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LANGUAGE IN THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS:
THE INTEGRATION OF WESTERN CONCEPTS AND TERMS
INTO CHINESE AND JAPANESE IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

This paper is concerned with the question of how the Chinese and Japanese languages reacted to the influx of Western ideas into the Far East in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Japanese language must inevitably be included in our investigation. It is well known that in the Japanese writing system the key-terms are written in Chinese characters. As a result, the Japanese contributed greatly to the coining of new Chinese terms to render Western models.

Contact between China and the West in the intellectual and linguistic sphere in the first half of the nineteenth century was largely due to the efforts of Protestant missionaries, mainly from Great Britain and America. We may recall that Robert Morrison published his Chinese translation of the Bible between 1813 and 1823, and from 1815 onwards a number of periodicals were edited by missionaries.

Translation activities on a broader scale started only after 1862 with the establishment of the Tongwenguan, the 'College for Foreign Languages', in Beijing which was also a research institute for the dissemination of Western knowledge in China. It was here where the missionary W. A. P. Martin, who joined the teaching staff in 1864, completed his translation of the standard work *Elements of International Law* by the American Henry Wheaton which appeared in the same year under the Chinese title of *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法 .

During the nineteenth century missionaries played a prominent role in the compilation of Chinese bilingual dictionaries.¹ Two of these include the *Chinese and English Dictionary* in two volumes by Walter H. Medhurst, which appeared in Batavia in 1842 and 1843², and the *English and Chinese Dictionary* in four volumes by Reverend Wilhelm Lobscheid, which was published in Hong Kong in the years

¹ Cf. the article by Shen Guowei in this volume.

² Walter H. Medhurst. 1842–1843. *Chinese and English Dictionary*. 2 vols. Batavia: Parapattan.

1866–1869.³ It is a happy coincidence that this voluminous reference work offers a cross-sectional view of Chinese vocabulary just at a time when the process of modernization in China and Japan was starting. With the help of this dictionary, we can find out with some degree of certainty which Western term was rendered by which Chinese term at the time. This can give us an idea of the extent to which ‘modern’ terms were already used in Chinese.

In 1993, Federico Masini published his very thorough dissertation *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898*.⁴ This book supplies additional data on the modernization of the Chinese lexicon in the nineteenth century. Masini provides detailed information on the first appearances of roughly 500 neologisms.

It is generally known that the Chinese language is not disposed to borrow terms from a foreign language on a large scale. The reasons for this are to be found, as Zdenka Novotná has convincingly demonstrated, in the character of the Chinese syllable structure and in the special features of the Chinese script. The Chinese language preferred a different method in assimilating Western concepts: it made descriptive replicas of Western terms by means of native morphemes. When the morphemes of a Western model were translated in a one-to-one relationship, the result was a loan-translation; more commonly, however, the description was so free that we talk of loan-creations induced by foreign concepts. If we look at Lobscheid’s dictionary, we find a number of apparently very modern terms, such as:

<i>Lobscheid</i>	<i>Chinese characters</i>	<i>Pinyin</i>
workman	工人	<i>gongren</i>
electricity	電氣	<i>dianqi</i>
liberty	自由	<i>ziyou</i>
literature	文學	<i>wenxue</i>
occasion, opportunity	機會	<i>jihui</i>
naturally	自然	<i>ziran</i>

³ Wilhelm Lobscheid (Luo Cunde 羅存德). 1866–1869. *Ying-Hua zidian* 英華字典. *English and Chinese Dictionary, with Punti and Mandarin Pronunciation*. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Daily Press Office.

⁴ Federico Masini. 1993. *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and its Evolution towards a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898*. Berkeley: Journal of Chinese Linguistics (Monograph Series, no. 6).

