

Modern Chinese Encyclopaedic Dictionaries: Novel Concepts and New Terminology (1903–1911)

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During the first decade of the twentieth century the Chinese encyclopaedias of new knowledge, which had developed since the 1880s, were joined by a new genre—the encyclopaedic dictionary.¹ It addressed the problem that many of the new ideas coming from abroad—particularly from Japan, the main transmitter of Western modern culture—were expressed in a new and unfamiliar terminology. These new terms were formed through a combination of several Chinese characters. The lack of reference works that could provide short definitions and show the place of a term in a taxonomic order proved an obstacle to Chinese students and scholars who were eager to revitalize the country by absorbing these new ideas. In short, what was acutely needed was a modern Chinese encyclopaedic dictionary. In their 1911 preface to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Henry Watson and Francis George Fowler marked the difference between an encyclopaedia and what in fact was an encyclopaedic dictionary: “The book is designed as a dictionary, and not as an encyclopaedia; that is, the uses of words and phrases as such are its subject matter, and it is concerned with giving information about the things for which those words and phrases stand only so far as correct use of the words depends upon knowledge of the things.”² This study will deal with the transition from traditional Chinese dictionaries, with their focus on the individual character, to the encyclopaedic dictionaries that explained the polysyllabic new terminology.

The times were favorable for such ventures. In 1901 the Qing court’s resumption, under strong internal and external pressures, of the 1898 reform policies under the slogan “Reform of Governance,” Xinzheng 新政, created an important opening for

¹ I wish to express my thanks to Rudolf Wagner for his generous information and data related to late Qing publications of encyclopaedic works of modern knowledge as well as for his ideas that were informally expressed during my compilation of this study and were important in forming its final shape.

² Henry Watson Fowler and Francis George Fowler, “Preface,” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 1.

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new career paths that set a prime on “new knowledge.” The publishing industry, escaping the court’s control in the Shanghai International Settlement, flooded the market with new publications that transmitted new ideas through newspapers, journals, and books. Many young Chinese went to Japan to study this new knowledge and to acquire familiarity with segments of the new terminology. It helped that the terminology of new knowledge that had developed and stabilized in Japan was written in Chinese characters. While in Japan this was a marker of high culture, it also greatly facilitated the absorption of this new terminology by Chinese students, even those without advanced levels of Japanese.³ In Japan, new encyclopaedias, bilingual terminological dictionaries, and encyclopaedic dictionaries provided a staggered degree of access to the new knowledge. These Chinese students were instrumental in spreading the new terminology in the Chinese-speaking world upon their return. This terminology appeared in the new Chinese-language encyclopaedias, which are studied by other contributors in this volume, but also in many translations and original articles. And it largely replaced earlier Chinese efforts to develop a translation terminology. In this context, the encyclopaedic dictionary was a latecomer. It filled a need generated by the steeply rising volume of works using the new terminology and was important for its stabilization.

An Encyclopaedia for General Education Translated

Once the Reform of Governance had been announced, publishers rushed to meet the suddenly revived demand for encyclopaedic presentations of the new knowledge. Works that had appeared before 1898 were reprinted, some that had just missed the 1898 deadline were rushed to print; one of the key propagandists of new knowledge, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), grouped his scattered essays into four broad semantic fields (Governance, *zhengzhi* 政治; Contemporary Situation, *shiju* 時局; Religion, *zongjiao* 宗教; and Education, *jiaoyu* 教育) to form an encyclopaedic compilation,⁴ and efforts got under way to translate encyclopaedic works from the Japanese. The 1903 foundation of the Literary Academic Society, Huiwen xueshe 會文學社, in Shanghai, highlights the growing Japanese impact on these ventures. This society began its work by publishing translations of Japanese textbooks, such as *High-School Physiology*, Zhongxuesheng lixue 中學生理學, *A History of the Japanese–Chinese War on Sea and Land*, Ri Qing hailu zhanzheng shi 日清海陸戰爭史, and *A History of the Japanese Empire in Modern Times*,

³ Douglas Reynolds, *CHINA, 1898–1912. The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies Harvard University, 1993), 41–64.

⁴ Liang Qichao, *Chongding fenlei Yinbingshi wenji quanbian* 重訂分類飲冰室文集全編 [Newly arranged classified compilation of writings from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio] (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1903). This edition was reprinted a year later in Japan as *Yinbingshi wenji leibian* 飲冰室文集類編 [Classified compilation of writings from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio] (Tokyo: Shimokōbe Hangorō, 1904).

Riben diguo jinshi shi 日本帝國近世史.⁵ The two founders of this society were Tang Zhen 湯震 (Shouqian 壽潛) (1856–1917), and Shen Lin 沈霖 (Yulin 玉林) (dates unknown). Tang, a Jinshi graduate (1892) from Zhejiang, had followed a career—common in these times—that involved politics, business, and educational reform.⁶ After a short time serving as a district magistrate, he abandoned officialdom and joined the staff of the reformer Zhang Yao 張燿 (?–1891). In 1890 he went public with a 4-volume work entitled *Warnings about Chinese-Western Affairs*, *Zhong xi shiwu weiyen 中西時務危言*,⁷ which included proposals to change the educational system, teach modern knowledge, build railroads, open mines, and develop the navy.⁸ Well connected to leading reformers and businessmen, in 1906 he became active in the push for a constitution and eventually set up the largest private bank after the founding of the Republic. He had an early interest in publishing, and we find a 1901 preface written by him in an encyclopaedic work that was published in 1902.⁹ The society continued to publish textbooks with a special emphasis on geography in the years that followed.¹⁰

Neither of the two founders are known for their studies in Japan, but Japan seemed to be where the best and fastest source of encyclopaedic knowledge was to be found at that time. Probably in 1902 or thereabouts, they named Fan Diji 範迪吉 (styled Zhenshi 枕石) (dates unknown) from Zhejiang province as the head of the project to translate and publish an encyclopaedia that would comprise encyclopaedic segments from Japanese works. Foreseeing a major demand for this kind of work, Fan founded the Japanese–Chinese Translation Society, Dong Hua yi she 東華譯社. The contacts and experience resulting from this clever move allowed him to quickly put together a qualified team to deal with this huge assignment.

In 1903 the Literary Academic Society published the Chinese translation of the *Compiled and Translated Encyclopaedia for General Education*, *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu 編譯普通教育百科全書*, later better known under the abbreviated title *Encyclopaedia for General Education*, *Putong baike quanshu 普通百科全書*.¹¹ The official decree against copyright infringement, which was

⁵ On this society see Zhu Lianbao 朱聯保, *Jinxiandai Shanghai chubanye yinxiang ji 今現代上海出版業印象集* [Collection of illustrations of modern Shanghai publishing] (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1993), 234–245. Zou Zhenhuan 鄒鎮環, *Ershi shiji fanyi chuban yu wenhua bianqian 二十世紀翻譯出版與文化變遷* [Twentieth century translation literature and cultural change] (Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu, 2001), 75–76.

⁶ On such trajectories, see Mary Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China, Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 182.

⁷ Tang Zhen 湯震, *Zhong Xi shiwu weiyen 中西時務危言* [*Warnings about Chinese-Western affairs*] (1891; repr., Shanghai: Shanghai Shuju, 1898).

⁸ Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China*, Chapter 7 “Political Conflict.”

⁹ Tang Zhen, “Xu” 序 [Preface] to *Shiwu tongkao xubian 時務通攷續編* [Comprehensive examination of current affairs, sequel], by Qilu zhuren 杞盧主人 (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1901).

¹⁰ Zou Zhenhuan, *Ershi shiji fanyi chuban yu wenhua bianqian*, 76.

¹¹ Fan Diji 範迪吉, ed., *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu 編譯普通教育百科全書* [Compiled and translated encyclopaedia for general education] (Shanghai: Huiwen xueshe, 1903). The

printed at the beginning of this work, included it in the broad mandate given to Shen Lin to publish “a variety of useful books” of an educational nature in the Suzhou-Songjiang-Taihu Region around Shanghai, the hub of the Chinese modernization drive.

Japanese compilations and translations of foreign language works, providing equivalents or explanations of the foreign terms, go back to the seventeenth century.¹² However, the close ties between Japanese and European encyclopaedias began with Nishi Amane’s 西周 (1829–1897) introduction of the taxonomy of encyclopaedias in 1869.¹³ It culminated in the government-sponsored Japanese translation of the fourth edition of W. & R. C. Chambers’ encyclopaedic work entitled *Information for the People* and during the 1880s and 1890s in the eventual publication of various independently compiled Japanese encyclopaedic works under government auspices as well as private publishers. The Chambers translation was supervised by Mitsukuri Rinshō 箕作麟書 (1846–1897) who coined the term *hyakka zensho* 百科全書, the Chinese characters of which—pronounced *baike quanshu*—stand for “encyclopaedia” in Chinese to this day.¹⁴ The first Chinese author known to have used this term is Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) whose 1897 annotation to a set of Japanese book publishers catalogues contained Japanese titles using this term.¹⁵

The large compendium of the *Encyclopaedia for General Education*, with its one hundred Chinese-bound volumes, comes with all the paraphernalia of a

members of the team are named in the segment “Bian yi baike quanshu ti ming” 編譯百科全書提名 [A list of names in the *Compiled and translated Encyclopaedia for general education*]. It has separate pagination. I am grateful to Prof. Zhou Zhenhuan’s help in accessing this source.

¹² See the study by Douglas Reynolds in this volume and Pan Jun 潘鈞, *Riben cishu yanjiu* 日本詞書研究 [Study of Japanese encyclopaedias works] (Shanghai: Renmin, 2008), 78–79, 350–51.

¹³ Nishi, Amane 西周, “Hyakugaku renkan” 百學連環 [Encyclopaedia] (1869), in *Nishi Amane zenshū* 西周全集 [Collected works of Nishi Amane], ed. Ōkubo Toshiaki 大久保利 (Tōkyō: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1945), 11–37.

