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Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise: Deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)

Song Ge, Archipel Hors-Série, 1. Paris: Archipel, 2021. xxii, 344, pp. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. € 25 (PB). ISBN 978-2-910513-86-3

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The book is not free from typographical mistakes and not entirely correct *Pinyin* transcriptions. More consistency regarding the inclusion or exclusion of Chinese characters – this reviewer is clearly in favor of providing them – would have been helpful.

These minor criticisms notwithstanding, on the whole the volume is extremely rich in contents, organized in a convincing way and thought-provoking on almost every single page. I highly recommend it not only to those interested in modern China's history of science and knowledge cultures but to researchers dealing with the history of 17th to 20th China in general.

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SONG GE, *Indes néerlandaises et culture chinoise: Deux traductions malaises du Roman des Trois Royaumes (1910–1913)*. Archipel Hors-Série, 1. Paris: Archipel, 2021. xxii, 344, pp. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. € 25 (PB). ISBN 978-2-910513-86-3

The book reviewed here, based on the author's dissertation, examines two Malay translations of the *Sanguo yanyi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms). Both publications came out in Batavia between 1910 and 1913, against the backdrop of increasing chauvinism in China and among its overseas subjects. The study draws attention to the translators behind these momentous works, their methods of translation, and the influence of their oeuvre on the broader Dutch East Indies society. Song Ge's main objective is to reflect on the ways the *Sanguo yanyi* and other landmarks of Chinese fiction entered the cultural realm of the Dutch East Indies and impacted on the lives of the colony's Malay-literate Chinese population (p. 12). To my mind, this goal has been achieved with great success. Through extensive research in different public and private collections worldwide, the author has produced a well-informed investigation of the source text – identified as a version of the *Sanguo yanyi* compiled and annotated by Mao Lun and Mao Zonggang – and especially its Malay translations by Lie In Eng (ca. 1890–1941) and Tjie Tjin Koeij (ca. 1890–?). The book also elaborates on the targeted readership of these publications, their socio-cultural outlook, and Chinese-Indonesian history more generally. Like most works on Sino-Malay literature, including my own, it rests firmly on the scholarship of Claudine Salmon.

The main text is divided into three parts. The first part, through three chapters, outlines the literary and historical background necessary to contextualize the book's broader discussion. The first chapter presents a useful overview of Chinese fiction translated into Malay and other Indonesian languages before 1910, calling attention to the different trends, genres, and time periods, as well as the communities from which the translators and their readers hailed. The second chapter contains general information about the *Sanguo yanyi*, its contents, different versions, and the social values and Confucian discourse embedded in it. The third chapter introduces a number of incomplete Malay translations of the *Sanguo yanyi*, which appeared before Lie In Eng and Tjie Tjin Koeij published their ground-breaking full translations.

The book's second part centres on the text itself. The first chapter delves into the motivations to translate the *Sanguo yanyi* into Malay. These translations were part of an effort to entertain and educate; in addition to commercial gain, they explicitly served to familiarize readers with the Chinese cultural repertoire and ancestral morals. The second chapter focuses on the specific editions used by the translators, which were presumably printed in Xiamen or Shanghai. The third chapter deals with the type of Malay in which the book was translated, commonly called *Melajoe rendah* (low Malay). Linguistically, the term "Sino-Malay" seems to hold little sway over the author. She does not regard it as a sociolect specific to the Chinese community akin to Baba Malay in British Malaya, emphasizes its facility as an idiom of translated Chinese works, and mentions its internal heterogeneity (pp. 96–97). The second and third point are difficult to disagree with. Some characteristics of the Malay of Lie In Eng and Tjie Tjin Koeij are highlighted on the basis of their translations of one paragraph, focusing on orthography and loanwords (pp. 97–100).

I particularly enjoyed the next two chapters. The fourth chapter (pp. 103–152) examines how the two translators grappled with poetic verses, commentaries, metaphors, literary allusions, wordplays, notes to the reader, and other literary conventions in the source text. The fifth chapter (pp. 153–176) scrutinizes the translation of culturally embedded concepts, including forms of address and self-reference – hinting at the precise relationships between the dramatis personae – as well as specific terminology in the fields of astrology, morality, and religion. As we learn, the two authors employed vastly different strategies in this area. If read carefully, Tjie Tjin Koeij's version is particularly informative about these translational choices, the underlying motivations, and their socio-historical relevance. In this regard, readers interested in the primary sources will particularly appreciate the book's three appendices; the first one (pp. 273–278) contains Tjie's preface (largely based on the Chinese source text but with significant additions), the second one (pp. 279–288) his own address to the readers, and the third one (pp. 289–294) his Malay translations of Chinese sayings scattered throughout the publication.