In Lobscheid's dictionary equivalents also occur which have the same material form as modern terms but have a different meaning and, accordingly, appear under different head-words:

<i>Lobscheid</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Modern meaning</i>
contemplating, meditating	思想	<i>sixiang</i>	thought, idea, ideology
to lose a fortune	失業	<i>shiye</i>	to lose one's job, to be out of work
philosophy, reasoning	理論	<i>lilun</i>	theory
statesmanship	經濟	<i>jingji</i>	economy

The Chinese equivalents in Lobscheid's *English and Chinese Dictionary* have a typical characteristic: Almost all of them have a source that can be traced back to classical Chinese literature and the meaning of which is more or less loosely connected with that of the term in the dictionary. Sinologists will be familiar with the example of the word *ziran* 自然 'naturally'. In the *Daodejing* 道德經 it means 'to be naturally so' or 'the spontaneous'. A passage in chapter 25 runs like this:

人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

Man models himself on earth, earth on heaven, heaven on the way, and the way on that which is naturally so (*ziran*).

Here it becomes obvious that the translators of the 1860s when looking for equivalents did not yet apply the method of creating new morpheme combinations so far unknown in Chinese literature.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which initiated all-out reform efforts, the process of assimilating Western ideas in Japan moved at a faster pace than in China. As a consequence, it was mainly the Japanese who took up countless Western terms and made replicas employing Sino-Japanese morphemes. Fortunately, there are several English-Japanese dictionaries from the beginning of the Meiji era which enable us to see in which way the Japanese translated Western terms. I worked with the following dictionaries: Hepburn's *Japanese-English Dictionary; with an English and Japanese Index* (1867)⁵; the *English-*

⁵ James C. Hepburn. 1867. *Wa-Ei gorin shūsei* 和漢語林集成. *A Japanese and English Dictionary; with an English and Japanese Index*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press.

Japanese Dictionary by a compiler who used the pen-name ‘Student of Satsuma’ (1869)⁶; and the *English and Japanese Dictionary* edited by Shibata and Koyasu (1873)⁷. While the first two of these dictionaries employ only Japanese equivalents which were indigenous to the Japanese language, the dictionary by Shibata and Koyasu draws heavily on Chinese renderings used in Lobscheid’s *English and Chinese Dictionary*. As these terms were, of course, incomprehensible to Japanese readers, many of them were explained by means of *furigana* in Japanese, e.g., 無根 ‘false’ as *nenashi no* ネナシノ. In this dictionary, we find such terms as *bungaku* 文學 ‘literature’, *kikai* 機會 ‘occasion’ or *kōjin* 工人 ‘workman’, which do not appear in other English-Japanese dictionaries of the time.

As the Japanese linguist Morioka Kenji 森岡健二 demonstrates, Lobscheid’s dictionary also exerted considerable influence on Japanese translations of English works completed in the first years of the Meiji period, such as Nakamura Masanao’s 中村正直 (1832–1891) translation of John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*, which appeared under the Japanese title of *Jiyū no ri* 自由の理 (1872), and Nishi Amane’s 西周 (1829–1897) translation of Mill’s *Utilitarianism* as *Rigaku* 利學 (1877).

Nishi Amane’s greatest achievement was to enrich the Japanese language and, in the long run, the Chinese language as well, by coining numerous new terms to render Western concepts. In his translation of *Utilitarianism*, the following new terms catch the eye:

<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese kanji</i>	<i>Hepburn</i>
concrete	具體的	<i>gutaiteki</i>
abstract	抽象的	<i>chūshōteki</i>
suffrage	投票	<i>tōhyō</i>
philosophy	哲學	<i>tetsugaku</i>
achievement	成功	<i>seikō</i>
idea	觀念	<i>kannen</i>
ideal	理想上/	<i>risōjō no</i>

⁶ Takahashi Shinkichi 高橋新吉. 1869. *Wa-yaku Eijisho* 和譯英辭書. *An English-Japanese Dictionary*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press. (Commonly known as *Satsuma jisho* 薩摩辭書)

⁷ Shibata Masayoshi 紫田昌吉 and Koyasu Takashi 子安峻. 1873. *Fu-on sōzu Ei-Wa ji-i* 附音插圖英和字彙. *An English and Japanese Dictionary, Explanatory, Pronouncing, and Etymological*. Yokohama: Nishusha.