¹⁴ *Hyakka zensho* 百科全書 [Complete work of a hundred disciplines] (Tokyo: Mombusho 1875–1885), translation of William and Robert Chambers’ *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 encyclopedia at a price beyond example moderate*, 4th ed. 1857. <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/>

¹⁵ Kang Youwei 康有為, *Riben shumu zhi* 日本書目志 [A record of Japanese book publisher catalogues], in *Kang Youwei quanji* 康有為全集 [The complete writings of Kang Youwei], comps. Jiang Yihua 姜義華 and Zhang Ronghua 張榮華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1992), 2: 583–1129. Kang Youwei lists the separate volumes of the *Hyakka Zensho* under the relevant subject headings biology or education. A variety of other terms continued to be used in Chinese to render “encyclopaedia.” Examples include *Dalei bianshu* 大類編書 for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, see Zou Zhenhuan 鄒鎮環, “Jindai zuizao baike 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) 3 (1998): 48; or *Xueshu leidian* 學術類典 for the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert, see *Faguo geming shi* 法國革命史 [History of the French Revolution] in *Kaizhi lu* 開智路 6 (1900): 10, based on Shibue Tamoshi 湓江保, *Futsukoku kakumei senshisi* 法国革命戰史 [History of the French Revolutionary War] (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1896).

professionally prepared compilation for practical use, but a strong political message was always present. In his preface, Tang Zhen recalls that he had already (more than a decade before) pushed for the opening of new schools, but that “opening them without first training teachers was worse than not opening them at all.” To form teachers, however, schoolbooks were needed, and approval by the state authorities was crucial for standardization. In the West and in Japan these conditions were all in place, but in China they were still sorely lacking. By that time a broad array of encyclopaedic works of new knowledge for readers with different levels of education was available in Japan, and he particularly mentions the *Encyclopaedia for Everyday Use*, *Nichiyō hyakka zensho* 日用百科全書,¹⁶ the *Popular Encyclopaedia*, *Shōzoku hyakka zensho* 通俗百科全書,¹⁷ and the *Small Encyclopaedia*, *Shō hyakka zensho* 小百科全書.¹⁸ In this domain Japan was quite on a par with Europe and the US.

The translation of segments from these Japanese works into Chinese would help China avert its political demise, while the offer of step-by-step introductions would make sure that the uninitiated Chinese readers were not overwhelmed. Tang writes, “Chinese students in their naiveté when they are first taught are like someone just recovering from a disease. If one goes too fast in feeding them with meats, their stomachs cannot take it, they cannot digest it, and will eventually fall sick. This does not compare with gruel and vegetables,”¹⁹ which is what the first part of this encyclopaedia offered.

The second preface evokes China’s defeats in her confrontations with England, France, and Japan to emphasize the possible benefits of the new work and the merits of the translator. Both authors assert an orthodox background by maintaining that the work at hand continues in the spirit of Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872) and Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901), two Han-Chinese officials who were influential supporters of the Manchu dynasty during the last decades of its reign. After two more prefaces lamenting the national fate and expressing hope in the new knowledge, the “General Purpose of the Work,” *Ben shu zhi zongzhi* 本書之宗旨, assures the reader that the goal of the work is not to undermine the state but “to connect the people’s knowledge and enhance their understanding of the state. We will not dare to include the smallest bit of anything that deviates from the classics and the true way and is detrimental to the nation’s thinking” 本書務以溝通人民知識, 增進國家觀念為宗旨。凡一切離經背道壞國民之思想者概不敢孱入。 On a more positive note these thoughts recur in the “Reasons that made the Japanese-Chinese Translation Society compile and translate the present book:”

¹⁶ *Nichiyō hyakka zensho* 日用百科全書 [Encyclopaedia for everyday use] (Tokyo: Hakubunkan 1895–1900).

¹⁷ *Shōzoku hyakka zensho* 通俗百科全書 [Popular encyclopaedia], 24 vols. (Tokyo: Hakubunkan 1893–1902).

¹⁸ This dictionary could not be located. Its title indicates that it might have been intended for young readers.

¹⁹ Tang Zhen 湯震, “Xu” 叙 [Preface], in *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baikē quanshu*, ed. Fan Diji, 2b.

For the purpose of enlightening the people's knowledge our Society considers it a public duty to foster in them the new knowledge of the peoples of the world. And so we have in gradual progression [from simple to complex] compiled translations of the useful books of the different nations in Japan and the West. 本社以開通民智，養成世界人民的新知識為公責，循序漸進編譯東西各國有用之書。²⁰

Apparently, the editors were conscious that they were involved in pioneering work because they wrote the following in their declaration: “Our Society at present has to begin a [new] age. For all the sciences in China there are only very few books in circulation that can serve as reference works” 本社現當胚胎代。凡百科學在吾國流通各書可供參考者鮮。The editors tried to cut down the number of mistakes and to stabilize the Chinese-language terminology of modern knowledge. For fields like zoology, botany, and mining they made ample use of the bi- or trilingual terminological dictionaries that had come out in Japan since the 1870s and that had the advantage of creating Chinese-character compounds for Western scientific terms that could be used directly in China where no such standardization had yet occurred. Many of these Japanese reference works were the product of scholars who were specialists in their respective fields.²¹ For other fields, like physics, chemistry, and mathematics, the terminology and symbols were based on specialized works that had been translated earlier into Chinese.²²

The *Encyclopaedia for General Education* is a compilation created on the basis of several different Japanese encyclopaedic works (some of which contain Western works translated into Japanese). Among the most important of these were the Japanese *Imperial Encyclopaedia*, *Teikoku hyakka zensho* 帝國百科全書, which was published in Tokyo from 1898 to 1903 by Hakubutsukan 博物館, one of the major publishers of encyclopaedic works,²³ and the collection of study materials called *Complete Anthology of Answers to Questions on General Knowledge*, *Futsūgaku mondō zensho* 普通學問答全書, published in Tokyo from 1894 to 1903 by Fuzanbō 富山房,²⁴ one of the main presses producing translations and

²⁰ Segment “Donghua yishe bianyi benshu zhi yuanyin” 東華譯社編譯本書之原因 [Reasons that made the Japanese-Chinese Society to compile and translate this book], in *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu*, paginated separately.

²¹ An example is the botanical dictionary by the renowned botanist Matsumura Jinzō 松村任三, *Nihon shokubutsu meii* 日本植物名彙 [Parallel title: *Nomenclature of Japanese Terms in Latin, Japanese and Chinese*] (Tokyo: Maruya, 1884). This dictionary played an important role in mapping the fauna and flora of East Asia. Other works used were for zoology, such as Murakami Eiko 村上瑛子, *Dōbutsu jii* 動物字彙 [Zoological terms] (Tokyo: Yūrindō, 1878), and for mineralogy, such as Kotō Bunjirō 小藤文次郎, *Kōbutsu jii* 鉱物字彙 [Parallel title: *Vocabulary of Mineralogic Terms. The Three Languages English, German and Japanese*] (Tokyo: Maruya, 1890).

²² “Benshu zhi fanli” 本書之凡例 [Editorial principles of this work], in Fan Diji, ed., *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baike quanshu*, paginated separately, 1.

²³ *Teikoku hyakka zensho* 帝國百科全書 [Imperial encyclopaedia] (Tokyo: Hakubutsukan, 1898 to 1903).

²⁴ *Futsūgaku mondō zensho* 普通學問答全書 [Complete anthology of answers to questions on general knowledge] (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1894 to 1903).

original works for popular education. Several Chinese historical compendia were also listed as sources for supplementary information including, allegedly, the *Comprehensive mirror for aid in government*, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), the *Twenty-four dynastic histories*, *Ershisi shi* 二十四史 and similar materials.²⁵ In the segments of the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* that were accessible to the author of this article, no such references were found.

In its taxonomy of knowledge, the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* followed earlier Chinese encyclopaedic works of modern knowledge, which had already abandoned the heaven/earth/man triad as their basic ordering principle. In its strongly didactic bent, it presented knowledge in three stages with a roughly parallel organization. The seventeen parts of the “Questions and Answers,” *Wen da* 問答, section start with Chinese history, Japanese history, and world history. The grounding of the mind is no longer in heaven and earth, as in earlier encyclopaedias, but in national history. The section moves on to education, logic, physics, chemistry, zoology, botany, mineralogy, and mathematics. The twenty-one parts of the “General Knowledge,” *Putong xue* 普通學, section go again through history, geography, education, the sciences, mining, and art before ending with a six-part focus on mathematics and geometry and on applied calculus. Only the long “Sciences,” *Kexue* 科學, section with its sixty-two parts has subdivisions that are newly organized with political sciences, economy, law, and philosophy at the beginning, followed by history, geography, mathematics, natural sciences, engineering, a long section on agricultural sciences, forestry, and ending with education. In the high station accorded to the national history and political structure and in the large space accorded to education, agriculture, and applied mathematics we see the outlines of a hierarchy of importance and usefulness emerge.

Like most of the Japanese encyclopaedias it followed Chambers’ model of a systematic presentation of fields of knowledge rather than breaking them down into itemized entries. It was innovative in its organization of information into three stages, starting with the “beginner’s stage” of “Questions and Answers” and reaching through the intermediate “General Knowledge” and the advanced stage of the “Sciences.” None of the Japanese or Western models had the same organization although introductions to new knowledge through three staggered “circles of knowledge” was common in England,²⁶ and Fuzanbō had published two separate

²⁵ Zou Zhenhuan, “Jindai zuizao baike quanshu de bianyi,” 49.

²⁶ Charles Baker (1803–1874), *Graduated reading; comprising a circle of knowledge in 200 lessons. Gradation 1* (London: T. Varty, n.d. [1840s]) (The “circle of knowledge” reproduces the etymology of the term “encyclopaedia”). This work, for which there also existed a Gradation 2 and 3, was translated into Chinese by James Legge as *Zhihuan qimeng dunke chubu* 智環啓蒙塾課初步 (Hong Kong: London Missionary Press, 1856). There were many later Chinese as well as Japanese prints. For a study, see Shin Kokui 沈國威, Uchida Keiichi 内田慶市, *Kindai keimō no sokuseki : tōzai bunka kōryū to gengo sesshoku, “Chikan keimō jukuka shoho” no kenkyū* 近代啓蒙の足跡: 東西文化交流と言語接触, 「智環啓蒙塾課初步」の研究 [The traces of modern enlightenment: East–west cultural interaction and language contact. A Study of *A Circle of*

encyclopaedias for beginners' knowledge and more advanced general knowledge, which in turn became the main source for the respective segments of the *Encyclopaedia for General Education*. The references in the paratexts to the "general education" in the title and to intended readers identified as the "nation," "the people," and even primary school students demonstrate that the project's ambition was to take the reader from the very first introductory level, to scientific knowledge, all the way through to advanced stages.

The information was conveyed in the sober and factual style associated with modern encyclopaedic writing in the West. This was in strong contrast to Liang Qichao's encyclopaedic compilation from the same year, which was written in a lively, emotional, and often polemical language. Compared to his explicit detailing of connections between the new knowledge and the grand purpose of reforming and saving China, the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* explicitly disclaimed any grand ambitions in this direction. It did, however, see a great need to contribute to the spread of a professional, modern education in China.

