

An Introduction on “Leçons Progressives pour L’Étude du Chinois Parlé et Écrit
(Kung Yü So T’an. 公餘瑣談)”

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The history of Christian missions in China began with the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in the Ming era. After the ban against Christianity, and the Opium War in 1840, missionary efforts, with Protestant churches at their core, spread widely.

For the missionary, it was crucial to study the local language. This was also true for the government officials who spread through the country simultaneously with the missionaries.

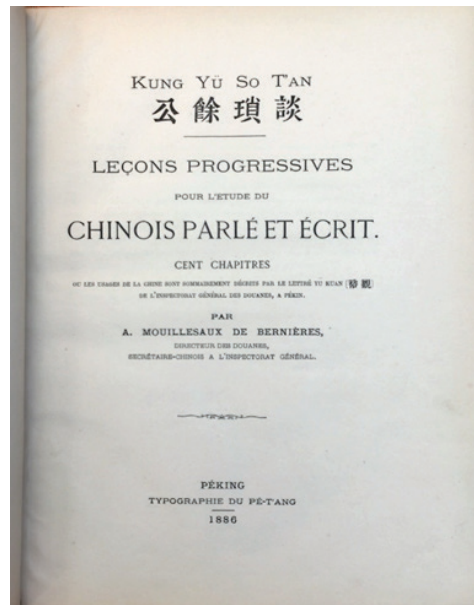
In this paper, I will examine the Chinese textbook, “Leçons Progressives pour L’Étude du Chinois Parlé et Écrit (Kung Yü So T’an 公餘瑣談),” which was published in 1886. Presently, there does not seem to be any existing studies on this text. As this will likely be the first study of its kind, I would like to present an introductory look at the text’s contents, and take the first steps of a rudimentary study.

In undertaking this rudimentary study, I will cover five points : 1) a summary of the text; 2) the author; 3) the preface; 4) the format and contents of the text; 5) the influence of Thomas Wade.

1) A Summary of the Text

Copies of the text, as far as I know, are available in the US at Harvard University’s Widener Library, as well as at Cornell University Library, and in England at Cambridge University Library. It was published by Pe Tang (Bei Tang Church or Xi Shi Ku Catholic Church) in Beijing, 1886.

This book’s title means “small talks in the intervals of official business.” The full title, printed on the book’s front cover in French, is “LEÇONS PROGRESSIVES POUR L’ÉTUDE DU CHINOIS PARLÉ ET ÉCRIT CENT CHAPITRES OU LES USAGES DE LA CHINE SONT SOMMAIREMENT DÉCRITES PAR LE LETTRÉ YÜ KUAN (裕觀) DE



(Image 1 inside cover of the book)

L'INSPECTORAT GÉNÉRAL DES DOUANES, A PÉKIN. PAR AUGUSTE MOUILLESAUX DE BERNIÈRES, DIRECTEUR DES DOUANES, SECRÉTAIRE-CHINOIS A L'INSPECTORAT

GÉNÉRAL.

(Progressive Lessons for the Study of Spoken and Written Chinese: A Hundred Chapters (or the Parlances of China Are Outlined by the Well-Read Yu Kuan of the Inspectorate General of Customs, in Peking.) BY AUGUSTE MOUILLESAUX DE BERNIÈRES, DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS, SECRETARY-CHINESE TO THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE) .”

From this, we can infer that this book was written by both Auguste Mouilleseaux de Bernières, a French government official working at customs, and Yu Kuan(裕觀), a Chinese government official employed onsite. In order to figure out how representative this textbook is of the period and of the contents, I will take a closer look at the author and the contents.

