

New Frontiers in Translation Studies

Lintao Qi
Shani Tobias *Editors*

Encountering China's Past

Translation and Dissemination
of Classical Chinese Literature

 Springer

New Frontiers in Translation Studies

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Literary Translation as Cultural Encounter: Classical Chinese Literature in the World



Shani Tobias and Lintao Qi

Abstract Exploring classical Chinese literature and its translation through the centuries highlights the nature of translation as cultural encounter. The dissemination and reception of these cultural artefacts are affected by changing historical and sociocultural contexts and interactions between various agents of translation. In this introduction the editors provide an overview of all the chapters in the volume, which is divided into two parts. Part I comprises diverse scholarship on the translation of classical Chinese literature, incorporating a variety of disciplinary approaches and methodologies, by researchers in Asia, Australia, the US and Europe. Part II provides a unique platform for translators to reflect on their own experiences reading and translating classical Chinese literature. By forefronting the translators' voices, we demonstrate the nature of translation as research, enabling the contributions to function as paratexts for readers and scholars of the translations.

Keywords Classical Chinese literature · Translation · Dissemination · Sociocultural context · Interdisciplinarity · Translator reflections

Exploring the historical landscape of the translation and dissemination of classical Chinese texts is illuminating on several accounts. It contributes to our understanding of global translation history more broadly, particularly with regard to the role of context (political, sociocultural, ideological), and the interactions between agents of translation (translators, publishers, governments) as well as the changing reception of translations through time. This volume combines such historical research with “history in the making”: translators' own reflections on their recent projects translating classical Chinese literature.

Although there is an expanding researcher base and significant body of scholarship on the translation and dissemination of classical Chinese literature, the majority of the work is done by researchers in China and published in Chinese, with only

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sporadic publications in international journals (Qi and Roberts 2020, 2). Greater dialogue between scholars within and outside of China would enrich the field with insights stemming from different national contexts and academic traditions. The current volume aims to broaden the conversation in this way, breaking through geographical barriers and showcasing different disciplinary approaches of scholars based in China, Australia, the US, the UK, France, Denmark and the Czech Republic. Part I brings together this diversity of research under the umbrella themes of the translation, dissemination and reception of classical Chinese texts. The range of methodologies and approaches, from detailed archival studies to critical analyses of translation approaches and more theoretical discussions, complement each other and enable an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas. The case studies span millennia, from Peking opera to novels such as *Hong Lou Meng (The Dream of the Red Chamber)*, *Shui Hu Zhuan (Water Margin)*, *Xi You Ji (Journey to the West)*, *Jin Ping Mei (Plum in the Golden Vase)*, going back as far as early translations of Chinese mythology by the Jesuit Figurists and even translations of the Confucian classic, the *Yijing (Book of Changes)*.

Part II of this volume provides a platform for the reflections of translators themselves, comprising intimate first-hand accounts of several scholar-translators' experiences encountering and translating classical Chinese texts (the genres span novels, poetry, homoerotic writings and historical texts) into Danish, Czech and English. These personal insights elucidate the motivations, aims, research processes, challenges and approaches involved in this endeavour. Translator reflections have been published elsewhere (e.g. Wilson and Gerber 2012; Gerber and Qi 2020), but not as comprehensively as in this collection. By providing a dedicated forum for translators' voices to be heard, we are putting them on a par with traditional academic research, acknowledging that translation practice by scholar-translators is at the same time a product of their previous research, and in itself a process of ongoing research. The contributions also function as important paratexts for readers of their translations, informing their interpretation of the work and understanding of the translator's role, enhancing the status and visibility of translators. Simultaneously, these introspective and retrospective reflections by translators provide well-organised raw data for historical study of translators and translations by future generations of scholars, since it can otherwise be a painstaking process to search through multiple archival sources to reconstruct the lives, activities and motivations of translators (e.g. Munday 2013, 2014; Paloposki 2017; So 2010).

A summary of each chapter is presented below. Within each part, chapters are arranged in reverse chronological order according to the source text being discussed, as we delve deeper into Chinese literary history.

Our encounter with classical Chinese texts begins with David L. Rolston's exploration of *Jingju* (Peking opera) in English translation. The author examines three translations and one set of subtitles of the famous play *Silang tanmu (Fourth Son Visits His Mother)* produced between 1967 and 2014. He utilises paratextual material and contextual research to demonstrate four very different approaches to translation, based on the purpose and function of the target texts. The first translation contains detailed stage directions and was designed to help foreigners understand how the

original play was performed; the second, in contrast, was produced to be performed itself; and the third was part of a government-led project to present *Jingju* as works of literature. Finally, Rolston comments on amateur subtitles of a video of the play, which allow the original performance to coexist with the translation in a multimodal format.

We continue our journey back in time to arrive at one of the canons of classical Chinese literature, *Hong Lou Meng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*). While English translations of this text have been studied extensively, in this chapter, Jindan Ni and Lintao Qi chart its translational history in Japan. The authors emphasise the vibrant literary connections between China and Japan since ancient times, and the influences of Chinese classics on Japan's literary development. Within this context and drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital, they shed light on the role played by the translators' educational and social background, as well as the symbolic and financial capital provided by prominent publishers in influencing the distinct features of each translation. The authors also contend that the multiple re-translations (including re-translations by the same translator) as well as abridged versions were motivated by various factors such as the advancement of scholarship on the source text (Redology) as well as a desire to appeal to a wider, more contemporary audience, and distinguish the translation from previous approaches.

The approach to translating poetry in *Hong Lou Meng* is an interesting case study explored by Quangong Feng, focusing on David Hawkes' English translation and his techniques of using rhyme to translate both rhymed and unrhymed verses in the source text. While the use of rhyme when translating classical Chinese verse is often criticised or discounted, Feng argues that Hawkes' ability to translate in rhyme while still retaining the overall meaning of the poems enhances their artistic appeal by conveying the aesthetic effects produced by form as well as content. Feng identifies three methods adopted by Hawkes: seeking rhymes according to the original meaning; changing the meaning for the sake of rhyme; and adjusting plot elements in order to create new rhymes. Since the poems are often connected to the plot, themes and characterisation in HLM, Hawkes pays close attention to the function of the poem when deciding on the appropriate translation method.