It is likely that Nishi Amane was the author of these terms.⁸

Nishi often asserts that he created new terms. In one of his own treatises, *Seisei hatsu-un* 生性發蘊 (The relationship between the physical and the spiritual, 1873) he states in a footnote: “The English ‘consciousness’, French ‘connaissance’, German ‘Bewußtsein’, Dutch ‘bewustheid’ I here translate by *ishiki* 意識”.⁹

Even more clearly he informs us in another passage that he was the coiner of new terms. In the introduction to his translation of Joseph Haven’s *Mental Philosophy, Including the Intellect, Sensibilities, and Will* (1857) with the Japanese title *Shinri-gaku* 心理學 (enlarged edition, 1878–79), one passage runs:

In our country books on psychology have rarely been translated. Therefore, as regards equivalents I was at a loss as to what course to follow. Moreover, not only are the subdivisions of the psyche even finer than what the Confucian scholars in China teach but the designations themselves have a different meaning, and the consequence inevitably was that I selected different characters and created different terms. For this reason, in such cases as *chikaku* 知覺 ‘perception’, *kisei* 記性 ‘memory’, *ishiki* 意識 ‘consciousness’, *sōzō* 想象 ‘imagination’, I followed the translation which existed heretofore, but concerning such terms as *risei* 理性 ‘reason’, *kansei* 感性 ‘sensitivity’, *kakusei* 覺性 ‘sense’, *gosei* 悟性 ‘intellect’ and such technical terms of the scholars as *kannen* 觀念 ‘idea’, *jitsuzai* 實在 ‘reality’, *shukan* 主觀 ‘subjective’, *kyakkan* 客觀 ‘objective’, *kinō* 歸納 ‘induction’, *eneki* 演繹 ‘deduction’, *sōgō* 總合 ‘synthesis’, *bunkai* 分解 ‘analysis’ etc., I generally had to coin them anew.¹⁰

According to an investigation by Kurishima Noriko, one of Morioka’s students, Nishi Amane has coined 787 terms, 332 of which became

⁸ Morioka Kenji 森岡健二 . 1969. *Kindai-go no seiritsu. Meiji-ki go-i hen* 近代語の成立—明治期語彙編 (The evolution of modern language. The vocabulary of the Meiji era). Tokyo: Meiji shoin.

⁹ Nishi Amane 西周 . 1966. “Seisei hatsu-un” 生性發蘊 (The relationship between the physical and the spiritual), in: *Nishi Amane zenshū* 西周全集 (The complete works of Nishi Amane). Edited by Ōkubo Riken 大久保利謙 . Tokyo: Munetaka shobō, vol. 1, p. 35. The Dutch sinologist K. Kuiper, however, pointed out that the term *ishiki* in Japanese can be retraced to the time before Nishi Amane wrote his works. It emerges as early as 1774 in the translation of a Dutch anatomical handbook with the title *Kaitai shinsho* 解體新書 . Cf. Koos Kuiper. 1993. “Dutch Loan-Words and Loan-Translations in Modern China: An Example of Successful Sinification by Way of Japan”, in: Lloyd Haft (ed.). *Words from the West: Western Texts in Chinese Literary Context. Essays to Honor Erik Zürcher on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Leiden: Centre of Non-Western Studies, pp. 116–44; 131.

¹⁰ Nishi Amane 1966, pp. viii–ix.

firmly established in the general Japanese vocabulary, whereas 455 were not accepted by the reading public. Of these 332 neologisms, 242 have a source in classical Chinese literature.¹¹

We have the testimony of one of Nishi's contemporaries by the name of Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) who confirms that the Japanese scholars of the early Meiji period consciously consulted reference works of classical Chinese literature as well as works of Confucian and Buddhist literature in order to get inspiration for coining new terms. In the “Preface” to the second edition of his *Tetsugaku ji-i* 哲學字彙 (Philosophical dictionary), published in 1884, Inoue gives the following description:

As far as the equivalents of our predecessors were appropriate, we have included them all. When in other cases we coined new equivalents, they were selected by consulting, apart from the *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府, *Yuanjian leihan* 淵鑑類函 and *Wuche yunrui* 五車韻瑞, Confucian and Buddhist books on a large scale.¹²

Although the predominant method of creating neologisms was to look for appropriate word groups in ancient Chinese literature, Nishi succeeded without drawing on a classical source in coining 90 replicas of Western models, which are still alive in the Japanese and Chinese languages. Terms like *genjitsu* 現實 ‘reality’, *tetsugaku* 哲學 ‘philosophy’, *shukan* 主觀 ‘subjective’, *teigi* 定義 ‘definition’, *shugi* 主義 ‘principle, doctrine’, *yūki* 有機 ‘organic’ etc. are among his creations. We cannot but acknowledge that, linguistically, he had a highly creative gift.

