



A wooden manuscript from late Qing Yunnan (救世鴻文): beyond the print–manuscript distinction

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of wood, a crucial material in East Asian print and manuscript culture, in East Asian traditions of knowledge in two parts. The first provides an overarching historical survey of wood in printing, contextualizing its use in conjunction with the West and the circumstances of its employment in the two main religious traditions of China – Daoism and Buddhism. The second introduces a late Qing woodblock from Yunnan of *A Mighty Text to Save the World* (*Jiushi hongwen* 救世鴻文), offering a voice from the Panthay Rebellion of 1856–1873 that would have otherwise been unpreserved. In light of this preservation, the paper ends with a consideration of surviving woodblocks as a source of lost narratives and how libraries may need to adapt to house these important materials.

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To conserve the knowledge and the material culture of the past by whatever means are available in the present is a noble aim, but one which cannot succeed unless we are prepared to reflect on our own preconceptions about the heritage we have received from the past. Here I would like to draw attention to the role of wood in East Asian traditions of knowledge, eventually by introducing an actual example of something I believe to be important, but initially through a broader historical survey. The manuscripts and printed books of East Asia formed the basis of one of the most successful textual cultures in world history, a culture spreading over various language communities in the region that was marked not simply by its success in transmitting an astonishingly rich legacy of sources, but also by its sophistication in organising knowledge. Particularly impressive in these two respects were the two main religious traditions of China – Buddhism and Daoism, which in both cases showed a capacity not simply for arranging their texts in vast canonical collections, comprising from quite early in their existence between 1000 and 1500 separate works, but also for disseminating the totality of these bodies of material, at first through manuscripts (and in the Buddhist case especially through epigraphy) and eventually through multiple printed copies. Today much of the content of this canonical legacy is available in digital form, which has allowed for important new analyses of textual questions.

Yet at the same time this exciting new research has not overshadowed the need to consult the surviving original materials. It has become clear, for example, that even the early twentieth-century typeset or photolithographed editions that have been used as the basis for the production of digitised text, in that they do not preserve the record of earlier paratextual materials included in canonical collections, omit thereby important clues to what was in the past perceived to be important constituent elements in canonicity. We know that both the Daoist and Buddhist canons were marked by formats that others attempted to copy in order to give their readers the false assurance that they were reading texts from officially recognised canons. In the Daoist case, Manicheans in the twelfth century imitated the content of colophons in Daoist texts.¹ In the Buddhist case, sectarians printing a work of theirs in 1430 added the initial illustrations and dedicatory cartouches of the canon to their own production.²

But the policy of getting back, wherever possible, to the original forms of these texts rather than simply relying on their content in digital form must also be accompanied by strenuous efforts to collect extra-canonical materials, efforts that are already under way in China as collections such as the *Daoist Texts Outside the Canon* (*Zangwai Daoshu* 藏外道書) published by Bashu shushe 巴蜀書社 in 1992–1994 and the series *Buddhist Texts Outside the Tripiṭaka* (*Zangwai Fojiao wenxian* 藏外佛教文獻) published through Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社 under the editorship of Fang Guanchang 方廣錫 since 1995 both attest. The importance of such ventures has been recently underlined by Paul Katz, who notes that one of the most influential religious works of Republican times, which at that time was printed in over three million copies, had been produced in the early Qing period – though it turns out never to have been part of any premodern canon.³

But in pursuing these aims of achieving a more accurate appreciation of the religious traditions of East Asia, we surely do not want to impose on our tasks limitations derived from the West, with its very different forms of both manuscript and print culture. The latter in particular has been largely dominated by the Gutenberg tradition of metal-based printing technology, in which the typesetting process produces a matrix of metal that is broken up after printing to release the type for other uses; only in the nineteenth century did it become common to form more permanent matrices in the shape of stereotypes or other moulds before this point. These secondary derivatives of the typesetting process were in the nineteenth century bought and sold separately, but never seem to have been collected or catalogued by repositories other than for commercial concerns. But the primary material of premodern East Asian printing was wood, which was generally treated rather differently.