The third part of the book examines the societal impact of the *Sanguo yanyi* and other Chinese books translated into Malay. The first chapter traces the development of a shared national consciousness among the Indies Chinese from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century, emphasizing the re-Sinicization movement, its efforts to retain (if not reintroduce) Chinese customs, and its campaigns against assimilation into the indigenous mainstream. The second chapter provides concrete instances of the legacy of the *Sanguo yanyi*, including theatre, feuilletons, poetry, and temple imagery, as well as Indonesia's contemporary discourse. It also explores connections between the text, Chinese chauvinism, and ideas of modernity. The third chapter highlights the communal importance of the translations to the Indies Chinese readers, their instrumentality in constructing a glorious past, and the prominence of translators within this discourse through their deliberate choices and additional notes. As the author shows, the recurring tropes of heroism and national unity continue to resonate through present times.

One could list many commendable features of this book. It has been somewhat uncommon in the study of Sino-Malay literature to comment extensively on the linguistic competence of translators. This book, by contrast, offers detailed comparisons between the source text and its translations. While both translators generally

remained faithful to the original, we read numerous examples of abridgment, partial omission, poetic license, or mistranslation. Anyone interested in the technicalities of Chinese-to-Malay translation will find much to enjoy in the book. The author is also convincing in asserting that the nationalist awakening of the Indies Chinese was as much the result of translated historical fiction as of new ideas introduced through periodicals, in other words, the print-capitalism of the celebrated scholar Benedict Anderson (pp. 229–231). Needless to add, their conceptions of communal unity were in no small part forged on the anvil of colonial rule, under which “the Chinese people” (*bangsa Tjina*) constituted a distinct legal class.

The author is slightly less careful in her treatment of nonce – rather than established – expressions from Southern Min. No evidence is presented that *go-ong* (p. 253) refers to a type of edible mushroom, in which case one would expect a compound with *kouw* (ko 菇). The toponym *Kietjioe* (p. 155) reflects *Kì-chiu* 冀州 (Jizhou) rather than 翼州 (Yizhou). The expression *mati lantaran Kek Sim* (p. 145) means to die of sadness (*kek-sim* 激心). The kinship term *shatjek* (p. 160) denotes the third eldest uncle among one’s father’s younger brothers (*saⁿ-chek* 三叔). *Koat Sie Twie* (p. 136) may be translated as Suicide Squad (*Koat-Si-Tūi* 決死隊). The phrase *Tha bwe an tjhoa, si kaparije?* (p. 128) offers a beautiful illustration of the linguistic creativity of Indies Chinese authors. The first segment can be identified as *Taⁿ boeh án-chóaⁿ* 今欲按怎 (What should be done now?) in the colloquial Zhangzhou variety of Southern Min, keeping in mind that these words can be written with several alternative characters; the second part reflects the Javanese phrase *Sik kepriye* in more or less the same meaning. As regards the Malay, there seems little need to hypercorrect the widespread colloquialisms *dioebat-abit* (put in disorder), *djoesta* (to lie), *komoedian* (then), *masoep* (to enter), *noraka* (hell), and *sjetan* (demon) to their “dictionary counterparts” *diobrak-abrik*, *doesta*, *kemoedian*, *masoek*, *neraka*, and *setan*.

Such archaic words and phrases, which are often translingual in nature, arguably represent one of the trickiest parts of working with Sino-Malay texts. In that regard, the author might be accused of prematurely disregarding the rich Sino-Malay idiom as a relevant phenomenon. To her credit, however, she carefully identifies a multitude of words that would have been incomprehensible to non-Chinese readers (pp. 99–100, p. 132, p. 148 fn. 195, p. 152 fn. 206, pp. 157–158, p. 174). The linguistic specificity of Sino-Malay texts is indeed primarily lexical rather than grammatical, as many observers have pointed out, although a systematic comparison with the Malay of Europeans, Javanese, Arabs, and other groups remains to be conducted. In any case, the notion that the Malay of Chinese people (*Chineesch-Maleisch*) was not regarded as a distinct entity before the 1920s (pp. 93–95) is best put to rest; already in the late nineteenth century, we encounter this designation in the Semarang-based newspaper *De Locomotief* (7 October 1882, p. 11).