In the "Questions and Answers" section the presentation of the entries is already highly systematic; is graphically structured with numbered chapter headings; keeps to a limited and highly abstract vocabulary without any embellishments or esoteric allusions; and provides basic punctuation. The "Questions and Answers" section on logic, for example, comprises six sections. It starts, like all the others, with a summary and definition and then continues with proper subsections through terms, propositions, inference, falsification, and induction. None of the Chinese encyclopaedic works of the previous decade achieved such a highly standardized level of providing information because they reproduced excerpts from other writings. The result is that the new work is easily readable and usable. Although the work contains—sometimes several contested—definitions of the key terminology, it is not structured as a dictionary and does not contain an index in the end that allows localization of the terms. In this manner, this encyclopaedia could have served as a source for the compilation of encyclopaedic dictionaries, although it was not one of them.

Only very few libraries in the world own a copy of the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* with its 100 sections and over 30 million characters.²⁷ The composite structure of Fan Diji's work is perhaps one of the reasons that it has attracted little attention from contemporary scholars who often described the work as a mere "anthology". A more important factor in this neglect, however, might be the scholarly tradition that makes an artificial divide between so-called genuine Chinese works by Chinese compilers and those by non-Chinese authors whose work had been translated into Chinese. For this reason translated works have often been judged as 'mere' translations that do not deserve the same attention, whatever their actual historical impact may have been. Sanetō Keishū 實籐惠秀

Knowledge, Gradation I](Suita-shi: Kansai Daigaku shuppanbu, 2002). The work came with a teacher's handbook providing questions and answers on the topics. It may be said to prefigure a similar approach in East Asian works.

²⁷ Among them the National Library in Beijing and the library of Fudan University in Shanghai.

(1896–1985), the great specialist on Japanese cultural exchange with China during these years, had a different—and more accurate—assessment when he called this work a “major achievement.”²⁸ Coming as early as it did in this Reform of Governance period, it certainly contributed to reducing the prevailing fuzziness in modern Chinese terminology and to essentially settle on the technical terms popularized in Japan with which many of the returned students were already familiar. The specifics of its impact on the development of the modern Chinese conceptual language are still awaiting further study. With its taxonomy as well as its systematic and sober presentation of modern knowledge, the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* is the first Chinese-language work that followed what by then had become the globally shared standards of presenting encyclopaedic knowledge.

Encyclopaedic Dictionaries 1903–1911: Their Role in the Modernization of Chinese Thought and Language

Monolingual dictionaries giving the history and/or meanings of words as well as encyclopaedias mapping the general knowledge required for a civilized citizen played a pivotal role in the cultural consolidation of the nation-state during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In quite a few cases, such dictionaries were crucial for the transformation of a given language—such as Czech—into an acceptable written medium; in other cases, as in the case of Korean, compiling a dictionary of the national language was an act of defiance against the language policies of a colonial power.

Already by the 1890s Japanese scholars and publishers had started to move away from the China-derived “character dictionaries”, *zidian* 字典, towards the “word” or encyclopaedic dictionaries, *cidian* 詞典/辭典, which sometimes focused on terminology. The 1891 *Japanese Word Dictionary: Sea of Words*, *Nihon jisho genkai* 日本辭書言海, is a fine example of this trend.²⁹ The preface by Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹, the official from the Ministry of Culture that was financing and supervising this dictionary project, shows not only the quality of the discussion in Japan, but also the importance given to the question of word dictionaries as markers of linguistic identity and cultural level.

What is culture? It refers to the [development] from simple to complex, from the crude to the refined. . . This principle is also true for word dictionaries, *cishu* 辭書. . . There are two kinds [of script], one that comes with meaning and the other that comes without meaning.

²⁸ Sanetō Keishū 實籐惠秀, *Zhongguoren liuxue Riben shi* 中國人留學日本史 [A history of Chinese students in Japan], trans. Tan Ruqian 譚汝謙 and Lin Qiyang 林啟彥 (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1983), 226. Sanetō Keishū’s library, which had a copy of the *Bian yi putong jiaoyu baikē quanshu*, has become part of the Tokyo Municipal Library.

²⁹ Ōtsuki Fumihiko 大槻文彦, *Nihon jisho Genkai* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Fumihiko, 1891).

States which emphasized words, *yanci* 言辭, would use writing without meaning; those which emphasized writing used characters with meaning. As letters developed daily more and the words became ever more profuse, the states emphasizing words made word dictionaries, while those emphasizing writing made character dictionaries. We [Japanese] definitely are a word state, but its progress to culture relied for the most part on the strength of China. That is why our script combines the meaningful and the meaningless, [but] the books of our state that are recording words and writing . . . all have the form of character dictionaries, not of word dictionaries. . . Now finally we come out with a first draft called *Genkai*. It has roughly 40,000 words, and has the form of a word dictionary not a character dictionary. . .³⁰

文明者何。自單之複、自粗之精之謂也。 . . . 若辭書，亦不外於此理者。 . . . 文字有二，一曰有義。一曰無義。主言辭之國。用無義之字。主文字之國用有義之字。人文日闢，言辭日繁，於是，言辭之國作辭書，文字之國作字書，以利民生。支那之為文字之國，歐洲之為言辭之國，人皆知之。若本邦固言辭之國。而其進文明，多賴支那之力，是以如其文字，合有義無義而用之。其勢然也。本邦錄言語文字之書 . . . 皆字書之體，而非辭書之體。 . . . 至於近日，始脫稿。名曰言海，大約四萬言。辭書之體，而非字書之體。 . . .

He then elevates the word dictionary to the status of a yardstick by which to measure cultural levels:

I used to say if you want to know whether the cultural level of a state is high or low, look at its word dictionaries. If they are large in number and sophisticated, its cultural level is high. If there are few and they are crudely done, the opposite is true. The Western word dictionaries are of two kinds, general and specialized. In the East there is only the general kind and, as to their sophistication, they have a long way to go to get to the level of [the Western word dictionaries]. How can we not be ashamed of ourselves. But once we know our shame, we have to make all efforts to get there. Nowadays our country does not lack in scholars who out of their own initiative struggle for this, and I know that they definitely will not let the Westerners monopolize the name of ‘culture’ for themselves for a hundred generations!³¹

余嘗謂，欲知文化之高卑，觀於其國之辭書，辭書之眾而精者，其文化高；寡而粗者，反之。西洋之辭書，其類二，一曰普通，一曰專門。東祥之辭書，惟有普通一類，至其精粗，此之不及彼遠甚。吾儕安可不愧怍自愧哉。然既知恥之，必將奮而求及之。本邦今日，學士之自奮者不乏其人。余知其必不使西人擅文化之名於百世也。

This Japanese discussion on the need for word dictionaries—and the difficulty in developing them given the mix of words of Japanese, Chinese, and Western origin and “vulgar” and “refined” usages as well as changes in meaning over time—inserted these encyclopaedic enterprises as well as the development of language into the trajectory of modernity. The Chinese encyclopaedic dictionaries also followed this trajectory and the discussion is explicitly taken up in many of their prefaces. The link claimed in the preface by Nishimura Shigeki—who ironically writes in literary Chinese—between the availability of word dictionaries and the cultural level a state has achieved became an often-repeated trope in the East Asian lexicological discussion right up to the Republican period.³² In another area—namely, bi- or multilingual dictionaries of specialized terminologies—Japan was

³⁰ Ōtsuki Fumihiko 大槻文彦, *Nihon jisho Genkai*, 1.

³¹ Ōtsuki Fumihiko 大槻文彦, *Nihon jisho Genkai*, 2.

³² Wang Jiarong 汪家熔, “*Ciyuan, Cihai de kaichuangxing*” 《辭源》《辭海》的開創性 [The pioneering nature of the *Ciyuan* and the *Cihai*], *Cishu yanjiu* 4 (2001): 132–133.

also the East Asian pioneer. Both the monolingual encyclopaedic and these terminological dictionaries became important sources for Chinese lexicographers during the Reform of Governance period.

Xin Erya 新爾雅 or *New Erya* (1903): Novel Concepts and New Terms

Of strategic importance for Chinese encyclopaedic development was yet another work published in 1903 called the *New Erya*, *Xin Erya* 新爾雅, by Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶 (1878–1933) and Ye Lan 葉瀾 (1875–?).³³ In a pattern that is already familiar, both had been active in the 1898 reforms, had studied in Japan, gone into translating and publishing, and then became involved in reform organizations. Wang Rongbao would eventually become the main author in drafting the constitution before the advent of the Republican revolution.³⁴

The title of their work took after the *Erya* 爾雅 dictionary, which scholars date to the third century BCE and which was eventually included among the officially sanctioned “classics.”³⁵ Yet Wang and Ye did not use this venerable book to display allegiance to Chinese tradition. Unlike other ancient Chinese dictionaries that were organized by classifier or by rhyme, the *Erya* was arranged along semantic categories and showed the connections within some conceptual fields, such as family relations. Wang and Ye returned to this type of semantic organization in their work. They went much further in their definitions as well as in establishing a strict taxonomic hierarchy. The entry on “Logic,” maps a sequence of steps for correct reasoning that may be read as a guide informing the actual entries.

Following the trajectory shared by many other fields of knowledge, the entry “Logic” is based on the work by a Japanese author, Takayama Rinjirō’s 高山林次郎 (1871–1902) 1898 *Logic*, *Ronrigaku* 論理學.³⁶ In 1902 this work had been translated into Chinese by none other than Wang Rongbao, one of the two authors of the

³³ Wang Rongbao and Ye Lan, eds., *Xin Erya* (Shanghai: Mingquanshe, 1903). It is reprinted in Shin Kokui (=Shen Guowei) 沈國威, *Shinjiga to sono go-i: kenkyū, sakuin, eiinbon fu* 新爾雅とその語彙 : 研究, 索引, 影印本付 [The *New Erya* and its terms: A study and index with a photographic reproduction attached] (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 1995).

³⁴ For details on the background of Wang Rongbao and his connection to Japan, see Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, *Wang Rongbao riji* 汪榮寶日記 [The diary of Wang Rongbao] (Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 1987) and the article by Li Hsiao-t’i in this volume.

³⁵ Huang Kan 黃侃, ed., *Erya yinxun* 爾雅音訓 [Explanations of the phonetics of the *Erya*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1984). The title word *er* 爾 of this work has been read as a loan for the character *er* 邇, “approach, get close to”, which would give a meaning of the title as “Paths to correct/refined [meaning].”

³⁶ Takayama Rinjirō 高山林次郎, *Ronrigaku* 論理學 [Logic] (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1898). The earlier Jesuit translation of Aristotle’s *Logic* had little impact and had been utterly forgotten by the end of the Qing.

