

Note

A NOTE AND LETTER ACCOMPANYING THE 1863 DUCHUXUAN EDITION OF *HAOQIU ZHUAN* AT THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

Among the various editions of the seventeenth-century Chinese novel *Haoqiu zhuan* that are kept at the Bodleian Library, one edition in particular deserves notice. This is the four-volume edition printed in the year of *guihai* of the reign of the Tongzhi Emperor (that is, the year of 1863) with an imprint of Duchuxuan on the title page.¹ The first volume, identified by the call number Sinica 6005, has a short note written on the back side of its front board, and a letter attached to the page next to this board. The short note was written by Sir John Francis Davis, British diplomat and sinologist whose translation of the novel *Haoqiu zhuan* was published in the year 1829 under the title *The Fortunate Union, a Romance*. The letter enclosed was sent from Sir Thomas Francis Wade (another British diplomat and sinologist) to Davis, providing background for his printing of this special edition of *Haoqiu zhuan* in the hope that it might serve to accompany Davis's translation as a sort of textbook for students pursuing studies of sinology. The following paragraphs offer a brief review of *Haoqiu zhuan* as well as the historical and cultural significance of the transmission of this novel to England, before transcripts of the note and letter found in the special 1863 edition are provided and analyzed.²

¹ *Guihai*, literally, 'water-pig', is one of the 60 terms of the sexagenary cycle used to designate years in China. Tongzhi Emperor is the tenth emperor of the Qing dynasty who reigned from November 1861 to January 1875, and the year of *guihai* during his reign is 1863. The title page of this edition specifies *guihai nian huazhao yue*, literally, 'February of the year of *guihai*,' as the actual month of printing. The binding of the book is in the style of the Chinese (requires reading from top to bottom and from right to left); the size of it is considerably larger than other editions of the same novel kept at the Bodleian.

² Transcription of the note and letter is my own; reproduced here by the kind permission of the Bodleian Libraries. The author also wishes to thank her doctoral supervisor, Professor Ros Ballaster, for her invaluable guidance in preparing the transcription.

Haoqiu zhuan is a traditional Chinese scholar-beauty novel. This kind of novel builds its plot around the courtship between a young man of high birth and illustrative deeds (the 'scholar'), and a young lady of equal merit and beauty (the 'beauty')—hence its name, scholar-beauty romance, or scholar-beauty novel.³ *Haoqiu zhuan* tells the story of the scholar Tieh-chung-u and the beauty Shuey-ping-sin, who, overcoming a series of obstacles, finally come to consummate their love in a blissful marriage. Our heroine, Shuey-ping-sin, whose mother died long ago and whose father is wrongly exiled, is promised by her scheming uncle to a young rake, Kwo-khé-tzu. Equipped with uncommon wit and courage, Shuey-ping-sin manages to escape from their designs several times before Kwo-khé-tzu turns to the use of force and seizes her from her house. Luckily, she runs into Tieh-chung-u who happens to pass by the town and is thus saved. Following this encounter, Shuey-ping-sin and Tieh-chung-u become attracted to each other, but their relationship remains chaste and impeccable through a series of events. In the meantime, the villains continue to force Shuey-ping-sin into marriage and to slander Tieh-chung-u, so much so that the couple is obliged to be presented at court to defend themselves. Finally, being declared the paragon of virtue by the emperor, Shuey-ping-sin and Tieh-chung-u become happily married.

From the summary above, it is not difficult to see that *Haoqiu zhuan*, with its depiction of the hero and heroine finally getting together in an unfaithful, everyday setting, is indeed different from other oriental (as well as pseudo-oriental) tales prevalent at the time. This peculiarity did not go unnoticed by Bishop Thomas Percy, being the first to introduce it to the English public in a translation entitled *Hau Kiou Chooan: Or The Pleasing History* (1761).⁴ In the preface, after a hackneyed

³ It is sometimes also referred to as the talent-beauty novel or talent-beauty romance, see Wilt L. Idema and Lloyd Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), 227–8. For a general study of this genre, see Richard C. Hessney, 'Beautiful, Talented, and Brave: Seventeenth-Century Chinese Scholar-Beauty Romances' (Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 1979). For more recent studies, see for example, Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2001), 206–35; Mengjun Li, 'In the Name of A Love Story: Scholar-Beauty Novels and the Writing of Genre Fiction in Qing China (1644-1911)' (Ph. D. diss. The Ohio State University, 2014).