All in all, the book contains several important insights. Its detailed analysis of the *Sanguo yanyi*, its competing Malay translations, and Sino-Malay printing more broadly add depth and texture to the cultural trends and burgeoning worldviews of the late-colonial period. Some readers may have wanted to see more culture beyond the written word, including theatre, music, or visual arts, but the author’s interest is clearly and justifiably in translation. The reception of the *Sanguo yanyi* in British Malaya, with its separate tradition of translating Chinese fiction into

colloquial Malay, is identified as a possible topic for future research (pp. 266–267). Given the author’s level of expertise, this research is eagerly awaited. It would also be interesting to see how she places her work within the field of Sinophone Studies. Finally, one hopes that the book will be translated into Indonesian.

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DOROTHEA WIPPERMANN, *Richard Wilhelm: Der Sinologe und seine Kulturmission in China und Frankfurt*. Gründer, Gönner und Gelehrte. Biographienreihe der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, herausgegeben von der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. Frankfurt/M.: Societäts-Verlag, 2020. 283 S. Abbildungen, Glossar, Bibliographie. € 15 (PB). ISBN 978-3-95542-377-3

Dass Wilhelm fast 100 Jahre nach seinem Tod eine Biografie gewidmet wird, hat seine Gründe. Anders als Vertretern der Sinologie an Universitäten der Gegenwart, gelang es Richard Wilhelm, von einer größeren Öffentlichkeit wahrgenommen zu werden. Das lag zum einen an der Zeit, in der er lebte und in der sich die Möglichkeit bot, als Mittler für die Begegnung zweier Suchender zu sorgen: Dort das im 19. Jahrhundert von Krisen geschüttelte China, das sich langsam öffnete und nach Wegen suchte, um Anschluss an die vom Westen geprägte Moderne zu finden; hier das Europa nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, das eine Krise durchmachte und glaubte, aus dem Osten geistige Impulse für eine Erneuerung seiner lange Zeit als überlegen betrachteten Kultur zu benötigen. Vor allem aber dürfte Wilhelms bleibende Bedeutung mit der Art und Weise seiner Begegnung mit China zu tun haben: wie Jahrhunderte vor ihm die Jesuiten lebte und arbeitete er lange Zeit im Land. So war es möglich, die Begegnung mit den Menschen und der Kultur Chinas vor Ort in einer einzigartigen Intensität zu erleben und darüber zu reflektieren.

Kompetent und informativ leuchtet Dorothea Wippermann in sechs längeren Abschnitten Wilhelms Herkunft und Wirkungsfeld aus. Geboten werden Einblicke in Wilhelms Leben und Wirken, seine missionarische Arbeit in den kolonialistischen Zusammenhängen, sein Bildungsengagement unter Chinesen, Schwerpunkte seiner Tätigkeit als Übersetzer und Sinologe, sein China-Bild und seine Rolle in den west-östlichen Beziehungen sowie als Gründer des China-Instituts in Frankfurt. In einem siebten und letzten Kapitel bietet die Biographin einen Ausblick auf die Entwicklungen des von Wilhelm begründeten Faches an der Frankfurter Universität nach seinem Tod. Die Dichte der Belege und Zitate zeigt, dass Wippermann viel Mühe darauf verwandt hat, Archivquellen heranzuziehen und die über Wilhelm und sein Werk verfassten Arbeiten zu konsultieren. Die Verfasserin macht deutlich, dass in den Archiven noch jede Menge an bisher nicht ausgewertetem Material vorhanden ist, um die Grenzen der von ihr angefertigten Biographie aufzuzeigen. Zu einem Teil hat man sich dieser Quellen schon anderswo bedient. Eine intensive wissenschaftliche Wilhelm-Forschung gibt es in China im Rahmen der „Internationalen Forschung zu China“ (*guoji Hanxue*), was vor allem mit Wilhelms „positiver“