Tom McArthur 1938-2020

The legacy of Tom McArthur

Lan Li

Tom McArthur was born in the city of Glasgow, Scotland, and studied at the University of Glasgow (MA) and University of Edinburgh (PhD). He had a rich international career, starting as an officer-instructor in the British Army, and subsequently as Head of English at the Cathedral School in Bombay (Mumbai), lecturer and Director of Studies at Extra Mural English Language Courses at the University of Edinburgh, Associate Professor of English at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, and Visiting Professor at the University of Exeter's Dictionary Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University, and Xiamen University.

Tom was a world-renowned linguist, fluent in English, Scots and French, with an academic knowledge of Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit. He could also converse to varying degrees in Spanish, Italian, Greek, Russian, German, Persian/Farsi, and Cantonese. He contributed to the field of linguistics with passion and love for world culture and languages, and shed light in particular on English studies, world Englishes and lexicography.

Contribution to lexicography

Tom was a lexicographer. He proposed the term 'reference science' for works providing lexical, grammatical, encyclopedic and other referential information. Defying the A-Z convention of lexicographic practice, he compiled the thematic dictionary, *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* (1981), complementing *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. The Lexicon is an admixture of cognitive science and reference science, containing over 15,000 entries in 130 topics, from life and animals to war and peace. It illuminates word differences in the same semantic field, such as *hotel*, *motel* and *inn*, and is especially useful for non-native learners of English to

enlarge their vocabulary. The book has had 22 printings and has been translated to different languages.

Alongside Reinhard Hartmann, Tom co-organized 14 sessions of Interlex (International Lexicography Course) at the Dictionary Research Centre at the University of Exeter from 1987 to 2000. They also initiated training lexicographers in the MA and PhD Lexicography programme from 1993 to 2000. Many of their students became practicing lexicographers or university professors in different parts of the world.

Contribution to English language research and education

Tom was an inspiring professor, doing independent academic research. His doctoral thesis was entitled *The English Word?* and his study into the English language covers a wide range of topics, including lexis, syntax, phonetics and sociolinguistics. He was the founding editor of the journal *English Today*, by Cambridge University Press, leading it from 1985 to 2008, and a walking encyclopedia recharging students with not only linguistic knowledge but also culture and history. With English teachers and learners in mind, his books were wittily written and easy to engage with. The peak of his linguistic achievements was in the editorship of *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992), which constitutes an immense, complex and detailed survey of the English language, including extensive facts and sharp opinions from scholars worldwide, describing local, regional and international usages of the language in detail and illustrating standard and non-standard varieties of English that present readers with a full picture of the world lingua franca. Another masterpiece Tom took much pride in was *The Oxford Guide to World English* (2003), which exemplifies how English has been used all over the world by more non-native than native speakers – a stark comparison with Latin in the Middle Ages.

Close link to Asia

Tom was a global citizen, interested in different languages and cultures, with a particular interest in Asia, an early proof being his condensed translation from Sanskrit of *An Easy-to-Read Bhagavad Gita* that appeared in 1978. He worked in India, loved Singapore and lived in Hong Kong, was one of the founders of the Asian Association for Lexicography in 1997 (together with Gregory James and Reinhard Hartmann) and participated in the Asialex conferences of 2003 in Japan and 2005 in Singapore.

Inspiring and sharing world ideas

Tom was a great tutor. He never gave up the thought of nurturing young teachers. While working as the editor of *English Today*, he created a hub bringing together famous experts as well as young scholars worldwide, presenting a comprehensive picture of English yesterday, English today and English tomorrow. His enlightened thinking, open-mindedness, consideration, generosity and encouragement stimulated many minds. He will be remembered forever.

Lan Li was a student of Tom McArthur at the University of Exeter. Currently she is Director of the Centre for Learning Enhancement and Research and an Associate Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) and Review Editor of *Lexicography – Journal of Asialex*.

Obituary by Roshan McArthur, The Guardian, 12 April 2020.

Tom McArthur's *English Today* by Kingsley Bolton, David Graddol and Rajed Mesthrie, *English Today* 100, Vol. 25, No. 4: 3-8. December 2009.

What is 'reference science'?

