and, for political as well as practical reasons, published a majority of books in its own language.

The style of printing of Chinese script in the border regions depended upon whether the block-cutter was a non-Chinese native or an ethnic Chinese. In the absence of contemporary models to copy, older styles from the Tang appear in books. In addition to the use of non-Chinese languages and scripts in some of the books produced by these border-state peoples, exotic book forms also were employed. The form known in Chinese as *fanjiazhuang* (Sanskrit clamped binding) refers to *pothi* (Indian *palm-leaf MS books) imported to China through Tibet and central Asian territories. Although the horizontal orientation of the palm-leaf books was unsuited to later Chinese books, *fanjiazhuang* was used for Sanskrit and Tibetan books, whose languages were written horizontally, as well as for Mongolian books, which adapted to the form.

After the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) established its capital at Hangzhou and gained effective control of all of southern China, it maintained a century-long coexistence with the Jin dynasty in the north. In this relatively peaceful climate, the country prospered and the role of books in society reached new heights. Official publishers at the capital and in the provinces produced editions for the revived political and educational bureaucracies, as well as for the growing number of civil service examination candidates. When their efforts failed to meet demands, commercial publishers eagerly supplied the market with comparable publications. Rong Liulang (12th century) is an example of a commercial publisher who relocated from the former capital of Kaifeng to Hangzhou. The Southern Song civil service network ensured that locations of official publishing were widespread, and in each of these locations and beyond, private and commercial publishers sprang up. The expanding market for books inspired diversity. Although type design in the conventional sense was not an issue, publishers of high-quality xylographic books were sensitive to the calligraphic style of the text. In addition to models derived from the famous Tang masters, contemporary calligraphers served as scribes for texts to be engraved. Like the *kegong* (block-cutters), the scribes' names often were recorded in the books. A unique characteristic of xylographic printing is the ability to produce accurate *facsimiles of actual handwriting: this was done for prefaces contributed by famous persons. Another characteristic of Song printed books is the use of many varieties of paper, which presumably were produced near places of publication using local raw materials. The regions around Hangzhou in the east, Sichuan in the west, and Fujian in the south were recognized as the three major publishing centres. In addition to the standard classics, histories, and philosophical works produced for the educated classes, popular publications for a wider audience circulated. Literary editions enjoyed a particular vogue. Thanks to informative prefaces and printers' colophons in many Song books, the distribution of places of publication can be clearly understood, and occasionally the particular circumstances of an edition can be established.

Members of the Chen lineage, headed by *Chen Si, published books and ran bookshops in Hangzhou in the Southern Song. Some published the collections of Tang and Song poets with an elegant and distinctive style of printing; their one-line colophons advertised their addresses. An example is the 13th-century edition of the *Tang nǚlang Yu Xuanji shiji*, the collected poems of the Tang female poet Yu Xuanji, published by the Chen bookshop at the Muqin district in the capital. The last page of text and the one-line colophon are surrounded by more than 40 **ex libris* seal impressions and a couple of collectors' inscriptions. This is a vivid reminder that the proliferation of printed books in the Southern Song stimulated private book-collecting, and that later generations of Ming and Qing book-collectors prized Song editions above all else.

The 1173 edition of *Huaihai ji*, the collected writings of Qin Guan, was published at the local academy of Gaoyoujun in Yangzhou. After the preface, the itemized costs (i.e. sale price) for bound volumes is calculated in great detail:

The Gaoyoujunxue edition of *Huaihai wenji* [i.e. *Huaihai ji*] accounts for 449 woodblocks [i.e. woodblock surfaces, since blocks usually were cut on both sides], which together with blank leaves and endpapers uses altogether 500 sheets of paper. *Sansheng* paper at 20 cash per sheet is 10 strings of cash; *xinguan* paper at 10 cash per sheet is 5 strings of cash; *zhuxia* paper at 5 cash per sheet is 2 strings and 500 cash; ink at 1 cash per woodblock is 500 cash; the binding of 10 volumes with dark blue paper at 70 cash per volume is 700 cash; and the fee for labour and materials is 500 cash. (Nihon Shoshi Gakkai, pl. 38)

The currency cited is the familiar Chinese round coin with a central square hole, commonly called 'cash'. A thousand coins can be strung together as a 'string of cash'. The names of the block-cutters responsible are engraved throughout the book.

