

English Translation of *Honglouloumeng* and the Establishment of Early British Knowledge of China in the Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the construction of Chinese knowledge through the translation practices of British sinologists in the nineteenth century. It centers on two such significant sinologists, John Francis Davis (1795-1890) and Edward Charles MacIntosh Bowra (1841-1874), and their translations of *Honglouloumeng* 红楼梦 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*, or *The Story of the Stone*, 1791-2), a renowned Chinese classical novel repeatedly translated by British sinologists of the time to learn the Chinese language and culture. The sinologists, who were both the pioneers in establishing British sinology and diplomacy in China, were also deeply engaged in advancing the British colonial and imperial agenda in the country throughout the century. Therefore, through the two case studies, the thesis aims to reflect how the early British sinologists acquired knowledge of China, including its language and culture, under the special historical context of the nineteenth century when the global expansion of British colonialism and imperialism brought Britain into a direct and conflictual contact with China. Drawing on critics of Said's Orientalism from scholars such as Eric Hayot and Rey Chow, it presents a theoretical framework for understanding cultural translation between China and Britain that diverges from the universalizing tendencies of the anti-Orientalist paradigm, instead emphasizing the particularities of the translation activities. By examining the specific translation choices and the context in which Davis and Bowra worked, the case studies highlight the complexities of cross-cultural interactions, revealing how translation actively constructs equivalent relations

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between languages and facilitates linguistic and cultural communication under specific historical conditions. The thesis concludes by pointing out a domestication strategy employed by both translators to manage and control the complete foreignness of the cultural other, which not only leads to the distortion of the meaning of the original text but also the fanciful representation of the cultural “reality” of China. Rather than attributing the distortion and misrepresentation to an orientalist discourse, the research perceives both translation practices as a manifestation of the British fantasy of China which cannot be simply explained as resulting from linguistic and cultural inequalities between China and Britain, as anti-orientalists following the Saidian approach most often seek to expose. Instead, it contends that the fantasy disclosed here is an inherent part of the human cognitive mechanism and thus an inevitable phenomenon in cultural translation.

KEYWORDS: cultural translation, equivalence, *Honglouneng*, knowledge construction, nineteenth century, sinologist-translators

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十九世纪的红楼梦英译与英国关于中国知识的早期构建

摘要

本论文考察十九世纪的英国汉学家如何通过翻译实践来构建关于中国的知识。其聚焦于这一时期的两位重要汉学家，即德庇时（1795-1890）与包腊（1841-1874），及他们对于中国著名古典小说《红楼梦》的翻译——该小说曾被这一时期的英国汉学家以学习中国语言与文化的目的而被反复翻译。这些汉学家同时也是英国汉学及英国在华外交体系建立的先驱，并深入参与到了十九世纪英国在华的殖民主义和帝国主义事业当中。因此，通过这两个案例研究，本论文旨在揭示，在十九世纪的历史背景下——当英国的全球殖民主义和帝国主义扩张导致中英之间产生了首次直接的接触与冲突——早期英国汉学家如何获取包括其语言与文化在内的中国知识。通过援引 Eric Hayot 及 Rey Chow 等学者对于萨伊德的东方主义的批评观点，本论文呈现了一个新的理论框架，其区别于反东方主义趋于普遍化的研究范式，转而强调个体翻译活动的特殊性。通过考察德庇时与包腊的具体的翻译决策及其所生活的时代背景，本论文强调跨文化互动的复杂性，揭示翻译是如何通过主动地构建语言间的对等关系，从而促进具体历史条件下的语言及文化间的交流。本论文最终指出两位译者所共同采用的归化的翻译策略，旨在理解和消化文化他者的异质性。这一翻译策略的结果不仅导致了对原文本意义的变形，同时也造成了对于中国文化“现实”的虚假表征。然而，本论文并不将这一变形及错误表征归咎于东方主义话语。相反，本研究将两个案例中的翻译实践视为英国对中国的幻想的体现，其无法简单地从语言与文化间的不对等关系的角度来进行阐释——其正是反东方主义者追随萨伊德的研究范式所通常致力于揭示的观点。本论文认为这一幻想所揭示的是人类认知机制中的固有部分，因此是文化翻译中必不可免的现象。

关键词：十九世纪，文化翻译，汉学家译者，红楼梦，对等，知识构建