China and the World – the World and China

Volume 2
Transcultural Perspectives on Late Imperial China

Edited by Natascha Gentz and Catherine Vance Yeh

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Essays in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner

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Volume 2

Transcultural Perspectives on Late Imperial China

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Editors' Introduction

Natascha GENTZ and Catherine Vance YEH

Festschriften are by nature amorphous compilations where friends, students and colleagues contribute their niche research, some of their more unusual scholarship, or even personal musings. All of this is typical for a Festschrift. And the topic chosen for this volume in our collection, as broad as it is – "Transcultural Perspectives on Late Imperial China" –, may seem to be pointing in the same direction. Yet, the entire collection, including this volume, is different, and not simply a collection of miscellanea. In this volume – which is ordered, like all the others, in chronological fashion – a number of themes can be identified which are pertinent throughout. First, all of the contributions are linked by a common interest in questions of transculturality, hybridity, contact zones and third spaces. These are, of course, concepts and ideas quite central to Rudolf Wagner's overall scholarly oeuvre. Each of the contributions addresses these notions in their own particular manner, sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly.

But there is more: the authors in this volume also share an interest in the hidden, the unsaid, the unknown – forgotten people and objects become our main protagonists. In addition, the importance of translation as a cultural practice and new perceptions and understandings of the role of translation in Late Qing cross- and transcultural interactions and the significant impact of particular actor networks involved in these translations emerge as two more common traits to be found throughout this volume.

Recent studies on Late Qing translation have emphasized the significance of translation in and for intellectual history in itself. Translations are no longer seen simply as supporting tools for intellectual exchange, they are no longer just taken as evidence for "reception" studies, but they are considered as transcultural endeavours, in and of themselves, producing ever new indigenous texts, meanings and understandings. At the same time, we face the challenge that many of the texts produced in the Late Qing were translations but unmarked as such. The boundaries between authors or translators were thus quite blurred – which applies to a range of publications such as journal articles, news as well as books. Much of this is widely recognized, in theory, in translation studies, but in actual analytical practice it is seldom applied. Accordingly, its impact and repercussions for intellectual history are rarely adequately reflected. This volume addresses these complexities of translational practice in a number of ways, related to linguistic translation, but also to the translation of objects, metaphors or meanings.

There never was a straight trajectory of translations travelling from one particular country to another, as mainstream reception history would often try to reconstruct – identifying, for example, "influences" from Britain, the US, Japan, Europe or later the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Instead translations were produced in and engendered through an often simultaneous and almost inevitably entangled transcultural intellectual discourse. What we find, then, is a network of multi-lingual translations of original source texts and of (trans)national networks of social actors involved in this cultural practice. Those operating in these transcultural networks were not representative of the cultural practice of a majority of people in the Qing Empire, however. Indeed, in the contributions presented here, we are, more often than not, dealing with rather exceptional individuals. They were involved in broad national and international networks, through missionary stations, publishing activities, institutions of new knowledge or travel, and this created synergies and thus also strengthened their nationwide and international impact.

Ben Elman in "Kim Chŏng-hŭi (1786–1856): A Late Chosŏn Korean Yangban in Qing China" highlights the importance of Korean translators of Chinese texts who served as go-betweens and

cultural brokers during the late 18th and early 19th century. The case of Kim Chŏng-hŭi illustrates that these Korean scholars/translators were not all admirers of China's Song learning. They were also proponents of the so-called "Northern Learning". This developed into quite a vocal group advocating Westernization for Korea. Elman unravels the enormous impact of Kim, a rather unknown translator and scholar active within this group. He reveals his group propagating a "world perspective" within their own international networks, long before China, and the political landscape changed dramatically with the rise of the British Empire and later Japan.

