

CHINESE BOOKS AS CULTURAL EXPORTS FROM HAN TO MING:

A BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

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Introduction

An important area of civilization developed in East Asia with China as its origin and center over the past two millennia. Nations and cultures we know now as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and other peoples as well have drawn inspiration, practices, and goals from the rich heritage of Chinese civilization. How was this Chinese influence transmitted? The historical record demonstrates how Chinese institutions came to be emulated by other nations, in large part through the artifacts of civilization, chief among which were books. The Chinese commitment to literacy and education has been maintained for over 3,000 years and their attainments have led human endeavor for most of that time. If we conceive of a kind of “cultural imperialism” on China’s part over the centuries, which of their many writings have been made available to other cultures?

Some work has been done on this subject by Chinese scholars in the past few years. Perhaps the most useful summary is by Peng Feizhang, whose work *Zhongwai tushu jiaoliu shi* (*A History of Chinese-foreign Exchange in Books*), is one of a series of similar titles published in the 1990s, dealing with exchanges in medicine, literature, education, etc.¹ Peng cites a number of relevant Chinese works. In addition, the German scholar Hartmut Walravens lists Chinese materials imported into Russia by the eighteenth century.²

However, this paper is a bibliographic essay—an extended book review, if you will—covering works in English that can help to elucidate the question of the ways in which Chinese books were disseminated in the East Asian world. Inclusion of sources in other languages would require a book-length study, which would be many years in the making. Furthermore, there are many aspects of the Chinese foreign exchange in books that must remain unclear in any language. For example, what books (if any) did the famous world-spanning expeditions of Zheng He in the fifteenth century carry with them to other nations? The survey recounted in this paper is limited to the period prior to the advent of European adventurers in China, who began to transmit their demands and their values to the Chinese and the rest of Asia.

¹ Peng Feizhang, *Zhongwai tushu jiaoliu shi* (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993).

² Hartmut Walravens, “Chinesische und Mandjurische Buecher in St. Petersburg im 18. Jahrhundert.” *Monumenta serica* 46 (1998), 397-418.

Writing in China

One must begin with China itself, by way of introduction. The core of Chinese civilization lay in the Yellow River region of north China, beginning c. 2000 BCE, when writing first became an essential part of public life, and only gradually came to extend into and incorporate areas to the south and west. The skill of writing accompanied every advance, and writing became inextricably tied up with the functioning of the state.

In one of the earliest recent studies of early Chinese literature, Burton Watson, comments that by the time of the Song dynasty (c. 1000 CE), the great majority of authors, whether poets, historians, or philosophers, were at the same time government officials or members of philosophical schools which sought official sanction and support. They were, in other words, either members of the ruling class or aspirants to such membership, and their principal intellectual concern was, as Stephen Spender puts it, “that human experience so neglected in modern art—the art of ruling, the art of being a prince and being responsible for the use of power.”³

A more intense and indeed, encyclopedic appreciation of the powers of writing is given by Mark Edward Lewis in his introduction to *Writing and Authority in Early China*. Lewis argues that writing was used to support the Confucian state. Bureaucratic administration relies on the use of written documents. Closely linked are the written codes and case records that define the legal sphere and impose its authority.⁴ Lewis also points out that, writing forms groups, of both those who make the law and those who must be aware of it. Writing crosses great distances of time and space, and gives “an aura of magic to the commands of a remote figure.” Writing in the form of calendars, maps, etc. enables a certain mastery over time and space. And, importantly, “Writing is known by all to be significant, but its significance is known only to the few.” Chinese authority figures have always known well that “knowledge is power,” and often attempted to restrict that knowledge to themselves, but sometimes also have spread Chinese learning far and wide. Lewis goes on to give a detailed account of how writing accompanied and indeed enabled the formation of the Chinese empire, noting its inevitable impact on surrounding peoples.⁵

The effects of writing were felt as early as the third century BCE in the proto-states of the Korean peninsula, where the Chinese directly introduced military, civil, cultural and commercial practices, and in Japan by the sixth century CE, where immigrants from the Korean mainland brought with them Chinese documents that included the major categories of Chinese learning: philosophy, literature, military affairs, and Buddhism.

³ Watson, Burton, *Early Chinese literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 5-6.

⁴ Lewis, Mark Edward, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 1-2.

⁵ Ibid.