New Erya.³⁷ The segment on logic in the *New Erya* is a summary of Takayama's essay, and it joins other recent translations like Yan Fu's 1902 translation of John Stuart Mill's *Logic* (as *mingxue* 名學) in reintroducing the Western scholarly field of Logic to China.³⁸

The entries in the *New Erya* used some of the same technical terminology as the original *Erya* such as giving “explanations” (釋) or synonyms for difficult-to-understand words and following definitions by an “is referred to with the term” (謂), after which the new technical term was given. In a mere 176 pages the *New Erya* offers definitions and short presentations of key concepts together with a taxonomy that groups them into 14 fields of knowledge. These range from government, law, economy, education, and sociology, to logic, geometry, astronomy, and earth sciences as well as to general sciences, chemistry, physics, zoology, and botany. The encyclopaedia marks the new terminology graphically with full black dots on the margin. Although it does not come with an index of definitions and terms, it is possible to describe it as an encyclopaedic dictionary in its embryonic stage of development.

The prominent position of fields related to state and society in the taxonomy signals a priority that differs markedly from that of the *Encyclopaedia for General Education*. The *New Erya* begins—without preface—with an “Explanation of Government” 釋政:

That which has a people and a territory and is established in the world is called ‘state.’ That which sets up a system to rule its people and its territory is called ‘government.’ Government has three great domains, the state, the political system, and the organs [of government], (viz. government and parliament, head of state and subjects, judicature, legislature, and executive functions).³⁹

有人民有土地而立於世界者謂之國。設制度以治其人民土地者謂之政。政之大綱三。一曰國家，二曰政體，三曰機關（如政府議會元首臣民司法立法行政之類是也）

In due order, each of these is followed by detailed and terse descriptions of these three domains. For “state,” these would include a “definition,” *dingyi* 定義, an “explanation” of the origins, of the different kinds of state, and of the “transformations” happening to the states. For “political system,” two basic forms are introduced: autocracy and constitutional government. The former, in which “one person holds all power at the top and alone decides all matters,” gets short shrift without Russia even being mentioned as an example, while the variants of constitutional government are described both in conceptual terms and then through an overview of examples of existing forms of constitutional government in Germany, England, North America, and France. When this work came out, the Qing court had just sent a mission to Europe to study different forms of government in an effort to select a form of constitutional government that would be acceptable

³⁷ Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, trans., *Lunlixue* 論理學 [Logic], *Yishu huibian* 譯書匯編 2.7 (1902), separate pagination 1–59.

³⁸ As mentioned above, the earlier Jesuit translation of Aristotle's *Logic* had little impact and had been utterly forgotten by the end of the Qing. For the entire process, see Joachim Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

³⁹ Shen Guowei, *Shinjiga to sono go-i*, 1.

in China. The *New Erya* clearly joins this debate, in which one of the two editors was to play such an important role. However, it does so in a visible effort to keep to the encyclopaedia rhetoric of factual and neutral information.

The chapter on logic proceeds in a similarly rigorous manner with the key terms marked in bold:

Discoursing on the use of the internal cognition faculties of man for purposes of inference is referred to as **logic**, *mingxue* 名學, but also referred to as the **science of arguing about principles**, *lunlixue* 論理學. To investigate one corner so as to understand the entirety is called **deductive logic**, *neizhou mingxue* 內籀名學 or *yanyi lunlixue* 演繹論理學. Make judgments on the basis of general principles about a multitude is called **inductive logic**, *waizhou mingxue* 外籀名學 or *guina lunlixue* 歸納論理學. The operation of the mind in comparing two judgments so as to establish a third is called **inference**, *tuilun* 推論. There are three key elements making up an inference – **concept**, **judgment**, and **inference**. The aggregate of shared features of a thing is called **concept**, *gainian* 概念. Linking two concepts to determine the relation between them is called **judgment**, *panding* 判定. Determining the relationship between two judgments of the type described above is called **inference**.⁴⁰

論人心知識之用於推知者，謂之名學，亦謂之論理學。察一曲而知全體者謂之內籀名學。亦謂之演繹論理學。據公理一斷眾事者謂之外籀名學，亦謂之歸納論理學。比較二個判定，而更立第三個判定之心之作用，謂之推知，亦謂之推論。構成推論之要素有三。一曰概念，二曰判定，三曰推理。若干個物公性之總合，謂之概念。結合二個之概念，制定其間之關係者，謂之判定。指定兩個以上之判定間之關係者謂之推理。

The extreme rigor with which the *New Erya* went about defining and mapping conceptual fields is a reaction to the prevailing conceptual fuzziness that was also deplored in the *Encyclopaedia for General Education* and would prompt further efforts in the coming years. The book reacts to the textual environment of the time by pointing out different translations of the same terms. While the information it provided might seem very abstract and hardly designed to reach readers unfamiliar with this style and language, it should be remembered that at the same time many translations as well as introductory essays touching on all fields of knowledge were being published. These provided a rich reading environment for these terms in which definitions could, at least to a degree, fulfill their function. The claim to scientific authority is evident in the normative rigor with which these definitions are articulated even in so-called soft fields like political science and sociology.

***Bowu dacidian* 博物大辭典 or *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History* (1907)**

In 1907 Zeng Pu 曾樸 (1872–1935) and Xu Nianci 徐念慈 (1875–1908), two men otherwise known for their literary works and as the editors of the literary journal *Forest of Fiction*, Xiaoshuo lin 小說林, set about producing Chinese terminological

⁴⁰ Shen Guowei, *Shinjiga to sono go-i*, 75.

dictionaries for selected fields. As disclosed in the preface, the *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History*, *Bowu da cidian* 博物大辭典 (1907), offered translations with short descriptions for the scientific terminology of botany, zoology, mineralogy, and physiology, the four disciplines included for the first time in late Qing encyclopaedias. Their nature required more than a verbal explanation because some of the newly introduced plants and animals had never been seen before in China. The *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History* is therefore equipped with a great number of realistic, and at the same time aesthetically appealing, pictures; this was a new educational feature in late Qing encyclopaedias where pictures were often omitted.

The encyclopaedia is organized in a purely formal way according to the number of strokes needed to write the first Chinese character of the respective term, a formula that emulates the empty sequence of the letters in the alphabet and facilitates access for those who were not yet fully acquainted with an organization according to categories. After the title of each entry the given term is assigned to one of the four fields of knowledge covered in this dictionary. This is followed by the term in the source language, viz. Latin, English, or Japanese. The volumes end with indexes of the terms in the source language and their Chinese translation, so that the *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History* could also be used as a multilingual, terminological dictionary for translation.

With altogether around 2,400 entries, its explanations, taxonomy, foreign terms, illustrations that accurately depict the nature of the discussed subjects, and introductions to relevant theories like Darwin's theory of evolution make it quite an impressive work. It was to be the first in an entire series of such works, in which the volumes for physics and law had already been announced for publication and seven more were in development.⁴¹ From the memoirs of Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1875–1973), another writer of novels whom the editors had recruited to their team, we learn that Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci were not just editors but were actively involved in this compilation.⁴²

In the preface the editors complaint is a familiar one: “in China there are only character dictionaries, *zidian* 字典, circulating among scholars, but no word dictionaries, *cidian* 辭典.”⁴³ Their work was to be a new beginning. While one might assume that commercial considerations played a role in prompting these men to compile such a work, the usefulness of a clear understanding of the scientific terms for national construction is emphasized: “The motive for the compilation of this book is total lack among our citizens of experience and study of natural history. This has led to the result that industries are not unfolding and the sciences are in the

⁴¹ See the advertisements for these other volumes on the last pages of the *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History*.

⁴² Bao Tianxiao 包天笑, *Chuanyinglou huiyilu* 釧影樓回憶錄 [Memoirs from the Chuanying loft] (Hong Kong: Dahua, 1971).

⁴³ Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci, “Xu” 叙 [Preface] to Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci, eds., *Bowu da cidian* (Shanghai: Hongwen, 1907), 1.

shadow”⁴⁴ 本書編纂之趣旨因國民於博物學最少經驗及研究，以致實業不興，理學滋味。

As a rule the entries are just one or two lines. They offer terminology and definitions of individual plants, animals, or minerals but also of key taxonomic concepts like “genus” or “species.” But the definitions are not limited only to concrete objects in their present stage of existence. The importance of this *Dictionary*’s dealing with nature rests in the exact opposite—the revelation of the significance of change and evolution. It was Zeng and Xu who first introduced into a terminological dictionary the most significant theory of modern times—Darwin’s theory of evolution. It has a separate entry under the new Japanese-derived term for evolution, *jinhuailun* 進化論, which replaced the *tianyanlun* 天演論 that had been cast by Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853–1921) in his translation of Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*,⁴⁵ but the theory also informs a number of other entries. Given the spread of social-Darwinist thought after Yan Fu’s Huxley translation, it is an indication of the rigorous natural science focus of the work that the author of this entry should turn to the discussion of the social-Darwinist variant only in the very last phrase:

“Once this theory of evolution had come out, it did not only define the entire life of the animal world, but exploring it for human society and thinking about it for a moment one will be aware that all human affairs proceed according to the theory of evolution. It is indeed an utterly correct scholarly theory that also has a huge impact on human affairs”⁴⁶

此進化論出，不啻微生物界開一生，而推之人類社會，而思想一變，乃覺人之事事物物，皆由進化之理而成。實為純正之學理，亦大有影響於人事者也

Zeng Pu was not a stranger to the politics of the Reform of Governance period. His 1903 novel *Flower in the Sea of Retribution*, *Niehai hua* 孽海華, with its pun linking the *hua*/flower with *hua*/China, contains an explicit dream reminiscence in which Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, the deposed reformers of 1898, descend as “gods of liberty” into China only to be “sacrificed in the bitter battle.”⁴⁷

The link between the new knowledge, the power of science, and the need of political and cultural reform is prominent in every one of the Chinese encyclopaedic projects in this period of transition to modernity. This trait connects the modernizing Chinese encyclopaedia with the concurrent trend in Western encyclopaedias compiled after the First World War. It was also during this era when a number of new nation-states emerged in Europe and the young generation needed to update their knowledge to the level of more advanced countries. These bold projects were most often financially supported by the governments, which

⁴⁴ Advertisement for the *Bowu da cidian* printed in the last before the last page of the book.

⁴⁵ Yan Fu 嚴復, *Hexuli Tianyan lun* 赫胥黎天演論 [Huxley on evolution] (n.p. 1898).

⁴⁶ *Bowu dacidian*, Entries of 12 strokes, 158.