Now it is certainly true that, even with printing from wood, it proved preferable under some circumstances to make up short-lived matrices of the European sort from individual wooden types. Joseph P. McDermott, in his *Social History of the Chinese Book*, mentions for example the printing of genealogies in this fashion.⁴ He also mentions the analysis by Martin J. Heijdra of statistics originating with early missionary observers, which plainly shows that for short print runs wooden type was the most economical method to use.⁵ The earliest examples that we have of this technology do indeed derive from areas under non-Chinese rule where print runs were unlikely to have been very large. Research would tend to suggest that movable type printing using wood goes back in the case of Tangut and Uighur materials as far as the twelfth century,

and examples of the wooden type in the latter language now preserved in Paris must constitute the earliest surviving examples of movable types in the world.⁶

Wooden movable type also flourished in Korea, as a glance at Fang Chao-ying's catalogue of the Asami Library shows.⁷ But wood is an organic material far less easy to deploy than metal, since it responds to variations in the surrounding atmosphere – even wooden blocks as a whole can vary in the impressions they give under different circumstances. The routine use of hand-carved wooden type required very high levels of skill, which were not always available. This situation only changed in Europe with the introduction of machine-cut wooden letters in the nineteenth century, allowing, for example, the production of WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE posters in the Wild West, though machine-cut wooden type were also marketed in England, and indeed apple wood letters are still in use among artisan printers in Britain today.⁸ In eighteenth century France, by contrast, attempts at creating wooden type for Chinese only succeeded in producing unduly large characters of somewhat limited utility.⁹ One notes, too, that in Japan the Tenkai 天海 edition of the Buddhist canon of 1637–1648, which was one of a number of movable type projects undertaken during this period, only produced a small number of exemplars, and that when the redoubtable Zen master Tetsugen 鐵眼 (1630–1682) decided to produce a canon later in the seventeenth century he reverted to using whole woodblocks.¹⁰ In the light of these difficulties one can understand the early stories to the effect that Gutenberg had tried using wooden type, but had then moved on to casting metal.¹¹

But special factors other than prospective low print runs may occasionally have been involved: Fang speculates that one book he examined, a work on the fallen Ming dynasty dating to Manchu times, derives from a movable wooden type Chinese original that was printed rapidly by this means to escape censorship and avoid incriminating blocks.¹² Such considerations may perhaps also explain why one Chinese work published in the uncertain times of the end of the Tokugawa period concerning the imponderable political developments of the contemporary Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, *The Unofficial History of the Manchurian Qing Dynasty* (*Man Qing jishi* 滿清紀事), was also apparently executed in wooden movable – and so therefore readily dispersible – type.¹³ This type of phenomenon, suspected by Fang for Korea, may also be reflected in an observation by the Chinese historian Yang Kuan 楊寬 (1914–2005) that printed texts of sectarian scriptures seemed not to contain subversive material, but that manuscripts did.¹⁴ One might further speculate that the failure of the development of copyright legislation in China in part reflects no more than the fact that hot metal printing in Europe required a closer watch to be kept on printers, who were therefore required to expose their products to centralised supervision in a way that was less necessary in China, where evidence of subversion could be more easily identified, should the need arise.¹⁵

Woodblocks, then, were – relatively speaking – durable to a fault. But they were and are by no means indestructible, so their early history is certainly not clear. The earliest surviving printing blocks we have in East Asia are well over 2000 years old, but are made of metal, for use on textiles, and derive from the lesser empire of Nanyue, a state contemporaneous with the early Han dynasty that was based in the Canton area.¹⁶ It is quite possible that wooden blocks impressed on clay were responsible for the repeated patterns we find in Han art, but I am not sure that this has been firmly established.¹⁷ The earliest references we have to the multiple impression of images on paper derive

from Daoist sources not later than the mid-seventh century and probably datable to c. 600 CE, which make it clear that this was an acceptable method of creating religious icons – something that would have been of interest to this religious group, who were at this time in competition with Buddhists in China, who as is well known were dedicated to the creation of vast numbers of likenesses of Buddhist figures, commensurate with the awe-inspiring numbers of such figures mentioned in Buddhist texts.¹⁸ When we look at the figures quoted in Amy McNair’s work on Longmen, where a total is given of over 100,000 stone images at this one site alone, and one cave now said to contain 10,000 Buddhas was in fact originally designed to contain 15,000 and actually contains 15,290, then we can see that Daoism faced very stiff competition indeed and needed all the help it could legitimate.¹⁹

