
One into many: translation and the dissemination of classical chinese literature. Leo Tak-hung Chan. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003, 369 pp.

One into many, edited by Leo Tak-hung, an Associate Professor in Translation at Lingnan University, contains 13 articles concerning the spread of classical Chinese literature throughout the world. These articles discuss the believed first translated Chinese novel written at the end of the 16th century through the popular Chinese writer Lin Yutang from the 1950's.

According to the opening and closing remarks by the editor, the translation of a text functions to perpetuate culture and to increase readership, a phenomenon agreed on by most twentieth-century intellectual historians. The original texts and translations are now becoming very valuable to anyone learning about a particular culture or society. Tak-hung Chan uses travel or "crossing borders of language" as a manner of treating translation. This technique of transmission has been documented by Tak-hung Chan after he attended

the International Symposium on "The Subjective Technology of Translation: Asia, Biopolitics, Globalization" at McGill University and Université de Montreal in January 2001, especially as a result of the remarks by Jon Solomon and Richard Calichman.

The first two articles separately debate the purpose, fidelity and quality of translations of Haoquin zhuan, a Chinese scholar-beauty romance. In 1761, the novel manuscripts (parts in English and others in Portuguese) were edited by clergyman Thomas Percy, who wrote extensive footnotes to accompany the text that explained Oriental life. The impact of this translation led to comments that, "the Chinese think, act, and feel almost exactly like us..." (Chan 31) Even though Percy's translation is considered to be among the best that exist of the work, especially since the next English translation of Haoquin zhuan excluded all Chinese words, the second author criticizes Percy, who never left England, for not being an expert on Chinese culture. He uses examples of the translation principles of Benjamin and Said to rationalize Percy's work. Benjamin would praise the translation as it encourages growth of the original text and exists tangentially as a work of art

itself, giving the original “life and fame.” Said, however, would view the translation as colonialism by which a first world imperialist alters the raw materials of a third world author and “introduces the issue of power relations into the translation equation.”

Interestingly, *Mingxin baojin* (*Precious Mirror for Enlightening the Mind*), was the first Chinese text translated into a Western language, Spanish, in 1590 by Juan Cobo, a Dominican priest working in the Philippines. The content of the book is public morality and self-development. The text, which still holds importance in the Korean curriculum of Chinese, was popular reading material for the general population. According to Pelliot, the work by Cobo has, “...no obvious mistranslations...” and should be considered, “...a brilliant rendition...” Hing-ho Chan, author of the article, “The First Translation of a Chinese Text into a Western Language”, contains a solid biography of Cobo and clearly describes the structure of the *Mingxin baojin* translation, yet still criticizes the fact that there are characters missing from the Chinese version, pointing out errors and providing possible solutions.

Next, in the articles by Lévy and Wong, the authors discuss the jour-

ney of the translation of Honglou meng (a fictional masterpiece) into Western language. The goal of translation is to learn and to understand the Chinese culture. The language varieties, according to the authors, correlate to the socio-situational features within the country. The phonological, grammatical, and lexical aspects of an original text should contribute to the construction of character and should not be lost in translation. The idea of maintaining the characters’ voices is applicable to the articles about literature, which would include the love story, “Yingying zhuan” and poetry written during the Tang dynasty.

Lastly, the final individual articles seem to conclude that while some translations (again focused on Cui Yingying) are not the “best”, they still serve to spread the Oriental culture throughout the world, mainly addressing translations of classical Chinese literature to Dutch, German, Korean, Swedish and Hebrew. The central point is that the translation clues the reader, who has a desire to be informed of the foreign, to generalizations of the Chinese culture and a need for these classic texts to have an after-life in order to promote the history of the society outside the borders of China.

There is an index to assist in the search of a topic along with pictures and tables of Chinese characters. The sections of *One into many: translation and the dissemination of classical chinese literature* that discuss the history of the text could be beneficial for an undergraduate student.

The majority of the linguistic information, however, is very challenging at this level. Knowledge of the work of Walter Benjamin and some familiarity with the Chinese language would be helpful in fully utilizing this text, since there are many references to them in this work.

Lindsay F. Farrar
St. Lawrence University
