

*ABC Dictionary of Sino-Japanese Readings*, edited by Victor H. Mair. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. Pp. xiii + i, 212. \$55.00 (hardcover).

All of us are indebted to Victor H. Mair for his work as Associate Editor of the wonderful *ABC Chinese-English Comprehensive Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003, and other versions), and for his dedication as General Editor of the ABC Chinese Dictionary Series published by the University of Hawai'i Press.

Victor Mair has here compiled another very helpful reference work, the *ABC Dictionary of Sino-Japanese Readings* (hereafter, "ABC-SJR"). It contains 13,072 entries of individual Chinese characters (including several Japanese *kokuji* identified as "jigi" 字義), arranged in *pinyin* order (*kokuji* being assigned Chinese readings under their main phonetic component, e.g. **jiān** for 榿 "kashi"). The four-page "Preface" and one-page "How to Use This Dictionary" are followed by 212 pages of sinographs in double columns.

Each graph (listed in romanized order in **bold** type with tone mark) is followed by its Japanese *on*-reading in romanized BLOCK script, and by its *kun*-reading(s), if any, in lower-case letters. Note the following sample entry: "**xiě** 寫 SHA utsu-su utsuru": "SHA" is the *on* reading; "utsu" is the "root" *kun* reading, with *okurigana* preceded by hyphens (namely, "-su" and "-ru") for the full *kun* readings, "ustusu" and "utsuru." Also, *italicized* lower-case letters are given for "proper names" (*namae*); for example, three are provided for the following: "**xùn** 巽 SON *tatsumi yuku yoshi*." All of the above makes perfect sense as an efficient way to communicate a great deal of information.

Many *on* readings are romanized, not only in accord with modern Japanese orthography, but also with traditional renderings as well; for example, in the following, "**jiào** 叫 KYOU (KEU) sake-bu," "KYOU" renders きょう (read "kyō") and KEU renders けう (also read "kyō"). The inclusion of traditional orthography may prove helpful in some contexts (for example, in looking up the second part of a compound in the great Morohashi dictionary, where traditional order is followed; more about this below). In fact, there are complications when providing older forms; for example, in addition to what is given for 幼, the *kanji* can also be read "EU" ("yō"). It's a bottomless pit.

Often, multiple *on* readings are given in modern transcription, preceded by “K” (for Kan 漢 readings), “G” (for Go 吳 readings), “T” (for Tō 唐 readings), and/or “H” (for Habitual readings); for example, “**qīng** 清 / 清 SEI SHOU K:SEI G:SHOU (SHAU) T:SHIN.” It is disappointing that nowhere is any explanation given of “Kan, Go, and Tō” readings, nor is there even reference to treatments of them in general Western-language books on Japanese.

With the inclusion of more than 13,000 Chinese characters, a large number of which are well outside the personal vocabulary (or even most passive of mental lexicons) of most readers, more than half of the entries have only an *on* reading. Personally, I think “less” would have been “more.” I wish the volume had the more-or-less standard 8,500 characters of most one-volume dictionaries. The rest, quite literally, get in the way.

Many of the more commonly used graphs have one or more *kun* readings. These are what distinguish Japanese from Chinese as a transcription system, and present one of the “fun challenges” of learning the language. It is a pleasure to leaf through ABC-SJR and mentally practice coming up with the three readings — Mandarin, *on*, and *kun* — for individual characters; for example, 東: “**dōng** TOU higashi.”

What not infrequently happens, however, is that a character has a plethora of *namae* readings. Anyone actively reading Japanese material knows that trying to master *kanji* readings for proper names of people and places is an endless (and hopeless) pursuit. Dictionaries, understandably, try to be comprehensive; for example, here with 東: “*agari akira azuma kochi to tou hajime haru higashi hide moto.*” Again, one wishes for less (say the first five, in terms of frequency, followed by “etc.”). Personally, I would have left them out; so many are tied to specific people and specific places that they are best accessed another way, say through the online Diet Library or via the sources noted below. Arguably, though, they do fit under the rubric, “Sino-Japanese Readings,” broadly (if not conventionally) defined.