2) The Author

In this chapter, I will discuss the author, Auguste Mouilleseaux de Bernières. According to the website “Photographes d'Asie (1840-1944)”¹, he “was born in Nièvre on May 26, 1848, entered into the Customs Service in 1867, [and] made his entire career there. In 1885, he became the director of the Chinese Imperial Customs in Kouang-Si (Guangxi), at Lung-Tchéou (Longzhou). He seems to still be in service in 1911. Amateur photographer (he is also an illustrator and watercolourist), he takes numerous photographs, just like his wife, but he also combines the prints of professionals, like those of Beato on Japan. The biggest part of this artistic work relating to China was given by their daughter to the Geographical Society in 1930. (Né dans la Nièvre le 26 mai 1848, entré dans le service des Douanes en 1867, Auguste Mouilleseaux de Bernières y fait toute sa carrière. Il devient en 1885 le directeur des Douanes impériales chinoises dans le Kouang-Si, à Lung-Tchéou. Il semble être toujours en service en 1911. Photographe amateur (il est aussi dessinateur et aquarelliste), il prend de nombreuses photographies, tout comme sa femme, mais il réunit aussi des clichés de professionnels, comme ceux de Beato sur le Japon. La plus grande partie de cette œuvre artistique relative à la Chine a été donnée par leur fille à la Société de géographie en 1930.)”

From the citation above, we learn that Bernières was not only a government official, but also an accomplished photographer, illustrator, and watercolorist, and we get a glimpse of his artistic talents. In this citation, there is a reference to Felice (Felix) Beato (1832-1909), but he was a war photographer, and mostly took photographs of conflict. Additionally, the sites of Beato’s activities did not include Japan. Before coming to Asia, he worked around the Mediterranean Sea, in Crimea, and India. Afterwards, he

¹ <http://photographesenoutremerasia.blogspot.com>

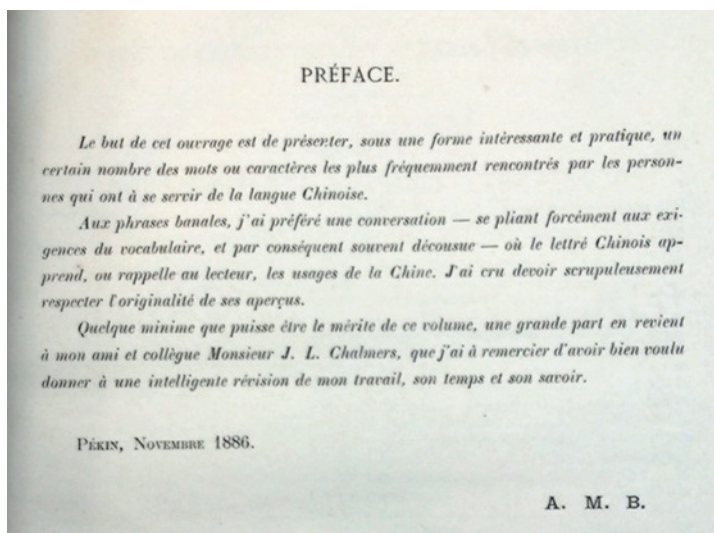
A website on photographers who worked in Asia from 1840-1944 directed by Marie-Hélène Degroise(1947-2012), a Honorary Chief Curator of the National Archives of France.

crossed over to China in 1860, and photographed the Second Opium War. In 1861, he returned to England, and stayed for only about a year. He sold the photographs he had taken to a newspaper company.

In contrast, Bernières was involved with customs affairs. Given that his daughter donated his photographs to the Geographical Society after his death, we can surmise that, as they tell us about China’s geography and classified information, they are very valuable artifacts.

3) The Preface

Auguste de Bernières wrote the preface in French, which I include below, together with an English translation.



(Image 2 Preface of the book)

PRÉFACE

Le but de cet ouvrage est de présenter, sous une forme intéressante et pratique, un certain nombre des mots ou caractères les plus fréquemment rencontrés par les personnes qui ont à se servir de la langue Chinoise.

Aux phrases banales, j’ai préféré une conversation—se pliant forcément aux exigences du vocabulaire, et par conséquent souvent décousue—ou le lettré Chinois apprend, ou rappelle au lecteur, les usages de la Chine. J’ai cru devoir scrupuleusement respecter l’originalité de ses aperçus.

Quelque minime que puisse être le mérite de ce volume, une grande part en revient à mon ami et collègue Monsieur J. L. Chalmers, que j’ai à remercier d’avoir bien voulu donner à une intelligente révision de mon travail, son temps et son savoir.

