Kodex

Jahrbuch 6 · 2016

Transforming Book Culture in China, 1600–2016

Edited by Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella

Kodex 6 · 2016

Kodex

Jahrbuch der Internationalen
Buchwissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft

Herausgegeben von
Christine Haug und Vincent Kaufmann

6 · 2016

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Transforming Book Culture in China, 1600–2016

Edited by
Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Contents

Acknowledgements

It is a privilege and a pleasure to present cutting-edge research from across the globe on China's book culture and contributions from the publishing world in China for *Kodex 6*. We would like to express our gratitude to the *Kodex* General Editors Professors Christine Haug and Vincent Kaufmann for their support and enthusiasm. We would like to thank all the contributors for their cooperation and for making it possible to offer with this book a new roadmap to book culture in China.

We would like to thank Li Jie (*alias* Anni Baobei, or Annie Baby) and Dr Sheng Yun for their time and insights into Chinese book culture in our interviews with them; Professor Tomas Casas i Klett for advice and support during fieldwork in Shanghai; Dr Wei-hsin Lin for her invaluable contribution to the realisation of this volume in its initial stage; Caroline Mason for expert comments and skilful copy editing; Tang Sisan for editorial and secretarial support; Theresa Lang for editorial work and the reviewers of the contributions for their comments.

We are grateful to the organisers and participants of the following conferences for offering platforms for discussion and dissemination of parts of our work and for their comments and feedback: 'The Culture of Entertainment in China: Past and Present' Conference at the University of Bristol, 19–20 May 2011; 'Modes of Activism and Engagement in the Chinese Public Sphere' International Conference at the National University of Singapore, 26–27 April 2012; the XIXth Biennial Conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies at Paris University, France, 7 September 2012; 'The Future of Content is Context' Conference at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of St.Gallen, St.Gallen, Switzerland, 25–26 April 2013; the KIM (Cultures, Institutions, Markets) Lecture Series, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of St.Gallen, 21 October 2013; the XXth Biennial Conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies at Braga and Coimbra Universities, Portugal, 22–26 July 2014; 'China's Media Go Global' International Conference at the School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, Beijing, 2–3 September 2014; the Chiang Ching-kuo Lecture Series 'Interdisciplinary Explorations of China's Changing Gender Dynamics 1900–2015', jointly organized by the University of Leiden and University of St.Gallen, 11 March 2016; 'People and Cultures in Motion: Environment, Space and the Humanities', Interdisciplinary Conference at Chengchi University, Taipei, Republic of China, 11–13 March 2016; and the XXIst Biennial Conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies at St. Petersburg State University, the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS and the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, 23–28 August 2016.

Research for this project was in part supported by grants from the Swiss National Science Foundation; the Swiss Asia Society; the KIM (Cultures, Institutions, Markets) Research Project, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of St.Gallen; and the Research Committee of the University of St.Gallen. Thanks for support in many forms are also due to

Professors Ulrike Landfester, Ulrich Schmid, Alan Robinson, Dieter Thomä and Dr Otmar Schneider.

Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella
St.Gallen
16 October 2016

From the General Editors

Dear Reader,

As a Yearbook of the International Society for Book Studies (IBG), *Kodex* has pursued a dual goal for the past six years. Firstly, using interdisciplinary approaches, we have tried to situate and describe the past, present and future development of the book medium in different contexts that are relevant today. To this end, *Kodex* has addressed and discussed issues such as the digital library (*Kodex 1*), bestsellers (*Kodex 2*), the destruction of books (*Kodex 3*), plagiarism (*Kodex 4*), and the book in the Humanities (*Kodex 5*). We are delighted by the overall very positive feedback and reviews. *Kodex* has established itself as a dynamic, original publication that has succeeded in filling the gap at the intersection of Book Studies and Cultural Studies.

We would like to build on this success and ensure a more systematic implementation of the second aim of the IBG: on the one hand, the internationalisation of the research topics and discussions in the Book Studies and, on the other hand, the expansion of the range of topics discussed in *Kodex*. Hence, *Kodex* 6 focuses on the topic of book culture in China and for the first time it consists exclusively of contributions in English from China itself or by researchers active in an international academic field. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Professor Daria Berg, Chair Professor of Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen, and Dr Giorgio Strafella, Senior Research Fellow in Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen, the guest editors of *Kodex 6* which offers 'first-hand insight' into what is for us the mostly foreign but unquestionably exciting field of Chinese book culture.

We wish to continue to develop *Kodex* in this direction in the future. Beside an issue on the topic of 'censorship in democratic societies', we are already planning another issue on book culture in the Islamic cultural space which will also include contributions in English. We are hoping that you, dear reader, find this development equally exciting and that the effective internationalisation of *Kodex* meets with your approval. We thank you sincerely for your confidence.

The General Editors:
Prof. Dr. Christine Haug
Prof. Dr. Vincent Kaufmann

Vorwort der Herausgeber

Lieber *Kodex*-Leserinnen und -Leser,

Als Jahrbuch der Internationalen Buchwissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft (IBG) verfolgt *Kodex* jetzt seit sechs Jahren ein doppeltes Ziel. Erstens versuchen wir, die Entwicklungen des Mediums ›Buch‹ in verschiedenen Kontexten, in denen ein starker Aktualitätsbezug vorhanden ist, interdisziplinär zu verorten und zu beschreiben, mit Blick sowohl auf die Zukunft des Buches als auch auf seine Gegenwart sowie seine Vergangenheit. In diesem Sinne wurden in den letzten Jahren in *Kodex* Themen wie die ›Digitale Bibliothek‹ (*Kodex* 1), ›Bestseller‹ (*Kodex* 2), ›Buchvernichtung‹ (*Kodex* 3), ›Plagiat‹ (*Kodex* 4) und das ›Geisteswissenschaftliche Buch‹ (*Kodex* 5) aufgegriffen und diskutiert. Wir können uns an den insgesamt sehr positive Rückmeldungen und Rezensionen erfreuen. *Kodex* hat sich als eine dynamische, originelle Publikation etabliert, der es gelingt, eine Lücke an der Schnittstelle zwischen Buch- und Kulturwissenschaften zu schliessen.