Under the great Khubilai Khan, the Mongol-Yuan dynasty was exceptional in thoroughness of its conquest of China; nevertheless, it can be said to have inherited the Song Chinese publishing tradition and other institutions intact. Official government publications were issued from the new capital, Dadu (Beijing), and official editions, as well as many Buddhist books, were printed from existing Song woodblocks in the former Song capital, Hangzhou. Private publishers and academies throughout the empire were also very active. The improvement of transportation networks and the growth of commercial publishing—particularly in Fujian province—resulted in the increased use of cheap bamboo paper, which came to characterize inferior popular printing in later periods. The publishers of Jianyang in northern Fujian developed now familiar *formats such as *shangtu xiawen* (picture above, text below), in which continuous woodcut illustration ran across the top of the pages, with text placed underneath. They also produced many medical books, popular *encyclopaedias, and works of fiction and drama. The travels of Marco Polo included the first decade of the Yuan dynasty, and his book was among the earliest to report on China to the West. Strangely, however, despite his visits to the publishing centres of Hangzhou and Fujian, he failed to mention the existence of printed books in China long before their appearance in Europe.

In the realm of books, one of the outstanding achievements of the Yuan period was the earliest use of two-colour printing. The Buddhist text of the Diamond Sutra with commentary, published in 1341 at the Zifusi Buddhist Temple in Huguang (Hubei province), has a main text of large characters printed in red with a commentary of smaller characters printed in black. The work also contains a two-colour woodcut which demonstrates good registration (see REGISTER (2)). This magnificent publication was produced more than 250 years before the wave of two-colour printing in the late Ming.

Influenced by Bi Sheng's invention, at the end of the 13th century a Yuan man named Wang Zhen carved more than 60,000 pieces of *wood type for printing projects in Anhui province. His detailed description of the type and his method for printing are all that survive: when he published his major work, the *Nongshu* (Book of Agriculture), in 1313, he used xylography. This choice suggests the difficulty private or commercial enterprises had in using native typography successfully to print texts in a language with many thousands of different characters. The Qing court in the 18th century, without regard for cost, produced two *founts (one bronze, the other wood), each of around 250,000 types, to execute its projects. From the end of the 15th century in China, movable-type printing was carried out on a small scale, but it never successfully challenged xylography as a viable method of printing. The principal investment of the traditional Chinese publisher was in suitable wood to be prepared as printing blocks, the commission of the calligraphic transcription of the text on to thin paper to serve as the pattern for engraving, and the necessary labour to cut the blocks. The printing of a small number of copies, *collating, and providing a temporary binding for the volumes, was often performed by the block-cutter. A small outlay for paper and ink for the initial printing was also required. As far as is known, an average initial printing was between 50 and 200 copies, and each subsequent printing may have numbered no more than that. Nevertheless, total print runs were often numbered in the thousands. In the case of certain popular books and religious publications, individual printings of 1,000 or more are not unknown. The cost of paper, ink, and labour would become an extended expense over the blocks' life. This differs from the Western publisher's need to produce the entire edition at once.

3 Ming to Qing (14th–19th centuries)

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang declared himself emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and China again reverted to native Chinese rule. The Ming capital was established at Nanjing in the south, but the Yongle emperor moved the capital to Beijing in 1420. The first decades of the new regime were rather unsettled, and private and commercial publishing fell into decline. The organs of official publishing were active, however, and the *Silijian* (Directorate of Ceremonial) took a leading role. Throughout the 15th century, the palace published lavish editions of standard works in large formats. The regional academies published the classics and educational works, and the network of princedoms set up in the early years of the Ming produced more than 500 titles. As the economy improved in the 15th century, the number of booksellers and publishers increased, and more illustrated popular literature and religious tracts, especially in the *shangtu xiawen* format, began to appear.

