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Introduction

Citation for published version:

Scott, G & Clart, P 2014, Introduction: Print culture and religion in Chinese history. in P Clart & GA Scott (eds), *Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China, 1800 - 2012*. Religion and Society, no. 58, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Bostin; Berlin, pp. 1-15.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China, 1800 - 2012

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Introduction:

Print Culture and Religion in Chinese History*

Gregory Adam Scott and Philip Clart

From the earliest known uses of printing in China, religious works represented some of the largest and most culturally significant examples of printed material. Canonical collections of sacred texts, individual scriptural editions, commentaries and exegetical analyses, books advocating moral behavior, divinely revealed texts, and other religious works all emerged as major aspects of the centuries-long print culture that flourished in China from the medieval period onward. Religious publications were not only ubiquitous, they were also widely believed to possess unique numinous powers, such as the ability to generate positive merit, or to protect their possessor from physical harm.¹ The introduction of new print technologies in the nineteenth century and their development in the early twentieth century, however, rapidly revolutionized the realm of print, transforming both the requirements of and the possibilities offered by the publishing enterprise. The chapters in this book examine the impact of this new print culture on religious groups in modern China, exploring how changes in the way that printed materials were assembled, edited, collected, produced, distributed, consumed, and understood, were related to changes in religious thought and practice. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey of such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, the essays that follow focus on a handful of religious

* This essay is based in part on the introduction to Gregory Adam Scott, “Conversion by the Book: Buddhist Print Culture in Early Republican China” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2013.)
<<http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/item/ac:161473>>

1 On the related religious practice of “cherishing lettered paper” see Adam Yuet Chau, “Script Fundamentalism: The Practice of Cherishing Written Characters (Lettered Paper) (*xizizhi* 惜字紙) in the Age of Literati Decline and Commercial Revolution,” in *Chinese and European Perspectives on the Study of Chinese Popular Religions* / 中國民間宗教民間信仰研究之中歐視角, ed. Philip Clart (Taipei: Boyang wenhua chuban gongsi, 2012), 129-167.

groups that were mostly based in the vicinity of Shanghai, and offer some representative examples of how such interactions between print culture and religious culture occurred in modern Chinese history from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. The people and institutions explored below were all inheritors to the legacies of pre- and early-modern Chinese religious publishing, but they were also keenly adept at navigating the new conditions generated by modern print culture. In embracing new print technologies and practices, they helped change the field of religious publishing in modern China. Yet in doing so, they were often transformed themselves, adopting new religious ideas and practices as a result of their engagement with print. It is this bidirectional influence between print and religious groups that is at the core of our inquiry.

The term ‘print culture’ denotes the particular set of cultural processes involved in the use of printing press technology, processes that have a unique type of impact on the producers and consumers of printed information. Print culture can be thought of as encompassing two related components: *print artifacts*, and the *social processes of print*.² Print artifacts are the physical products of the printing press: books, periodicals, series, advertisements, posters, ephemera and so on. As artifacts, they are invaluable as sources of information on their material construction, publication information, internal references to other printed works, editorial structure, page layout, character set, and other related factors. They are the material evidence of the publishing enterprise, and sometimes also give clues regarding reading habits, as in the case of marginalia. The second component, the social processes of print, refers to the people and institutions involved in the writing, editing, publishing, printing, distributing, and reading of print artifacts. As print technologies impose certain material, capital, and skill requirements on their use, they

2 This definition was coined by Professor Greg Downy of the School of Journalism & Mass Communication and the School of Library & Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in a conference presentation, and published in his blog “Uncovering Information Labor,” available at <<http://uncoveringinformationlabor.blogspot.com/2008/09/print-culture-and-sciencetechnology.html>>.

help initiate the formation of social organizations such as publishing houses, printer's guilds, and bookstores. These organizations are important as they represent new types of social structures brought about by print technology, as well as conduits through which people's involvement with print can have a reflexive impact on their own identity, composition, and relationship to others. Print technology thus not only gives rise to new types of media artifacts, but also new types of social and institutional structures, creating opportunities and challenges for those who engaged with, or were engaged by, new forms of print culture.