⁴⁷ Zeng Pu 曾樸, *Niehai hua* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1980), chap.1. The first chapter, in which this dream sequence occurs belongs to the parts actually written by Jin Songcen 金松岑, who then asked Zeng Pu to take over and finish the novel. For a study of this chapter, see Catherine Vance Yeh, “Zeng Pu’s *Niehai hua* as a Political Novel—a World Genre in a Chinese Form” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1990), chap. 1.

realized the need for updated knowledge and renovation of the language. Unlike Japan, the Chinese government could not become active in this domain, even during the Reform of Governance period.⁴⁸ As a result, the plan for an entire series of encyclopaedic dictionaries overtaxed the financial resources of the editors. Bao Tianxiao notes dryly in his memoirs: “At this time they [Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci] were also running a Hongwenguan [publishing house] and were compiling the *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History*. At that point I was no more working for the journal *Xiaoshuo lin* and joined them. However, the capital was all exhausted and the enterprise folded.”⁴⁹

Like most works of this kind, the *Terminological Dictionary of Natural History* was not reprinted during the Republican period and has not been included in the large reprint series that came out in Taiwan during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, only a very few libraries have a copy in their collection.

Huang Ren’s Encyclopaedic Dictionary

By the time Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci set to work, other efforts were under way to produce something like a bilingual English–Chinese encyclopaedic dictionary. The Commercial Press had originally planned to produce a translation of *Webster’s International Dictionary*,⁵⁰ but its sheer volume was beyond the available manpower and capital. It then settled for *Nuttall’s Standard Dictionary of the English Language* as the model because it was more manageable in length and, above all, it focused, as its subtitle announces, on the “many thousand [sic!] of new words which modern literature, science and art have called into existence.”⁵¹ The Webster classification scheme was maintained, however. The result was the *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary*, *Ying Hua da cidian* 英華大辭典, which was edited by a team under W.W. Yen (Yan Huiqing 顏惠慶) (1877–1950). Begun in 1905, it was published in 1908 with the primary purpose of serving as a handbook for translators and Chinese speakers reading books in English. With its strong focus on the new scholarly terminology and its efforts to provide short and precise definitions of words together with the Chinese renderings, it laid claim to be a “dictionary” that “is an encyclopaedia in a small scale, comprehending within its covers every science under the sun.”⁵² By employing the Chinese term *cidian* 辭典

⁴⁸ For details on this topic see the article by Douglas Reynolds in this volume.

⁴⁹ Bao Tianxiao, *Chuangyonglou huiyilu*, 327.

⁵⁰ *Webster’s International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA.: G.&C. Merriam & Co., 1891).

⁵¹ *Nuttall’s Standard Dictionary of the English Language based on the labours of the most eminent lexicographers* (New York: F. Warne, 1898).

⁵² W.W. Yen (=Yan Huiqing 顏惠慶), ed., *Ying Hua da cidian* 英華大辭典 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1908). The statement is in the preface on page 1 of the unpaginated editors’ preface in



Illustration 1 Huang Ren (second from left in the front row) with other teachers at Dongwu University in Suzhou. From *Yan lai hong* 雁來紅, 1903, here reproduced from Wang Guoping 王國平, *Dongwu daxue jianshi* 東吳大學簡史 [A short history of Dongwu University]. Suzhou: Suzhou University Press, 2009, 42

as the translation for “dictionary” it clearly set out to be an encyclopaedic dictionary without actually using the term.

Huang Ren’s *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, *Putong baike xin da cidian* 普通百科新大詞典, (1911) might very well be called the apogee of the encyclopaedic works produced during late Qing.⁵³ Its author is Huang Moxi 黃摩西 (1866–1913) (Christian name: Moses Huang) but the name he is generally known by is simply Huang Ren 黃人, the “Yellow Man,” a proud declaration of his allegiance to the “yellow race,” the crisis of which so many late Qing reformers bemoaned. Like most other encyclopaedists of the time, he had close connections to various reform groups but also engaged in other scholarly efforts to recast the Chinese heritage (Illustration 1).⁵⁴

Huang is the author of the first *History of Chinese Literature*, *Zhongguo wenxue shi* 中國文學史, written by a Chinese scholar, and he also ventured to write

English. A similar statement will be found in Sect. 4 of the “Eight Editorial Principles,” *Lie yan ba ze* 例言八則. The information on the earlier plans is from the preface.

⁵³ Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin dacidian* 普通百科新大詞典 [New encyclopaedic dictionary of general knowledge] (Shanghai: Zhongguo cidian gongsi, 1911). Published on commission for the *Guoxue fulun she* 國學扶輪社.

⁵⁴ In 1900, Huang, together with his friend Long Shubo 龍樹伯, founded an anti-Qing revolutionary society in Suzhou called the Society of Three Thousand Swords, *San qian jian qi wen she* 三千劍氣文社. It was viewed as a forerunner of the militant Southern Society, *Nan she* 南社, established in 1909.

numerous articles on modern Chinese literary theory.⁵⁵ The work clearly focused on two prominent issues of the day: the terminology of new knowledge and the arrival of the theory of evolution. Huang probably also worked on another dictionary, the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies, Section Rhetoric*, *Wenke da cidian*. *Xiuci zhi bu* 文科大辭典, 修詞之部, which did not include any of the new terms but was composed along principles of organization similar to those in the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*.⁵⁶ It was published by the same Society for the Support of National Studies, *Guoxue fulun she* 國學扶輪社, in Shanghai.⁵⁷ Founded around 1902, this society served as a platform for the cultural interests of a group of publishers/scholars who felt that despite all the changes coming with new knowledge there was still merit to be found in sophisticated writing. While they were publishing Huang Ren's work, with its exclusive emphasis on the new, their concern that "with the imperceptible deepening of the impact of European fashions and Japanese style, the flaws in Chinese writing" had become such that a handbook was needed to help people to remember their literary heritage.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Huang Ren, *Zhongguo wenxue shi*, in *Huang Ren ji* 黃人集 [The writings of Huang Ren], eds. Jiang Qingbo 江慶柏 and Cao Peigen 曹培根 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua, 2001), 323–358. Tang Zhesheng 湯哲聲 and Tu Xiaoma 涂小馬, eds., *Huang Ren: pingzhuan, zuopin xuan* 黃人: 評傳, 作品選 [Huang Ren: Critical biography and selection of his works] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi, 1998). See also Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and M Henri Day, "Huang Moxi 黃摩西 (1866–1913): His discovery of British aesthetics and his concept of Chinese fiction as aesthetic system" in *A Passion for China. Essays in Honour of Paolo Santangelo for his 60th birthday*, ed. Chiu Ling-yeong and Donatella Guida (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 93–141. On Huang Ren's *History of Chinese Literature*, see also Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Zuowei xueke de wenxueshi 作為學科的文學史* [History of literature as an academic field] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011), 250–254 and the article by Chen Pingyuan in the present volume.

⁵⁶ *Guoxue fulun she*, comp., *Wenke da cidian. Xiuci zhi bu* 文科大辭典. 修詞之部, 12 vols. (Shanghai: Zhongguo cidian gongsi, 1911). The publisher was tireless in its efforts to promote sales of both works. The copy of the *Putong baike xin da cidian* held at the Harvard Yenching Institute has two slips from the publisher in the beginning. Dated to the first month of the third year of the Xuantong reign (Feb. 1911), these offered both works at a special discount of 50 percent for 4 yuan instead of 8 for a limited time period (one month for the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, and four months for the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies*). These slips were inserted into the initial prints. They would entitle the buyer of either encyclopaedic work to get the second one at half price and to get another copy of the one in his hands as a gift for someone else. The efforts to promote the sales were remarkably successful for the *Putong baike xin da cidian*, since a fourth printing of 3,000 copies was already planned in 1911. This information can be found in the advertisement for this work in the front matter of the first edition of the *Wenke da cidian*. On this work, see also the study by Chen Pingyuan in this volume.

⁵⁷ For background on this society, see Zhu Lianbao, *Jinxiandai Shanghai chubanye yinxiang ji*, 277. Sun Qing 孫青, "Guoxue fulun she 'Wenke da cidian' yu Qing mo bentu jingdian de 'zhishi ciyuan' zhuanxing" 國學扶輪社"文科大辭典"與清末本土經典的"知識詞原"轉型 [*The Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* of the Society for the Support of National Studies and the shift in Chinese classical 'knowledge resources' during the late Qing], *Wakumon* 15 (2008): 86, note 8. More background on this society will be found in the study by Chen Pingyuan in this volume.

⁵⁸ The quotation is from "Wenke da cidian yuyue" 文科大辭典預約 [Subscription for the *Wenke da cidian*] in the front matter of the *Wenke da cidian*. It advertises a special printing of 3,000 copies of this work and offers subscriptions to this set at half price.

The members included Shen Zhifang 沈知方 (1882–1939), who was a middle-level manager at the Commercial Press and would continue in a publishing career that eventually led to a managerial position at the new Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局 in 1912,⁵⁹ and Liu Shiwei 劉師培 (1884–1919), the anarchist scholar who was to become a professor at Peking University. The society, which published through other publishing houses, came out with its first compilations in 1905. These included scholarly reference works for classical studies, the *Guochao wenhui* 國朝文匯 collection of the literary works of the Qing dynasty, which had been prepared by Huang Ren and Shen Zhifang in 1909, and a famous collection of *biji* 筆記 “brush notes.”

The two dictionaries were part of a similar agenda. They were both not “character dictionaries,” which identified a word with a character, but rather word dictionaries, which regarded the characters as empty notation forms and included mostly multisyllabic words. Both organized the words into an empty numerical sequence according to the number of strokes of the first character. They both established a series of fields of knowledge, specifically marked the field to which each word or term belonged, and offered an index of the different fields and their content at the end. In an innovative move, the *Dictionary for Classical Studies* also marked the grammatical category to which the word belonged. Still, the two dictionaries differed vastly in their readership. While the *Dictionary for Classical Studies* was intended for readers whose education had exposed them to the literature of the past, Huang Moxi’s *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* was designed as a source of new knowledge for younger readers who were interested in the current issues of the day.

With the word fields they were following a practice that had been used in the *New Erya* and in later dictionaries of similar structure, but more specifically by Western encyclopaedic dictionaries like Robert Hunter’s *The American Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (1894), which would indicate the field of knowledge—for instance, chemistry—after each term from a scholarly terminology, but would arrange the terms themselves alphabetically.⁶⁰ Even in *Classical Studies* the terminology for the forty word fields had been thoroughly modernized and included fields such as “plants” (instead of “grasses and trees”), “animals” (instead of “birds and quadrupeds” and “fishes and insects”), and “government.”⁶¹

They both came with prefaces written by two men who were by then clearly the key names in Chinese translations: Lin Shu 林紓 (1852–1924) for the *Classical Studies* and Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854–1921) for the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*. Yan Fu had also become the government official in charge of

⁵⁹ Sun Qing, “Guoxue fulun she ‘Wenke dacidian,’” 86, note 7.