Imperially sponsored projects in the early Ming were conceived on a grand scale. Three Buddhist Tripitaka editions and a Daoist canon were published in the first 75 years of the dynasty. In 1403 the Yongle emperor initiated his most famous enterprise, the *Yongle dadian*. It was a huge MS compilation ordered as a classified encyclopaedia of extant knowledge, based on citations culled from 8,000 works. It was arranged in 22,877 *juan* (the chapter-like division of traditional books) and bound in more than 11,095 *folio-size* volumes. Nearly 3,000 scholars and scribes worked full-time to complete the compilation in five years. Printing a work of this size was out of the question, so the encyclopaedia had to be consulted in the imperial library. After centuries of attrition and misfortune, less than 10 per cent of the original exists today. The largest parts are held by the National Library of *China*, the Library of *Congress*, the *Tōyō Bunko*, and the British Library.

By the Jiajing period (1522–66), a significant change had taken place and book-collectors, as well as private and commercial publishers, were laying a foundation for the flourishing of publishing that would occur toward the end of the Ming period. The oldest surviving private library in China was founded in Ningbo in 1561 by Fan Qin, a retired official. The library is called *Tianyige*, and in time it came to symbolize the ideal private library. The Jiajing era also witnessed increased official publishing, including the activities of the Southern Academy in Nanjing. Jianyang commercial publishers increased their output, and private publishers in the Jiangnan area of central China began producing editions of the highest quality, especially facsimiles based on Song and Yuan editions. Superior editions of the Jiajing period have always been in great demand. The modern Nanjing book-collector Deng Bangshu went so far as to collect 100 Jiajing editions and provide them with a room of their own in his library. He designated the room as *Baijingzhai* (studio of 100 Jiajing editions), and ordered a special *ex libris* seal to be stamped in each of them.

Beginning in the Wanli reign (1573–1620), improved economic and social conditions, and increased numbers of candidates sitting imperial examinations, led to an unprecedented offering of books that reached readers across a broad spectrum. Two examples embody this 16th-century trend. First, the *Xuanhe bogu tulu*, a magnificent illustrated catalogue of the Northern Song imperial collection of bronze vessels, was published in the 14th century; in the Jiajing period, a full-size facsimile edition appeared in 1528. In the Wanli period no fewer than five new editions, all illustrated, were published in 1588, 1596, 1599, 1600, and 1603. Secondly, the collected works, entitled *Cangming ji*, of Li Panlong, an official and writer whose poems and essays were greatly admired after his death in 1570, were published in at least ten different editions between 1572 and the early 17th century. A collection of his poetry, published earlier, had at least four editions. Copies of *Cangming ji* also circulated in Korea and Japan, where selections were published.

The period also witnessed the introduction and spread of two important developments in Ming printing: books illustrated with woodcuts and books printed in colour. Suddenly, all China's major works of fiction and drama were available in illustrated editions, and even picture books with minimal text appeared. Polychrome printed books fell into two categories: pictorial and textual. The total colours used on a page or leaf ranged from two to five or six, including black (ink) as one of them. Polychrome textual printing seems to have been limited to the *taoban yinfa* (multi-block) technique, although the 14th-century Diamond Sutra, already described, used the

more primitive *shuangyinfa* (double-impression) technique. From around 1615, two lineages (Min and Ling) in Wuxing (Huzhou) published most of these books, in which the main text was printed in black, and punctuation and facsimiles of handwritten annotations and other text appeared in red, blue, and occasionally in one or two additional colours. Fine white paper was used, and these books were undeniably elegant. Polychrome pictorial prints consisted of prints that attempted to imitate the appearance of colourful hand-painted pictures with little or no outlining, as well as narrative pictures with outlined figures containing colours.

A sub-genre of two-colour textual printing is the *yinpu* (seal book), which began to be published in the early Wanli period. Seal books contain collections of seal impressions printed in red, either impressed from actual seals using cinnabar paste or printed in red xylographically, accompanied by seal texts and minimal explanations printed in black. Such books containing the seals of one person or family may be compared with Western books of *heraldry. Collections of ancient seal inscriptions suited the growth of epigraphical studies in the Qing. All editions with actual seal impressions were extremely limited.