Yunhong Wang's contribution is another discussion of translation strategy, providing a close analysis of how the motif of cannibalism is reconstructed in three English translations of the classical Chinese novel *Shui Hu Zhuan* (*Water Margin*). From a narratological perspective, Wang argues that while motif is often seen as more translatable than discourse features such as voice, an examination of these three translations shows that certain motifs may be changed, or even lost due to the mediation of translators. Wang conducts a survey of 189 clauses to identify where shifts have occurred in the translations and finds that overall, Pearl S. Buck's 1933 translation tends to retain the cannibalism motif while Sidney Shapiro's 1980 translation quite comprehensively deletes it, and John and Alex Dent-Young's 1994–2002 translation retains the motif in some instances but also performs stylistic modulation to attenuate its effect. The author describes how these translation strategies affect the characterisation, thematic links and plot development and also have intertextual repercussions for the use of the motif in the target culture and literature. The

final section of the chapter seeks to account for the varying translation approaches by situating each within its socio-historical context and considering factors such as ideology, patronage and readership.

From this, we turn to the sixteenth century classic *Xi You Ji* (*Journey to the West*) and its 1942 English translation by Arthur Waley (*Monkey: A Folk-tale of China*). Wenyan Luo and Bingham Zheng examine the role of this popular and influential translation in spawning multiple re-translations and versions in several languages, leading to the large-scale global dissemination of the work. Through a close analysis of primary sources such as correspondence between publishers and other agents in the translation process, the authors explore the dynamics involved in the networks of translations, emphasising the crucial role of publishers in the production and promotion of translations. While Waley was a renowned translator and *Monkey* was critically acclaimed, these factors combined with a highly proactive publisher who paid much attention to cover design, typesetting and publicity campaigns to make the work successful in the UK and abroad.

With regard to the dissemination of Chinese classical literature beyond Anglo-phone spheres, Pierre Kaser takes us on a tour of the French translations of erotic novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Despite being targeted by censors from early on and mostly still banned in China, these texts have survived and been translated quite broadly, such that in the half-century from the 1960s, at least twenty works have been made available in French, responding to a growing curiosity among the Franco-phone audience about ancient Chinese eroticism. The author provides an historical overview of the translation, dissemination and reception of erotic texts from *Jin Ping Mei* (*Plum in the Golden Vase*) and *Rou Putuan* (*The Carnal Prayer Mat*), to the more recent translations of a corpus of classical Chinese works (the “Siwuxie huibao” series). Kaser illuminates and critically analyses the various translation methods such as relay translations from German versions compared to more complete translations from the Chinese originals, and the creative collaborations between sinologists and translators. He draws closely from paratexts and critical commentary, examining how translators, editors and sinologists have conceived of their work.

Lintao Qi and Shani Tobias focus specifically on *Jin Ping Mei* in their chapter, investigating how the sexual component of the novel was dealt with by translators in the Japanese context. The authors provide a comprehensive diachronic study of representative Japanese translations situated in their sociocultural contexts, from the Edo period to the present day. These contexts gave rise to varying forms of censorship based on religious norms and political circumstances, and further led to self-censorship by early translators who would bowdlerise or delete the erotic content to avoid prosecution. The authors utilise the translators’ paratexts to analyse the varying motivations and aims of the translations. They show that while pre-war Japanese translators were strongly influenced by the likelihood of censorship and therefore approached their work from an ideological (moralising) standpoint or didactic purpose (improving understanding of Chinese culture and society), the post-war environment became gradually more tolerant of sexual material, giving rise to more complete translations. At the other extreme, the growth of erotic genres in Japanese popular culture since the 1970s has led to multimodal film and manga

adaptations as well as rewritings of *Jin Ping Mei* which deliberately amplify the erotic content.

Keeping with the theme of how context and ideology contribute to varying translation purposes and approaches, Sophie Ling-chia Wei presents a fascinating case study of the Jesuit Figurists, one of the earliest groups of sinologists and translators. She examines how they translated the mystical creatures and elements in Chinese classics into Latin, depicting Chinese mythological figures as figures from Greco-Roman, biblical and Egyptian mythologies, to support their case that all pagan religions have the same origin. Wei compares this with the Figurists' translations into Chinese, demonstrating how the stories were similarly adapted to cater to the needs of their target audience, this time rendering the betrayal of Satan, the fall of Adam and Eve, and the emergence of Jesus through mystical creatures in Chinese classics, to lessen their foreignness. They could thus build parallels between ancient Chinese legends and the chronicles in the Bible for the purpose of proselytisation.

The last contribution in Part I by Weirong Li traces the translation history into English of one of the most ancient Chinese texts of divination and philosophy, the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*) from 1854 to 2020. These translations have been influential in the understanding of Chinese Confucian thought in the West. As such, Li contends that the "ultimate goal" of translators has been to provide Anglophone audiences with translations that are as close as possible to the original meaning. Using translator paratexts, he identifies several interesting trends in this translation history, particularly regarding the process of translation. Early translators made extensive use of traditional authoritative commentaries on the *Yijing* and in some cases, benefitted from close collaboration with Chinese *Yijing* scholars when interpreting the source text. More recent translators have been able to take advantage of both previous translations and new scholarship, as well as important archaeological discoveries since the 1970s, such as the Mawangdui Silk Manuscript.

In Part II, we hear directly from contemporary researcher-translators who have recently completed, or are nearing completion of significant (re)translations of classical Chinese texts. Over the past decade (2011–2021), sinologist and translator Vibeke Børdahl has completed a full translation of *Jin Ping Mei* into Danish. With captivating enthusiasm, she writes about her research into the oral tradition of Yangzhou storytelling, its relationship to the Ming novels, and how she was eventually overcome by a "deep-seated urge" to translate *Jin Ping Mei* for Scandinavian readers. She describes how she drew inspiration and knowledge from the wealth of *Jin Ping Mei* scholarship available at the time, as well as prominent translations into French (Lévy's was her ideal model), German and English. For Børdahl, the most challenging, but also most enjoyable aspect of translating this novel was the linguistic polyphony of the source text, which needed to be recreated to convey the stylistic nuances and individual voices. She aimed for a translation approach that was close to the ST but not alienating for her readers, choosing not to include extensive paratextual material in the style of David T. Roy's English translation. Børdahl explains her approach to various translation issues such as proper nouns, set phrases, verse and erotic passages, making it clear that her priority was to recreate the tone, effect and atmosphere of these in the target language.