Tom McArthur

It was born at a one-day conference at the University of Exeter in England in the spring of 1996. The birth was on time, the baby was small but in excellent health, and hardly made any noise. As a result, very few people knew that it had arrived. At the same time, however, there has been a steadily increasing interest in the new arrival, and in September this year [1997] I talked to the Iwasaki Linguistic Circle about it in Tokyo. I believe it is a subject whose time has come, but it will take a little more time before the precise nature and relevance of 'reference science' become clear.

Before I go on I'd like to look at a rather basic issue — the actual matter of inventing a science. Can one just invent a science when one feels like it? And if you do, how does it stay invented? Does a new science occupy new semantic or conceptual space, does it 'steal' space from other sciences, or does it overlap, flowing in and out of them? Or are these the wrong metaphors? And if you do invent a science, when and how do you know if you've succeeded — ten, twenty, a hundred years later? I would argue that these questions are not just interesting in general terms; they are questions for which reference science could itself provide a framework for answers — and further questions.

Looking back over the year since we launched our fledgling science, four things particularly stand out for me:

● Reinhard Hartmann creating the Dictionary Research Centre, which has proved successful in getting lexicographers and other interested people to talk to each other.

● Study programmes at Exeter, from the doctoral level to the one-week InterLex course, that allow open-ended consideration of everything relating to lexicography. Nothing referential was arbitrarily excluded, and minds could extend themselves.

● The formulation over time of first EuraLex then AfriLex, then this year, AsiaLex. These organizations, alongside the Dictionary Society of North America, provide a firm base for lexicographical debate, without which one could not contemplate anything more fundamental.

● The publication by Cambridge in 1986 of my *Worlds of Reference: Language, lexicography and learning from the clay tablet to the computer* [WoR]. The book was widely and constructively reviewed, and the most enthusiastic reviewers were not lexicographers but librarians and computer people who seemed to feel that it gave them a history and even a charter. Lexicographers generally responded well, but some considered that I did not give enough attention to 'proper' lexicography. But then, the book wasn't about any single art, craft or science. It was about how we refer and inform, how we communicate, and how we know.

One of the most powerful developments since WoR was published has been our understanding of DNA. In a few short years humankind has uncovered and begun to map a referential software system that is built into us and all other life known to us. It seems to me that we need a framework within which we can ask such questions as 'How similar are human language and DNA?' and 'How similar to and different from DNA are our systems of information storage and retrieval?' It is not enough to talk about 'the language of the genes' and 'genetic letters'. Are these simply metaphors, or do language systems and gene systems share a basic pattern that could also underlie some third system that we have not yet encountered? This is just one of the possible areas that reference scientists might in due course look at.

We can consider next something not quite so cosmic, but nonetheless large: what at the end of WoR I described as a 'global nervous system'. In just ten years, that nervous system has immensely, almost incalculably, increased — a vast multiplex of old copper cable and new fibre-optics, older ground TV and newer satellite TV, and

many other things. Technology is one thing; however, content and use another, and part of that content and use relates to asking for information either from other humans by e-mail or from the system itself on, say, the World-Wide Web. Reference science has a place in observing and reporting on this largest and most integrated reference service humanity has ever known, into which many of the resources of the world's great libraries are currently being woven, to form the largest work of reference that has ever existed.

When pushed, users and observers of works of reference will concede that both the dictionary and the telephone directory have much in common, as do indexes, concordances, atlases, manuals, and catalogues (whether the mail-order kind or in libraries). It is hard, however, to conceive of the circumstances in which the compiler of a telephone directory, an atlas, a computer manual, or a catalogue would be accepted as members of Euralex or the DSNA. Yet these varied products are linked by their reference function and a range of common techniques and technologies. The current computerization of all such materials only serves more fully to emphasize this point.

Indeed, they belong within something larger than, but closely associated with, traditional lexicography, have never had any generic names, and at the close of this century they need such names. On offer since at least 1986 have been, for the practical business of producing artifacts, such terms as reference art and reference technology, and since 1996 the term for their assessment has been reference science, the study of all aspects of organizing data, information, and knowledge in any format whatever, for any purpose whatever, using any materials whatever. The lack of such a level of study may be due in part at least to a historical current which, in the terminology of postmodernist literary theory, has 'privileged' the position of dictionaries and to some extent also encyclopedias, gazetteers, chronologies, concordances, and indexes (all in archetypal A-Z order) and along with them privileged the position of lexicography and its practitioners.