The work of Tsien Tsuen-hsuei

An important volume of the seminal series *Science and Civilisation in China*, organized, directed and edited by Joseph Needham until his death in 1995, is entitled *Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part I: Paper and Printing*, written by Tsien Tsuen-hsuei of the University of Chicago.⁶ His work reflects the inseparability of the techniques of book production in China and book content. From ancient times, Chinese scholars, officials, and readers often became immersed—sometimes obsessed—with “book culture;” that is, the virtual veneration of all aspects of book production, circulation, collection, and content, and the raising of the written word to an almost sacred position in the life of both individual and state. While calligraphy with brush and ink was at the center of this syndrome, and remains so today, the advent of paper and, later, printing, could not help but have a profound influence on the nature and distribution of books. Thus in describing the development of book production over the centuries, Tsien describes the content and impact of important works, and in some cases the specific impact of such works on the areas surrounding China. Interestingly, Tsien devotes an entire chapter to describing “The Spread of Paper and Printing to the West” before moving on to the chapter entitled “Migration of Paper and Printing Eastwards and Southwards.”

The Koreans, Japanese, and Vietnamese were clearly identified with the Chinese cultural outlook from very early times. They borrowed the Chinese writing system, followed Confucian thought, modeled their political and social institutions after those of China, and adopted Chinese forms of art and material life.⁷

In reference to Korea, Tsien suggests that “the importing of paper and paper books to Korea must have been no later than the third century [CE], when paper began to be popular and spread beyond the Chinese border in both the northwest and southeast.”⁸ The movement of Korean Buddhist monks, scholars, painters, and artisans to and from China and Japan in succeeding centuries was obviously important in the transmission of book culture. Tsien discusses in considerable detail the technical aspects of Korean paper and printing, and then notes the major works involved. The famous printed sutra *Wugou jing guang da tuo luo ni jing* of the late seventh century is cited as the earliest known example of printing. The Buddhist *Tripitaka* was printed in China prior to the tenth century. Koreans obtained several sets from the Song and Liao states. The first *Tripitaka Koreanan* was produced in the eleventh century, and so too were secular works, although on a smaller scale. The Confucian classics were first printed under the auspices of the Korean Imperial Library in the 1040s. The Koreans sent some sets of engraved blocks back to China.

⁶ Joseph Needham, ed. *Science and Civilisation In China*, vol. 5 Tsien Tsuen-hsuei, *Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part I: Paper and Printing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁸ *Ibid.*

However, a reluctance developed among some Sung scholar-officials to exporting Chinese books to Korea for reasons of national security, but this only encouraged further development of printing by the Koreans, so that they could become self-sufficient in supplying the books they needed, especially the Confucian classics, Neo-Confucian writings, and medical works.⁹ The proscription on exporting Chinese books in Song will be investigated further below.

The establishment of the stable and Confucian-oriented Korean Yi dynasty in 1392 produced a demand for more books, and, Tsien states, “promoted the wide application of metal type for printing.” A Bureau of Type Casting was added to the Office of Publications in 1403, and it oversaw the production of many metal fonts, mostly in Chinese characters, over the next several centuries. It was soon said that “no book on any subject was not available in print.” Tsien notes that Korean scholars acknowledged that the practice of movable type was of Chinese origin, perhaps dating back to the eleventh century.¹⁰

Tsien goes on to describe the analogous history of the development of paper and printing in Japan. Briefly, paper was probably introduced from Korea in about 600 CE. In the era of the flourishing Tang dynasty (618-907), more than a dozen official Japanese missions were sent to China to study Buddhism, and many monks and students visited for years at a time. Printing was introduced into Japan during this period. The earliest extant Japanese printing was “the one million *dharani*,” or four Sanskrit charms translated into Chinese, distributed to leading Buddhist temples, and copied ad infinitum for merit. Book printing came later, pioneered by importation of the “Chinese Khai-Pao [Kai Bao] imperial edition of the *Tripitaka* in +983.” Buddhist sutras in Chinese printed in the temples became popular. From the thirteenth century on secular works from China were reprinted in Japan, including poetry (e.g. *Hanshan* in 1325), the seminal *Analects* of Confucius (1364), and several medical works. A number of Chinese block carvers and printers emigrated to Japan in this period, and the quantity and quality of printing improved.

In the late sixteenth century the forces of the Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi brought back movable type from their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Korea, and printing of works in both Chinese and now Japanese (*kana*) continued. In 1590, Jesuit missionaries brought a printing press to Japan, but when Christianity was proscribed in the early seventeenth century, it was sent to Macau. Chinese art prints and books were a source of Japanese works in succeeding centuries, and Chinese classical works “continued to be important elements in publishing” into the eighteenth century at least.

