

Sandars Lectures in Bibliography 2008

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The Latin of East Asia?

When Samuel Sandars originally made his benefaction which led to the foundation of the Sandars Readerships in Bibliography in 1895, he specified the broad range of subjects which the lectures were to concern themselves with, but he said nothing about any geographical limitations, presumably not from inadvertence but from genuine catholicity of taste. Of course, at the time of his death in 1894, the oldest printed book in the University Library was of European origin. This was not the Gutenberg Bible, for the Library's copy was not acquired until 1933; nevertheless, the Library's fifteenth-century European imprints were at the time unchallenged in terms of antiquity.

The first East Asian book to find a home in the University Library was a Chinese medical treatise, *Zhu Danxi's central methods* [*Danxi xinfa* 丹溪心法], which was printed in 1600.¹ This was presented by the Duchess of Buckingham in 1632; it carries a pencil inscription reading, 'Found in the Library April 1919' and evidently lay uncatalogued from 1632 to 1919, a delay of exactly 287 years, which makes any minor cataloguing backlogs of today seem rather insignificant. This medical treatise was followed by an early seventeenth-century edition of *The mirror of the East* [*Azuma kagami* 吾妻鑑], a history of thirteenth-century Japan; this came to Cambridge in 1715 when Bishop John Moore's library was presented to the University by King George I, but it had earlier belonged to a clergyman who spent his life in rural England; how he acquired it in 1626, soon after it was published in

¹ University Library [hereafter UL] Sel.3.273. It consists only of volumes 22 and 23 of the supplement. This book came from the estate of Thomas van Erpe (Erpensius), who was professor of oriental languages at Leiden University when he died of the plague in 1624, and was bought by George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, who was elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1626 and was murdered in 1628. See J. C. T. Oates, *Cambridge University Library: a history. From the beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 162-4, 223.

Japan, remains a mystery.² In any case, neither he nor the Duke of Buckingham could read these exotic books, which was certainly a good reason for giving them to somebody else.

In 1886, when the total number of Japanese books in the Library was still just one, a large collection of Chinese and Manchu books was donated by Sir Thomas Wade, a diplomat and sinologist. None of these books yet challenged the Library's oldest European imprints, but in 1911 the Library bought from William George Aston, a long-serving diplomat in Japan and Korea and a pioneering scholar of Japanese and Korean literature, a large collection of books which included a handful printed well before Gutenberg's press began operating in the middle of the fifteenth century: one of them, a Chinese translation of the *Mahā prajñā pāramitā sūtra*, was printed in China in the twelfth century [*Da banruo boluo miduo jing* 大般若波羅密多經] while the other was a Buddhist doctrinal work printed in Japan in 1288 [*Shakumakaen ronsan gensho* 釋摩訶衍論贊玄疏].³ Since 1911, then, the oldest printed books in the Library by a margin of several hundred years have had their origins in East Asia. Over the succeeding hundred years to the present day, acquisitions of early Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Manchu and even Mongolian books have vastly enriched the East Asian collections; they include a translation by Faxian 法顯 of the *Buddhabhāshita-mahāyāna-dhyāna-saṅgāna-mandala-sarvadur-bhāva-prasādhaka-sūtra* [*Fo shuo da cheng guan xiang man-na-luo jing zhu e ju jing* 佛說大乘觀想曼拏羅淨諸惡趣經] which was printed at Fuzhou in China in 1107 and is now the oldest printed book the Library possesses.⁴ It is fair to say, therefore, that the Library has ample in the way of early manuscripts and printed books from East Asia to sustain an East Asian approach to bibliography and the history of the book, one that would have been beyond Samuel Sandar's ken, though his generosity allows us to pursue it today.

I have prepared these lectures on the assumption that few members of the audience will know Chinese. Far from being a disadvantage, that is actually a good thing, for it is in fact sheer ignorance of Chinese that places us in the right frame of mind to appreciate the kind of problems that peoples in East Asia had in ancient times when they encountered the overwhelming textual might of China.

² UL FJ.274.17; Nozomu Hayashi and Peter Kornicki, *Early Japanese books in Cambridge University Library: a catalogue of the Aston, Satow and von Siebold collections* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1-2 and no. 1173.

³ UL FG.711.49 and FG.710.135; Hayashi and Kornicki, nos 2358 and 2365.

⁴ UL FH.20.61; it consists of vol. 2 only.

The theme of the first two of these lectures is the life of Chinese texts outside China, a subject that has until very recently been of little interest in China itself, even though it was those same Chinese texts that created a world of shared knowledge and practice throughout East Asia. It is a subject that poses many difficult questions. How did Chinese texts manage to dominate for so long in lands where Chinese was not spoken at all, how were they received and read there, what occasioned the dramatic loss of esteem they faced in the early twentieth century? And what parallels are there with the rise and fall of Latin in Europe and Sanskrit in South and Southeast Asia?

Before turning to these interesting and important questions, some of which I confess I am not even going to attempt to answer, I need, for the benefit of those who know little of East Asia, to make a few preliminary remarks. These will concern the limits of East Asia, languages and scripts, the nature of the Chinese texts that circulated throughout East Asia and finally book production in East Asia.

Firstly, when I speak of East Asia I am referring to those parts of Asia in which the dominant form of writing, and for centuries the *only* form of writing, was Chinese characters; in other words those societies which first acquired the art of writing from China and which adopted the corpus of Chinese classical texts as the foundation of their systems of intellectual formation. Needless to say, these societies had no conception of Asia and did not consider themselves to be ‘east’ of anywhere, but rather to be around the periphery of China, which was for most of them symbolically as well as geographically the centre of the known world. In the context of the eighth century, therefore, I am talking of the kingdom of Silla which occupied the Korean peninsula, of Parhae to the north of it, and of China, Japan and Annam, which occupied the northern part of what is now Vietnam; if we leap ahead to the nineteenth century then I am talking of China itself, of unified Korea, of Japan, of the Ryūkyū kingdom (which is now called Okinawa and is part of Japan), of a much enlarged Vietnam, and of Manchuria, the north-eastern part of China. For the sake of convenience I shall from now on simply refer to China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam using their present-day names, but it is important to remember that they were far from static entities over these many centuries – polities came, went and were replaced by others, and boundaries, such as they were, were of course in a constant state of flux.