 An diesen Erfolg möchten wir anknüpfen, um auch den zweiten Anspruch der IBG systematischer umzusetzen: einerseits die Internationalisierung der buchwissenschaftlichen Forschungsdiskussionen und andererseits die Erweiterung der in *Kodex* bearbeiteten Themenfelder. Deshalb widmet sich *Kodex* 6 dem Thema ›Buchkultur in China‹ und besteht erstmals ausschliesslich aus englischsprachigen Beiträgen, die aus China selbst stammen oder durch in einem internationalen wissenschaftlichen Feld aktiven Forschern verfasst wurden. Herausgegeben von Prof. Daria Berg und Dr. Giorgio Strafella (Lehrstuhl Chinesische Kultur, Universität St. Gallen), denen wir für ihren begeisterten Einsatz herzlich danken möchten, bietet *Kodex* 6 eine ›Ersthand-Einsicht‹ in die uns meist fremde, aber zweifelsohne spannende chinesische Buchkultur.

 Es würde uns sehr freuen, wenn wir *Kodex* in diese Richtung weiter für Sie entwickeln dürfen. Neben einer weiteren Nummer zum Thema ›Zensur in demokratisch verfassten Gesellschaften‹ planen wir auch schon eine Nummer zur ›Buchkultur im islamischen Kulturraum‹, die auch (wenigstens in Teilen) aus englischsprachigen Beiträgen bestehen wird. Wir hoffen dass auch Sie, liebe Leserinnen und Leser, diese Entwicklung spannend finden und dieser tatsächlichen Internationalisierung von *Kodex* zustimmen können. Für Ihr Vertrauen möchten wir uns herzlich bedanken.

Die Herausgeber:
Prof. Dr. Christine Haug
Prof. Dr. Vincent Kaufmann

Transforming Book Culture in China, 1600–2016:
Introduction

Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella

This volume explores the transformation of China's book culture, offering a roadmap to the world of books, literature and publishing in the country today. It sheds new light on how modern and contemporary Chinese society has produced, re-invented and valorised the book in its various printed, hand-written and electronic forms. Bringing together contributions from fourteen scholars from Greater China, Europe, the United States and Australia, this volume offers cutting-edge research on publishing, reading, collecting and selling books in China. The time frame for the present volume extends from the late Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) to the Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1911), the Republican period (1911–1949), Mao's China (1949–1976), Deng Xiaoping's era of reforms (1979–present) and the postsocialist period up until China's ongoing rise to superpower status. The essays cut across the fields of literature, history, media studies and sociology.

The term 'postsocialist' describes for our present purposes a country where 'socialist institutions such as state planning, collective work units, guaranteed job allocation, housing distribution, free healthcare, and fixed pricing have all disappeared but residual socialist mentalities, sensibilities, and hierarchies continue to impact on people's behavior'.[1] However, Party-state organs and authorities that played an all-encompassing role in book publishing and cultural production tout court during the socialist era retain significant power in post-1978 society. Party-state leaders also never ceased to 'uphold' socialist principles with regard to 'public opinion guidance' and literary writing. It is therefore worth stressing how the postsocialist condition is one of 'ideological contradiction and uncertainty' and the term itself is 'intentionally residual, since the historical situation that it is intended to capture conceptually is highly ambiguous in its characteristics'.[2]

While this volume mainly focuses on reform-era postsocialist China, it also seeks to show how contemporary phenomena are rooted in the country's history. By including contributions dealing with books, literature, print culture and the publishing industry from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, the volume aims to highlight elements of historical continuity as well as the more obvious discontinuities, to show how China's book culture has developed in a variety of genres, media and institutions.

---

1   Michel Hockx: *Internet Literature in China*. New York: Columbia University Press 2015, p. 2; see also pp. 12–18. On postsocialist Chinese culture, see also Daria Berg: A New Spectacle in China's Mediasphere. A Cultural Reading of a Web-Based Reality Show from Shanghai. *China Quarterly* 205 (2011), pp. 133–51.
2   Arif Dirlik: Postsocialism? Reflections on 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. In: Arif Dirlik, Maurice Meisner (eds): *Marxism and the Chinese Experience.* Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe 1989, p. 364.

China's Print Culture and Publishing Industry in Historical Perspective

China prides itself on being the cradle of book culture.[3] The opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics showcased China's ancient and modern achievements, including movable-type printing, and started with an act that turned the stage into a digital scroll. As the blank scroll unfolded, dancers inscribed it with calligraphy by moving their bodies like brushes. The scene combined the modern media of digital publishing, ancient Chinese art and performance art. It also conveyed a sense of continuity between antiquity and the present while pointing to the central role of books, writing and literary composition in China's cultural empire past and present.[4]

Books have played an important political, social and cultural role in Chinese culture throughout history. Chinese writings have come in the form of oracle bone inscriptions, stone inscriptions, silk scrolls, bamboo slips tied together, woodblock printing, movable-type and lead printing, handwritten manuscripts, and, most recently, digital writing including blogs, microblogs, ebooks and webzines. Handwritten pages, carved inscriptions, printed pages and webpages have functioned as the vehicles of poetry, prose and political ideas; high-brow and low-brow literature; officially sanctioned and state-promoted works of literature, history and philosophy, and also of the unofficial writings of popular and vernacular cultures.[5]

China boasts the invention of the art of paper-making as well as that of printing by means of both woodblock and movable type.[6] The First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 (r. 221-210 BCE), made it clear that he understood the power of the written word and its importance as a political tool. Ever since he allegedly burned books and buried scholars alive in 213 BCE, Chinese writers have lived with the fear or fact of censorship. The imperial court supervised official publishing, which consisted mainly of the production of officially ordained works of history and anthologies for imperial libraries. In late imperial times both the court and local officials banned certain books, yet the rise of a commercial publishing industry starting from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards rendered official prohibition ineffective.[7]

Literary composition opened the doors to the social and political elite in China from the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618) until the twentieth century. From the late sixth century until 1905—just six years before the end of imperial China—the scholar-official elite who filled the

3   Joseph P. McDermott: *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2006, p. 9.
4   On the Beijing 2008 Olympics opening ceremony, see Geremie R. Barmé: China's Flat Earth: History and 8 August 2008. *China Quarterly* 197 (2009), pp. 64–86
5   On vernacular culture, see Glen Dudbridge: *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China*. Leiden: Brill 2005; Daria Berg: *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China*. London: Routledge 2013, p. 2. See also Chapter Fourteen.
6   McDermott, *Social History*, p. 9
7   Timothy Brook: *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1998, p. 171.

ranks of the administration were mostly recruited through a three-tiered examination system (*keju* 科舉). In the examinations men could rise in the imperial meritocracy by proving their excellence in the composition of poetry, prose and philosophical debate. Literature and book culture counted among the emblems of China's scholar-official elite.[8]

Print culture in late imperial China mainly relied on the use of xylography, or woodblock printing, which had been invented and was in public use by the early eighth century.[9] The oldest surviving printed book, the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 (Diamond Sutra, Vajracchedikā), appeared in 868, predating the Gutenberg Bible (1455) by 587 years.[10] Some works, such as the Buddhist canon *Sanzang* 三藏 (Tripitaka), were also carved in stone.[11] By the eleventh century Chinese publishers were using a newly invented method—printing by movable type. Chapter Three in the present volume examines the importance of the religious and in particular Buddhist press in nineteenth and twentieth-century China.