Børdahl's reflections can be read in tandem with the contribution by Lucie Olivová and Ondřej Vicher who in 2021 are currently translating the final volumes of *Jin Ping Mei* into Czech. Their translation journey is an interesting one, because they have taken over the project from the late professor Oldřich Král who translated the first seven volumes before his death. Their translation is thus necessarily constrained to a certain extent by the choices of their predecessor. Olivová and Vicher describe their unique approach to collaborative translation (whereby they each translate alternate chapters and proofread each other's translations in a sequential flow). The authors comment in detail on the various linguistic and cultural challenges of translating JPM, providing many examples of how they have dealt with such issues as register, proper nouns, units of measurement and poetry. Their solutions are varied and in their words, "attempt to find a compromise between the exotic and the domestic, a balance between the scientific and the aesthetic, between the accurate and the beautiful."

The contribution by anthropologist Mark Stevenson reflects on his experiences selecting, compiling and translating *Homoeroticism in Imperial China: A Sourcebook* in 2013, which comprises English translations of over sixty pre-modern Chinese literary works (including content selected from histories, poetry, drama, fiction, etc.) on the theme of same-sex desire. Like Olivová and Vicher, Stevenson collaborated with a co-translator, Cuncun Wu, a discipline expert, in a somewhat different process of "side-by-side collaboration," which provided a "sense of immediacy, colour, space and tone created in an act of communication that was voiced and heard" as Wu read or paraphrased the source text aloud and Stevenson drafted the translation in discussion with her. Their aim for the *Sourcebook* was to address misconceptions about the topic of same-sex desire in discourse and paratexts surrounding previous translations of Chinese materials, not through a philological translation approach, but rather one in which the aesthetics of the STs were preserved, and the sophisticated and complex nature of this literary tradition could emerge. Stevenson provides a metacommentary about the role and ethics of the translator in this regard.

Nicholas Morrow also prompts us to think about the role of translation beyond the linguistic challenges. For him, the translator's role is "not so much to balance competing values as to elucidate which values actually are at stake in interpreting the text, both today and in the past." His chapter comprises a full English translation + commentary of an ancient Chinese poem: Song Yu's "Jiu bian" (Nine phases), part of the anthology *Chuci (Elegies of Chu)*. Morrow contends that translating such a poem requires the translator to embark on a process of discovery to interpret subjects and contexts which frequently are not identified within the poem itself. By presenting each of the nine phases in bilingual format with detailed discussion of the ST and his translation choices, he takes us with him on this inspiring journey. In addition to the interpretive challenges, he explores techniques for translating metre and rhythm, as well as poetic imagery and allusions from traditional Chinese culture and literature. When dealing with many of these issues, Morrow demonstrates the importance of reflecting on the poem as a whole, considering both the intertextual and intratextual contexts when formulating an interpretation.

Developing an interpretation based on meticulous research is also central to William Nienhauser's approach to translating the *Shiji* (*Grand Scribe's Records*) into English. Nienhauser has devoted himself to this mammoth task of translation and retranslation for over thirty years, and his reflections in this chapter, as he nears the end of the project, provide readers and scholars with a behind-the-scenes appreciation of just what it takes to engage seriously in such an endeavour. Nienhauser first explains his background and motivation, and his decision to strive for a fully annotated scholarly translation to counterbalance existing translations. He adopts a "workshopping" approach to the translation process, whereby drafts are read aloud and discussed in small groups before being finalised. Indeed, he takes the notion of collaborative translation to a new level due to the sheer number of collaborators involved, including researchers and graduate students in multiple countries and regions. Drawing upon such a diversity of knowledge and perspectives when translating would take time, for sure, but would undoubtedly enrich the interpretive process.

With its merging of research and translator perspectives, this volume is likely to have broad appeal to scholars in Chinese Studies, Translation Studies, Literary Studies, and related disciplines. It may also interest other literary translators, as well as anyone who enjoys reading literature in translation.

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The Reading of Translations: Dissemination and Reception Studies

How Purpose and Function Has Affected Translation and Subtitling of the *Jingju* Play *Silang tanmu*



David L. Rolston 

Abstract *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母 (Fourth Son Visits His Mother) is a famous traditional play at the very heart of the *Jingju* 京劇 (a.k.a., Peking opera) repertoire that has been banned from performance in both the PRC and the ROC but that has nevertheless remained a perennial favorite impossible to keep off the stage. This paper examines three translations and one set of subtitles for the play and discusses their differences with particular regard to their intended purposes and audiences: two were prepared to help non-Chinese students learn to perform the play or elements of Chinese indigenous theater, one was prepared to help *Jingju* and its classic repertoire become better known outside China, and the last is a set of subtitles added to a video of a TV broadcast of a performance of the play that was posted online.

Keywords Chinese plays in translation · Bilingual translation · Performance surtitles · Translation for performance · *Jingju* (Peking opera) · Translation for different audiences and purposes

Jingju 京劇 (a.k.a., Peking opera), like Western opera, is primarily a performance genre. It grew by borrowing from other Chinese indigenous theater genres, matured into something that was different from them and with an identity of its own in the nineteenth century, then went on to become the theatrical genre with the widest reach in China and the most influential mass media of its day in the twentieth century. It was at one time so influential that Jiang Qing 江青 (1914–1991) and others picked it to be the vehicle for transforming China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). As entertainment options have proliferated since the Reform Era (1978–) began, *Jingju* has lost its predominance but still retains a lot of cultural capital.

