

Bilingual Sources of Kwong Ki Chiu's English-Chinese Lexicons, 1868–1887

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1. Introduction

The primary aim of the paper is to revitalize the study of Kwong Ki Chiu's 鄺其照 (1845–1891) English-Chinese lexicography.¹ Born in the present-day Taishan in Guangdong Province, Kwong started as a merchant in the Pearl River region,

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¹ Existing sources suggest Kwong's year of birth could have been 1836, 1841, or 1845. See Bruce A. Chan, “A Forgotten Qing Era Progressive: Kwong Ki Chiu—Lexicographer, Interpreter, Textbook Author, Newspaper Publisher,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 53 (2013): 228 and 256, note 2; and Sam J. L. Wong and Brian Z. Wong, “U.S. Influences on Chinese Education Reform: Universal Education and Moral Education as Tools for Chinese Modernity, 1874–1882,” *Pacific Historical Review* 91.4 (2022): 528. I consider 1845, which is based on 1880 United States Federal Census, as the best supported estimate. See “Ki Chin Kwong in the 1880 United States Federal Census,” *Ancestry*, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/22599858:6742> (access: 25 February 2025). The digitization of this document recognized “Chiu” as “Chin,” but the biographical data and the record on his three-year-old son “Chi Fun” in this document would verify that the census information was of Kwong Ki Chiu. Kwong's concurrent periodical sources indicate that he passed away in Canton on 14 June 1891, see “Local and General,” *Hong Kong Telegraph*, 16 June 1891, p. 2.

with probable brief experience in Australia.² He attended an English government school in Hong Kong before becoming a lexicographer, journalist, and prominent official in the Chinese Educational Mission (1872–1881, hereafter “the CEM”).³ In what follows, I will recast Kwong as a pioneer behind the first locally compiled, Cantonese-based bilingual lexicon series, which was widely circulated and helped extend the reach of language education in the territory. Kwong’s significance is examined through historical and comparative approaches, by tracing the development of his English-Chinese bilingual lexicons, released in 1868, 1875, and 1887 respectively, and by integrating Chinese and English lexicographical sources and archival materials surrounding his life and publications.

Recently the value of bilingual lexicons in revealing the language, culture, and society of late-Qing China has been widely explored, gathering interests in lexicographical genealogy, linguistic topology, language contact, and language education.⁴ The existing scholarship gives balanced attention to both native Chinese and non-Chinese—mainly Anglo-American and European missionary—

² See “The Chinese Commissioners: The Jolly Way in Which They Pass Their Time in Hartford,” *New Haven Register*, 21 April 1879, no page number; and “Correspondence,” *The London and China Telegraph*, 19 May 1879, p. 421. My search through the mid-nineteenth-century passengers’ records in Public Record Office Victoria, Melbourne, has not identified Kwong’s journeys, but revealed the migration of a large number of the Kwongs from Taishan. I must thank Mr Yi Li, a friend and resident in Melbourne, who generously helped me access the Victorian archives.

³ For his education in Hong Kong, see Section 3. For a concise history of the CEM, see Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872–81* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

⁴ For an overview of the recent scholarship, see Zhang Meilan 張美蘭, “Qingmo minchu yuwai shuangyu jiaocashi yu di'er yuyan de Hanyu xuexishi” 清末民初域外雙語教材史與第二語言的漢語學習史 [History of extraterritorial bilingual textbooks and history of learning Chinese as second language during the late Qing and early ROC], *Guoji Hanyushi yanjiu* 國際漢語史研究 [International study of the Chinese language history] 1 (2023): 140–53; Uchida Keiichi 內田慶市, “Kindai chūgokujin hen teki ei kan jiten teki fukei” 近代中國人編的英漢字典的譜系 [Genealogy of English-Chinese dictionaries compiled by modern Chinese authors], *Higashi Ajia bunka kōshō kenkyū* 東アジア文化交渉研究 [Journal of East Asian cultural interaction studies] 6 (2013): 3–16; and Wang Ze-wei 王澤偉, “Zhong-Ying-Yin sanyu hebi de yuyan jiaocai: Ying-hua Xiannihuasi zaziwen

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lexicographers, but seldom examines the connections between these intellectual circles. The works of Kwong would serve as a good case for re-evaluating early native Chinese bilingual lexicographers. By interweaving historical and linguistic evidences, this paper argues that Kwong's lexicon series were consistently and fundamentally based in the Cantonese language, evincing that Cantonese was a valid medium through which English was systematically acquired. By arguing so, the paper challenges the existing views that the Chinese language in Kwong's lexicons tended toward standardized Mandarin *guanhua* as they evolved, and charts a wider context which explains its long evolution and widened circulation. To deliver this panoramic perspective, the paper is primarily based on synthesis of varied concurrent sources surrounding Kwong's lexicons; the discussion of representative language data in the lexicons will be of high selectivity.