Books traditionally belonged to the realm of men, as participating in the book culture of imperial China was one of the privileges of being a male scholar. Scholar-officials formed the 'sashed and gartered' (*shenjin* 紳衿, or *shenshi* 紳士) upper class or gentry. The way to climb 'up the ladder to the azure clouds' (*ping bu qing yun* 平步青雲) into the ruling class and the privileged circles of the gentry was through the above mentioned system of examinations.[12] In the examinations a man had the chance to display his mastery of the Chinese canon of literature, poetry and philosophy. The 'examination hell' from education to office-holding thus represented the traditional route to success in late imperial China, placing political and economic power, social influence, prestige, and cultural capital into the hands of the Chinese literati.[13] Students, aspiring scholars, active and retired officials and the literati—regardless of whether they held office or not, by virtue of their education, were among those climbing the social ladder or already within the socio-political elite of the Empire.

Women, alongside slaves and the offspring of prostitutes, were excluded from participation in the official examination system and hence from taking office.[14] Only a handful of women were educated enough to write or produce literature in traditional China. Women only began to participate in the scholar elite's literary culture in the early modern era, from the sixteenth century onwards. In the late Ming era at the turn of the seventeenth century courtesans were

---

8 See Daria Berg: Publishing Industry. In: David Pong, et al. (eds): *Encyclopedia of Modern China*. Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons 2009, pp. 220–25.

9 McDermott, *Social History*, p. 11

10 McDermott, *Social History*, p. 11.

11 Victor Mair (ed.): *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press 2001, p. 162.

12 Daria Berg: *Carnival in China: A Reading of the* Xingshi yinyuan zhuan. Leiden, Boston and Köln: E.J. Brill 2002, pp. 225–28.

13 See Berg, *Carnival*, pp. 171-224.

14 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, pp. 85–119.

among the first women to become famous as writers, poets and painters.[15] They gained prominence in the literati arts and helped shape cultural ideals. Famous courtesans formed sexual, emotional and intellectual companionships with elite men, sharing their interest in learning and helping out in the scholar's studio by composing poetry as well as by compiling, collating, editing, proofreading and annotating literary works.[16] Elite women only emerged in larger numbers as readers and writers, i.e. as producers and consumers of culture, at the end of the seventeenth century.[17]

Writing women with male-level literacy made up only a tiny percentage of the population at the end of the Ming dynasty—probably even less than the one to five per cent estimated for the late Qing or the nineteenth century.[18] The names of only around 250 women authors—including both courtesans and upper-class women—have come down to us from the late Ming years.[19] In the late Qing about thirty to forty-five per cent of men and two to three per cent of women were literate; we know the names of about 3,500 women writers from that era. Although the first women rumoured to have authored fiction lived at the end of the seventeenth century[20], we have to wait until 1877 and the publication of *Hongloumeng ying* 紅樓夢影 (Shadows of Dream of the red chamber) by Gu Taiqing 顧太清 (1799–ca. 1877) to see evidence of a woman writing and publishing a novel.[21] Reading habits changed in the nineteenth century as women began to read and write fiction as well as poetry.[22]

The rise of literate women who became the new readers and writers in early modern China during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries coincided with an economic boom and the growth of the publishing industry in the prosperous Yangzi 揚子 delta region, or Jiangnan 江南 area.[23] The economic flourishing of prosperous market towns and cities increased the market for books. One may argue that a 'mass communication society' and mass print culture had already emerged during the late Ming era when commercial woodblock publishing began to flourish.[24] Individual enterprises and commercial bookstores, rather

---

15 Daria Berg: Courtesan Editor: Sexual Politics in Early Modern China. *T'oung Pao* 99:1:3 (2013), pp. 173–211; Daria Berg: Amazon, Artist, and Adventurer: A Courtesan in late Imperial China. In: Ken J. Hammond, Kristin Stapleton (eds): *The Human Tradition in Modern China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2008, pp. 15–32. Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 85-119 and pp. 193–210.

16 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 89.

17 E.g. the Banana Garden poetry club. See Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 222–43.

18 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 7.

19 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 7.

20 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 223; Ellen Widmer: *The Beauty and the Book: Women and Fiction in Nineteenth-Century China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006, p. 23.

21 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 223.

22 Berg, Publishing Industry, p. 221.

23 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 13.

24 See Ōki Yasushi 大木康: Minmatsu Kōnan ni okeru shuppan bunka no kenkyū 明末江南における 出版文化の研究. *Hiroshima daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 50:1 (1991), pp. 74–102; Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 240–41.

than official presses, gradually came to dominate the market. Nanjing 南京, Suzhou 蘇州 and Hangzhou 杭州 became the main centres of the newly established publishing industry. Technological advances and changes in the production mode, such as the simplification of fonts and the division of labour in woodblock cutting, facilitated the production and distribution of books, thus making publication faster and more economical.[25] The wealthy and powerful Huizhou 徽州 merchants readily supplied Jiangnan publishers with wood from Anhui 安徽 province to be used in the printing business.[26] The comment of the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who marvelled at the 'the exceedingly large number of books in circulation here and the ridiculously low prices at which they are sold'[27], reveals that there was a flourishing book market.

Commercial publishers began to make serious money. The owner of a publishing house in Hangzhou, Wang Qi 汪淇 (ca. 1605–after 1668), found himself in a position to offer employment to the highest degree holders, while never passing any examinations himself.[28] A relative who worked in the family publishing business described himself as 'filthy rich'.[29] These merchants succeeded in the publishing industry and became more wealthy and influential than many members of the scholar elite. Their new upward social mobility entailed a shift from the traditional social hierarchy to a new order.