Lexicographers might, in Johnson's term, be 'harmless drudges', but their drudgery has for centuries been held in higher esteem than that of makers of catalogues, directories, time-tables, ready-reckoners, and travel guides. It might be wise in McLuhan's age of information overload to seek greater egalitarianism in the worlds of reference, by focusing on reference itself rather than on language and alphabeticism (significant as these are), and to examine and exploit all techniques and insights associated with all works of reference from any time, place, language, and writing system.

Of course, it is only relatively recently that lexicography has been systematically critiqued, a development that has however proved both successful and useful. Nowadays, lexicographers no longer simply compile dictionaries according to formulas that seldom change but are liable as they work to develop theories about what they do and novel practices tied to those theories. Given this advance, is it asking too much to say now: Look beyond this recently-raised consciousness and recognise a greater link with other professionals and products.

It is not surprising that the academic world has paid little or no attention to the making of directories and catalogues. So crucial, however, is the business of organizing information in our time, and on a global basis, that it may soon be difficult — impossible — to avoid bringing all the tools and vehicles of reference together within one subject area with one name. This will happen, I suspect, if for no other reason than that anything informative and referential, when stored in a computer, becomes quite simply a database, regardless of whatever name or function or prestige or lack of prestige it might traditionally have had. The electronic revolution is a leveller.

At the moment, however, I feel that we can identify three areas of immediate concern to reference science, the first with a traditional name, the second with a new name, and the third with no name at all:

- The first is lexicography, that aspect of reference art and technology which deals wholly or mainly with language and pre-eminently with words, regardless of the format used (in the main alphabetic, thematic, or a hybrid of the two).

- The second is encyclopedics, that aspect of reference art and technology which deals with information about the world, and for me includes atlases, gazetteers, almanacs, and manuals (and ties in with textbooks).

- The third covers tabulations (such as time-tables), directories (as for telephone subscribers), and catalogues (among other things). It may prove to be several areas and require us to conclude that certain divisions of reference science necessarily overlap with other disciplines and activities, such as library science and social and business life, because they have common concerns.

Fairly obviously, the bulk of research and commentary in reference science in the immediate future will concern dictionaries and probably also encyclopedics. I anticipate, however, that increased interest in databases, hypertext, multimedia, and information structures at large — from satellite linkups to DNA — will ensure that more attention is paid to my third, unnamed element, which to date has been the part of the iceberg below the referential waterline.

It seems to me that there are all sorts of fertile possibilities within the framework made possible by the concept reference science. I will close by looking at only one of these, a contrast that has become important in lexicography in recent years: macrostructure and microstructure. This dichotomy is usually interpreted as covering on the one hand the overall ('macro') organization of a dictionary and on the other any single entry within such a work (the 'micro' organization). I would argue here, however, that the contrast is valuable not only in terms of dictionaries and their entries (and by extension library catalogues and whatever their constituent units may be) but also in other levels of organization among information, knowledge, and communication structures.

Thus, just as an entry is microstructural within the macrostructure of a dictionary, so such a dictionary is microstructural within a publisher's list of dictionaries. Such a reference list is in its turn microstructural within the macrostructure of all publisher's reference lists everywhere. The same is true with each bibliographical catalogue in a library, which is microstructural within the macrostructure of all bibliographical collections within all libraries and similar institutions in a city, state, or the world — especially if such resources are linked electronically. Again, within such a system as the World-Wide Web, each website is microstructural within the WWW at large.