The second issue is scripts and languages. Although these societies on the periphery of China all adopted or used the Chinese script, for they had not evolved scripts of their own, it was a script that was singularly ill-suited to the vernacular languages, which were of course not linguistically related to Chinese at all. Japanese and Korean, for example are both highly inflected

languages and writing them in Chinese characters alone proved extraordinarily cumbersome. The pressure to transform the spoken vernaculars into writing proved irresistible in all East Asian societies, perhaps because the example of Chinese demonstrated the greater authority and permanence of writing.⁵ Thus a few centuries after Chinese writing had been absorbed in Japan and Korea, attempts were made to extend the practice of writing to the vernaculars using the only form of writing known to them, Chinese characters. This involved using Chinese characters in unsystematic and clumsy ways to represent the sounds of Japanese or Korean, rather like rebus writing. These tiresome ways of writing the vernaculars gave way to vernacular scripts in due course, but only after some centuries had passed: in Japan the kana syllabary was developed from abbreviated forms of Chinese characters by the ninth century, in Vietnam Nôm characters were invented on the model of Chinese characters in the tenth century, in Korea the hangŭl alphabet was invented in the mid fifteenth century, and for writing Manchu the Mongolian alphabet was borrowed in the early seventeenth century.⁶ The details need not concern us here, but what is important is that although it then became possible to write the Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese vernaculars, Chinese had become so deeply embedded in the political, educational and literary cultures of these societies that book production was dominated by Chinese texts. By this I mean not only texts originally imported from China but also the many texts written in literary Chinese by Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese in their own countries.

It is for this reason that the literary patrimony of these various societies can be said to be marked by diglossia in writing, perhaps more properly to be termed digraphia. I am referring here to the coexistence within a given society

⁵ See Jack Goody, *The logic of writing and the organization of society* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Sheldon Pollock, *The language of the gods in the world of men: Sanskrit, culture, and power in premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 4.

⁶ See Aldo Tollini *La scrittura del Giappone antico* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2005); Chris Seeley, *A history of writing in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); David Barnett Lurie, 'The origins of writing in Japan: from the 1st to the 8th century CE', unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2001; Young-Key Kim-Renaud, ed., *The Korean alphabet: its history and structure* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1997); C. Michele Thompson, 'Scripts, signs, and swords: the Viêt peoples and the origins of Nôm', *Sino-Platonic papers* 101 (2000); André Fabre, 'Trois écritures à base de caractères chinois: le *idu* (Corée), les *kana* (Japon) et le *chu nôm* (Viet Nam)', *Asiatische Studien* 34.2 (1980), pp. 206-225.

of two written languages enjoying different levels of prestige, in the case of East Asia this means literary Chinese and the various vernaculars.⁷

On the one hand, there was a substantial body of poetry and prose writings written in literary Chinese by Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese. Some of these consisted of commentaries on imported Buddhist or Confucian texts, but there were also diaries, historical works, original philosophical contributions and a host of other works. I said that these were written in literary Chinese, and some of them were indeed written in good Chinese that could and did pass muster in China. Many, however, were written in a form of Chinese that could not necessarily be readily understood elsewhere; in Japan, in particular, forms of writing developed which looked like Chinese and in parts were comprehensible as Chinese but which also contained elements that were influenced by Japanese syntax, by Japanese word-order and by the Japanese requirement for honorific language.⁸ Such forms of writing might have puzzled Chinese or Korean readers, if they came across samples of it, but the educated elite in Japan understood perfectly well what was going on linguistically. At least in principle, then, it was literary Chinese that remained the language of government, scholarship and education throughout East Asia.

On the other hand, in addition to all these texts written in literary Chinese or pseudo-Chinese, there was a growing body of texts written in the vernacular. In the case of Korean, this consisted mostly of translations of Chinese texts and of Korean poetry. In the case of Japanese, however, there is a very substantial body of poetry and prose produced from the ninth century onwards, including of course the *Tale of Genji*; to this was added in the second millennium a large quantity of historical and literary writings in all fields. Mention of the *Tale of Genji*, written of course by a woman, reminds us that at times the divide between high-prestige Chinese and low-prestige vernaculars was marked by gender: although there have always been some women in Japan, Korea and Vietnam who were sinologically literate, they were few in number and their writings consisted mostly of Chinese poetry;

⁷ On this subject see Charles A. Ferguson, 'Diglossia', *Word* 15 (1959), pp. 325-40, and María Angeles Gallego, 'The languages of medieval Iberia and their religious dimension', *Medieval Encounters* 9 (2003), pp. 107-139.

⁸ Minegishi Akira, *Hentai kanbun* (Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1986); in English J. N. Rabinovitch, 'An introduction to *hentai kanbun* (variant Chinese)', *Journal of Chinese linguistics* 24 (1996), pp. 98-126. The eighth-century Korean monk Hye-Ch'o 慧超, who lived many years in China and even travelled to India, does not seem to have written particularly good Chinese in spite of his years of residence there: Han-Sung Yang, Yün-hua Jan, Shōtarō Iida, and Laurence W. Preston, eds, *The Hye-Ch'o diary: memoir of the pilgrimage to the five regions of India* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press/Seoul, Po Chin Chai, 1984), p. 20.

their contributions to intellectual discourse in literary Chinese were all but non-existent, to say nothing of their absence from the offices that generated government documents. Nevertheless, women readers of Chinese there certainly were.⁹

Thirdly, what exactly are the Chinese books that I am talking about? In the first place there is the vast body of Buddhist texts which had been translated from Sanskrit and other languages into Chinese, mostly between the third and seventh centuries, and were then transmitted throughout East Asia. As a result, for those who lived in Vietnam, Korea and Japan, Buddhism was to all intents and purposes a Chinese religion, and written Chinese has largely remained the language of Buddhism to this day. Monastic libraries even in eighth-century Japan and Korea often contained thousands of Chinese Buddhist texts and were thus rather better endowed textually than medieval European monastic libraries.¹⁰

It is worth pausing to take note of the Chinese complexion of Buddhism in East Asia. Since Buddhism was for centuries a Chinese religion for Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese Buddhists, it necessarily required mastery of difficult Chinese texts to approach. There can be little doubt that this was because Buddhism was first transplanted into those societies in the form of Chinese texts before they had evolved any script of their own. The contrast with what happened in Tibet is instructive. The Tibetan script was developed on the basis of the Indian Brahmi script in the seventh century, well before scripts had evolved in Japan, Korea or Vietnam, so Tibetan Buddhism developed on the basis of translations made directly from Sanskrit originals and only later on the basis of translations from Chinese Chan (Zen) texts into Tibetan. For lack of a script, by contrast, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese Buddhists had no choice but to base their faith and their scholarship upon Chinese translations, and Chinese as the language of Buddhism was too deeply embedded to be supplanted by translations when the vernacular scripts

⁹ On Korean women as readers and writers of Chinese, see Ch'oe Yŏnmi, 'Chosŏn sidae yŏsŏng p'yŏnjŏja, ch'ulp'an hyŏmnyŏkja, tokja ūi yŏkhal e kwanhan yŏngu', *Sŏjihak yŏngu* 23 (2002), pp. 113-47. On Japan see Martha C. Tocco, 'Norms and texts for women's education in Tokugawa Japan', in Dorothy Ko, Jahyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott, eds, *Women and Confucian cultures in premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 193-218; and on a seventeenth-century woman with a knowledge of Chinese, Chikaishi Yasuaki 近石泰秋, 'Inoue Tsū-jo shōden narabi ni nenpu', 井上通女小伝並に年譜, in *Inoue Tsū-jo zenshū shūteiban* 井上通女全集修訂版. (Marugame: Kagawa Kenritsu Marugame Kōtō Gakkō Dōsōkai, 1973).

