

# Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought

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## Introduction

Many aspects of the rapidly evolving engagement between China and the West during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been well enough explored to have entered schoolbook knowledge. These include war, trade, diplomacy, and missionary endeavors. The present volume explores what went on in Chinese minds during this turbulent process. It does so through a series of case studies on the Chinese adaptation of the increasingly globalized canon of modern knowledge and the shifts in the equally globalized software through which this process was articulated: in the taxonomy of knowledge, the hierarchy of relevance and usefulness, the standards for the reliability of information, and the tools to enhance the terminological precision of language. The footprints of these articulations are best visible in Chinese encyclopaedic works of what was called “new” or “Western” knowledge. They were published between the 1880s and the 1930s and were produced against the background of and in a critical debate with a well-established, traditional encyclopaedia culture. While present at the time in great diversity and in large print runs, the shelf life of these new works was short because they were quickly superseded by ever-newer works. These works have neither been reprinted, nor studied in any detail.

We owe it to the efforts of a single scholar, Prof. Zhong Shaohua 鍾少華, whom politics had banned to the margins of Chinese academia,<sup>1</sup> that a first overview appeared of these works, which he had laboriously collected since the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> He was not allowed to study because his father, an anthropologist of great renown, was branded a “rightist” in 1957.

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Cultural Revolution from bookstores selling old books so as to form his own private library.<sup>2</sup> But there were also other achievements that, independent of Zhong Shaohua's work, significantly contributed to China's recovery of materials that illuminated the path to modern Chinese encyclopaedias. Among them was for instance the finding in 2004 of a copy of Huang Ren's (Moxi) 黃人 (摩西) 1911 *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, Putong baike xin da cidian 普通百科新大詞典,<sup>3</sup> in the Chinese Library of the University of Toronto. While impressed by the meticulous analysis of materials in the book, which included a large number of references to contemporary Western culture and was sometimes remarkably reminiscent of the European encyclopaedia in the way that it grouped certain items into one 'family', the chance discoverer—Milena Doleželová—was hesitant to identify the generic nature as encyclopaedia because the term cidian 詞典 was not used widely at that time and was overshadowed by the term *baike quanshu* adopted from Japanese. Only when Professor Chen Pingyuan informed Doleželová about Zhong Shaohua's collection, which had previously been unknown to her, did the possibility of launching a research project begin to look promising. Being unacquainted with the natural sciences and observing that there were a large number of entries on the field, Doleželová asked Dr. M. Henri Day, a sinologist-cum-physicist at Stockholm University, to jointly apply for a CCK Grant to tackle this problem. The grant was awarded in 2005 and although it started as a team project with only six collaborators, the research ended up involving a good dozen scholars from five countries and convened two conferences before giving birth to this volume.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Rudolf Wagner was developing a database in Heidelberg comprising as many of the hard-to-find late Qing encyclopaedic works as he was able to locate in many of the world's finest libraries, and to make them available as scans to the members of the project. The result was the database HEIDENC with its more than 100 primary sources in Chinese, Japanese, English and other languages, as well as many works of secondary literature and a continuously updated bibliography. It is hosted by the Institute of Chinese Studies in Heidelberg, and will be opened to scholars in general once this volume has been published.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Zhong Shaohua 鍾少華, *Renlei zhishi de xin gongju—Zhong Ri jindai baike quanshu yanjiu* 人類知識的新工具—中日近代百科全書研究 [A new tool of human knowledge: A study of early modern encyclopaedias in China and Japan] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Huang Ren 黃人, *Putong baike xin da cidian* 普通百科新大詞典 (Shanghai: Zhongguo cidian gongxi, 1911).

<sup>4</sup> A selection of papers from the first conference appeared in Chinese, Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 and Miliena 米列娜 [= Milena Doleželová-Velingerová], eds. *Jindai Zhongguo de baikeci shu* 近代中國的百科詞書 [Early modern Chinese encyclopaedias] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Wagner, *Bibliography of Chinese Encyclopaedic Works 1840–1937, their Japanese and Western Models and Sources. Continuously updated Metadata for the Database HEIDENC*. [http://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/sinologie/digital\\_resources/heidenc/](http://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/sinologie/digital_resources/heidenc/). Last accessed on August 25, 2012.

From a Chinese perspective, the West's rapidly increasing presence on China's shores was felt in diverse areas—but little visible connection could be identified. Why should the free treatment of glaucoma in a missionary hospital, American and British clippers delivering opium contraband to Chinese dealers, George Washington's life and labors, map making and the behavior of Western women in the Treaty Ports have any other connection than the involvement of individuals from different foreign countries?

Chinese men of letters reacted to these phenomena since the 1830s by accumulating knowledge about those aspects of the 'West' that seemed most apposite, starting with geography, political history and the structure of governance in foreign countries, and weapons manufacturing. The information was largely taken from material in Chinese presented by foreign Protestant missionaries. Assuming as they did that the standing of their religious teachings would be enhanced in China if their publications contained information deemed relevant beyond the circle of their converts and inquirers, these missionaries wrote on many subjects of which they had only a marginal command. For this they would draw on Western-language encyclopaedias, which they had brought in their baggage for the very purpose. In this manner, recent Western encyclopaedia knowledge was transferred to China in segmental form.

During the nineteenth century, Western encyclopaedic works came in a variety of formats. First were the comprehensive encyclopaedias. These works purported to present all relevant knowledge in its totality. Some grouped the information into articles that were alphabetically ordered and cross-referenced by an index. Abraham Rees's (1743–1825) *Cyclopaedia, or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* in 45 volumes,<sup>6</sup> is a work of this kind. Published in 1819–1820, it was the main reference work for dissenting clergy at the time, and dissenting clergy formed in turn the main recruitment pool for the budding foreign missions. A missionary showed his Rees to the Canton Commissioner Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785–1850), whose later action against British opium imports prompted the British reaction known as the "Opium War." Lin was greatly impressed with the wealth and completeness of factual information contained in this alphabetically-ordered work, and made a detailed note about it. Seeing that it was fundamentally different from Chinese encyclopaedic works, he did not use the term *leishu* 類書 (book arranged according to categories), which Chinese book catalogues and collections used as a generic category, but gave it a phonetically transcribed name for *cyclopaedia*, namely *xi-guo-luo-bi-di-ya* 西果羅彼釐亞.<sup>7</sup> Since his notes were not published until 1986, this information and terminology did not become

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopaedia, or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, 45 vols. With illustrations (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819–1820).

<sup>7</sup> Lin Zexu 林則徐, *Yangshi zalu* 洋事雜錄 [Miscellaneous notes on western affairs] (1846). Unpubl. manuscript in Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. Transcribed in simplified characters in "Lin Zexu 'Yangshi zalu'" 林則徐《洋事雜錄》 [Lin Zexu's *Miscellaneous Notes on Western Affairs*], by Chen Depei 陳德培, Lin Yongyu 林永侯, and Meng Pengxing 孟彭興, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)*, no. 3 (1986): 14–34.

public knowledge. Other comprehensive encyclopaedias defined a limited number of fields of knowledge such as “biography,” “science,” or “gardening” and grouped all related articles under these headers, often again with systematic subheadings. This latter approach facilitated serial publishing for subscribers, because each item was a stand-alone unit. Chambers’s *Information for the People*, which was translated into Japanese during the 1870s and 1880s, was of this kind.<sup>8</sup> Very much interested in conveying practical and useful information to a wider audience that had only recently started to join the literate public, it offered 49 systematic entries.

Some authors chose a different format by just publishing one such stand-alone encyclopaedic unit without inserting it into a wider framework. The first Western encyclopaedia to be fully exploited by Chinese authors was of this kind, dealing only with one field, namely geography. *An Encyclopedia of Geography*, a 3-volume work edited by Hugh Murray (1779–1846) in 1834,<sup>9</sup> had been given by an American missionary<sup>10</sup> to Lin Zexu; Lin had bilingual ethnic Chinese from the Straits Settlements—such as Liang Afa’s son Liang Jinde 梁進德 (1820–1862)—in his employ to read foreign newspapers for him and convey the information contained in books such as Murray’s. Lin’s 1839 world geography is largely based on the translations from Murray, and the information it conveyed was subsequently included in the widely-read Chinese-language world geographies of the following years.<sup>11</sup>

A third format that became known as the ‘encyclopaedic dictionary’ responded to the flood of new concepts and terminologies that developed during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It broke down the information into much smaller units and presented terse summaries of key factual information and/or conceptual definitions by combining the functions of a dictionary and an encyclopaedia. It first developed in Germany early in the nineteenth century (Brockhaus) and later also became popular in the English and French speaking worlds.<sup>12</sup> Its impact in China has been felt since the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>8</sup> William and Robert Chambers, eds., *Chambers’s Information for the People: Being a Series of Treatises on Those Branches of Human Knowledge in which the Greater Part of the Community Are Most Interested, and Designed to Serve the Chief Uses of an Encyclopaedia at a Price Beyond Example Moderate*, 4th ed. (London: Orr and Smith, 1857). *Hyakka zensho* 百科全書 [Complete compendium of the hundred branches of knowledge] (Tokyo: Monbushō, 1875–1885).