Some of the earliest scholarly attempts to address the impact of print on history were focused on social factors, as with Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's pioneering 1957 book *L'apparition du livre*, which applied the long-term and sociological historical approach of *l'École des Annales* to the effects of print technology on medieval society.³ Another early work, Marshall McLuhan's 1962 *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, explored how media technologies affect the function of human senses and the organization of societies, looking back from McLuhan's own time, which he saw as the dawn of an electronic age, to the early effects of movable type and alphabetic printing on Western culture.⁴ In both of these studies, print and media were given a new prominence in the study of social history. A major turning point in print culture theory came in 1979 with *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* by Elizabeth Eisenstein, in which she examined the impact of movable type technology in the history of ideas.⁵ Her main argument in this study was that the scientific revolution of the

3 Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du livre* (Paris: Éditions A. Michel, 1958). Published in English as *The Coming of the Book*, translated by David Gerard (London, New York: Verso, 1997[1976]).

4 Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962]).

5 Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1979]). Citations here refer to the paperback edition of 1997, in which both volumes are combined into a single book. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 3-8, 17, 32-40, 43. Eisenstein's work was later revisited in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, eds., *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was facilitated by the widespread availability of printed books, with the printing press leading intellectual development, using the publication career of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) as her central example. Critics of this approach, such as Adrian Johns, pointed out that Brahe was in fact an atypical figure during his time. Johns suggests that rather than view the printing press as the prime mover behind the intellectual and social revolutions connected to print culture, we ought instead to emphasize the role of human agency in constructing print culture itself.⁶ His work is characterized by a focus on the different modes of labor required to produce printed materials, and how their authoritative power was developed by those who participated in print culture rather than emanating from the inner logic of print technology itself.⁷ Critiques such as these have been part of a recent move to shift the focus of print culture studies toward more specific, local, and microhistorical subjects, and away from the large-scale narratives of print's impact on history.

One such subject has been print's role in transforming religious thought and practice. Early print culture studies recognized that religion, Protestantism in Western Europe in particular, played an important role in the initial spread of movable-type technology and its print products. The English editor John Foxe (1517–1587), for example, employed Biblical allegories of light and darkness to describe the influence of Protestant book culture and printing, and other religious authors in early-modern Europe, representing a number of denominations and nationalities, used printing to give expression to their religious ideas.⁸ During the Enlightenment, the printing press made possible the expansion of a book culture that gave rise to both a surge of

6 Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17-18.

7 Johns, *Nature of the Book*, 19-20, 29-31, 42-46.

8 John N. King, "'The Light of Printing': William Tyndale, John Foxe, John Day, and Early Modern Print Culture," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Spring, 2001): 52-53, 77-78, 83. See also Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-12, 91-123.

skepticism over the divine provenance and superhuman authority of the Bible, as well as the intellectual work required to reinvent the Bible as a storehouse of European cultural ‘heritage.’⁹ More recently, scholars have begun to examine the relationship between print and Asian religious cultures. Shawn McHale’s account of the rise of the literary public sphere in modern Vietnam describes a flood of Vietnamese Buddhist publications that were produced in the urban centers of Hanoi and Saigon by Buddhists who envisioned a religious revival, and who advocated that readers “move from an oral understanding of texts to critical approaches based on written and printed texts.”¹⁰ Anne Ruth Hansen has addressed the relationship between Buddhist modernism and publishing in Vietnam and Cambodia, describing how they participated in the larger historical movement of literary modernism, reconnecting with Buddhist textual traditions and publicizing their innovative ideas through compendia and critical translations. Their work was strongly influenced by European Orientalist scholarship, and in many cases elicited a hostile response from more traditional monastics.¹¹ These and related studies have begun to unearth the deep connections between the development of print cultures in the modern era and changes in many aspects of religious culture, including new roles for and understandings of sacred texts, the formation of religious identities through shared participation in print, and its role as a medium in the new public sphere of mass print media.¹²

9 Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), x-xiv, and *passim* but especially chapter one.

10 Shawn Frederick McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004).

11 Anne Ruth Hansen, *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860 – 1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 1-3, 8-10, 14-15, 79-84, 103-105, 142-147.

12 See, for example, J.B.P. More, *Muslim Identity, Print Culture and the Dravidian Factor in Tamil Nadu* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), especially Part II, pp. 69-140; Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008), 29-106; Daniel Vaca, “Book People: Evangelical Books and the Making of Contemporary Evangelicalism” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012); Thanapol Limapichart, “The Emergence of the Siamese Public Sphere: Colonial Modernity, Print Culture and the Practice of Criticism (1860s-1910s),” *South East Asia Research* 17, no. 3 (Nov., 2009): 361-399.