⁶⁰ Robert Hunter, ed, *The American Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, 4 vols. (Chicago: Ogilvie Co, 1894).

⁶¹ See Sun Qing, “Guoxue fulun she ‘Wenke dacidian,’” 91.

standardizing Chinese terminology, but unlike the strong guiding hand and financial support of the Ministry of Culture in Japanese dictionaries and encyclopaedias, there was no government involvement here. Yan Fu indicated the linked agenda of the two works:

The chairman of the Society for the Support of National Studies upholds the standard of the national essence. The books he came out with earlier have already been highly appreciated by Chinese scholars involved in transmitting [knowledge of the past]. However, the best way of preserving [the national essence] is not to claim nowadays that it can only be searched for in past precedents! Only when it has been enlarged and has absorbed all different currents will it be effective.⁶²

國學扶輪社人保存國粹之誠志也。其前所為書已為海內承學之士所實貴矣。乃今以為徒於其故而求之，猶非保存之大者也。被張皇補苴，宏納眾流而後為有較。

China's heritage could only be made relevant for modernity if it absorbed the best that foreign cultures had to offer. In this sense, the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* and the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* tried to offer both a modern reworking of the classical heritage as well as the terminological and theoretical substance of modern knowledge, and to present both in a modern, scientific way. Absorbing foreign knowledge hinged on words.

Given the Qing government's difficulty in communicating its reform proposals, Yan Fu rejoiced in the help given by the effort of the Literary Society "to support our endeavor in the Office for the Terminology [headed by Yan Fu]" and "to accomplish the glory of a system going by rules." In the year 1911 this certainly was a pious wish, but it is improbable that Huang Ren would have seen his work in the same light.

Huang Ren's own preface starts off with a systematic discussion of the concept of 'word' *ci* 詞 (rather than 'character,' *zi* 字). In a criticism aimed at some of his contemporaries who claimed that words were just sounds and that meaning could be assigned at random,⁶³ Huang insisted that the meaning of the often-quoted classical reference "In a word the meaning is the inside, the speaking the outside," 詞者意內而言外, is contained in the two components of the character 詞—namely, 言 and 司, which translate as "verbalizing 言 a charge 司". He read this as the claim that "both the inner part [the meaning] and the outer part [the phonetic representation] point towards what [the word] is in charge of." 內與外皆指其所司焉 Words, however, are part of the historical flux:

The six ways [of making characters][mentioned by Xu Shen 許慎 (2nd century CE) in the dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining words by analyzing the characters)] are continuously alternating, and human affairs are becoming more complex by the day,

⁶² Yan Fu 嚴復, "Putong baike xin da cidian xu" 普通百科新大詞典序 [Preface to the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*] in *Yan Fu ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986), 2: 276–277. The version in the original work is in cursive script, in this edition of Yan Fu's works it has been transcribed.

⁶³ See Li Zhimin 李智敏 and Lu Lili 魯麗麗, "Huang Moxi yu Zhongguo baike quanshu" 黃摩西與中國百科全書 [Huang Moxi and the Chinese encyclopaedia], *Dangdai tushuguan* 4 (2007): 13.

changing from and moving according to time and place. The word might be saying yes, but the meaning no, the meaning might persist, but the word might have transformed, time and again there is a word one has used all one's life and all of the sudden one does not know where its assignment lies [in a given context].⁶⁴

六書遞變，人事日煩，隨時隨地，一步換形。或言是而意非，或意存而言改，往往有終身習用一詞，而初不知其職之何在者。

This situation is exacerbated by the changes intervening in the Chinese language through the increased interaction with the West.

Ever since the opening up of sea communication with countries abroad [during the 18th century], retranslations were made through different foreign languages [into Chinese], the new and the old merge in chaotic fusion; individuals make up their own terms, schools go their own way in their interpretation; things are moving ever further apart and one mistake leads to the next. Even Kharoṣṭha, the Donkey-lipped Sage, and Akṣapāda, the Arhat with eyes in his feet, would, were they born again, be bewildered.

海通以後，重譯侏儷，新故糅雜，人自為說，家異其趣。歧而又歧，以繆承繆。雖驢唇仙人足目尊者復生，亦將暝眩。

In the resulting chaos and following “the general rule of evolution,” (天演公例) the marvelous Chinese script is “fleeing in fright from under the 26 letter [Western] alphabet with its sidewise crawl” (遽出蟹行二十六字符號下).

The reason:

Alas, there is a most potent reason for this—namely that our country only has *zishu* 字書—dictionaries listing individual graphs, and *leishu* 類書—compendia arranged according to certain categories. However, special books to explain the proper usage of words have been lacking. The different states over there in Europe and America on the other hand have what they call ‘encyclopaedic dictionaries’ *cidian* 詞典 which always give definitions for terms, things, symbols and numbers. These works all emphasize usefulness and are strict with regard to [semantic and grammatical] rules. They are not like our *zishu* simplistic and ambiguous or like our *leishu* confused and disjointed. That is why [in these Western works] names and facts correspond and both their similarities and differences are presented. This is one of the basic driving forces for the power and prestige of these nations and the development of the talents of their people.

嘻！蓋有一絕大原因也，則以吾國之僅有字書，類書，而無正當用詞之專書也。彼歐美諸國則皆有所謂詞典者，名物象數，或立界說，齊一尊用，嚴於律令，非如字書之簡單而游移，類書之淆雜而滅裂。故名實不僞異同互資。其國勢之強盛，人才之發達，此一大原動力焉。

The difficulties in the way of any Chinese effort to match these Western works would be “a hundred times greater” because in China “speech and writing are cut from each other and are hard to bring together, and the shapes [of the characters used to signify words] and the sounds for the largest part consists of loans.” Huang Ren’s

⁶⁴ Huang Ren, “Putong baike xin da cidian xu” 普通百科新大詞典序 (Preface to the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*), in Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin dacidian*. The following excerpts are all from this Preface.

argumentation closely matches that of the preface to the *Japanese Word Dictionary: Sea of Words* referred to above.

Still, the society was willing to support the effort to enrich “national learning” with modernity in substance and method, and Huang Ren was willing to shoulder the burden of compiling both dictionaries. In an obscure last phrase at the end, he links up with the potential of encyclopaedic works to undermine an earlier order of things as well as the forces supporting it: “As for myself, I am also rejoicing in being the pioneer in providing things needed at this time, positioning myself [like Chen She 陳涉 or Chen Sheng 陳勝 (–208 BCE) and his troops] with the camp fire covered by wicker baskets and howling like fox demons.” The reference is to an officer in the Qin army who became a hero when he rebelled and told his troops to cover their campfires with wicker baskets to make them flicker eerily while baying like fox demons to frighten the Qin troops.

Among the large crowd of foreign political heroes, including George Washington or Mazzini, who were held up for emulation by Chinese reformers during the late Qing, Chen She is one of the very few who were resurrected as Chinese role models for bringing about fundamental political change.⁶⁵

In the ambitious “Editorial Principles” for the work, Huang defines its focus as being on the “entirety of scholarly terminology,” *yiqie xueyu* 一切學語, and its purpose as being a “reference tool for teachers” and a handbook “for student self-study,” 以適用於教員改檢，學子自修為宗旨, that would “summarize Chinese and foreign things and contain all the scientific fields” (中外兼賅，百科並蓄). He claims that the explanations stress clarity and brevity without being obscure or having overloaded phrases, all this with the very modernist goal of “saving mental energies while gaining new knowledge” (省腦力而增新知). The work was to use the science terminology approved by the ministry (and Yan Fu) as its “base” but would include other terms if they were widely used.

The “new scholarly terminology,” Huang writes, “is based on translations of the meaning or the pronunciation of West European terms,” which have “reached China for the greater part via Japan.” However, because there were some differences between the meanings of the same Chinese characters used in China and Japan, the dictionary would give itemized explanations. As for the earlier Chinese terms, which are as numerous as the “sands on the river Ganges,” only the barest outlines were provided because most readers would have a better

⁶⁵ See Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, “‘Geming biao mu’ yu wan Qing yingxiong xipu de chongjian. Huashengdun yu Napolun chuanji wenxian de yikan ji qi yinxiang” ‘革命表木’與晚晴英雄希普的重建. 華盛頓與拿破侖傳記文獻的譯刊及其影響 [The revolutionary model and the reconstruction of the genealogy of the late Qing hero. Publications of translations of documents on Washington and Napoleon and their impact], *Lishi wenxian* 9 (2005): 393. Shen Songqiao 沈松僑, “Zhenda Han de tiansheng. Minzu yingxiong xipu yu wan Qing guozu sixiang” 真大漢之天聲. 民族英雄希普與晚晴的國族想像 [The true call of the great Han. The genealogy of national heroes and late Qing national thought], *Xueshu sixiang pinglun* 學術思想評論 [Intellectual Inquiry] 10 (2003): 248–327. Chen served as reference to a Chinese heroic past in Huai Ren 懷仁, *Shehui xiaoshuo: Luosuo hun* 社會小說: 羅梭魂 [Social novel: The spirit of Rousseau] (1905) Repr. Nanchang: Beihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1991), Chapter 1.

grounding in old learning and thus the older encyclopaedias would serve their purpose. To mark the difference between items relating to the “world” rather than to China, a round circle for the globe is prefixed to the respective category. The entry “history” 史 thus signals that an item belongs to the field “Chinese history,” while ○史 would signal that it belongs to “world history”. Together with this very sober and informed dealing with the world and the development of modern Chinese scholarly terminology, Huang also makes it clear that he has not forgotten his political and reform agenda.

Although the lands that once belonged to China have been stolen with cunning and bravado and are no longer ours, the detailed record of every small mountain and rivulet [in these lands as contained in his work] has the purpose of recording national shame. That the history of our defeats in foreign relations is not in the least bit embellished or hidden [in this work] has the same purpose.⁶⁶

五國曾經隸屬之邦土，雖巧偷號攫非復故物，而寸山勺水紀載較詳，志國恥也。外交失敗歷史不稍諱飾，亦同此旨

The rationalist enlightenment agenda of the encyclopaedist does not only pervade Huang’s statement of principles, but even the “particulars of this book” (本書之特色) that follow: “Concerning things society believes in a superstitious way or is used to without proof we accumulate evidence [of their being unfounded] and spread this with scientific principles—and one morning inevitably the clouds will break and they will see the sun” 社會所迷信及習用而不省者，皆集左證而以學理流通之，俾一旦豁然披雲見天。⁶⁷ The title signals the “general” rather than the specialized level of encyclopaedic knowledge, and Huang explicitly declares that it should be fit for a “middle school level.”