The best-known of the pictorial books is the *Shizhuzhai shuhuapu* (Ten Bamboo Studio Manual of Calligraphy and Painting), published by *Hu Zhengyan from 1633 to 1644, although work may have begun earlier. It took more than a decade to complete and employed the refined *douban yinfa* (assembled-block) technique. His *Shizhuzhai jianpu* (Ten Bamboo Studio Collection of Letter Paper) of 1644 moreover used the *gonghuafa* (blind-printing) technique that produced exquisite small units of embossed surface. Other examples of pictorial colour printing are exceedingly rare; arguably the finest instance—the unique illustrations for the Yuan drama *Xixiang ji* (Tale of the West Chamber) in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne—was published in 1640 by *Min Qiji, the doyen of the Min printers in Wuxing. The recent rediscovery of the Shibui collection of late Ming polychrome editions of erotic picture books will require a reassessment of early colour printing and of the role of *pornography in late Ming society—a role which previously was limited to critical accounts of published pornographic fiction.

The renowned Italian Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci was involved with the earliest polychrome printing of the *Cheng shi moyuan*, a compilation of decorative designs for Chinese moulded ink sticks, published in 1606. The work contains essays and encomiums, including one by Ricci accompanied by his original phonetic transcription—the first published attempt to romanize Chinese. It is likely that Ricci had met the compiler, Cheng Dayue, in Nanjing, and given him original engravings that were copied into *Cheng shi moyuan* as woodcut facsimiles—the first examples of Western graphics to appear in a Chinese publication. Three images were from *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* by the Jesuit Gerónimo Nadal, and the fourth was an image of the Madonna and Child produced in Japan in 1597 after a Spanish prototype. In a small number of copies of *Cheng shi moyuan*, Cheng Dayue experimented with the *duoyinfa* (multiple-impression) technique to produce polychrome woodcuts; however, the Western ones from Ricci were printed in black only. Beginning with Ricci, a succession of talented Jesuits in China published books in Chinese until their presence was banned in 1724 (see 9). These books included works on theology, geography, history, science, and mathematics. Works such as *Zhifang waiji*, a geography of the world with six folding maps, compiled and translated into Chinese by Giulio Aleni and others and published in Hangzhou in 1623, had a profound effect on the Chinese intellectual class. This publication was the first of its kind in Chinese, and was intended to explain some of the new concepts of cartography and geography introduced by Ricci a couple of decades earlier.

Publishing in the last four decades of the Ming became frenetic. Besides new editions of the classics and standard titles, often hastily edited in the rush to market, dictionaries, primers, *textbooks, *anthologies, practical handbooks, medical texts, travel *guidebooks, artisan *pattern books, *novels, and *plays circulated. Unauthorized editions, *plagiarized prefaces, and *pirated contents were not uncommon. The growth of titles and subject-matter in this competitive commercial environment encouraged new forms of *advertising. Most commercial editions included a separate leaf called *fengmianye* (cover page), folded and printed on one side and attached to the uppermost bound volume of a work. It resembled a Western *title-page, and likewise

seems to have evolved from the printer's colophon. These cover pages—used since the late 13th century, following the introduction of the wrapped-back binding, but especially popular at the end of the Ming—commonly included the title, author's name, publisher's name, and occasionally a date and a brief statement about the book and its contents. The cover page was fundamentally a commercial advertisement with appended statements by the publisher, and many were bound into the books, preserving their valuable data. The cover page sometimes contained a hand-stamped price or a distinctive seal impression meant as a trademark, and it was common to print pseudo-*copyright statements such as *fanke bijiu* ('unauthorized reprints will be investigated'), which were utterly ineffectual. However, it all ended unceremoniously for the most speculative publishers in 1644, when Li Zicheng entered Beijing and the Manchus began their conquest of the entire country.

The first years of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) included aggressive efforts to stabilize the country: official publishing consisted mostly of moralistic tracts emphasizing the new Manchu rulers' commitment to traditional Confucian values. Scholarly publishers such as *Mao Jin continued into the Qing, private publishers cautiously carried out their projects, and commercial publishers tried to survive without the flamboyance they had become used to. As Chinese scholars recovered, they looked inward to try to understand the sources of this transformation of power. At the same time, the Manchu ruling class, recognized for its grasp of military matters (*wu*), was eager to demonstrate its support for civil affairs (*wen*) through promotion of literate culture. During the Kangxi emperor's reign (1662–1722), ambitious scholarly publications were initiated, and the *Wuyingdian hall within the Forbidden City was established as the central office for palace publications.