As mentioned above, print and religion in East Asia have historically been intimately interconnected. The earliest print products in East Asia were religious works, including the earliest dated printed work, the *Diamond Sūtra* scroll of 868, as well as undated and possibly older *dhāraṇī* scrolls from Korea and Japan. They were also among the largest and most significant publications of later eras, as with the massive scriptural canon printings from the tenth to the twentieth centuries.¹³ They were mainly printed with what was the dominant print technology for most of East Asian history: xylography, also called woodblock printing. Xylographic printing uses flat wooden printing blocks onto which characters and images are carved in relief, which are inked and used to transfer the image to paper. The medium is flexible as it accepts both depictions and text, aesthetically pleasing since it can reproduce fine calligraphy, and with minor maintenance can produce a total of twenty-five to forty thousand impressions before the block must be retired. Blocks can also be stored indefinitely between printings, subject to rot, fire, or insect damage.¹⁴ Xylography remained the mainstream print technology in East Asia up to the early part of the twentieth century.

Religious works were one component of a complex and varied print culture that evolved through medieval and early-modern Chinese history. Large-scale xylographic publications in China were first undertaken in the Song 宋 dynasty (960 - 1279), when the technology was still

13 L. Carrington Goodrich, "The Development of Printing in China and its Effects on the Renaissance under the Sung Dynasty (960-1279)," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (1963): 36-43; Denis Twitchett, *Printing and Publishing in Medieval China* (London: The Wynkyn de Worde Society, 1983), 13-23; Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 151-152; Timothy H. Barrett, *The Woman Who Invented Printing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). This *Diamond Sūtra* printing is held in the British Library, item Or.8310/P.2.

14 Our understanding of how xylography was practiced is based on studies of surviving tools and materials, the terminology used, records produced by foreign observers, and the accounts of craftspeople that were gathered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The description offered here is thus most accurate for this later period. Tsiens Tsuen-Hsuei 錢存訓, *Paper and Printing*, in *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 5: Chemistry and Chemical Technology*, ed. Joseph Needham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 194-201, 370. For a first-hand account of xylographic printing in Beijing in 1949, see Hedda M. Morrison, "Making Books in China," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 38-39 (1949): 232-243.

limited to a handful of temples and urban centers, but by at least the middle of the Ming 明 dynasty (1368 - 1644), printing and the book market had become much more widespread.¹⁵ During this early modern period, imperial courts sponsored several xylographic printings of the Buddhist canon (*yiqie jing* 一切經; *da zangjing* 大藏經), each one of which involved teams of people, thousands of blocks, and years to produce. As Indian Buddhist texts were brought to China and translated, they arrived from a variety of doctrinal schools and there was no single, unified system readily available for determining the authority or even the proper classification of scriptural texts. One model for doing so was found in the native body of standardized statecraft texts used for the civil service examinations, and thus the term ‘classic’ (*jing* 經) came to be applied to Buddhist scriptures. Introduction into the Buddhist ‘canon’ occurred when a text was added to an authoritative library, establishing the precedent of an open and flexible canon of Buddhist texts. This *ex bibliotheca* origin for notions of the Chinese Buddhist canon can be seen in the key term for ‘canon’ (*dazang* 大藏), in use from the Song dynasty onward, which originally denoted a ‘great library’ or ‘storehouse’.¹⁶ As eminent monks wrote their own compositions discussing and explicating scriptural texts, a number of secondary genres also made their way into the canon, such as treatise (*lun* 論), comprehensive commentary (*shu* 疏), interlinear commentary (*zhu* 注/註), and exegesis (*shi* 釋). Bibliographic studies of the sixth and seventh centuries themselves also became incorporated into this open Buddhist canon.¹⁷

Daoist scriptures, in contrast, were catalogued several times from the fifth century