Federica Casalin, in her "Early Protestant Historiography and the Travel of Some 'European Characters to China: Karl F. A. Gützlaff's *Gujin wanguo gangjian* (1838)", traces a peculiar case of "translating Europe". In this early work of "world history" Gützlaff offers a rather specific view of Europe to the late Qing Chinese readership, and one that is written in rather naïvely stereotyped and judgmental fashion: Gützlaff puts an almost exclusive focus on morality to measure the success or failure of the European nations. Moreover, he is unwaveringly confident in the moral superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism. Accordingly, his accounts are scarcely meaningful reflections of the situation in the various countries themselves. It is perhaps not too surprising that his account did not have much impact as a scholarly work. Yet, it is a fine example of how early world histories were written – without even the slightest attempt of hiding one's own agenda.

"Para/Texts and the Construction of Life Histories in Women's Literary Collections in Late Imperial China: The Case of Chen Yunlian (ca. 1810-ca. 1860)" by Grace Fong, implicitly addresses the issue of translation. She examines the translation of the meaning of a source text into a completely new reading, by use of paratexts. Her case study on Chen Yunlian is a fine example of an individual female poet using resourceful subversive strategies to expose her husband as a useless wimp. Quite paradoxically, she does so in a collection of poems that was hailed for the depiction of their ideal marriage by her networks of family and friends. Fong's careful intertextual reading of paratexts, authorial colophons and autobiographical information reveals these contradictions and presents an astonishingly self-confident, autonomous gentlewoman taking hidden revenge at her husband and turning her poetry into a vehicle of public vindication, which defies all stereotypes of Late Qing womanhood.

Catherine Vance Yeh's "Shanghai as Entertainment: The Cultural Construction and Marketing of Leisure, 1850–1910" takes us from the individual level into the world of Shanghai literati, the nascent late Qing Shanghai leisure and entertainment industries and its hidden sites and playgrounds – its theaters, restaurants and cultural centers. Again, with its main audiences and actors operating in transnational and transcultural networks, the study highlights the importance of the international atmosphere, the contact zone that Shanghai was, and the prevalence of translation in both the cultural and commercial spheres as the driving motor of Shanghai's success from its inception.

Chen Pingyuan's 陈平原 "From Drama to Speech: The Voice in the Late Qing Pictorial Newspapers" (从戏剧到演说—晚清画报中的声音) explores the representation of public speech in pictorial magazines and thus exemplifies two more levels of translation – from the oral to the visual and from an older medium to a newer one. In visualizing and dramatizing speech, these periodicals attempted to spread new ideas to an even wider audience than that of the theatre, which had been the main public cultural arena for spreading ideas for social reform during the late Qing. Chen demonstrates that these pictorials could build upon a longstanding pictorial tradition of conveying music and sound through a combination of images, texts and poems. Chen argues that the popularization of public speech as a new social and political activity during the late Qing was due in part to its dramatization (another translation) within the new space created by pictorials.

Cheng Wen-huei's 鄭文惠 "Visual Wonders and Power Geography: The Politics and Cultural Narrative of Spatial Representation of Myanmar in the Dianshizhai Magazine" (視覺奇觀與權力

地理——《點石齋畫報》緬甸的空間政治與文化敘事) focuses on how this first Chinese pictorial magazine translates Myanmar as an *Other* in the imagination of the Chinese in the late Qing. Through an integrated examination of images, text and print technology, Cheng describes Dianshizhai's agenda of fostering understanding and cultural enlightenment within the framework of entertainment and commercial culture. She demonstrates that in representing Myanmar through the lens of exotic wonders but within a corrupt political and primitive cultural context, the magazine conjures up a new image of Myanmar for its Chinese readers. As Myanmar becomes, clearly, China's inferior, a new power dynamics is established which the magazine helps construct.

Elisabeth Kaske's contribution, "The Pitfalls of Transnational Distinction: A Royal Exchange of Honors and Contested Sovereignty in Late Qing China", tackles the phenomenon of transnational ornamentalism – which sounds like a nice pun on transnational orientalism, incidentally the topic of Cheng's paper just discussed. Elisabeth Kaske offers a meticulous study of the exchange of medals and ornaments during the Late Qing as part of global monarchic empire building. While ornamentalism has so far not been seen as fundamentally important to Qing rule, this article shows its significance in the emerging global state system. Underpinned by a wealth of historical information on Manchu court life and practice, this contribution addresses translations of international rituals and the use of material objects in this increasingly trans-national/-cultural context.

