

John Considine (Editor). *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography*. 2019, xii + 961 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-17886-1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Price: \$155.00.

A dictionary is the authentic record of the relevant language as well as its cultural world. For most languages in the world, the history of the dictionary is almost as long as that of its language and culture. This makes the history of dictionaries a worthy subject of inquiry and systematic research in the field of lexicography. Hartmann and James (1998: 85) state that lexicography 'has two basic divisions: lexicographic practice, or DICTIONARY-MAKING, and lexicographic theory, or DICTIONARY RESEARCH', and that dictionary research is concerned 'with the academic study of such topics as the nature, history, criticism, typology and use of DICTIONARIES and other REFERENCE WORKS' (ibid: 43). Quite a number of volumes on lexicography have been published worldwide to present the history of lexicography. However, most, if not all, of them focus on the lexicography of one single language, as Yong and Peng (2008) on Chinese dictionaries, and Cowie (2009) on English dictionaries, or on one specific type of dictionaries, as Cowie (2002) on English dictionaries for foreign learners.

The Cambridge World History of Lexicography (CWHL) is regarded as the first survey of the global history of lexicography, tracing the historical development of the dictionaries of different types and of various languages from the global perspective. This volume is among a series of academic books on world history produced by Cambridge University Press. Its editor John Considine, Professor of English at the University of Alberta, Canada, has authored, edited or co-edited several books on lexicography, and has been contributing to the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the last thirty years as a library researcher, an assistant editor, and a consultant. *CWHL* is a joint work by 33 leading scholars in lexicography from 15 countries.

With a total of 973 pages, *CWHL* comprises 32 chapters in four parts, plus an introduction, two appendices, two resources and one index. The four parts are arranged chronologically from the ancient world of five thousand years ago to the modern world, and the chapters in each part are further sequenced from the linguistic, geographical, or cultural perspective. This volume is 'the first survey of all the dictionaries which humans have made, from the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, and the Greco-Roman world, to the contemporary speech communities of every inhabited continent' (p. i).

Part One 'The Ancient World' explores, in five chapters, the lexicographical traditions of ancient Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, ancient China, ancient India, and the Greco-Roman world. This part depicts a global map of the ancient lexicography, starting from Mesopotamian lexicography, which originated in cuneiform and has yielded the world's oldest extant wordlists, to ancient Egyptian lexicography, which has the longest of all dictionary traditions in the world. The map then rolls eastward to ancient Chinese lexicography, which has produced the greatest variety of early types of dictionaries

rooted in the philological heritage, and then to ancient Indian lexicography originating from the Sanskrit language and the Brahmanical tradition. The map finally stops at Greco-Roman lexicography, which developed from the great flourishing of Alexandrian scholarship and started by compiling alphabetical lists of lemmata based on a corpus of canonical literary texts.

Part Two 'The Pre-modern World' analyses, in nine chapters, world lexicography in the following millennium, and the continuations up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This part begins with two chapters on the great traditions of Chinese lexicography and Indian/Tibetan lexicography, which continued from the ancient world into this middle period. Indian and Tibetan lexicography during this period share similar cultural features typically in Sanskrit dictionaries, Buddhist texts and synonym treatment. The next four chapters remain focused on Asia, surveying the Arabic and Hebrew traditions of lexicography, those of the Chinese periphery, and those of the Turkic languages and of Persian. Eastern Inner Asia, Japan, and Korea are grouped into the Chinese periphery as the lexicographical activities there were directly influenced by the Chinese tradition in terms of Chinese characters and typical Chinese dictionaries. The last three chapters turn westwards to the lexicography of the Byzantine world, that of Medieval Latin Christendom, and that of early modern Western Europe. Medieval Latin Christendom refers to the lands where Roman Christianity was practised and the Latin language was read, corresponding roughly to what Western and Central Europe is in the modern day.

As the longest part of this volume, Part Three 'The Modern World: Continuing Traditions' surveys, in eleven chapters, the world lexicography of the past two or three centuries from the East to the West to illustrate the mass production of lexicographical works. It starts with the lexicographical tradition in China which has remained highly active until the present day. It is followed by a description of Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese lexicography from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, a period in which these were no longer considered part of 'the Chinese periphery' but had their own vigorous traditions of lexicography. The next two chapters turn westwards and then southwards to the lexicography of the Turkish and Persian languages, and then to that of South Asia. The following two chapters address the two Semitic lexicographical traditions of Arabic and of Modern Hebrew. Then the last five chapters turn to the lexicographical traditions of the languages belonging to three European language families: one on Slavic and Baltic languages, three on Germanic languages, and one on Romance languages. The three chapters on Germanic comprise one on the Germanic languages other than English, one on standard varieties of English, and one on regional varieties.