15 Cynthia J. Brokaw, “On the History of the Book in China,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 3-54.

16 Lancaster, “Construction of the Chinese Buddhist Canon”.

17 Genre name translations based on the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DDB, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>). Lancaster, “Construction of the Chinese Buddhist Canon,” 235-236. Shi Dao’an 釋道安, *Zhongguo dazangjing diaoke shihua* 中國大藏經雕刻史話 ([s.l.]: Zhonghua dadian bianyin hui, 1978); “General Introduction,” in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, volume one, ed. Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

onward, but unfortunately few of these early lists survive. A major printing of the Daoist canon was undertaken in 1244 as the *Xuandu baozang* 玄都寶藏 (Precious Canon of the Mysterious Metropolis), but the printing blocks and nearly all copies of the printed texts were later destroyed. These early compilations and collections were likely strong influences on the *Zhengtong daoizang* 正統道藏 (Zhengtong Daoist Canon), also called the *Da Ming dao zangjing* 大明道藏經 (Daoist Canon of the Great Ming), completed in 1445.¹⁸ Sacred texts of popular religious traditions, on the other hand, were most often produced locally and by manuscript, although from the sixteenth century onward some genres, such as *baojuan* 寶卷 (precious scrolls), were printed in xylography. Religious publishing was motivated by a number of considerations: the widespread belief that their reproduction would generate incalculable amounts of merit for those who sponsored it, the social prestige accrued to their sponsors and owners, the will to impose orthodoxy on a vibrant and heterogeneous religious landscape, and the desire to expand the reach of proselytization with mass-produced texts. These factors can be found in a number of religious traditions, and images, tropes, narratives, figures, and genres were also widely shared between different types of religious texts.

By the Qing 清 era (1644–1911) the publishing world had expanded greatly, and consisted of a large number of regional workshops, a nationwide network of printer-retailers, and a core of best-selling titles that was being sold to a much broadened readership. This expansion and homogenization of print culture in the Qing likely made a positive contribution to the spread of education, functional literacy, and a shared public literary culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even if for the majority of people their knowledge of texts and ability to

18 See Judith M. Boltz, “Daozang and subsidiary compilations,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, edited by Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 28-33. Zhengtong refers to the era name spanning 1436 to 1449. The English translation of *Xuandu baozang* used here is based on Boltz’s. An excellent guide to related research resources is available at the Daoist Studies 道較研究 website, <<http://www.daoiststudies.org/content/research-guide-daoist-studies>>.

read characters were both still rather limited.¹⁹ Canonical and scriptural publishing continued, as with for example the Buddhist *Longzang* 龍藏 canon printed between 1735 and 1738, and the work of numerous temple scriptoria (*jingfang* 經房), where monastic publishers drew upon extensive temple libraries and storehouses of printing blocks to compile their new editions of scriptural texts.²⁰ While no officially-sponsored new Daoist canon was published during the Qing, a number of massive new text collections were compiled and printed by both clerics and lay Daoists, with the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Essentials of the Daoist Canon, early nineteenth century) as perhaps the voluminous among these anthologies.²¹ The popular moral and religious texts known as *shanshu* 善書 (morality books) were widespread during this era. They advocated an ecumenical morality, combined several different traditions of textuality, and encouraged readers to reprint and redistribute copies in order to generate further positive merit. In contrast to manuscript works, where exclusivity and rarity added to the object's power, the merit gained through their production meant that printed religious works often functioned as both message

19 Brokaw, "History of the Book in China," 27-30; Brokaw, "Commercial Woodblock Printing in the Qing (1644-1911) and the Transition to Modern Print Technology," in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 40-44; Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 559-570. Note that scholars have had to adapt the largely Eurocentric print culture theory to the study of late-imperial Chinese history. See Tobie Meyer-Fong, "The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (August 2007): 787-817.

20 Shi Dao'an, *Zhongguo dazangjing diaoke shihua*, 123-132, 144-149; Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25.

21 Monica Esposito, "The *Daozang Jiyao* Project: Mutations of a Canon," *Daoism: Religion, History and Society* 1 (2009): 95-153. In spite of its title, the *Daozang jiyao* does not consist exclusively of excerpts from the Ming canon, but also contains many works not found there. Other Qing-period Daoist collections include the *Daozang xubian* 道藏續編 (Sequel to the Daoist Canon, eighteenth century) and collected writings of various immortals and deities, such as the *Lüzu quanshu* 呂祖全書 (Complete Writings of Patriarch Lü, eighteenth century). See Lai Chi-tim 黎志添, "Qingdai sizhong Lüzu quanshu yu Lüzu fuji daotan de guanxi" 清代四種《呂祖全書》與呂祖扶乩道壇的關係, *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 42 (2013): 183-230; Monica Esposito, "Il *Daozang xubian*, raccolta di testi alchemici della Longmen," *Annali dell'Instituto Universitario Orientale* 52, no. 4 (1992): 429-449.

and as means of salvation.²² By the middle of the nineteenth century, the xylographic printing technology used to reproduce most religious works was well-established in China, and was being deployed by a wide range of state, commercial, private, and temple-based presses to produce printed materials. Printing expertise was available through local craftspeople and specialist workshops, literacy was relatively common, and religious communities had established their own open corpus of texts, bibliographic studies, and catalogues of canonical works. Within a generation, however, this culture would be revolutionized by a wave of new technologies, and new social and intellectual practices of print.

