PART ONE

CHANGE: INTERPRETING ACCUMULATION IN TEXT PRODUCTION AND COLLECTING
I. Introduction

The focus of this paper is on the ways that the increased availability of books in eleventh- and twelfth-century China affected ways of thinking about the written word. I will begin by quoting a few sources that suggest how widespread and quantitatively significant was the increase in books, owing largely (but not entirely) to the spread of printing. Most of these passages are well known and have been cited in the considerable amount of scholarship in Chinese on the history of printing during the Song.1 There is first the exchange of 1005 between Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 998–1022) and Xing Bing 邢昺:

The emperor went to the Directorate of Education to inspect the Publications Office. He asked Xing Bing how many woodblocks were kept there. Bing replied, “At the start of our dynasty, there were fewer than four thousand. Today, there are more than one hundred thousand. The classics and histories, together with standard commentaries, are all fully represented. When I was young and devoted myself to learning, there were only one or two scholars in every hundred who possessed copies of all the classics and commentaries. There was no way to copy so many works. Today, printed editions of these works are abundant, and officials and commoners alike have them in their homes. Scholars are fortunate indeed to have been born in such an era as ours!”

1 Key works include the following (listed here in reverse chronological order): Zhang Gaoping, “Diaoban yinshua”; several essays contained in Zhongguo chuban shiliao, 302–455; Zhou Baorong, Songdai chuban; Li Zhizhong, Gudai banyin, ch. 5; and Zhang Xiumin, Zhongguo yinshua, 53–221. There is also much valuable information on Song printing in Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol. 1, sec. 5; and Fan Fengshu, Zhongguo sijia cangshu, sec. 2, ch. 1. In English, the most detailed study of commercial printing during the Song period is Part II of Chia’s Printing for Profit. Also very useful is the article by Cherniack, “Book Culture,” which concentrates on issues related to textual transmission in the period of proliferating imprints, including textual corruption, collation, emendation, and other editorial practices.

2 Xu Changbian (2), 60.1333.