



FROM ORACLE BONES TO E-PUBLICATIONS

THREE MILLENNIA OF PUBLISHING IN CHINA



China International
Publishing Group



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Introduction

One of the world's four ancient civilizations, Chinese civilization has continued for thousands of years without interruption. It is a culture characterized by long history, rich content, unity in diversity, deep and far-reaching influence, and continuous development. To review 3,000 years of Chinese publishing is to see the reasons behind the changes that took place in each period of publishing activity. Therefore, the publication and presentation to the world of this illustrated summation of China's 3,000 years of publishing is of great significance.

The contents of the book is divided into four periods, a chronological approach that displays China's publishing history and culture against the whole panorama of Chinese cultural development. Papermaking technology, printing technology and the application of modern digital technology are the transition markers, thus: 1. The invention of characters and the appearance of books – the era of writings on bamboo and silk; 2. The invention of papermaking technology – the era of books handwritten on paper; 3. The invention and development of printing technology – the printing era; 4. The development of digital technology, a profound influence on Chinese publishing – our current digital publishing era. Modern Chinese publishing is highly diverse in character, a pattern that encompasses print publishing, on-line publishing and mobile-phone publishing.

The Appendices cover book layout and binding in ancient China, large-scale compilations and complete works, and books most representative of Chinese culture.



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Preface

**The Origin and
Evolution of
Publishing in China**

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Publishing has many definitions but, from a macro-perspective, it is a human activity of accumulating knowledge and spreading civilization. The many kinds of publications produced by man are not only instruments whereby civilization is spread but also the direct product of knowledge accumulation. By its very nature, publishing is closely associated with the development of culture and civilization. In China, a country blessed with age-old civilization and profound culture, publishing has a time-honored history. Over the past millennia, the Chinese have created a huge variety of publications and nurtured a brilliant book culture.

If we look at China's publishing activity in the context of its thousands of years of civilization, we can draw the following conclusion: Publishing has developed in China in an uninterrupted manner since 3,000 years ago when the Chinese script was invented and documents first appeared.

China's 3,000 years of continuous publishing have left an invaluable cultural legacy both for China itself and the world at large. From a historical perspective, China, as one of the cradles of world civilization, was among the first countries to engage in publishing. In the history of world civilization China's classic works perhaps deserve a book of their own, given their large numbers, long history, wide circulation and continued and detailed documentation. Creative Chinese people have shown great wisdom in their long-term publishing activity. Papermaking and printing, two of the four most important inventions in ancient China, not only helped publishing in China to flourish but also helped accelerate the transition from barbarism to civilization in the eastern hemisphere. Moreover, a large number of eminent editors, publishers, distributors and sales people have emerged since publishing started in China 3,000 years ago.

Looking back at the 3,000-year history of publishing in China, we find that Chinese publishers made innovations at each stage based on the achievements of the previous stage, thus moving the publishing industry forward. The industry follows a unique trajectory of evolution with diverse features. It is therefore highly significant to produce this illustrated review of the history of publishing in China and present it to readers at home and abroad.



Chapter I

The Era of Oracle Bones, Bamboo and Silk

21st - 2nd Century BC