From the illustrations given above one thing becomes clear: the Japanese language is so heavily influenced by Chinese linguistic thought that the formation of new creations in Japanese followed the word-formation patterns of the Chinese language.

The rapid development of the Japanese lexicon in the years after the appearance of the *English and Japanese Dictionary* by Shibata and Koyasu (1873) is clearly shown by the additions found in the second and revised edition of his dictionary published nine years later in

¹¹ Morioka Kenji 1969, pp. 159–81.

¹² Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 and Arigao Nagao 有賀長雄 . 1884. *Kaitei zōho tetsugaku ji-i* 改訂增補哲學字彙 (Philosophical dictionary, revised and enlarged). Tokyo: Tōyōkan.

1882.¹³ An important formal innovation consists in not having any more *furigana*. From this it becomes obvious that its editors tended to treat all equivalents as Sino-Japanese words unless they were identified as genuinely Japanese words by their endings. The neologisms had, however, to comply with one condition to be accepted by the Japanese public: they had to be written in characters familiar to the Japanese. As most of the new creations included in the dictionary met this demand, many of them have survived down to the present. Such terms were, amongst others:

<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese kanji</i>	<i>Hepburn</i>
atom	原子	<i>genshi</i>
truth	真理	<i>shinri</i>
impression	印象	<i>inshō</i>
identity	同一	<i>dōitsu</i>
science	科學	<i>kagaku</i>
consciousness	意識	<i>ishiki</i>
evolution	進化	<i>shinka</i>

The increase of the Sino-Japanese words is an indicator of the modernization of the lexicon. This development was extremely rapid in the first twenty years of the Meiji period, especially after the year Meiji 15 (1882) when the second edition of the dictionary by Shibata and Koyasu appeared.

Two dictionaries edited in the year Meiji 21 (1888) reveal the speed of this process. These are the *English-Japanese Lexicon*, translated by Shimada,¹⁴ and *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, translated into Japanese by a Committee.¹⁵

¹³ Shibata Masayoshi 紫田昌吉 and Koyasu Takashi 子安峻 . 1882. *Zōho teisei Ei-Wa ji-i* 增補訂正英和字彙 . *An English and Japanese Dictionary, Explanatory, Pronouncing, and Etymological*. 2nd and revised edition. Tokyo: Nishusha.

¹⁴ Shimada Yutaka 島田豊 . 1888. *Fu-on sōzu Wa-yaku Ei-ji-i* 附音插圖和譯英字彙 . *An English-Japanese Lexicon, Explanatory, Pronouncing and Etymological*. Translated by Y. Shimada, revised by S. Sugiura, J. Matsushita and A. Manase. Tokyo: Ōkura shoten.

¹⁵ F. Warrington Eastlake and Tanahashi Ichirō 棚橋一郎 . 1888. *Uebusutā-shi shinkan daijisho. Wa-yaku ji-i*. ウエブスー氏新刊大辞書。和訳字彙 . *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*. Translated into Japanese by a Committee. Tokyo: Sanshōdō.

Whereas in the second edition of the dictionary by Shibata and Koyasu the percentage of Sino-Japanese words was 36.2 per cent, it was 55.9 per cent in 1888 in the dictionary edited by Shimada, and thus it reaches the level of Sino-Japanese words in the modern Japanese language. The Japanese lexicon as seen in the two dictionaries is qualitatively not much different from the modern Japanese vocabulary. Thus, without exaggerating, we may say that the Japanese lexicon acquired its modern shape in the first twenty years of the Meiji era.

