

*The Pop-up Books Collection
of Guan Zhongping.*
A Brief History of Chinese Pop-up Books

Guan Zhongping

Pop-up Book House 立体书屋

Contact: 23506278@qq.com

Si inaugura qui un nuovo spazio, che diverrà una rubrica fissa nei prossimi fascicoli, dedicato ai collezionisti di libri animati ovunque residenti nel mondo. A inaugurarlo in questo numero è il contributo di un collezionista cinese di pop-up, Guan Zhongping di Beijing (Cina), che, attraverso la propria collezione, delinea una “breve storia dei libri pop-up cinesi”, tema particolarmente negletto in bibliografia.

This issue inaugurates a new section – destined to become a regular feature in forthcoming years – dedicated to collectors of movable books worldwide. The opening contribution is offered by a Chinese pop-up book collector, Guan Zhongpin of Beijing (China), who, through his own collection, outlines a “brief history of Chinese pop-up books,” a subject that has been largely neglected in the scholarly literature.

KEYWORDS

Chinese pop-up books; pop-up books collection; pop-up books history.

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About Guan Zhongpin*

Chinese well-known pop-up book collector.

Collected more than 4.000 pop-up books and pop-up cards.

Pop-Up Book House WeChat official accounts founder.

Chongqing University of Education visiting professor. Teaching pop-up book appreciation and design in the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication and other universities.

In recent years, he has been committed to promoting the art of pop-up books to the public.

* All the images accompanying this contribution pertain to materials held in the rich collections of the Guan Zhongpin. The only exception concerns Fig. 31 (a, b), for which the credits are: "China Media Group (CMG). (2020). 2020 Spring Festival Gala [TV Program]. CCTV-1. Recorded on January 24, 2020".

People who interested in pop-up book always start collecting books which are popular abroad, including me. At first, I collected Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart's books, later collections are the Kubasta's or Bookano series. However, as a Chinese pop-up book collector, many people asked me when pop-up book firstly appeared in China and what it looks like. From then on, I realized that I have never focused on this area before.

So, do pop-up books exist in Chinese book history?

When I wanted to do some research, there was a problem – I found that I need to know the Chinese name of 'pop-up book', but this word has not used before. As a result, I tried to use some phrases which are closely related to pop-up book, such as '立体 (pop-up)', '弹出 (pop-out)', '纸工 (paperwork)', '图册 (picture album)', etc. When I used the combination phrase '立体画册 (pop-up picture book)', I found an important clue. In 1956, two pop-up books appeared in China: *The Radish Is Back* and *Little Cattle*.

Chinese original pop-up books in the 1950s

The 1950s was the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, new China began a comprehensive economic and cultural construction. A large amount of original picture books was published during this period, including two original pop-up books, *The Radish Is Back* (Fig. 1 a, b) and *Little Cattle* (Fig. 2 a, b).



Fig. 1 a, b. || Fang Yiqun & Yan Gefan, *The Radish Is Back*, pop-up picture album, 1956.



Fig. 2 a, b. || Liu Weixin & Wang Min, *Little Cattle*, pop-up picture book, 1956.

The two books are beautifully framed and presented in a 90-degree parallel fold, and need to be handmade after purchase (Fig. 2 c, d). Instead of using paper pop-up structure, the designers used cotton threads to pull it up (Fig. 2 e).



Fig. 2 c, d. || Little Cattle. The book has not been DIY.



Fig. 2 e. || Little Cattle. Used cotton threads to pull it up.

After that, I found a comic book published in 1951 named *War criminal deformation book*. Although the paper has pressed already, it still needs to be cut by hand (Fig. 3 a, b).



Fig. 3 a, b. || Guangkai, War criminal deformation book, 1951.

Earlier pop-up books in China

Will there be earlier pop-up books? Will there be pop-up books in the Republic of China, the Qing Dynasty, or even earlier Ming Dynasty? What are they look like? I decided to find the answer through technically and culturally way. China has a long history of papermaking, but this paper may not suitable for pop-up structures. So maybe it is the same as the earliest structure in history – ‘rotator’ (volvelles) or ‘lift-the-flap’. Culturally, there are ‘five elements’ and ‘The Eight Diagrams’ in China that are suitable for these structures, so I found the book *The Thousand Faces of Dunjia* with a turntable structure in it (Fig. 4 a, b).