Ellen Widmer's contribution on "Medical Translation in Canton, 1850–1918" sheds light on the nature of collaboration between missionaries and Chinese assistants – or rather "pundits" – in translating medical texts. While the importance of these collaborations is acknowledged today, this was not the case at the time, and the assistants, or better, co-translators, most often remained unnamed. As Widmer shows, this was different within the context of the early translation of medical texts in Canton, conceivably because some of these "assistants" advanced to become medical experts themselves, which distinguished them from "mere" translators of missionary novels and other such texts.

Taking the question of "validation" of the actors one step further, Joachim Kurtz, in "Kant in China: Eine philosophische Wahlverwandtschaft" (Kant in China: Notes on an Elective Affinity, his inaugural lecture at Heidelberg University), highlights how important it is for global reception history to disentangle the many and radically variable strategies of appropriation and interpretation. Kurtz elucidates that reception history must not only look at the texts, but needs to integrate the personal networks of authors and translators and their impact on reception and translation processes. He also reminds those of us who interpret reception processes, that to state an affinity towards and popularity of Kant in China does not provide a sensible reason to speak about an affinity between Chinese and German philosophy as a whole, as has often been done.

Natascha Gentz in her contribution "Ying Lianzhi: A Journalist Mistfit Negotiating the Founding of the Tianjin *Dagongbao*" looks at the sometimes obstructive impact of transnational networks and entanglements and hybrid backgrounds. The case of Ying Lianzhi, a French/Catholic, loyalist Manchu bannerman and his more or less fruitless attempts to link up with the Shanghai literati elites in order to start his – later extremely successful – periodical, the *Dagongbao* 大公報, is her point of departure. She illustrates that hybridity in the late Qing stems from distinctions between different entities or cultures on several levels which provided the context for an "internal hybridity", engendering powerful structural asymmetries and thus potential for conflicts, and the necessity for negotiations.

This line of argument, focusing on the conflictual, agonistic qualities of transcultural encounters and translations is continued in Iwo Amelung, "Shandong, the Yellow River, the Local and the Global", who analyzes how specific practices in dealing with the shift of course of the Yellow River also involved transnational shifts in regulatory practice. His case study on river engineering reveals both the interdependence of local governance and global developments in Late Qing river manage-

ment, as well as the impact of simultaneous attempts of monopolization of knowledge on water. Obviously, translations and networks of power were at play here as well, and we will see this discussion continued in a later period in the contribution by Pierre-Étienne Will in volume 3.

This volume concludes with David Wang's 王德威 contribution "From Sinophone Studies to Sinophone/Xenophone Studies: A Polemical Essay" (華夷之「辨」到華夷之「變」華語語系研究再思考). He takes the discussion of seeing and operating China from within and without even further by focusing on the meaning of being "Chinese" *hua* 華. His contribution provides a historical backdrop to a very contemporary discussion: the polemical stance taken by Sinophone studies on the issue of writing from inside and outside of mainland China. He argues that, as the relationship between China and its neighbors today faces another era of transformation, the reinterpretation of the discourse of *hua* and *yi* and the question of translation between the two is of critical importance, not just for the Humanities but for the world at large.

His essay is a very appropriate conclusion to a volume dedicated in spirit to Rudolf G. Wagner. Throughout this volume, we are out to show that while translation plays a crucial role in the transcultural processes described above, hardly any of the translation practices addressed here deals with one language/culture/medium alone. Texts/objects/notions take international travel routes through different languages, and individual texts and their remediations have to be understood within this complex and multilayered network of translations. Moreover, none of the social actors involved in these operations acted on her or his own but relied on strong transnational networks which enabled them to bundle their efforts and advance (or fail) to become influential opinion leaders and main stakeholders in the World of Late Imperial China.