Movable type had first been used in China as early as the eleventh century, but the difficulty of carving sufficient type for the wide variety of Chinese characters and its relative expense compared to xylography meant that typeset printing was never put into widespread use.²³ It was only with the introduction to China of mechanized printing presses and cast type in the nineteenth century that movable type, along with other modern print techniques such as lithography and planography, gradually became a viable means of large-scale printing. This modern print revolution in China was largely initiated by Christian missionaries, who established presses to print English- and Chinese-language Bibles, tracts, and other religious works. From about 1807 to 1876, mechanized printing in China was the exclusive domain of missionaries and their converts based along the South China coast, a period during which Protestant and Catholic

22 Catherine Bell, “‘A Precious Raft to Save the World’: The Interaction of Scriptural Traditions and Printing in a Chinese Morality Book,” *Late Imperial China* 17, no. 1 (1996): 158-200, especially 160-163, 183, 190.

23 See Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 15-17, 57-64. Chow notes that wooden movable type was used from the mid-1400s to print a few large works, and was preferred in the Qing for some small-run works (pp. 67-69). While this book focuses on printed texts, it is important to remember that manuscripts also remained a popular and culturally significant means of reproducing texts, as they manifested the individual touch of their creator. Brokaw, “History of the Book in China,” 8-10, 15-16. On the religious significance of manuscripts as opposed to printed texts, see James Robson, “Brushes with Some ‘Dirty Truths’: Handwritten Manuscripts and Religion in China,” *History of Religions* 51, no.4 (2012): 317-343.

mission groups founded dozens of printing houses.²⁴ Mission newspapers and journals were among the earliest mass-market periodicals printed in China, with one of the longest-running being *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*. Founded in Fuzhou in 1868, revived in Shanghai in 1874, the *Recorder* stood as the publication of record for mission personnel in China until its closure in 1941. Mission publications in China were also instrumental in publicizing new intellectual movements and diffusing knowledge about science, technology, and current events across the globe.²⁵ Commercial firms soon joined the mission presses, and their publications played a key role in mediating many of the political and cultural movements of the late-Qing and early Republican-era reforms. Shanghai quickly became the nexus for the Chinese commercial press, with newspapers such as *Shenbao* 申報 (Shanghai News, 1872–1949), *Zilin hubao* 字林滬報 (Chinese Edition of the *North-China Daily News and Herald*, 1882–1900), and *Xinwen bao* 新聞報 (The News, 1893 – 1945) functioning as public venues for debates on social, cultural, intellectual, and political issues, protected from state censorship by operating in the international settlement zones of Shanghai.²⁶

By the early twentieth century, several Chinese entrepreneurs, many of whom had

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- 24 See, for example, Gilbert McIntosh, *The Mission Press in China: Being a Jubilee Retrospect of the American Presbyterian Mission Press, with Sketches of Other Missions Presses in China, as well as Accounts of the Bible and Tract Societies at Work in China* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1895); Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 28-52. For a list of mission presses that published in Chinese, see Fan Muhan 范慕韓, *Zhongguo yinshua jindai shi (chugao)* 中國印刷近代史(初稿) (Beijing: Yinshua gongye chubanshe, 1995), 71-105.
- 25 Kathleen L. Lodwick, "Introduction: History and Description of The Chinese Recorder," in *The Chinese Recorder Index: A Guide to Christian Missions in Asia, 1867-1941*, ed. Kathleen L. Lodwick (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1986), vol. 1, xi-xii. See also Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009); R.S. Britton, *The Chinese Periodical Press 1800-1912* (Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore: Kelly & Walsh, 1933).
- 26 Britton, *Chinese Periodical Press*, 51, 63-71, 74-75. See also Chen Yushen 陳玉申, *Wanqing baoye shi* 晚清報業史 (Ji'nan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2003), 115-169; Zhu Ruiyue 朱瑞月, "Shenbao fanying xia de Shanghai shehui bianqian (1895 – 1927)" 申報反映下的上海社會變遷 (1895-1927) (MA thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, 1990); Weipin Tsai, *Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, Consumerism and Individuality in China, 1919 – 1937* (Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: the Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