The 11,865 entries in the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* are organized according to the same principle used by Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci. The basic sequence of entries follows the number of strokes needed to write the first Chinese character of the word. This allows for short dictionary entries that define the term and detail the key features of its content, sometimes with a historical explanation of its origin. These entries are then linked to a taxonomy of knowledge that assigns them to altogether sixty fields, sometimes also giving the term in the source language. This taxonomy includes all recognized scholarly fields of the day ranging from mathematics and zoology to religious studies and international law. It also includes elements such as “hunting” that might not really qualify in a Chinese context but had played a prominent role for the British Isles in Chambers’ *Information for the People*.

Although Huang Ren claimed that the entire work was completed within one year and though the competing enterprise from the Commercial Press, which was begun in 1908 and was eventually to produce the *Source of Terms*, *Ci yuan* 辭源, in 1915, moved at quite a different pace, many of the entries are of high quality and of

⁶⁶ “Fanli” 凡例 [Editorial principles], in *Putong baike xin da cidian*, 2a.

⁶⁷ “Benshu zhi tese,” in *Putong baike xin da cidian*, 1a.

intrinsic not just historical interest.⁶⁸ Here is his explanation on the term *jingji* 經濟 in the meaning “economy”:

Jingji means managing state affairs and handling administrative matters. However, in China common speech calls being good with data, *shang ji* 善計, and “to manage,” *jingji* 經紀. When the Japanese imported Chinese terms, they mistakenly wrote this as 經濟 (*jingji*) [because of the similarity in pronunciation]. (There are frequent occurrences of this type). Nowadays this term has again been brought back to China and is regularly used in the sense of economic management, *shengji* 生計, which is totally different from the original meaning. Although through its cumulative use it will be impossible to reverse this, one still should know its original definition.⁶⁹

經濟者經綸幹濟也。而我國通俗以善計者曰經紀。日人輸入中語，因音近而誤作經濟。(此類甚多)今此一名詞又回輪吾國，而沿用為省計義，與原義全別。雖已積習難返，然其本原界限，不可不知也。

The entry on the Chinese *chen wei* 讖緯 prognostication texts, which definitely could not have been copied from existing encyclopaedias, reveals both knowledge and an emphasis on sober factuality together with the enlightenment agenda. Classified as belonging to “religion”, it runs:

Of the *chen* 讖 [mantic texts] there are three kinds, graphic *chen*, spell *chen*, and oath *chen*. All spoken, written and designed things which carry indications for the future can be called *chen*. The apocrypha, *wei* 緯, were transmitted outside the classics when Confucius fixed the six classics and trimmed the old works. They are generally what Sima Qian 司馬遷 refers to as things with words that lack elegance and propriety or that are even opposed to the classics. While this is not so, it is correct to say that they are not classics. The *chen*, however, are all scattered in small bits while the *wei* are gigantic texts. (Today they do not survive intact, and they are only in part genuine). They have a similarity in character in that with incoherent incomprehensible words they are said to be able to anticipate the rise and fall of the imperial family or order and chaos in society. This learning had its heyday during the Western and Eastern Han Dynasty at the same time when the doctrine of the Five Agents was flourishing. The [Chen and Wei] are made up by the two forces of despotism and superstition. Their negative effects eventually led to great chaos, and during the Jin Dynasty they were for the first time strictly banned. However, to this day this tradition has not been completely cut off. This is something that people engaged in opening up people’s knowledge will have to pay attention to.⁷⁰

讖有圖讖，符讖，誓讖。凡一切語言文字及圖書等，範圍來有徵驗者，皆可謂之讖。緯相傳孔子定六經刪古籍於經外者，大約即司馬遷所謂其言不雅馴者，或與經對待，其實不如。直謂之不經可也。但讖多瑣碎，而緯的煌煌巨典。(今已不完全存者，亦真贗參半)惟其以支離詭譎之語，謂可推朝家之聲率世運之治亂，則同一性質。磁學最盛於兩漢，與五行學並行。蓋專制與迷信之兩刀所構成也，而其弊，卒至於興妖擻亂。晉初，始申厲禁，然其流風，至今未全絕。此亦開民智者所當注意焉[]。

⁶⁸ Lu Erkui 陸爾奎, comp., *Ci yuan* 辭源 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1915). For a detailed study of Huang Ren’s entries on ‘literature’ and their relationship to his *History of Chinese Literature*, see Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Zuowei xueke de wenxue shi* 作為學科的文學史 [History of literature as a field of scholarship] (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2011), chap. 5.

⁶⁹ Huang Moxi, *Putong baikexin da cidian*, 13 strokes, entry #360.

⁷⁰ Huang Moxi, *Putong baikexin da cidian*, 24 strokes, entry # 1.

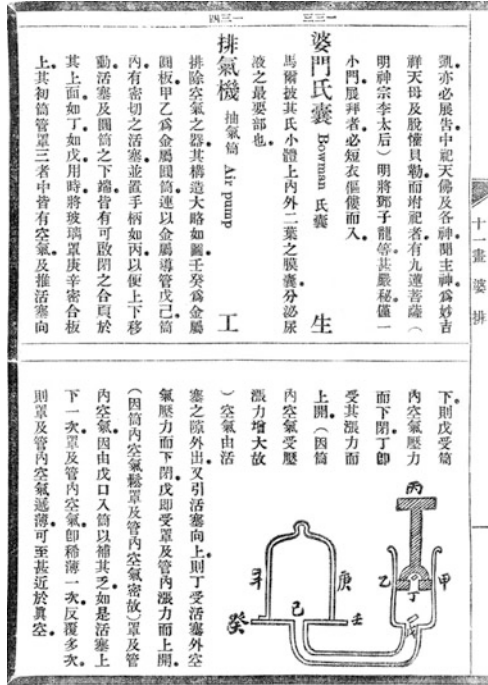
Illustration 2 Jinweiyi instrument for measuring Azimuth. From Huang Ren, *Putong baike da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911, 13 strokes, number 352



A relatively large number of entries in Huang’s *Dictionary* are accompanied by illustrations, diagrams, and technical drawings, which are of a different kind than the plants and animals in the work by Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci. Huang inserted illustrations of new technical instruments and tools like microscope, bulldozer, printing press, or a special astronomical instrument called “jingweiyi” 經緯儀, which was not given a term in English but was described in Chinese as “an instrument for measuring the altitude and azimuth of heavenly bodies.” Assigned to the section “astronomy,” it comes with a straightforward description of its functions despite the fact that the illustration—like all the illustrations generally—lack technical precision. It was clearly copied from elsewhere and was reduced in size to the point that the technical details are utterly blurred (Illustration 2).

However, the presence of a wealth of such modern technical and scientific devices in this encyclopaedic dictionary shows that a field that was mostly looked down upon in traditional China was now considered a necessity in a country heading toward a modern future. The numerous diagrams of function designs that accompany abstract verbal descriptions of new technical ideas and inventions serve the same purpose while retaining clarity due to the simpler graphic design (Illustration 3).

Illustration 3 Air pump mechanism. From Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911, supplement 補遺, 11 strokes, number 134



Conclusions

Since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the spread of encyclopaedic works in Chinese has led to a dramatic expansion of the range of contextualized knowledge available to men of letters and literate urbanites. It was presented in the sober factual language of rationality that increasingly dispensed with traditional markers of learning such as allusions to classical texts. The development of new print media, like newspapers with their editorials or advocacy newspapers with their political essays, contributed to the spread of this new rhetoric. The great upswing of encyclopaedic publishing in the years between the Sino-Japanese War and the 1898 Hundred Days Reform was only shortly interrupted by the palace coup that sent some of the reformers to their deaths and others into exile. After the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and the ensuing Allied intervention, those forces in the court that demanded substantial political reforms got the upper hand. At the same time, the Shanghai International Settlement offered itself as a safe haven for publishing outside the court's control. Within weeks of the beginning of the Reform of Governance in 1901, many of the promoters of the 1898 reforms were active again and quite a few of the encyclopaedic works that had failed to meet the 1898 deadline were rushed to press while new works were eagerly produced.

The Reform of Governance period is characterized by a steep rise in the influence of Japan in all spheres of government, education, and the military, all of

which accompanied the heavy impact of the Japanese vocabulary on new knowledge in China. This was greatly enhanced by a large number of Chinese students who went to Japan to study and came back with the new Japan-minted vocabulary. A linguistic confusion spread and different Chinese translators pursued different strategies in translating Western scholarly terminology. The situation worsened with the students returning from Japan and the massive translation projects for Japanese works that they undertook because it brought yet another set of translation words for the same concepts. But this time the words had a strong and rising social group (the returned students) as advocates and the backing of both the Japanese government and private Japanese publishing ventures in China.

The second problem was the quality and accessibility of the new knowledge. With the new schools and, more importantly, with the abolishment of the examination system, a market for textbooks and reference works that provided well-organized and easy access to items of the new knowledge emerged. Encyclopaedic works with their often book-length introductions to scholarly fields retained their importance, and they were increasingly geared towards providing a step-by-step introduction to fields of modern knowledge. This was what Fan Diji's translation attempted to achieve. In his work we can already see elements of a unified structure for the emerging encyclopaedic entries, which included a definition of the term together with more or less substantial information on the subject matter itself. The new grammar and rhetoric of the language of the encyclopaedic entries is a field of transcultural interaction that deserves more study since the impact of this rhetorical pose is possibly as important as that of the conceptual taxonomies.

With a much stronger emphasis on the taxonomy of knowledge and the precise definition of core concepts, the *New Erya* followed another—again Japan-inspired—path. With the widening presence of the new technical terms in the schools, the press, the military, and the government administration, a lacuna was perceived for which a solution had already been found in the West: itemized encyclopaedic dictionaries with an organization structure that combined terse entries with definition and background information and was arranged in a purely formal sequence with cross references to broader fields of knowledge. The taxonomy of these fields had gradually stabilized over the previous decades with the Chambers *Information for the People* used as a key reference. Very shortly after the abolishment of the Chinese examination system many of the publishing houses that were eager to catch the lucrative textbook market started looking at encyclopaedic dictionaries as a type of reference work for which there was a great need and market.