Early modern China also witnessed the rise of great private library collections. Chapter One in this volume examines examples of such libraries in detail. Privately owned libraries could contain up to fifty thousand volumes (*juan* 卷).[30] Scholars competed in filling dozens of crates, or dozens of rooms with their books, listing them in multi-volume catalogues, and reissuing rare works in collectanea (*congshu* 叢書).[31]

The mass market in the seventeenth century targeted as its audience the growing urban population and unprecedented numbers of examination candidates, lower degree holders, 'failed' students, upwardly mobile merchants and literate women.[32] Private and commercial publishers catered to the needs of the market, producing anything from handbooks on literati taste and leisure pursuits, textbooks for the civil service examinations, travel guides for

---

25 Cf. Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. xxi.

26 Cf. Ōki Yasushi, Minmatsu Kōnan ni okeru shuppan bunka no kenkyū.

27 Louis Gallagher (trans.): *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci, 1583–1610*. New York: Random House 1953, p. 21; Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 169.

28 Ellen Widmer: The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56:1 (1996), pp. 77–122, esp. p. 87. Berg, Publishing Industry, p. 221.

29 Widmer, Huanduzhai, p. 91.

30 Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 169.

31 Cf. Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, pp. 167–68.

32 On publishers, see also Widmer, Huanduzhai, pp. 77–122; Ōki Yasushi 大木康: Kō botan shikai: Minmatsu Shinsho Kōnan bunjin tembyō 黄牡丹詩会：明末清初江南文人点描. *Tōhōgaku* 99 (2000), pp. 33–46.

merchants, historical works and fictional narratives to erotic literature and colour printing.[33] Moral, educational and narrative works about and for merchants and women—the new readers—became popular. In the eighteenth century Beijing emerged as the new capital of commercial publishing, while publishing enterprises spread to provincial sites.[34]

Printing in movable type was used for the first time in 1638 when *Jing bao* 京報 (Peking gazette) was published in response to increasing popular demand for information about the imperial court.[35] China's 'Gutenberg revolution' happened in the late nineteenth century with the introduction of Western mechanized movable lead-type printing and photogravure printing plates to reproduce texts faster and on a larger scale for a new mass readership. The first modern and largest publishing houses were the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, established in 1897) and the China Publishing House (Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, established in 1912). In 1872 the first mass-market newspaper entitled *Shenbao* 申報 (Shanghai news) was published.

'Print capitalism' emerged in the Republican era (1912–1949) when Shanghai became the new publishing centre. The press remained under Nationalist control until 1937.[36] Publishers began to use new modern-style publishing methods such as lithographic (*shiyin* 石印) or lead-type (*qianyin* 鉛印) printing and new commercial business forms while building on traditional channels and distribution patterns established by commercial woodblock printers. Traditional woodblock printing techniques remained in use until the 1940s.

'Print communism' denotes the new Communist-controlled press that originated with the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 and the establishment of the People's Publishing House (Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社) the same year. Mao organized a print workers union in the early 1920s. CCP publishers operated underground until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937. As the war destroyed Shanghai's print capitalism, the CCP moved its print centre first to Yan'an 延安 and then to Beijing. Mao took control

---

33 Cf. William S. Atwell: From Education to Politics: The Fu She. In: William Theodore de Bary (ed.): *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press 1975, pp. 333–67; Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, pp. 167–72; Giovanni Vitiello: Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and Love in Late Ming Culture. *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 2:2 (2000), pp. 207–57; Giovanni Vitiello: The Forgotten Tears of the Lord of Longyang: Late Ming Stories of Male Prostitution and Connoisseurship. In: Peter Engelfriet, Jan de Meyer (eds): *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*. Leiden: E. J. Brill (2000), pp. 227–47; Sophie Volpp: Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61:1 (2001), pp. 77–117.

34 Cf. Cynthia Brokaw: Commercial Woodblock Publishing in the Qing: The Dissemination of Book Culture and Its Social Impact. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christoper Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill 2009, pp. 39–58.

35 Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 171–72.

36 On print capitalism, see Christopher A. Reed: *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press 2004.

of the publishing industry upon the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949.

The establishment of the PRC marked the ascension of CCP publishers to become holders of the state monopoly over the national print media. The sole purpose of the new publishing industry was to serve the people.[37] The Communist government kept control of all authorised print media and the production of the creative arts in Mao's China (1949–1976). By 1959 Mao Zedong had nationalized the publishing industry and concentrated all publishing enterprises in Beijing. Publishing during the Mao era remained CCP-dominated, heavily subsidized and non-commercial.

In that era, the distribution of books, printing supplies as well as publishing targets followed political objectives. Permitted for publication between 1949 and 1966 were works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao; textbooks (57 million in 1950); popular literature for workers, peasants, and the masses; children's books; science and technology; and 'books for cadres only' (*neibu* 内部). Reprints of classics and traditional literature appeared for a short time during the Hundred Flowers movement (1956–1957), but the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 soon put an end to this. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) political tracts were among the few officially published books apart from Mao's works, of which millions of copies were produced. Chapter Five by Henningsen discusses the unofficial circulation of manuscripts in the illegal book culture during those turbulent times.

Deng Xiaoping's market reforms since 1979, the consumer revolution and the digital revolution have contributed to a rapid transformation of China's print and book cultures in the post-Mao period. Reform-era print culture witnessed the radical decentralization of the publishing industry, technological innovation especially in digital publishing, and a burst of artistic and literary creativity. The privatisation and commercialisation of the publishing industry have terminated the state monopoly on print culture. The Internet has moreover broken the blockade imposed on state media while the government pays a heavy political prize for censorship.[38] Yet publishing today still needs to negotiate the area of tension between state censorship and market demands. The nine chapters in Parts Four and Five of the present volume explore such issues in detail. The digital media have opened new avenues for publishing, presenting a new public sphere in postsocialist China while also changing the dynamics of the book market and publishing industry.

37 Cf. Christopher A. Reed: Oppositionists to Establishmentarians: Print Communism from Renmin to Xinhua. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christoper Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill 2009, pp. 275–311.

38 On the Internet and censorship, see Yongnian Zheng: *Technological Empowerment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2008.

Outline

The twelve scholarly papers included in this volume explore the transformation of the publishing industry in China from the different perspectives of history, literature, media studies and sociology, discussing issues such as books and the marketplace; the rise of commercial publishing; the emergence of new authors; books in the era of the new media and new forms of communication; Internet literature, ebooks and e-publishing; blogs, microblogs and online writings; banned books, censorship and the regulation of 'harmful writings'; bestsellers and consumer culture; cybersphere and celebrity culture; originality, authenticity and plagiarism; book culture and gender; women authors, female audiences and female empowerment through editorship; and the role of literary editors and publishers in China.