There has been some debate as to from which local theater tradition *Jingju* adapted its version of *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母 (Fourth Son Visits His Mother), but that need not concern us. Of more importance is how prominent this play has been in the *Jingju* repertoire since our earliest records to the present. The first guide to Beijing that included a separate section on theater appeared in 1845. It includes a list of

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thirty-seven currently performing actors of the “Four Great Anhui Troupes” (*sida Huiban* 四大徽班), the four troupes perhaps most fundamental in the development of *Jingju*. For each actor is listed the roles in which plays the actor is famous for. *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母 (Fourth Son Visits His Mother) is the play that appears most often (seven times); and five characters from the play are listed (the male and female leads twice).¹

The earliest extant datable playscript for the play dates from 1880, when it is included in a woodblock-printed anthology of primarily *Jingju* plays, Li Shizhong’s 李世忠 (d. 1881) *Liyuan jicheng* 梨園集成 (Compendium of plays).² It was not remarkable for a popular *Jingju* play of the nineteenth century to have been transmitted only in manuscript for so long; the troupes, afraid of competition, did not allow the widespread transmission of the plays they developed and performed. When Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) brought in famous *Jingju* actors and troupes into the palace after the death of Empress Dowager Ci’an (1837–1881), although the actors and troupes were made to produce written playtexts for every play they performed, and Cixi was famous for watching performances with fair copies of the playtexts in front of her (actors could get into big trouble for departing from the written version), this did not immediately lead to the widespread printing of *Jingju* playscripts. That happened for the first time in the twenty years centered on 1900, when predominantly undated lithographic editions of plays were published in Shanghai in numerous editions that plagiarized each other.³ The play was longer than most in these collections, and typically split up into three fascicles, each with an illustration of characters from the play on stage. Typeset editions of the play began to appear in the early years of the Republic of China (1912–1949). There were a number of factors that spurred the increased publication of *Silang tanmu* and other *Jingju* plays. One was the spread of the genre into South China, especially Shanghai. People there were less familiar with Mandarin and needed written material to help them understand what was going on onstage (displaying subtitles on either side of the stage would not become common until after 1949). Demand for printed versions of plays was also driven by the growing number of amateur performers (*piaoyou* 票友; some editions promised that relying on them, amateurs would be able to avoid having to depend on actors, a class of people whose social status was still very low) and fans who listened to phonograph recordings and radio broadcasts of *Jingju*.

Oddly enough, *Silang tanmu* was both one of the most popular and most controversial of *Jingju* plays. To help understand why especially the latter was true, we

¹ The name of the guide is *Dumen jilüe* 都門紀略 (Concise record of the capital) and that of the theater section is “Cichang 詞場.” For a typeset version of the section, see Fu (2010, 2: 907–914).

² On Li Shizhong, who had his own theater troupes, and the collection, see Huang (1989). A scan of the copy of *Liyuan jicheng* originally collected by Nakasawa Kikuya 長澤規矩也 (1902–1980), and now held by the University of Tokyo, is available at <http://shanben.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>.

³ Basically all of these sets included *Silang tanmu*. An example would be a late Qing set titled *Huitu Jingdu Sanqing ban Jingdiao* 繪圖京都三慶班京調 (Illustrated Capital Sanqing Troupe capital tunes). The Sanqing Troupe was one of the four Anhui troupes and did not disband until 1898. A scan of the copy originally collected by Nakasawa Kikuya and now held by the University of Tokyo is available at <http://shanben.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/> (search under the title given to the entire set).

need to look at the plot of the play. It tells the story of Yang Yanhui 楊延輝, fourth son of the patriarch and matriarch of the famous Yang Family of Generals of the Song dynasty. In a battle against the northern Liao dynasty, he is captured, changes his name and identity, and is married to the daughter of Empress Xiao of the Liao dynasty, Princess Iron Mirror (Tiejing gongzhu 鐵鏡公主). After living in the Liao palace as imperial son-in-law for over a decade and fathering a young son, Yanhui hears that his mother has come north with the Song army. He gets the princess to help him sneak out of the palace to go see his mother, promising to return that very night. She tricks Empress Xiao into lending her an arrow of command that allows Yanhui to cross the border. When he does come back, Empress Xiao, now aware of his real identity, condemns him to death, but the princess saves his life by playing on her mother's affections for her grandson and herself. Yanhui is warned by Empress Xiao to not try and do anything of the sort again.

Part of the original appeal of *Silang tanmu* was the idea that seemingly unbridgeable barriers between ethnicities could be (at least temporarily) breached. The Qing dynasty was founded and run by the Manchus, with the help of Central Asians such as the Mongols, but also by Han Chinese who surrendered to them or decided to, eventually, accept the legitimacy of the dynasty. Relations between Manchu and Han were exacerbated by such things as the Manchu demand that Han Chinese men shave their foreheads and plait the rest of the hair on their heads in queues. For the first part of the dynasty, in order to avoid playing up ethnic tensions, actors were not allowed to wear Manchu dress (*qizhuang* 旗裝) and hair-styles onstage (Wang 2020). It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that this policy began to change, and in the nineteenth century, in plays such as *Silang tanmu*, not only did Manchu characters begin to appear on stage and wear Manchu dress, but all non-Chinese northerners, including the Khitan of the Liao dynasty, did so as well.

However, for those Chinese who might have been willing to praise Yang Yanhui for his filiality, the fact that he surrendered to the enemy of the Chinese state could not be forgiven. It was for this reason that the play was banned for long periods of time by both the Guomindang (Nationalist Party) in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC).⁴

It is only in recent decades that Chinese scholars have started to talk about *Jingju* librettos as dramatic literature.⁵ This has yet to become common among the rather limited number of Western scholars who work on *Jingju*, despite the fact that the open participation of literati in the writing of *Jingju* playscripts began in earnest in the Republican period, and that younger playwrights attached to *Jingju* troupes now tend to have college degrees. Western scholars of China have, for a long time, been interested in popular literature as a way to understand Chinese culture. This led to the inclusion of translations from older and more esteemed genres of Chinese theater in

⁴ While the play was not among the twenty-six plays banned by name in the early years of the PRC, constant criticism of the play kept it off the stage until the Reform Period, with the short exception of the Hundred Flowers Period (1956–1957).

⁵ The first book to discuss *Jingju* playscripts as literature, Yan (2005), is less than twenty years old.

books about China by the Jesuits⁶ and the translations of novels by missionaries (both as ways to understand China and to learn Chinese).⁷ Although what seems to be the first translation of a *Jingju* play into English was done by an Englishman who worked both in the British and Chinese civil services, he was most interested in folklore.⁸ The first book of translations of *Jingju* plays into English⁹ seems to have been done for the benefit of Westerners who might live in or visit China and want to see these plays. Entitled, *Famous Chinese Plays*, it was co-written by L. C. Arlington (1859–1942)¹⁰ and Harold Acton (1904–1994).¹¹ It was written and published in China (by Henri Veich in 1937 in Beijing [known at the time as Peiping]). The book includes the “translations” of over thirty plays but many of the scenes in them are summarized rather than translated. They are, in a sense, primarily extended synopses or guides to the plays (they often have appended remarks on how the plays are performed by famous actors seen by the pair; the book also has photographs of actors in costume and aria snatches with Western musical notation).