It may be of some significance that the reproduction of text is nowhere mentioned here. Religious icons could be quite complex, and were certainly not created as swiftly as texts were by means of brush and ink. As far as we can tell, Daoists of this period seem to have been content therefore to copy their texts by hand; it is only in the early eighth century, initially in 708, that we find the text of the *Dao de jing* deliberately placed on steles so that rubbings could be taken, and here a major factor was no doubt not so much speed or multiplicity as accuracy.²⁰ One form of text that was reproduced repeatedly, and in which accurate reproduction was essential, was of course the seal, which had a long history in China, but here it was the very brevity of the text that was the key to its success. Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫 has demonstrated that the *multum in parvo* capacity of the Chinese writing system meant that surrounding peoples who normally used other scripts often preferred to deploy Chinese on their seals.²¹ Seals were moreover usually epiphenomena – that is, they were imposed on pre-existing documents, and not used to create independent documents in themselves. One exception to this, however, was the seal stamp used as a security pass, which is attested from Tang times. But it may be that a history of using such stamps on clay predates their use on paper: at any rate, the Russians who invaded Islamic territory in the mid-tenth century, as yet unaccustomed to using paper, seem to have still employed security passes made of stamped clay.²²

By the mid-tenth century, of course, the Chinese had been using paper for about a millennium, and printing text from woodblock for at least two centuries. No precise date can be given for the start of this process. The existence in a Japanese library of a printed *dhāraṇī* from China described in its catalogue as associated with the Emperor-Empress Wu encourages me in the supposition that such printing may have been carried out as part of that remarkable monarch’s policy of ‘ruling through relics,’ but since this object has not been examined by experts, proof of this is as yet lacking.²³ Such a development would at least accord with the findings of recently published research by Paul Copp, which notes that during the seventh century *dhāraṇī* moved from additional materials within other texts to achieve independent status, whilst the impact of printing on their design may be seen perhaps as early as the middle of the next century.²⁴

Icon printing in Buddhist circles had, along with the printing of text, been legitimated by reference to Indian practice by the end of the seventh century, and the use of simple Buddha stamps seems to have spread already from China to Japan in the eighth century.²⁵ Only a careful examination of textual references preserved in Japan allows us to see that by the middle of the ninth century the block printing of icons must have also advanced in sophistication. For in fact the very next clear literary reference we possess

to an icon created by printing is one of great significance for the history of Japanese art, since it occurs in one of the catalogues of Chinese sacred materials brought back to Japan by one of the Buddhist pilgrims to late Tang China. This mention of what may have been a quite substantial piece of Tantric iconography occurs in a catalogue by Annen 安然 (841–885), the *Comprehensive Catalogue of the Shingon Esoteric Teachings of All the Ācāryas* (*Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄), which is dated to the last year of his life, where it appears from his annotation to refer to an import by Eun 惠運, who returned to Japan from China in 847.²⁶ This listing in his ‘mandala chart’ section is helpful in showing that where the same title is found in Eun’s own bibliography of his Chinese acquisitions, it indicates a piece of iconography rather than a purely textual document.²⁷

The contents of the iconographical tableau in question, entitled in both catalogues ‘The Eighteen Assemblies of Trailokyavijaya’ (*Jiang sanshi shiba hui* 降三世十八會) centring on the god Trailokyavijaya, or Jiangsanshi (Jp. Gōsanze 降三世), dates back in China to the introduction of new Tantric materials by the Sri Lankan master Amoghavajra (705–774) in the late eighth century, and in Japan would have been known particularly as a result of the promotion from the start of the ninth century of the text known in Japan as the *Scripture that Transcends the Principle* (*Rishūkyō* 理趣經).²⁸ We may in any case on the basis of this reference place knowledge of the printed icon in Japan in a more developed state to the mid-ninth century at the latest. Precisely what form this printed object took is hard to establish: the mention of ‘eighteen assemblies’ or scenes suggests not the *Rishūkyō* itself but the larger textual corpus in India of which it was supposed to form part.²⁹ There are certainly listings in Annen’s catalogue that would imply that the supposed derivation of this corpus from 18 separate preaching occasions of the Buddha was somehow read into or otherwise related to the shorter text.³⁰ But even if this entailed a representation or representations of Trailokyavijaya alone within the confines of a mandala, his image was that of a ferocious figure with multiple heads and arms, and in many cases he is depicted trampling one or two gods (Maheśvara and often also his consort Uma) under his feet, so something more extensive than a crude handheld seal was probably involved in the creation of the print, which seems to have been a substantial object related to open display rather than private practice.³¹