¹⁰ See Kornicki, *The book in Japan: a cultural history from the beginnings to the nineteenth century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 364-70.

were invented centuries later. And this in spite of the relaxed approach inherent in Buddhism towards vernacular translation, particularly when compared with the resistance to translation in Catholic Europe.

Just as important as the Buddhist canon of texts were secular books. In pride of place were the Chinese classics, especially the so-called *Four Books* [*Si Shu* 四書] and *Five Classics* [*Wu jing* 五經], that constituted the core educational texts, and the later commentarial tradition which presented a reformulation of Confucianism, so-called Neo-Confucianism. This classical tradition of Confucian texts dominated secular book production outside China, and the only other categories of book that were imported and then widely reproduced in the rest of East Asia were the Chinese dynastic histories, which were valued as a source of precedents for dealing with political problems, the poetry of the Tang dynasty, which served as a model for verse composition, and didactic books for women. Much later, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chinese vernacular fiction such as the *Water margin* [*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳; also known as *All men are brothers* and *Outlaws of the marsh*] and the *Story of the Stone* [*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢; also known as the *Dream of the Red Chamber*] was added to the repertoire of imported texts.

Fourthly, there is the question of book production. There are several technologies to bear in mind here. The first is that of woodblock printing, which is essentially a mechanism for reproducing a handwritten text, like lithography, especially as used in the Islamic world. There can be no doubt that woodblock printing was practised in China in the seventh century, and it is merely an accident of history that the oldest examples found so far date from eighth-century Korea and Japan.¹¹ The University Library is lucky enough to have four of these texts, which were printed in Japan in the late eighth century and are therefore, by a margin of many hundreds of years, the oldest printed artefacts in the library; I say artefacts not books, for they are but slips of paper.¹²

Typography, the use of movable type, was also invented in China in the form of clay type in the eleventh century, but it was put to little use and no

¹¹ On evidence for printing in China in the seventh century, see T. H. Barrett, *The woman who discovered printing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); on the Korean text printed before 751, see Ch'ŏn Hyebyŏng, *Naryŏ inswaesul ūi yŏngu* (Seoul: Kyŏng'in Munhwasa, 1982), pp. 19-31; on the Japanese printing in 764-70, see Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 115-7.

¹² UL FG.870.1-4; Hayashi & Kornicki, nos 2360-2363.

samples survive.¹³ Wooden type, however, proved more practical and was used in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. The oldest examples come from the Tangut kingdom of Western Xia; Paul Pelliot discovered some wooden Tangut type in 1909, but more recently an act of vandalism on a brick pagoda has revealed much more, including a book which must date from before the demise of the Tangut kingdom in the twelfth-century.¹⁴ The use of metal type was pioneered in Korea in the thirteenth century, and it was widely used for the production of government editions of Chinese canonical texts, but it is unclear why the use of metal type did not spread to other East Asian societies.¹⁵ Typography was introduced comparatively late to Japan, in the late sixteenth century, both in the form of metal type and typography equipment looted from Korea by Hideyoshi's troops and in the form of a European printing press brought to Japan from Macao by Jesuit missionaries. From the late 1590s onwards, some Japanese printers made use of metal and then wooden type, but, for reasons to be discussed in the second lecture, typography failed to take root in Japan and had fallen out of use by 1650.¹⁶ There is also evidence of typography in Vietnam in the eighteenth century, but so far little is known about the extent of its use there.¹⁷ In Japan and Vietnam, then, as well as China itself, woodblocks remained the principle method of printing up to the nineteenth century, and even in Korea woodblock printing ran in parallel with typography.

Finally, just as the work of David McKitterick and others has shown that the development of printing in Europe by no means spelled an end to the production of manuscript books, we must remember that this holds true for

¹³ Tsien Tsuen-Hsün, *Paper and printing*, Part 1 of vol. 5, Chemistry and chemical technology, in Joseph Needham's *Science and civilisation in China* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 201-203.

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Drège, 'Le livre imprimé sino-tangut', *Journal asiatique* 294 (2006), pp. 343-371. For the recent discoveries, see Ningxia Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, ed., *Baisigou Xixia fangta* (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2005); on p. 460 it is claimed that, 'Xixia played an indelible role in the spreading of movable-type printing from China to the West', but this remains to be demonstrated.

¹⁵ Son Po-gi, *Hanguk ūi kohwalja/Early Korean typography* (Seoul: Hanguk Tosōgwanhak Yōnguhoe, 1971).

¹⁶ Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 125-136.

¹⁷ On Vietnamese typography the only source is Yamamoto Tatsurō, 'Development of movable type printing in Vietnam under the Lê dynasty: a study of the comparative history between Japan and Vietnam', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 57 (1999), pp. 1-11.

East Asia, too.¹⁸ For reasons of economy, in order to make copies of rare texts, in order to evade censorship, or in order to control who had access to valuable knowledge, manuscripts continued to be produced, sold and consumed throughout East Asia until the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

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That concludes the introductory remarks I wanted to make. Now to turn to the story of how Chinese books gave way to vernacular books throughout East Asia, a process that lasted more than a thousand years. The narrative that I shall unfold over these three lectures is one that has many parallels to the declining hold of Latin on intellectual discourse in Europe and the rise of vernacular literary traditions, but there were two crucial differences that must be acknowledged at the outset.

The first divergence is, paradoxically, that Latin was a spoken as well as a written language while Chinese was only a written language. Chinese was of course a *spoken* language, or rather languages, in China, but it was decidedly *not* a spoken language in the rest of East Asia, where it thrived almost entirely in the form of literary Chinese and nothing more. This undoubtedly is to be attributed to the huge phonological differences between Chinese and the vernaculars spoken in Korea, Japan and Vietnam which made spoken Chinese well nigh impossible to master without access to native speakers. Some attempts were made in Korea and Japan to master spoken Chinese, it is true, but these were extremely limited in extent.²⁰

¹⁸ David McKitterick, *Print, manuscript and the search for order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Harold Love, *Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1993).

