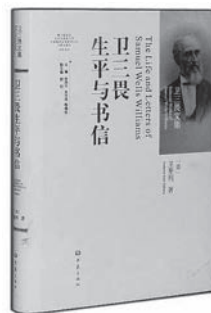


Review of *Selected Works of Samuel Wells Williams*

GUAN Yu*

Samuel Wells Williams (1812–1884) is an important figure in the history of U.S.-East Asia relations. He stands out as one of the first American missionaries to China, the first American professor in sinology and the witness to Japan's opening to the world. He worked and lived in East Asia (mainly Canton, Macao, Beijing and Japan) for 43 years. The *Selected Works of Samuel Wells Williams*, with Zhang Xiping (张西平), Wu Zhiliang (吴志良) and Tao Demin (陶德民) as the editors and Gu Jun (顾钧) as the associate editor, is a cooperative outcome of Macao Foundation, Beijing Foreign Studies University and Great Elephant Publishing House (Zhengzhou, China). Here is a brief introduction of them.

I



The Life and Letters of Samuel Wells Williams was written and compiled by his son Frederick Wells Williams. First published in 1889, this book of 12 chapters records, in a chronological order, the experiences of Williams as a missionary, scholar and diplomat through the journals and correspondence of him and his contemporaries, interlaced by telling from the author. With an intact demonstration of raw materials, it gives a truthful portrait of Williams,

* GUAN Yu 管宇 is Ph. D. Candidate at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

his life and his inner world, which distinguishes it from ego-thumping autobiographies and deep-processed biographies.

Born into a Christian family in Utica, New York, Williams was appointed as a printer for the missionary station of Guangzhou by the American Board in 1832. One year later, he went there and began his 40-year career in China. During the first 20 years, he was mainly responsible for editing and publishing the *Chinese Respiratory* (《中国丛报》). Between 1856 and 1876, he served as U.S. Chargé d'Affaires for nine times. In 1853 and 1854, Williams did interpreting on Com. Perry's two expeditions to Japan. In 1856, he resigned from the American Board and accepted the position of Secretary of the U.S. Legation to China. In 1858, he witnessed the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin with Wm. B. Reed, U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary. After Williams' return to the U.S., he was appointed as the first Professor of Chinese Language and Literature by Yale University in 1877. In 1884, he passed away in New Haven, Connecticut.

As seen in the book, S. W. Williams, the founder of American sinology, opened a window for Americans to understand the real China in early modern times. His publications include lexicons such as *Easy Lessons in Chinese* (《拾级大成》), *Tonic Dictionary of the Chinese Language of Canton Dialect* (《英华分韵撮要》) and *A Syllable Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (《汉英韵府》), and informative readings like *A Chinese Topography* (《中国地志》), *A Chinese Commercial Guide* (《中国商业指南》) and the masterpiece *The Middle Kingdom* (《中国总论》). In addition, when Williams managed the printing office of *Chinese Respiratory*, he wrote on Chinese weights and measures, natural history, literature, construction, etc.. Undoubtedly, Williams' passion for Chinese language and knowledge was largely driven by his original motive to advance Christianity in China. Williams deserves our growing research for his long stay in China as multiple identities and his knowledge and experience that come along. This book provides valuable sources for missionary studies and the research on American sinology, China-U.S. relationship in the 19th century and modern Chinese history at large.

II



The Middle Kingdom (《中国总论》) is the first book in the U.S. that makes a comprehensive overview of China's cultural history and current conditions (in late Qing Dynasty). It epitomizes American sinology in the 19th century.

As one of the first American missionaries to China, Williams dedicated this book to his bosom friend Gidden Nye for his generous help with which Williams returned to his sick father in America from Canton.

In two volumes and 26 chapters, this magnum opus unveils China's geography, population, nature, laws, education, language, literature, art, social life, etc.. Such an encyclopedia about China cannot be finished in only two years without Williams' long stay in China and his intensive research into the Chinese language and culture. As a linguist, diplomat and missionary, he was able to survey every aspect of China. Moreover, the vast illustrations and both Chinese and Western literature quoted in the book gives it further academic value. This book was revised and published in 1883 based on the 1848 edition, with three chapters added: the Taiping Rebellion, the Second Opium War and Recent Events. Much of the revision was assisted by his son Frederick W. Williams.

