中國城市用語
Dictionary of Chinese City Words

石路、劉海岩　主編

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PREFACE

City words, City of words

Why a dictionary of *Chinese City Words*? What is the actual meaning of an enterprise that seems to cover an extremely broad span of time about a relatively narrow field of lexicography? One may even question the relevance of putting out yet another dictionary in a country where dictionaries are plentiful. We believe that this dictionary will fill a niche that no one has yet explored. As we explain below, this dictionary is not an exercise in lexicography, it is a study of words through the social sciences and, especially, in a historical perspective.

The elaboration of this dictionary has its roots in a broader international project initiated by both the MOST (Modes of Social Transformation) program of Unesco and by the French CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) in 1995. The initial idea for this endeavour came from a debate among a group of social scientists involved in the study of "cities" or "urban issues" in different countries and cultures. Their original purpose was to question the concepts, words, expressions that they used among themselves and that they found in scholarly publications,

in particular the issue of using a "common language" -- actually the apparently neutral international idiom, English. In their view, this apparently "common language" tended to blur or gloss over important differences in the actual meaning of words in each language. This preliminary confrontation of ideas led to a proposal to bring together international specialists of urban studies across the disciplines and to examine, from the perspective of social sciences, the usage and history of "city words" in various cultures and languages. China was of course selected as one of the cultural and linguistic areas to be studied.[1]

If the working of language in any linguistic area cannot be grasped by listing a single and simple lexicon, the picture gets even more complex and interesting when considering different languages. There is no point in trying to draw up "word for word" equivalents between terms describing cities and their elements. "English for planners", nevertheless, is often supposed today to be the comprehensive common reference for all. This idea of a universal glossary goes along with the belief that, in each linguistic area and among all of them, there exists a common technical or scientific language that reflects some shared sense of what a city is. We contend that the use of words is a serious stake that social scientists, but also decision-makers cannot overlook. For the former, the necessary critical stand in the use of words is often toned down as quite naturally words are taken for granted, especially when they come from written documents. Yet, this can be highly misleading. For the latter, both within one single country

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1   In order to promote specific empirical inquiries, the programme was organized in networks in each of the following linguistic areas: Arabic, Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Latin-American Portuguese and Spanish, Russian, Spanish, and West-African languages.

or cultural entity or across cultures, the assumption of the existence common code words, at least at the level of elites, may lead to difficulties when it comes to carrying out actual policies among the common people who do not share the same body of meanings.

In fact, words are not neutral tools of language. They serve to express reality as it is perceived by individuals and institutions as much as they participate to the construction of reality. Seen in this light, words are more than a woven tissue of signs that represent an external reality. They are simultaneously a means to manufacture and traverse places. In texts that seek to write space, the text performs a transformative operation on space and the lived experience of a place. And texts weave together not only disparate cultural codes, but different planes of experience: they combine mind and body, imagination and reality. The mighty weight of culture in language, therefore, cannot be simply dismissed when it comes to share experiences, to describe processes, and even to designate "objects" in cities and urban life. Underlying the whole project was the idea that while we could not simply challenge the idea of a "common language" and argue on the impossibility of communication across cultures and languages, we sought to question the fact that the equivalence of words -- here specifically the vocabulary related to the city -- could not be taken for granted. Behind each individual word, there is a history that translation may -- and actually often does -- betray, causing sometimes misunderstandings, biased or deformed perceptions of reality, and eventually misconceptions or misapplications of policies.

The case of the Chinese language presents both a formidable and exciting challenge. One the one hand, it represents the oldest and richest continuous written language on earth. It offers therefore

a wealth of materials to draw on for the evolution of the modern lexicon, but also an unlimited sea of texts that scholars, including the Chinese themselves, have hardly touched upon, especially in terms of etymological dictionaries.[2] To delve into the history of words, understood as *ci*, not *zi*, is definitely an exploration of a largely understudied field. On the other hand, the Chinese language underwent a considerable transformation in the last two hundred years, with several successive waves of lexicographic additions. While it is not possible to examine these issues in detail here, it is important to indicate the major steps of that transformation.[3] Throughout the nineteenth century, almost all official texts, but also scientific, geographic, historical treatises were written in *wenyan*. Yet, behind this apparent continuity, there was a massive influx of new terms that were either borrowed from Japan or coined by Chinese literati and foreign translators. Moreover, words that had been used in the past acquired a new meaning often in combination with other characters. This period saw the beginning of a renewal that, in association with other trends (late Qing novels, Japanese technical literature, translations of Western subjects) would eventually give birth to a new national language.