It is here at the intersection of China and Japan that the case of Liu-kiu (Ryukyu) is considered by Tsien. The Okinawan kingdom(s) became a Chinese tributary in the fourteenth century, when “The Ming emperor sent thirty-six Fukienese families of boatmen and artisans to Liu-kiu to service the tribute missions. These Chinese settled in a special village called Thang-ying [Tangying] or Chinese Camp, which also became the

⁹ Ibid., 324-325.

¹⁰ Ibid., 330.

site of a Confucian and other Chinese temples.”¹¹ Use of paper and printing followed, as did importation of Chinese-style government, education, and culture. It was reported that in the early sixteenth century, “the king arranged for the printing of the *Four Books*, the *Five Classics*, as well as works on philology, Neo-Confucianism, and literature. A century later, the *Liuyu Yanyi* (Six Maxims) in colloquial Chinese, was printed as a language text.¹²

Tsien also considers the situation in Vietnam, a territory that resisted Chinese political control but was clearly within the cultural sphere of East Asian civilization. Until the eleventh century CE, northern Vietnam was a Chinese province, where both Confucian and Buddhist philosophies and practices were imported from China. Later, politically independent Vietnam continued to adhere closely to Chinese ways, including the continued use of Chinese characters and the establishment of an imperial-bureaucratic system which mirrored that of China.

Tsien notes that several references in early Chinese literature imply that paper may have been made in what is now northern Vietnam in the third century CE. After achieving independence in the eleventh century, the *Nanyue* kingdom was still a Chinese tributary, and books continued to be imported regularly from China until the twentieth century. Thien mentions the *Tripitaka*, the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*, and “in later periods many more government editions of the Confucian Classics, histories, poetry collections, and dictionaries were printed, primarily for the civil service examinations.”¹³

Chinese books in Japan: Reischauer, Kornicki, Loewe et al.

Since so much of the story of the spread of Chinese books and their ideas to Korea and Japan involves the spread of Buddhism, we should mention here a work well known in the literature for many years: Edwin Reischauer’s *Ennin’s Travels in T’ang China*.¹⁴ Based on the diary of the famous Japanese monk who spent nine years in China in the middle of the ninth century, the work elucidates the many observations on religious life in Tang, among other matters. Of course this was a period of intense religious and intellectual intercourse between China, Japan, and Korea. Unfortunately, while Reischauer describes this situation exhaustively in what might be called sociological terms, he does not provide details on the specific Buddhist materials Ennin brought back to Japan in 845 AD. Reischauer notes that,

The scattered references in Ennin’s diary to his studies, to the Buddhist ceremonies in which he participated, and to the texts and paintings he acquired no doubt would give a good idea of the philosophy and beliefs of this important figure in the history of Buddhism, and the picture could be rounded out by the full list of texts he brought back from China, the record

¹¹ Ibid., 345.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 350.

¹⁴ Reischauer, Edwin. O., *Ennin’s Travels in T’ang China* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955).

of his religious innovations in Japan, and his later writings. [But], for all their richness, they are the commonest of all Buddhist literary fare.¹⁵

Reischauer refers to “the hundreds of Buddhist scriptures and religious paintings which he [Ennin] eventually took back to Japan and which were the basis of so much of the esoteric lore he introduced into Japanese Buddhism.”¹⁶ As noted below, the importations of some other monks have been not only larger, but more identifiable. As Reischauer implies, it is merely necessary at this point to refer to “The Buddhist Canon” (*Da Zang Jing*) to understand basically what was being transmitted from China to other nations. This term may refer to many compilations in many editions over the years, and some further details are noted below.

Reischauer gives a useful summary of what is generally known as the tribute system, which he describes as simply “international relations in the Far East.” Peoples or nations outside the Chinese realm participated in Chinese civilization and international affairs such as investitures and trade by sending tribute and obeisance to the emperor in return for gift goods and political blessings. “Tributary embassies to China were the symbol of the only international order of the day in the Far East, and also in some cases, almost the sum total of China’s contacts with certain of its more distant neighbors.”¹⁷

In her description of the same system in *The Sextants of Beijing* Joanna Waley-Cohen reminds us that Chinese superiority, while assumed in the rhetoric and ceremony, was not always the case in fact, and also that China was entirely capable of seeking and adopting important influences from outside (e.g., Buddhism). She records that China under the powerful and cosmopolitan Tang dynasty participated in seaborne and Silk Road trade with far-flung areas, and saw the establishment of foreign communities in China and overseas Chinese communities abroad. Furthermore, “In the centuries following the fall of the Tang, China rose to the leading position on the seas.”¹⁸

In his well-known paean to Tang civilization *The Peaches of Samarkand*, Edward Schafer describes at length both the conspicuous Tang taste for everything foreign and the important exports of Chinese strengths:

How T’ang China contributed her arts and manners to her neighbors of the Far East, especially to Japan, Korea, Turkestan, Tibet, and Annam, is rather well-known story. To mention the arts of xylography, city planning, costume design, and versification is only to hint at the magnitude of the cultural debt which these peripheral countries owed to T’ang. We are also familiar with the material goods sought by foreigners in China or taken

¹⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁶ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷ Ibid., 40-41.

