

CYNTHIA BROKAW and CHRISTOPHER A. REED (eds):

From Woodblock Prints to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008.

(Sinica Leidensa.) xiii, 440 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010. €130. ISBN 978 90 04 18527 2.

LUCILLE CHIA and HILDE DE WEERDT (eds):

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

(Sinica Leidensa.) xv, 430 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011. €130. ISBN 978 90 04 19228 7.

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These volumes, the results of conferences in 2004 and 2007, are major contributions to scholarship and interpretative discussion on the history of publishing and print culture in China and very useful resources for anyone seeking to engage in comparative discussion of the global histories of printing and publishing. All four of the editors and most of the other authors have already made major contributions to the field.

Reed's very smart introduction to the volume edited by Brokaw and Reed includes discussions of new technology and of the changing roles of the marketplace and of political actors. Here and in the essays that follow it is not always clear how much the detail on publishing sheds new light on wider cultural and political changes. Many of these themes will intrigue scholars in other fields. Cynthia Brokaw's "Commercial woodblock publishing in the Qing (1644–1911)" builds on her breakthrough book *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge MA and London, 2007) to show, roughly in line with a growing interpretative trend in the history of printing and publishing in Europe, that there was no sudden break between the highly developed practice of woodblock printing that had flourished and met new demands for centuries and the new world of modern technology and organization Reed opened up for us in his *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver and Honolulu, 2004). Woodblock publishing activity had many centres, many of them quite remote from big cities and major centres of commerce; the publishers and bookstores spreading the new forms and contents, overwhelmingly concentrated in Shanghai, made use of the intricate networks of distribution already developed in the traditional trade. Promoters of the sale of modern books found that there was a continuing market in many areas for traditional texts like the *Three-Character Classic*; they were no longer of use in preparing for imperial examinations, but the language and values were familiar.

Ellen Widmer's "Modernization without mechanization" builds on her important studies of fiction around 1800 to reinforce Brokaw's picture of a long and complicated transition beginning before the Opium War; authors of works of fiction in pursuit of larger sales developed a simple and frequently dialogic style that appealed to readers outside the scholar elite, including large numbers of women. Missionaries trying to reach a broad spectrum of the Chinese public adopted some of this simple style. Joachim Kurtz's "Messenger of the sacred heart" focuses on Father Li Wenyu S.J. and his *Yiwen bao*, a judicious mixture of official edicts, news from abroad, and basic scientific and technical information, which appeared fortnightly, a total of about 1,800 issues from 1878 to 1898, and was then

continued in other forms. Printing was one of the important trades taught to boys in Catholic orphanages, which became a major source of skilled craftsmen as the industry grew.

Andrea Janku's "The uses of genres in the Chinese press" shows how the styles and genre labels of items in early newspapers echoed traditional classifications, for example in the emergence of the editorial, *she lun* as a serious and systematic statement like the *lun* of traditional scholars. Newspaper genres also owed a good deal to Meiji practice, which reformers and revolutionaries had studied in their years in Japan. Especially striking are the "short critiques of current affairs", *shi ping*, which in their brevity and vehemence remind this reader of items that draw attention in the current Chinese blogosphere. Paize Keulemans, in "Printing the sound of cosmopolitan Beijing", shows how written texts preserving the flavour of oral storytelling found ways to represent the variation of pronunciation of the characters in the story, giving voice to local dialects but at the same time demonstrating the cosmopolitan range and purity of speech of the real Beijing man. Jan Kiely, "Spreading the Dharma with the mechanized press", shows continuity and change in the oldest strand of printing in China; purchase of fine texts was an act of religious merit. The vast increase in numbers of copies made available by modern technology opened up the possibility of ordinary people, each with a copy of a simple text, improving their knowledge of Buddhism in a new form of community. Two of the very important modern Buddhist teachers gained their mass appeal only as their works appeared in print.

Ling Shiao, "Culture, commerce, and connections: the inner dynamics of new culture publishing in the post-May Fourth period", shows how the writers who shaped the radical culture of the 1920s, shunned by the big commercial publishing houses, joined with small, struggling publishing houses, publishing journals that carried only the writings of a close-knit group. Authors might agree to accept deferred payment. A publishing house might sell shares for very modest sums. Many of the great names – Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ba Jin – appear in a new light here. Robert Culp, "Reading and writing *Zhejiang Youth*", shows how the publication by provincial officials of a journal for teachers built up a sphere of professionalizing discussion about education, while a journal for students produced very energetic responses, individual school journals, and a great deal of writing by students. We see here a world of teachers and students itching for participation in public life, and assuming that participation in writing is one of the best forms, as was true from the early newspaper readers around 1900 and still is true of the blogosphere. Christopher A. Reed, "Advancing the (Gutenberg) revolution: the origins and development of Chinese print Communism, 1921–1947", presents excellent information on publishing in the turmoil of the 1920s, but the core of the story is the build-up of an effective publishing apparatus at Yan'an, a facet not only of the Party's great energy in seeking to change people's minds but also of its industrialization efforts, even a paper mill, in that remote area.

The inclusion of three essays bringing the story into the internet age was an excellent idea, but it has not been very energetically developed. It is discussed only in passing in Reed's introduction. The three essays, by Daria Berg, Guobin Yang, and Gudrun Wacker, average 22 pages, compared to 30 for the other nine. There is only passing mention of the waves of scandal and angry comment that sweep through the blogs regularly, as they did through the early newspapers in the last years of the Qing.