By the early 20th century, the use of *wenyan* came under

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2 The interest of the Chinese for their own language was a late development. The existence of one unique official language -- *wenyan* -- throughout the empire and the concurrent use of an oral *lingua franca – guanhua* -- overrode actual concerns about local languages, parallel forms of written expression such as *baihua*, etc. Even if the Chinese language absorbed foreign words over time, in particular through Buddhism, these words gradually lost their foreignness and came to be part of the general lexicon. It was only with the challenge forceful intrusion of Western powers in the 19th century and the introduction of new knowledge that the Chinese state started to get involved in the politics of language.

3 This brief presentation owes much to Federico Masini, The formation of modern Chinese lexicon and its evolution toward a national language: The period from 1840 to 1898, Monograph series number 6, Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Berkeley, 1993, pp. 109-120.

increased criticism. It had survived the abolition of imperial examinations in 1905, but the powerful wave of eclectic modernism unleashed by the May Fourth movement brought it to a final end. While the shift to the vernacular language as the official language constituted a fundamental change, it was not as significant in terms of modification of the lexicon. The massive influx of new terms that had occurred in the past century already offered a large reservoir to address the new political, social and technical issues of the nascent twentieth century. Of course, the process of modernization that reached into the various realms of life in China brought with it new terms, both in the official and the colloquial languages (for the latter, it followed a traditional pattern of regional differentiation). The invention of neologisms built up on the trend toward polysyllabism (mostly disyllabism, though with a definite increase in trisyllabism as well) that had marked Chinese in the previous period. Most certainly, urban issues and affairs became one of the field in which there was a solid and sustained flow of new words along with increased urbanization, the introduction of Western theories and practices of urban planning, the involvement of a large spate of actors, especially state authorities, in city management.

The post-1949 period did not mark any breakthrough in the Chinese lexicon, even if the politicization of all aspects of life generated a new influx of political terms. Yet, many of them had been in use in Republican times. The gradual stiffness that permeated the economic system and social organization did not create the conditions for much creativity since real progress and modernization virtually stalled. The 1978 decision to introduce structural reforms and to reopen China to the world initiated another vigorous movement of lexicographic innovation. The long

decades of semi-isolation meant that the Chinese language had to catch up with the much complexified lexicon that technological and economic progress had generated in the more advanced societies. In almost all fields of knowledge, new terms had to be invented, to a scale that matched and even superseded the 19th-century influx and creation of words. Apart from foreign word loans, the Chinese language also generated its own spate of neologisms to reflect the internal tensions and changes in society. Dictionaries were simply unable to catch up with the speedy evolution of vocabulary. Every day brought its new load of terms that, sometimes, faded away in just a few years (even if they still remain in the current vocabulary).

The studies of the Chinese vocabulary in a historical perspective are still few in numbers. Moreover, they have focused mostly on the issue of neologisms *per se*, especially the issue of the foreign or native origin of new words. At the start of the century, some foreigners had already published collections of terms and bilingual dictionaries, but, like the first dictionaries of neologisms published before 1949 by Chinese scholars, they could not count as linguistic studies as such.[4] After 1949, the issues of language were enmeshed in politics and nationalism and avoided the tricky problem of words with an evident foreign character and concentrated on phonemic and graphic loans. Eventually, in 1958, Gao Mingkai and Liu Zhengtan produced the first overall analysis of phonemic and graphic loans, excluding semantic loans.[5]

4　The first dictionary entirely dedicated to foreign loans was the Wailaiyu cidian (外來語詞典) edited by Hu Xingzhi (胡行之) in 1936 (Shanghai, 天馬書店). Federico Masini, The formation of modern Chinese lexicon and its evolution toward a national language: The period from 1840 to 1898, Monograph series number 6, Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Berkeley, 1993, p. 130.