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Murray, ed., *An Encyclopedia of Geography, Comprising a Complete Description of the Earth, Exhibiting its Relation to the Heavenly Bodies, its Physical Structure, the Natural History of Each Country, and the Industry, Commerce, Political Institutions, and Civil and Social State of all Nations* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1837).

<sup>10</sup> Most likely Eliah Bridgman (1801–1861), who had arranged an extra copy to be bought for Lin. Other reports say that he received it through Samuel Robbins Brown (1810–1880).

<sup>11</sup> The result, Lin Zexu’s *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志 [Record of four continents], has largely been incorporated into Wei Yuan 魏源, *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 [Illustrated record of overseas countries], which appeared in 1843, and was expanded in 1852. Parts of the original *Sizhou zhi* have survived in Wang Xiqi 王錫祺, comp., *Xiaofanghuzhai yudi congchao zaibubian* 小方壺棄輿地叢鈔再補編 (Shanghai: Zhuyi tang, 1897).

<sup>12</sup> A popular and often reprinted example of this kind is Robert Hunter, ed., *The American Encyclopaedic Dictionary, a Thoroughly Accurate, Practical and Exhaustive Work of Reference to All the Words in the English Language, with a Full Account of their Origin, Meaning, Pronunciation and Use*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Ogilvie, 1894).

Given this variety of formats and taxonomic schemes, a definition of such ‘encyclopaedic works’ of new knowledge will have to focus on the manner and the purpose of their presentation of information rather than the format of the publication or its internal organization. These works purport to offer a concise overview of a given field of knowledge which claims to be based on evidence rather than authority; they come in a language of rationality, and have the purpose to present useful knowledge to people of different levels of education and sophistication, but do not claim to present new research. By the middle of the nineteenth century, encyclopaedic works were also compiled to provide newly literate classes, the ‘people’, with the knowledge that fitted their new interests and social aspirations, the best known and most widely emulated being the “Penny” publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and Chambers’s *Information for the People*, both of which combined encyclopaedic works with the weekly fare of encyclopaedic knowledge offered in periodicals.<sup>13</sup> This impulse was taken up by early Chinese-language periodicals published by foreigners.<sup>14</sup>

Encyclopaedic works are never complete in a global sense, their criteria of completeness are the usefulness and relevance of the information. Works focusing on one particular area such as geography, weapons, gardening or music, are thus fully compatible with the genre. The category of usefulness depends on the particular definition of the environment of the readers at a given moment. Someone trying to overcome an asymmetry in social standing by climbing up the social ladder in Manchester will find different things useful than someone trying to overcome an asymmetry in power between his and a foreign country by convincing his countrymen to spend money on manufacturing foreign-style arms. The content of this category of usefulness might change as the understanding of the most effective way to solve a particular range of problems evolves, and different people living at the same time might have different opinions on what would be the most useful knowledge. We may thus expect the particular selection of fields for which encyclopaedic entries were presented in China to reflect their authors’ assessment in this respect, and we may infer from the market response the degree to which booksellers and buyers were convinced of their assessment.

This encyclopaedic information from the West was not taken to a no-man’s land, but into a literate society with its own reference works. These would for quite a

<sup>13</sup> *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 27 vols. (London: Charles Knight, 1833–1843). The periodicals were *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (1831–1845), and *Chambers’s Journal* (1832–1853), which was continued by *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and the Arts* (1854–1897). Both the *Penny* and the *Chambers* were published simultaneously in a British and a U.S. edition.

<sup>14</sup> Examples are the *Dongxi yang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統紀傳 [East western monthly magazine], Singapore 1833–1837. It was succeeded by the *Xiaer guan zhen* 遐邇貫珍 [parallel title: *The Chinese Serial*], Hong Kong between 1853 and 1856. This in turn was followed by the *Liuhe congtan* 六合叢談 [parallel title: *Shanghae Serial*] (1857–1861), the *Zhong xi wenjian lu* 中西聞見錄 [News from China and the West] (1872–1875) and the *Gezhi huibian* 格致彙編 [parallel title: *Chinese Scientific and Industrial Magazine*] (1876–1882, 1890–1892).

while constitute the sometimes very stubborn counter-texts for the “new” knowledge, which had their own claims to relevance. Up to this time, Chinese encyclopaedic reference works had come in two types.<sup>15</sup> The first addressed itself to men of letters and had often been compiled for the benefit of the dauphin as a source of learned quotation and conversation.<sup>16</sup> Rather than offering definitions and information of their own, these works merely used writings transmitted from the past as their source. They thus drew explicitly on authority rather than first-hand evidence for the reliability of their entries. They grouped quotations under the relevant headings (such as ‘dream’), which they then organized according to the triad heaven, earth and man. A table of contents secured easy location within this familiar taxonomy.<sup>17</sup> These works had their own standards of relevance and usefulness, which were largely framed by the Imperial Examination system, which not only tested successful rote learning, but also, at times, the capacity to apply classical knowledge to contemporary problems. None of these *leishu*, however, contained substantial information about the world at large, be it the geography, the religion, the military, the political institutions, the arts or the customs of foreign lands. The same is true for new fields of knowledge and their applications, such as science and technology, which were developing elsewhere. For centuries, China had extensive commercial contacts with East and Southeast Asia as well as with the Middle and Near East and the West. China exported china, tea and silk on a truly industrial scale. These exports were paid for, however, with silver and not exchanged for goods. Accordingly, little need was seen for a broader knowledge of other countries.

The gigantic *Collection of Texts and Illustrations, Old and New*, Gu jin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成, in 10,000 chapters, which was printed under imperial sponsorship in 1726–28 for the top echelon in only 60 copies with many illustrations, may be said to be the crowning achievement of this genre. Eventually it even had its day in the modern and international sun, when the Shenbaoguan 申報館 publishing house in Shanghai under its manager Ernest Major democratized it by republishing it in 1,500 copies in 1884, and when the Qing Office for Foreign Affairs, Zongli Yamen (or Tsung-li Yamen) 總理衙門, ordered copies of another Shanghai reprint from the early 1890s to be used as gifts to leading foreign universities as a summary of China’s glorious achievements in the arts and

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<sup>15</sup> A fine exhibition on the Eurasian history of this genre since the earliest times was organized by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 1996–7. It came with a rich catalogue. Roland Schaer, ed., 1996. *Tous les savoirs du monde: encyclopédies et bibliothèques, de Sumer au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1996). There is a large literature on the history of pre-modern Chinese encyclopaedias.

<sup>16</sup> The standard example for this is the early work by Wei Zheng 魏征 (580–643), comp., *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 [Essentials of governance from all books] (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshu guan, 1981).

<sup>17</sup> The available alternatives were organization by rhyme or by the radical of the character with which the word was written. Neither of these would have been easier to use.

sciences.<sup>18</sup> This traditional genre with its ties to an educational system of book learning was gradually sidelined, however, by the new encyclopaedias of modern—and largely Western—knowledge with their claim to practical usefulness under the new circumstances. It is to these works that the present volume is devoted.

The second type of Chinese encyclopaedic works, which only started to flourish in the Ming dynasty, was a commercial enterprise that had a more popular clientele and offered practical, useful, and much more condensed information about a very broad band of daily concerns. These works, the best known of which is the *Complete Book of Myriad Gems*, *Wanbao quanshu* 萬寶全書, combined authoritative quotation with newly written text, and were published in ever-updated, revised, or pirated versions.<sup>19</sup> They continued to be printed up into the Republican period, and only faded out of sight on the arrival of the *Everyday Cyclopaedia*, *Riyong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書 of the Shanghai Commercial Press in 1919 with its very explicit and practical agenda to provide models for modern everyday behavior and knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Since they did not claim the high ground of elite knowledge, encyclopaedic works such as the *Complete Book* were no competition for the new works with their Western-derived knowledge.