English translation as follows :

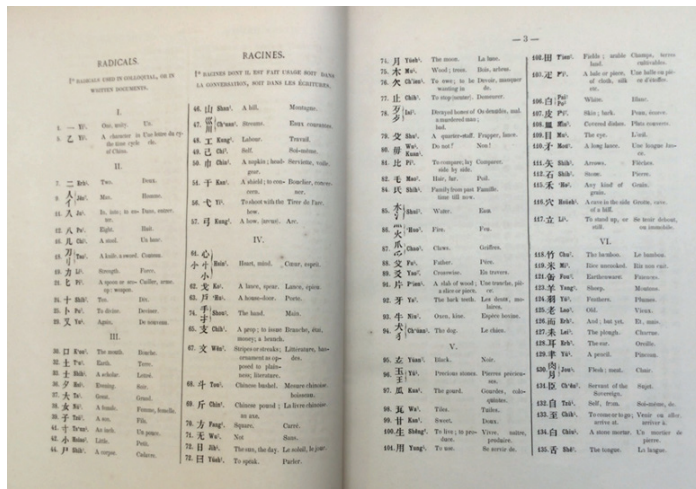
PREFACE

The goal of this work is to present, in an interesting and practical form, a certain number of words or characters most frequently encountered by people who have to use the Chinese language.

To put it plainly, I preferred a conversation---one that necessarily submits to the exigencies of vocabulary, and is constantly often disjointed---where the learned Chinese teaches, or reminds the reader, the customs of China. I believed in having to scrupulously respect the originality of their insights.

Whatever small merit this volume may have, a great part is owed to my friend and colleague Mr. J.L. Chalmers, whom I have to thank for giving my work an intelligent revision, his time and his knowledge.

Mr. J. L. Chalmers², who is mentioned here, was a missionary from Scotland, and a member of the London Missionary Society. He is famous for being the first to translate Lao Tze(老子) into English. He also wrote “An account of the structure of Chinese characters under 300 primary forms: after the Shwoh-wan, 100 A.D., and the phonetic Shwoh-wan, 1833”³, which explains the structure of 300 primary forms of Chinese characters, using phonetics from Shuo-wen-tong-xun-ding-sheng by Zhu Zhunsheng from the mid-Qing era. I suspect that where he explains the radicals on p. 4-5 of the Kung Yü So T’an, Bernières is also referring to Chalmers’ books.



(Image 3 From p 4-5 of « Kung Yü So T’an »

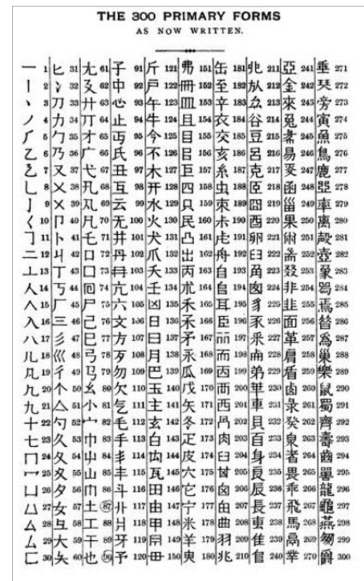


Image 4 From Chalmers’ book, «An account of the structure of Chinese characters under 300 primary forms »page 2)

² cited from Gerald H. Henderson (1999) Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions Wm, B. Eerdmans Publishing p. 123

³ London: Trübner & Co. 1882, Book from the collections of Harvard University, <https://archive.org/details/anaccountstruct01chalgoog>

As for the Chinese author, Yu Kuan, I have yet to arrive at any clear conclusions or at a clear picture of his character. It is likely that he was an accomplished Chinese teacher like Ying Long Tian in “Colloquial Chinese”

4)The Format and Contents

The table of contents are as follows :