I have deliberately called attention to these references because without them the sophistication of the illustrated frontispiece to the famous printed *Diamond Sutra* of 868, with its complex composition of superhuman, human and feline figures, comes as something of a shock, which may distract us from what is the most important feature of this work for present purposes, namely that the block that produced this dramatic opening page was clearly made quite separately from the rest of the text.³² So, for as far back as our knowledge of works composed from the combined products of several blocks extends, the apparently unitary ‘books’ resulting from the process were in fact made up from modular elements, precisely in the fashion described for Chinese multiple production in the work of Lothar Ledderose.³³ This tendency to use blocks in modular ways, together with the persistence of woodblocks as matrices for printing over a relatively long period, makes a complete nonsense of our normal bibliographical expectations. We identify editions by place and date, and expect them to be separate and discrete entities, even if they reset and repeat or modify their materials on these

separate occasions.³⁴ But woodblock prints can modulate in all kinds of ways from one printing to another of what may still be to a greater or lesser extent the same edition.

This is a lesson those of us who study premodern East Asia all have to learn sooner or later. For my doctoral work I had to familiarise myself with a specific *wenji* 文集 or 'Collected Works' that had ostensibly been printed in the fifteenth century, according to many listings current in the early 1970s. Parts of it had, indeed, been first published at that time, but other parts of it – upwards of 85%, in fact – turned out to date to the sixteenth century, five decades later.³⁵ Scholars who deal with the great heyday of Chinese printing in the late Ming frequently describe a yet more complex range of situations. Glen Dudbridge, for instance, in introducing a study on what he calls the 'genetics' of the great seventeenth-century compilation known as the *Persuasion of the Suburbs* (*Shuo fu* 說郛), remarks:

It concludes that not only did a very large number of standardized printing blocks circulate among publishers and booksellers during the first half of the century, serving to make impressions of books in different *congshu* groupings, but many of the same blocks were also progressively modified and eventually re-standardized in the context of the 120-*juan* *Shuo fu*. It is the way in which these blocks mutated, often accidentally, in physical form, repeatedly combining and reproducing their textual impressions in different publication outlets, that suggests a genetic metaphor to characterize the whole process.³⁶

The frenetic reworking and repackaging of woodblocks that is typical of this period has been described as 'iterative hucksterism' in one recent monograph devoted to the phenomenon.³⁷

It may be argued that later eighteenth-century Chinese scholars looked askance at such blatantly commercial practices, and that they were mainly confined to the commodification of popular knowledge, rather than the publication of religious literature. This latter assumption, however, remains to be ascertained: religious publishing may not have been driven by commercial pressures in the same way, but it was certainly widespread and shows signs of having been extremely complex. One thing that can be said at present, for example, is that when Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880–1971) compared independent editions of late seventeenth-century *yulu* 語錄, or 'Recorded Sayings,' to those contained in the contemporary Buddhist canon he found significant differences.³⁸ As for the literature of Daoism, the careful work of the late Monica Esposito on the *Essentials of the Daoist Canon* (*Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要) has revealed a far from straightforward publishing history for this collection, spanning many decades.³⁹

But there are other reasons for taking a close interest in woodblocks unconnected with seeing them as a means towards investigating the state of the various texts they generated. It has recently been observed that 'wood identification is a straightforward way to obtain basic information about materials used for production, their origins and regions supplying workshops.' In some cases, dendrochronological information can also be retrieved from wood, providing precise information on dating. Though this is an area for experts, on whom historians must depend for exploiting the opportunities offered, we must surely take note of one such specialist when we are told 'it is not just the written text that contains a message from the past.'⁴⁰

Such considerations aside, however, one of the most compelling reasons why any historian might want to preserve a woodblock might be that it contains text or images not available elsewhere. This, as it happens, is precisely the situation that describes the

earliest woodblock in Europe, which dates to about 1370, and appears to have been created in order to transfer its images (and indeed a short textual quotation from the Vulgate) to textiles, something which already seems from other evidence to have been happening in Europe in the late fourteenth century, before the application of woodblocks to the creation of text and images on paper in the following century.⁴¹ There are, of course, many woodblocks in East Asia older than this, including many of the constituent blocks for the Korean Buddhist canon of the thirteenth century, and from this group of materials it has been possible not simply to check well-known canonical texts but also to retrieve and publish the extremely important extra-canonical compilation known in China as the *Anthology from the Halls of the Patriarchs* (*Zutang ji* 祖堂集), which would otherwise not have survived.⁴²