¹⁹ On manuscripts in China, Korea and Japan, see, respectively, Joseph P. McDermott, *A social history of the Chinese book: books and literati culture in late imperial China* (Hong Kong University Press, 2006), pp. 73-6 and *passim*; Boudewijn Walraven, 'Reader's etiquette, and other aspects of book culture in Chosŏn Korea', in W. L. Idema, ed, *Books in numbers* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard-Yenching Library, 2007), pp. 237-265; and P. F. Kornicki, 'Manuscript, not print: scribal culture in the Edo period', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 32 (2006), pp. 23-52.

²⁰ On spoken Chinese in Korea see Ki-joong Song, *The study of foreign languages in the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910)* (Seoul: Jimoondang Publishing Company, 2001) and Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer, *Pak the interpreter: an annotated translation and literary-cultural evaluation of the Piao Tongshi of 1677* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, Australian National University, 2006); on Chinese-speaking in Tokugawa Japan, see Olof G. Lidin, *The life of Ogyū Sorai, a Tokugawa Confucian philosopher* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1973), pp. 120-124, and Shu Zenan, 'Fukami Gentai ni tsuite', *Chiba Shōdai kiyō* 41.4 (2004), pp. 69-92.

In Japan, Korea, the Ryūkyūs and Vietnam, Chinese texts were read and studied by all literate males and a much smaller proportion of women, scholars wrote to each other in Chinese and they composed their contributions to learning exclusively in Chinese, but they did not as a rule know the Chinese pronunciation of the characters they were using nor could they even begin to speak Chinese. They could not, therefore, use it for oral communication either with each other or with people from other societies that were similarly reliant upon Chinese as a written language. When Japanese met Koreans, Vietnamese, Manchus or Chinese, therefore, they could without difficulty communicate silently with brush and paper, but they could not communicate orally, unlike Europeans, who could indeed converse in Latin if they were educated. Take as a late illustration of this the case of Phan Bội Châu 潘佩珠 (1867-1940), the Vietnamese nationalist hero. In the early years of the twentieth century, when he was engaged in his anti-colonial struggle against the French and was trying to raise money in Canton, or to find supporters in Japan, he had always to put his requests in written Chinese, for he could not speak Chinese and knew not a word of Japanese. It is a mark of the prestige that literary Chinese retained, even for a nationalist in the early twentieth century, that his revolutionary pamphlet ‘The history of the loss of Vietnam’ was written in Chinese, and it was again to Chinese that he turned when he wrote his autobiography in 1928.²¹

The second divergence from the case of Latin is that Chinese after all belonged to China: it was not, and never could be, a politically or diplomatically neutral language like Latin in the context of early-modern Europe. Vietnamese, Koreans and Japanese were constantly, and sometimes painfully, aware of the fact that the writing system, the language of discourse and the texts they read were all inextricably bound up with a very powerful state located uncomfortably nearby. This awareness in time gave birth to an acute sense of cultural difference and ultimately to one of self-awareness. It is partly as a consequence of this that the scholarly community in East Asia is no longer able to engage in debate through the medium of written Chinese any more than we are able to debate in Latin.

How and when Japanese or Koreans first encountered the Chinese script and Chinese texts we cannot know, but it must have been in the first half of the first millennium. The texts, we can hazard a guess, must either have been Chinese translations of Buddhist sutras or texts associated with the Confucian

²¹ Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden, eds, *Overtaken chariot: the autobiography of Phan-Bội-Châu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

tradition. As we shall see in a moment, there is some evidence that Chinese texts were used in diplomatic exchanges and that possession of them conferred political benefits, irrespective of whether the recipients could read them or not. Diplomatic gifts apart, however, the principal mechanism whereby Chinese texts were transmitted was in the hands of visitors to China from Korea, Japan and Vietnam when they returned home. Some of these visitors were members of tribute missions to the Chinese court, while others sojourned in China for many years in pursuit of Buddhist understanding or of the underpinnings of Chinese statecraft; doubtless they were among the few who could not only read Chinese but also speak it. But opportunities for travel to China, let alone other neighbouring countries, were notoriously few and far between for Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese, so for most of them it was at home at home that they acquired the only form of writing known to them and at home that they encountered Chinese texts. Thus one of the key problems in all these societies was actually acquiring Chinese texts in the first place.

This itself is worth emphasizing. There is no sign that successive Chinese dynasties at any time ever sought to foist their Buddhist or their classic texts on their ignorant neighbours, and even when commercial publishing came into its own in the Ming dynasty in the sixteenth century, there was no Chinese equivalent of Oxford University Press setting up branches in Seoul, Hanoi and Edo (now Tokyo) to take canny commercial advantage of the continuing thirst for Chinese books. If you wanted new Chinese books, for the most part there was little alternative but to go and get them.

There can be no doubt that Chinese books were wanted badly, desperately even. They were wanted for the academies of higher sinological learning – perhaps we should properly call them universities – which were set up in Korea in the seventh and in Japan in the eighth centuries.²² Furthermore, an official examination system along Chinese lines functioned in Korea and Vietnam as the sole route of entry to government office and this in turn necessitated a constant supply of books for hard-pressed examinees. Urban conflagrations, floods and other disasters were frequent, and led to the destruction of a many a library.²³ War was of course ruinous for books, too: the Ming invasion of Vietnam, the Japanese invasion of Korea in the 1590s and the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1626 and 1637 all did incalculable damage to the stock of books. And the same was true of the destruction of

²² Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the early Heian court* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p. 71ff.

²³ In Japan, for example, the great Kyoto fire of 1177, the deliberate destruction in 1180 of many famous temples and the Ōnin war of 1467-77 all took a severe toll of books: Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 370-3.

Kyoto by warring factions in the fifteenth century. As governments and scholars began to rebuild their libraries after these disasters, it was often to China that they turned for replacements, particularly if they could no longer locate copies of essential texts at home.

The story of the movement of Chinese books all over Asia is a long and deeply illuminating one, but it is also one that, until the last couple of years, appears to have been of no interest whatsoever to Chinese historians and bibliographers.²⁴ And for reasons perhaps of nationalism, bibliographers elsewhere have for the most part been far more intent on vernacular books than on local editions of Chinese texts. And yet it is precisely these local editions that today can show us which Chinese texts were valued and which were not – for tastes outside China did not necessarily correspond to tastes within China – and can show us how they were pre-digested and presented to non-Chinese audiences.

