



# **Sound Rising from the Paper: Nineteenth-Century Martial Arts Fiction and the Chinese Acoustic Imagination (Harvard East Asian Monographs)**

*Paize Keulemans*

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Chinese martial arts novels from the late nineteenth century are filled with a host of suggestive sounds. Characters cuss and curse in colorful dialect accents, vendor calls ring out from bustling marketplaces, and martial arts action scenes come to life with the loud clash of swords and the sounds of bodies colliding. What is the purpose of these sounds, and what is their history? In *Sound Rising from the Paper*, Paize Keulemans answers these questions by critically reexamining the relationship between martial arts novels published in the final decades of the nineteenth century and earlier storyteller manuscripts. He finds that by incorporating, imitating, and sometimes inventing storyteller sounds, these novels turned the text from a silent object into a lively simulacrum of festival atmosphere, thereby transforming the solitary act of reading into the communal sharing of an oral performance. By focusing on the role sound played in late nineteenth-century martial arts fiction, Keulemans offers alternatives to the visual models that have dominated our approach to the study of print culture, the commercialization of textual production, and the construction of the modern reading subject.

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