¹⁸ Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing* (New York: Norton, 1999), 37.

abroad by the Chinese themselves . . . [including] of course the instruments of civilization, great books and fine paintings.¹⁹

Chinese internationalism and cosmopolitanism grew constantly and were a permanent facet of the culture, with only short intervals of relative isolationism. The tributary system will be referred to more than once below, and we will also return to the practice of seaborne trade.

An important commentary on the relationship of books in Japan and China has been provided by Peter Kornicki in his masterful survey of the history of the book in Japan—of which more below.²⁰ He suggests that a critical element in any such study must be the relationship between books and the state:

In China the state has long had an important, even central, role in the history of the book. . . . In Japan, by contrast, there are very few parallels to be found to the central role of the state in the transmission of texts . . .

Kornicki goes on to point out that there was little censorship or book-burning in Japan until the Tokugawa period, and little concern with the formation of a canon, except in the “limited context of Chinese Confucian philosophy. . . . One is forced to conclude that the state in Japan has played a negligible role in this respect by comparison with other societies. . . .”²¹

So, while the impact of Chinese books in forming a China-centered East Asian cultural sphere was crucial, it did not always carry with it quite the same “book culture” that existed in China itself. Kornicki, also in the work mentioned above, explicitly refers to Chinese books influential in Japan up to the sixteenth century, devoting half a chapter to the subject. He notes that Japanese imports of Chinese books were so extensive that some works eventually lost in China survived in Japan and have found their way back to China only through the research of modern scholars.

Perhaps as early as the third century CE, scholars sent from Korea familiar with the Confucian classics became tutors to the heirs of the Nara kingdom. While “the accumulation of books in Japan remained passive and subject to the vagaries of chance probably until the early eighth century,” after that, scholars and monks began actively to search out books in China, usually with official direction. Ambassadors and accompanying clergy became enthusiastic book buyers and bibliophiles. Chinese books became desiderata not only at high court and temple levels but in the Japanese provinces. Some Daoist works were included, although the full Daoist canon was apparently not available until the Tokugawa period.

¹⁹ Schafer, Edward H., *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: a Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 2.

²⁰ Kornicki, Peter F., *The Book in Japan: a Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

As for Buddhist imports, there is considerable information on the travels and purchases of Japanese monks visiting China over a period of hundreds of years. Above we have mentioned the case of Ennin in the middle of the ninth century, but Kornicki notes that the champion of all of the book collectors was Genbo (d.746), “who is reported to have brought back more than five thousand volumes of Buddhist texts,” which “may well have been the entire so-called Kaiyuan canon.”²²

At this point it is best simply to list the specific Chinese imports mentioned by Kornicki in his exposition concerning the pre-Tokugawa years:

Lunyu (Confucian Analects)

Wen xuan (Selections of Refined Literature)

Works of Tang poet Wang Boji

Han shu (History of the Former Han)

Liji (Record of Rites)

Sanguo zhi (Romance of the Three Kingdoms)

Poetic works of Yuan Zhen and Bo Juyi

Lei shu (compendia), selected examples

Commentaries on the Tang Code

The Buddhist Canon

“Poetry, maps, and works on calendrical science and materia medica”

The *Taiping yu lan* [Imperial Overview of the Taiping Era 976-983 CE] was included as were the Four Books and Five Classics and some 256 “other Confucian texts,” and 463 works catalogued as “other secular texts.” A “large collection of Chan (Zen) texts and Tendai and Riten texts plus “literary, medical, and Confucian works,” including the Commentaries and other works of Zhu Xi were all included in the list. Kornicki concludes, “in sum, over the centuries up to 1600 a vast quantity of Chinese texts were imported into Japan,” with great significance for “the development and maintenance of Chinese literacy in Japan, and for theological, philosophical, literary and medical study.”²³

It is impossible in a short paper to discuss each of these well-known works in detail, but the major categories or genres can readily be identified. Confucian classics and

²² Ibid., 284

²³ Ibid., 289

commentaries, histories, and law together might be described as the important sources of Chinese-style public policy, which was so readily adopted and adapted in Japan, as in other areas. Works of and on literature are a necessary complement, since the Confucian ideal combined literary and scholarly skills with political and managerial. And as a separate and perhaps antithetical category, Buddhist scriptures and commentaries suggested attention to spiritual rather than worldly matters, also with great impact. Works on medicine must also have filled a perceived need.