The primary task was always the acquisition of Chinese books, and that was a task fraught with danger and difficulty, given the huge distances and treacherous seas that had to be traversed in the quest for books. Sometimes they were acquired by diplomatic missions visiting China, for books often functioned as tools of diplomacy. It was, for example, in the context of Japan's relations with Paekche, one of the states on the Korean peninsula, that the first books to reach Japan are said to have been transmitted in the fifth century.²⁵ During the Tang dynasty the appetite for books shown by Japanese missions to the Tang court in the eighth century was such as to merit mention in the Tang dynastic history, and there was already talk in China of keeping certain types of book out of the hands of foreigners, especially dynastic histories and books on the art of war.²⁶

During the eleventh century, when the Liao dynasty held sway over northern China, Buddhist texts were brought as gifts by diplomatic missions from as far away as Korea and the Xia state in western China. In the Liao

²⁴ The launch in 2005 of the annual journal *Yuwai hanji yanjiu jikan* 域外漢籍研究集刊 (Beijing: Chunghua Shuju) marks new interest in this subject. Western sinologists have recently become interested in this topic, too: see Talbot Huey, 'Chinese books as cultural exports from Han to Ming: a bibliographic essay', *Studies on Asia*, Series III, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2006), pp. 85-101; also, Emanuel Pastreich, 'The reception of Chinese literature in Korea', 'The reception of Chinese literature in Japan', and 'The reception of Chinese literature in Vietnam', in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia history of Chinese literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 1067-78, 1079-95, & 1096-1104.

²⁵ See Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 278-9.

²⁶ Wang Zhen-ping, 'Manuscript copies of Chinese books in ancient Japan', *The Gest Library Journal* 4.2 (1991), pp. 45-6.

records these are described as ‘tribute’, in other words offerings by a subordinate state, but some of them were evidently valued highly enough to be reprinted by the Liao government. In return the government presented these missions with copies of the Liao edition of the Buddhist canon, of which, it appears sadly, not a single leaf remains.²⁷ Similarly, as late as the nineteenth century, the acquisition of Chinese books was considered in Vietnam to be one of the most desirable by-products of the diplomatic relationship with China. Consequently, it made good sense to despatch the most accomplished scholars on missions to Beijing, not just to demonstrate the attainments of Vietnamese scholars but also, and more importantly, so as to be able to acquire the best books available in the Chinese capital.²⁸

It was probably the Koreans, though, who were the best organized when it came to exploiting diplomatic relationships for the purpose of acquiring books. Indeed, it has been said that the real reason the Korean government was so assiduous in sending missions to China on every conceivable occasion – felicitations on accession to the throne, marriages and births, and condolences on deaths in the imperial family – was the thirst for books.²⁹ This did not go unnoticed in China and in the late seventeenth century the Qing government placed a ban on the acquisition of certain categories of books and maps by barbarians, a category that naturally included both Koreans and Japanese; on several occasions Korean diplomats were caught trying to smuggle contraband books out of China. Some Korean diplomatic missions even had on their staff an official whose sole function was to petition the Chinese emperor for the gift of specific books in return for the loyal tribute offered by his Korean subjects.³⁰ The members of the missions also did some book-buying on their own account while in Beijing, and they were such good customers that Chinese bookshops put up the prices of the kinds of books popular with Korean customers, and were not averse to faking books to sell to gullible Koreans.³¹ What the Korean visitors were after was the best editions

²⁷ Nogami Shunjō, *Ryōkin no bukkyō* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1953), pp. 24-28.

Although it is true that not a leaf remains, a printed copy was pasted onto stone tablets and carved out and these stone tablets remain to this day; rubbings taken from them, which preserve the original form of the Liao canon, are reproduced in facsimile in *Fangshan shijing*, vol. 1- (Beijing: Zhongguo Fojiao Tushu Wenwu Guan, 1986-).

²⁸ Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese model: a comparative study of Vietnamese and Chinese government in the first half of the nineteenth century* (Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 114-5.

²⁹ Kang Hyeyōng, ‘Chosŏn hugi taejung sŏjŏk suip chŏngch’aek yŏngu’, *Tosŏgwanhak nonjip* 11 (1984), pp. 4-5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

of the Chinese classics and the Chinese dynastic histories, though the latter they were supposed to be banned from purchasing. But that was not all that they sought, for they also managed to acquire some works on Christianity written by the Jesuits in Beijing, which led to the emergence of a Catholic minority in Korea, and some Ming vernacular fiction, which in Korea as in Japan and Vietnam inspired vernacular translations and reworkings.³²

Japanese diplomatic missions to Korea were equally assiduous in the quest for books, especially for the vast Korean edition of the Buddhist canon, which was carved on more than 80,000 woodblocks in the mid-thirteenth century. The Korean government was not fooled by the diplomatic pretexts for these missions, for in Korean sources the Japanese were referred to as ‘sutra-seeking missions’; there were more than eighty in all and they made rather a nuisance of themselves. One of them even had the audacity in 1423 to request not merely a complete copy of the text but even the printing blocks themselves; naturally the ambassadors were sent away with a flea in their ear and returned to Japan with empty hands.³³

Diplomatic missions alone, however, were inadequate for maintaining a sufficient supply of books. Monks travelling to China for instruction and study constantly made good use of the opportunity to acquire books, either by copying them themselves or by purchase. We are fortunate that several catalogues compiled by Japanese monks in the eighth century are extant, giving us priceless information on the precise books they brought back from China. We also have a catalogue compiled in Japan in the late ninth century, which identifies the very large quantity of Chinese texts that were known in Japan by that time.³⁴ Alas, we do not have similar sources to tell us about the Chinese books that were reaching Korea or Vietnam then or later.

In the seventeenth century Chinese shipping merchants realised that there was profit to be had from this thirst for books. They began to include them in their cargoes on their own account, not at the behest of Chinese publishers for they had realised that there was a good market for such wares, particularly in Japan and Vietnam.³⁵ Again, we are fortunate that detailed records survive of the titles imported into Japan year by year, but in this case we have censorship to thank. Early in the seventeenth century some books on Christianity written in Chinese by the Jesuits in Beijing ran foul of the Japanese prohibition on Christianity; as a result, strict censorship controls were imposed on all Chinese

³² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³³ Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 293-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 285, 416-26.