Since the early 1860s, some men such as Feng Guifen 馮桂芬 (1809–1874) had started to probe whether there was something like a system that held the diverse elements together, and which had resulted in the ability of a small island like Britain to project its power worldwide and even into the Chinese domain.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps Western superiority rested on an integrated ‘modernization package.’ The only way to overcome the resulting asymmetry of power was a massive effort to acquire the key competences contained in this package. There was no support from the Chinese court for large-scale translations of Western encyclopaedias in the manner the Meiji government had already supported the translation of Chambers’s *Information for the People* during the 1870s; and there were as yet no Chinese men of letters with enough experience and foreign-language training to be able to conceive systematic encyclopaedias of their own, as had been done by Nishi Amane 西周

<sup>18</sup> Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 and Jiang Tingxi 江廷錫 *et al.*, comp. *Qin ding Gujin tushu jicheng* 欽定古今圖書集成 [Collection of texts and illustrations, old and new]. 1725. Reprint, Shanghai: Tushu jicheng, 1884. Lionel Giles, *An Alphabetical Index to the Chinese Encyclopedia* (London: British Museum, 1911) provides some background on the arrival of this gift in London. Among the libraries to receive a set were those of Columbia University and the University of Leipzig.

<sup>19</sup> Wu Huifang 吳蕙芳, *Wan bao quan shu: Ming Qing shiqi de minjian shenghuo shilu* 萬寶全書：明清時期的民間生活實錄 [Wanbao quanshu: A truthful record of everyday life in the Ming and Qing periods] (Taipei: Guoli Zhengzhi daxue lishi xuexi, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Wang Yanlun 王言綸 (chief editor), Chen Duo 陳鐸, Zhou Yueran 周越然, Liu Dashen 劉大紳, Zhuang Shi 莊適, Ping Hailan 平海瀾 and Tang Jinggao 唐敬皋, eds., *Riyong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書 [parallel English title: *Everyday Cyclopaedia*], 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1919).

<sup>21</sup> Feng Guifen 馮桂芬, *Jiaobinlu kangyi* 校邠廬抗議 [Counterproposals from the Jiaobin studio] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2002).

(1829–1897) in Japan as early as 1869, upon his return from Leiden University.<sup>22</sup> There were, however, an increasing number of foreigners literate in Chinese and Chinese men of letters who were publishing on their own initiative systematic presentations of certain fields of knowledge that were based in part on Western encyclopaedic entries, and were in any case presented in the format and language of subsections of a cohesive body of rational modern knowledge.

During the next decades up until the 1890s, the efforts to present this crucial ‘modernization package’ to Chinese readers thus had to do the second-best thing short of publishing a comprehensive encyclopaedia: publishing book collections with as many fully developed ‘encyclopaedic’ entries as could be found in Chinese from either foreign or Chinese hands, and that were considered useful at the given time by the given authors and readers. These would be published under titles such as *Collection of Excerpts on Foreign Affairs*, *Yangwu congchao* 洋務叢鈔 (1884), with 11 works dealing with military, geographical and political information deemed useful in light of an assessment that the main problem was an inferiority in military technology<sup>23</sup>; or *Sixteen Works of Basic Western Learning*, *Xixue qimeng shiliu zhong* 西學啓蒙十六種 (1885). This latter work, which had been compiled and translated by Joseph Edkins, already offered a grouping of texts into fields of knowledge with a focus on geography and science, which “enrich the state and foster the people,” as well as outlines of Greek, Roman and European history, selected with an assessment that the problem was more fundamental and also required new knowledge in science, effective governance and successful models of governance from foreign history in a taxonomy similar to that of *Information for the People*.<sup>24</sup> The word for ‘modern’ knowledge was then ‘Western’ and, after it had become more globally shared, ‘new’ knowledge. Indeed, these collections did not include works based on traditional Chinese authorities. If they dealt with China at all, they did so from a foreign perspective. They must rightly be included in the category “encyclopaedic works,” even though they do not cover the whole range of a comprehensive encyclopaedia.

The first more encompassing encyclopaedic work to appear in China and in Chinese, the *Classified Compilation of Western Affairs*, *Xishi leibian* 西事類編 in two vols., which was published in 1887 by the Shenbaoguan publishing house, was geared to a very specific purpose, namely providing useful and relevant factual information to members of the young Chinese diplomatic service who were going

<sup>22</sup> The various drafts and versions of his work, which refers to encyclopaedia by the term *hyakugaku renkan* 百學連環 (an etymologically correct translation of the word encyclopaedia) are published in *Nishi Amane zenshū* 西周全集 [Collected works of Nishi Amane], ed. Ōkubo Toshiaki 大久保利謙, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1945). They were not subsequently reprinted in his collected works.

<sup>23</sup> Zhang Shusheng 張樹聲, *Yangwu congchao*. 16 vols. (Shanghai: Dunhuaitang 1884).

<sup>24</sup> Ai Yuese 艾約瑟 [= Joseph Edkins], comp. and trans., *Xixue qimeng shiliu zhong* (Shanghai: Tushu jicheng shuju, 1885). We have not seen an edition of this year, and this date is based on that of the preface. It was reprinted in 1896 and 1898.



abroad for the first time.<sup>25</sup> This work took the diaries of the first Chinese ambassadors abroad as its principal source, extracted all relevant factual information about the West from them, and added systematic information after each entry to supplement the often anecdotal tit-bits from the diaries. It was a breakthrough in several respects. First, it was based on Chinese reports of current, first-hand observations, supplemented by a summary presentation from the compiler that again did not rely on the authority of some ancient author, but on up-to-date evidence available from other sources, such as translated books and newspaper articles, with the same claim to first-hand observation and analysis. Second, while its title still used the old genre marker *lei* 類, which indicates the encyclopaedic scheme of organizing knowledge into categories, it abandoned the inherited taxonomy of knowledge used by earlier Chinese encyclopaedic works with the heaven/earth/man triad as their basis.<sup>26</sup> Instead, it grouped the information about the West, *Information-for-the-People*-style, under 16 headings arranged in the order in which they would be useful to a diplomat and his staff. It started off with information about travel overseas, the basics of international law relating to foreign relations, and the ceremonies at the foreign court that had to be followed. From then on, the chapters went systematically through those elements about which an ambassador was expected to have a knowledge and be able to gather information. These range from taxes and money to military preparedness, arts and sciences, buildings, talent selection, commerce, religion, and manufacture. In keeping with their pertinence, the two small volumes waxed long on state institutions, social customs and industry, but were short on science. Many of the taxonomic categories they used were adopted by later Chinese encyclopaedic works. The preface from a different hand than the author's highlights the difference to earlier works regarding foreign countries, saying that they were largely based on hearsay, and full of mistakes.<sup>27</sup> Third, while not making the claim that knowledge about things Chinese was in any way irrelevant, its exclusive focus on knowledge about the world, and about the West in particular, marked a new hierarchy of relevance at this time and place.

This new hierarchy of relevance and usefulness did not remain uncontested. The 1890 *Records of the Essence of Science*, *Gezhi jinghua lu* 格致精華錄, that came with a proud preface by Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909) and the claim that Western science and government institutions all had their origins in China, made a

<sup>25</sup> Shen Chun (Cuisheng) 沈純 (粹生), *Xishi leibian*, 16 *juan* in 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, 1887).

<sup>26</sup> While this triad also represents a philosophical understanding of the relationship between the cosmos and society, it had long lost its philosophical vibrancy and become a taxonomic scheme. Other taxonomies were available from early on, for example in the catalogues for the Imperial Library since the Western Han dynasty. Encyclopaedic works that continued with a strong China focus, such as the 1889 *Comprehensive Summary of the Imperial Library*, *Cefu tongzong* 策府統宗, started with a sequence taken from book catalogues, followed by one of the government ministries, and ended with astronomy and geography. Cai Mei'an 蔡梅庵, comp., *Cefu tongzong* (Shanghai: Hongwen shuju, 1889).