TABLE OF CONTENTS.		TABLE DES MATIÈRES.	
	Page		Page
Preface	v.	Preface	v.
Orthography	1.	Orthographe	1.
Idioms	2.	Idiomes	2.
SUBJECTS OF EXERCISES		SUJETS TRAITÉS	
Numbers, Mandarin language, etc.	Lessons 1 to 11.	Chiffres, Langue mandarine etc.	Leçons 1 à 11.
The Eight Banners.	11 to 14.	Les Huit Bannières.	11 à 14.
House building. House. Furniture.	14 to 17.	Maisons, Meubles.	14 à 17.
Children's education.	18.	Éducation des enfants.	18.
Saddlery, etc.	19.	Harnachement, etc.	19.
Dressing. Costumes.	20 to 21.	Habillement, Costumes.	20 à 21.
Marriages.	22 to 25.	Mariages.	22 à 25.
Funerals. Mourning.	26 to 27.	Enterrements. Deuil.	26 à 27.
Fortune-tellers. Diviners.	28 to 29.	Diviseurs de bonne aventure. Devins.	28 à 29.
Meals.	30 to 31.	Repas.	30 à 31.
Relationships.	32.	Parentés.	32.
History.	33 to 38.	Histoire.	33 à 38.
Examinations.	37 to 38.	Examen.	37 à 38.
Government.	39.	Gouvernement.	39.
Legal punishments.	40.	Pénalités légales.	40.
Officials.	41.	Fonctionnaires.	41.
Provincial administration.	42.	Administration provinciale.	42.
Special honours.	43 to 44.	Honneurs d'ordre spécial.	43 à 44.
Military grades and decorations.	45.	Grades et décorations militaires.	45.
Insignia.	46.	Insignes.	46.
Taxes.	47.	Impôts.	47.
Foreign nations.	48.	Nations étrangères.	48.
Treaty rights.	49.	Résultats des traités.	49.
Correspondence. Missions.	50.	Correspondance. Missions.	50.
International relations.	51 to 54.	Relations internationales.	51 à 54.
Treaty ports and Customs-Houses.	55.	Ports ouverts et Douanes.	55.
Buying and hiring.	56.	Achat et location.	56.
Light-houses. Pilots. Customs-Houses.	57 to 59.	Phares. Pilotes. Douanes.	57 à 59.
Trees. Flowers. Birds.	60.	Arbres. Fleurs. Oiseaux.	60.
Fruits. Reptiles. Shellfish. Insects.	61.	Fruits. Reptiles. Coquilles. Insectes.	61.
The Peking Gazette. Waterways.	62.	Gazette de Pékin. Eaux d'can.	62.
River Works.	63.	Entretien des rivières.	63.

		— VIII —	
Spirit worship.	Lessons 64 to 65.	Culte des esprits.	Leçons 64 à 65.
Provincial government.	66.	Gouvernement provincial.	66.
Titles of wives, etc. Theatricals.	67.	Titres décernés aux femmes.	67.
Familiar phrases.	68.	Théâtre.	68.
Medical practitioners. Medicines.	69 to 70.	Phrases d'usage familier.	69 à 70.
Provinces, their documentary names. Disturbances.	71 to 72.	Médecins. Médicines.	71 à 72.
Provincial armies.	73.	Provinces, leurs noms anciens.	71 à 72.
Railways, why necessary.	74.	Insurrections.	73.
Government postal service.	75.	Armées des provinces.	74.
Money.	76.	Chemins de fer, leur utilité.	75.
Religion.	77.	Postes nationales.	76.
Religious.	78 to 81.	Monnaies.	77.
Buddhist priests.	82.	Religions.	78 à 81.
Officials.	83 to 84.	Éducation.	82.
Porcelain manufactures. Embroideries etc.	85.	Prêtres Bouddhistes.	83 à 84.
The San Kuo Chih. (Historical romance).	Lessons 87 to 89.	Fonctionnaires.	83 à 84.
The Hung Lou Meng (Romance).	90 to 91.	De la porcelaine.	85.
The Shi 'Hu Chuan. (Romance).	92.	Étoffes de soie. Broderies, etc.	86.
The Hsi Yu Chi. (Romance).	93 to 94.	Le San Kuo Chih. (Roman historique).	Leçons 87 à 89.
Novels: Tale from the Liao Chai.	95 to 99.	Le Rive de la Chambre Rouge. (Roman.)	90 à 91.
Correspondence representing four styles of letters.	100.	Le Shui 'Hu Chuan. (Nouvelle.)	92.
Index.	Page 215	Le Hsi Yu Chi. (Roman.)	93 à 94.
		Romans: Nouvelle tirée du Liao Chai.	95 à 99.
		Correspondance représentant quatre genres de lettres.	100.
		Index.	Page 215.