The next big project to translate *Jingju* plays into English did not begin to be published until 1967, when the first of the three volumes of A. C. Scott’s *Traditional Chinese Plays* appeared. That volume consisted of an introduction to “The Peking Theater” (which turns out to include both *Jingju* and *Kunqu*), and full translations of two *Jingju* plays, one of which is *Silang tanmu* and the other *Hudie meng* 蝴蝶夢 (The butterfly dream; a.k.a., *Da piguan* 大劈棺 [The great cleaving open of the coffin]). If *Famous Chinese Plays* was oriented toward Westerners who might want to attend Chinese performances of *Jingju*, *Traditional Chinese Plays* was prepared for Westerners who might want to perform (or understand how to perform) *Jingju* or make use of elements from the tradition in Western theater. Of the six translations of plays in the three volumes (the last volume appeared in 1975; all three appeared during the time Scott was running a new Asian theater program at University of Wisconsin, Madison, whose press published the volumes), Scott only directed performances of the translated version of *Hudie meng* (once in 1961 and once in 1969), with the arias spoken rather than sung. He made a half-hour TV program about this play in 1961 and in a guest lecture video-recorded in 1980 he talked about using Asian theater concepts to perform Western theater.¹² Scott was very clear that none of

⁶ Du Halde (1739–1741), included an (incomplete) translation of *Zhao-shi gu'er* 趙氏孤兒 (The orphan of Zhao).

⁷ For example, see Baller (1911).

⁸ See Stent (1876). On Stent’s interest in folklore, see Idema (2017).

⁹ A couple of *Kunqu* 崑曲 (Kun opera) plays are included. At the time in China, it was common for *Jingju* actors to perform a number of *Kunqu* plays.

¹⁰ Arlington also wrote *The Chinese Drama from the Earliest Times until Today* (New York: B. Blom, 1930).

¹¹ Acton can be taken as a representative of another segment of Westerners in China at that time. He figures in Mungello (2012).

¹² The title of the first one is *The Butterfly Dream: Chinese Classical Theater*, and was produced at Creative Arts Television in Kent, Connecticut; the second is titled *Asian Concepts of Stage Discipline and Western Actor Training*, and was produced by Michigan State University in 1980 (it is also about half an hour). Both are available in the Alexander Street Press database.

the translations, despite all the stage directions they include, are adequate to teach someone to perform the roles in them; he believed that staging the translations and training Western actors to perform the parts required intense training sessions with professional *Jingju* artists.¹³

Scott first saw Chinese theater in China shortly after World War II, when he was sent there by the British Council for Cultural Relations to China. After 1949 he lived in Hong Kong for two years, during which time he got to know Zhang Junqiu 張君秋 (1920–1997),¹⁴ the most famous male performer of female roles after Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894–1961), and other famous *Jingju* and *Kunqu* performers who were waiting in Hong Kong to see whether they wanted to return to China proper under the Communist Party. Shortly after that, Scott spent two years studying *kabuki* in Japan and published two book-length English translations of *kabuki* plays. He returned briefly to China in 1956 to see plays and former acquaintances. The grant for the new Asian theater program lasted from 1963 to 1972, after which Scott did not have the budget to bring in as many Asian theater specialists and concentrated more on teaching theater students to make use of Asian theater concepts and practices to inform their performance of Western plays.¹⁵

On the covers and title pages of the second and third volumes of *Traditional Chinese Plays*, the following text appears prominently: “Translated, described, annotated, and illustrated by A. C. Scott.” In the case of volume one, the word “illustrated” does not appear.¹⁶ As for the annotation, the translation of *Silang tanmu* has 19 footnotes and the volume in which it appears has a glossary and an index (the other two volumes do not have a glossary), but it is the appearance of the word “description” that is most of interest. As the prefaces to the three volumes make clear, Scott’s main audience for them was theater students.¹⁷ In both his *kabuki* and *Jingju* translations, he felt that just translating what the actors said or sung on stage and the very laconic stage directions of the original playscripts would not be able to give theater students, unfamiliar with the plays or the traditions they came from, a good idea of how the plays work on stage. When he was doing the work on his translations and for some

¹³ Scott (1962) described how he enlisted the aid of two Hong Kong *Jingju* professionals he knew to help train young actors to perform *The Butterfly Dream* in 1961 under the sponsorship of the Institute of Advanced Studies, but is pretty critical of how the two professionals actually performed the duties requested of them during the workshop.

¹⁴ Scott’s translation of *Silang tanmu* includes three photos of an actor dressed as Princess Iron Fan, one of which is identified as Zhang Junqiu (here and elsewhere Scott’s use of the older Wade-Giles romanization system has been converted to *pinyin*); the other two are also almost certainly of him too.

¹⁵ For an overview of Scott’s career, on which I have relied pretty heavily for detail, especially in this paragraph, see Liu (2011). Besides the three volumes of translations, Scott also published *The Classical Theatre of China* (first published in 1957), *Mei Lan-fang, Leader of the Pear Garden* (first published in 1959), and *Actors Are Madmen: Notebook of a Theatregoer in China* (1982).

¹⁶ The illustrations in the other two volumes of *Traditional Chinese Plays* take the form of line drawings. All three included posed and stage photos of actors in costume.