As Williams put in both editions, the purpose of writing *The Middle Kingdom* is to "divest the Chinese people and civilization of that peculiar and indefinable impression of ridicule which has been so generally given them by foreign authors". Since the American Revolution, Americans' knowledge of China had been indirect and partial. They glimpsed the tip of the iceberg from nothing but non-fictions and travel journals of European diplomats and merchants, predominantly *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (Sir George Thomas Staunton) and *The Chinese: General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants* (Sir John Francis Davis). After the dissolution of the Society of Jesus and then the outbreak of the Opium War, the Chinese were treated with contempt and the image of China plunged, much in a distorted way. *The Middle*

Kingdom, at this opportune moment, made the American voice heard on Chinese studies and rid of the dependence on Europe for understanding China.

Overall, this book provides an accurate and brilliant insight into China and the Chinese. For example, on the character of the Confucian system of ethics, it captures one of the essences of Confucianism – ritual propriety: “From the duty, honor, and obedience owed by a child to his parents, he (Confucius) proceeds to inculcate the obligations of wives to their husbands, subjects to their prince, and ministers to their king, together with all the obligations arising from the various social relations. Political morality must be founded on private rectitude.” (vol.1, p.530)

III



The Journal of S. Wells Williams: Expedition of Japan With Commodore Perry is based on the bounded volume of Williams’ private letters to his wife in 1853–1854. It was faithfully transcribed by Prof. Miyazawa Shinichi (宫泽真一).

It falls into five parts: the Preface by Shinichi, the body part of Japan Journal, the Reference of the editors, the Appendix which comprises miscellaneous unpublished correspondence of Williams in 1853–1854 and the Notes to the body part.

The Journal tells of Williams’ experiences during his expeditions to Japan in 1853 and 1854 as an interpreter and aide to Perry, which marks the start of his transition from a missionary-printer to a diplomat. In May 1853, the motive to further Gospel and the call of the sate impelled Williams to reach Naha, Lewchew. On Jun 6th, Perry and his delegation managed to visit the capital of Lewchew - Shuri in spite of local opposition. On July 14th, the U.S. met Japan officially for the first time in history in Kurihama, with the letter of President Fillmore being delivered. On Aug 1st, a bazaar was open for the U.S. in Napa, which indicates the commencement of their free trade. The first

expedition ended on Aug 3rd. On Jan 21st, 1854, Perry and Williams reached Napa, Lewchew for their second expedition. On Mar 31st, the Treaty of Kanagawa was signed, a symbol of the establishment of U.S.-Japan bilateral ties. On Jul 11th, another treaty was signed between the U.S. and Lewchew, a strategic port to Japan. On Aug 11th, Williams ended his second expedition and returned to his home in Macao.

This book offers precious materials for the research on the diplomatic career of S. Wells Williams as well as Japan-U.S. relationship. During the two expeditions, Williams' command of Japanese and Chinese contributed to the conclusion of the treaties, and moreover, his timely advice to Perry helped ease possible frictions with Japan. For example, in drafting the Kanagawa Treaty, the number of Japanese ports to be opened was cut to two from five, and consular jurisdiction was excluded upon Williams' request. With his reason and dispassion, Williams served as a buffer agent between the assertive commodore and the vigilant Japanese. Meanwhile, he was steadfast and far-sighted. He made it clear that Japanese close surveillance would incur resolute actions from America, and he bluntly turned down Japan's request to limit U.S. movement within Nagasaki. By including the most-favored-nation treatment in the Kanagawa Treaty, Williams laid the foundation for the enduring business interests of America in East Asia. Such flexible diplomacy was attributed to his Christian motivation and his pursuit of national good. As Shinichi puts it, the expeditions put an end to the isolation policy of Shogunate Government through peaceful, though threatening with men-of-war, means, and opened Japan's long-closed doors to foreigners and their commerce, with its impact as far-reaching as what the Opium War left on China. With the two expeditions, Williams accomplished the state-conferred mission and embarked on the journey of professional diplomacy.