(image 5 and 6 from the table of contents)

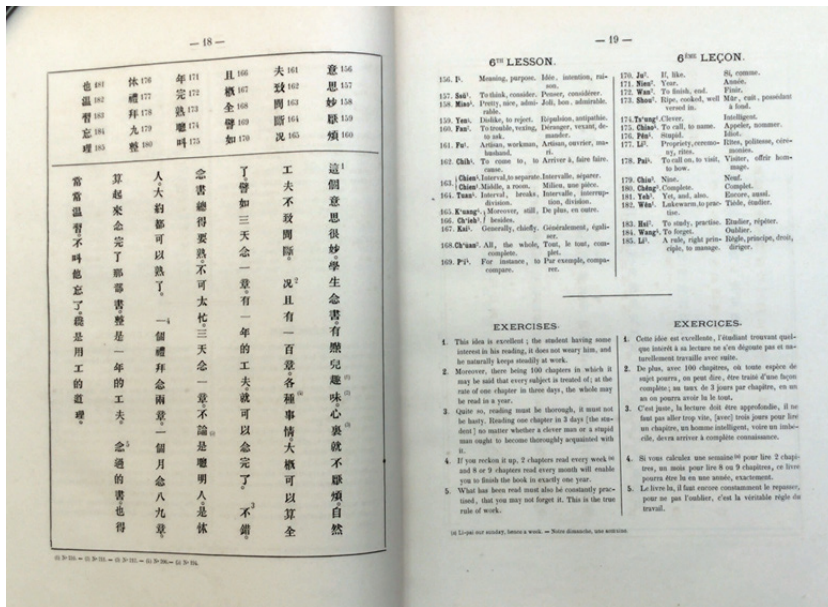
Numbers, Mandarin language, etc	Lessons 1 to 11
The Eight Banners.	11 to 14
House building. House, Furniture.	14 to 17
Children's education.	18
Saddlery, etc	19
Dressing, Costumes.	20 to 21
Marriages.	22 to 25
Funerals, Mourning.	26 to 27
Fortune-tellers, Diviners.	28 to 29
Meals.	30 to 31
Relationships.	32

History.	33 to 36
Examinations.	37 to 38
Government.	39
Legal punishments.	40
Officials.	41
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Special honours.	43 to 44
Military grades and decorations	45
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International relations.	51 to 54
Treaty ports and Custom-Houses.	55
Buying and hiring.	56
Trees. Flowers. Birds.	60
Fruits, Reptiles, Shellfish, Insects.	61
The Peking Gazette. Waterways.	62
River Works.	63
Spirit worship	64 to 65
Provincial government	66
Title of wives, etc. Theatricals.	67
Familiar phrases.	68
Medical practitioners. Medicines.	69 to 70
Provinces, their documentary names, Disturbances.	71 to 72
Provincial armies.	73
Railways, why necessary.	74
Government postal service.	75
Money.	76
Religions.	77
Education.	78 to 81
Buddhist priests.	82
Officials.	83 to 84

Porcelain manufactures.	85
Silk manufacture, Embroideries etc.	86
The San Kuo Chih (Historical romance)	87 to 89
The Hung Lou Mèng (Romance)	90 to 91
The Shui ‘Hu Chuan. (Romance)	92
The Hsi Yu Chi, (Romance)	93 to 94
Novels: Tale from the Liao Chai.	95 to 99
Correspondence representing four styles of letters	100
Index.	Page 215

With the exception of the final section on literary works, the example sentences are mostly written in the form of questions and answers. By studying these example sentences, we can learn about the lifestyle cultures, history, politics and literature of the Late Qing era. The sentences offer a rather brief treatment of their contents, but they also present much in the way of in-depth study.

Lessons 1 to 5 involve easy conversation exercises.