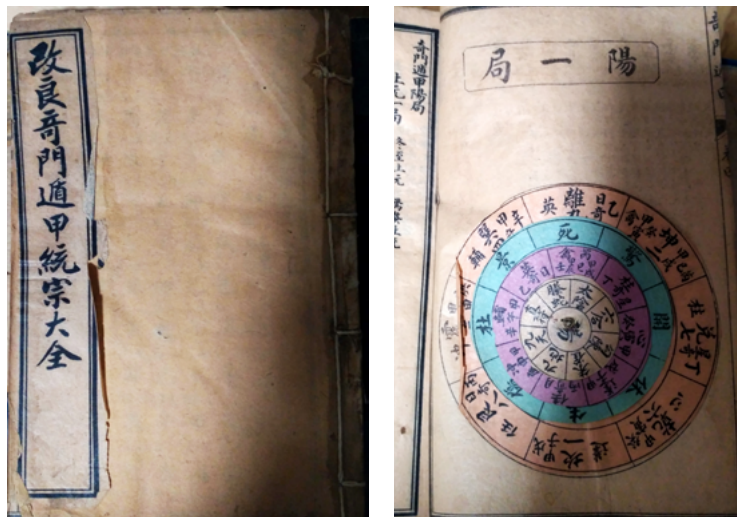


Fig. 4 a, b. || *The Thousand Faces of Dunjia*, period of the Republic of China.

I tried to find books like this but I only found *The Thousand Faces of Dunjia* in Qing Dynasty (1636 -1912) until now.

It is interesting that, just like the development of the pop-up book structure in the western countries, during the Republic of China (1912-1949), I also found an original Chinese medical flip book, *Movable human anatomy diagram* (Period of the Republic of China 1930), published by the Society of Physiology, designed by Wang Yugang (Fig. 5 a, b). It is said in the book that: “Mostly, we use wax human skeleton model, they are bulky and expensive, not everyone can buy it. This book is light and clear, it is the first time in our country”.

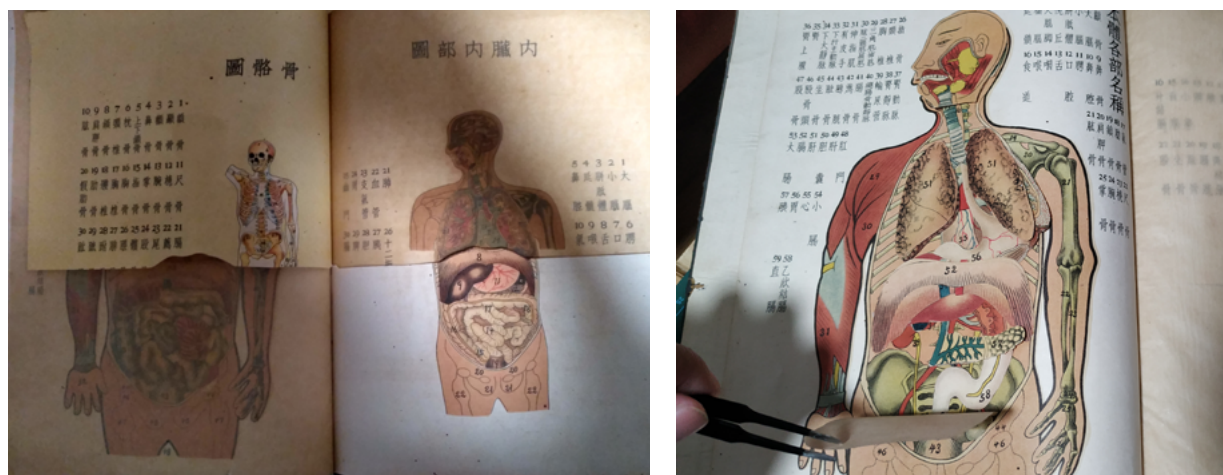


Fig. 5 a, b. || *Movable human anatomy diagram*, period of the Republic of China, 1930.

Chinese original pop-up books in the 1960s-1970s

Let’s go back to the main timeline of new China’s history. Time goes into the 1960s-1970s. This special period has reduced the number of children’s pop-up books. At present, only a few pop-up bookmark cards can be collected (Fig. 6 a, b; Fig. 7, 8).



Fig. 6 a, b. || Movable Peacock bookmark, 1965.



Fig. 7. || Obedient to the party, 1965.



Fig. 8. || Calculate twenty years, 1966.

Chinese original pop-up books in the 1980s

In the 1980s, there were more and more original pop-up books in China. Reform and opening brought vitality to the publishing industry. The original pop-up books of this period showed a wide range of topics and diverse forms. The pop-up structure is relatively simple, but it began to use V-folds and combined pop-up structures (Fig. 9 a, b).

Almost all books need to DIY. This is one of the characteristics of Chinese original pop-up books in the 1980s (Fig. 10 a, b; Fig. 11, 12, 13).

Some of the pop-up books in the 1980s were produced in factories, and their expressions were various. Although the structure was simple, it was also challenging for the printing factories in China at that time (Fig. 14, 15).



Fig. 9 a, b. || Children's holiday gifts pop-up book, 1982.