Somewhat to my surprise, I have found that similarly unique survivals may apparently be found on woodblocks easily obtained in China in recent times. I say apparently, because in Britain resources for exploring the bibliography of popular publication in late nineteenth-century Yunnan, the likely place and time of provenance of the woodblock in question, are less than ideal. The block in question was bought for a small sum in Dali 大理 from a tourist souvenir shop run by local Bai women in 2005 and is carved on both sides, thus providing recto and verso of two pages, five and six, from a text the running title of which is *Jiushi hongwen* 救世鴻文, or 'A Mighty Text to Save the World.' Whether this was the full title is, of course, impossible to say in the absence of the title page; one suspects that the running title is an abbreviation. On the provisional assumption that the text is unique, I append a print impression (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Yunnan woodblock, side one.



Figure 2. Yunnan woodblock, side two.

The cut block surfaces are 205 mm high and 238 mm broad, and recto and verso of each of the two pages carried on the block are divided into nine columns, each of which contains 20 characters divided between an upper and a lower register of ten characters each.⁴³ The ten characters each constitute rhyming lines, formed with syllables ending in /ang/or /an/. Thus 360 characters of the text are preserved, apart from the running title and the two page numbers, and since the carvers omitted the final stroke from the character *xuan* 玄 at the fifteenth character in column 6b5, the block was presumably produced before this taboo became inoperative at the end of the Qing dynasty. At columns 5b6 and 6a7 reference is made to a troubled period of 18 years 十八年. These would seem to correspond to what we term the Panthay Rebellion, which lasted from 1856 to 1873. The Muslim leader of the rebellion, Du Wenxiu 杜文秀 (1823–1872) is referred to with a variant second character for his name, 芟, in column 5b2, and ‘Du’s rebel bandits’ (*Du nizei* 杜逆賊), are mentioned in column 5b9.⁴⁴ In columns 5b1 and 5b2 the locations of Yongchang 永昌 and Dali are mentioned; the former I presume indicates today’s Baoshan 保山, which suffered an 80% to 90% population loss as a result of the uprising.⁴⁵ Responsibility for this disaster is firmly pinned on the Muslims: ‘If it were not for you Muslims, the region would not be in chaos’ 不為你回民們地方不亂 affirms column 6a3 – using a dog radical for the word Hui (Muslim) in a way that my computer does not permit.

Exactly who is speaking is unclear, though the running title suggests some local theophany. The only deity mentioned is 'our Wenchang' 吾文昌 at column 6a7, and 'our Emperor Zhang Wen' 我張文帝 at column 6b8: I have not encountered the latter name elsewhere, but the god Wenchang was usually deemed to carry the family name Zhang, so both references probably indicate the same deity, who had long been popular among the Naxi and Bai minorities of Yunnan by the late nineteenth century.⁴⁶ The mention at the foot of column 6b4 of 'my song texts' 我歌章 may well indicate the musical tradition associated with the Yunnanese worship of Wenchang known as Dongjing 洞經 Music, a phenomenon that has been studied by a number of scholars in China and beyond. Unfortunately to the best of my knowledge researchers in this tradition have so far discovered no materials at all allowing us to know any details of its history as far back as the late nineteenth century, save that the period seems to be remembered as a time of widespread destruction from which recovery was difficult.⁴⁷ The content is, moreover, plainly not liturgical, but rather seems addressed to a very specific situation, and not a pleasant one at that. Yet there is nothing overtly eschatological in the surviving pages, despite a title that could be read as pointing towards messianic beliefs: rather, the call seems to be to return to previously established forms of worship, even if the fragmentary nature of the material renders such an interpretation no more than hypothetical.

The exact ethnic affiliation of the addressees of the 'Mighty Text to Save the World' too is not entirely evident – indeed they may have spanned different communities. Apart from Muslims, the only groups named, in columns 5a9 and 5b3, are 'non-Muslims' (*gejiao* 隔教) and once 'Han Chinese' (*Hanjia* 漢家), in column 6a1. Thus, to sum up, though the overall context of this source and its general meaning may therefore be tolerably clear, my lack of knowledge of Yunnanese history has dissuaded me from attempting a translation. Yet I would hope that others find it worth preserving, for my sense is that it records – from a time and place when and where little history was being written – the fears and hopes of persons otherwise entirely lacking any surviving voice.