The contributors to the collection edited by Chia and De Weerd build on their own detailed research and that of several generations of Chinese and Japanese bibliographers to show a world in which print had many uses but remained in constant

interaction with manuscript. Details on numbers of copies, their preservation and circulation, matter a great deal. In their excellent introduction, the editors give an up-to-date account of the centuries from *c.* 700 to *c.* 950 when the Chinese had the technology of printing but seem to have made rather limited use of it. Ronald Egan, in his many-sided “To count grains of sand on the ocean floor”, shows Sima Guang and others, very much like Euro-Americans from *c.* 1550 to today, expressing both delight at the wider availability of texts and dismay at the glut of worthy and unworthy books. The introduction and Egan’s essay would have been of more use to specialists of other places and other periods if they had shown more clearly how Song imperial support of printing was part of a massive transformation of political culture as a wider elite, including many from the formerly separated southern regions, were drawn into pursuit of office through examinations and other channels.

Joseph P. McDermott, “Book collecting in Jiangxi during the Song Dynasty”, shows status-seeking local worthies buying books, including many manuscripts, on trips to the capital, and later, under the Southern Song, buying more locally. Joseph Dennis, “Early printing in China viewed from the perspective of local gazetteers”, shows that these books, expressions of local pride and key handbooks for newly arrived magistrates, began in the Song with a strong push from the government but gradually depended more on local initiatives. Woodblock printing made it very convenient to store the blocks and later add updating sections.

Shih-shan Susan Huang’s beautifully illustrated “Early Buddhist illustrated prints in Hangzhou” shows the separatist southern state of Wu Yue making the large-scale printing and distribution of Buddhist prints and printed texts an important part of its quest for legitimation, and the spread of sutra recital as part of repentance rites producing a growing market for sales of texts. Lucille Chia, “The uses of print in early Quanzhen Daoist texts”, shows how printed texts contributed to the spread of this teaching; here the centres of printing were in north China, rarely studied in this literature and under Jin and later Mongol rule after 1125.

T. J. Hinrichs’, “Governance through medical texts and the role of print” does the best job of any essay in this volume of linking specific developments to the big transformation of Song unification and the emergence of a broader elite. Printing made possible the dissemination of medical texts on a large scale. In the eleventh century, when official activism was in the air, ambitious officials might seek a good name by proposing further projects and publications. There was a special drive to persuade people of the newly reunified southern areas to consult medical texts and take well-proven drugs rather than asking a shaman to chant something over them. Hilde De Weerd, in “The cultural logics of map reading”, concentrates especially on one widely used and reprinted set of maps that met the needs of students preparing for examinations, showed historical changes and contemporary realities, and gave detailed instructions on the use of the collection.

Charles Hartman’s “Chen Jun’s *Outline and Details*” shows how summaries of Song history down to 1224 were brought together and edited by a zealous disciple of Zhu Xi in a form very convenient for the student looking for bits of morality and policy to memorize; a sample page given as an illustration contains some fervent moral simplicities that remind one of rants in very late Qing newspapers or on Sina Weibo. Anne E. McLaren, “Challenging official history in the Song and Yuan dynasties”, offers another case of the promotion through printed texts of a radically simplifying and moralizing version of history, here one that rejects Three Kingdoms Wei as a legitimate successor to Han and turns Cao Cao into a cardboard villain and Zhuge Liang into a spotless hero.

The volume concludes with a brief “Afterword: Rethinking Western printing with Chinese comparisons” by Ann Blair, a distinguished scholar of European printing and publishing. I do not detect any major rethinking of her understanding of Western printing, and in fact I doubt that any is possible without quite a lot of reading and thinking about both histories, much of it on contexts not often discussed in specialized works on printing and publishing.

The two volumes here reviewed are major contributions to our understanding of these specialized histories in China, indispensable reading not just for scholars of printing and publishing but for all students of China in their periods. Editing and scholarly apparatus are exemplary in both. I have suggested that more could have been said about wider contexts in many of the essays. Readers coming from other specialisms will see more such openings, and make these remarkable works of erudition and interpretation stepping stones to new points of view and comparisons far beyond their apparent topics.

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SEBASTIEN BILLILOUD:

Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan’s Moral Metaphysics.

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Despite the inherent complexities and difficulties, it has never ceased to be an intriguing and tantalizing task to reflect on the academic achievements of the great Confucian minds which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, among whom Mou Zongsan (1909–95) is indisputably among the outstanding figures who perpetuate Confucian tradition in the radically turbulent social context of modern China. The questions he has raised both to the Confucian tradition and to its relevance to modernity continue to inspire scholars and students in Confucian studies and beyond. Although numerous books on him have been published over the last few decades in various languages, this newly released monograph by Sebastien Billioud, with a particular focus on Mou’s moral metaphysics, has brought fresh impetus to this field and signified new scholarship in the study of Mou Zongsan, skilfully revealing the author’s own thinking and research on Confucian modernity.

Given the all-embracing nature of Mou’s system as well as his abundant intellectual output (32 volumes in total), a discerning eye is necessary to find the crux of the matter. Billioud’s preference for the subject of “moral metaphysics” has undoubtedly provided the reader with a clear entrance to the innermost part of Mou’s system – philosophical speculation and conceptual construction – and enabled us to glimpse Mou’s massive project as a whole.

The question of moral metaphysics constitutes the core of Mou’s philosophical thinking and, to a large extent, exemplifies his method and writing style. Based on his understanding of both Mou Zongsan and Kant, Billioud demonstrates that the term “moral metaphysics” in Mou’s context has an origin in Kant’s “metaphysics of morals” but evidently forms a sharp contrast to the latter. Thus an insightful thesis is put forward in this book, which can be summarized as follows: Inspired by