This volume also presents two exclusive interviews, one with a bestselling writer, the other with a literary editor. Both are women, and they provide fascinating insights into China's latest trends in book culture and the publishing industry from a female point of view. The first interviewee, a legend on the literary scene, is the pioneering Internet writer Li Jie 勵婕 (b. 1974), better known by her pen name Anni Baobei 安妮寶貝 (Annie Baby). Although she is known for her aloofness and inaccessibility, refusing both interviews and requests to sit on literary prize committees, Li Jie gave Daria Berg a rare opportunity for an interview. The second interviewee, Shanghai scholar and literary editor Sheng Yun 盛韻, represents the new phenomenon of women active in the publishing industry behind the scenes. A contributor to the *Shanghai shuping* 上海書評 (Shanghai review of books), Sheng Yun offers fresh and rare insights into marketing strategies and current fashions in China's new book culture. Both interviewees belong to the new group of women cultural entrepreneurs in China, testifying to new forms of social and economic female empowerment.

This book is divided into five main parts: Part One, 'Books, Bestsellers and Bibliophiles in Early Modern China, 1600–1700', presents two chapters which analyse the social and literary practices of book collectors, bibliophiles and novelists in the late Ming era.

Chapter One, 'Books for Sustenance and Life. Bibliophile Practices and Skills in the Late Ming and Qi Chenghan's Library Dansheng tang' by Cathleen Paethe and Dagmar Schäfer examines the book collecting activities of the bibliophile Qi Chenghan 祁承爍 (1563–1628) of Shaoxing 紹興. From humble beginnings, Qi's collection in the Dansheng tang 澹生堂 (Hall of the simple life) grew until it became the most extensive collection of books of the Ming Dynasty. Delving into how Qi built up his collection, the authors' focus is on the procurement channels: Qi's network of personal contacts and mutually beneficial arrangements with other collectors as well as offerings from the commercial book market. The theoretical considerations behind Qi's book collecting are illuminated as well as his motives for collecting.

Chapter Two, 'The Chinese Novel Comes of Age, *circa* 1620' by Robert E. Hegel investigates how in the less than a century between 1522 and 1620, the novel appeared in China and reached a level of maturity that was to be maintained into the twentieth century. That period saw the development of standard themes, conventional narrators and language styles,

regular structures, stable genres, and common modes of characterization. It also saw the introduction of illustrations and commentaries; this separate critical perspective developed simultaneously with the novel and promoted a growing awareness of it as a literary form. Overt artistic self-consciousness became widely visible in fiction produced after about 1620, a time which marked the maturation of the form.

Part Two, 'Print Culture at the Threshold of Modernity in Late Imperial and Republican China, 1860–1949' includes two chapters that deal with religious texts, one Buddhist and the other Christian, and the new publishing industry at the end of the imperial era in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century respectively. These chapters discuss the role of religious publishing and the status of women.

In Chapter Three, 'Absolutely Not a Business: Chinese Buddhist Scriptural Presses and Distributors, 1860s–1930s', Gregory Adam Scott argues that several of the Buddhist xylographic scriptural presses that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China adopted many practices from commercial publishing enterprises, while strongly maintaining the position that their religious publishing endeavours were fundamentally different from that of business-oriented publishers. Through an examination of the budgetary procedures and financial reports of a few presses, Scott aims to demonstrate that even these types of religious presses, which on the face of it were highly conservative, adopted specific technologies of the modern era to expand the size and reach of their printing enterprise. This should not be understood, however, as a 'modernization' of publishing, since their core mission remained the spread of the Buddhist Dharma and the production of merit, well-established roles that had been fulfilled by temple scriptoria in the past.

In Chapter Four, '*Women in All Lands* and the Hierarchies of "Global" Knowledge in Chinese Print Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century' Yun Zhu examines Young John Allen (1836–1907) and Yin Pao-Lu's 任保羅 (also known as Ren Baoluo or Ren Ting-xu 任廷旭) 21-volume work entitled *Quandi wudazhou nüsu tongkao* 全地五大洲女俗通考 (Women in all lands, or China's place among the nations: a philosophic study of comparative civilizations, ancient and modern), a Chinese-language text published between 1903 and 1905 which introduces knowledge about the world's different nations with an emphasis on the status of women. Yun Zhu's discussion focuses on three important aspects of the collection: first, the nuances of translatorship, (trans)national subjectivity, and cultural agency in the collaboration among its American missionary editor, his Chinese assistant, and other indigenous advocates; second, women's issues as a multi-layered subject matter in the collection's proposal for a religious and socio-cultural enlightenment and their central relevance to a modern Chinese readership; and thirdly, the hierarchies of its 'global' vision and the new sense of temporal spatiality it introduces. The collection's uneven mediation between the national and the global by way of women's issues, Yun Zhu argues, reveals a series of entwined changes in the Chinese book and print culture as it underwent transformation at the turn of the twentieth century.

Part Three, 'Book Culture in Mao's China, 1949–1976' contains one chapter which investigates how unofficial literature circulated in manuscript form during the Cultural Revolution and assesses its literary impact on reform era literature.

Chapter Five by Lena Henningsen, 'Crime, Love, and Science: Continuity and Change in Hand-Copied Entertainment Fiction (*shouchaoben* 手抄本) from the Cultural Revolution' analyses illegal book culture during the Cultural Revolution and its impact on later developments. Henningsen focuses on hand-copied entertainment fiction (*shouchaoben*), discussing two texts that at the time circulated particularly widely and in multiple versions: the *San duo meihua* 三朵梅花 (Three plum blossoms) series and *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (The second handshake). *Shouchaoben* fiction clearly had an impact on later literary developments, on account of the themes broached, the focus on entertainment and the processes of its creation, circulation and consumption, which reached beyond the realm of Party control. Building as they did on earlier literary genres of espionage, crime and love, these stories resounded well with readers. On the surface, the texts provided readers with much sought-after entertainment and distraction. On a deeper level, the stories also resounded with readers' Cultural Revolution experiences, in addressing such topics as the idealism necessary to devote oneself to the nation, the status of intellectuals or the legitimacy of striving for romantic love. Given that the texts circulated in hand-written copies, multiple versions of the 'same' story exist. The analysis of different versions of the same story points at 'stability across variation' and at the fact that literary practices were deeply intertwined with political, social and living conditions: the texts thus gave individuals a forum to become creative authors (or secondary authors) testing literary ambitions and new thoughts. The texts and the practices of their creation, circulation, re-creation, preservation and consumption thus continued earlier literary practices and foreshadowed trends in later literary genres as well as in the Chinese bestseller market that would evolve in the 1980s and 1990s.

Part Four, 'Bestsellers and a New Generation of Writers in Postsocialist China, 1979–2016' brings together four chapters that examine the formation of bestsellers, reading communities and the new generation of writers and readers.