Such matters can become discussable if we have such a framework as reference science, whose findings and postulations can feed back into the practical business of making books and other artifacts. Reference science could be a liberating and integrating discipline, in which lexicography would not be eclipsed but strengthened, not downgraded but upgraded, in intriguing theoretical and practical ways. The term proposed is, I suggest, neither a cute neologism nor a novelty for its own sake, but at the close of this century a necessity.
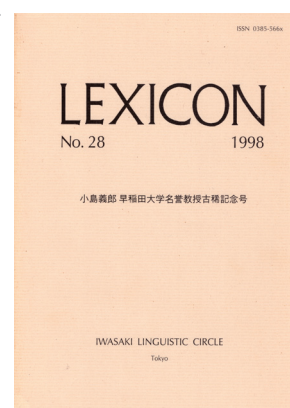
Asian Lexicography:
Past, Present, and Prospective

Tom McArthur

Introduction

In 1997, I had the good fortune to attend two international conferences held in East Asia, the first in Hong Kong in March, the second in Tokyo in August. Both were concerned with lexicography but, although a number of people attended both, there was no intended link between them, and their approaches to lexicography were markedly different. They were:

- *Dictionaries in Asia*. A gathering organized by the Language Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and held at its campus at Clearwater Bay in Kowloon. During the conference proper, attention focused in the main on alphabetic lexicography and analogous formats, and on the closing day members inaugurated the Asian Association for Lexicography (ASIALEX). In addition to a large attendance from many parts of Asia, representatives and other well-wishers were present from four already established continental organizations: the Dictionary Society of North America (DSNA), the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX), the African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX), and the Australian Association for Lexicography (AUSTRALEX). I attended as publications consultant.

- *Language Study and the Thesaurus in the World*. This gathering, organized by the Kokuritu Kokugo Kenkyuzyo (National Language Research Institute) in Tokyo, was held at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center and focused mainly on thematic lexicography – and is as far as I know the first conference in the world to do so. I was present as a guest speaker, invited to describe the nature, origin, and compilation of my *Longman Lexicon* (1981; see also 1986a, 1998b).

Despite the differences between the two (or rather because of them), the conferences proved to be valuable complementary events for those able to attend both. Because of such meetings, in Asia as elsewhere, it has now become possible to look forward to a conference devoted to 'world lexicography' (on whatever continent it may be held), that will seek to cover as wide a sampling as possible from our immense international heritage of reference materials, in all their formats,

genres, rationales, writing systems, technologies, languages of origin, and languages of translation. It would be particularly good if the four continental -lexes and the DSNA could consider jointly sponsoring such a 'Globalex' development.

Asia and its Languages

Hong Kong and Tokyo, the venues of the conferences in question, are relatively close together, in a part of the world once Eurocentrically known in English as 'the Far East' and in French as l'Extrème-Orient. Two decades ago such terms were internationally commonplace, and they are certainly still with us, but on the edge of a new century they have an archaic feel about them, especially as the region is now more commonly and straightforwardly referred to, in English and especially in the media, as 'East Asia'.

It is intriguing to consider what the participants might have thought and felt if the conferences had been held not in 'East Asia' but, say, in Ankara and Beirut (located in the former 'Near East': a label now virtually extinct), or in Damascus and Teheran (both still located in the 'Middle East' but increasingly also in 'West Asia'), or in Tashkent and Samarkand (formerly and still safe in 'Central Asia'), or in Karachi and Calcutta (formerly in 'the Indian subcontinent' but more recently in 'South Asia' or, on occasion, simply in 'the Subcontinent'), or in Saigon and Manila (both located in a hyphenated 'South-East Asia'). But wherever the conferences might have been situated and however they might have been nuanced in geocultural terms, they are significant for one reason above all others: that until now, Arabs, Iranians, and Indians, for example, have not been in the habit of discussing lexicography with Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese – except perhaps in such venues as the Dictionary Research Centre of the University of Exeter in England, where for years lexicographers from many backgrounds have been meeting. But if they have been talking to each other in such places, it has been more as lexicographers at large than as Asian lexicographers.

Asia is old and immense, but this lexical club is very new, and its members are so thin on the ground and many of the issues that concern them are so novel that much of the continent may remain unrepresented in their ranks for some time to come. To see why this is so, it may make sense here to consider the origins and nature of some of the names and concepts involved and at least raise the question of whether lexicography in Asia is – or can be? – based on any kind of unified – or unifiable? – sociolinguistic culture.

