

# An Examination of the Engraving of the Book of Han in “Jing You Ben”

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**Abstract:** This paper takes “Jing You Ben” Book of Han as the object of study, describes the process of its formation, introduces the features of its edition, and divides it into two categories, original engravers and supplementary engravers, through the collation and analysis of engravers, and on this basis, argues that “Jing You Ben” Book of Han was published in the Northern Song Dynasty.

**Keywords:** “Jing You Ben”; Book of Han; Engravers

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## 1. The Formation Process of the “Jing You Ben” Book of Han

The Song dynasty has been proofreading three historical books, namely the Historical Records, the Book of Han, and the Book of Later Han, since the Chun Hua period of the Song dynasty in China, and has continued to do so since then. “In the seventh month of the fifth year of the reign of Chunhua, the imperial edict selected officials to study the Book of History, the Former, and the Later Han”<sup>[1]</sup>. Finally, the names “Jing De Ben” and “Jing You Ben” were created. The three history books “Jing You Ben” are traditionally considered to be the three history books published during the Jing You period of the Northern Song Dynasty. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, scholars often took the wrong version as “Jing De Ben” and “Jing You Ben” according to the publication of the history book and the avoidance of the text in the history book. Today, the “Jing You Ben” Book of Han is in the collection of the National Library of China. At the end of the “Jing You Ben” Han Book, there are the words of Yu Jing, a minister of the Northern Song Dynasty, who said that the “Han Book” was published in the year of Jing You, so the Historical Records and the Book of Later Han, which have the same style and characteristics as the Book of Han, were regarded as a set of history books published at the same time, and for many years, the three history books were incorrectly called “Jing You Ben”.

Only in recent years has this claim been questioned. “However, there remains a question as to whether the original book was published during the reign of Jing You”<sup>[2]</sup>. Through analysis of the engravers of the three historical books the Historical Records, the Book of Han, and the Book of Later Han found that most of these workers lived in the late Northern Song Dynasty and early Southern Song Dynasty. Scholars only found that it has always been considered by many scholars to be a historical book engraved in the early Northern Song Dynasty, and the real time of publication was in the late Northern Song Dynasty and the early Southern Song Dynasty.

There are a total of 2 copies of the “Jing You Ben” Book of Han that are preserved. All were collected by Huang Pilie and are now in the collection of the National Library. One has preserved 98 volumes, the 30th volume is completed with the ancient Chinese Song Dynasty Qingyuan Jian’an Liu Zhiwen inscription, and the 29th volume is completed with the ancient Chinese Song Dynasty Jiading Jian’an Cai Qi inscription. There are 100 volumes in total, collection number 9592. The first preserved 92 volumes, volumes 54, 87, 88, and 97 were completed with the eight-year inscription of the Ming Zeng Tong, the directory and volume 1 were completed

by the early Qing transcription, and volume 19, volume 62, and the upper parts of 64 were completed by the Qing transcription. 100 volumes, collection number 7344.

## 2. The typographic characteristics of the “Jing You Ben” Book of Han

Today, it can be known that the ancient books engraved in the real Northern Song Dynasty of China are extremely rare, and the ancient books engraved by the ancient imperial court are even rarer. As the earliest ancient books of the Northern Song Dynasty, the three history books of “Jing You Ben” are very important to study the three historical books, and the research is of great significance. “Jing You Ben” Book of Han consists of 100 volumes. In front of the main text, there is a text of the State Council in the first year of Qian Xing of the Song Dynasty, and after the main text, there is a text of “The Book of Han in Chinese” and two postscripts of Huang Pilie and Gu Guangqi. Volumes 29 and 30 are replaced by other editions of the Book of Han published in ancient China during the Song dynasty. Some pages were blurred due to time, so later generations used transcriptions to fill in the blurred text. Pages that have been repaired with transcriptions of ambiguous text often have a large gap between the font and the original page.

The Book of Han has 20 lines per page, 19 words per line of text, and 25-28 words per line of text for the notes, with some lines having 37 words. A survey of the engravings based on the 9592 version first is as follows.