Considering another seminal Chinese work, Wai-ming Ng notes in his study of the influence of the *Yijing* in Tokugawa Japan that the *Yijing* appeared in Japan perhaps as early as the sixth century.²⁴ A work originally in Russian by Iulian K. Shchutskii contains a chapter on Asian commentaries on this work.²⁵

Another useful source is *Early Chinese Texts: a Bibliographical Guide* (1993), edited by Michael Loewe.²⁶ While not specifically discussing Chinese book exports, this work does cite an important Japanese reference source: a catalog of Chinese works prominent in Japan at the end of the ninth century, written about the year 891 by an aristocratic scholar named Fujiwara Sukeyo. Loewe's work is a collection of 64 short bibliographical notes by different authors, many of whom cite Fujiwara's catalog, or note that a certain work is not mentioned there. Of the 64 works, the following appear (in whole or part) in this catalog:

²⁴ Ng, Wai-ming, *The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 3ff.

²⁵ *Researches in the I ching*, translated by William L. MacDonald et al. Bollingen Series LXII.2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

²⁶ Michael Lowe, *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1993).

Zhanguo ce (Books of the Warring States)

Jiuzhang suan shu (Nine Chapters of the Mathematical Art)

Zhouli (Record of the Zhou Dynasty)

Zhuangzi (Daoist classic)

Feng su tongyi (Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Habits)

Han Feizi (Legalist Classic)

Han shi wai zhuan (Commentary on Han Poetry)

Han shu (History of the Former Han)

Xiaojing (Classic of Filial Piety)

Xin shu (New Writing)

Xunzi

Huai nanzi

Yi Zhou shu (Lost Book of Zhou)

Guanzi

Kongzi jiyu (School Sayings of Confucius)

Lun heng (Weighing Discourse)

Lǚ shi chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals of Lǚ Buwei)

Mengzi (Confucian Classic by Mengzi)

Mu tianzi zhuan (Biography of Emperor Mu)

Qianfu lun (Comments of a Recluse)

Shanhai jing (Classic of Mountains and Seas)

Shang jun shu (Book of Lord Shang Yang)

Shiji (Sima Qian's "Records")

Shijing (Book of Poetry)

Shi ming (Clarifying Poetry)

Shuo yuan (Garden of Explanations)

Sunzi bingfa (Sunzi's Art of War)

Taixuan jing (Classic of the Great Mystery)

Baihu tong (Comprehensive Discussions from the White Tiger Hall)

Wu-Yue chunqiu (Spring and Autumn of Wu and Yueh)

Ya-tie lun (Discourses on Salt and Iron)

Yanzi chunqiu. (Master Yang's Spring and Autumn)²⁷

²⁷ Ibid.

This list does not mention all of the “Four Books,” the *Lunyu* (Analects of Confucius), the *Daxue* (Great Learning), *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the mean), or the “Five Classics,” the *Shijing* (Classic of Songs), *Shujing* (Classic of Documents), the *Chunqiu* (Spring and autumn annals), the *Yijing* (Classic of changes), or the *Liji* (Record of Rites) but there is no implication that all were not considered key texts in Japan as well as in China. Examining these together with the long list above, the familiar categories of Chinese thought and writing appear: the classics, histories, and literature, as well as mathematics and military science. The characteristic obsession of the classics with government and its relationship with society and the exhaustive and sophisticated debates on the subject in the major texts certainly provided a model of progress to nearby societies. The high esthetic value of Chinese literature and its linkage with the ruling class was also noted, no doubt, and the intellectual advances in practical matters such as medicine and strategy also were worthy of emulation.

Book exports in Song: Tao, Rogers, Wu

In referring to the continued functioning of the tributary system after the Tang, Jingshen Tao points out that from the earliest times, the Chinese nation saw itself as superior to the “barbarian” peoples around it, and that foreign relations were usually put in terms of the barbarian ruler acknowledging the formal suzerainty of the “Son of Heaven” and sending local goods to the Chinese capital as tribute, to be repaid with Chinese goods and titles at the behest of the generous and powerful emperor.²⁸