³⁵ Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese model*, p. 123.

book imports, and the censors, with bureaucratic punctiliousness that later scholars can only be thankful for, kept meticulous records to protect their backs. So, we can learn what new books were reaching Japan, in what quantities and when.³⁶ This was now the only way Japanese could get Chinese books, for they were forbidden to travel to China from the early seventeenth century onwards, and so were in a worse position than Koreans and Vietnamese, who could travel to Beijing and select the books they wanted. Nevertheless, it was through this means that vernacular Ming fiction began to reach Japan, and, in the 1850s, some worrying accounts of the Opium Wars and the threat to East Asia posed by the imperialist powers reached Japan in this way, too.³⁷

The movement of Chinese books throughout East Asia has recently been dubbed the Book Road by Wang Yong, on the analogy of course of the Silk Road.³⁸ The analogy is apt up to a point, for just as it was thanks to the Silk Road that the material culture of central Asia and even Persia reached Japan in the eighth century and is preserved to this day in the Shōsōin in Nara, so it was thanks to the Book Road that Chinese manuscripts and, later on, printed books reached Japan, Korea and Vietnam. The analogy fails, however, when we consider that most of the traffic on the Book Road was moving in one direction and was in one language alone.

If we were to try and draw a map of the movement of books and texts in East Asia, it would look something like a centrifugal pattern in which books travelled from China to neighbouring polities. This is not to say that books did not travel between those neighbours or that some books did not travel in the reverse direction, from Japan or Korea to China, for of course they did. Needless to say, books travelling in the reverse direction had to be books written in literary Chinese, for there was no audience whatsoever in China for books written in the Korean, Vietnamese or Japanese vernaculars.

Given the quantities of books being written and printed in Chinese in Japan, Korea and Vietnam, it might be supposed that there must have been a common audience, even if not a ready market, for Chinese texts throughout East Asia. Let us consider two examples. In the first (fig. 1), we see an edition of *The School Sayings of Confucius* [*Kongzi jiyu*, 孔子家語], a collection of

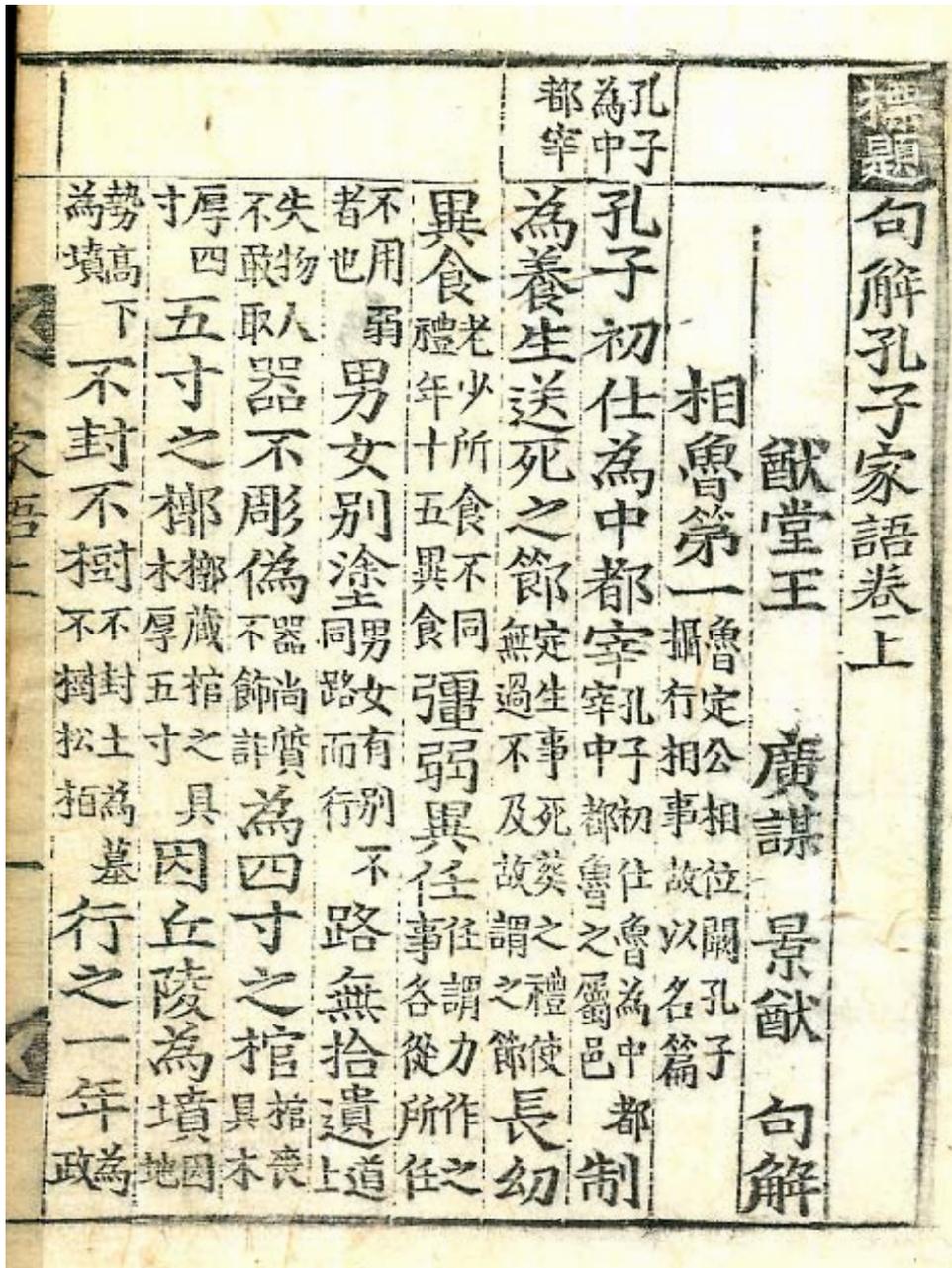
³⁶ Ōba Osamu, (*Edo jidai ni okeru*) *Chūgoku bunka juyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1984); Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 296-299.

³⁷ R. H. van Gulik, 'Kakkaron, a Japanese echo of the Opium War', *Monumenta Serica* 4 (1939-40), pp. 478-545; Yamamuro Shin'ichi, *Shisō kadai to shite no Ajia* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001), pp. 214-5.