The Kangxi emperor took particular pride in publication of the *Quan Tang Shi* (Complete Poetry of the Tang Dynasty) in 900 *juan* in 1707, which he had commissioned through Cao Yin, head of the salt monopoly at Yangzhou. Over the next decade the palace published two new, classified encyclopaedias plus the eponymous *Kangxi zidian* (Kangxi Dictionary) in 40 volumes. The emperor also ordered the missionary Matteo Ripa to produce the first copperplate prints in China. Completed in 1713 and based on a suite of woodcuts published by the Wuyingdian, 'Thirty-six Views of the Jehol Imperial Gardens' appears to have used both *etching and *engraving. The greatest enterprise sponsored by the emperor, however, was not completed until four years after his death in 1726. The *Qinding Gujin tushu jicheng* is an enormous classified encyclopaedia of 10,000 *juan*, bound in 5,000 volumes. It is the largest printed book of its kind produced in China; only the MS *Yongle dadian* is bigger. What is most remarkable is that the work was printed from a fount of 250,000 bronze types and is profusely illustrated with woodcut illustrations. Whether these types were cut by hand or cast at the Wuyingdian is still debated. During the emperor's lifetime, the palace also published his collected writings and a large illustrated work commemorating his 60th birthday celebrations in Beijing in 1713.

Later in the 18th century, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) continued this form of imperial patronage and published even more works, including the *Shisanjing zhushu* (Thirteen Classics) from 1739 to 1747 in 115 volumes and the *Ershisi shi* (Twenty-four Dynastic Histories) from 1739 to 1784 in 722 volumes. The MS compilation called *Siku quanshu* (Complete Library of the Four Treasuries) was unquestionably his greatest achievement. Thousands of works from all over the country were sent to an editorial committee in Beijing for consideration. The emperor's aim was not merely to preserve important extant texts by copying; he wanted to exercise the power of *censorship through the committee's review, and lists of proscribed books were issued. The Manchus feared sedition among the majority Chinese population, and they opposed moral turpitude of the sort that was perceived to have led to the fall of the Ming. Names of authors considered critical of Manchu rule were to be deleted from books, and their books and woodblocks were to be burned (see BOOK BURNING). In the end, 3,461 titles were selected for inclusion in the *Siku quanshu*, and 6,793 were merely reviewed. Editing and transcription took place between 1773 and 1782. Seven identical MS sets of c.36,000 volumes each were produced between 1782 and 1787. The complete bibliographical descriptions for these 10,254 titles were published by the Wuyingdian as the *Qinding siku quanshu zongmu* (Imperially Authorized Annotated Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries), which is still one of the most important Chinese descriptive

bibliographies. Another by-product of these activities was the printing of 134 significant titles from the *Siku quanshu*. In 1773 the superintendent of the Wuyingdian, Jin Jian, was appointed to undertake the project. In a persuasive proposal to the throne, which was followed by publication of an illustrated handbook describing the process, Jin recommended that the entire collection, to be named the *Wuyingdian juzhenbanshu*, be printed from wooden types. After the emperor's approval, 253,500 types had to be cut by hand, and the printing of all 134 titles, numbering over 800 volumes, lasted from 1774 to 1794.

The Qianlong emperor's expansion of the palace rare book collections coincided with great interest in book-collecting in society at large. Encouraged by the palace publication projects, many of whose titles were reprinted in the provinces, and buoyed by the improved economy, an upsurge of private and commercial publishing took place in the 18th century, despite threats of censorship emanating from the Qing court. Civil service officials posted throughout the empire were very active, printing local histories and a variety of scholarly works. The Qing period was also noteworthy for the widespread publication of genealogies using native typography. Early in the 19th century, scholars and book-collectors, inspired by the likes of *Huang Pilie and Gu Guangqi, produced numerous bibliographical works and published facsimile reprints of Song and Yuan editions.

The 19th century witnessed the beginning of the end of the dominance of xylography in the history of book and print culture in China. Nevertheless, certain events conspired to prolong that demise. In the West, the year 1800 is a convenient (if approximate) date to divide the era of hand printing from the age of machine printing; in China, the corresponding dividing line would be nearly a century later.