However, Tao makes it clear that in a number of historical cases, especially the relations between the Song and the Liao in the tenth and eleventh centuries which occupies him in *Two Sons of Heaven*, there was actual and acknowledged equality between the Chinese court and the foreign one. This equity was a result of military and political parity between these two antagonists, and in this context we can see a new sense of how the book trade fitted into foreign policy. At one point a third party was involved, the Koryo kingdom, which in 1078, during a time of peace between Liao and Song, received an imperial embassy for the first time in almost 200 years. This mission included merchants, and by 1090, a hundred and fifty Song merchants traveled with the embassy. Tao describes the frequent exchanges of books between the Koreans and Song,

[which] eventually aroused the suspicion of a few Sung officials, such as the famous poet and scholar Su Shih [Su Dongpo]. Su objected to the purchase of books by Korean envoys. He stated in memorials to the throne that national defense secrets were leaking out of the country in this manner and that Khitan [i.e., Liao] spies were probably disguised as Koreans and sent along with them on diplomatic missions. He urged the adoption of controls to prevent the export of Chinese books.²⁹

²⁸ Tao, Jingshen, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 1988.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84. Kornicki notes (281) that this was sometimes seen as a problem also in earlier dynasties.

Tao cites an article by Michael C. Rogers, “Sung-Koryo relations: some inhibiting factors.” One of the interesting points revealed by Rogers is that the Song court was as eager to receive books from Koryo as the latter was from Song. “It seems that the Chinese gave credence to extravagant legends of ancient bibliographic treasures preserved in Korean libraries, remote from the conflagrations which had destroyed them in China. . . .”³⁰

Su Shi had other issues with the tributary missions from Korea than that of national security. The missions were extremely expensive for the Chinese hosts, both officials and local people, and Su was dismayed by the commercial motives scarcely concealed behind the official hoopla. His memorials to the throne on the subject were acknowledged, but Rogers reports that the Song government never succeeded in resolving the dilemma between caution and greed. In general “the Sung court showed little interest in exporting its culture to nomadic peoples and prohibited the export of Chinese books other than Confucian documents and the nine scriptures.” As for the book trade, Rogers notes that in 1085 the Koreans “requested various books, but aside from Buddhist works were permitted to purchase only the *Wen-yuan ying-hua ji*.”³¹ This work “is one of the three great compendia of writings whose compilation was ordered by the Sung Emperor T’ai-tsung [Taizong] (r. 976-998).”³² It contained thirty-eight separate categories of writings, from poetry (150 subsections) to many kinds of materials on history, the examinations, and—perhaps most significantly in this context—many categories of what we would call public administration—announcements, orders, reports, dispatches, impeachments, petitions, deliberations, texts, etc. Questions could certainly have been raised as to whether these should be bandied about in the courts of Song’s enemies.

Fortunately some evidence also exists from foreign sources as to what Chinese books were sought, were in circulation, translated, reprinted, and/or had an influence on foreign lands and cultures at this time. A 1950 article by K.T. Wu, “Chinese Printing under Four Alien Dynasties,”³³ examines the emulation of Song institutions by the northern peoples of the Liao (Khitan), Xixia (Tangut), and Jin (Jurchen) nations through printed publications. Peter Bol has pointed out that the literati serving the Jin did “eventually recreate a self-sustaining intellectual culture similar to those found in Northern and Southern Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Ch’ing;” i.e., the independence of these regimes did not imply significant alienation from Chinese cultural norms.³⁴ Thus Chinese texts were imported, translated, printed or copied in Chinese or the vernacular, and local books were published in much the same categories and traditions. It is interesting,

³⁰ Rogers, Michael C., “Sung-Koryo Relations: some Inhibiting Factors.” *Oriens*, 11 (1958), 200.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

³² Nienhauser, William H., ed. and comp., et al., *The Indiana companion to traditional Chinese literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 897.

³³ Wu, K.T., “Chinese Printing under Four Alien Dynasties,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 13, 3&4 (December 1950), 447-523.

³⁴ Bol, Peter K., “Seeking Common Ground: Han Literati under Jurchen Rule,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic studies*, 47,2 (December 1987), 461-538.

however, that the Su Shi's suspicions were reflected across borders: "The Khitan authorities...were careful to guard their books from circulating outside their own domain," on pain of death.³⁵ But a famous Liao publication in Chinese called the *Long kan shou jing* (a glossary, dating perhaps to 997 CE) was reprinted in Zhejiang late in the eleventh century.³⁶