apprenticed in mission presses, established independent commercial publishing houses in Shanghai, presses that would grow to dominate the Chinese book market for the remainder of the Republican era. The Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館) was founded in 1897, and built its reputation and fiscal health as a textbook publisher after the civil service exams were abolished in 1905. It was joined by China Books (Zhonghua shuju 中華書局) in 1912 and World Books (Shijie shuju 世界書局) in 1917.²⁷ The appearance of these types of commercial presses and the new print technologies they deployed transformed print culture in modern China. Mechanization allowed for the rapid casting and setting of type, the efficient production of lithographic plates, and the mass production of ink and paper to be used as printing materials. This in turn made possible the mass production of printed materials for a much lower cost than had been possible using xylography. Yet to undertake such an enterprise on a significant scale required a great deal of capital, specialized physical plant, the presence of a machine industry to produce and repair the presses, and the availability of skilled engineers to operate and maintain them. Where these elements combined, as in Shanghai and a handful of other urban centers, however, the result was a host of new opportunities and possibilities for religious groups interested in publishing, either through hiring commercial presses to print religious materials, or by establishing one's own independent, specialist religious press.

In this book we examine how these revolutionary new developments in Chinese print interacted with religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During this era, religion itself was being redefined and reconstructed. *Zongjiao* 宗教, the term that has come to denote 'religion' in modern Chinese, first appeared in the writings of reform-minded intellectuals as a

27 Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai*. Also see Reed's "Introduction," in *From Woodblocks to the Internet*, 8-10; Li Jiaju 李家駒, *Shangwu yinshuguan yu jindai zhishi wenhua de chuanbo* 商務印書館與近代知識文化的傳播 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2005).

reverse loan-word from Japan, where it had been coined as *shūkyō* to translate the word ‘religion’ from European-language texts.²⁸ *Zongjiao* was at the center of a series of intellectual and political struggles in modern China; while some criticized it as a form of *mixin* 迷信 (errant belief or superstition) and an impediment to the establishment of a modern society, others saw the establishment of ‘modernized’ or ‘patriotic’ religion as an essential part of the nation-building process.²⁹ During the Republican era, in spite of the constitutionally-protected freedom of religious belief, many state authorities exerted regulatory and legal control over *zongjiao*/religion and *mixin*/superstition. Reform-minded elites of the late Qing and early Republic also seized upon these notions to advance programs of political, cultural, and spiritual renewal. The extent to which the government was actually able to exert such control, however, varied widely; attempts to organize religious groups into legally recognized and regulated bodies often produced only paper entities, obscuring a much more complex reality on the ground.³⁰ Print culture was thus a key component of the rapidly evolving intellectual and cultural worlds of the Republic, and the central medium through which people participated in the public sphere. Print was one of the key areas where religious groups could establish themselves in the public sphere, and new genres

28 Federico Masini, *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898* (Berkeley, CA: Project on Linguistic Analysis, University of California, 1993), 149-151, 222; Lu Yan, *Re-understanding Japan: Chinese Perspectives, 1895-1945* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), chapters 1 and 2; Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), appendices B and C. On Japan, see Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

29 Yoshiko Ashiwa and David Wank, “Introduction,” in *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China*, ed. Ashiwa and Wank (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 6-9; Yoshiko Ashiwa, “Positioning Religion in Modernity: State and Buddhism in China,” in *Making Religion, Making the State*, 45-47; Vincent Goossaert, “1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 2 (May, 2006): 307-336; Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 43-89.

30 *Zhonghua minguo linshi yuefa* 中華民國臨時約法 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1916); Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010). On the earlier history of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, see B.J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1991); J.J.M. De Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China, a Page in the History of Religions* (Amsterdam: J. Müller, 1903-1904).

such as the periodical and technologies such as mechanized movable type and lithography facilitated such strategies with unprecedented scale and speed. Publications were also important means of communication within the large and growing religious communities, as they began to organize themselves into local, regional, and national associations.