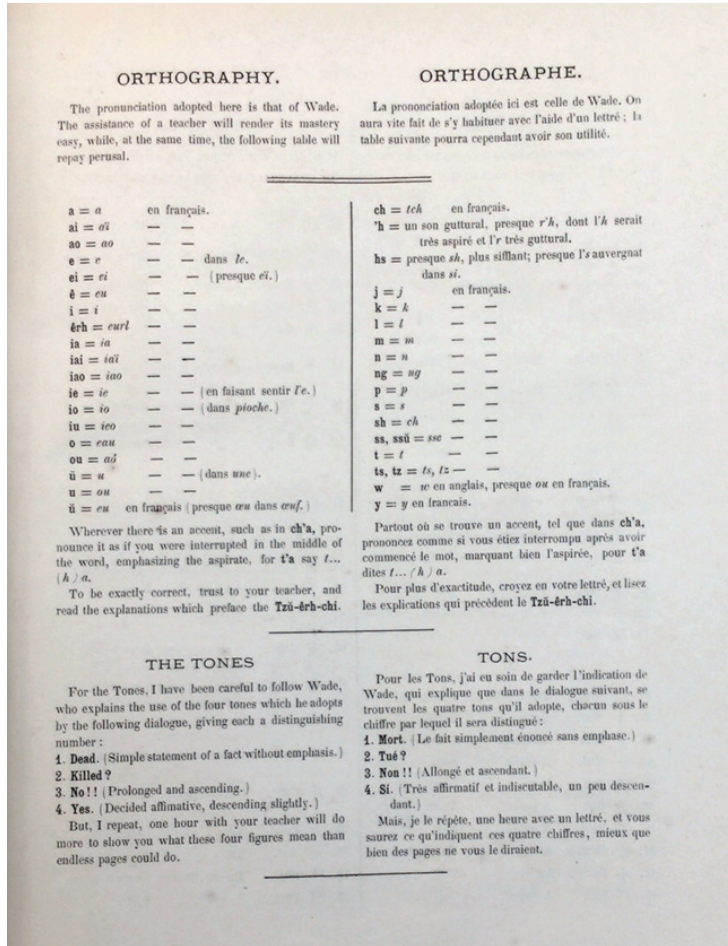
(Image 7 From 6th Lesson)

The image above is of the Chinese section. One speaker asks a question about the lesson topic, and the other speaker always answers, “Yes.” The second speaker then adds more information in the course of answering the question.

In keeping with the description of “Progressive” in the book title, the contents are very well suited for practical use.

5) Influence from Thomas Wade “Colloquial Chinese (語言自邇集)”

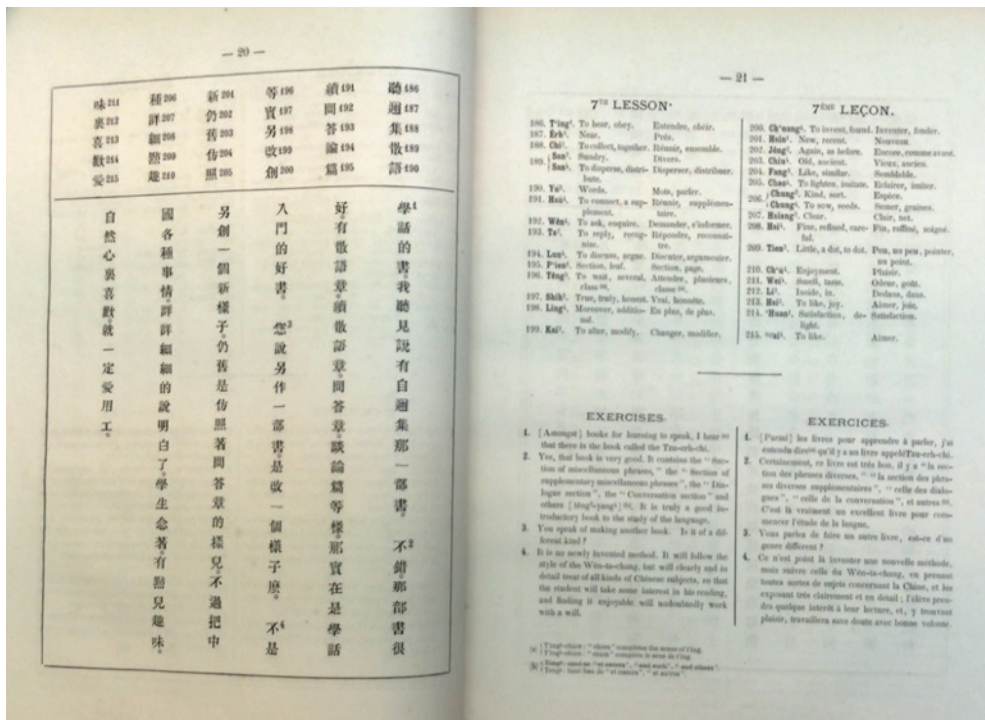
I would now like to move on to the next topic, the influence of Thomas Wade and his textbook “Colloquial Chinese (語言自邇集)”. In “Kung Yü So T’an (公餘瑣談),” there are three instances where the author refers to Thomas Wade and “Colloquial Chinese”. The first is in the “Orthography” section. Please refer to the image 8.



