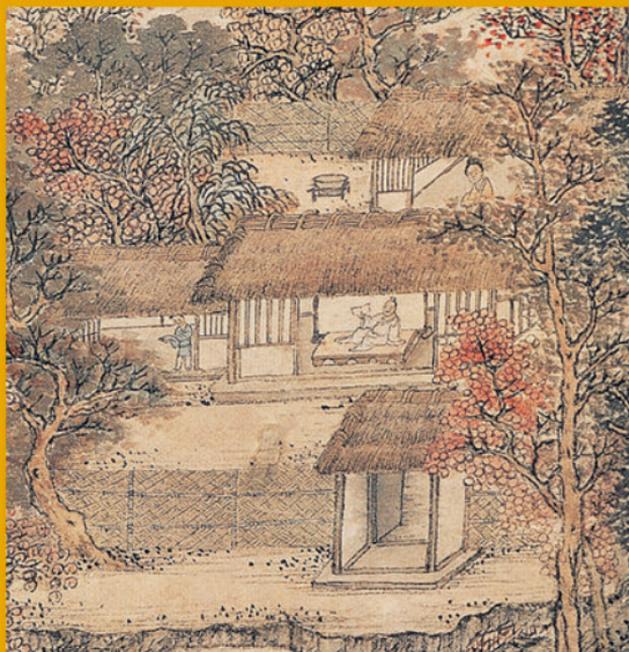


Knowledge and Text Production  
in an Age of Print:  
China, 900-1400

*Edited by*

Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerd



BRILL

Knowledge and Text Production in an  
Age of Print: China, 900–1400

# Sinica Leidensia

*Edited by*

Barend J. ter Haar  
Maghiel van Crevel

*In co-operation with*

P.K. Bol, D.R. Knechtges, E.S. Rawski,  
W.L. Idema, H.T. Zurndorfer

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*On the cover:* Cottage on an autumnal hill 秋山草堂圖 (detail). Ink on paper hanging scroll by Wang Meng 王蒙 during the Yuan Dynasty. Courtesy, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Republic of China.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The essays in this volume come mostly out of the conference, “First Impressions: The Cultural History of Print in Imperial China (8th–14th centuries),” that took place at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University, June 25–27, 2007. It was preceded by a workshop organized at the Fairbank Center in 2005 by Hilde De Weerd and Joe Dennis and attended by several of the participants at the “First Impressions” conference. At this earlier meeting it became clear that for the many issues which arise when dealing with early Chinese written culture in the earliest centuries of printing, further research was both feasible and necessary. Thus it was decided that a further conference should be convened, where scholars who had been thinking long and hard about the transmission of knowledge in books and other media could present some of their latest findings.

The success of the conference was due in great part to the enthusiasm and hard work of the paper presenters, who demonstrated their formidable knowledge and understanding of how the Chinese transmitted, transformed, and even effaced knowledge in manuscript and print, as well as other media. We were also very fortunate in having three discussants who provided, sometimes at very short notice, incisive and detailed comments and suggestions on how we could improve our own papers by sharpening our arguments and broadening our thinking on Chinese recorded culture. Ann Blair, whose own work focuses on early modern European cultural and intellectual history, provided valuable insights that helped us better understand the differences and similarities, sometimes unexpected, between Western Europe and China in the periods when each was incorporating print into its repertoire of tools for transmitting knowledge. Peter Bol’s deep knowledge of and passion for literati culture helped us understand the transformations of knowledge addressed in this volume, and he offered trenchant comments on what the papers had done well and what they had missed. Cynthia Brokaw’s own research on book culture and the book trade in late imperial China, as well as the volume on Chinese book culture and print in late imperial China that she co-edited, made her a valuable discussant. We are especially grateful for her concluding comments, which have greatly helped us in the shaping of this

volume. During the three days of the conference, the participants were saved from any sense of insularity by the participation of a keen and interested audience, members of which were quite happy to contribute to the general discussion. In addition to the essays in this volume, five other papers were given at the conference. We thank these authors, whose works have stimulated our thinking as we revised our own papers in this volume. The editorial work of Caroline Mason was invaluable in bringing this volume into being.

