
This lengthy collection of articles is the first in a series intended to offset the discipline’s Eurocentrism by presenting a history of the book in the East. The collection contains nineteen previously published articles drawn from a number of sources and touching on a wide range of topics and time periods in East Asian book history. Brokaw and Kornicki’s *The History of the Book in East Asia* represents an encouraging step towards the promotion of cross-cultural exchange between book historians based in and focused on Asia, and those who study the book history of the West.

The collection opens with a brief introduction and historical overview of the history of manuscript and print production in China, Japan, and Korea. The introduction presents the main languages of manuscript and imprint production and the major printing techniques in each of the three geographical areas, before turning to a more extensive history of print culture and publishing in China. The introductory material on Korea and Japan that follows is scant in comparison, and indeed China is the focus of the bulk of the collection. Of the nineteen articles, nine are devoted to book history in China (375 pages), two to Korea (108 pages), and the remaining eight to Japan (152 pages). Despite their East Asian focus, the majority of the articles were originally published by academic journals or scholarly presses in the West, such as the University of Washington’s *Journal of Japanese Studies* and the University of California Press. They range in original publication dates from 1989 to 2006, are varied in length and detail, and were all originally written in English. Rather than reformatting and paginating the collected articles, the editors Kornicki and Brokaw and the publisher Ashgate have chosen to use the facsimile method, retaining original pagination to facilitate easy citation of the original articles. Unfortunately, this choice, though useful in terms of citation, has degraded the quality of many of the illustrations.
The nineteen articles can be grouped into four main subjects: printing and the technologies of book production; publishing and distribution; illustration; and texts and books as related to social history. In the first article of the collection, Joseph P. McDermott provides a handy overview of Chinese woodblock printing technology, which proved dominant throughout the continent until the advent of industrial printing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of the articles focused on publishing feature in-depth analyses of family-run publishing businesses, including Ellen Widmer’s exhaustive study of the Hangzhou and Suzhou-based enterprise, Huanduzhai (mid- to late-seventeenth century China), and Andrew Markus’s fascinating consideration of the Daisō Lending Library of Nagoya, Japan, which lasted from 1767 to 1899. Another publishing history of note is that of the Hakubunkan publishing empire in Meiji Japan, sketched in a concise but insightful manner by Giles Richter. As well, Cynthia Brokaw’s history of the Zou and Ma family businesses of Sibao, Fujian, should be singled out for making good use of a variety of historical and archival sources as well as the knowledge of contemporary informants still living in Fujian. In terms of book illustration, Anne Burkus-Chasson provides a hermeneutical analysis of the interplay between text and image in a rare mid-sixteenth century Chinese picture book: Liu Yuan’s Lingyan ge. Ekkehard May presents a useful and clearly delineated history of the different forms of illustrated books in Early Modern Japan, from the small kusazōshi, forerunners of the modern manga, in which text and image are no longer arranged on separate pages but run parallel, to gōkan. In the latter, one of the most famous and highly developed picture-narrative genres of the Edo period, text fills almost every empty space of the richly illustrated page, resulting in a dense fabric of word and image. In a more sociologically and culturally inflected approach to book history, Kai-Wing Chow considers how printing contributed in unexpected ways to intellectual change in late Ming China. In a less traditionally book-historical contribution, Martina Deuchler focuses on the propagation of female virtue in Chōson Korea. Her study is much more akin to literary and social history than book history in the strictest sense, as it provides very little context regarding the production, publication, and distribution of the texts in question. Apart from this one example, which remains instructive in terms of content, the articles collected in The History of the Book in East Asia make use of the methodologies and approaches favoured by historians
of the book and print culture, and all may be commended for their intellectual quality and readability.

The goal of the series is to provide an overview of research, and indeed, the variety of methods used and subjects examined in the articles is extensive. What is lacking in the introduction to the History of the Book in East Asia is a historiographical survey of work by East Asian scholars. How has the history of printing and publishing been approached by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean scholars, both contemporary and past? Although many of the authors in Brokaw and Kornicki’s collection rely on original-language primary and secondary sources, the volume itself lacks a comprehensive bibliography, and its index of names contains some lacunae. As well, though reliant on original-language sources for historical details, in terms of theoretical frameworks, the authors turn to Western scholars like Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Elizabeth Eisenstein, and D.F. McKenzie. While The History of the Book in East Asia represents an important preliminary step towards a greater appreciation of the complex histories and print cultures of the region, a possible further step would be to publish foundational texts by East Asian scholars in translation. For example, W.J. Boot, in his chapter on the importation of Chinese and Dutch books through the port of Nagasaki, mentions the work of Japanese scholar Itō Tasaburō, who made a special study of many of these forbidden books in two Japanese articles in 1936, which were later excerpted and translated for publication in Acta Asiatica in 1972. It would be a great boon to the English-language scholarly audience to have wider access to reprints and translations of East Asian classic works and recent scholarship related to bibliography and book history.

Despite the lack of material pointing to original-language sources and its somewhat cursory introduction, The History of the Book in East Asia is a useful resource for students and scholars seeking to explore the rich and extensive history of the book in China, Korea, and Japan. As the series editor Kornicki puts it in his preface, the volume will indeed serve as an invaluable “one-stop” resource for introductory courses and should find its place in any university library supporting programs in history, book history, and East Asian studies.

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