<sup>27</sup> Cheng Xianchao 程咸焯, "Xu" 序 [preface], in Shen Chun, *Xishi leibian*, 1

point by following the heaven/earth/man taxonomy and relegating Western scholarship, law and government to the margin after the birds, the fishes, and the plants.<sup>28</sup>

Besides these more comprehensive encyclopaedic collections or works, translations or new presentations of encyclopaedic segments such as international law or economy continued.<sup>29</sup>

The ‘downward’ diffusion of useful knowledge pioneered by the English-language encyclopaedic enterprises was now extended to include diffusion among new audiences abroad. In both cases these works were expected to provide their readers not just with a systematic presentation of fields which they were already largely familiar with from their general education, but with basic and systematic information that was not new, but new to them. The locus of the agency, however, has to be specified. On the British Isles, encyclopaedia publishing was part of a betterment agenda of elite members associated with enlightenment values, but the success of their enterprise was ultimately decided by readers who found their work useful enough to subscribe to and make use of. The agency on the other hand in the transfer of the genre and its information to East Asia was all in the hands of local elites with strong foreign exposure but with no role whatsoever played by, for example, the English or Scottish publishers. These East Asian local elites had in turn espoused an enlightenment agenda very similar to their English and Scottish counterparts, albeit mostly with the aim of overcoming the painful asymmetry in power relations between the West and China at that time. But the impact and success of the enterprise of these cultural brokers was again ultimately decided by people totally unconnected with the compilation, but willing to buy, read, and use the knowledge provided.

As the assumption spread that Western wealth and power resulted from a cohesive modernization package, the acquisition of which would be crucial if China was ever to close the gap, the encyclopaedia of modern/Western knowledge was increasingly seen as containing the key ingredients of this package in well-organized form. The new encyclopaedia was thus a reflection of the presumably

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<sup>28</sup> Jiang Biao 江標, comp., *Gezhi jinghua lu- houfu - Deguo yiyuan zhangcheng, Deguo hemeng jishe benmo* 格致精華錄·後附：德國議院章程；德國合盟紀事本末 [Records of the essence of science. Appendices: statutes of the German parliament. Record of Germany forming a federal state] (Shanghai?: 1890). The story of these taxonomic battles remains yet to be written. Zhang Zhidong was a high-ranking official at the time who maintained, against those advocating the “Western” model, that the “Chinese essence” had to be kept while one should make use of practical contraptions from the West.

<sup>29</sup> The translations of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed. article “International Law” by Edmund Robertson and the volume *Political Economy, for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction* (Edinburgh: 1852), which was a part of Chambers’s Educational Series, which itself tried to break down highly condensed encyclopaedia articles into easily digestible reading matter, were both included in Zhang Yinhan 張蔭桓, ed., *Xixue fuqiang congshu* 西學富強叢書 [Collection of books of Western learning [to make the state] rich and powerful] (Shanghai: Hongwen shuju, 1896). This work in 48 volumes tried to assemble all information relevant for making the nation “rich and powerful,” including volumes on such fields as mathematics and mining.

consistent approach and cohesive content of this package as well as a handy tool for familiarizing oneself with it through self-study. With schools, academies and other institutions that could teach this dispensation being already rare in the Treaty Ports and absent in the rest of China, an increasing number of men of letters inside and outside of government service perceived a national crisis that might be solved with the help of encyclopaedic modern knowledge. This knowledge would also present new career options, and thus a market opened for compilations of Chinese-language encyclopaedias of modern/Western knowledge that clearly was fuelled by reports about the veritable encyclopaedia industry that was springing up not only in the West, but also in Japan, from whence the Chinese name for the genre was eventually taken.<sup>30</sup>

The Chinese defeat in the war with Japan in 1895 was a watershed in the assessment of ‘Western’ or ‘new’ knowledge among many Chinese men of letters. The steep increase in the number of Chinese encyclopaedic works that reprinted previously existing summary presentations of fields of modern and useful knowledge after 1895 shows the urgency and timeliness which this type of knowledge now assumed. The 1896 *Collection of Books of Western Learning [to Make the State] Rich and Powerful*, *Xixue fuqiang congshu* 西學富強叢書, came with a preface by none other than Li Hongzhang, the highest-ranking government official at the time. He had just signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki with the Japanese and was obviously making a point about the cause of China’s defeat. In a taxonomy that harked back to the 1890 work with the preface by Zhang Zhidong, this work started with mathematics, electricity and chemistry, but even when it subsequently dealt with heaven and earth, this was Western astronomy and geology, all of which was geared to the goal of overcoming the asymmetry in power between the modern

<sup>30</sup> The Japanese translation of the Chambers’s *Information for the People*, which had been sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, was published in separate installments between 1875 and 1885. The earlier installments used the 4th edition of 1857, the later parts the 5th edition, which had been published in 1874–75. A study on this translation can be found in Fukukama Tatsuo 福鎌達夫, *Meiji shoki hyakka zensho no kenkyū* 明治初期百科全書の研究 [Studies of early Meiji encyclopaedias] (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1968). This translation did not use the term ‘hyakugaku renkan 百學連環 Encyclopaedia’ originally proposed by Nishi Amane, but pioneered the translation *Hyakka zensho* 百科全書 for encyclopaedia. This was adopted in China in the late 1890s. In 1896, Timothy Richard still used the descriptive formula “a category-book in which articles by different authors were collected” (有彙刊之類書) to render the reference to Diderot’s *Grande Encyclopédie*—“...the men of letters combined to produce an Encyclopaedia ..”—in his translation of Robert Mackenzie’s *The 19th Century. A History* (London: T. Nelson & Co., 1880), 14. *Taixi xinshi lanyao* 泰西新史攔要 [A sketch of the recent history of the West] tr. Li Timotai 李提摩太 [= Timothy Richard]. Revised by Cai Erkang 蔡爾康 (Shanghai: Mei Hua shuguan, 1898), *juan* 1, 5b. In 1908, a biography of d’Alembert excerpted from *Chambers’s Biographical Dictionary* on the suggestion of Richards, used the term *tushu jicheng* 圖書集成—familiar from the recently reprinted Chinese encyclopaedia by that name—for the *Grande Encyclopédie*. Zhangboer 張伯爾 (Chambers), *Shijie mingren zhuanlüe* 世界名人傳略 [Brief biographies of notables worldwide] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1908), *zhuan* si D 傳四 [D biographies 4], 1.

nations in the West and the East by making China “rich and powerful.”<sup>31</sup> These works denoted their usefulness for contemporary political affairs in their titles. A good example is the 1897 *Comprehensive Examination of Current Affairs*, Shiwu tongkao 時務通考.<sup>32</sup> This encyclopaedic work also retained the old taxonomy, but the entries had shifted beyond recognition. The section on “heaven” went into great detail about different Chinese and Western systems of establishing a calendar and came out in favor of the Western system. The geography section mostly dealt with “Asia” and “Europe”.

A growing asymmetry in information had developed vis-à-vis Western countries, which were eagerly accumulating increasingly specific and verifiable encyclopaedic as well as particular knowledge about China—right down to plants, birds and waterways<sup>33</sup>—while there had been little move to acquire similar levels of knowledge about the West in China. By the latter third of the nineteenth century, it had become a widely, if uneasily, shared assumption among members of the Chinese elite that such public knowledge—which by now was shared on an increasingly global level—was needed because some foreign countries derived wealth and power from their technical devices, their political set-up, their state of being “civilized,” and their levels of information. This new and Western knowledge did not stop at China’s door. It came not just with a new conceptual taxonomy that translated into newly-formed key terms and terminologies in Chinese, together with new scientific and technical knowledge as well as the institutions that conveyed, managed and translated them into practice. It also came with the challenge that China might need a new history, new government institutions, and a new knowledge about herself down to religious beliefs, mineral resources, and statistical data. The sections in the new encyclopaedic works dealing with China focused increasingly on this new knowledge, for which they drew on writings by a body of cultural brokers familiar and conversant with both sides.

Together with an increasingly acerbic assessment by many authors of the capability of the existing officialdom to meet these challenges with the classical education they had received, came proposals to establish, at the very least, a fast track to government positions for people equipped with some of this new, modern

<sup>31</sup> Zhang Yinhan, ed., *Xixue fuqiang congshu* 西學富強叢書 [Collection of books of Western learning [to make the state] rich and powerful] (Shanghai: Hongwen shuju, 1896).

<sup>32</sup> Qilu zhuren 杞廬主人, comp., *Shiwu tongkao*, 31 *juan* in 24 vols. (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1897).