How many other lost voices survive in the same fashion, neither in manuscript nor in print, but trapped in their looking-glass world of wood? I have no idea. To Westerners unfamiliar with East Asian printing these wooden objects are mere curiosities, collectable as souvenirs but not as sources. The first woodblock I saw in this category in 1984 was being used as a trivet, that is, as a stand upon which to place a hot kettle. The owner was obliging enough to make an impression of it, and it turned out to be a page about Europe from a well-known early modern encyclopaedia.⁴⁸ The random appearance of woodblocks as souvenirs today reminds us that Sinological librarianship in the United Kingdom started from much the same base: in 1781 the British Museum declined to purchase five Chinese books 'on the grounds that there were already enough Chinese books in the Museum to be produced as specimens, which was the only use to which they had been put.'⁴⁹ It would seem that today British institutions do possess woodblocks, at least from Japan, since they sometimes use them to illustrate the process of Edo period printmaking, but I know of no dedicated catalogues or studies. In East Asia matters are somewhat different. We have already mentioned in passing

the blocks of the Korean Buddhist canon, and those of Tetsugen's Ōbaku canon still exist as well.

In China the secular holdings in woodblock from the Jiaye Tang 嘉業堂 and other Qing period collections were in the late twentieth century taken into public ownership, and are being studied.⁵⁰ But these holdings derive for the most part from collections formed by scholars from areas of China possessing rich bibliographic resources who were not interested in ephemeral materials such as the 'Mighty Text to Save the World,' and for the most part reflect also well-ordered libraries of blocks rather than the scattered remains of not so highly regarded publishing enterprises. Away from the Chinese heartland, publishing in southwest and west China may have been more like that of Tibet, which remained unaffected by developments elsewhere at least into the middle of the twentieth century, when one European traveller was able to travel to Tibet to request the printing up of canonical texts by entirely traditional means.⁵¹ No doubt many issues of Tibetan book history will be clarified with the publication of recent research in this area.⁵² Research into Daoist publishing in nineteenth-century Sichuan, however, suggests a level of decentralised but vigorous printing activity intermediate between that of east China and of Tibet, though perhaps sometimes following patterns overlapping with, and at others different from, those of Beijing, where general publishers would also take on Daoist works.⁵³

There are many topics, then, relating to the written transmission of East Asian religious traditions that still remain to be investigated. No mention has been made here, for example, of the important efforts now being made to collect and preserve religious sources that survive throughout the area in epigraphic form, of which the most ambitious, the series *Buddhist Stone Sutras in China* under the general editorship of Lothar Ledderose, has, since 2014, already produced several outstanding volumes. Even if we set aside mountain stones, the writing materials used in the region are generally more robust than the Fragile Palm Leaves that have formed the focus of the preservation of Buddhist materials elsewhere.⁵⁴ But they do require careful and well-informed collection and preservation. The example cited here would suggest that librarians must be prepared not only for the accession, cataloguing and care of manuscripts and printed books, but to deal with woodblocks as well, something that Western libraries have not been accustomed to doing in the past. At present, as already indicated, the tendency seems to be to leave this task to museums. In future, however, this may not prove to be the best policy, especially if librarians are able to deploy new techniques for duplicating, as well as preserving, such artefacts. In the University Library, Cambridge, a step has recently been taken that perhaps augurs well for the duplication of woodblocks as such, since there for the first time an oracle bone has been replicated by means of 3D digital printing, even if as yet the high cost of this process suggests that its first use will have to be reserved for similar extremely ancient and valuable materials.⁵⁵ There are, of course, many non-textual aspects of the East Asian religious heritage that also need to be preserved, from meditation techniques to liturgical music. I simply raise the matter of woodblocks for scholarly discussion because it seems somehow to have been overlooked so far. Perhaps this is a misunderstanding on my part, based on my limited knowledge of this

rather technical topic. In any case I look forward in due course to learning from what others have to say about this.