Wu notes, as we would expect, that Confucian classics and the Buddhist canon were the major exports from China to the north. "Between 1031 and 1064 the Khitan printed, under imperial auspices, a complete edition of the *Tripitaka* in their own script." The Xixia state to the west of the Liao "cultivated the study of the Confucian classics. [Their emperor] Li Yuan-hao was so interested in Chinese literature that on one occasion he procured a number of books from the Sung court in exchange for fifty horses." The succeeding ruler requested permission to import both Confucian and Buddhist works. The Russian archeological expedition to what became Mongolia in 1908 "discovered a great number of Buddhist manuscripts and prints in Chinese, Tangut, and Tibetan scripts, in addition to some miscellaneous records on paper in Chinese, Tangut, and Uighur." Block-printed sutras in various scripts, including the Diamond Sutra, have been recovered in the area.³⁷

Wu describes how the Jurchen looted the Imperial Library in 1125, a somewhat back-handed compliment to Chinese learning and book culture. The subsequent publishing industry in the north flourished:

According to one estimate, the Chin [Jin]. . . . published over thirty works in Chinese and fifteen works in Ju-chen [in the late 12th century]. . . . Yeh Te-hui [Ye Dehui] (1864-1927), the distinguished bibliophile, listed eleven books published by business concerns in [the capital] during the Chin Dynasty.³⁸

One "outstanding publication" was the *Chongxiu Zhenghe jing shi zheng lei bei yong*, a "work on herbals and *materia medica* in thirty chuan [juan]." This work originally dated to 1108 and the Jin edition is a facsimile of the 1116 Song edition. Wu mentions also the Jin edition of the *Geshi bian*, a collection of poems by Li He (790-816), and the *Shangshu zhu su*, which contains woodcut illustrations and maps, along with a companion work called *Shangshu zheng yi*, among other works. A national academy was established by the Jurchen in 1173, and a number of Confucian classics and philosophical works, including the *Shangshu* or *Classic of history* were translated, printed, and distributed to schools.³⁹

³⁵ Wu, "Chinese printing," 449.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 449.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 451-453.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 454.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 454 ff.

The Sea Trade: Ptak, Levathes

At this point, attention must be turned away from the rich and complex interface between China and its neighbors to the north and east, to consider briefly China's cultural impact on territories to the south and west. Unfortunately, while study of this question has expanded in recent years, there has been little specific information adduced as to the export of Chinese publications. A leading scholar in the field has been Roderich Ptak, and in his introduction to a 1998 book chapter reviewing work on "Ming Maritime Trade in Southeast Asia, 1368-1567," he notes that while much scholarly material has recently appeared on the Chinese maritime trade with southern Asia and the Indian Ocean, including attention to the famous expeditions of Zheng He, many important questions remain unanswered due to the lack of detailed and quantitative data in the Chinese sources.⁴⁰

An earlier work by Paul Wheatley shows that there is no lack of information on Chinese imports of goods through the sea trade. Wheatley lists almost a hundred commodities imported in Song times, ranging from amber to umbrellas, but notes only the usual exports of silk, metals, and porcelain, with no mention of books, maps, calendars, or other such material.⁴¹ Missing information on both quantitative and qualitative issues might include the book traffic in this maritime trade.

Louise Levathes' *When China Ruled the Seas*⁴² is a thorough popular account focused on the now famous Zheng He expeditions of the early fifteenth century. She mentions briefly that "fine writing materials" were sent to Siam in 1407, and that in 1408 an Oirat Mongolian chieftain requested books on divination and health from the emperor Yongle. In somewhat more detail, she also notes that

The first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, gave calendars to tribute countries because he was anxious to have China's immediate neighbors accept the empire's customs. The calendars were compendia of Ming rituals and indicated the best times for every activity in life.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ptak, Roderich, "Ming Maritime Trade in Southeast Asia, 1368-1567," in Guillot, Claude, Denys Lombard, and Roderich Ptak, *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea: Miscellaneous Notes* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 157. See also Ptak's "China and Portugal at Sea: the Early Ming Trading System and the *Estado da India* Compared," in R. Ptak, ed., *China and the Asian Seas* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1998), and other works on related subjects by Ptak. In all, the emphasis is on what the Chinese learned about other nations more than on what Chinese culture (as apart from trade goods) was brought to them. This is true also of the well-known Chinese travelers in Southern regions such as Zhao Rugua, Wang Dayuan, Duan Chengshi, *et al.*

⁴¹ *Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade*. Singapore: *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, v. 32, part 2, 1961, 138-139. Lo Jung-pang's dissertation *China as a sea power, 1127-1368* (University of California, Berkeley, 1957) is similar.