<sup>33</sup> To give just two examples: for birds, see Armand David, M. E. Oustalet, *Les Oiseaux de la Chine* (Paris: G. Masson, 1877); and for waterways, Charles Henry Clarke Langdon, ed. *The China Sea Directory, COMPRISING THE COASTS OF CHINA FROM HONG KONG TO THE KOREA; NORTH COAST OF LUZON, FORMOSA ISLAND AND STRAIT; THE BABUYAN, BASHEE, AND MEIACO SIMA GROUPS. YELLOW SEA, GULFS OF PE-CHILI AND LIAU-TUNG. ALSO THE RIVERS CANTON, WEST, MIN, YUNG, YANGTSE, YELLOW, PEI HO, AND LIAU HO; AND PRATAS ISLAND*, which was in its third revised edition by 1896. The part of the latter dealing with the Chinese coast was eventually translated into Chinese and published in 1900, see Chen Shoupeng 陳壽彭, trans., *Zhongguo jianghai xianyao tuzhi* 中國江海險要圖志 [Atlas of strategic locations of rivers and seas of China] (Guangdong: Guangya shuju, 1907).

and specialized knowledge. Such a track was already opened earlier for aspiring diplomats, but demands for it became clamorous in 1898. With this, an assumption gained ground that knowledge about the world at large and even some basic science was an important qualifier for an official career. This new knowledge was articulated in modern Western notions that were being reconfigured in China and Japan with a variety of Chinese character compounds. The concepts themselves were new, and to complicate things further, the same concept often came in several different characters. The result was a fundamental transformation of the conceptual order of things accompanied by great turbulence, not just in the objects of knowledge, but also in the instruments for its articulation. As yet there were no schools and academies to convey this new knowledge apart from the Christian missionary schools and the military arsenals with their foreign technicians. Under these conditions there was a rapidly-growing market for printed encyclopaedic works of new and modern knowledge for home study, as well as for reference works providing reliable information on concepts and terminologies; there was a small group of people with the qualifications to meet this demand; there was some official patronage; there was the technology of lithography that would allow the speedy publication of massive works at modest prices; and there was the burgeoning media center of the Shanghai International Settlement outside the jurisdiction of the court, but with the nationwide book distribution network throughout the Chinese-reading world pioneered by the Shenbaoguan.

Segments of encyclopaedic knowledge relevant to modernity were now also spread throughout China with the new advocacy papers pioneered by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929).<sup>34</sup> While making great efforts to abide by the sober and rational rhetoric of presenting verifiable and relevant facts (and never acknowledging the voracious copying done from Japanese writers), these articles were often framed by cries of despair. While these cries served to mark the critical importance of the new knowledge, they were also part of a fierce battle with the silent counter-text of what Liang Qichao saw as entrenched opinion and corrupt practice.

Among the individual articles introducing such segmental information, we find a sketch of the life of Denis Diderot of the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* fame,<sup>35</sup> in which the “*Encyclopédie*” is

<sup>34</sup> Before the beginning of the Qing government’s ‘Reform of Governance,’ Xinzheng 新政, phase in 1901, these would be the *Shiwu bao* 時務報 [*The Chinese progress*] (1896–1898), its successor *Changyan bao* 昌言報 [Open words] (1898 July–October), *Qingyi bao* 清議報 [parallel title: *The China Discussion*] (1898–1901), *Zhixin bao* 知新報 [parallel title: *The Reformer*] (1897–1900), and *Kazhi lu* 開智錄 [parallel title: *The Wisdom Guide*] (1900–1901). Their number alone indicates the energy that went into propagating new types of concepts and knowledge. Their titles were programmatic, and the English titles in brackets starting with capital letters are part of the official names of these papers.

<sup>35</sup> The biographical sketch of Diderot is a translation of the respective section by Feng Ziyou 馮自由 as *Faguo geming shi* 法國革命史 [History of the French Revolution] in *Kaizhi lu* 4, 1900, 71–73. For other early references to Diderot in late Qing writings, see Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, “Jindai zuizao baikē quanshu de bianyi yu Qing mo wenxian zhong de Dideluo” 近代最早百科全書的編譯與清末文獻中的狄德羅 [The compilation of the first modern encyclopaedia and Diderot in late Qing writings], *Fudan xuebao* (*Shehui kexue ban*), no. 3 (1998): 47–52.

translated, as in the Japanese original from which this sketch is translated, with the neologism *xueshu leidian* 學術類典 or ‘classified handbook for science and the arts.’ Liang Qichao himself was very much aware of the fact that many of his own newspaper writings had the character of encyclopaedia entries, and his writings were perceived in this manner. A Singapore journalist and doctor, Lim Boon Keng (Lin Wenqing 林文慶), writing in the *Singapore Free Press* under the pseudonym Wen Ching, summed up the writings of both Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the section “The Chinese Encyclopaedists” in his 1901 *The Chinese Crisis from Within*, saying:

He became the leader of a new school, which we may compare with the *Parti des Philosophes*, headed by Voltaire and kept agoing by the energetic D’Alembert, in the critical years of French history prior to the Great Revolution.

Liang Qichao’s *Shiwu bao* newspaper, in which many of these entries were published, was

therefore conceived in the same spirit that, more than a century ago, inspired the great Diderot, as Carlyle calls him, to join D’Alembert in editing the immortal *Encyclopédie*, that storehouse of freethought [sic] and revolutionary ideas, which heralded the most momentous changes in the social and political history of Europe. Kang Yu Wei and his colleagues may thus be called the Chinese Encyclopaedists, although the encyclopaedia, which they had sketched in outline, was never completed.<sup>36</sup>

The subversive potential of a systematically presented new body of useful knowledge for the established practices of thinking and acting was well known and appreciated by Chinese men of letters in this period of rapid change, in which the borderlines between reform and revolution were far more diffuse than they appear in retrospect.

Once the cohabitation between the court and reformers such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei ended with the Empress Dowager’s coup in 1898 and their exile, there was a widening in the gap between the court and the increasingly self-assertive Jiangnan public intellectuals, who were connected with one another, and with overseas communities through the Shanghai contact zone and its press. But it didn’t become an abyss. When the foreign powers occupied Peking in 1900 after the Boxer and Muslim attacks on the Legation Quarter, the Manchu Court ceded to pressures from high Han-Chinese officials and went back with some reluctance, in 1901, to the ‘Reform of Governance,’ *xinzheng* 新政, policies, which it had aborted in 1898.<sup>37</sup> Conditions were now right for a second and higher peak in the

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<sup>36</sup> Wen Ching, “The Chinese Encyclopaedists,” in Wen Ching, *The Chinese Crisis from Within*, ed. Rev. G. M. Reith (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 42 and 44. For the identification of this author, who is known from many other books and as the editor of newspapers such as the *Straits Times* and *Chinese Nation*, see Clive J. Christie, *Ideology and Revolution in Southeast Asia 1900–1980* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 17.

<sup>37</sup> For background on this period, see Douglas Reynolds, *China, 1898–1912: The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1993); Douglas Reynolds, ed. tr., *China 1895–1912: state-sponsored reforms and China’s late-Qing revolution* (Armonk: Sharpe, 1995); Wang Xiaohu 王晓秋, Shang Xiaoming 尚小明, eds.,

publication of encyclopaedic works of new, modern and western knowledge. It was clear, whether accepted by the court or not, that the reform of governance would have to include wide-sweeping changes in government, education, the military and state–society relations, and not merely the purchase of some military hardware and mining equipment. The complete abolition of the Imperial Examination system in 1905 shifted the vast book market of useful knowledge completely away from the material used in preparation for the Imperial Examinations and towards handy works of new knowledge.