In looking for the origins of 'Asia' as both word and concept, one must turn to the Greeks, a people who have been squeezed for

several millennia between two cultural tectonic plates – so much so indeed that Herodotus wrote the first universal 'history' in terms of war between East and West: first between the Greeks and Trojans (who were in fact close neighbours), then between the Greeks and Persians (who were much more widely separated). The Greeks had a word for both the subject of this book (*lexikographia*) and the region in question (Asia), but they also had two – now largely forgotten – original senses for Asia, one of them mythological the other geographical. In mythology, Asia was a titan and the mother of titans. One of her sons was Atlas (who has served as an eponym three times over: for an everyday work of reference, for a range of mountains in North Africa, and for the Atlantic Ocean), another was Prometheus (a symbol of human, and later Western, arrogance in challenging the fundamental forces of nature and being punished for it). In geographical terms, however, Asia had more modest beginnings, as a small city on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, inland from which lay an uncertainly large region known as Anatolia ('Land of the Rising Sun'). The later Latin equivalent of this name, *oriens* ('rising'), is the literal root of the mysterious 'Orient'.

By the time the Romans took over the eastern Mediterranean, the area of coverage of 'Asia' had become properly titanic. Both the city of Asia and Anatolia had by then been lumped together in a west-facing peninsula which the Romans called in Latin Asia Minor ('Lesser Asia'), in contrast to a vast and conceptually shapeless Asia Major ('Greater Asia') that was now known to stretch all the way to Sinae and Serica (their names for parts of China). In later centuries, perhaps under pressure from inquisitive Europeans, the inhabitants of this huge expanse came to perceive themselves as inhabiting a single region from Mediterranean to Pacific, although in strictly geographical terms the landmass in question is a single 'Eurasia' rather than a smaller 'Europe' to the west and a larger 'Asia' to the east, Europe being in effect an Atlantic equivalent of the Indian subcontinent. The division of this single hard-to-encompass landmass into two such unequal continents is topographically illogical, but the distinction does make a kind of psychological sense. As the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Said (1978:2-3) has observed, regarding European views of what lies to the east:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". Thus, a very large mass of [European] writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction of East and West as the starting point for

elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its peoples, customs, "mind", destiny, and so on.

The whole matter is both culturally and emotionally charged, as a consequence of which a range of European expressions that include the English terms Asiatic, Oriental, and Eastern have acquired over time certain suspect connotations, as a consequence of which the phrases 'Oriental lexicography', 'Asiatic lexicography', and 'Eastern lexicography' are impossible. At the end of the twentieth century, the only viable term to match such phrases as 'European lexicography' and '(North) American lexicography' is 'Asian lexicography', because out of the set of relevant adjectives only Asian is neutral in terms of international pride and prejudice.

However, if denomination is odd, delimitation is odder, for where do Asia, its languages, and its lexicography begin and end? Arabia, India, China, and Japan (among other territories) are unequivocally 'Asian' and so therefore are their languages, but what does one do with Russia, an entity that extends over vast tracts of North-Eastern Europe and North and East Asia? Even makers of post-Soviet atlases are chary about the geopolitics of Russia, as for example the editors of the Reader's Digest Illustrated Atlas of the World (UK: 1997), who divide the 'old world' into: Northern Europe; Southern Europe; Central Europe; Russia and its Western Neighbours; Central and Eastern Asia; South-East Asia, the Middle East and the Gulf, the Indian Subcontinent and its Neighbours; and Oceania.

The Digest may dodge this issue, but we should not, and can reasonably ask: Is Russian to be classed as an Asian language and, if so, should there have been a place for it and its lexicography both at the Hong Kong conference and in a book whose content derives largely from that conference? Or should Russian and its dictionaries be considered no more than the overland extension of a European culture into Asia, much as Dutch and its lexicography for a time extended by sea to what is now Indonesia (as Soekemi notes in his paper) and to Japan (as Yamada and Komuro point out in theirs)? One might say 'yes', categorizing Russian as alien despite the size of the territory involved and the obvious need to list indigenous Siberian languages that co-exist with Russian as unassailably Asian – along with any work done on them by Russian-speaking lexicographers.