Although it was the government that eventually ceded to demands to abolish the examination system together with its contents, beyond the small and rather powerless office given to Yan Fu it did not emulate Japan by assuming a government responsibility for the development of the new educational tools. Instead, it left this to independent actors who used the Shanghai International Settlement, with its openness to the world and relative freedom from court interference, as their forum of public articulation. But this lack of government support also came at a price. Zeng Pu and Xu Nianci had great plans and set the framework (stroke number, cross

reference, and source language), but they lacked the financial resources to get beyond the second volume of their planned ten-volume set. The Commercial Press had started work on the *Source of Terms*, *Ci yuan*, but lacked a man with the amazing energy and knowledge of a Huang Moxi to pull the project off before the dynasty abdicated.

Eventually, it was Huang Moxi who produced a large and relatively mature encyclopaedic dictionary that could be used at a middle-school level and would provide quick and relatively high-quality, “enlightened” information on an exceedingly wide range of what he called “scholarly terms,” *xueyu* 學語. It certainly marks the apogee of encyclopaedic publishing in China during the Qing, but the lack of government interest in managing a national canon of language and knowledge, and the inability of the Society for the Support of National Learning to seriously compete with the large schoolbook publishing companies that were establishing themselves in Shanghai meant that the great potential usefulness of this reference work only had a small window of time in which to find the readers for whom it was intended. The publisher strived to get both dictionaries to the readers and made great efforts to promote sales of both works. With three and possibly four prints within a few months, the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* was certainly successful.⁷¹ Some of the documentation for this can be found in the Appendix to this article.

By never referring to works like Huang Ren’s, but also by benefitting from a market savvy that allowed it to run through dozens of reprints without a single entry being changed until the early 1940s, the Commercial Press’s magisterial dictionary of “New Culture,” the *Xin wenhua cishu* 新文化辭書 (1921), claimed the honor of being the true *Chinese Encyclopedic Dictionary of New Knowledge* in the English translation of its title.⁷²

The modern Chinese encyclopaedias compiled during the first decade of the twentieth century have been relegated to the very periphery of scholarly interest for no less than a century. The reasons for this disinterest may differ, but they all end in the same result: inaccurate interpretations of the rise and the nature of modern Chinese culture.

Time and again studies from both China and abroad have argued that modern Chinese literature and culture are the outcome of the efforts made between 1915 and the 1930s by a small group of young Chinese intellectuals who were educated in Japan and the West. Collectively these efforts are now known as the New Culture

⁷¹ The first edition came out in the 5th month of the Xuantong era (1911), the second already in the 6th month; by the 1st month of winter, the third edition was nearly sold out and subscriptions were offered for a fourth edition in an advertisement inserted into the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies*. It is not clear whether this fourth edition was ever printed.

⁷² *Xin wenhua cishu* [Parallel title: *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of New Knowledge*] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923). Entries from this dictionary are studied in the contribution by Barbara Mittler in this volume.

Movement and/or May Fourth Movement.⁷³ This master narrative has lost much of its credibility through a series of studies on the fiction of the years between the 1890s and the 1910s. The location, collection, and examination of Chinese encyclopaedic works of modern knowledge published between the 1880s and 1910s provide a further case study for this. The results have opened a new vista onto this eminently important period in Chinese history.

First, it has become apparent that the transition from the old to the new cultural environment did not take place during the brief years between 1915 and the 1920s (or 1930s), but during the relatively long period between the 1870s and the 1920s. Second, modern Chinese culture by and large did not evolve through a direct engagement with Western culture but through a more complicated process during which not two (Chinese and European) but at least three cultural environments interacted, with Japan playing the most important (but later often underestimated) role of the intermediary. This neglect resulted in a simplified reading of the historical evidence, which very strongly suggests a global rather than bilateral circulation of knowledge as well as the importance of the Japanese variation of this new Chinese knowledge that had preceded its adaptation in China.

In conclusion, the new materials provided by the encyclopaedias reveal that the transformation from the old to the modern did not take place merely in literature and culture but encompassed the whole of Chinese culture, including technical and scientific development. This new perspective on the period from the 1870s to the 1920s highlights many similarities between the Chinese development of modern culture and European developments a few decades earlier. It calls for nothing less than a revision of modern Chinese history from a global perspective.

Appendix: Advertising the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* and the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies*

The copy of the *Putong baike xin da cidian* that is held at the Harvard Yen-ching Institute has two slips from the publisher inserted in the beginning. Dated to the 1st month of the 3rd year of the Xuantong reign (February 1911), these offered both works at a special discount of 50 % for four yuan instead of eight for a limited time period (1 month for the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, and 4 months for the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies*). They would entitle the buyer of either encyclopaedic work to receive the second one at half price and to get another copy of the one in his hands as a gift for someone else (Illustrations 4, 5, 6, and 7). The efforts to promote the sales resulted in remarkable initial success for the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, as a

⁷³ For a critical analysis of the genesis of this master narrative, see Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král, eds., *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

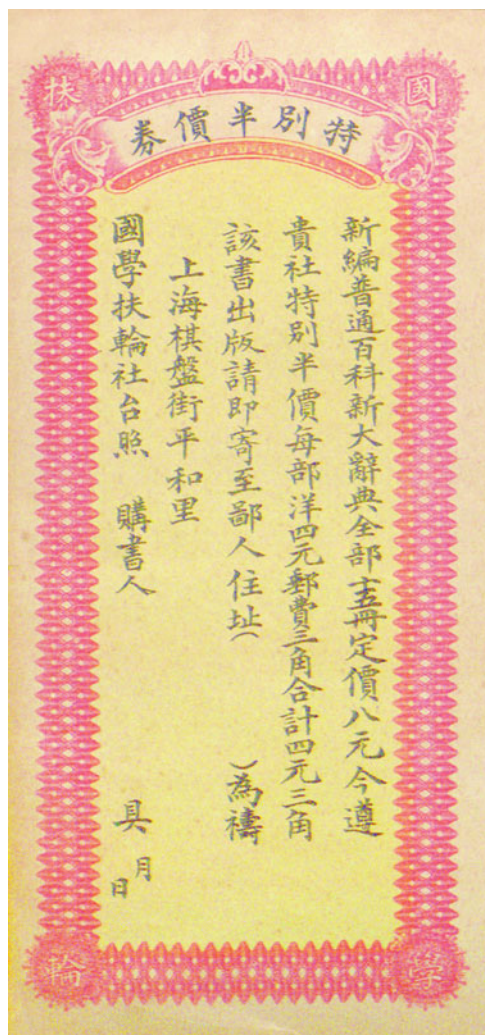


Illustration 4 Offer of second copy of *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* at half price (4 yuan instead of 8 yuan) for buyers of first edition at full price. Note the perforations that allow it to be torn out of the volume. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she, second edition, 1911, 6th month, front matter

fourth printing of 3,000 copies was already planned (and might have come about) by 1911 (Illustrations 8 and 9). Even the *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* might have gone through several printings (Illustrations 10 and 11). While the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* went through three and possibly four printings in its 1st year, the climate change coming with the Republic was such that it was soon forgotten. As the inserts advertising these two works are rare, they are included here for reference.

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Illustration 5 Special stipulations of the offer of second copy of *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* at half price dated 1st month of Xuantong 3 (1911). To be used before the end of the 3rd month. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she, second edition, 1911, 6th month. Back side of offer in Illustration 4. Note the inconsistency between the handwritten dates and the month of publication

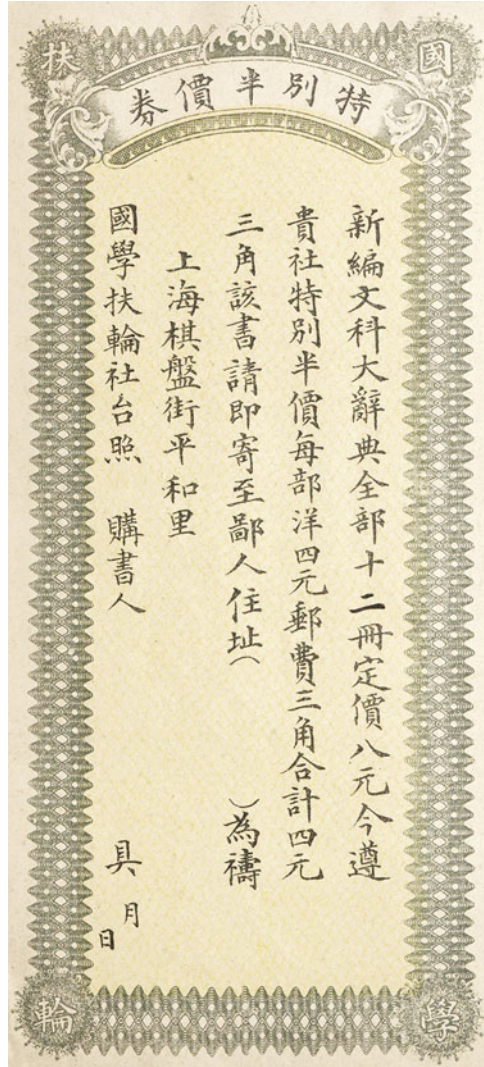


Illustration 6 Offer of copy of *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* at half price (4 yuan instead of 8 yuan) to buyers of copy of *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge* at full price. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she, second edition, 1911, 6th month, front matter

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Illustration 7 Special stipulations of the offer of copy of *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* at half price dated 1st month of Xuantong 3 (1911). Has to be used before the end of the 5th month. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Putong baike xin da cidian*. Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she, second edition, 1911, 6th month. Back side of offer in Illustration 6

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Illustration 8 Slip with offer of subscription of copy of *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*, forth printing at half price (4 yuan instead of 8) to buyers of *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* at original price. The third printing is already sold out. The fourth printing will run at 3,000 copies. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Wenke xin da cidian, Xiuci zhi bu*, Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911, front matter

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Illustration 9 Advertisement text for subscription of copy of 4th edition of the *New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of General Knowledge*. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Wenke xin da cidian, Xiuci zhi bu*, Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911, front matter

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Illustration 10 Slip with offer of subscription of copy of the first edition of *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* at half price (4 yuan instead of 8) to buyers of this work at original price. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Wenke xin da cidian, Xiuci zhi bu*, Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911 (1st month of winter Xuantong 3), back side of Illustration 9

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Illustration 11 Advertisement text by the head of the Guoxue fulun she for offer of copy of *Terminological Dictionary for Classical Studies* at half price to buyers of this work at original price. As this page claims the work would be published “in the next month,” and offers a subscription for this, it must be for the second or third printing. The print in the 1st month of winter of Xuanton 3 (1911) did not carry this insert. Inserted into Huang Ren, *Wenke xin da cidian, Xiuci zhi bu*, Shanghai: Guoxue fulun she 1911, later than 1st month of winter, Xuanton 3

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