³⁸ Ō Yū [Wang Yong], *Shomotsu no chūnichī kōryūshi* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Kōbō, 2005).

episodes put together well after the time in which Confucius is supposed to have lived. The large characters constitute the text while the smaller characters squeezed into narrow columns are a commentary written by a Chinese scholar

Fig. 1. The school sayings of Confucius printed in Korea in 1810 (author's collection).



in the fourteenth century. This edition, therefore, could have been printed anywhere in East Asia, for it consists of nothing but a transmitted Chinese text and its commentary; in fact, it actually reproduces many of the accidentals of Chinese editions – the solid line framing the text, the lines ruled between each column of text and the decorative features at the edge of the page. In this form, then, this copy could have been printed in China, Japan, Korea or Vietnam; in fact a 1533 Ming edition and a 1599 Japanese edition are extant, and there must have been earlier editions that are no longer extant; this particular example, however, was printed in Korea in 1810.

The second example (fig. 2) is an anthology of poetry from the Tang dynasty. The title page of this edition identifies on the right the author of the explanatory material in Chinese and on the left the publisher, whose location is not specified; the text itself carries the same accidentals noted before and this, too, could have been printed anywhere in East Asia; in fact, it is a nineteenth-century edition from Vietnam.

There is not the slightest sign, however, that such local editions of Chinese texts circulated anywhere outside the societies in which they were produced. In this sense, the function of such books is quite unlike, say, a sixteenth-century edition of Virgil or Ovid, which might travel far from its country of origin.³⁹

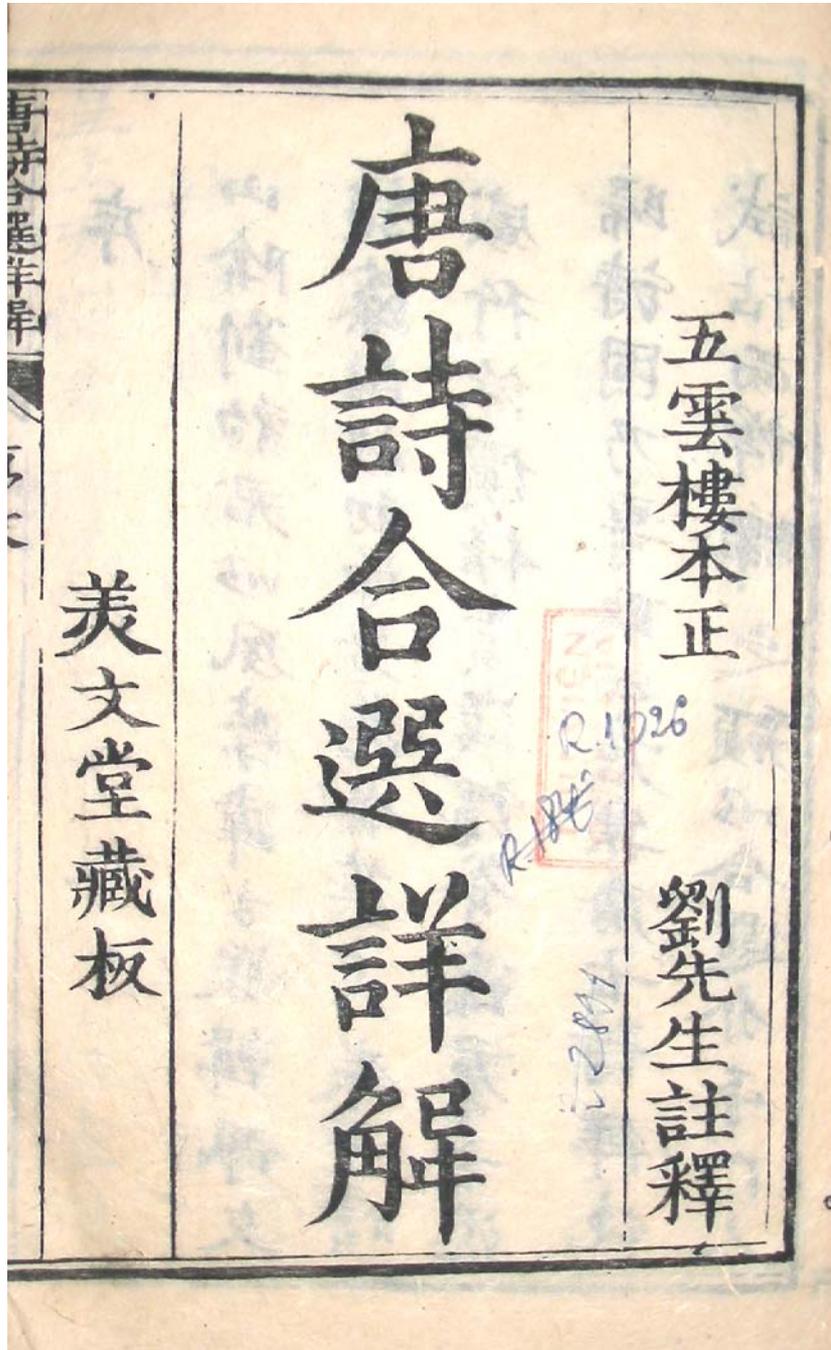
A similar point can be made about the Chinese writings of learned Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese. While Italian neo-Latin poetry was being reprinted in Spain even before the end of the fifteenth century and the Latin writings of an Erasmus or Thomas More circulated throughout Europe, the same was not true of even the best writings in Chinese produced in Japan, Korea or Vietnam.⁴⁰ There is plenty of evidence to show that ambitious Japanese and Korean scholars sent some of their writings to China, but what is striking, however, is how very few of these texts made any impact in China whatsoever. Let us consider a few examples.

Some time in the seventh century a Japanese monk prepared a rather good commentary, naturally in Chinese, on the sutra known in English as the *Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala* [*Śrīmālā sūtra*]; the commentary bears the title *Shōmangyō gisho* 勝鬘經義疏. In 615 this commentary was taken to the Korean kingdom of Koguryō by a Korean monk resident in Japan called Hyeja

³⁹ On this and in general on the relationship between Latin and the vernaculars, see Peter Burke, *Languages and communities in early modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), chapters 2-3.

⁴⁰ Alejandro Coroleu, 'Introduction', in Barry Taylor and Alejandro Coroleu, eds, *Latin and vernacular in renaissance Spain* (Manchester Spanish and Portuguese Studies, 1999), pp. 4-5.

Fig. 2. *Annotated anthology of Tang poetry* in a nineteenth-century Vietnamese edition (National Library of Vietnam, Hanoi).



惠慈 (?-622), who may well have been the author of the commentary, although it is usually loyally attributed by Japanese scholars to the Japanese Prince Shōtoku; in 767 some Japanese monks on their way to China for study took another copy with them; in time a Chinese monk produced a secondary commentary on this work and when the Japanese monk Ennin visited China in the middle of the ninth century he came across this secondary commentary and brought a copy back to Japan.⁴¹ This is the only recorded instance before modern times of a Chinese scholar writing a commentary on a work emanating from Japan, though for Japanese scholars writing commentaries on works imported from China was all in a day's work.