There are also thought-provoking parallels elsewhere. Arabic, for example, is manifestly an Asian language, but is every bit as bicontinental as Russian, having ancient extensions into North and East Africa. It would be impossible to exclude Arabic from any

comprehensive lexicographical discussion of 'languages of Africa' (as opposed to, say, 'African languages', if that formulation is to be reserved for the ultimately indigenous). But the time is likely to come – and probably quite soon – when Russian cannot be excluded from discussions of language and lexicography in Asia; it is after all as firmly established to the north of India and China and the west of Japan as Arabic is established south of the Mediterranean.

If the Russian and Arabic languages are bicontinental (and therefore the concern alike of EURALEX, AFRILEX, and ASIALEX), what can one say about omnicontinental English? Its inroads into Asia are so marked that no fewer than five papers in this volume relate to its Asian roles and to Asian dictionaries and dictionary research associated with teaching, learning, and using it: Lu Gusun on bilingual Chinese/English lexicography, Li Lan on dictionaries as aids to the learning of English in China; Jacqueline Lam Kam-mei on a glossary to help (especially Hong Kong) students with computer science texts in English; Ilan Kernerman on semi-bilingualized English learners' dictionaries in Asia and elsewhere; and Shigeru Yamada and Yuri Komuro on the origin and immense educational and commercial success of Japanese English learners' dictionaries. Reiko Takeda even turns the tables entirely, and as an Asian researcher into European lexicography reports on lesser-known aspects of the lexicography of English not in Asia at all but in England in the fifteenth century. Sauce for the goose....

In addition, English enters obliquely into other papers, as for example where Lee Sangsup, discussing the Dictionary of Korean, indicates the key role played by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a model, and where Arvind Kumar compares two Indian thesauruses (one ancient and in Sanskrit, the other recent and in Hindi) with Roget, an originally nineteenth-century English-language work which he treats as a touchstone for the genre.

Finally, the medium of the present collection of papers is uniformly English, and it is hard to imagine any other language that could have served to weave together such varied strands as these. [It is noteworthy, however, that at the Hong Kong conference papers could be and were delivered in Mandarin or English, and at the Tokyo conference in Japanese, Mandarin, or English. How many other languages might be deemed to merit the same treatment at a comprehensively pan-Asian gathering?] English is here at least 'a language of Asia' if not (yet) 'an Asian language', although already these days – safely beyond lexicographical circles – it is often referred to as just that, for at least the following five reasons (see also McArthur, 1998a):

- English has been used widely in Asia for as long as it has been used in the Americas (that is, since the seventeenth century), and by considerable numbers of people, especially in South and South-East Asia.

- In recent years (much to the surprise of many of its own inhabitants), Australia has been 're-branded' as Asian rather than Australasian (in origin a Latinate term meaning 'South Asian'), and is often so listed in international periodicals (especially for economic and financial purposes). Thus, Philip Bowring comments in the article 'Australia: Regional Leader or Orphan Adrift?' (*International Herald Tribune*, 1 October 1992): "Australia and its neighbors have to recognize that Asia is simply a geographical definition, and for practical purposes Australia is part of it." The national language of Australia is English, and many East Asians send their children there for educational reasons that pre-eminently include improving their English – in the process of course Asianizing it further.

- It is the language that Asians need not only for purposes of communicating with other continents and engaging in worldwide scientific and other activities whose dominant medium is English, but also (pre-eminently?) for intra-Asian communication: Thais with Japanese, Koreans with Indonesians, Filipinos with Asian Russians, Chinese with Pakistanis, Gulf Arabs with Indians.

- It has highly significant and long-standing official roles within Asia. Thus, in the Philippines it is co-official with Filipino (Pilipino, Tagalog); in Singapore it is one of four official languages, alongside Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil; in Hong Kong (now integrated into China as a special administrative region) it is a key everyday language of business and education alongside Cantonese and increasingly Mandarin/Putonghua; and, momentously, it has in India three distinct legislated roles, as the associate official language (Hindi being official), as a national language (alongside Bengali, Gujerati, Tamil, and other state languages), and as the sole official language of eight Union territories (including Delhi, Nagaland, and Pondicherry) – all additional to its use as a medium of education, business, and – famously – 'a window on the world'.