Kwong's lexicons should first be introduced in comparison to pre-existing English-Chinese bilingual references from the early to mid-nineteenth century. These works were represented by the famed mega-volumes of Robert Morrison's (1782–1834) *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language in Three Parts*, published in Macau in 1815–1822, Samuel Wells Williams's (1812–1884) *An English and Chinese Vocabulary, in the Court Dialect*, published also in Macau in 1844, Walter Henry Medhurst's (1796–1857) *English and Chinese Dictionary in Two Volumes*, published in 1847–1848 in Batavia and Shanghai, and Wilhelm Lobscheid's (1822–1893) *An English and Chinese Dictionary with the Punti and Mandarin Pronunciation*, published in 1866 in Hong Kong. These works were intended for learners of the Chinese language, so the Chinese-English section naturally preceded the English-Chinese section and far exceeded the latter in length. "Chinese" in these works was principally Mandarin *guanhua* in speech and Han Chinese script in writing. The philological depth suggested that these works were compiled to impart systematic knowledge about the Chinese language, tradition, and culture to readers of the same background as the authors'; they were not immediately useful to the Chinese learners of the English language.

(Note 4— Continued)

cangben kao yu jiazhi chonggu” 中英印三語合璧的語言教材——《英華仙尼華四雜字文》藏本考與價值重估 [A tri-lingual language vocabulary book: An investigation of *Ying Hua xiannihuasi zaziwen* and a re-evaluation of its value], *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese studies) 42.2 (2024): 153–202. The cited works in section 2 are also important contributions along these lines.

Concurrently, there emerged bilingual lexicons catering to the learning needs of the Chinese population. Some survived long enough to present to us intriguing linguistic landscapes. *Chinese and English Vocabulary* 華英通用雜話 compiled by Robert Thom (1807–1846) between 1843 and 1844 exhibited a mixture of Mandarin and Cantonese vocabulary and pronunciation. Thom specifically discussed the phonetic resemblances between English, Mandarin, and *Qingwen* (清文, “Qing language”) in his preface, and provided a list of Manchu syllables sonically comparable to high-frequency English syllables.⁵ In the section on useful phrases for conversation, Thom exemplified dialogues between Mandarin-speaking government officials and English-speaking visitors, indicating that the gentry-class Mandarins had a primal place in his target readership.⁶ The presence of Cantonese—the main spoken language of the region where Thom published this book—was minimal in the sample conversations.

Concurrently, a cluster of small pidgin vocabulary books for learning the “foreign tongue” (*fanhua* 番話) spoken by the “red-haired” (*Hongmao* 紅毛) was entirely Cantonese-based. These books were mainly produced in Canton and Hong Kong during the 1830s through 1870s, all deriving from the work titled “The Must-knows for Trading in the Foreign Tongue of the Red-haired” (*Hongmao fanhua maoyi xuzhi* 紅毛番話貿易須知) and spanning six to twelve double-sided sheets.⁷

⁵ Robert Thom, *Chinese and English Vocabulary* 華英通用雜話, Part 1 (Canton, 1843), access via <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=104042&page=12> (access: 5 March 2025).

⁶ *Ibid.*, on the pages from <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=104042&page=94> to <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=104042&page=103> (access: 5 March 2025).

⁷ For an overview, see Zhou Zhenhe 周振鶴, “*Hongmao fanhua suojie*” 《紅毛番話》索解 [Inquiry of the red-haired foreign tongue], *Guangdong shehui kexue* 廣東社會科學 [Social sciences in Guangdong] 4 (1998): 148–49; and Qiu Zhihong 邱志紅, “‘Guohua’ donglai: ‘Hongmao fanhua’ lei zaoqi Yingyu cihuishu kaoxi” 「鬼話」東來: 「紅毛番話」類早期英語詞彙書考析 [“Alien tongue” going eastward: An analysis of the early English lexicons about “the red-haired foreign tongue”], *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 [The Qing history journal] 2 (2017): 113–21. I consulted a digital copy of one of these works provided by Berlin State Library, at https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN334876310X&PHYSID=PHYS_0002&view=picture-download (access: 6 March 2025).