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The present volume originates from a conference panel on “Publishing Religion, Negotiating the Party-State: New Perspectives on Religion in Modern China,” held at the 2011 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. The word “originates” needs to be stressed, as this book does not simply reflect the panel proceedings. The panel papers by Philip Clart and Paul P. Mariani were not included in this volume as they had already been published elsewhere;³¹ those chapters that are based on the 2011 panel paper presentations (i.e., those by Berezkin, Katz, Lee & Chow, Mak, and Scott) have been thoroughly revised, and have in some cases undergone a shift in their thematic focus; finally, the volume has been enriched by two new chapters by authors who had not been part of the original panel (Wang and Yau). What connects this book to the 2011 conference panel is the impulse to bring together scholars working on a variety of Chinese religious traditions, and to utilize the insights generated by the above-cited general studies of late-imperial and Republican period printing, publishing, and media usage on the one hand, and the religious field on the other, to address the interaction of both through specific case-examples. This restrictive pattern obviously precludes any claim to comprehensive coverage; that, however, is not the aim of the present book, as we do not seek to construct a unified

31 Philip Clart, “Mediums and the New Media: The Impact of Electronic Publishing on Temple and Moral Economies in Taiwanese Popular Religion,” *Journal of Sinological Studies* / 漢學研究學刊 3 (2012): 127-141. Paul P. Mariani’s presentation was a summary of and introduction to his monograph *Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

narrative or a theoretical model of the interactions of religion and media technologies. Instead we aim to counteract a modernist discourse of the decline of religion in modern China by focusing on the vibrant world of religious print culture in the late Imperial and Republican periods, to explore how religious groups made use of publishing and new print technologies, and how religious ideas and practices were transformed as a result of their engagement with modern print culture. Thus, each of the chapters that follows explores one facet of this developing relationship between religious groups and publishing in modern China.

The first two chapters look at Christian efforts to publish the Bible and other religious writings as part of Christian proselytization in China. In his “The Colportage of the Protestant Bible in Late Qing and Republican China: The Example of the British and Foreign Bible Society,” George K.W. Mak looks at the role played by Chinese colporteurs in the distribution of Bibles in China, how they fit into mission strategies of book production and sales, and what the Western members of their Bible society thought of them. Although colporteurs were an essential part of Bible distribution networks in China, previously they have seldom been the subject of critical scholarly research. Mak finds that just as the Bible was a key focus of Protestant mission efforts in China, Chinese colporteurs were at the center of its distribution to potential converts. Not only were they vital links between missionaries and the Chinese mission field, they were also often the public face of Protestantism for new converts, the first Chinese Christians they might encounter. “Publishing and Theologizing Prophecy: The Seventh-day Adventists in Modern China,” by Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Christie Chui-Shan Chow, examines the role of publication and distribution of printed materials by Seventh-day Adventists from their earliest presence in China up to the present day. For their movement, print media was an indispensable means of evangelization in a field of varied and competing denominations, all vying for the attention of the

Chinese public. The institutional networks created to sustain their publishing enterprise was also an important facet of their presence in China, and helped support their conversion efforts. In both of these chapters, we see previously understudied aspects of the print culture of the China mission field come to the fore, and reveal themselves to be significant examples of religious activity.

The next two chapters deal with Buddhist publications and the baojuan 寶卷 (precious scroll) genre of popular religious scriptures, respectively. In his chapter, “Navigating the Sea of Scriptures: Ding Fubao’s Buddhist Studies Collectanea, 1918–1924,” Gregory Adam Scott explores the landmark Buddhist book series that incorporated annotated scriptural texts, books for beginners, and a dictionary of Buddhist terms translated from the Japanese. While Chinese Buddhists in the late Qing were focused on publishing scriptures to replace those lost in the conflagration of the Taiping rebellion, Ding’s concern was rather that the Buddhist canon was too vast and complicated for most people to understand. In response, he crafted a number of publications that drew upon well-established modes of religious education but also current scholarship among Japanese Buddhists to produce a series to guide readers through the turbid “sea of scriptures.” In doing so, however, he helped shift the focus of many people’s religious engagement from one centered on personal and institutional relations toward one typified by independent, self-directed textual learning. Rostislav Berezkin, in his “The Multiple Ways of Printing and Circulation of ‘Precious Scrolls’ in Early Twentieth-Century Shanghai and its Vicinity: Towards an Assessment of Multifunctionality of the Genre,” focuses on how new print technologies changed the organization, circulation, and impact of baojuan as they were produced by a number of publishers and bookstores. His argument is that shifts in the types of print technologies used to reproduce baojuan were accompanied by changes in their content and in the

way they were used. As the number and variety of baojuan in circulation increased in the early twentieth century, their publication was partially commercialized, and they began to be used for private reading as well as public presentation and performance. These two chapters explore how the structure, construction, and reception of specific printed materials interacted with larger shifts in religious thought and practice in these two central streams of Chinese religious tradition.