By the end of the 1830s, high-quality private publishing began to decline, probably owing to economic downturns and the foreign incursions leading up to the Opium Wars, and followed by the Taiping Rebellion. The Taiping armies left a swathe of destruction across central and southern China in the 1850s. Book collections were destroyed and book production was interrupted for more than a decade. In the wake of the disaster, voluminous reprint collections of new xylographic editions of standard texts were commissioned to replace the losses. A new demand for printed matter came from Protestant missionaries, and although they promoted letterpress printing, they also turned to xylography as a practical and economic means of producing some of their texts. It was not until the end of the 19th century that alternative technologies such as *lithography and Western-style movable-type printing began to compete successfully with xylography. As the dynasty declined, their use increased, including reprints of the huge reference work *Qinding Gujin tushu jicheng*. The *Shenbaoguan in Shanghai printed a small-format edition with lead type (1884–8), and an official agency, the Zongli Yamen, published a full-size lithographic reprint, printed by *Tongwen Shuju (1895–8). These two reprints were in thread binding, but at the turn of the century Western-style bindings began to appear and would soon become the norm. The century, and before long the dynasty, ended amid an outpouring of publications, new in form and content. Journalism, especially pictorial journals and serial fiction, attracted a wide audience. New publishers using lithography and Western-style movable type sprang up everywhere, but especially in Shanghai.

4 The 20th century

The future course of books and publishing in 20th-century China was set in 1897 with the founding of *Shangwu Yinshuguan (Commercial Press) in Shanghai. After the abolition of the imperial examinations in 1905, traditionally educated scholars such as Zhang Yuanji (1867–1959) encouraged the publishing of new Western-style textbooks, from which the Commercial Press first gained its reputation. The *Zhonghua Shuju, founded in Shanghai in 1912, would become its leading competitor. The first decade of the 20th century also saw the birth of modern libraries in China. Academic and public libraries such as the *Peking University Library, the *Nanjing Library, and the National Library of China were founded then. The New Library Movement was linked to

educational reform and was inspired by the American model. By 1925 the Library Association of China was established, with the reformer Liang Qichao as chairman and *Yuan Tung-li as secretary. In 1927 the new organization became a founding member of the *International Federation of Library Associations.

Increased political activities after the republican revolution of 1911 greatly stimulated the periodical press. *Qingnian zazhi* (Youth Magazine), also titled *La Jeunesse*, was established by Chen Duxiu in 1915 in Shanghai,



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The inaugural issue of *Qingnian zazhi* (Youth Magazine) or *La Jeunesse* (September 1915). Private collection

where it was published by Qunyi Shushe with support from *Yadong Tushuguan. In 1916 the title was changed to *Xin qingnian* (New Youth). The New Culture Movement that followed spawned countless books and periodicals. For the first half of the 20th century, revolution, foreign invasion, and civil war precluded publishing's peaceful development. Publishers changed names and locations, property was destroyed, and writers used many *pseudonyms under threats of censorship and imprisonment. Yet the book survived and flourished.

After 1949, the new Communist government merged and nationalized the publishing industry and book trade. Most of these activities were organized by the distributor *Xinhua Shudian. In the 1950s, important publishing projects benefited from government subsidies and from a large pool of talented writers and editors. At the same time, major publishing houses such as Shangwu Yinshuguan and Zhonghua Shuju, as well as the Nationalist government publisher *Zhengzhong Shuju, were replicated and set up in exile in Taiwan by former managers and editors who had fled the mainland. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) publishing and bookselling in China came to a standstill; but since then they have re-emerged very strongly, and the antiquarian book trade has been aided by a vibrant *book auction market. Since 1949, woodblock printing has been extolled as an important Chinese invention and national cultural asset. This historical turn has resulted in the preservation of existing collections of woodblocks and the maintenance of skills such as papermaking, calligraphic transcription, block-cutting, hand printing, and traditional binding.

Like other countries, China has been profoundly affected by the digital revolution. The automation of data brought about by the introduction of computers was first applied to cataloguing and indexing books— catalogues of individual libraries developed into electronic databases. The *digitization of texts in China has

grown exponentially in recent years without reducing the growth of new print publications, and the natural division between modern books and ancient texts has not disappeared. The digitization of new books, of course, is merely a new form of publication, and the digitization of current publications is fraught with legal issues of copyright. On the other hand, the digitization of ancient books and MSS not only provides access to their texts but is closely related to issues of preservation. The future of Chinese digital books and virtual libraries is as unpredictable as the technology that underlies them.

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