Part Four 'The Modern World: Missionary and Subsequent Traditions' traces, in seven chapters, the missionary traditions of lexicography across the modern world: South America, Mesoamerica, North America, East Asia, India and Indonesia, Africa, and Australia. These cultural areas cover South America, North America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania in terms of continents. Only Europe

is excluded, as it functions as the epicentre of the world Christian mission as well as the missionary lexicography.

In the back matter are two appendices: 'the Language Varieties' and 'the Lexicographers'. The first appendix takes a brief account, in 32 pages, of each language, language group and language family of which the lexicography is discussed in this volume. These entries are arranged alphabetically, and each comprises very basic taxonomic information and a note on the lexicographical record. The second gives, in 68 pages, a brief description of each lexicographer whose work is discussed in this volume. Each of these entries, also alphabetically listed, consists of name, date and place of birth and death, principal occupation other than 'lexicographer', and principal contribution to lexicography. This part is deemed as the first biographical survey of lexicographers on a global scale.

CWHL is distinguished from the other volumes of similar topics in at least the following three aspects. Firstly, *CWHL* offers the first comprehensive account of the full history of world lexicography spanning five thousand years and covering three hundred languages. Writing up a volume to cover the comprehensive history of global lexicography is challenging for at least two reasons: one is that 'there have been so many lexicographical traditions in the world over the past five thousand years [...] that their individual traditions are almost ungraspable by a single historian' (p. 1); the other is that 'the concept of "lexicography" is somewhat elusive' (p. 2). The elusive concept of 'lexicography' is actually due to the definition of 'dictionary'. For a long time, the borderline between 'dictionary' and 'encyclopaedia' was vague, and so was that between 'dictionaries of synonyms' and 'thesauruses'. Therefore, 'lexicography' in *CWHL* is defined as 'the making of lists of words and their equivalents or interpretations' (ibid). *CWHL* is the only single volume ever to present the historical description of world lexicography (cf. Considine 2016).

Secondly, it delivers accessible and insightful contributions mainly from the perspective of Eurocentrism. The 33 contributors are mostly from Europe or North America, somewhat indicating a Eurocentric sense. This is not unusual, as Europe has long been the core of human civilization, dictionary compilation, and lexicographical research worldwide. Accordingly, missionary lexicography plays a vital role in the history of global lexicography, which explains why Part Four is devoted to the missionary traditions of lexicography since the sixteenth century in various cultural areas other than Europe. As Hovdhaugen (1996: 7) observes, 'a satisfactory history of linguistics cannot be written before the impressive contribution of missionaries is recognised'. Asia is a good instance. The efforts of the Jesuits in the fields of linguistics and lexicography have resulted in a number of important dictionaries, grammars, vocabularies, and teaching manuals in Asian countries. 'Products planned are searchable on-line texts of the European dictionaries used by missionary lexicographers and of the bilingual and multilingual dictionaries which they produced, and a linguistic overview of the grammars and vocabularies published

by the Jesuit mission in Japan and in India.' (Zwartjes 2012: 195-196) A number of pioneering bilingual dictionaries of Chinese were compiled during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries by European and American missionaries such as Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Robert Morrison (1782–1834), and Samuel Wells Williams (1812–1884). These missionary scholars were involved in Chinese lexicography with their vigorous promotion in the Latinization of the Chinese writing system, as well as in the orthographic transferability across dialects of the Chinese language.