(Image 8 From the “Orthography” section)

In the first line, the author writes, “The pronunciation adopted here is that of Wade. The assistance of a teacher will render its mastery easy, while, at the same time, the following table will repay

perusal."



(Image 9 From 7th Lesson)

In lesson 7, one speaker says the following:

學話的書。我聽見說有自邇集那部書。

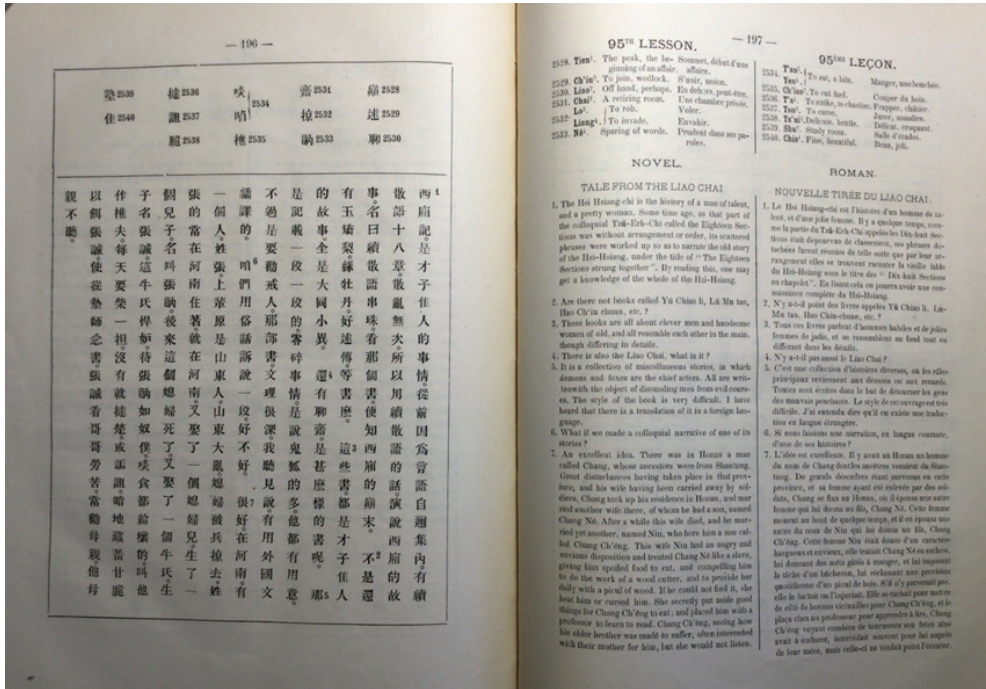
不錯。那部書很好。有散語章。續散語章。問答章。談論篇章等樣。那實在是學話入門的好書。

您說另作一部書。是改一個樣子麼。

不是另創一個新樣子。仍舊是仿照著問答章的樣兒。不過把中國各種事情。詳細細的說明白了。學生念著。有點兒趣味。自然心裏喜歡。就一定愛用工。

1. [Amongst] books for learning to speak, I hear that there is the book called the Tzu-erh-chi.
2. Yes, that book is very good. It contains the "Section of miscellaneous phrases", the "Section of supplementary miscellaneous phrases", the "Dialogue section", the "Conversation section" and others [teng3-yang4]. It is truly a good introductory book to the study of the language.
3. You speak of making another book. Is it of a different kind?
4. It is no newly invented method. It will follow the style of the Wen-ta-chang, but will clearly and in detail treat of all kinds of Chinese subjects, so that the student will take some interest in his reading, and finding it enjoyable will undoubtedly work with a will.

