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Preface

The international workshop *Research on Asian Papers* was held on 21 October 2011 at the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP) in Paris, France (see the Appendix). The workshop was organized by the Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation des Collections (CRCC; France) in collaboration with the National Museum of Ethnology (Japan), the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (Korea), and the Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology, Fudan University (China).

This workshop was a result of the following projects carried out by CRCC and the above-listed institutions:

- (i) Japan–France Integrated Action Program (SAKURA)/Hubert Curien Program: “Asian papers: building a database of historical and technical information on papers from Asia” with the National Museum of Ethnology (2010–2011);
- (ii) Korea–France Hubert Curien Program (STAR): “Asian papers: building a database of historical and technical information on papers from Asia” with the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (2010–2011); and
- (iii) China–France Hubert Curien Program (XU GUANGQI): “Asian papers: building a database of historical and technical information on papers from Asia” with Fudan University (2011).

These projects aimed to promote a better understanding by western researchers of paper-making materials and techniques in China, Japan and Korea.

Papermaking appeared in China more than two millennia ago and is an industry that has had lasting consequences on the evolution of societies. Preparation methods and their historical evolution in Europe and North America have been well studied by western researchers but not in Asia. Papers from the Far East to Europe were used in the 17th century by artists such as Rembrandt and were appreciated for their color and texture, but they are currently poorly identified by curators of western collections. Old imported papers are often classified with the generic term “Chinese paper” or more recently “Japanese paper” and technical research on Asian collections held in the West are rare, with the exception of remarkable objects.

Inaccuracies in identification are caused by a lack of information on the manufacturing methods used in the earliest Chinese papers, the spread of these methods to neighbouring countries, and their journey through the Middle East and Europe. There are two basic reasons for this situation: a lack of research by the holders of the primary sources (historians of technology in Asia, with the exception of China, Japan and Korea, are rarely interested in this industry); and the difficulty of access to primary and secondary texts in European languages. Those that exist are often confusing and flawed by poor translations or erroneous interpretations of technique.

The establishment of a database of materials in the form of a directory of fibers, vocabulary, and photographs depicting the tools and the current patterns of raw materials, all of which would be placed in a historical development context, would provide an excellent tool to identify Asian papers. In addition, the development of a simple but rigorous laboratory

protocol specifying the basic elements of paper identification would also prove useful in identifying paper.

Conservators, curators, historians and archaeologists will benefit from this database and the results of analyses carried out with simple laboratory equipment. The objective of the research is to provide a thorough knowledge of Asian papers to curators and conservators in the West. It was essential for French researchers to work directly with Chinese, Japanese and Korean researchers to benefit from their experience and overcome accessibility obstacles. For their part, the Asian teams considered it part of their academic (and social) responsibility to collaborate in the diffusion of scientific knowledge on Asian papers.

During the present collaborations, we were also seeking new directions for longer term and wider based scientific collaboration in the field of conservation science. During our workshop, we considered not only material and technical aspects of Asian papers, but also recent research on paper in general. For this publication, the oral presentations have been revised and reviewed. The presentations have been grouped into the three following sections:

Section I: New Possibilities for the Evaluation of Paper Deterioration

Section II: Conservation and History of Ancient Papers

Section III: Papermaking Materials and Techniques

We would like to express our thanks to Eric Gross, Director of the INP, and Sophie Seyer, Secrétaire Générale of the INP, for kindly housing the workshop. Additional thanks go to the primary organizer, Léon-Bavi Vilmont, Research Scientist at CRCC, for managing countless details for the workshop. Our success was due in no small part to his efforts. Finally, we offer sincere gratitude and appreciation to Professor Bertrand Lavédrine, Director of the CRCC, for his support, without which the projects and workshop would not have been possible.

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