The reproductions indicate a lasting demand, which had been extending to overseas destinations, primarily motivated by gold rushes in this period.⁸

While the authorship of the red-haired-foreign-tongue vocabulary books remains opaque, we are sure that the first English-Chinese bilingual lexicons made by Cantonese natives emerged in the same period, during the 1850s and the 1860s. These Cantonese-made bilingual lexicons were different from the missionary dictionaries in design and focus. They were also significantly more structured and elaborate than the pidgin books, juxtaposing the English and Chinese scripts in a manner to exhibit lexical, phonetic, and cultural correspondences, and implying a method of systematic language learning. Most importantly, the lexicons were distinctive and consistent in their basis in written Cantonese, evidently intended for those who would acquire the English as new language through their first-language competence in Cantonese.

Among the earliest and still-available works of this sort are *Chinese-English Phrase Book* 華英通語 authored by Zi Qing 子卿 and Zi Fang 子芳 and published in Hong Kong in 1855,⁹ and the voluminous production *Ying Ü Tsap T'sün* (or *The Chinese and English Instructor* 英語集全), published in Canton in 1862 by Tong Ting-kü 唐廷樞 (or Tang Tingshu, 1832–1892), the modernizing comprador and founder of Kaiping Mines from Xiangshan, Guangdong Province.¹⁰ Kwong's first lexicon, *An English and Chinese Lexicon* 字典集成, followed closely in 1868. It was published by De Souza & Company in Hong Kong¹¹ under the name Kwong Tsün Fuk 鄺全福, which was the name used by Kwong Ki Chiu when he attended a government school in Hong Kong (see section 3).

⁸ Qiu Zhihong (“Guihua’ donglai”) specifically discussed an edition of “The Must-knows” found in New Zealand, which Qiu believed was brought there and used by Cantonese immigrants in the 1870s.

⁹ Zi Qing 子卿 and Zi Fang 子芳, *Chinese-English Phrase Book* 華英通語 (Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong: unknown publisher, 1855). Accessible via ctext at <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=95669> (access: 28 June 2024). The English title is taken from the later edition published by A. Roman & Company in San Francisco in 1867.

¹⁰ Tong, Ting-kü 唐廷樞, *Ying Ü Tsap T'sün* (英語集全, *The Chinese and English Instructor*) (Canton: unknown publisher, 1862), 6 vols. Accessible via ctext at <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=95648> (access: 28 June 2024).

¹¹ De Souza & Company Limited was a book printer, binder, stationer and account book and stamp manufacturer based in Shanghai. It was owned by P. C. Souza and
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The 1868 lexicon evolved into a slightly expanded edition in 1875 with the Chinese Printing and Publishing Company in Hong Kong and an immensely enriched edition in 1887, with international joint partnerships with Kelly & Walsh in Shanghai and Hong Kong, Trubner & Co. in London, and Wing Fung in San Francisco.¹² During that time, Kwong navigated important positions in Shanghai and Connecticut, U.S., to oversee all aspects of the CEM's operation, and joined the leadership of the reformist Liangguang Viceroy Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909) as a diplomatic commissioner after his return to China following the termination of the CEM. Kwong's lexicographical project and his outbound experience appeared to be so synchronized, and the Cantonese orientation in his language and career choices so persistent, that a synthetic, diachronic analysis becomes mandatory. Such an integral view is largely missing in the existing studies, which relied on long-known sources and have yet to consider certain authentic data about Kwong, which became digitally available recently.

(Note 11— Continued)

J. S. Foreman, with Chinese staff. See "The Office of the North-China Herald. 1904 (January)," in *Desk Hong List; A General and Business Directory for Shanghai and the Northern and River Ports* (Shanghai: The Office of the *North-China Herald*, 1904), p. 26. The Hong Kong printing branch was in operation as early as 1865. See "In the Estate of De Souza & Co.," *The North-China Daily News (1864–1951)*, New Series, vol. 11, no. 294, p. 1. I am grateful for Prof. Benjamin Penny at the Australian National University for directing me to these sources.

¹² The reprints I consulted are: Kwong Tsün Fuk, *An English and Chinese Lexicon, compiled in part from those of Morrison, Medhurst and Williams* 字典集成 (Hong Kong: De Souza Co., 1868); Kwong Ki Chiu, *An English and Chinese Dictionary, Compiled from Different Authors and Enlarged by the Addition of the Last Four Parts* 字典集成 (Hong Kong: The Chinese Printing and Publishing Company, 1875); and Kwong Ki Chiu, *An English and Chinese Dictionary, with the Latest and Best Authorities, and containing all words in common use, with many examples of their use* 華英字典集成 (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh; London: Trubner & Co.; Hong Kong: Kelly and Walsh; San Francisco: Wing Fung, 1887). Below I will cite the short English titles of these lexicons with the year of publication. I am deeply thankful to State Library of New South Wales for digitizing the 1868 edition in their special collection for my view, and particularly the librarian Mr Ye Jiasong, for helping me access the physical copy of the rare book. More discussion on the particularities of this copy is in Section 4.