Finally, this volume provides a global history of dictionaries both chronologically and synchronically, showing a general picture, and presenting case studies, of how world lexicography has developed in various areas. *CWHL* 'seeks to tell a story' (p. 2) on global lexicography of five thousand years and three hundred languages in a time sequence from the ancient world to the pre-modern world and modern world. This volume can be read 'to follow one thread in the whole story from period to period, looking, for instance, at the three chronologically sequenced chapters on Chinese lexicography as a series' (p. 2). The story is also told in a synchronic way to explore the lexicographical status of a specific language or at a specific period. Readers are offered the alternative to 'read synchronically, across a given part, to get a picture of the lexicographical activity which was taking place at a particular time' (p. 3). In *CWHL*, Chinese lexicography, with its various historical stages, is carefully reviewed and illuminated, although there are no joint contributors from China. As Considine points out, 'the language to which the most chapters are devoted is Chinese' (p. 2), although English is the language in which this volume is written and currently the most important academic language globally. In Appendix 1 'The Language Varieties', the occurrence of 'China/Chinese' and 'England/English' is respectively 11/38 and 3/24; in Appendix 2 'The Lexicographers', 'China/Chinese' and 'England/English' are respectively counted 82/62 and 12/123 times; and in 'Index', 'China/Chinese' and 'England/English' are respectively 2/41 and 2/44. Chinese lexicography has a very long and continuous history, and its magnificent dictionaries are worthy of further research in the Western world. 'Dictionary-making in China, for example, was already well advanced some two thousand years ago, but the extent of this achievement was not appreciated by the West for more than a thousand years.' (Collison 1982: 20)

Admittedly, there are still some possibilities for the improvement of the whole volume. First, there seems not to be an obvious and consistent structural framework for each chapter to observe. The whole volume follows the principle that 'different chapters are handled in different ways' (p. 3), thus it is more readable than searchable. As a result, it is hard to make a comparison between different areas or periods in terms of lexicographical status. Second, little emphasis is placed in this volume on the lexicographical status in the contemporary world. The whole history is divided into three periods: ancient, pre-modern, and modern, and the modern period is from the eighteenth or nineteenth century onwards. However, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first

centuries, a substantial number of dictionaries of various types have been produced in different parts of the world; thus it would be better for the contemporary period to be separated from the modern period so as to describe the current flourishing lexicography. Moreover, in this volume there is not a systematic description of lexicographical study in its various stages. Although this volume is designed to provide 'a history of lexicography, not of dictionaries' (p. 3), it touches on theoretical lexicography very lightly. In Appendix 2 'The Lexicographers', there is no 'Zgusta', a great figure in theoretical lexicography, as *Manual of Lexicography* (Zgusta 1971) is honoured as a milestone to initiate the systematic study of lexicography. 'Lexicographer' is defined as 'one who engages in lexicography, either as a compiler or as a metalexicographer' (Hartmann and James 1998: 84), and 'metalexicographer' is 'one who engages in the theory of lexicography' (ibid: 93).

Overall, despite the minor criticisms raised above, *CWHL* deserves recognition as the first volume on a comprehensive history of world lexicography, and as a helpful resource to the international community of lexicographers and linguists, and to the wider users of dictionaries of various types. It fulfils the function as a rich source of historic information on global lexicography. This volume takes readers on a linguistic journey into the dictionaries of the past five thousand years, into the literal worlds of the people who used or observed those dictionaries, and into the enormous variety of the global cultures of humankind. *CWHL* has established a high-quality precedent for a comprehensive historical assessment of global lexicography.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Professor Hans C. Boas of the Linguistics Research Centre, the University of Texas at Austin, Texas, USA, for his encouragement and support.

References

- Collison, R.L. 1982. *A History of Foreign-Language Dictionaries*. London: André Deutsch.
- Considine, J. 2016. A Chronology of Major Events in the History of Lexicography. Durkin, P. (Ed.). 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of Lexicography*: 605-615. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cowie, A.P. 2002. *English Dictionaries for Foreign Learners: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cowie, A.P. (Ed.). 2009. *The Oxford History of English Lexicography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hartmann, R.R.K. and G. James. 1998. *Dictionary of Lexicography*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Hovdhaugen, E. 1996. Missionary Grammars: An Attempt at Defining a Field of Research. Hovdhaugen, E. (Ed.). 1996. *... and the Word was God: Missionary Linguistics and Missionary Grammar*: 9-22. Münster: Nodus Publikationen.
- Yong, H. and J. Peng. 2008. *Chinese Lexicography: A History from 1046 BC to AD 1911*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zgusta, L. 1971. *Manual of Lexicography*. The Hague: Mouton.

Zwartjes, O. 2012. The Historiography of Missionary Linguistics: Present State and Further Research Opportunities. *Historiographia Linguistica* 39(2/3): 185-242. (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/hl.39.2-3.01zwa>)

Xiangming Zhang
School of Foreign Studies
Guangdong University of Finance and Economics
Guangzhou
China
(simon.xmzhang2019@gmail.com; xmzhang@gdufe.edu.cn)

and

Hai Xu
Centre for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
Guangzhou
China
(Corresponding Author, xuhai1101@gdufs.edu.cn)