¹⁷ On the copyright page for each of the three volumes, there is a statement that inquiries about “performing rights” should be sent to Scott himself. The one for the first volume claims that the two plays in it are “fully protected as drama.”

time after that, access to video or film recordings of performances of the plays he translated was difficult or even impossible. He was also very clear that because of the changes going on in the PRC, traditional Chinese theater was going through irrevocable changes. Only one of the original editions of the plays translated in *Traditional Chinese Plays* represents a version revised or newly compiled after 1949.¹⁸

Alone among the six plays, Scott included an appendix for *Silang tanmu* containing “excerpts” from the play designed to “provide the reader with aural illustration of some forms discussed earlier in the description of theater music (see pp. 6–9) [of the ‘Introduction’ to the volume].”¹⁹ A note at the end of the preface to the volume says, “A tape has been made of the illustrative excerpts... printed in the appendix of this book” and provides details on how to get a copy. I have not been able to find a more detailed description of this audiotape nor to locate a copy of it. The appendix covers five excerpts: (1) Yanhui’s “opener” (*yinzi* 引子), whose first half is recited and second half sung, followed by his “stage settling poem” (*dingchang shi* 定場詩) and spoken self-introduction (*tongming* 通明); (2) Yanhui’s first aria; (3) a largely spoken exchange between Yanhui, Iron Mirror, and her maid to illustrate how these three characters speak differently, due to their differing sexes, status, and role-types; (4) a “duet” between Yanhui and Iron Mirror over her getting the arrow of command for him so he can visit his mother; and (5) a comic piece from the end of the play, all in dialogue, in which the two imperial uncles (*guojiu* 國舅) get Iron Fan to pretend to kill her son in order to get Empress Xiao to pardon Yanhui. The excerpts include short introductions (the longest, to excerpt two, is one page long) as to what is special and to be paid attention to in each excerpt. All of the excerpts provide romanization of the stage dialogue, poems, and arias in Standard Chinese (no attempt is made to show how individual words are pronounced differently from Standard Chinese in *Jingju*, which would require both some modification of the romanization system used and diacriticals or numbers to show the tone contours of individual characters [except for certain role-types that speak something close to Pekinese, the other role-types speak a stage dialect peculiar to *Jingju*]). In the romanization for Yanhui’s aria, which is sung to a slow meter and with a lot of melisma, an attempt was made to show which words extend over how many multiple beats by following those words with a line of spaced-out periods with approximately one period per extra beat.

But if we return to the language about what Scott added to his *Jingju* translations, the word “described” is most important. Playscripts, outside of any paratextual material that might appear before or after the play itself, are composed of two types of language: that which the actors vocalize, and information about how the play should be performed (stage directions). While the former should be relatively fixed across editions of the same play, the amount of stage directions provided can vary widely for theatrical genres (for instance, ancient Greek playscripts as they have been passed

¹⁸ The exception is *Shiwu guan* 十五貫 (Fifteen strings of cash), in volume two, whose newly revised version Scott got to see performed in 1956.

¹⁹ See Scott (1967, 149). The appendix appears on pages 149–159.

down to us often have no stage directions at all, while modern plays by playwrights such as Ibsen and Strindberg can include paragraph upon paragraph of character analysis and in some respects resemble a novel). The amount and types of stage directions in editions of playscripts for “traditional” plays (plays for which the playwright’s copyright is not strictly enforced, which would apply to all of the playscripts translated in *Traditional Chinese Plays*) can also vary tremendously, depending on their intended audience and use. Traditional *Jingju* plays are famously constructed by the use of “conventions” (*chengshi* 程式) that allow actors to develop the details of their characters and to efficiently construct whole worlds on empty stages with only minimal input or oversight from directors or director-like figures.²⁰ Professional *Jingju* actors are very familiar with those conventions and do not need them to be spelled out every time they are used. Amateur *Jingju* actors with access to teachers to give them personal instruction also do not need those conventions spelled out in their playscripts. Amateur *Jingju* actors with less access to teachers or who wanted to avoid too intense contact with them (because of the formerly bad reputation of actors as a class in China) and readers such as Scott’s “theater students” would have more need and interest in more detailed stage directions. The introductory material to both Scott’s translations of *kabuki* and *Jingju* plays take care to justify the prodigious amount of stage directions that they contain; it is in this sense that his translations include a lot of “description.” Whereas a mass-market printing of *Silang tanmu* such as the one in *Xikao* 戲考 (Research into plays)²¹ might only use three Chinese characters to get Yanhui onstage and ready to open his mouth for the first time, a 1938 edition used 51 Chinese characters to get to the same place.²² Scott uses 423 words to get where Yanhui opens his mouth (Scott 1967, 33–34). When I first read Scott’s *Silang tanmu*, I thought that those stage directions had been added by him on the basis of stage versions that he had seen performed, but it turned out that most of them come from the 1938 edition of the play,²³ including one on when is the best time and place to refresh your throat by drinking some tea onstage.²⁴ Scott adjusted

²⁰ These conventions are presented as the very “soul” of *Jingju* in Li (2010). The author of that book, Li Ruru, is the daughter of a famous *Jingju* actress and playwright, Li Yuru 李玉茹 (1924–2008) and the step-daughter of the most famous spoken drama (*huaaju* 話劇) playwright, Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910–1996).

²¹ *Xikao* was published in 40 installments from 1912 to 1925 by Zhonghua Tushu Guan 中華圖書館 of Shanghai. *Silang tanmu* appears in the second installment, which appeared in 1913.

²² See Liu (1938). For a comparison of around thirty manuscript copies or printed editions of the play, including the first three English versions treated in this paper, see Lu (2015).

²³ Inexplicably, Scott (1967, vii) dates the edition to 1937, when the royalty page clearly says that the first edition appeared in the following year.

²⁴ The stage direction appears right before Yanhui begins his first, quite long and slow, aria. See page four of the pagination for the playscript proper (which does include a *dramatis personae* on the first two pages) in Liu (1938; Liu’s edition has almost 80 pages of paratextual material before the playscript proper), and Scott ([1967], 35). Already in Liu’s time, the practice of having underlings bring out tea for you to drink onstage (*yinchang* 飲場) had become controversial as Western stage realism and its reluctance to break the “fourth wall” had become influential in China; by Scott’s time the practice had long vanished from the stage. To deal with that, Scott put the passage in the past tense and prefaced it with the phrase, “In the past.”

his translation of this stage direction to register some of the changes between 1938 and 1967 (see footnote 24), a practice he follows elsewhere in the translation. He also expands his stage directions to include such things as the explanation of special *Jingju* terminology and other details he felt his audience, as opposed to that of the 1938 edition, needed to be added. When I have asked students to read Scott's translations for Chinese theater and drama classes, the majority complain about getting lost in all of those stage directions.