Original engraving workers					
Niu xian	Wang tian	Shi gui	Yin gui	Zhu zong	Zhu bao
He li	He xian	Yu yong	Wu an	Wu shi	Lü ji
Song xiang	Shen ren	Shen cheng	Shen shen	Shi yuan	Shen xin
Zhou cheng	Hu gong	Hong ji	Ling an	Sun an	Sun cheng
Xu cheng	Xu jing	Xu zhen	Xu ya	Lang zheng	Zhang an
Zhang xuan	Zhang gui	Zhang ju	Xu zong	Xu ming	Xu liang
Xu jian	Chen yong	Chen ji	Chen zhong	Chen yan	Chen you
Chen kui	Chen xin	Chen hao	Chen jue	Chen hui	Tu heng
Tu ju	Ji qi	Tang li	Hua lian	Yang yu	Yang shou
Yang jie	Yang qi	Yang de	Zhao chang	Jiang zong	Zheng an
Zheng yan	Zheng zhang	Wei yu	Qian zhen	Qian zhen	Gu quan
supplementary engraving workers					
Ding you	Mao zhong	Mao duan	Niu shi	Wang bao	Wang jin
Wang zhen	Yin zhi	Yu ji	Wu liang	Wu shao	Lü jian
Song qiu	Song rong	Lin you	Lu xiang	Niang sheng	Sun xiang
Xu sheng	Xu zhi	Xu yan	Xu gao	Chen xian	Chen quan
Chen yan	Chen chang	Chen wei	Chen fu	Huang hui	Dong ming

For the study of editions in the Song and Yuan official histories is an important work introducing the system of editions of the twenty-four historical books. However, the following mistakes have been made in the study of the engraving of the Book of Han in the “Jing You Ben”. First, inconsistency between the general statement and the explanation. The general statement places some engravers in the category of original engraving workers, for example Wang zhen, Yin qi, Sun cheng, Chen jue. However, the names do not appear in the explanation. There is also a situation where some names appear in the explanation, but not in the general statement. For instance, Niu shi, Sun xiang, Xu sheng, Wei yu.

The problem arises because the author did not study the engraving of the two books separately. Two “Jing You Ben” Book of Han in the National Library of China. The printing dates of the two “Jing You Ben” books of Han are one after the other. For example, the author lists the names of a number of engravers, but a detailed comparison reveals that these people do not appear in the “Jing You Ben” edition of the Book of Han, with the collection number 9592. For example, Qiu dian, Wang zhong, He an, Ye hu, Yan zong. If we want to stage the engraving of the Book of Han in more detail, we must first study the engraving of the two books separately. The Book of Han with the collection number 9592 was printed later than the Book of Han with the collection number 7344, so that the Book of Han with the collection number 7344 is of great value. It is a great pity that the book has not yet been photocopied and is not yet available for the general public to see in person.

### 3. The importance of studying ancient book engravers

Knowing how an ancient book was formed and when it was published is the only way to know the literary value of the book. Because of the time and lack of information, it is difficult to know when some ancient books were published. There are a number of secondary sources that we use to determine when an ancient book was inscribed. A number of scholars have summarised many of these aids, such as typeface, paper, ink, and the avoidance of writing. During the Tang and Song dynasties in China, books were published in pursuit of avoidance of the words in the book. This trend was not abolished until the 20th century. For example, there was an emperor in the Song Dynasty in China, and the emperor's name was "Zhao shen", so the books engraved after the emperor's death, as long as the word "shen" was encountered, other characters were selected instead.

In ancient China, the process of making paper had its own characteristics in each region, as each region used different raw materials. Paper is often also used as an important basis for determining when an ancient book was published. For example, in the Fujian region of China, the raw material for paper was mostly bamboo, so most of the ancient books printed in the Fujian region were on bamboo paper.

There were many scripts in ancient China, so ancient books printed in different regions and eras had their own distinctive fonts. For example, around the Hangzhou area of China during the Song dynasty, most of the standard fonts for ancient books were imitated by Ouyang Xun, and many of the standard fonts for ancient books printed in the Sichuan area of ancient China were imitated by Yan Zhenqing. However, the typeface varies with time and region, and there are often subtle differences within the typeface, so to determine when an ancient book was printed, one needs to combine the typeface with other conditions to make a comprehensive judgement.

There are many other aids to determining when a book was printed, such as other people's accounts of ancient books and the seals left on books by collectors. However, the more scientific and secure method of determining the date of an ancient book is based on the workers who engraved it. In the process of engraving ancient books, workers would often leave their names on the books. The main purpose of leaving the names of the workers was to assess the results of their work and to calculate their wages, but it did make it easier for future generations to determine the date of the ancient books. "Find a few books with clear dates and places of engraving as references, and note the names of the engravers. If the names of the engravers are the same as those of other books, it can be concluded that they were published at the same time and in the same place"<sup>[3]</sup>.

An engraver worked for an average of 40, if not 50, years. By comparing the engravers of the Book of Han with publications today for which we have a clear idea of the date of publication, it is possible to deduce when the Book of Han was published. By analysing the clarity of each page of the book, it is also possible to stage the engraving in more detail, which is a great help to the study of ancient books. In conclusion, it is important to study and analyse the engraving of ancient books.

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