5　Gao Mingkai (高明凱), Liu Zhengtan (劉正談), Xiandai hanyu wailaici yanjiu (現代漢語外來

The publication of this study generated a debate in journals both in linguistic terms (especially the issue of Japanese loans), but it also involved issues of national pride.[6] Apart from the constraints imposed by the political context, these dictionaries had in common another limit: they took into account only the issue of word formation and its source, but they failed to examine words in an etymological perspective that would produce data on the initial attestation of the terms introduced in Chinese during the last two centuries. Furthermore, they set aside the problem of evolving meaning and usage over time.[7]

The present dictionary is not an addition to conventional lexicography. Its originality lies in an attempt to historicize words by placing them in a temporal continuum. In other words, our purpose was not so much to determine the origin and construction of old and new words as to examine how social processes impacted upon the language and, conversely, to start from words to examine social change in China. Of course, it implied finding out when a new term appeared in the vocabulary, at least in published materials. Yet, the challenge was made much more complex by our ambition not just to date a new word, but to study its actual usage and meaning over time. It included tracking terms that had been in use in the past, though with a new meaning. This required pointing to relevant materials that would enable us to contextualize words

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词研究), Beijing, wenzi gaige chubanshe, 1958.

6 Federico Masini, The formation of modern Chinese lexicon and its evolution toward a national language: The period from 1840 to 1898, Monograph series number 6, Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Berkeley, 1993, p. 132.

7 Although new dictionaries provide indications on the origin of words, this is not based on a systematic approach. The Hanyu dacidian (漢語大詞典，上海，漢語大詞典出版社，1990 年，vol. 12) provides much information, but it cannot compare with the Trésor de la langue française, edited by CNRS in France (http://zeus.inalf.fr/) or, specifically, the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* edited by Alain Rey, Paris, Dctionnaires Le Robert, 1998..

and to associate them with social practices and phenomena. Given the enormous scale of the project, it was necessary to delimit the scope of the lexicon to be studied. Since we were involved in an international project on city words (see above), the urban realm became our natural field of investigation.

Such a project could only be based on collective work. Yet, even for a small group of experienced scholars, the task was daunting. China has a written tradition that dates back to more than three thousand years. It is probably the largest repository of historical written documents on the planet. To engage into an investigation of city words through the "longue durée" of Chinese history was illusory. We hope that others will take up this challenge, but for the present project the time frame was limited to the last two hundred years. Apart from practical considerations on our limited forces, we made this choice because this period also saw the most rapid and radical transformation of the Chinese language. While China experienced periods of intensive change in the past, its language was relatively stable compared with the tremendous pace of social transformation that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is not our purpose to tell this story here, but the reader should bear in mind that this period saw the breakdown and emergence of three political regimes (imperial, republican, communist), the explosion of cities in coastal areas, the abolition of thousand-year old imperial examination system, the transition from *wenyan* to *baihuawen*, the entry of foreign ideas, concepts and words on a scale never experienced before.

A second difficulty was the selection of sources and, in relation with it, the nature of the languages we would be able to include in our survey. China has a solid tradition of state governance and intervention in all realms of life. Thanks to one single written system, the Chinese language was unified very early. Yet, below this veneer of unification – a language that was shared only by the literate elites – there were also tens of millions of people who spoke in a number of dialects, who used local expressions, who nourished a popular language that, for its most part, went unrecorded. The issue of taking into account both the "national" language as well as the diversity of localities lead us to work on various sets of materials originating from Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xiang Gang. This is, of course, a limited sample but it offers enough room to confront the terms from the largely unified "national language" and those from the "native language" in various places.[8] All the sources that we used to compile this dictionary are clearly listed at the end of the volume and for each entry. We make no claim to completeness. We simply hope that this dictionary may opens a new road and constitute a first contribution on which further additions and improvements will be made by other scholars.

A third difficulty was to grasp the different registers of language. Words classify territories by dividing, reshaping, describing them. These classifications are never fixed and agreed upon once and for all, because language differs greatly according to the speaker's social, institutional and situational position. Words take on meaning only when they are actually used in the context

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8 Our source material included pre- and post-1949 city guides, pre- and post-1949 professional and scholarly journals in urban affairs, newspapers, dictionaries, yearbooks, maps, etc.

of discourses that may carry many different intentions. At any moment and place, a variety of language registers are being used in government, science, or the daily life of various urban groups. Many words are thus in competition and all contribute, however unequally, to some "common" language that is used for describing and understanding cities. Everyday speech records the temporary or more permanent results of those various attempts by various agencies at naming and controlling things in the urban realm. We have tried to follow the various threads that each word or expression presented, within the limitations of our materials, and to relate them with each other. The dictionary is organized in a way as to provide as any links as possible for the reader to follow so that he can literally jump from one word to the other within each single entry and among the various entries.