IV



The Journal of S. Wells Williams: Expedition to Tientsin and Peking

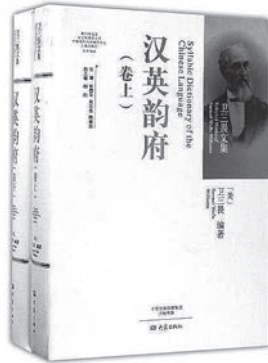
(1858–1859) is a collection of private letters from Williams to his wife between Apr 17th, 1858 and Jan 13th, 1860. During this period, Williams was attached to the U.S. embassy, assisting Minister William B. Reed in the negotiation of the Tientsin Treaty, and accompanied his successor John E. Ward to Peking to exchange the ratifications. Meanwhile, he also went to Shanghai and Japan with the legation. The letters tell of Williams' experiences and association as a diplomat as well as his concern for his family across the Pacific.

In April 1858, the warships of Britain, France, Russia and America assembled at the Taku Forts at a stalemate with China. Rounds of futile negotiations provoked conflicts between the Anglo-French Allied Force and the Qing army. The disparity in strength was clearly detected by Williams, but remained oblivious to the conceited and feckless Chinese officials. "... my pity is more excited at their ignorant confidence, than my indignation at their refusing to grant us what is demanded. I'm afraid nothing short of the Society for the Diffusion of Cannon Balls will give them the useful knowledge they now require to see their own helplessness. (p.44)" As Williams observed, the citizens of Tientsin fled in large numbers during the war and moved back when it wended down. They remained indifferent to foreign faces and passive in resistance though in dire poverty. Such a disorder and suffering must have hardened Williams' missionary resolve and impelled him to get the article into the Tientsin Treaty which permitted the free exercise of the Christian religion among the Chinese people.

After leaving Tientsin, Williams went to Shanghai in charge of investigating the losses of Americans at Canton and elsewhere. There, he learned the miserable news of his son Olyphant's death. Later, in 1859, he went with the new U.S. Minister Ward to exchange ratifications at Peh-tang as the latter refused to perform the *kowtow* before the Emperor.

This book provides valuable sources for the research on Williams' diplomatic career and contribution, as marked by his competence in interpreting, negotiation, compiling of the treaty, and most importantly, his vision to have missionary activities legalized in China. In a broader sense, it unveils a missionary's view of China and offers us a different perspective to see modern Chinese history and diplomacy.

V



The Syllabic Dictionary of the Chinese Language (《汉英韵府》), which was published in 1874, embodies the highest achievement of Williams in the Chinese language research.

The motive of compilation, according to Williams in the Preface, stems from the scarcity of practical and up-to-date lexicons and the tenfold growth of Chinese language learners at that time.

The Dictionary emerged mainly out of his previous work -- *A Tonic Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (《英华分韵撮要》). Other works of his predecessors had also been consulted. For example, Williams referred to the *Wu-fang Yuen Yin* (《五方元音》) in arranging characters, the *K'anghi Tsz'tien* (《康熙字典》) and Medhurst's translation in defining characters and expressions, and the *Selected Characters Carefully Examined* (《艺文备览》) in defining etymologies.

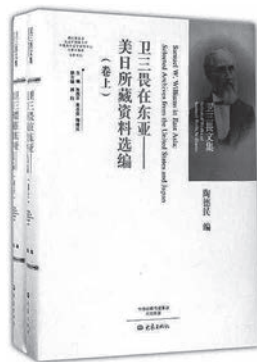
The Introduction part of the lexicon is a multifaceted and profound thesis on the Chinese language, including Mandarin, orthography, aspirates, tones, old sounds, dialects, radicals and primitives. A wide range of lists and tables are provided in the body as well as the Introduction part, such as the Abstract of the Chinese Dynasties, the List of Family Surnames of the Chinese, the Names of the 18 Provinces and the 28 Chinese Zodiacal Constellations. The body part contains 12,527 characters under 522 pronunciations. Every pronunciation is annotated by the manner of articulation, the old sound and the ways to pronounce its dialects, followed by all the Chinese characters of that pronunciation and different tones. Such a phonetic transcription system distinguishes the Dictionary from others. Apart from its pronunciation and tone, almost every character is marked with the structuring or etymology and the meanings, and exemplified by common phrases and expressions. Each meaning is separated by a semicolon, but it does not correspond to the expression below one-to-one—quite a difference from modern dictionaries. Compared with the *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (《五车韵府》) by