We gratefully acknowledge funding from the American Council of Learned Societies with the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities that made the conference possible. We also wish to thank the Fairbank Center for hosting the conference and the staff for their administrative support. Wilt Idema and Peter Bol generously agreed to be the Harvard faculty sponsors.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- CSJC-CB *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935–37. Reprint. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991.
- CSJC-JB *Congshu jicheng jianbian* 叢書集成簡編. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965–66.
- CSJC-XB *Congshu jicheng xinbian* 叢書集成新編. Taipei: Xin Wenfeng, 1985.
- QSW *Quan Song wen* 全宋文. Zeng Zaozhuang 曾枣庄 and Liu Lin 劉琳, eds. 360 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2006.
- SBCK *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1919–36.
- SBCK-CB *Sibu congkan chubian* 四部叢刊初編. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935–37. Reprint. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991.
- SBCK-ZB *Sibu congkan zhengbian* 四部叢刊正編. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1979.
- SD *Song dazhaoling ji* 宋大詔令集. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- SGZ *Sanguozhi* 三國志
- SHY *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿. See Works Cited for editions used.
- SKQS *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書. Reprint. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983.
- SKQSCM *Siku Quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書. Tainan xian Liuying xiang: Zhuangyan wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 1996.
- SKQSZB-CJ *Siku quanshu zhenben chuji* 四庫全書珍本初集. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1934–35. Reprint. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1969–70.
- SKQSZB-EJ *Siku quanshu zhenben erji* 四庫全書珍本二集. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1971.
- SRZJ Chang, Bide 昌彼得 et al., comp. *Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 宋人傳記資料索引. 6 vols. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1974–76.

- SRZJBB *Songren zhuanji ziliao suoyin bubian* 宋人傳記資料索引補編. 3 vols. Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 1994.
- SS *Song shi* 宋史. See Works Cited for editions used.
- SYFZ *Song-Yuan fangzhi congkan* 宋元方志叢刊. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990. Reprint. 2006.
- T *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–35.
- TYG *Tianyige cang Mingdai fangzhi xuan kan* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji shudian, 1981–82.
- Xu Changbian* Li Tao 李燾. *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑. See Works Cited for editions used.
- ZBT *Zhongguo banke tulu* 中國版刻圖錄. Beijing tushuguan ed. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1960.

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

*Ann Blair* is Professor of History at Harvard University.

*Lucille Chia* is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Riverside.

*Joseph Dennis* is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

*Hilde De Weerd* is University Lecturer in Chinese History, the University of Oxford and Fellow of Pembroke College.

*Ronald Egan* is Professor of Chinese, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.

*Charles Hartman* is Professor of East Asian Studies, The University at Albany, State University of New York.

*TJ Hinrichs* is Assistant Professor of History, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

*Shih-shan Susan Huang* is Assistant Professor of Art History, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

*Joseph P. McDermott* is Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University Cambridge and Fellow of St. John's College.

*Anne E. McLaren* is Associate Professor, Asia Institute, The University of Melbourne, Victoria.



## INTRODUCTION

*Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerd*

### I. IN SEARCH OF THE EARLIEST HISTORY OF PRINTING

When we first planned the conference that gave rise to this volume, one goal was to address the impact of woodblock printing (xylography) on Chinese recorded culture from the tenth through the fourteenth centuries. As the conference proceeded, however, we quickly realized that thinking of the printing block as an agent of change was only one of many ways to help us comprehend the shifts in transmitting and transforming knowledge for the first several centuries when this technology was in use. Printing was not merely added to the available media—manuscript on paper, inscriptions on stone, paintings, among others—but also changed the relationships among these media. This first “golden age” of print in China, which began in the tenth century, was long in coming. By the beginning of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), woodblock printing had already been in use for two and a half centuries or more, not only in China, but also for nearly as long in the other parts of East Asia heavily influenced by Chinese culture—Korea and Japan. By the end of the Song Dynasty, the Chinese had been printing books and other materials for nearly as long as Western Europe from the time of Gutenberg to the present. Thus, as rich and varied as the materials presented in the nine essays of this volume, they represent neither the first nor the last word on how printing helped bring about important new dimensions of book culture in China during these five centuries. We hope, however, that readers of the volume will be inspired to think further on the questions raised and expand upon the research done.

In the first part of this introduction, we reflect on the earliest part of the story of Chinese printing, not to repeat what has been written on the subject,<sup>1</sup> but to help us better understand the dramatic quantitative

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the well-known older works (Carter, *Invention of Printing*, and Pelliot, *Débuts de l'Imprimerie*), somewhat more recent discussions (sections in Tsiensien, *Paper and Printing* and in Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo yinshua shi*), as well as other

and qualitative changes in the history of books that occurred from the Song onward.