Several chapters in this volume examine the publication of morality books (shanshu 善書) and sectarian texts, particularly in connection with the types of popular religious groups who were newly emboldened in the changing political climate of the late Qing and Republican eras. In “The Xiantian dao and Its Publishing Activities in Guangzhou and Hong Kong from the late Qing to 1940s: The Case of the Morality Book Publisher Wenzaizi,” Yau Chi-on 遊子安 discusses how the Wenzaizi 文在茲 publisher in Guangzhou 廣州 functioned to help the Xiantian dao 先天道 movement expand into the south of China, and eventually to Hong Kong and to Chinese communities overseas. Yau’s chapter also reveals that the adoption of modern print technologies is not a necessary corollary of religious vibrancy; Wenzaizi and other printer-publishers in the Chinese Xiantian dao network continued to employ xylography, or a variation thereof in the form of cast metal type plates mounted on wooden blocks, well into the 1940s, with cottage-industry printing still being carried out by Xiantian dao temples in Singapore in the 1950s. The low capital outlay of this traditional technology probably made it well-suited for the specialized “morality bookstores” (shanshujū 善書局) whose income depended upon donations from book sponsors rather than retail sales. Modernizing conditions in the form of accelerated Chinese migration to Southeast Asia and the establishment of an efficient domestic and overseas postal service, however, still were major factors in this particular religious publishing business model. The modern distribution network built by the Shanghai publisher Mingshan shuju (see

below) is mirrored on a smaller scale by the sectarian network of Xiantiandao related temples and bookstores in South China and Southeast Asia.

An important publisher and bookstore active in Shanghai from 1931 to 1949, the Mingshan shuju 明善書局 (Illuminating Goodness Bookstore), is the subject of two chapters. Wang Chien-chuan 王見川, in his “Morality Book Publishing and Popular Religion in Modern China: A Discussion Centered on the Scriptural Publications and Texts of the Tongshanshe,” first places the publisher in the broader context of Shanghai morality book publishers, and then focuses on how it functioned as a branch of the Tongshanshe 同善社 (Fellowship of Goodness), printing morality books and scriptural texts sacred to the group. For the Tongshanshe, which had an uncertain legal status throughout the Republican period, the bookstore provided a convenient means of producing and distributing its sacred texts under the rubric of publishing morality books. Through its bookstore, the group was able to extend its influence nationally and even to Chinese communities outside the Chinese mainland, as evidenced by the section on the role played by Taiwan’s non-sectarian publisher-bookseller Lanji Bookstore 蘭記書局 in redistributing morality books published in Shanghai. The distribution network of Mingshan Books allowed it to spread the sectarian message to a broader audience than was otherwise possible, for example, for the Wenzaizi bookstore described in Yau Chi-on’s chapter, which was largely limited to locations that were part of its own sectarian network. In “Illuminating Goodness: Some Preliminary Considerations of Religious Publishing in Modern China,” Paul R. Katz approaches the topic from a different angle, focusing on the publisher’s place in the larger context of religious publishing of the time. Again, the Mingshan shuju appears as a decidedly more ambitious venture than the Wenzaizi bookstore in Guangzhou; its adoption of mechanized printing allowed for a larger output of titles, which in turn were distributed through mail and a

national network of branch stores, and advertised by means of independently circulating catalogues. This went along with a rationalization of the Mingshan shuju's range of print products, as evidenced by the product categories in its catalogues.

Each chapter thus throws light on specific aspects of the interplay among religious groups and individuals, rapid developments in print technology and publishing business models, evolving mass communication and transportation, and subtle concurrent shifts and changes in the “modalities of doing religion.”¹ These chapters are pieces of a mosaic of religious life in modern China—a mosaic whose contours have only recently begun to emerge more clearly, as the hegemony of secularization theory with its master narrative of an inevitable decline of religion in the modern age has been weakened and scholars have taken a fresh look at religious modes of constructive engagement with modernity in twentieth-century China. While the present volume adopts a historical perspective and focuses primarily on phenomena of the Republican period, its editors cherish the hope that it will stimulate further study of religions' engagement with the next and still ongoing phase of technological and socio-cultural change in the Digital Age. The findings of the research presented here seem to suggest that religions will again find novel ways of utilizing and appropriating the new media—and that in the process they will be changed by them.