There is a human link between the Asian theater program that Scott ran at the University of Wisconsin and the Asian theater program at the University of Hawai'i, the program that trained Elizabeth Wichmann (a.k.a., Elizabeth Wickmann-Walczak) and where she taught and produced English-language versions of *Jingju* plays until her recent retirement. That link is Daniel S. P. Yang (Yang Shipeng 楊世彭; 1935–),²⁵ who received an M.A. in directing at the University of Hawai'i in 1964, then got a Ph.D. on recent Chinese theater history under Scott in the Wisconsin program in 1976. He taught for two decades at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and directed student English-language productions of *Jingju* plays, including one of *Wulong yuan* 烏龍院 (under the title of Black Dragon Residence), which he also directed for the Asian theater program at the University of Hawai'i in 1972 in a production that Wichmann originally served as understudy for the female lead and then starred as the female lead when it went on tour in Hawai'i. Contrary to Scott's practice, Yang got the students to sing the arias to recordings of the instrumental music for them²⁶ and was able to use a 1961 film of the play starring Zhou Xinfang 周信芳 (1895–1975) to help teach the students. Some aspects of his approach to training the students were very influential on how the Hawai'i program produced English-language *Jingju* productions on a regular basis.

Elizabeth Wichmann got her Ph.D. from the Hawai'i Asian theater program in 1983 with a dissertation on the aural dimensions of *Jingju* that she revised and published as a book in 1991.²⁷ While studying in Nanjing, as one of the earliest American foreign students in the PRC after the thaw, a fortunate series of events ended up with her being assigned to the youngest disciple of Mei Lanfang, Shen Xiaomei 沈小梅 (1937–), to learn and perform the role of Prized Consort Yang (Yang guifei 楊貴妃) in the *Jingju* play *Guifei zuijiu* 貴妃醉酒 (Prized Consort Yang becomes intoxicated on wine). Her performance, in 1980, was well-received, earning her the nickname, in China, of “The Foreign Prized Consort” (*Yang guifei* 洋貴妃).²⁸ Not long after she was awarded her doctorate, she joined the faculty

²⁵ On his training and career, see Liu (2013).

²⁶ Although Yang wrote about the Colorado and Hawai'i productions of the play, he does not seem to have ever published the script(s) for them. He did publish both English and Chinese versions of a play he wrote based on the story of Yan Xijiao, the female lead of *Wulong yuan* (see Yang 2000). No arias are sung in either version, but they do make use of elements from *Jingju* and feature talking prop persons who announce things and try to explain elements of traditional Chinese theater to the audience. The book includes English and Chinese reviews of the student production of the play.

²⁷ See Wichmann (1991).

²⁸ For an example of an article whose headline uses this nickname, see Li and Liu (2002).

at Hawai'i and from 1984 to 2014 directed eight productions of full-length *Jingju* plays in English that won acclaim not only in the US but also in the PRC, where several of them toured, beginning with the first one, which I happened to get to see performed in Beijing (for reasons to be explained below, even I had to make some use of the English subtitles projected on the sides of the stage to follow some of what was being spoken and sung in English, despite being fairly familiar with the original play). The English script for that production is the only one that has been formerly published²⁹ (plans to publish all of the English scripts have been slowed because of her poor health). Wichmann's *Silang tanmu* was the fourth of the eight and premiered in 1998.³⁰

For each of the eight plays, under an exchange agreement with the Jiangsu *Jingju* Company, a team of *Jingju* artists (including Shen Xiaomei) who are members of that company select the play to be performed and create the versions of the Chinese scripts for each. For the last six months of the academic year in which a play is to be performed in English, a small group of specialists from the company come to Honolulu to oversee the training of the students. The Chinese script is modified to fit the students involved and other factors during the training process. Wichmann has described the process of working up the translation this way:

Our aim, however, is to actually perform *jingju*³¹ in English. The English translation therefore attempts to preserve the textual and musical form, so that *jingju* vocal practice may be applied. For song, this means rhymed English couplets that have the same number of syllables, in the same number of phrases, as the Chinese original—and for melismatic song, the same or a related vowel sound if at all possible. Madam Shen and her colleagues then innovatively apply traditional techniques to the English circumstance. For instance, in melismatic *jingju* singing, the prolonged central vowel is held until the end of the melodic phrase, when it is ‘closed’ (*shou*) by a gentle sounding of the final vowel or ‘n’ or ‘ng’ sound—no other consonants occur at the end of Mandarin words/syllables. When this technique is applied to the English singing of a melismatic passage, the resultant ‘softening’ of English final consonants is noticeable. For instance, the couplet ‘I saw the trap and so could not comply; I will go to Father and tell him why’ sounds more like the following when this technique is applied: ‘I saw the tra pan so cou naw com ply; I wi go to fa the an te lim why’. As a result, the sung English is approximately as difficult for an English speaker to understand as is the sung Mandarin for a Mandarin speaker, and we follow the contemporary Chinese performance practice of mounting subtitles above or beside the stage. (Wichmann-Walczak 2005, 170–171)

²⁹ The first half of the book was devoted to Wichmann's English version and the second half to the original Chinese version. See Wichmann (1986). While this publication only credits Wichmann for the translation, the unpublished versions of the scripts that I have seen always credit a co-translator. Helen Heyue Wang is credited as the co-translator for *Silang tanmu*.

³⁰ I first got to know Wichmann in 1986, when I was doing thesis research in Nanjing, when the system for quarantining foreigners that assured that we slept and ate in the same buildings facilitated meetings among us. I am very grateful to her for sharing a wide variety of materials with me over the years, including the performance script for *Silang tanmu* and a video-tape of one of the performances of it.

³¹ Wichmann prefers not to capitalize *Jingju*. I capitalize it because the “jing” is short for *Beijing*, a proper noun.