- It is the working language of ASEAN (the Association of South-East Asian Nations), a regional organization founded in 1967 for economic, social, and cultural co-operation, whose members are currently Brunei, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

There have always been world languages, in the sense that the language of culturally, economically, and militarily powerful communities have impacted on the known worlds of their time and place. Asia has had its share of such languages, which include Sanskrit (brought to our attention here by Arvind Kumar), Persian (whose lexicography is discussed by Ahmad Taherian), Malay (covered by both Nur Ida Ramli of Malaysia and Soekemi of Indonesia), and Classical Chinese (with its influence not only in the Middle Kingdom but also in Korea, Japan, and Indo-China, and the concern here particularly of Lu Gusun and Li Lan). English differs from other world languages only – yet it is an overwhelming 'only' – is that its world is the entire planet, its speakers are the most widely distributed and the most ethnoculturally varied ever, and their numbers increase by the year. Demographically the only Asian rival to English – and it is a powerful 'only' – is Mandarin/Putonghua, which may not be spoken an written by all Chinese but is for all of them the touchstone of linguistic excellence. Inevitably, these two giants among languages will have much to do with each other in the coming century, including in lexicographical terms.

Asia and its Lexicographies

The word *lexicography* has the same Greco-Latin pedigree and structure as *biology*, *astronomy*, *osteopathy*, *phylogeny*, and other widely-used names for academic activities and subjects. As such, it is part of what the American dictionary editor Philip Gove (1963:7a) has called *International Scientific Vocabulary* (ISV). Although Gove has for his purposes treated such words as restricted to English, they are in reality 'translinguistic': they operate (with appropriate phonological and orthographic adaptations) in many languages that serve as mediums for education, culture, science, and technology: not only in, say, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, or English (European languages traditionally receptive to Classical word elements and patterns) but also in Japanese, Malay, Tagalog/Pilipino, and other Asian languages (to which they are often transmitted through modern European languages). In effect, such words have no ultimate canonical forms: their embodiments in any language are all equally valid as citation forms. Because no language-specific version of such a term has primacy, an ISV word is truly international, transcending individual languages, a point which lexicographers worldwide have yet to come to terms with. ISV words would appear to be – both in their own right and through any loan translations that may have been made from them – the most universal set of lexical items on earth.

Not all such Greco-Latinisms are however equally 'scientific'. On the one hand, such terms as *biology* and *physics*, which serve to label branches of science itself, are manifestly part of an originally European endeavour that has in the last century or so become fully cosmopolitan, but on the other hand terms such as *lexicography* and *psychotherapy* refer to social and professional activities, not to 'hard' sciences, and other terms still, such as *necromancy* and *anthropophagy*, label activities that are not at all scientific – although scientists and scholars may take an interest in them, and are likely to be prominent among the few who use the terms. All such words are however at their very least specialist terms, for which reason (*pace* Gove) I prefer to interpret 'ISV' as 'International Specialist Vocabulary' (cf. Kirkness, 1997, who identifies them more particularly as 'Euroclassicisms').

Because the strictly scientific ISV terms are unitarian and now cosmopolitan, one cannot treat a 'biology in Europe' and a 'biology in Asia' as being different in kind: they are the same thing pursued in different locales. Matters are not so clear, however, for such items as 'lexicography' and 'psychotherapy'. Do such terms mean something essentially European that is spreading throughout the world, as biology has done, and may at length have the same comprehensive status as biology, or do they – actually or potentially – refer to more general, more culturally varied matters, so that for example traditional, millennia-old Chinese lexicography might differ markedly from centuries-old British, American, and French lexicography yet be recognised everywhere instantly and fully as equally lexicographical? Indeed, are we seeing a kind of hybridization under way, where aspects of Western lexicography combine usefully with aspects of Eastern lexicography? An example might be present-day bilingual English-Chinese dictionaries such as Lu Gusun and Li Lan discuss, where the English-Chinese section has an A-Z ordering of lemmata and the Chinese-English section is traditionally ordered according to a conventional listing of the strokes of which Chinese characters are composed.