A real drawback to ABC-SJR is that we are not told how it might be used. The one-page “How to Use This Dictionary” gives a brief explanation of conventions followed in the work, but says nothing as to how one might use it. I will try to provide at least one way the dictionary might be employed, in addition to that already noted (of using it to review, study, and learn the Mandarin, *on*, and *kun* readings of the two or three thousand most commonly used graphs).

First, I must make a detour to explain some of my rationale. In recent years I have taken to looking up premodern Chinese compounds in three sources: *Hanyu da cidian* (漢語大詞曲 [Great Dictionary of Chinese Phrases], Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1987–95, 13 vols.), “Morohashi” (namely, Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* 大漢和辭典 [Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary of Phrases], Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1955–60, 13 vols.), and *Nihon kokugo daijiten* (日本国語大辞典 [Great Dictionary of the Japanese Language], 2nd ed., Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2000–02, 14 vols.) via *Japan Knowledge*. Each contains material not found in the other two. Surprisingly, *Hanyu da cidian* does not include many citations found in Morohashi. And *Nihon*

*kokugo daijiten* sometimes includes Chinese sources not found in the other two, and not surprisingly, provides far better coverage of usage of *kanji* compounds in *Kanbun*.

Other contributions by Victor Mair — *An Alphabetical Index to the 'Hanyu da cidian'* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003) and *Conversion Tables for the Three-volume Edition of the 'Hanyu da cidian'* (Sino-Platonic Papers #169, 2006) — make this reference work infinitely more usable than it had been previously. In recent years, they have been eclipsed by the CD version of the dictionary, which offers even faster accessibility, as well as copy-and-paste capability.

In the meantime, the great Morohashi dictionary seemed to be dying on the vine, a relic of earlier days in Taiwan when pirated editions were cheap and other reference works unavailable. But the publication of *Dai Kan-Wa jiten: Goi sakuin* 大漢和辭典: 語彙索引 (Index of Compounds in the 'Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary of Phrases'; Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1990) has revolutionized access to the work. Before, one had to find a head-character (among more than 48,000 entries), then search for the compound among sometimes more than a thousand sub-entries (listed in Japanese *gojūon*-order, by the *on* reading of the Chinese compound, as transcribed in old-style orthography employing *katakana*). It could take a great deal of time. Now, in one short step, one can look up a compound (or confirm it's not there!) in record time, and get a specific volume and page number. As with *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, it is helpful to have explanation of an entry in something other than Chinese, even if in Morohashi it is sometimes in highly sinified Japanese.

This is where Mair's new Dictionary comes in. If one only knows the Chinese reading of the characters in a compound (or of one of the characters) — e.g., for “héngshuò 橫槩” — one can quickly find in ABC-SJR the *on* readings (namely, “ō” for the first character, “saku” or the other, the vast majority of readings in both the Morohashi dictionary and index being *on-on* compounds), then go to the *Goi sakuin* volume and find there that the compound “ōsaku” is treated in Morohashi on page 565 of vol. 6. No need to search for it among the 317 listed under 橫 in that work. (If anyone has a set of Morohashi languishing on the shelves, I highly recommend buying a copy of the *Goi sakuin*. It makes the dictionary a good ten times more usable.) The Mair volume helps access both. That is another way one might utilize ABC-SJR. Perhaps he has additional ones in mind.

