

Sarah Ogilvie and Gabriella Safran (Eds.). *The Whole World in a Book: Dictionaries in the Nineteenth Century.* 2020, 358 pp. ISBN: 978-0190913199 (Hardback). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £22.99.

Dictionaries are works of individual lexicographers or a group of lexicographers and also constrained by social and cultural factors of the time. Thus, they bear unmistakable features of the makers and the period. Historical studies of dictionaries can reveal the facts about the dictionaries and their compilers, and it is necessary to carry out such studies to promote further progress in academic lexicography (Hartmann 2001: 39).

The nineteenth century witnessed the dramatic development of industrialization and globalization. The industrial revolution and technological development opened up increasing opportunities for the mobility of people and sped up communication, which brought about the burgeoning of dictionaries worldwide. Dictionaries in the nineteenth century bore features of the time: they promoted national identity; they reflected different views on language; they portrayed authorship differences and lexicographic innovations. Previous historical studies of dictionaries mainly focused on different versions of a dictionary or dictionaries in one country. A more recent exception is *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography* edited by John Considine (2019). The present book can be seen as an addition, exploring dictionaries in the nineteenth century worldwide and giving answers to the following four questions: Who were the nineteenth-century lexicographers? How did the world within which they lived foster their projects? What did language itself mean to them? What goals did they try to accomplish in their dictionaries? (p. xv). The book is divided into 16 chapters together with an introduction and an index. The articles are organized on the principle that the dictionary dealt with is from the general to the specific, and from the more familiar to the less familiar (p. xix). The dictionaries include famous ones such as *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Vladimir Dahl's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great-Russian Language*, etc., but also less known Chinese, French, Frisian, Japanese, Persian, Scottish and Yiddish dictionaries, and dictionaries of sign language.

In Chapter 1, John Considine provides a general background of nineteenth-century lexicography by pointing out the challenges needing to be addressed by the lexicographers. Despite the flourishing of lexicography in the eighteenth century, some problems remained unsettled. The expanding and speeding up of communication also brought up new questions concerning the structure and contents of the dictionary entry, the scope of the dictionary wordlist, and the type of information which dictionaries should offer. Considine points out that the questions must be considered 'in the context of the whole ecosystem of reference publishing' (p. 13).

In Chapter 2, Brian Kim traces the development of foreign language dictionaries and dictionaries of the native language in the nineteenth century in

Russia and Japan with statistical evidence. The increasing tendency was the result of greater contact with Western Europe and the efforts to seek modernization while maintaining the national identity.

In Chapter 3, Michael Adams describes and evaluates Charles Richardson's *New Dictionary of the English Language* (1836–1837). As a mirror of the compiler's philosophy of language, NDEL is a valuable foil in the history of lexicography and is 'the pivot on which the scientific revolution of English lexicography turned' (p. 49).

In Chapter 4, Sarah Ogilvie explains why OED features prominently in modern lexicography. It was a collaborative work of both specialists and the general public. It applied historical principles systematically to the structure and content of the dictionary entry, adopted a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach, attempted a thorough coverage of the lexicon, and was received as a national project.

Chapter 5 deals with the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (DWB), which is considered the starting point of scientific lexicography. The scientific feature was illustrated by the descriptive agenda, the description of word meaning, the collaborative network, data collection, etc. Volker Harm also shows that its scientific approach was still deeply rooted in Romanticism.

In Chapter 6, Anne Dykstra studies Joost Hiddes Halbertsma's unfinished dictionary of Frisian, the *Lexicon Frisicum* (1872). The dictionary reveals strong nationalistic tendencies of Romanticism. Dykstra analyzes it in terms of structure, source and material, metalanguage, meaning description, examples, etymology, and encyclopedic information, as well as the relationship between Frisian and English, and cultural nationalism. Although it lacks consistency and the use of Latin as the metalanguage restricted the target users to a limited group, it provides insights into nineteenth-century linguistics, lexicography and culture.

Chapter 7 focuses on John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808/1825), the first Scottish national dictionary. Having a reputation for its pioneering historical principles, the dictionary was of greater significance as a national and patriotic work, featuring widespread participation in the dictionary, coverage of cultural vocabulary, and presenting Scots as a distinct language. Though being criticized for excluding the lexis that Scots shared with English, it was regarded as a repository of national identity and cultural participation.

In Chapter 8, Wim Remysen and Nadine Vincent study Dunn's idea of a united and independent French Canada and the legitimacy of Canadian French. The topic is explored against the nineteenth-century sociopolitical context and the life experience of Dunn. They show that his vision was neatly reflected in the *1880 Glossaire franco-canadien*, which figured prominently in the development of Quebec lexicography.