Chapter Six presents Daria Berg and Rui Kunze's interview with Sheng Yun, an assistant research professor at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and a contributing editor at the *Shanghai Review of Books*. A doctoral graduate from Fudan University, Sheng Yun is also a translator and a member of the standing committee of Shanghai International Literary Week for the Shanghai Book Fair. She is a remarkable example of a twenty-first century Chinese woman scholar using the power of literary editorship to make her voice heard. Female editorship is a new phenomenon in reform era China, but it has its roots in the early modern era. As a literary editor Sheng Yun is following in the footsteps of illustrious pioneering women writers-cum-editors such as gentlewomen Shen Yixiu 沈宜修 (1590–1635) and Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–ca. 1701) and celebrated courtesans and *femmes de lettres* Xue Susu

薛素素 (before 1575–after 1637) and Wang Wei 王微 (ca. 1600–1647).[39] These seventeenth-century poets-cum-editors were among the first women in Chinese history to discover that the processes of editing and publishing male- and female-authored literature empowered them in new ways, allowing them to fashion the female self in new ways by editing 'her-story' and (re)writing history—a pursuit traditionally dominated by men.

Chapter Seven, 'The Formation of Reading Communities: An Analysis of Bestsellers in Postsocialist China' by Lai-man Winnie Yee examines how China's publishing industry has undergone remarkable changes since the 1980s, when literature and politics in the PRC were united in their dismissal of market-driven literary production. The flourishing of the publishing industry as well as Internet literature in the past two decades further confirms this continued commercialization.[40] In order to understand these tendencies and their influences in terms of literary production and consumption, this chapter analyzes how bestsellers construct particular reading communities in China, and the way reading as a social activity is linked to sociological and historical questions. The discussion centres on bestselling Chinese-language literary works in China between 2008 and 2012.

Yee pays critical attention both to the annual Top Ten Bestsellers book charts and to the monthly Top Ten Bestsellers lists of non-fiction works and the latter's strong connections to the cultural governance of the state. Her study focuses on the complex relationship between bestsellers, cultural consciousness and the formation of a reading community of Chinese classics in the new millennium. China's print culture both conditions and facilitates social cohesion and the formation of a collective consciousness, which had been undermined by 30 years of the reform and open-door policy (*gaige kaifang* 改革開放) advocated by Deng Xiaoping. The discussion deals with both the function and significance of print culture in postsocialist China, and the relationship between cultural control and market economy under the rule of China's Communist Party.

Yee's chapter first traces publication trends in postsocialist China, then goes on to examine China's bestseller business vis-à-vis the Chinese government's cultural policy. It shows how *guoxue* 國學 (education in Chinese history and traditions) exemplifies the emerging roles of intellectuals and new cross-media collaborations. During the period covered by this study, a proliferation of *guoxue* publications and introductions to classics gradually gave way to studies and edited collections on the state and Party leaders. It seems as though, once a reading community has been forged by the publishing of classics, there is a ready audience for works of Party policy. The discussion reaches the tentative conclusion that the rise and fall of bestsellers will continue to reflect government policy, and that print media will continue to be an instrument of ideological shaping or indoctrination.

---

39 On women editors in early modern China, see Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 169–210; Berg, Courtesan Editor, pp. 173–211.

40 Kong, Shuyu: *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005, p. 4.

In Chapter Eight, 'From New Concept to Youth Economy: The Rise and Crisis of the Me Generation', Hui Faye Xiao studies the rise of a generation of young writers growing up during China's reform era, in particular Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983) and Han Han 韓寒 (b. 1982). These two young writers have topped the bestseller lists, superseding many senior Chinese writers including the Nobel Laureates Gao Xingjian 高行健 (b. 1940) and Mo Yan 莫言 (b. 1955). They also run commercially successful literary journals and multi-media companies, representing the rise of a new generation of entrepreneur-writers. Born in the 1980s, Guo Jingming and Han Han belong to the 'Me Generation'. In the American context, the Me Generation refers to the generation of Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1960). In the Chinese context, the term has been used to refer to the post-1980 generation (*ba ling hou* 80 後), or the approximately 200 million Chinese citizens born between 1980 and 1989. The 1980s marked the starting point of two critical transitions in Chinese history: a paradigmatic shift from high socialism to high capitalism, and the implementation of the 'One Child' policy. As a result, the increasing concentration of family financial and affective investment provides this generation with better educational opportunities and exposes them to a new global consumer culture. However, the unprecedented social mobility and massive dislocation caused by China's rapid economic and social transformations have also created a profound sense of loss and confusion over identity among this generation. Xiao investigates the ways in which these two writers represent China's Me Generation in their creative writings and how their literary works and entrepreneurial practices reinforce, contest or negotiate mainstream ideology, particularly the most recent state-sanctioned discourse of the China Dream, which aims to conjure up a glamorous image of a rising China. Xiao's study raises a series of important questions: What political, economic and cultural conditions contribute to the huge market success of these Me Generation entrepreneur-writers? How does the rise of the Me Generation change the landscape of China's publishing industry and book culture? How are their bestselling novels received among the Me Generation readers? What role do new media, particularly the Internet, play in the reception, appreciation, and discussion of these bestsellers, which shape the Me Generation readers' understanding and articulation of constantly redefined youth identities and gender norms in an age of overwhelming changes and social fragmentation?

In Chapter Nine, 'Sex and the Glocalising City: Women Writers as Transcultural Travellers in Postsocialist Chinese Literature, 1997–2016', Daria Berg and Rui Kunze investigate the themes of gender, sexuality and the glocalising cityscape—combining both globalising and localising trends—in postsocialist Chinese women's writings. Using the works of two women writers—Wei Hui 衛慧 (*alias* Zhou Weihui 周衛慧, b. 1973) and Chun Shu春樹 (*alias* Zou Nan 鄒楠, b. 1983)—as case studies, this chapter traces transcultural flows from US popular culture into China and the construction of a new glocalising culture in Chinese literary discourse. It examines the new wave of women's writings about the glocalising cityscape, transcultural travel and the quest for cosmopolitanism. The imaginary of the glocalising cityscape appears in two dimensions: as a local, native place as epitomised by Shanghai and

Beijing, and also as a global, foreign symbol of ultramodernity in the shape of New York. It sets the stage for China's new transcultural women travellers who seek an ultramodern lifestyle characterized by sexual and economic emancipation. This study sheds fresh light on the self-fashioning of a new generation of women writers as China's emerging cultural entrepreneurs.

Part Five, 'Internet Literature and the ebook Industry in Twenty-First Century China' discusses how the rise of the new digital media has changed book culture in China.