Liang Qichao was among the first to sense that the wind was changing in 1901 and that a new chance for reforms was coming. For this, the power of encyclopaedias to ‘change people’s thinking’, as Diderot had hoped, was urgently needed. Liang directly prepared a collection of the ‘encyclopaedic’ entries he himself had written during the previous years. He published it in Chinese in Shanghai 1903 and—for the numerous Chinese students in Japan—in Tokyo 1904. Both came with the encyclopaedic genre marker *lei*.<sup>38</sup> Liang’s 14 categories of useful knowledge range from politics, education, history, geography and travelogues to his science fiction novels about the future of China and the world. He was not alone. The prefaces of quite a few of the new encyclopaedic works explicitly refer to the 1901 ‘Reform of Governance’ edict as their anchor for relevance and official acceptance.<sup>39</sup>

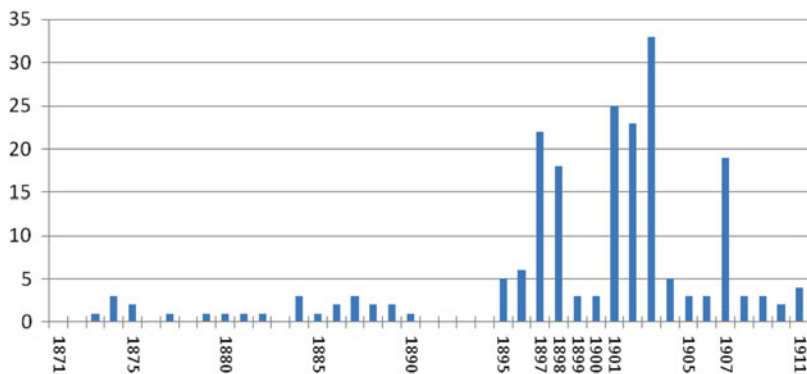
The numbers of new or reprinted encyclopaedic works in Chinese in our bibliography—nearly all published in Shanghai—indicate the very tight relationship between encyclopaedia publishing and the political environment. Between 1870 and 1894, about one such work was published each year. Immediately on the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and the gradual speeding-up of reform discussions and policies, the numbers went up.

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*Wuxu weixin yu Qing mo xinzheng: wan Qing gaige shi yanjiu* 戊戌維新與清末新政：晚清改革史研究 [The Hundred Days Reform and the Reform of Governance of the Late Qing: Studies in the history of Late Qing reform] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998). Tan Ruqian 譚汝謙, *Jindai Zhong Ri wenhua guanxi yanjiu* 近代中日文化關係研究 [Studies on the cultural relations between China and Japan in the modern period] (Hong Kong: Xianggang Riben yanjiusuo, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Chong ding fenlei yinbingshi wenji quanbian* 重訂分類飲冰室文集全編 [Newly revised complete works from the Icedrinker’s Studio arranged according to categories] (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1903). This edition was reprinted a year later in Japan as *Yinbingshi wenji leibian* 飲冰室文集類編 [Works from the Icedrinker’s Studio arranged according to categories] (Tokyo: Shimokōbe Hangorō, 1904). We had access only to the Japanese edition, which is on the National Diet Library website.

<sup>39</sup> See Chen Shuzhu 陳洙珠, “Xu” 序 [preface], in Qian Xun 錢恂, comp., *Wuzhou geguo zhengzhi kao* 五洲各國政治考 (Shanghai: 1901), 1a; Chen Wenzhu 陳文洙, “Xu” 序 [Preface], in Yishu hui zhuren 譯書會主人, comp. *Zhong wai zhengyi cefu tongzong* 中外政藝策府統宗 [Comprehensive summary of imperial examinations about government and technical learning in China and foreign countries] (Shanghai: Zhong wai yishu hui, 1901), 1b; Zhouqing jushi 籀頤居士 (= Sun Yirang 孫詒讓), “Pingdian Zhouli zhengyao xu” 評點周禮政要序 [Preface to the interpunctuated and annotated edition of the *Zhouli zhengyao*], in Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Pingdian Zhouli zhengyao* 評點周禮政要 (Shanghai: Rixin tushuju, 1902), 1; Yu Yue 俞樾, untitled preface, in *Xinxue da congshu* 新學大叢書 (Shanghai: Jishan qiaoji shuju, 1903), 1.



**Fig. 1** Numbers of Chinese-language encyclopaedic works of new knowledge printed and reprinted 1871–1911. Data based on Rudolf Wagner, *Bibliography of Chinese Encyclopaedic Works 1840–1937*, status: March 2012

They dropped steeply after the coup that ended the 100-Days Reform in the fall of 1898 and brought about the Boxer disaster, but immediately picked up after the ‘Reform of Governance’ edict in 1901. Numbers then went down, picked up again when the plans for a constitution were announced in 1906, and stayed then at two to four per annum for the remaining years of the dynasty (Fig. 1).

There was a sizeable gain in professionalism, however, as new encyclopaedic dictionaries started to come out. A large number of publishers were involved and competed in this market, but none of them gained the upper hand. The succeeding decades until the mid-1930s saw the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan) gain dominance of the encyclopaedia market by concentrating talent and money in a very small number of encyclopaedic ventures of high professional quality. The initial plans of the Guomindang, after gaining national ascendancy in 1928, to crown the new nationhood with a full-scale Chinese encyclopaedia were reduced to naught by civil war and Japanese military intervention, which also destroyed the plant of the Commercial Press together with the finished manuscript of a revised *Everyday Cyclopaedia*.

In the early phase of the ‘Reform of Governance,’ we see a flurry of reprints of works from the first phase, but for new works the more developed Japanese encyclopaedic works were an important and readily available source for the rapidly-growing number of Chinese conversant with Japanese texts. Some could now also draw on English language encyclopaedias both for their own information and for the compilation of Chinese-language works. The study of encyclopaedic knowledge during the late Qing and Republican periods will therefore have to abandon the cherished idea that it only involves the study of Chinese-language materials.<sup>40</sup> Japanese encyclopaedic works are the most important source for all of

<sup>40</sup> This aspect still needs more careful study. While the efforts to sell the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to Chinese in China did not meet with much success, which might have to do with the price, we see special, modestly-priced editions of the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* and the *Encyclopedia of Religion* advertised in Chinese papers during the 1920s.



the new 1903 Chinese works of this type (only during the Republican period did English-language works start to dominate). Among the new works published in Chinese we find the very concise and sophisticated encyclopaedic dictionary *The New Erya*, *Xin Erya* 新爾雅, which for the first time provided systematic definitions in Chinese for the key concepts in 14 fields of knowledge, such as state, law, economy, logic, science or botany, on a bare 175 printed pages.<sup>41</sup> At the same time we find the massive *Great Book Collection of New Knowledge*, *Xinxue da congshu* 新學大叢書, of “famous Chinese and Japanese works selected for their relevance for the management of the state today in translation” and the promise that only the “most up-to-date translations [from the Japanese]” and the “most up-to-date [Chinese] works” would be used. Its ten key concepts, *gang* 綱, such as ‘government and law,’ *zheng fa* 政法, ‘finance,’ *licai* 理財, or ‘philosophy,’ *zhexue* 哲學, all used the latest translation terminology from Japan and brazenly included signed entries from the banned Liang Qichao.<sup>42</sup> It was matched in volume by the 100 volumes of the *Compiled and Translated Encyclopaedia for General Education*, *Bianyi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu* 編譯普通教育百科全書 (1903), which popularized the new Japanese term for encyclopaedia, *hyakka zensho* (Chinese: *baike quanshu*) 百科全書, in China, and consisted entirely of sometimes abbreviated translations from the Japanese *Imperial Encyclopaedia*, *Teikoku hyakka zensho* 帝國百科全書, and the *Complete Anthology of Answers to Questions on General Sciences*, *Futsūgaku mondō zensho* 普通學問答全書, from the Fuzanbō 富山房 publishing house, who played a role in Japanese encyclopaedia publishing comparable to that of Chambers in Scotland.<sup>43</sup>

For the next years until the abdication of the dynasty in 1912, encyclopaedia developments in China continued along the two tracks that had been consolidated since 1901, namely compilations of systematic and factual information on the one hand, and efforts to overcome the terminological confusion through precise definitions of the new key concepts and terminologies in the style of an encyclopaedic dictionary. The massive and uncoordinated creation and spread of new concepts in the entire range from “historical epoch” or “nation” to “antipodal cells” created a situation where precise definitions of the subject under discussion became a crucial condition for understanding the information conveyed. The lack of encyclopaedic dictionaries of the type pioneered by the *Xin Erya* was keenly felt. The key to the 1907 *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History*, *Bowu dacidian* 博物大辭典, which offers definitions of the terminology of botany, starts: “Scholarly circles in China today only have character dictionaries, *zidian* 字典, but no

<sup>41</sup> Wang Rongbao 王榮寶 and Ye Lan 葉瀾, comps., *Xin Erya* 新爾雅 [The New Erya] (Shanghai: Guoxue she, 1903).