The difficulties in studying printing in pre-Song China lie not just in the relative scarcity of extant sources but also in the limited range of these materials, whether religious or secular. Thus, through the end of the Tang Dynasty (618–906), we have short Buddhist dharani sutras, a few longer sutras or portions thereof, and a variety of privately printed materials, but nothing published by the state. Information about these works comes from the extant imprints themselves, manuscript texts copied from printed versions, and occasional references to them in other writings. For the surviving works or their remnants, we have been mostly dependent on archaeological finds. These discoveries consist mainly of Buddhist materials, since many of the other kinds of works listed above were useful references that would be well-read and thumbed until worn out and discarded, rather than buried in a Buddhist stupa or in a tomb.<sup>2</sup> That is, the survival pattern probably does not accurately reflect the quantitative distribution of what had actually been printed—a problem common throughout the world for all but recent times. It is even more difficult to estimate the scale of printing of these popular, ordinary books and booklets sold in the market. Indeed, our knowledge about such imprints comes as much or more from the writings of government officials who disapproved of the sale of privately printed calendars, imperial decrees prohibiting these calendars, and descriptions of the poor print quality of the items on sale.<sup>3</sup>

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works (Drège, *Les bibliothèques en Chine*, “Des effets de l’imprimerie,” “Du rouleau manuscrit,” “La lecture et l’écriture”; Su Bai, *Tang-Song shiqi de diaoban yinshua*; Cao Zhi, *Zhongguo yinshua shu*; and Seo, “The Printing Industry in Chang’an”) have added to our still scanty knowledge about the earliest history of printing in China. Moreover, this essay owes much to Timothy H. Barrett’s research on this topic, presented in many articles, including one for this conference, as well as his recent book, *The Woman Who Discovered Printing*.

<sup>2</sup> See Seo, “Printing Industry” for a recent tabulation of the known imprints from China, Korea, and Japan from the eighth century through the end of the Tang in the early tenth century (pp. 30–32) and secondary works on these materials.

<sup>3</sup> In 835, Feng Su 馮宿 (767–836), a military commissioner in Sichuan, memorialized that privately printed calendars were being sold even before the official one issued by the government’s Astronomy Bureau and that this was to be prohibited. See, e.g., Pelliot, *Débuts*, 33–34; Tsien, *Paper and Printing*, 151. In the same year, Emperor Wenzong 文宗 decreed that the provincial authorities should forbid the carving of woodblocks for such works (Seo, “Printing Industry,” 14). Nearly fifty years later, in 883, again in Sichuan, another Tang official, Liu Pian 柳玘, reported seeing poorly

Nevertheless, assuming that these known printed materials indicate the range if not an accurate distribution of what was printed, then we may also ask why it was that for two hundred and fifty years or longer, other kinds of works were *not* printed. As scholars have shown, representatives of the state in the Tang and Five Dynasties (907–59) were clearly cognizant of print technology, even if most individual rulers evinced no great enthusiasm for utilizing it. Even the one notable exception is based on plausible circumstantial evidence rather than hard proof—the case of Empress Wu 武 (r. 690–705), who may have utilized blockprinting to replicate a huge number of copies of a Buddhist text in imitation of the Indian ruler Ashoka’s spread of Buddhist relics throughout his kingdom.<sup>4</sup> In any case we currently still have no known samples of printed materials which can definitely be dated to eighth-century China. In fact, it is not until the tenth century, after the end of the Tang, when we encounter evidence of printed works sponsored by, or at least favored or permitted by the state (see below).

From the ninth century, we have at least some surviving Buddhist printed materials—the short dharani sutras that have survived their centuries-long burial in stupas and tombs, and usually even shorter talismanic texts buried in tombs, as well as the complete *Diamond Sutra* printed in 868.<sup>5</sup> Then why, given the various ways Buddhists used printing, did they not print the entire Canon? Collections of Buddhist

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blockprinted character books, divination works, and other imprints on sale (Pelliot, *Débuts*, 37–41; Tsien, *Paper and Printing*, 151–52).

<sup>4</sup> In *The Woman Who Discovered Printing* (ch. 6, esp. 89–90), Barrett provides a credible scenario but no hard evidence that Empress Wu actually fulfilled her vow to disseminate over eight million short sutras or that these copies were blockprinted, since such a huge number may have taxed even the efforts of the many scribes available to the court, especially if the copies had to be made quickly. Barrett further argues that the text was the dharani sutra *Wugou jing guang da tuoluoni jing* 無垢淨光大陀羅尼經, the same text as that printed between 705–51 and found in a stupa in the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Pulguk-sa 佛國寺 in Kyongju 慶州, Korea. Somewhat later (ca. 770), blockprinted excerpts from the same text copies (supposedly a million) were made and distributed by Empress Shōtoko 稱徳天皇 of Japan to temples around the country. That the Korean and Japanese texts both contain special characters used under Empress Wu would bolster Barrett’s argument about the latter’s use of blockprinting to replicate a Buddhist text. Finally, Barrett feels that the Tang Dynasty after Empress Wu interrupted it, “apparently turned away from printing from 706 till its demise in 907” (p. 135). For the Korean and Japanese examples, see Tsien, *Paper and Printing*, 149–51.

<sup>5</sup> This entire scroll of the *Diamond Sutra* can be seen at the International Dunhuang Project’s website: [http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo\\_scroll\\_h.a4d?uid=9671877789;bst=1;recnum=18824;index=1](http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=9671877789;bst=1;recnum=18824;index=1).