

One more “first grammar” of the Chinese language: Tarleton Perry Crawford’s *Mandarin Grammar*

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Despite a very substantial tradition of linguistic studies, Chinese linguists did not develop any learning comparable to what in Europe and in India was labelled as “grammar” until nineteenth century. But Chinese grammar did not remain untouched by any scholarly interest for such a long time. When in sixteenth century many European explorers and missionaries embarked in a number of long journeys across the oceans, European linguistics soon was employed to describe new and unknown languages. European linguists put much effort in formulating grammatical descriptions that could well explain the structures of the languages they got in touch with; but in spite of their efforts, they could not help wearing the eyeglasses of traditional Latin grammatical scheme for studying languages which were completely different from Latin. The first ever description of Chinese language by means of European linguistic categories is deemed to be the *Grammatica Sinica* (1653) by the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini (1614-1661); after this works an abundant number of linguistic descriptions, grammars, phrasebooks and dictionaries were composed by European missionaries and scholars. They all were written in European languages and very hardly adopted some of the notions of traditional Chinese linguistics; they tried to adapt Chinese grammar to Latin instead. Chinese scholars usually acknowledge the *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通 (1895–8) by Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845–1900) as the beginning of a Chinese study of grammar: but in fact, even though it is relatively original in its proposals, it is not the first grammar of Chinese written in Chinese.

My contribution presents the *Mandarin Grammar* (*Wenxueshu guanhua* 文學書官話; 1869) by the Baptist missionary Tarleton Perry Crawford (1821–1902). Its interest lies not only in its temporal primacy in comparison with Ma’s work, but also in the original views with which Crawford described Chinese. Crawford, on the one hand, applied some of the traditional categories of Latin, but on the other hand applied some new categories he had specifically invented for Chinese; being the first to write them down in Chinese and not in Latin or other Western languages, he had also to invent the necessary terminology. Crawford’s *Mandarin grammar* was later translated into Japanese and became a major source for the knowledge of the Chinese language in Japan and had some influence on the development of a Westernized Japanese grammatical description. As for China, Mandarin Chinese was employed in Crawford’s mission but had some influence on later grammatical studies, as acknowledged some decades later by some Chinese grammarians.