The choice of the "city" and all its related processes and phenomena should perhaps be explicited here. Cities are the places where a growing number of people are living and where the majority of the world population will eventually congregate by the end of the century. Because of the concentration of resources, activities, and people from various origin, language is subject to constant renewal and alterations, both in everyday life and in the more stable realms of official and literate texts. In other words, language in the city is a living set of signs that is thriving on the permanent physical and social transformation of urban communities and their environment. If this vocabulary was stable for long periods of time, it also went through periods of sudden change: institutional and political upheavals, massive changes of urbanization forms, language reforms. This lexicon markedly varies according to the countries and -even more- according to

the "cultural areas". Long-range historical work and comparisons between East and West, North and South are therefore particularly important here.

While there was a clear ambition to confront such issues across different linguistic and cultural areas, the individual projects that were implemented in the course of the MOST-sponsored international project varied greatly. At the same time, there was an attempt to move along a common canevas. Because of obvious differences in the "state of the art", in intellectual traditions and in the nature of the available materials in each area, there was a consensus on giving a large degree of freedom to the participants to select an approach and mode of research that corresponded better to local conditions. To give just one example of such differences, in the United States, architects and urban planners have established professional associations that have been holding annual conferences for more than a century, with proceedings, journals, etc. There is therefore a very rich body of sources of a certain type that is not available in China or in India. One could find similar examples in other areas. This is not a value judgement between more or less advanced countries. It is just the plain observation that historians and social scientists have to adapt to the types of sources that were produced in each country. In order to maintain a comparative perspective, the participants held various seminars during which they confronted their findings on pre-defined themes: "Town and city: urbanism categorized", "City divisions", "Naming new urban areas", and "Languages of urban stigma". The results have been published in edited volumes.[9]

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9 Two volumes have appeared so far: Christian Topalov (ed.), Les divisions de la ville, Paris, Editions unesco et Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2002; Hélène Rivière d'Arc

The China group decided to focus on the elaboration of the present *Dictionary of City Words*. This was perhaps inspired by our own practice of history that focussed on Chinese urban history. Most of us had been using various sets of sources that provided a wide array of terms. We had all been faced with the same problems: some words were familiar because they were still in use, although their actual meaning may have changed over time; some were not readily understandable and required research to be understood; some had a long history while others were recent imports from Japan or from the West. More to the point, we asked ourselves how urban Chinese "expressed" the city and urban life through words, how they phrased out their relationship to their environment – street, neighbourhood, house, *hutong* or *lilong*, district, peripheries, to name but a few spaces within any locality. We sought to grasp the linguistic markers that shaped the self-perception of the city by Chinese urban dwellers and to explore the interplay between physical ground and semiotic surfaces, how the visible constantly gets cast in invisible forms, how "invisible geographies" get shaped within the "city of words" that people and institutions weave over time.

The initial selection of words was very broad, but because we were interested in terms that *told* something on urban processes and urban phenomena from the perspective of social sciences. Eventually, we trimmed down the list by excluding words that designated urban artefacts or concrete objects. We privileged all the terms that offered broadly an insight in some sort of social use or interaction. The list remained flexible during the period of

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(ed.), .Nommer les nouveaux territoires urbains, Paris, Editions unesco et Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2001.

investigation of the collected materials in order to incorporate all the terms that popped up in our documents. With a clear focus on the written language, we endeavoured to take into account local specificities through the use of materials produced in various places, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Wuhan, and Hong Kong. On the whole, however, we observed an increasing process of homogenization of the Chinese language as a result of the dominance of the official national language. Probably, oral surveys would have revealed a more diversified locale-related vocabulary, but such an approach was beyond our capacities. The process of selection turned out a total of 260 main entries and more than 500 terms (synonyms are not included here) that we tracked through a large array of written documents in order to reconstruct their individual histories.

Words have a history and we have tried to tell this history within the specific field of the city and urban life in China. We hope that the *Dictionary of City Words* will contribute to fill in some of the gaps between current language practices, the use of past and contemporary materials, and the reflection on urban issues in China. Finally, this volume made possible by a long-term cooperation and friendship between Chinese and French scholars such as we all hope will become a standard practice in international academic work.

Christian Henriot