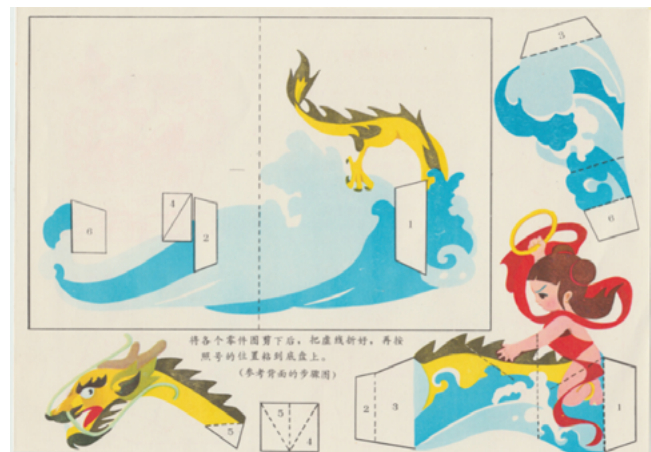


Fig. 10 a, b. || Fairy tale movable book, 1983.

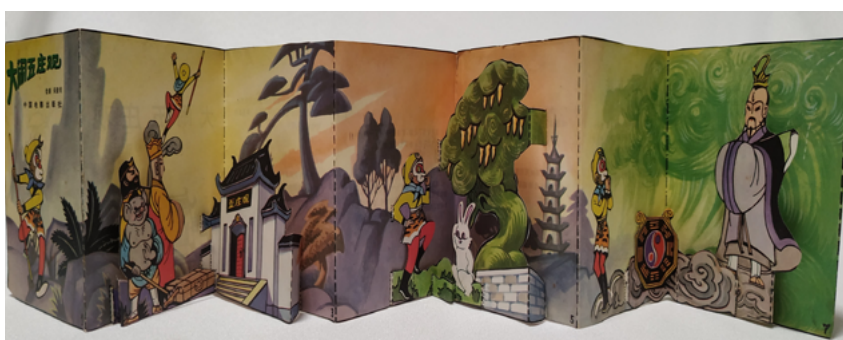


Fig. 11. || Rong Jingsheng, *Make trouble in Wuzhuangguan*, 1986.



Fig. 12. || Rong Jingsheng, *The Mad Monk*, 1986.



Fig. 13. || Yang Wanxing, *Monkey Fishes The Moon*, 1986.



Fig. 14. || Pony cross the river, 1986.



Fig. 15. || Seventy-two transformations, 1980.

Chinese original pop-up books in the 1990s

The original pop-up books in the 1990s are no longer limited by the theme of fairy tales. The pop-up books in this period are broader themes, and the painting methods are more international. During this period, China became the foundry of the world, and a large number of foreign pop-up books came to Chinese printing factories for printing. Therefore, some of Chinese designers began to see the design methods and manufacturing techniques of western countries. They started thinking and learning (Fig. 16, 17).



Fig. 16. || Wang Wei, *Pop-up Dinosaur World – 2*, 1996.



Fig. 17. || Moye, *Journey to the West Pop-up Picture Book*, 1997.
 The birth of the monkey.



Fig. 18. || Wang Hui, *Happy animal*, n. 12, 1997.

Almost all of the original pop-up books in this period were industrialized and mass-produced, and a series of books began to appear, like Happy animal pop-up book, there are 15 books in this set (Fig. 18, 19).



Fig. 19. || Wang Wei, *Chinese 12 zodiacal animals pop-up book*, 1996.

Today's Chinese original pop-up books

China's original pop-up books started late, and even in the 1980s, its technological level was still far behind western countries.

According to the evolution of consumption upgrades and the improvement of industrial production level, both quantity and quality of original pop-up books have been rapidly improved. More and more professional publishing agencies and design teams getting involved in this emerging publishing field today (**Fig. 20, 21, 22**).



Fig. 20. || Kit Lau, *Pop-Up China*, 2010.

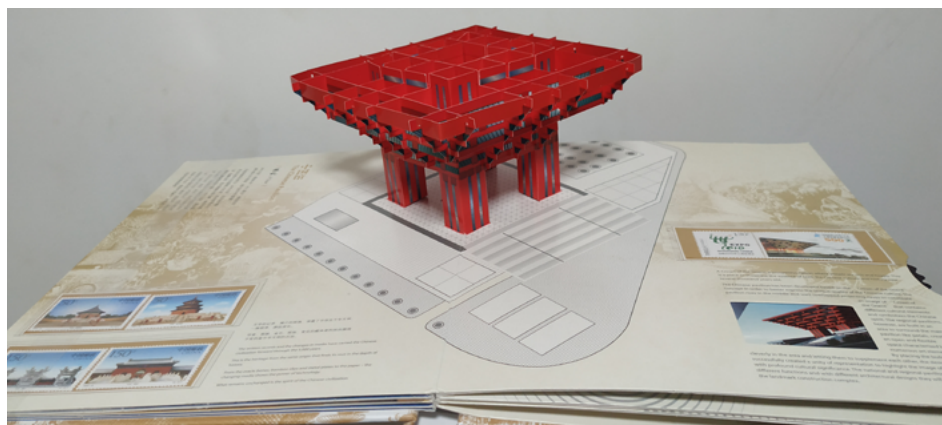


Fig. 21. || Zhangkui, *Jizhen Expo Pop-up Postbook*, 2010.



