THE USES OF PRINT IN EARLY QUANZHEN DAOIST TEXTS

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I. Introduction

This paper explores the uses of print by the Quanzhen 宗真² Daoists, a group that began in the third quarter of the twelfth century under the Jurchen Jin 金 Dynasty (1127–1234) and rapidly grew to be the largest Daoist school in north China over the next 150 years. The rise of Quanzhen Daoism has been well studied, so I shall not dwell on the mainly religious aspects of the movement.³ But a look at the ways Quanzhen Daoists used texts, whether engraved on stone or printed on paper, and the religious images depicted in imprints and temple murals can help us understand the impressive spread of this movement from the twelfth through the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Furthermore, Quanzhen publishing activities allow us to examine some less-studied aspects of the history of books and printing in imperial China, such as the publishing in the north and that done by religious organizations during the Jurchen Jin and Mongol Yuan 元 (1234–1368) periods.

Beginning sometime in the eleventh century, the number of books published in China increased markedly, although it is hard to give even rough numerical estimates of the editions produced. Zhang Xiumin, for example, thinks that there might have been several tens of thousands of titles printed in the Song 宋 Dynasty (960–1279), but only

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¹ The author thanks an anonymous reviewer and Pierre Marsone for their comments and suggestions.
² The term Quanzhen has been interpreted in various ways: ‘complete perfection,’ ‘completion of authenticity,’ ‘complete reality,’ ‘perfect realization,’ etc., depending on the translator’s overall understanding of Quanzhen teachings. Since I do not intend to focus on the religious ideas of Quanzhen Daoism in this paper, I shall use the original untranslated term.
³ Rather than attempt an exhaustive listing of these works, I refer to the articles in the special section on Quanzhen Daoism in Journal of Chinese Religions 29 (2001) and the references therein. These articles also touch on the evolving historiography of the Quanzhen movement, as does Tsui, Taoist Tradition, especially ch. 1. Studies will be cited below, as they relate to the discussion at hand.
about 1,500 works are extant, suggesting a rather low survival rate of 15 percent or less. For the Jin, a much shorter-lived dynasty, we have perhaps 120, and for the Yuan, 600–700 extant titles.

In addition to estimating the number of lost works, there is also the issue of geographical distribution—where and why publishing centers arose. Insufficient information about precise dates and venues of imprints have made investigating such questions highly difficult. One overall conclusion remains unchallenged, however: the area north of the Yangzi, or more accurately, north of the Huai River, produced far fewer imprints than that to the south. During the Northern Song (960–1127), the only region in north China that produced a significant number of publications was Jingji lu, where the capital, Kaifeng, was located. Given that the Guozi jian (Directorate of Education) alone issued about 130 titles out of the circuit’s total of 171, it seems that central government offices accounted for nearly all that area’s publications. Each of two other circuits in the north, Jingdong xi lu (southern Hebei) and Hedong lu (much of Shanxi) accounts for two imprints. Finally, my preliminary survey of Yuan imprints suggests that prior to the Mongol conquest of south China around 1279, books published in Mongol-controlled north China numbered fewer than 150, so that most of the Yuan imprints came from south China after that date. Given these estimates, it is tempting to discount the north of China from the tenth through the late fourteenth centuries in a study of books and printing. But this dismissal neglects at least one important commercial printing center, Pingyang, active from the late twelfth through the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Moreover, religious printing thrived to some extent, as we see from the reprinting of the Daozang (Daoist Canon) from blocks cut during the Northern Song.

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4 Zhang Xiumin, Zhongguo yinshua shi, 58. My estimate of 1,500 extant Song imprints is based on the figures in Appendices A and B in Poon, “Books and Printing.”

5 The Jin and Yuan figures are my own estimates, based on a wide variety of Chinese rare book catalogs. Calculation of the average number of imprints per year shows the Yuan figures to be more impressive than that for the Song, especially considering that most Yuan imprints came from central and southern China, when under Mongol control (ca. 1279–1368). The numbers are for works in Chinese. Although books in Jurchen were printed during the Jin dynasty, nothing has survived, and little in Mongolian is extant from the Yuan.

6 The estimate of 130 Directorate of Education editions was derived from Poon, “Books and Printing,” Appendix A, while the figures for the three circuits are from Poon’s Appendix B, 468.