

DOCTORAL THESIS

An ethnohistoric investigation of the operation and function of translation in the dissemination of Chinese Xiqu in the US: a study of three encounters

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the role of translation in the introduction of Chinese *xiqu* into the United States is examined using an anthropological approach. This study identifies three encounters that exemplify the three critical stages of acceptance of *xiqu* in the United States, and examines how translation operates and functions as a tool of cultural mediation in the introduction and promotion of *xiqu* there. The three critical encounters this study identifies are: the 19th century performance tours of Cantonese opera in San Francisco, the 1930s tour of Mei Lan-fang to the U.S., and the 2006 tour of Kenneth Pai's production of the Young Lover's Edition of the *Peony Pavilion* to the U.S. An ethnohistoric approach is adopted to reconstruct the contexts of the translators' decision-making with the purpose of highlighting the human factor in the process. Translations, first-hand paratextual materials and data collected in interviews facilitate the triangulation of analysis and verification. The result offers a critical understanding of translation in a cultural dissemination process by analyzing *xiqu* with an emphasis on the human factor.

Keywords: Translation, *xiqu*, traditional Chinese theatre, Chinese drama, anthropological approach, ethnohistory, paratexts

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