Fig. 22. || Zhangkui, *Pakistan Pavilion, China World Expo 2010 Shanghai* pop-up card.

After 2010, publishing houses and design teams – including Anhui Children’s Publishing House, Lelequ, The Irised Kingdom and Bei Shi Guo – have published a large number of original pop-up books (Fig. 23). Take the book *3D Journey to the West* for instant, it has over 300.000 copies in print during three years (Fig. 24 a, b). The application fields of the structure in the pop-up books are becoming more and more extensive. Once, Andy Warhol published the *Index Book* as the originator of the artist’s pop-up book.



Fig. 23. || Lelequ, *Caused havoc in heaven*, 2016.



Fig. 24 || The Irised Kingdom, *3D Journey to the West*, 2016.



Now, Chinese artist Xu Bing has also made a pop-up version of his art publication – *Book from the Ground* (Fig. 25 a, b).

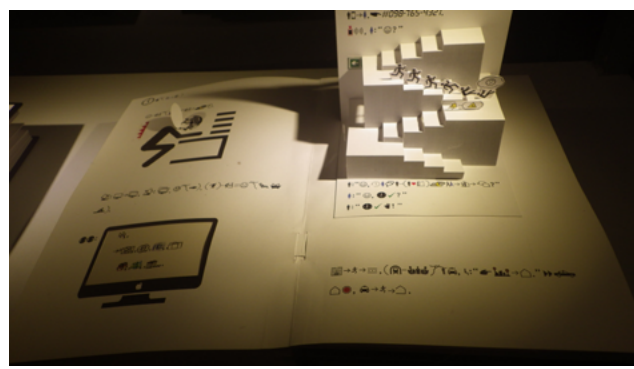


Fig. 25 a, b. || Xu Bing, *The Book from the Ground*, pop-up edition, 2018.

Nowadays, Cultural and Creative Industry is also a very emerging field in China. A large number of products with pop-up structures have been created. Paper designer Wang Wei designed a pop-up calendar of Chinese Traditional New Year Patronus, all the patronus are movable (**Fig. 26**). Laoshe Tea house, China's traditional tea culture platform company which has tried various innovations and publicity, designed various pop-up cards (**Fig. 27**).



Fig. 26. || Wangwei, Chinese Traditional New Year Patronus Calendar 2020, 2019.



Fig. 27. || Guanzhongping, Laoshe Tea house Big Bow Tea Pop-up Card, 2020.

At present, in China, pop-up structures are widely used in packaging. In 2019, many moon cakes and rice dumplings packaging have been added the structures (**Fig. 28 a, b**). Cosmetics industries are also trying this innovative packaging.

Pop-up advertisement booklet has a long history, which makes advertising interesting and more compelling. Chinese companies have attempted to get involved in this area. After purchasing a box of milk, Jindian Milk will give customer a pop-up advertising calendar (**Fig. 29**), and Jinmao Building also prepared a pop-up advertising booklet for guests (**Fig. 30**).



Fig. 28 a, b. || Gift From The East, Moon Festival Moon cake box, 2019.



Fig. 29. || Pop-Up Book House, Jindian Milk pop-up Advertising Book, 2019.



In China, the structure in pop-up books is also making bolder attempts. In this year's CCTV Spring Festival Gala, paper designer Wang Wei designed a large pop-up book and used it as a backdrop for the show on the stage. Every scene can be changed quickly (Fig. 31 a, b).

In the latest technology, AR has been applied to Chinese pop-up books for a long time. With mobile phones, you can see content that cannot be seen on the structure (Fig. 32). The combination of point-reading pen and smartphone has brought new directions to pop-up books (Fig. 33). Books can not only be read, but also be clicked and listened. Kids like the new way of reading pop-up books and this method is also convenient for them to learn knowledge.

Fig. 30. || Lelequ, Gift Jinmao Building pop-up Advertising Book, 2019.



Fig. 31 a, b. || Wangwei, Beijing Opera Show Large pop-up book background, 2020. Screenshots from the 2020 Spring Festival Gala, CCTV-1, 2020.



Fig. 32. || AR technology in pop-up book.



Fig. 33. || Reading pen on pop-up book.