



Article about “Wide Influence” of L. E. Dickson

I read, and am fascinated by, the article on “The ‘Wide Influence’ of Leonard Eugene Dickson,” by Della Dumbaugh and Amy Shell-Gellasch in the August 2017 *Notices*. It describes Dickson’s wide influence as reflected in three of his students graduating in the same year: A. Adrian Albert, Mina Rees, and Ko-Chuen Yang.

All three are fascinating subjects by themselves. Albert is a well-known, notable algebraist of the Chicago school and an administrator of the highest order. Rees is the subject of a biography written by Shell-Gellasch. Yang and his student Hua Luogeng were fine contributors to the development of the Chinese school of modern mathematics. I am particularly interested in Yang, because he taught at Southwest Associated Universities, which had a seven-year tenure during the Sino-Japanese war and which was attended by both my parents as well as others, such as Yang’s son, the physics Nobel Laureate Chen-Ning (Frank) Yang. (By the way, Southwest Associated Universities had three presidents, whose disparate personalities were often the subject of good-natured humor and banter.)

Admittedly, I am an admirer also of Leonard Eugene Dickson, whose seven-volume *Mathematical Papers* still sit on the shelves of my personal library, which I have for some time vowed to downsize, along with the rest of my hoard in the house.

I applaud the authors and the *Notices* for including the Chinese name (in Unicode) of Ko-Chuen Yang, for disambiguation, because Chinese mathematicians often published with names in Anglicized forms. I know six or seven Chinese transcription systems, including the now-standard Hanyu Pinyin and others that preceded it (such as Wade-Giles and Gwoyeu Romatzyh)—Shiing-Shen Chern’s name belongs to the latter system. People used whatever official system was then in force in official dictionaries for these transcriptions. (The doubling of “i” in “Shiing” denotes third tone; the seemingly extraneous “r” in “Chern” denotes second tone—these were concocted before the introduction of diacritical marks in computerized typesetting and typography.) Besides, in the old Wade-Giles system, there were mispronunciations, or dialectical influences, so that the system was many-to-one for the same Chinese characters. So, I believe supplying the Chinese names of Chinese scientists helps a lot to disambiguate.

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The full space the article introduced in the Chinese name of 楊克純 can be considered an honest (though unorthodox) attempt to highlight his family name, but it is really unnecessary, as the correct form is to put his family name first (before the given name), which is the standard Chinese appellation—no spacing inserted. I would also like to see Hua Luogeng’s Chinese name (华罗庚) used as well.

I thank the authors for writing such an inspiring article, which I have thoroughly enjoyed.

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Updating Math Genealogy

In our article on “The ‘Wide Influence’ of Leonard Dickson” in the *Notices* (August 2017), Amy Shell-Gellasch and I noted that Dickson had 67 PhD students in his forty-year career at the University of Chicago. Peter May inquired about this number, since the Mathematical Genealogy Project listed only 53 students for Dickson. Following the guidelines for submitting new students to the Mathematical Genealogy website, I added 15 names to Dickson’s list and removed one name, Marion Stark, who was not his PhD student. I want to extend a generous thanks to Peter May for calling this discrepancy to our attention and to the Mathematical Genealogy Project for their excellent service to the mathematical community. I encourage other members of our community to submit updates to this valuable database.

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Peripatetic Accent Marks

I would like to reassure the readers that the accent marks in my name are firmly rooted on the letters “a” and they have no business wandering over to the “o” as in the September 2017 *Notices* (p. 922 column 2 and p. 923).

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EDITOR’S NOTE. Yes, sorry, it is a shame to spoil such nice symmetry.