As far as the Chinese language is concerned, we cannot observe a modernization as rapid as that of the Japanese language. Due to the difference in the levels of modernization in all fields towards the turn of the century, a huge quantity of Japanese neologisms streamed into the Chinese language. The first Chinese to use such new creations in their writings were Chinese students and intellectuals staying in large numbers in Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894/95. The Japanese neologisms were borrowed by the Chinese intellectuals as graphic loans, i.e. the combinations of Chinese characters were borrowed, but the morphemes represented by the characters were realized phonemically according to the Chinese way of reading.

At the beginning, the Japanese new creations were not understandable for Chinese readers. If we look at Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873–1929) essays published before and after the turn of the century, we observe that he tried to interpret the loan-words he used. As the Japanese term *shakai* 社會 'society', Ch. *shehui*, was incomprehensible for the Chinese reading public, Liang explained: "*Shehui*, i.e. *renqun* 人群 (group of men)". Liang had great difficulties with the term *keizai* 經濟, Ch. *jingji* 'economy'. Although this term had been in use in Chinese for a long time, it had a different meaning, namely 'statemanship', 'administration'. Liang explained the term *jingji* in its new meaning 'economy' by a large number of Chinese terms: *fuguoxue* 富國學 (the science of how to enrich the country), *zishengxue* 資生學 (the science of the resources and the livelihood), *pingzhunxue* 平準學 (the science of how to keep the prices at an equal level, obviously derived from *pingzhun fa* 平準法 'the method of equalizing' in ancient China, a system of grain purchase that enabled the government to retail it cheaply in times of scarcity), *shengjixue* 生計學 (the science of the means of existence).

In view of the abundance of neologisms pouring into the Chinese language from the Japanese, it became necessary to publish dictionar-

ies for the ‘new terms’. The first dictionary of this kind was the *Xin Erya* 新爾雅 (The new *Erya*, 1903)¹⁶, a reference work divided according to subject categories. This work treats the most important fields of knowledge with the help of modern terminology borrowed from the Japanese. There we find such definitions as:

掌行政之機關者謂之政府。

That which is in charge of the administrative bodies is called government.¹⁷

or:

立法司法行政之權謂之三權。

The powers of legislation, judicature and administration are called the three powers.¹⁸

or:

生財有三要素勞力土地資本是也。

In the production of material goods there are three factors: These are labour force, land and capital.¹⁹

It took a fairly long time until the new terms were included in general Chinese dictionaries. The *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary* in two volumes edited by the Commercial Press in Shanghai (1912)²⁰ has less than half of the new equivalents. On the other hand, a *German-Chinese Dictionary (Deutsch-Chinesisches Wörterbuch)* by I. Huang and K. Chü (1920)²¹ contains almost all the new terms.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have aimed at demonstrating in which way Western concepts and terms were integrated into the Chinese language by means of native morphemes. In most cases it was not the terms which

¹⁶ Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶 and Ye Lan 葉瀾 . 1903. *Xin Erya* 新爾雅 (The new *Erya*). Shanghai: Mingquanshe. See Shen Guowei 沈國威 . 1995. *Shin Jiga to sono go-i*. 新爾雅とその語彙 (On the *New Erya* and its vocabulary). Tokyo: Hakuteisha.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁰ W. W. Yen (Yan Huiqing 顏惠慶). 1912. *An English and Chinese Standard Dictionary in Two Volumes*. 4th edition. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

²¹ I. Huang and K. Chü. 1920. *Deutsch-Chinesisches Wörterbuch*. 2nd edition. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

were borrowed, but the concepts. This process of assimilation reached its height in Japan in the early Meiji period, and it must be noted that the Japanese applied the word-formation patterns of the Chinese language. The creation of new terms was in most cases stimulated by word groups with similar meanings from classical Chinese sources.

The Chinese had no difficulties in adopting the Japanese neologisms by way of graphic borrowing. Nowadays these new terms introduced about the turn of the century have become firmly established in the Chinese lexicon, and their Chinese users are no longer aware that they are operating with borrowed terms. In the course of time, some of these graphic loans went out of use and were replaced by genuine Chinese new creations.