⁴² Levathes, Louise, *When China Ruled the seas: the Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne 1405-14* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

Later Ming emperors continued this practice. Levathes goes on to describe the book trade in the Ming period in the following words:

In 1404 Zhu Di [Emperor Yongle] ordered the Ministry of Rites to print ten thousand copies of *Lie nǚ zhuan* (Biographies of heroic women), which were then sent to all the tribute countries. . . . Foreign texts also came into China during this period of cultural exchange, particularly Buddhist scriptures, transplanting southern sects of Buddhism into the Ming empire.⁴⁴

The fifteenth century saw both the extravagant Chinese expansion of official sea trade and exploration, then its rapid withering as the result of a change in policy, and the intrusion of the first European ventures into South, Southeast and East Asia. Although Chinese trading continued in other forms, it was the end of one era and the beginning of another, in which the character of the Chinese cultural impact on the world around China had to change, and these developments deserve separate treatment.⁴⁵

Since the Song, the invention of printing and the general rise in prosperity over the decades added to the historical respect of the Chinese for the written word, and led to the rise of popular literature. Jaroslav Prusek proclaimed the Ming “the dawn of a new era in Chinese literature. . . . During this time, narrative prose came to dominate Chinese literature. . . .”⁴⁶ In *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China*, Evelyn Rawski goes on to enumerate the many forms this vernacular literature took: the novel (above all), drama, popular verse, songs, short stories (including detective stories, ghost stories, heroic adventure, etc.), jokes, travelogues, morality books, primers, popular encyclopedias and almanacs, and cartoons.⁴⁷

Timothy Brook also comments on the nexus between “commerce and knowledge” in the Ming; as commercial publishing increasingly replaced the previous practice of private sponsorship. The Classics and palace editions were reprinted by publishers, which helped the state “to establish a core of set books that most scholars could be expected to own.” Included in the set were:

. . . the Hongwu recensions of the Confucian canon and the standard histories as well as *The Ming Code* and *Ming Regulations*. Commercial publishers went well beyond the curriculum, however, producing all

⁴⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁴⁵ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese trade, 1652-1853* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977), 7 notes that the “[junk] trade was at its height at the end of the eighteenth and during the early decades of the nineteenth centuries.”

⁴⁶ Prusek, Jaroslav, “P’u Sung-ling and His Work,” *Chinese History and Literature* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1970), 109.

⁴⁷ Rawski, Evelyn Sakakida, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch’ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 112 ff.

manner of popular texts cheaply and in large volume to sell to a broader reading public than aspiring officials.

Brook describes the now well-known publishing and printing establishments, “the growing presence of book collections in the lives of mid-Ming intellectuals,” the prevalence of gazetteers full of useful knowledge, and the general spread of “news.”⁴⁸

Kai-wing Chow, in a recent work points out that the Ming boom in publishing created an “expansive discursive space” which allowed editors, critics, and writers “to negotiate, challenge, and subvert the authority of the officials” and “challenge imperial authority in the field of cultural production.”⁴⁹ Unfortunately, these and other recent contributions in English to this field only rarely address the exports of these genres or their impact on nearby cultures.

Conclusion

In general, the books noted in this essay fall into two categories: secular and religious. Religious books include Buddhist texts and devotional materials and are evidence of the spread of Buddhism from China into neighboring territories, and presumably also were influential in that effort. Secular books can be classified into a number of genres, all of which exemplified Chinese ideas, values, and practices, and could serve as models or inspirations for other societies:

1. The Confucian classics, together with later neo-Confucian works and similar political-philosophical works by other writers such as Xunzi, and a few works that are clearly anti-Confucian, such as the Daoist Zhuangzi. one might describe them all as models of and commentaries on public policy and the relationship between the state and the people.
2. Histories and biographies, especially dynastic histories, which described politics and society in practice.
3. Compendia: large collections on a wide range of subjects; encyclopedias.
4. Literary works and literary criticism.
5. Travel literature, especially fictional and fantastic voyages.
6. Science, mathematics, and medicine.
7. Military affairs and strategy, especially Sunzi’s Art of War.
8. Official calendars.

There is one conspicuous lack in this array: little evidence is found of exposition or specific discussion of practical matters such as agriculture and finance, both areas in which Chinese society made remarkable advances over the years. Some of this information may have been available in dynastic histories.

The specific ways in which the works noted here as available to neighboring societies actually made their mark is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is clear

⁴⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁴⁹ Kai-wing chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Powering EarlyModern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2004, 2.

that a substantial and varied quantity of written material containing information on Chinese core values and practices was exported continuously to neighboring areas over a period of centuries and achieved a considerable degree of saliency and influence in those areas. Historical studies of the development of the Asian nations must consider this influence, and further study of Chinese cultural exports is in order.