<sup>42</sup> *Xinxue da congshu*, 32 vols. (Shanghai: Jishan qiaoji shuju, 1903). An example for a signed entry from Liang Qichao is his “Zhongguo zhuanzhi zhengti jinhua shi lun” 中國專制政體進化史論 [On the evolution of the Chinese autocratic system], at the commencement of Chap. 2. It is signed Ren Gong 任公, a standard name used by Liang.

<sup>43</sup> Fan Diji 范迪吉, ed., *Bianyi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu*, 100 *juan* in 100 vols. (Shanghai: Huiwen xueshe, 1903).

terminological dictionaries, *cidian* 辭典. Since translations are widely circulated, a need has been felt to publish a general terminological dictionary to facilitate their perusal. The present work is designed as a reference work for teachers and students when reading books.”<sup>44</sup> Since these did not give a systematic presentation of the entire field under question, but only a quick definition of a term one might find in such a presentation, itemized forms of taxonomy were used, namely the arrangement according to the number of strokes of the first character of the (normally multi-character) term one might find in a work of new knowledge.

Huang Ren 黃人 (Huang Moxi) launched a major polemic against the terminological chaos that he felt still prevailed by way of a preface to his huge *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* (1911). This is not a series of terminological handbooks for different fields of knowledge, but a comprehensive terminological dictionary. He took the next logical step by putting all the terms into a single and purely formal taxonomy, in which they are lined up according to the number of strokes of the first character, but he added a taxonomical contents list by adding a classifier to the terms that indicated to which of the 14 fields of knowledge the term belonged. In quite a few cases, he goes one step further by adding information about the origin of a term.<sup>45</sup> Given the foreign origin of most of the terms, both works included the source terms in Japanese, English, or both.

The wealth of information made available to literate and largely urban Chinese through these encyclopaedic works of new knowledge, together with the increasing sophistication of the terminological dictionaries, prompts us to reassess the degree of familiarity that Chinese elites had with “the world” during these decades. While certainly no match in quantity and quality to the Japanese encyclopaedic works, the volume and quality of encyclopaedic knowledge available in China was certainly far beyond the range hitherto acknowledged by scholarship.

During this first decade of the twentieth century, new schools, academies, and universities were springing up with teachers and students eager to get a quick grasp of the prized new knowledge, make a career, and save their country. While in the beginning the encyclopaedias were the natural shortcut to new knowledge, gradually a body of people developed who needed and had a more specialized knowledge than these encyclopaedias could offer. The market dried up, few new encyclopaedias appeared, while work on high quality terminological dictionaries such as the *The Source of Words*, *Ci yuan* 辭源 (1916) continued, but only reached the publishing stage during the first decade of the Republic.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Zeng Pu 曾朴 and Xu Nianci 徐念慈, eds., *Bowu dacidian* (Shanghai: Hongwen, 1907), 1. This was to be the first of a series, and the next two, on law and physics, were already advertised at the back.

<sup>45</sup> A fine example is his note on the origin of the term *jingji* 經濟 in a Japanese phonetic mix-up. See the study by Milena Doleželová-Velingerová in this volume.

<sup>46</sup> Lu Erkui 陸爾奎, *Ci yuan* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1916).

It was not until 1919 that the Commercial Press launched its first encyclopaedia, the *Everyday Cyclopedic*, *Riyong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書, which was to dominate the market throughout the Republican period. It was soon joined by specialized encyclopaedic dictionaries such as the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of New Knowledge*, *Xin wenhua cishu* 新文化辭書 (1923),<sup>47</sup> and the 1929 *Dictionary of Social Problems*, *Shehui wenti cidian* 社會問題辭典.<sup>48</sup> With the radical modernism of their perspective, content, and organization and the multilingual competence of their editors, they resolutely joined the “new culture” and rang the death knell for the works of the first generation. The older works faded from memory as quaint efforts from the past and the last gasps of a dying dynasty, marginalized even by historians of science. Only the recently growing interest in vernacular knowledge—including conceptual migrations, processes of translation and adaptation, and taxonomies of knowledge—has sharpened our understanding of the importance of this body of works. The studies presented here are the result.

**Li Hsiao-t’i** looks at the background and the political attitudes of the people involved in the compilation of these encyclopaedic works. The career paths of quite a few of these men show that since the Taiping War, lack of success in the Imperial Examinations did not necessarily mean a lowly existence as a local school teacher. In the large secretariats built up by the new Han-Chinese political leaders of the Foreign Affairs (*Yangwu*) current, new avenues opened, and these often led to careers in the new urban publishing center of Shanghai, in the new diplomatic service, and in the domain studied by Natascha Gentz, the newspapers. Eventually, study abroad provided a fast track to these new areas. The cultural capital on which these people relied was their competence about “Western” things. Their writings on the “new knowledge” of the world became an important source for the compilers of encyclopaedias, and led to increased professionalism in these works as well as to a host of new compilations after the Sino-Japanese War.

**Natascha Gentz** explores the links between the event-focused genre of newspaper reports and the encyclopaedic entries with their claim to long-term significance and reliability. She shows to what extent late Qing encyclopaedias of new knowledge drew upon newspapers as one of their sources of information, to what degree encyclopaedias themselves conveyed not a summary of available specialized knowledge but provided new knowledge, very much like newspapers, and how far journalists themselves became actively involved in encyclopaedia compilation.

**Iwo Amelung**’s study explores the link between the reforms in the Imperial Examination system and the publication of encyclopaedic works of new knowledge through a case study of one such work. This link opens up a whole new series of questions: What is the connection between the topical classifications of the

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<sup>47</sup> Tang Jinggao 唐敬杲, comp., *Xin wenhua cishu* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1923). It came with the interesting parallel English title *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of New Knowledge* (rather than new culture).

<sup>48</sup> Chen Shousun 陳綬蓀, comp., *Shehui wenti cidian* [parallel title: *Dictionary of Social Problems*] (Shanghai: Minzhi shuju, 1929).

reformed examinations and the order of things as presented in these encyclopaedic works; are the questions asked in the examinations keyed to the information presented in the encyclopaedias; is the continuing “textual” focus of the examinations responsible for the very textual manner in which the new knowledge is presented, a manner that involves abandoning the graphs and illustrations often contained in the sources; was the market for encyclopaedic works a creation of the reforms; should the new collections of statecraft essays, which were geared to the examination of new knowledge, be treated in the same category as the encyclopaedic works on which they largely drew; and finally, what conclusions does the negligible place accorded to traditional Chinese scholarly knowledge in these compilations suggest with regard to the perception of the strong cultural asymmetry prevailing in knowledge deemed relevant to the nation’s aspiration to become “rich and strong” and to securing the candidates’ success.

Encyclopaedia compilers have a long-seated habit of looking at their predecessors’ entries and copying them when they saw fit. Given the small windows for the publication of encyclopaedias of modern knowledge during the late Qing, the extreme time constraints they imposed on their editors, and the difficulty in assembling a staff of writers capable of covering all areas of knowledge, it was likely that entries were copied from other works of this kind. To test this assumption and see whether this led to a homogenization of views into shared commonplaces, **Rudolf Wagner** analyzes a selection of eight such works in the light of three questions: Where is the newspaper, and especially the privately-owned newspaper, in the late Qing order of things and to what degree did this new medium change the perception of state-society interaction; are these encyclopaedias reproducing a set of shared commonplaces by borrowing quotations; and to what degree were these features picked up in other genres, such as examination essays?

The Chinese encyclopaedic works did not simply interact with the content of Western learning and the form of Western encyclopaedias. They did so largely through the intermediary of Japanese translations and works. The migration of encyclopaedic forms of organization and content across languages and cultures is a large field that has barely been opened. **Douglas Reynolds** probes the social and intellectual conditions that facilitated a proactive and highly creative appropriation of useful encyclopaedic knowledge from the West in the context of the government-sponsored “Dutch Learning” of the Tokugawa period, which in its turn provided an excellent starting point for the Meiji reforms with their massive government-sponsored encyclopaedia projects. At the same time, he shows how a different set of social and intellectual conditions in China hampered the early efforts of individuals such as Huang Zunxian to provide a wide-ranging, fact-based understanding of the Japanese reforms and to open the door for a Japanese shortcut to Western learning.