From the examples above, we can see that the author thought highly of “Colloquial Chinese (Tzu-erh Chi)”. What is more, he saw his own book as the next-level textbook to “Colloquial Chinese”, and arranged it accordingly. In order to explore this point further, I here turn to the third instance of the author mentioning “Colloquial Chinese”.



(Image 10 From 95th Lesson)

Image 10 is taken from lesson 95, where, for the most part, the speaker introduces “Liao zhai zhi yi”. In the first two or three lines, he mentions “Hsi Hsiang Chi,” and subsequently lists similar Chinese literary works. “Colloquial Chinese” makes an appearance in this section.

1. The Hsi Hsiang-chi is the history of a man of talent, and a pretty woman. Some time ago, as that part of the colloquial Tzu-erh-Chi called the Eighteen Sections was without arrangement or order, its scattered phrases were worked up so as to narrate the old story of the Hsi-Hsiang, under the title of “The Eighteen Sections strung together”. By reading this, one may get a knowledge of the whole of the Hsi Hsiang.

As I mentioned in discussing the second and third instances where “Colloquial Chinese” was mentioned, each of the three editions of this text bears differences from the others. According to Professors Keiichi Uchida’s book⁴ and Tokio Takada’s paper,⁵ the first edition was published in 1867, the second in

⁴ 内田慶市、氷野歩『語言自彙集の研究』(関西大学アジア文化研究センター、2015年)

⁵ 高田時雄「トマス・ウェイドと北京語の勝利」(『西洋近代文明と中華世界』京都大學學術出版會、2001年) p127-p142

1886, and the third in 1903. The index for the three first-edition volumes is as follows.

< Vol.1 >

1. Pronunciation
 2. The Radicals
 3. The Forty Exercises
 4. The Ten Dialogues
 5. The Eighteen Sections
 6. The Hundred Lessons
 7. The Tone Exercises
 8. The Chapter on the parts of Speech

< Vol.2 >

KEY (English translation)

< Vol.3 >

Appendix

The index for the second-edition volumes is as follows.

< Vol.1 >

1. Pronunciation
 2. The Radicals
 3. The Forty Exercises
 4. The Ten Dialogues
 5. The Hundred Lessons
 6. The Graduate’s Wooing or the Stories of a Promise that Was Kept)
 7. The Tone Exercises
 8. The Chapter on the parts of Speech

< Vol.2 >

KEY (English translation)

< Vol.3 >

Appendix

As I have yet to consult the third edition, I will leave it out for now. As for the differences between the first and the second editions, the fifth chapter in the first edition, “The Eighteen Sections,” was deleted in the second edition, while the sixth chapter in the first edition, “The Hundred Lessons,” became the fifth chapter in the second edition. “The Graduate’s Wooing or the Stories of a Promise that Was Kept)”

was inserted as sixth chapter in the second edition. This chapter presents a translation of the “Hsi Hsiang Chi” into Mandarin.

This is precisely what I was referring to in the second part with regards to the influences between “Kung Yü So T’an” and “Colloquial Chinese”. “Kung Yü So T’an” was published in 1886, the same year that the second edition of “Colloquial Chinese” was published. Since “Kung Yü So T’an” made references to the differences between the editions of “Colloquial Chinese”, “Kung Yü So T’an” was likely published sometime after the second edition of “Colloquial Chinese”.

Furthermore, “Kung Yü So T’an” includes some Chinese literary works in lessons 87 to 99, though, as mentioned previously, the speaker provides only a brief explanation of the Hsi Hsiang-chi, so as to avoid any overlap with “Colloquial Chinese.”

In conclusion, I have addressed five aspects of the Kung Yü So T’an. I believe that it is a document rich with many possibilities for many fields, not only linguistics, but also, history and literature. Within the scope of this presentation, I could infer only a little about the influences between “Kung Yü So T’an” and “Colloquial Chinese,” but because their year of publication coincides, we can hypothesize a possible connection between the authors (Auguste Mouillseaux de Bernières and Thomas Wade), whereby they made arrangements with each other prior to publication. Subsequently, we can catch a glimpse of how (maritime) customs, which Western countries snatched from China, functioned. Additionally, we can discover the roles that literary works had in the study of the Chinese language at the end of the Qing era. Through these materials, we can observe how the literary language (spoken language) in each era was translated into Mandarin, and used for study.