

**Early Modern Chinese Encyclopaedia (1870s -1920s):
Modes of Production and Changing Chinese Ways of Thought**
Abstract

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At the turn of the past century, a new cultural phenomenon emerged in China's East coast cities – the rise and development of the early modern Chinese reference works, including encyclopaedias. A hundred-odd such works, either translated from European languages or Japanese or compiled by outstanding Chinese scholars brought new information about the modern Western world and a modernizing Japan, which generated great interest from the educated public about not yet well known objects and subjects. Still, from the mid-1910s on, these reference works were not registered in Chinese libraries nor did historians take an interest in the topic.

The proposed lecture will present some results from the project that aimed at recovering the unlisted encyclopaedias as well as the restoring their role in the modernizing Chinese culture. Awarded a CCK Foundation grant in 2005, this project was successfully carried out by an international team of late Qing scholars from 2005 to 2008. My lecture will summarize several principal issues that emerged during our work and that I formulated during my recent editorial work on the volume resulting from the project. My talks will be centred on two mutually interrelated issues – the changing Chinese ways of thought and the modes of production of the encyclopaedias. Arranged chronologically in order to capture these changes in their temporal succession, they will be focused on the following four issues:

1. The change from the Chinese cosmological interpretation of the world to the Chinese reception of Denis Diderot's philosophical realism and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution (1902-1906). We consider this change as crucial for the emancipation of Chinese encyclopaedias from traditional ideological system and as an indivisible prerequisite for the rise of modern Chinese encyclopaedias.
2. The turn-over from the Western sources used at the beginning of encyclopaedic activities in China to the preference of Japanese sources that propelled the modern Chinese encyclopaedias to a new evolutionary stage (beginning of the 20th century). Instead of seeing the relation between Chinese and Western culture as the only source of modernization, we adopted new results of research by Douglas Reynolds and his ideas that brought to light the impact of modern Japanese encyclopaedic activities for the new stage of development of Chinese encyclopaedic works.
3. The role of translations of foreign encyclopaedias for expansion of Chinese horizons on modern world culture and the newly developed Chinese appreciation of the role of individual personality in modern history.
4. The conceptualization in modern encyclopaedic dictionaries as a result of yet little known compilations and publications of foreign language-Chinese language dictionaries at the turn of the past century.