The discussion need not however end there. The condition of lexicography in Asia may be closer to that of a comparably culture-laden activity that has travelled the other way, from East to West, as for example yoga in Europe and America. Such a comparison leaps to my mind because intermittently over some thirty years I have attended (and spoken at) conventions of yoga teachers and students in the United Kingdom, have written two books about India, yoga, Indian philosophy, and their spread worldwide (McArthur 1986b/c), and at one time, for several years, edited the journal of an association

which was concerned (in effect) with indigenizing yoga in Scotland: a process that included the accreditation of local teachers of yoga by the Scottish Sports Council – an example of culture clash if ever there was one. During that period such concepts as *asana* (a physical pose), *dhyana* (meditation), and *mantra* (a repeated sound serving to focus the mind) have gone from being generally regarded in the West as eccentrically and exotically Eastern to being about as common and virtually as unremarked as the terminology of golf.

The organization of conferences about dictionaries in Asia and conventions for yoga in Europe can be perceived as a vast process of cultural exchange. In such an exchange, questions like the following arise: In their encounter with yoga in Europe and other non-Asian locales, should non-Asians regard it as 'essentially' Eastern and therefore forever 'other', no matter how strong the effort to naturalize it, or do they absorb and extend the subject so as to incorporate comparable practices among Europeans and others into a more inclusive view of yoga (that may also include such other Asian philosophical-cum-physical systems as tai-chi, Zen, and Sufism)? Comparably, in their encounter with lexicography, should Asians (and others) regard it as 'essentially' Western and focused on 'dictionaries' (understood in an A-Z sense), and so forever to some degree 'other', or do they absorb and extend the subject so as to include comparable practices among Asians within what can become a more inclusive view of lexicography?

There may be no neat and tidy answer to such questions, but the papers in this volume, it seems to me, in addition to their valuable immediate aims contain the seeds of studies, both diachronic and synchronic, that could be immensely helpful in placing lexicography in a geographically wider and chronologically deeper frame of reference. Let me mention here only three areas that belong very much to Asia, about which one day I hope to know more:

(1) Lexicophony

At present I can think of no better name for something which Arvind Kumar discusses in his paper: a tradition probably over three millennia old in South Asia, in which the brahmins of Vedic India orally and aurally encoded in Sanskrit verse not only religious but also lexical information, to be recited as the need for consultation and instruction arose. Such pre-literate artifacts have been the lexicographical equivalents of Homer's Iliad or, in more local terms, of Vyasa's Mahabharata.

(2) Bilingual word lists

Such lists, which recur throughout this collection in relation to the present-day bilingual-dictionary industry, had their origins in West Asia. Some three millennia ago in Mesopotamia, Semitic-speaking scribes in the city state of Akkad (and later in Babylon and Nineveh), borrowed cuneiform writing from their southern neighbours in Sumer, the creators of the world's earliest known writing system (cf. McArthur 1986a, Chs. 4-5). In the process, the formulated Semitic equivalents for Sumerian originals, creating the first lists of language equivalents set side by side in columns on clay tablets.

(3) Ideographic lexicography

First formulated in China over two millennia ago, the signs in such a system in the main represent concepts rather than sounds and words as such: that is, they are ideographic rather than phonographic and logographic. As such, they are in principle as detachable from the language to which they initially relate as alphabetic letters have been, as demonstrated for example by their adoption to serve Japanese, which is structurally entirely different from Chinese. In essence, such a system is a (successful and extensive) ancient cousin of the (failed and more limited) philosophical language with which Bishop John Wilkins experimented in seventeenth-century England, a quest for a conceptual 'language' that in due course inspired Roget when he created his *Thesaurus* in the mid-nineteenth century.

The prospects are endless and enticing, and the present collection of papers already provides a varied spread of approaches, perspectives, descriptions, and proposals ranging from the remotest times to the day after tomorrow, contributing significantly to an academic discipline which Reinhard Hartmann and I call 'reference science' (see McArthur, 1998c). It is refreshing that the collection covers several generations of scholars, all of whom I wish to thank here for their collaboration in making the volume possible; I am immensely pleased to have been part of its creation. *Lexicography in Asia*, it seems to me, is a noteworthy step towards the collaborative formulation of a single over-arching typology for all works of lexical reference, wherever and whenever compiled, by whomever and in whatever language, and through whatever compiling, recording, and presentational technology.

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Selected papers from the Dictionaries in Asia Conference, Hong Kong and other papers

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