Chapter Ten, 'People Must Search within China's Contradictions to Discover What Really Matters', reports Daria Berg's interview with bestselling woman author and pioneering Internet writer Li Jie, better known by her pen name Anni Baobei. Li Jie is a novelist and essayist from Ningbo 寧波, Zhejiang 浙江 province. In 1997–98 she began publishing short works of fiction on the pioneering Chinese literary website Rongshu xia 榕樹下 (Under the Banyan Tree). Li Jie later joined the staff of the website and from 2000 the website hosted a regular column in which her writings appeared 'for kindred spirits to read'. In 2000 she also published her first volume in print, *Gaobie Wei'an* 告別薇安 (Goodbye, Vivian), a collection of short stories that included some of the works she had previously published online. The book went on to sell an estimated half a million copies and turned her into a household name among young Chinese readers. After publishing several successful novels under the name of Anni Baobei, among them *Lianhua* 蓮花 (Lotus, 2006), the author announced via Weibo in 2014 that she would adopt the Buddhist-inspired pen name Qingshan 慶山. Her latest book is a non-fiction travelogue that contains interviews. It is also discussed in Chapter Nine by Daria Berg and Rui Kunze. The interview with Li Jie provides rare insights into the career and thought of this famous woman writer while also shedding light on the beginnings of Internet literature in China and its impact on the cultural scene from a bestselling author's point of view.

Chapter Eleven, 'Postsocialist Publishing: Internet Literature in the PRC' by Michel Hockx addresses changes in the regulation regime for book publishing in the PRC with particular reference to the publication of literary works. Based on the assumption that the current regulation regime is 'postsocialist' (i.e. no longer run by socialist institutions but still displaying socialist mentalities), the chapter argues that the arrival of the Internet in China, and especially the spectacular rise of websites publishing full-length online popular novels, has signalled the certain gradual demise of the old print-based system which only allowed the publication of books with designated 'book numbers'. Drawing on information obtained from following the development of certain websites over a period of time, as well as readings of relevant policy documents and interviews with state regulators, Hockx shows that state regulation of Internet literature is characterized both by the encouragement of self-regulation on the one hand, and by the drawing of a clear 'bottom line' on the other. The most recognizable remnant of socialist attitudes in this process is the continued insistence that literature (especially popular fiction read by large numbers of people) should present 'healthy' content, epitomized by the state's continued refusal to impose age limits on access to pornography. This places state regulators and policy makers in the paradoxical situation that any decision they make about the definition of pornography and obscenity would potentially open up a

whole category of 'adult' material to readers of all ages (or, conversely, make it illegal for all readers, including adults). In its conclusion, the chapter assesses the extent to which the recent arrival of ebooks, blurring the boundaries between online publishing and print publishing, will lead to further transformations of Chinese book culture and its regulation.

Chapter Twelve, 'Production of Consumption, Consumption of Production – Readers Empowered, Authors Enabled and Digital Prosumption Facilitated in the Landscape of Popular Literature in China' by Chao Shih-Chen, examines the rise of virtual books and the digital publishing industry. In 1994, the notion of *hulianwang* 互聯網 (Internet) was introduced into China. Three years later, Rongshu xia, the first literary portal to host a large number of works produced by both amateurs and professional writers, was set up to offer a virtual space for literature production and consumption. The expansion of literary portal websites made it easier for literary works—the majority of which appear in the form of serialised popular fiction—to be produced and consumed. Today, Internet literary portals have become common. Many netizens produce (write and publish) their works in virtual space, while many more netizens consume 'virtual books' online using various electronic devices, thanks to the convenience of the Internet. The popularity of 'virtual books' indicates a profound change in China's book culture. While the production and consumption of a literary product, to a large extent, used to be confined mainly to elites, Internet literature has turned it into an everyday life practice for netizens. The rise of 'virtual books' also points to a significant change in the literary production, publication, and consumption model. Chao describes this model as 'prosumption'—production and consumption in one. This chapter aims to analyze the model of prosumption by adopting Michel de Certeau's notion of general consumers acting as proactive producers in his 'The Practice of Everyday Life' as a basis for comparison between a traditional paper-based production and consumption and a virtual prosumption in today's China. Through this comparison, the way in which and the extent to which production and consumption in a paper-based literary field evolve into a new model of prosumption in a virtual literary field will be elaborated. The elaboration is largely built upon examining the changing roles of authors and readers during the prosumption process. Using Qidian zhongwen wang 起點中文網 (Starting point Chinese net), arguably the most commercially successful literary portal website in China, as a case study, Chao's chapter attempts to shed light on the prosumption model implemented by the website to introduce this profound change from physical books to virtual books in China today.

Chapter Thirteen, 'Disruptive Innovations in the Chinese ebook Industry' by Xiang Ren, investigates the new digital publishing industry. Xiang Ren's study enquires whether digital publishing is leading to a paradigm shift or only replicating the print publishing systems in digital garb. This chapter explores the digital transformation of book publishing and ebook cultures in China through the lens of disruptive innovation. Disruptive innovation in this study refers to innovations developed by the Chinese ebook initiatives that create new markets and value networks for digital publishing and eventually displace the traditional publishing models. Ren examines three case studies of disruptive innovation in different ebook areas:

Qidian, the literary self-publishing site; China Mobile Reading Base 中國移動閱讀基地, the ebook distributor for mobile phone reading; and Duokan yuedu 多看閱讀, an ebook startup with user-oriented and user-driven innovation. It discusses the business innovations and industrial changes driven by digital dynamics and Internet cultures that dis- and re-intermediate publishing communication, empower authors and users in connected and distributed ways, and enable new channels and models to capitalise on content resources. This chapter also explores the cultural impacts of disruptive ebook practices, in particular digital activism and enlightenment, along with the rise of digital reading publics and ebook cultures.

Chapter Fourteen, 'Blogging and Intellectual Life in Twenty-First Century China' by Giorgio Strafella and Daria Berg, aims at appraising the place and impact of blogging and other forms of online self-publication on Chinese intellectual life. By focusing on online writers who 'post their thoughts, experiences and politics' online[41], it sheds light on how the spread of Internet usage in China since the late 1990s has changed public discourse and the role of traditional gatekeepers such as the Party-state and print publishers. It highlights similarities between blogs and 'citizen magazines', i.e. publications whose production and distribution are independent from Party-state control and which represented the main vehicle to spread information and commentary outside official channels before the popularisation of Internet usage. Drawing on a recent survey of blog writers and blog readers, as well as on our survey of China's most visited blogs, this chapter identifies key features of the Chinese blogosphere and examines issues such as responsibility, trust and style. In the second part of the chapter and in the light of the above-mentioned surveys, we analyse and compare the online writing practices of two of China's most prominent bloggers and celebrities, artist-cum-activist Ai Weiwei 艾未未 (b. 1957) and bestselling novelist Han Han. As a result, this study points at blogging as a vast source of insights into China's new 'vernacular culture'.