Many other works were exported to China, by Japanese or Koreans hoping to make a signal contribution to sinological scholarship, but most disappeared without trace. Just two exceptions can be mentioned; one was the *Vajrasamādhi sūtra* [金剛三昧經], one of the oldest works of Chan/Zen Buddhism, which was in fact written in the seventh century in Korea and thence transmitted to China, Japan and Tibet.⁴² The other is a study of the book of *Mencius* by Yamanoi Konron 山井崑崙 (1690-1728) completed in 1726 [*Shichikei Mōshi kōbun hoi* 七經孟子考文補遺]; Japanese printed copies reached China and were greeted with surprised praise by Chinese scholars, but, again, this is the only known example of Japanese sinological scholarship gaining a favourable reception in China.⁴³ Although these two texts undeniably made an impact in China, it is arguable that the most significant exports to China from Japan and Korea were not texts written by Japanese or Korean scholars at all so much as Chinese texts which had been lost in China but had been preserved elsewhere; on several occasions Chinese scholars actively sought out such lost texts from Japan and Korea and arranged for copies to be made and sent back to China.⁴⁴

The impression that these few instances convey, then, is one of literary and intellectual self-sufficiency in China vis-à-vis its East Asian neighbours: what need was there, after all, of the lucubrations of Japanese, Korean or

⁴¹ Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 306-7.

⁴² Robert E. Buswell, *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea: The 'Vajrasamādhi-Sūtra', a Buddhist Apocryphon* (Princeton University Press, 1989)

⁴³ Ōba Osamu and Wang Yong, *Tenseki* (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1996), pp. 292-300; Roy Andrew Miller, 'Some Japanese influences on Chinese classical scholarship of the Ch'ing period', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 72 (1952), pp. 56-67.

⁴⁴ Kornicki, *The book in Japan*, pp. 310-311; Chih-weh Chan, 'The Korean impact on T'ien-t'ai Buddhism in China: a historical analysis', in Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Currents and countercurrents: Korean influences on the East Asian Buddhist traditions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 227.

Vietnamese scholars – well-meaning, no doubt, but not quite up to scratch? This impression is only reinforced when we recall, as Peter Burke has recently reminded us, that in Europe some books were translated from the various vernaculars into Latin as late as the eighteenth century for ease of circulation abroad, and that works such as Thomas More's *Utopia* were published in various European countries both in the original Latin and in vernacular translation.⁴⁵ I know of not a single example of a vernacular work in Japanese, Vietnamese or Korean being translated into Chinese for circulation abroad; vernacular works were instead hermetically confined to the societies that produced them.

The one significant exception to what I have said about the literary and intellectual self-sufficiency of China is that those who travelled to China and stayed there could make an intellectual impact. The most important such cases are perhaps the Korean monks Musang 無相 (680?-756?) and Wōnch'ūk 圓測 (613-696). Musang was recognised as the 3rd patriarch of Chan/Zen Buddhism in Sichuan and his name features in Tibetan records as one of the transmitters of Chan Buddhism to Tibet; Wōnch'ūk, for his part, enjoyed the patronage of Empress Wu and his commentary on the *Sa dhinirmocana sūtra* was translated into Tibetan where it was known as the 'great Chinese commentary'.⁴⁶ But both of them crossed over to China in the seventh century and, significant though their contributions undoubtedly were, they had no later successors. What these two cases clearly show is that writing brilliant exegetical works in impeccable literary Chinese was not enough, so long as you did not leave your desk in Japan or Korea. The transmission of ideas in East Asian Buddhist practice was after all not purely textual, for face-to-face instruction remained an important element. It is therefore not at all surprising that Musang and Wōnch'ūk were able to exercise such influence in China while other learned Japanese and Korean monks, who spent little time in China or never visited it at all, remained known only in their own countries.

The converse of Chinese self-sufficiency in texts and books was the state of textual dependency on China found in East Asian societies until the late

⁴⁵ Peter Burke, 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe', in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, eds, *Cultural translation in early modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.7-38.

⁴⁶ On Musang and Wōnch'ūk see Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism: conversion, contestation, and memory* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 69-84; Bernard Faure, 'Ch'an master Musang: a Korean monk in East Asian context', and Cho Eunsu, 'Wōnch'ūk's place in the East Asian Buddhist tradition', Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Currents and countercurrents: Korean influences on the East Asian Buddhist traditions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 153-72 & 173-216.

nineteenth century. In Japan, Korea and Vietnam official publications overwhelmingly consisted of local editions of Chinese classical or Buddhist texts; commercial publishing came into its own in Japan in the seventeenth century, well before Korea and Vietnam, but even then it was texts in Chinese, suitably adapted for the convenience of Japanese readers as we will see in the next lecture, that dominated production. The ultimate example of dependence upon China was the government library in Edo, which only collected imported Chinese imprints and disdained all books printed in Japan, even sinological texts. The contrast here with China is stark: up to the seventh century, Buddhist books in Sanskrit had been imported into China and translated, and later, in the fifteenth century great interest was taken in Tibetan Buddhism, but no interest was shown in books written even in literary Chinese by learned Japanese, Vietnamese or Koreans, let alone books actually written in the Japanese, Vietnamese or Korean vernaculars.⁴⁷

Thus large quantities of Chinese texts were being imported from China or other neighbouring countries into Japan, Korea and Vietnam, or being copied or reprinted there, and equally large numbers of Chinese texts were being written by Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese, but how were they read? How was the necessary knowledge of literary Chinese, not an easy language at the best of times, acquired outside China? Were there textbooks like those that taught the elements of Latin to pupils all over Europe? No, we would look in vain for anything like that. So, the obvious question is this: in societies in which education was based upon familiarity with the core Confucian texts and in which governments frequently sought to inculcate the civic and moral virtues they found desirable in those texts, how could those same, difficult texts be made accessible not just to a handful of scholars but to a larger segment of the population? And how could readers be guided towards the approved interpretation of those texts? In the second lecture, therefore, I shall explore the attempts that were made to render difficult Chinese texts more accessible even before vernacular scripts had come into their own. The solution was to domesticate them, to find some way of making Chinese conform to the very different grammatical norms of Japanese and Korean and so to make them easier to handle.

⁴⁷ On the Tibetan *kanjur* (ie canon) printed in China in 1410, see Helmut Eimer, 'The Tibetan Kanjur printed in China,' *Zentralasiatische Studien* 36 (2007), pp. 35-60.