Students learn to sing romanized (*pinyin*) versions of the arias first, then switch to the English versions. In the performance script, all vocal performance that must match set metrical requirements, such as lines of poetry, arias, or a character’s “opener,” use line breaks, and have each line of English followed underneath by its romanization. When necessary to make each syllable in the romanized lines match a syllable in the English line, multi-syllabic English words are split and hyphenated. The first example is Yanhui’s opener, which runs like this³²:

So	long	a-	Part	my	mo-	ther
<i>Shen</i>	<i>kun</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>Zhou</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>lao</i>	<i>mu,</i>
Dwells	in	my	Heart			
<i>Chang</i>	<i>gua</i>	<i>xin</i>	<i>tou</i> ³³			

In this case, the English rhymes in the same places as the original Chinese does. The rhyme words in Chinese are *zhou* and *tou* and in English are part and heart. “So long apart, my mother dwells in my heart” is, however, not a very accurate translation of the original. A literal rendering of the Chinese would be: “Self trapped in Youzhou, thoughts of my old mother, long hang in my heart,” but as is the case with Western opera, a number of aspects are neglected in the Wichmann performance playscript in favor of performability.

Since the Wichmann translation of *Silang tanmu* is a performance script for theater students studying in Hawai’i, it uses conventions such as acronyms for “stage right” (SR) and “center” (C) when neither the full nor any short forms of these terms appear in *Jingju* playscripts. Also rarely found in regular *Jingju* playscripts are stage directions concerning when the inner curtain (*erdao mu* 二道幕 in Chinese) is to

³² The grid does not appear in the original translation; I have added it to keep the vertical columns aligned.

³³ In extant playscripts for the play, the opener takes two different forms, one like the one in the performance script: 身困幽州, 思老母, 常掛心頭 (although it is more common for the first character to be *bei* 被 [marks a passive construction] rather than *shen* [actually, since the performance text does not include Chinese characters, and I have never seen a manuscript or printed edition that had a character pronounced *shen* in the place of *bei*, I can only guess; of the possibilities, 身 seems best]; other variants include *gurou* 骨肉 [flesh and blood] for *laomu*, and an entirely different form that shares no characters with the first, *Jinjing suo wutong*, *chang tan kong sui*, *yizhen feng* 金井鎖梧桐, 長歎空隨, 一陣風 (editions with percussion patterns notated make clear that although the number of characters in the two versions is the same, the scansion differs). Scott (1967, 34), translates the second version as “The *wutong* tree locked in a golden courtyard,/A long sigh carried away on the breeze.” Oddly enough, the earliest datable edition, in *Liyuan jicheng*, kind of smashes the two together, taking its first four characters from the second version, the fifth from the first one, the ninth from the second one (where it appears as the seventh character), and the last three also from the second version. Taiwan editions that tried to deal with the issue of Yanhui living on after being captured so the play could be publicly performed made changes such as switching out *si laomu* in the first version for *jia guo hen* 家國恨 ([I] resent [what happened to] family and nation). See *Xiuding Silang tanmu* 修訂四郎探母 (Revised edition of *Silang tanmu*; Taipei: Jiaoyu bu Zhongguo geju gailiang yanjiu weiyuan hui, 1955) and *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母 (Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1979). Both of those editions made more substantial additions/changes to the play to make it clear that Yanhui has remained loyal and has continued to keep the best interests of China in mind.

be drawn to create a separate performance space downstage and change the scenery upstage for the next scene.³⁴ This use of an inner curtain first became widely popular in the PRC after the traditional prop men system (*jianchang zhi* 檢場制), in which sets were changed and props moved by prop men in full view of the audience, was abolished because it was supposedly not realistic enough.

According to a videotape of one of the performances, which deletes the intermission between scenes three and four, the Hawai'i version of *Silang tanmu* runs for less than two hours. No scenes were completely deleted. The majority of the cuts involve removing or making easier performance aspects of the play that would be difficult for students who have only studied *Jingju* for a short time to pull off. An example would be the reduction of the length of Yanhui's opening aria from 28 to 12 lines, leaving out all four of the metaphors in a row he uses to express how he feels (I am like... [*Wo hao bi...* 我好比...]), the last of which includes one of the highpoints of the play, when he compares himself to a lone goose (*yan* 雁) and that one word is drawn out for 24 beats and 16 separate notes.³⁵ Other cuts seem designed to just reduce the running time (such as leaving out Yanhui's 37-character long prose self-introduction).

Wichmann has been given many awards by Chinese organizations for her work making *Jingju* better known in the West.³⁶ Over the years, the governments on both Taiwan and China have invested in overseas performances of *Jingju* for diplomatic purposes.³⁷ I personally, in 2015, in Beijing, during a rehearsal for an upcoming *Jingju* performance at Lincoln Center whose surtitles I was working on, heard one of the top officials of the organization in charge of managing the performances speak

³⁴ The performance script for Wichmann's translation of *Feng huan chao* has these kinds of stage directions but they are absent or greatly curtailed in the printed version. For instance, the stage directions in the performance version before the first character speaks takes up 255 words, while the printed version only has 37.

³⁵ The last two figures are based on the musical notation for the play in *Jingju qupu jicheng* 京劇曲譜集成 (Compendium of *Jingju* plays with musical notation), 10 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1992–1998), 8: 9.

³⁶ Unlike Scott, who with the one exception of *Shiwu guan*, only translated plays not associated with PRC policy and performance practices, Wichmann's plays have been chosen by her Nanjing collaborators and have represented a wide spectrum of a specifically PRC repertoire, including one model opera from the Cultural Revolution, with the exception that the eight full-length plays do not reflect the fact that a majority of the items being performed are short plays or extracted scenes (*zhezi xi* 折子戲) but, on the other hand, parts of some of those eight plays appear on programs as extracted scenes (in the case of *Silang tanmu*, the first scene, which includes Yanhui's self-introduction and his revelation of his true identity to Iron Mirror and persuasion of her to borrow the arrow of command for him, is often performed alone under the title of *Zuogong* 坐宮 [Sitting in the palace]). Scott has little patience with criticism of *Silang tanmu* for ideological reasons, and instead gives this kind of rationale for interest in the play: "To the old-time theatergoers this was a play that provided excellent opportunities for displays of technical virtuosity in most of the principal roles...., thereby providing audiences with full measure of entertainment" (1967, 24). Wichmann seems to attempt to deflect criticism of the play by, in essence, recognizing the problem by adding a subtitle to her English title for the play, *Silang Visits His Mother/Love and Loyalty*.

³⁷ Zhou (2014) needs almost 400 pages to cover its topic (PRC exchange performances abroad of Chinese indigenous theater, 1949–2012).