To proceed with the third source for treatment of Chinese compounds: *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, accessed via *Japan Knowledge* (Tokyo: Netto Adobansu-sha, 2001–). *Japan Knowledge* is an online site subscribed to by the libraries of major research institutions. Its importance cannot be overstressed. My only fear: given its title, many sinologists may overlook it. By inputting a compound (or character, or “kana” set, or name, or title), treatment in dozens of digitalized volumes is accessed. These include many Japanese-language dictionaries (and *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, no less), biographical and place-name dictionaries, historical dictionaries, English-Japanese and other-language-to-Japanese dictionaries, a 30-volume Japanese encyclopedia, the multi-volume English-language *Encyclopedia of Japan*, and (for sinologists!) the full text of

hundreds of volumes in the great Tōyō Bunko series. Both entry-title searches and full-text ones are possible: the former lead to discrete treatments of the search-term in reference works, the latter to all instances where it is cited in the works included (which can be narrowed, if desired).

Unfortunately, *Japan Knowledge* does not include Morohashi or *Ajia rekishi jiten* アジア歴史事典 (Dictionary of Asian History; Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1959–62, 10 vols.) — or the latter’s ancestor, the *Tōyō rekishi daijiten* 東洋歴史大辭典 (Great Dictionary of Oriental History; Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1940–41, 9 vols.) — which have traditionally been the best sources for Japanese readings of China-related terms. (In point of fact, individual institutions’ subscription packages to *Japan Knowledge* differ. Some do not include *Nihon kokugo daijiten*; others include *Tōyō rekishi daijiten*. Not a few share access with other institutions.)

*Japan Knowledge* is especially important for sinologists. Oftentimes, Western scholars give reasonable-sounding romanized transcriptions of terms, cobbling together possible readings of them from *The New Nelson Japanese-English Character Dictionary* (Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1997, or its original 1962 edition) and elsewhere, and end up with something that is wrong. (I am not faulting the Nelson, which is a great dictionary.) For example, a Ph.D. dissertation on the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 repeatedly gives as the Japanese-language reading of the work “*Bunshin chōryō*,” when it should be “*Bunshin chōryū*.” An HJAS article citing a Japanese-language study on the Ming 明 dynasty uses “Mei” instead of “Min” to transcribe the title. Many make the fatal error of asking a Japanese they happen to know how to read a name or title or compound, forgetting that few have sinological knowledge or other requisite specialized training. (One colleague insisted on “Sei” for the reading of Qing 清 dynasty, which should be “Shin.” He told me his wife, who is Japanese, reads it that way; by definition, I had to be wrong.) If one uses *Japan Knowledge*, at least one will be in good company with the readings used.

I will indulge here, by adding what I wish were in ABC-SJR, and perhaps unfairly draw attention away from all that *is* there. I wish Victor Mair had included two items with each graph: (A) the Morohashi entry-number and (B) a brief one- or two-word English-language definition. The one would help in using Morohashi, which in turn might obviate the need to include old-style orthography, since items could be readily checked there or at *Japan Knowledge*. Although Nelson’s includes Morohashi entry-numbers, the most convenient volume for sinologists, especially when knowing only the Chinese reading, is Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991). And Pulleyblank includes English shorthand-equivalents for the characters treated. Personally, I find it frustrating (and depressing) to see extensive lists of unmediated characters. I would like to have my tentative understanding of many confirmed, and to gain some notion of the meaning of the all too many that I do not know. Removal of *namae* and of the old orthography for *on* readings (and possible reduction in the number of graphs treated) would have made room for both.

Doubtless out of considerations of space, there are no indexes either to the Chinese readings for the 13,000-plus characters included, or to Japanese readings for same (e.g., those can be read as “akira”); the latter, in particular, would have made the volume unwieldy. With so many characters, dozens having the same tone, thank god they are listed in Kangxi-radical order — very helpful! In the Pulleyblank volume they are not, which can distract.

Finally, mention should be made of the pioneering work by Bernhard Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1923; rpt. Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Publishing, 1966). It includes *on* readings and informed English-language equivalents. Unfortunately, the characters are in his particular order (one has to look them up in the index first) and no tones are provided for modern Chinese readings. Yet interestingly enough, it has an index of English meanings.

John Timothy Wixted  
Harbert, Michigan