Notes

1. van der Loon, *Taoist Books*, 41.
2. Overmyer, *Precious Volumes*, 52; Overmyer does not identify the material as derived from the regular canonical format, perhaps precisely because it has been obscured for most scholars by the practices of modern editors.
3. Katz, *Religion in China*, 126, concerning the *Anshi quanshu* 安士全書 (Complete Works of Anshi). It is now readily available in digital form on the internet.
4. McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book*, 210, n. 124; this topic has also been investigated by Michaela Bussotti and Han Qi, some of whose research is due to be published in *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* in the near future.
5. McDermott, *A Social History*, 21 and 202, n. 55.
6. Shi and Yasin, *Zhongguo huozhi yinshuashu de faming he zaoqi chuanbo*. For a broader survey of movable type in China, including reports of earlier ceramic and later metal type, see Xu, *Huozhi ben*.
7. Fang, *The Asami Library*, 21, 68–69, 87–88, 141, 198, 262, 288–89.
8. Bigmore and Wyman, *A Bibliography of Printing*, vol. 1, 70, show that the firm of H. Bonnewell & Co. were just the largest of several firms selling wooden type in London in the 1860s. All information here on contemporary British printing practice derives from David Borrington, Dekkle Printmaking Studio, Baldock, to whom I am grateful.
9. Leung, *Etienne Fourmont*, 241–46.
10. For some initial research on the Tenkai types, see Mizukami, “Tenkai ban issaikyōmoku katsuji no tokushoku,” 209–13; for Tetsugen’s canon, see Baroni, *Iron Eyes*, 41–42.
11. See Bigmore and Wyman, *A Bibliography of Printing*, vol. 1, 202–203, for some early accounts of Gutenberg, supposing that a phase of wooden types lay between the block book and metal-based typography; vol. 2, 148, notes the claim of one Paulus Pater in 1710 to have owned some of these wooden types as a boy!
12. Fang, *Asami Library*, 87–88.
13. Masui, *Chūgoku no futatsu no higeki*, 83, 238. For an account of the work in question, by Luo Sen 羅森, one of the Chinese members of the second 1854 Perry party, see Masuda, *Japan and China*, chapter 18.
14. Yang, “Bailian jiao jingjuan.”
15. The importance of legislation to authorship in England is made clear by the essay on this topic by Mackinnon, “Notes on the History of English Copyright,” 1113–25; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at least, the prevention of sedition seems to have been much more important than any regard for authors’ rights.
16. Lin, ed., *The Search for Immortality*, 260–61.
17. This Han technique is explained in Čapek, *Chinese Stone-Pictures*, 49, which also affords illustrations of the reduplicated images.
18. One of these sources is reported in Barrett, “The *Feng-tao k’o* and Printing on Paper in Seventh-Century China,” 538–40. Antonello Palumbo has since pointed out to me an apparent source for the passage in question in *Taishang dongxuan lingbao guowang xingdao jing* 太上洞玄靈寶國王行道經 (Scripture of Kings who Practice the *Dao* from the Numinous Treasure of the Cavern Mystery of the Most High), 3a–b: this is text no. 1113 in the Taoist canon in the Schipper enumeration. For a synopsis of this short text, see the entry by Lagerwey in Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon*, 540–41; here a Tang date is suggested after 649, but the early quotation suggests that the criteria used to establish the date may refer only to the version preserved in the canon. Dr Palumbo suggests a Sui date, on the basis of criteria that seem to me very persuasive.
19. McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 1, 135.

