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To steal a book is no elegant offence, and to steal another book’s title may seem no more acceptable. *New Terms for New Ideas* was originally the title of a small volume compiled by Ada Haven Mateer and first published in Shanghai by the Presbyterian Mission Press in 1913. Initially conceived as a vocabulary list for the late Calvin W. Mateer’s *Mandarin Lessons*, the booklet grew into one of the first studies of the new words that were beginning to circulate in China by the thousands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Other books, even from that early period, certainly provide more comprehensive inventories of lexical innovations than Ada Mateer was able to “cull from the pages of Chinese Mandarin newspapers”. But no one, and we happily acknowledge this here, has found a more concise way of saying why these once new terms continue to be of interest, to linguists, of course, but perhaps even more so to historians of science and thought. Thus, our reviving of Ada Mateer’s title for the present volume should be taken as an act of reverence rather than a misdemeanour.

The chapters in this book discussing the vicissitudes of new terms and new ideas in late Qing China have evolved from a series of symposia organized by the research project *Wissenschaftssprache Chinesisch* (WSC) or *Studies in the Formation of Modern Chinese Terminologies*. This project and all events that have taken place within its framework were made possible, exclusively or in part, by a generous grant from the Volkswagen Foundation. For this invaluable support, we extend our thanks to the Foundation and to Hiltgund Jehle, our programme director, who has helped to keep us focused over the past four years through continued encouragement and occasional exhortations.

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Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung and Joachim Kurtz
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