

Translating “Unequal Treaties” between China and Great Britain during 1842-1843: Reconstruction of Ideology and Practice of Power

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ABSTRACT

Translation, as the communicative bridge between two discursive systems, plays a crucial role in manipulating and reconstructing ideologies and reshaping the power relations that sustain them. Taking the translation of “unequal treaties” signed between China and Britain during 1842-1843 as a case study, the paper examines how Britain sought more political gains by manipulating the translation of treaties, with the ultimate goal of delineating how translation negotiates power between discourses by ideological reconstruction. Based on critical discourse analysis (CDA), the study is carried out around three dimensions: lexico-grammar, discourse semantics, and context, which focus respectively on discursive patterns, information delivery, and the sociocultural environment that conditions translation practice. Notable translation shifts have been found between the treaties and their translations at lexico-grammatical and semantic levels, which essentially reflect the power struggle in the given historical period.

Keywords: Unequal treaties; translation; ideological reconstruction; power practice