20. For accounts of the stele in question, see Zhu, *Laozi jiaoshi*, v–vii; the text of this edition, predating later discoveries, is based on that of the stele, which was the earliest source then available.
21. Moriyasu, ed., *Shiruku rōdo to sekaishi*, 65–67.
22. This event is described in Margoliouth, “The Russian Seizure of Bardha’ah in 943 A.D.,” 89.
23. Professor Kornicki states that it is item number 786 in Kawase, ed., *Ryūmon Bunko zenpon mokuroku*, 248, and provides a link to the online version of this work, which is all that I have been able to consult, in his very important article, “The *Hyakumantō darani*,” 43–70, a study which incidentally shows that otherwise the only attested printed objects of the eighth century come from Japan, not Korea.
24. Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 30–31, 103, and 235, item no. 12.
25. Barrett, “Did I-ching go to India? Problems in Using I-ching as a Source on South Asian Buddhism,” 142–56; Kornicki, *The Book in Japan*, 117–19; and for some illustrations of Chinese-stamped Buddhas from the Stein Collection, see Wood and Barnard, *The Diamond Sūtra*, 33, 65.
26. Annen’s catalogue is *T. no. 2176*, 55; the reference to the printed icon is on *T. no. 2176*, 55: 1131c22; Eun’s career is summarized in von Verschuer, *Les relations Officielles du Japon avec la Chine*, 496–97.
27. Eun, *Eun risshi sho mokuroku* 惠運律師書目錄, *T. no. 2168*, 55: 1091c18.
28. See Astley-Kristensen, *The Rishūkyō* 135–38.
29. Noted by Astley-Kristensen, *Rishūkyō*, 6, n. 9, and further on 21–22.
30. Annen, *Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄, *T. no. 2176*: 1131b25–26.
31. There are many studies of the legend underlying the relevant iconography, notably Iyanaga, “Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya,” 633–745.
32. As is made clear in passing by Wood and Barnard, *The Diamond Sutra*, 70; the illustration of image and text at the start of chapter 3, 40–41, also make it obvious on close inspection that the characters on the cartouche at the top left of the image were written in a different hand from that of the text.
33. Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things*.
34. This is not to dismiss the usefulness of Western thinking about the relationship between different versions of texts: for one reading of Chinese materials in the light of such ideas, see Starr, “Narrating the Passage of Text,” 74–110, especially 79–84 and 99–110, though this study essentially deals with a publishing world in China no longer tied to woodblock technology.
35. See Barrett, “The Background to the First Modern *Li Wengong ji*,” 149–50.
36. Dudbridge, *Books, Tales, and Vernacular Culture*, 76; and cf. in the conclusions on p. 88 his reference to ‘a medley of printed material, superficially uniform, but in reality deriving from multiple sources.’
37. He, *Home and the World*, 141, 142 – the entire monograph, and especially the third chapter, cited here, constitutes a very revealing exploration of this neglected topic.
38. See Chen, “Yulu yu Shunzhi gongting,” 518.
39. Esposito, “The Daozang Jiyao Project,” 95–153.
40. These quotations are from the first and last pages of Ważny, “Woodblocks and Covers,” 113–15.
41. On this, see Field, “Early Woodcuts,” 21–23.
42. This famous text in fact seems to have had a rather complex transnational history: see Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng the Sixth Patriarch*, 729–52; for the text of the work as derived from the blocks, see the remarks of Kinugawa in Sun, Kinugawa, and Nishiguchi, *Zutang ji*, 933–39.
43. There is very little excess trim on the block itself in the vertical dimension beyond the printing surface, but in the horizontal dimension there is some unused wood, though this is not cut straight – across the middle of the block its width is about 270 mm; the block itself is about a centimetre thick. I do not know what wood it is made from.

44. The variant second character in the name may be intended to differentiate it from the name of the god mentioned below, and to imply the meaning ‘dim.’
45. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate*, 186.
46. On the association of Wenchang with the Zhang name and on the cult’s popularity in Yunnan, see Kleeman, *A God’s Own Tale*, 29–39 and 82–83, respectively.
47. Note Rees, *Echoes of History*, 41, 49 and 224, n. 11.
48. This material is extensively discussed in He, *Home and the World*, 202–44; if memory serves, the block derived from a Japanese encyclopaedia edition, of a type mentioned in passing, p. 242.
49. See Wood, “Chinese Books in the British Museum,” 220.
50. For a brief conspectus of such woodblock collections in China, see Xiao, “Existing Wood Blocks for Printing,” 71–86, which also includes some surveys of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist block collections. This volume contains several other contributions that focus on the blocks themselves (and on wooden type), whereas the many excellent new studies of Chinese publishing from North American university presses tend to scatter information on this topic throughout their footnotes.
51. This journey is described in Migot, *Tibetan Marches*. Xiao, “Existing Wood Blocks for Printing,” 78, suggests that disturbances at the end of the Qing badly affected the printing centre of Derge, but Migot’s evidence from the 1940s would suggest that most damage was inflicted at a later date: cf. Chandra, “Les imprimeries tibétains de Drepung, Derge et Pepung,” 361–72.
52. Diemberger, Elliott, and Clemente, *Buddha’s Word*, represents the first fruits of a much larger project concerned with Tibetan book culture.
53. For Daoist publishing in Sichuan beyond the *Daozang jiyao*, see Valussi, “Printing and Religion in the Life of Fu Jinquan,” 1–52. Fu’s writings were also picked up by a Beijing general publisher: see p. 198 of my review of Vincent Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking, 1800–1949*, which also touches on some other similar cases, and incidentally in 197–198, n. 12 on the publishing of Islamic works too.
54. A description of this project, supported by Dharma Drum College, may currently be found online at <http://fpl.tusita.org>.
55. University of Cambridge Research, “Chinese Oracle Bones go 3D.” I am grateful to the initiator of this pioneering project, Mr Charles Aylmer, for some discussion of the present state and future prospects of this technology.

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