From the outset, encyclopaedic reference works established a focus for their selection. This might be determined by the target audience, the purpose for which the work was to be used, or by subject matter. Among the latter, biographical dictionaries have a long tradition. With the late Qing transition, a flood of new names made their appearance in Chinese writings and translations from other

countries including sketches of their history, but there was no handy resource with information about the lives and labors of these individuals. The established Chinese genre of the biographical dictionary listing the famous members of the different clans continued with many reprints into the Republican period, but as no foreign name could contribute to the standing of a Chinese clan, the compilers felt no need to include foreigners. **Xia Xiaohong**'s contribution brings to light the complex problems faced by the Chinese and foreign compilers of biographical dictionaries consisting mostly of Westerners. Not only had their names been around in many transcriptions, the question was also where to find short and reliable information without either the library resources or the language skills to peruse large amounts of foreign-language works; how the sequence in the dictionary could be organized so that Chinese users would find what they were looking for; and how dates could be provided that made sense in a Chinese chronology.

The range of works that may be classified as encyclopaedic is large. Encyclopaedias may contain systematic presentations of entire fields that may appear as separate volumes or fascicles, while other works of this type will focus on brief entries with compacted factual information on such things as concepts, events, persons, works, institutions, and places. During the nineteenth century, a division of labor emerged between these two types, the first resulting in the large multi-volume encyclopaedias and the second in encyclopaedic dictionaries such as the Brockhaus *Konversationslexikon*, or Robert Hunter's *Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. While the compilations according to categories, *leishu*, had an affinity with the former, the character dictionaries, *zishu* or *zidian*, corresponded more to the latter. In a case study, **Chen Pingyuan** traces the process how the concept "*wenxue*" that had a previous Chinese use and today means "literature" gradually assumed this meaning and stabilized. His key witness is Huang Moxi, who compiled a radically new encyclopaedic dictionary, which he carefully set off against the traditional "chaotic" *zishu* or *zidian* by focusing on conceptualized and knowledgeable definitions, and who wrote a first "History of Chinese Literature" for his students at Soochow University, in which he fleshed out the concept.

The rapid development of specialized fields of knowledge during the nineteenth century posed a huge challenge to compilers of encyclopaedias. They had to keep abreast of developments in the knowledge about the world and its workings, and in new specialized terminologies. A flurry of ever newer encyclopaedias or supplements to existing ones tried to solve the problem of topicality, and new and often highly specialized encyclopaedic dictionaries provided concise explanations of the key terms for areas as different as law, mining, political science, or police work. The ensuing professionalization and increasing division of labor made its way via Japan to China.

**Milena Doleželová-Velingerová** traces the development of encyclopaedic dictionaries since the beginning of the "Reform of Governance" phase in 1901 from *The New Erya* to Huang Moxi's 1911 encyclopaedic dictionary. These works come with an implicit as well as explicit critique of traditional dictionary and encyclopaedia practices as being chaotic, fuzzy and not fit for bringing China into the modern world. This critique can be ascribed to a better understanding of the

concept of ‘evolution’ which, as expressly spelled out by Darwin, can also be applied to the social environment. In his preface, Huang proceeds from his understanding of biological evolution to then observe the possibility of evolution in the cultural realm, including encyclopaedia, and their potential for contributing to social evolution. This critique is articulated against a court policy that tried to slow down and moderate the precipitous changes. The lives and works of many of the encyclopaedists of this first decade of the twentieth century thus take on a distinctly rebellious aspect that recalls the role of Diderot and d’Alembert in pre-revolutionary France. Writers of encyclopaedic works were active in writing political novels (Zeng Pu), founding girls’ schools and professional associations (Sun Yirang), joining revolutionary organizations such as the “Revolutionary Party” (Wang Rongbao and Ye Lan), or envisioning that their encyclopaedia would be a challenge to the inherited framework of thinking on a par with the shock Chen Wei and his friends sent down the spine of the Qin troops when they let loose foxes’ howls in the middle of the night—which was the beginning of the end of the first of the dynasties of imperial China, the Qin.

The late Qing period is a time of radical reordering of the conceptual and institutional realms in East Asia. While many items were new in this new order of things that was gradually developing and consolidating, others that had long been familiar were now recast. Among these is the role of the state in the economy in general and in providing social welfare in crisis situations in particular. **Andrea Janku** follows the process by which the late Qing encyclopaedias and the future state officials as their implied readers recast this old responsibility of the Chinese state. The discursive environment was dominated by the goal of “enriching the state and strengthening the military,” which emphasized the responsibility of the citizen towards the state rather than the responsibility of the state for the people. In this context, the long and mixed Chinese experience with famine relief lacks the status of properly summarized historical experience. Instead, Chinese encyclopaedic works turned to studies about the experience of Western “civilized” states with various social and economic policies in the context of “political economy” to discuss the direction in which China should go.

With the end of Imperial governance and the coming of the Republic in 1912, the environment for encyclopaedias changed dramatically. This change had already announced itself through the very new and modern form and content of Huang Moxi’s encyclopaedic dictionary. From many prefaces we know that the late Qing encyclopaedic works were largely addressed to teachers and students of the new “modern” subjects that became part of school curricula and the entrance conditions for government jobs at that time. While many people already clamored for a complete remake of the populace as modern citizens, the court continued to focus on institutional reforms. With the advent of the Republic in 1912, the fledgling state took on the role of grand educator. **Catherine Yeh** explores the role played by the new encyclopaedic works of this period, above all the *Everyday Cyclopaedia* (Riyong baikē quanshu), in this context—both as a potential guide in this tumultuous transition, and as a reflection of social change throughout the different editions. Going back to the function of similar works in the USA designed to introduce

immigrants to their new environment and focusing on the entries for “family” rather than state institutions or science, she probes the profound changes in the private lives of people in their “immigration” to the foreign land of modernity.

Scholarly literature has often emphasized the difference between traditional Chinese reference works and the modern Western equivalents. The Chinese encyclopaedias for everyday practical use that became popular during the Ming dynasty and were updated and reprinted well into the Republican period were not included in these surveys, and nor were the new Chinese encyclopaedias studied in this volume. Only recently has attention begun to focus on these two neglected fields. Taking recent studies on the earlier encyclopaedias for daily use as her point of departure, **Barbara Mittler**’s contribution challenges the earlier narratives by asking whether their modern successors, such as the entirely reworked *Everyday Cyclopaedia* of 1934, were following some of the earlier tracks rather than simply following foreign models throughout; whether the readers they tried to reach were members of the modernizing elite or the broader ranges of people addressed in the pre-modern works; and whether and how they reflected the changing role of women in the urban society of the Republican era.

The volume concludes with a hard and critical look by **Zhong Shaohua** at the manner in which traditional Chinese reference works designed for a scholar’s “ruminatory” excursions into a wide range of common knowledge that was sourced to the “classics” but had not been tested by scholarly means, were replaced by attempts at encyclopaedic works of new knowledge along Japanese and Western lines. Going beyond the evident contrast between the proactive policies of the Japanese government in this domain and the Qing court with its wide array of officials who failed to see much merit in this “new learning,” the article looks at the particular intellectual attitudes and social conditions that shaped the production of the Chinese encyclopaedic works with widespread amateurism as well as narrow time and money constraints. At the same time, the works served their purpose by introducing and popularizing a wide range of new concepts and terms together with basic knowledge about their contents.

This volume brings together studies characterized by the close attention they pay to the hitherto unstudied source material; to the transcultural and translanguagual environment in which these Chinese works were produced; and to the broader questions of political, institutional, intellectual, and conceptual history. As is mandatory for such a pioneering endeavor, the volume raises as many questions as it answers. The encyclopaedic works were only one side of the public articulation of new knowledge, and their role within this wider environment merits further study. The migration of encyclopaedic knowledge, commonplaces and concepts across languages, cultures and genres is a topic of absorbing interest that requires control of a range of sources in many languages and a type of cooperative research that has barely begun. During the nineteenth century, the compilation of encyclopaedias and encyclopaedic dictionaries became a key feature in the claims of the new nation states to higher and independent cultural status. How this aspect played out in East Asia remains to be studied. The same is true of the uneasy interaction between the Chinese encyclopaedias for everyday use from the Ming

and the new works. The impact that the Qing government's "New Governance" or "Reform of Governance" measures since 1901 had on creating the environment, the demand, and the market for such works is still little understood and might end up supporting a revision of the widely shared assessment that the Qing court was on the way out after 1898. The same is true for the interaction between the very independent publishing hub in Shanghai and the political powers of Qing and Republican China. It is hoped that the present volume will stimulate further forays into this challenging and important field of research.

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