Robert Morrison and *A Dictionary of the Ko-keen Dialect of the Chinese Language* (《福建土话字典》) by Walter Medhurst, this Dictionary has more concise, accurate and evenly explained definitions. Moreover, a cultural perspective was adopted to clarify character structures (人 on p.370) and meanings (鬼 on p.566), which offers Chinese learners a deeper insight into Chinese philosophy and society. Notably, different from Robert's long-winded analysis, Williams used the shortest sentences to convey the richest cultural connotation (理 on p.603).

Despite its breakthroughs, the lexicon is still flawed. In some cases, a meaning has no illustrative expression, or one expression overlap another (理会 and 必理会这一句 on p.519). Although the emphasis on dialects makes the Dictionary special, they're limited to those spoken in missionary and business destinations. This brings us to the conclusion that Williams' study of Chinese is also utilitarian.

After its debut in 1874, the Dictionary received wide applause and became a must-have for Western Chinese learners. It had since been modeled on by lexicon compilers for its accuracy, conciseness and tidiness, and was later revised in accordance with the Wade system. As a milestone in American sinology, it will leave an indelible mark in the history of teaching Chinese to foreigners and the history of Chinese-English dictionaries.

VI



Samuel W. Williams in East Asia: Selected Archives from the United States and Japan is a treasury of archives on the study of Williams compiled by Tao Demin, professor of Kansai University and founding President of Society for Cultural Interaction in East Asia.

Apart from Part I—membership certificates and autobiographies, the body of the book showcases the images and literature related to Williams by four periods: around the First Opium War, during the expedition to Lewchew and Japan, around the signing of the Tientsin Treaty and the residence in Peking,

at Yale University till his death. The appendixes include materials about Elijah C. Bridgeman, the guide to the Samuel W. Williams Family Papers and Professor Tao's several articles about Williams.

With the images drawn mainly from the Japanese translation of *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan* and the literature from Samuel W. Williams Family Papers of Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, the abundant and wide-ranging archives embody the strenuous research efforts of Tao in the past two decades. They also reveal his approach to probe into history from as many perspectives as possible. First, the historical facts are provided in diverse forms, e.g., in both manuscripts and printed text (the autobiography of Williams), in multiple languages (the Kanagawa Treaty, the Additional Articles to the Tientsin Treaty) and in extracts of different books (Luo Sen's *Journal of a Visit to Japan*). Second, both the core materials and their "derivatives" have been uncovered. For example, although Perry and Williams were key players in the expedition to Japan and their journal and memoir are central to relevant analysis, Luo Sen and Yoshida Shoin also contributed their own share and thus offered us fresh insights with the Japan Journal and the Letter of Surrender respectively. By taking all the materials into account, one will gain a holistic picture of an event. Meanwhile, new domains of research will pop up. For instance, a focus on the missionary-printer career of Williams cannot miss the mention of Elijah Bridgman. To start from that, one might unconsciously extend his attention to the first-generation missionaries in China such as Peter Parker, Charles Gutzlaff and their cooperation and inheritance. Another example. In studying the diplomatic life of Williams, one will find his important role in the conclusion of the Burlingame Treaty. Then after further reading, the dual identity of Burlingame in China-U.S. diplomacy might emerge as a new dimension of interest.

Samuel W. Williams in East Asia serves as the most complete source for the research on Williams. It also offers a glimpse into missionary activities in modern East Asia, early American sinology and the relationship between America and East Asia in the 19th and 20th century. Moreover, it provides valuable experience for the mutual learning and constructive interaction between the East and the West.

The *Selected Works of Samuel Wells Williams* were published to review the historical figure who made a difference in the 19th century Asia-Pacific and summarize the experience of mutual learning, equal dialogue and constructive interaction between China and the U.S., Japan and the U.S., as well as the East and the West at large.