In Chapter 9, Edward Finegan studies the 1828 edition of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*. He shows that the dictionary is a

manifestation of the lexicographer's nationalism and Christian commitments, through etymologies, definitions, and illustrative citations.

Chapter 10 explores Webster's unabridged dictionary of 1864. Peter Sokolowski focuses on the innovations of the revision work which set the course for the modernization of lexicography, featuring the organization of the editorial staff, the removal of Webster's etymologies, the historical ordering of the senses, the systematic pruning of the lexicon, the dual presentation of the engravings, the volunteer reading for citations, etc. The innovations, together with the keen business sense of the publisher, made the dictionary a great commercial success.

In Chapter 11, Ilya Vinitsky studies Vladimir Dahl's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great-Russian Language* within the context of the Russian literature and culture and the religious and mystical doctrines of language. The dictionary reflected Dahl's view on language, that is, the word was a spiritual entity, a bridge between worlds, and a window onto the national soul. Viewing the Russian language as centered on the notion of family, he endeavored to reveal the communal spirit of Russia and create the national epic.

In Chapter 12, Mårten Söderblom Saarela discusses Banihûn and Pungong's *Manchu-Chinese Literary Ocean* (1821). The dictionary aimed at a greater integration of Manchu and Chinese and to serve the hybrid culture of lettered bannermen. He compares this dictionary with Callery's unfinished Chinese-French encyclopaedic dictionary, which was inspired by the same source dictionary, to show the importance of imperial Chinese lexicography. As the product of a specific historical period, the utility of the dictionary depended on the readers' proficiency in Manchu and their knowledge of the Confucian literary tradition.

In Chapter 13, Walter Hakala traces the century-long history of British lexicographic works on the Persian language, which concluded in 1892 with Francis Joseph Steingass's *A Persian-English Dictionary*. This chapter also documents the rise and fall of Persian as a transregional language. By the time Steingass produced his *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* in 1892, the use of Persian in British India had been on the decline, which doomed the dictionary to failure.

Chapter 14 focuses on American missionary women lexicographers. Lindsay Rose Russell explores what made the missionary women lexicographers and what features their dictionaries contained. Compared with the large-scale dictionaries mentioned in the previous chapters, which aimed for national identities or featured refined lexicographic methods, the dictionaries made by the American missionary women are characterized as small-scale, pragmatic and appreciative of local languages and cultures.

In Chapter 15 Gabriella Safran discusses the historical confluence of Yiddish dictionaries and Jewish dialect comic books in the Russia Empire and the USA. Instead of assigning a social meaning to the dictionaries as seeking linguistic identity for a low-status and minority language, Safran focuses on the

popularization of Yiddish dictionaries and Jewish comic books and proposes that their success may be attributed to their ability to meet people's needs to produce low-status and high-status languages and perform comedy to impress others. Both were products of specific social conditions.

Chapter 16 is devoted to sign language dictionaries, which contributed to the recognition of the identity of the deaf community and the dissemination of sign languages. Jorge Bidarra and Tania Aparecida Martins start with a brief overview of the development of Libras dictionaries in Brazil from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, showing that the development of sign languages was affected by educational philosophy and government policies. The authors then introduce the ongoing monolingual dictionary, PORLIBRAS, a project they have been working on.

Having different dictionaries discussed in one volume makes it possible and easy for the readers to compare and contrast. As shown, the authors of Chapters 5–9 share an interest in exploring the lexicographic works from the perspectives of language, culture, and nationalism. It also reveals that dictionaries produced in similar circumstances could yield different results. Steingass's *Comprehensive Persian–English Dictionary* failed, because of the limitation of Persian as a written elite language. In contrast, the dictionaries made by the American missionary women in Asia were successful since they insisted on the importance of local language users. These two examples also prove that the success of a dictionary depends in part on whether it could meet the needs of the users in a specific period, which is reinforced by the examples in Chapters 12 and 15. In addition, the dictionaries are explored from different perspectives. Some are focused on lexicographic innovations, such as Chapters 4, 5 and 10. Some, for example Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, attach greater weight to the social or cultural value of the dictionaries. Furthermore, the articles are not isolated, but related and compared. The contributors focus on different dictionaries. When they are exploring the dictionaries, it is usual that they compare the dictionaries with others, which also draws the readers' attention to the differences and similarities.

However, the book is not without shortcomings. It is not made clear by which principle the dictionaries were selected for study. Nearly half of the volume is devoted to English or English-related dictionaries. It would have better shown the panorama if more dictionaries of other languages were incorporated.

By offering an overview of nineteenth-century dictionaries and exploring dictionaries from varied perspectives, anyone interested in the history of lexicography would find this book informative, readable, and well researched.

References

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