To sum up, this volume aims to contribute to the ongoing debate around the transformation in China's book culture and publishing industry today, while showing their links with the past and their place within the globalising culture in the age of the digital media. It is our hope that it may provide a new platform to stimulate further discussion and future scholarly adventures.

---

41 Kaye D. Trammell/Ana Keshelashvili: Examining the New Influencers. A Self-presentation Study of A-list Blogs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82:4 (2005), p. 968.

I

Books, Bestsellers and Bibliophiles in Early Modern China,
1600–1700

1
Books for Sustenance and Life:
Bibliophile Practices and Skills in the Late Ming and Qi Chenghan's Library Dansheng tang

Cathleen Paethe and Dagmar Schäfer

> When the ancients were hungry they [books] were sustenance,
> when they were cold [they were] clothing,
> when they were lonely [they were] good friends.
> how can I surpass them?
> 昔人饑以當食, 寒以當衣, 寂廖以當好友. 余豈能過之.[1]

Qi Chenghan 祁承爜 (1563–1628) described himself as 'crazy about texts' (*duyu chi* 蠹魚癡), a 'glutton for books' (*duyu zhi shi* 蠹魚之嗜).[2] As shown by his remark above, for him, texts were more than just objects. They fed and clothed him, comforted him in his loneliness and were his good friends. No wonder then, that Qi amassed one of the most extensive—or even the most extensive—private text collections of the Ming era (1368–1644) in the region of Jiangnan. Zhao Yu 趙昱 (1689–1747), his great-grandson, a book collector himself, noting one hundred years later that it contained a total of 100,000 fascicles.[3] In terms of numbers, Qi Chenghan's collection dwarfed even the most famous library of the Ming period, the *Tianyi ge* 天一閣 (Tianyi pavilion) in Ningbo 寧波 county, Zhejiang, which comprised only 70,000 fascicles.[4] A count, based on Qi Chenghan's *Dansheng tang cangshu pu* 澹生堂

---

1   Qi Chenghan 祁承爜: Cangshu xunyue 藏書訓約. In: Qi Chenghan 祁承爜 (ed.): *Dansheng tang quanji* 澹生堂全集 [n.p.]: [n/a] [n.d.], juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 3a. Here Qi Chenghan modifies a quotation by You Mao 尤袤 (1127–1194), a well-known man of letters, book collector and bibliographer of the Southern Song period (1127–1279) from Wuxi 無錫, Jiangsu province.
2   Qi Chenghan 祁承爜: Shu ma suiji zhong 數馬歲記中. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 12 卷 12, Ji 記, p. 69a and Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2a.
3   Zhao Yu 趙昱: Chuncao yuan xiaoji 春草園小記. In: Ding Bing 丁丙 (ed.): *Wulin zhanggu congbian* 武林掌故叢編. [Qiantang Ding shi Zhengbei tang louban 錢塘丁氏正備堂鏤版 ed.]. Qiantang: Ding shi Jiahui tang 1883, vol. 57, p. 6b (entry: *Kuangting* 曠亭).
4   Wang Yanfei 王燕飛: Qi shi Dansheng tang cangshu xiaoshi: Dansheng tang chongjian si bai nian ji 祁氏澹生堂藏書小識: 澹生堂重建四百年祭. *Shaoxing wenli xueyuan xuebao* 22:3 (2002), p. 14.

藏書譜 (Catalogue of books stored in the Hall of Humble Life), shows an actual inventory of 9,378 works.[5]

Historians of Chinese book culture have exemplified both Qi Chenghan's efforts and his collection for its size. This study suggests, however, that the actual value of Qi Chenghan's legacy for the study of texts as material artefacts is yet to be unveiled. Qi Chenghan's collection is one of the few that represents the work of an individual (rather than of a family or a generation). While some bibliophiles basked in the reflected glory of their treasures, often keeping the doors to their repertories firmly closed, Qi Chenghan has left a legacy that enables us to unlock the daily practices of collection during his era. The reading interests of this collector are at the forefront of his diaries and through them and his library catalogue we see his story and that of the collection revealed, as in no other case. Through this, the values and ideals which guided the bibliophilia of this era are also revealed.

It is these issues that this chapter addresses: the material, intellectual and social conditions of text collecting in the late Ming period. We will look at Qi Chenghan's intellectual and social interactions with his peers and the strategies and rhetoric that he employed in his quest for texts. The beginnings of Qi's collection lie in books obtained from the public market. Later he adopted techniques to procure pieces mainly from private hands. As we discover Qi Chenghan, the person, the collector and the networker, we shed light on the public markets that existed for texts in the late Ming era and the social networking pursued for the love of books.

This study also suggests that in the case of Qi Chenghan, the term 'book lover' or 'bibliophile' is not entirely correct. Our research revealed that Qi Chenghan, generally celebrated as an exemplary of Ming bibliophiles who were vying with each other to 'obtain copies of books that were not on the market and that money could not buy'[6], mainly wanted to trace, compare, restore and re-compile original texts. For Qi Chenghan the significant unit was thus the artefact or 'text' and not the book as a collectible or objet d'art. It is in this sense that Qi informs us about the importance this era assigned to hand-written copies in comparison to printed works.

Qi Chenghan's inclination became apparent when he defined collecting as an act involving knowledge and skills and identified a collection as the mirror of a person's grasp of textual traditions. He did not pursue book collecting simply as a performative activity—'a strategy for publicizing one's scholarship and wisdom', as Dennis Twitchett and Frederick Mote

---

5   Qi Chenghan 祁承爜: *Dansheng tang cangshu pu* 澹生堂藏書譜 [n.p.]: [n/a] [n.d.]. This number comprises the individual works from the collected works (*congshu* 叢書), including duplicates. The catalogue reflects the collection in the year 1618, the year in which it was probably composed. It does not reflect the holdings that constituted the final collection, as Qi worked on it up until his death. We thank Zheng Cheng for allowing us to study his transcription of the catalogue.

6   Qi Chenghan in a letter to his sons. Cited according to Huang Shang 黃裳: Qi Chenghan jiashu ba 祁承爜家書跋. *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 32:4 (1984), p. 266.