expatiation on the ‘littleness and poverty of genius’ in the literary taste of the Chinese (vol. i, p. xii), and the lack of imagination and dullness of the Chinese mind (vol. i, pp. xii-xiii), Percy turns to justify his publication of *Hau Kiou Chooan* by recognizing certain qualities of the Chinese novel in question and of Chinese literature as a whole:

It ought, however, to be observed in favour of the Chinese, that if they do not take such bold and daring flights as some of the other Eastern nations, neither do they run into such extravagant absurdities. Whether this be owing to the cause now assigned [that is, dullness], or to their having bestowed more attention on literature, so it is that they pay a greater regard to truth and nature in their fictitious narratives, than any other of the Asiatics. For it must be allowed to our present work, that the conduct of the story is more regular and artful than is generally seen in the compositions of the East; hath less of the marvellous and more of the probable. (vol. i, pp. xiii-xiv)

Percy’s reference to the probable and the marvellous recalls Fielding’s famous introductory chapter to book 8 of *The History of Tom Jones* (1749) where he discusses novelistic verisimilitude, differentiating the possible and the probable from the marvellous and the incredible. And Percy indeed invokes the name of Fielding later on, when he continues to justify his introduction of such a Chinese novel to the English readers in the terms of its being if not tasteful, then at least useful. Specifically, Percy proposes that one should consider this novel ‘as a faithful picture of Chinese manners, wherein the domestic and political oeconomy of that vast people is displayed with an exactness and accuracy to which none but a native could be capable of attaining’ (vol. i, p. xv). According to Percy, compared to the ‘dead resemblance’ (vol. i, p. xvi) of a people given by travelogues, histories, and descriptions, a novel, in which one sees ‘the object in action’ (vol. i, p. xvi), will inform the English readers with a deeper and truer knowledge of the character of the Chinese. To reiterate, Percy remarks at the end of the passage that ‘A foreigner will form a truer notion of the genius and spirit of

⁴ *Hau Kiou Chooan: Or The Pleasing History. A Translation from the Chinese Language ... In Four Volumes. With Notes* (London: Printed for R. and J. Doddsley, 1761). References are to this edition and hereafter will be given parenthetically in the text.

the English, from one page of Fielding, and one or two writers now alive, than from whole volumes of Present States of England, or French Letters concerning the English Nation’ (vol. i, p. xvii).

To some extent, Percy’s remark implicitly puts *Haoqiu zhuan* on a par with the ‘modern’, ‘realist’, ‘domestic’ English novel, oft regarded as originating in the works of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson. By the same token, Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest mentions certain similarities between *Haoqiu zhuan* and the novels of Richardson in his account of the Dutch East-India Company’s 1794–5 embassy to Peking. Of this Chinese novel (by then translated into several European languages), he says, ‘on verra qu’il n’est réellement qu’un roman moral écrit dans le dessein de célébrer la chasteté virginale.’⁵ In his judgment, the emphasis on chastity in the Chinese novel is, if not better than, at least comparable to Richardson’s novels: ‘C’est le portrait d’une héroïne toute platonique, qu’à mon avis il ne faudrait pas envier à la Chine, où l’on a, au surplus, comme en Europe, pour les romans, des modèles inimitables & des Grandisson pour créer des Clarisse.’⁶

Percy’s *Hau Kiou Chooan* proceeds Davis’s translation of the same novel by almost 70 years. Many of the opinions regarding the Chinese novel nevertheless remain the same. For example, Davis also notes in his preface to *The Fortunate Union* that ‘The reader will observe many remarkable points of resemblance between the “Fortunate Union” and our own novels and romances at the present day.’⁷ It should however be noted that, not knowing the language himself, *Hau Kiou Chooan* is actually edited by Percy from the manuscript of a certain James Wilkinson who had lived in China—Canton, specifically—and who, according to Percy, translated the novel as a sort of language learning practice.⁸ The fact is pointed out by Davis:

⁵ André Everard van Braam Houckgeest, *Voyage de l’ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises, vers l’empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 & 1795 ...*, 2 vols. (A Philadelphia, 1797–8), ii. 134.

⁶ Van Braam, *Voyage*, ii. 134.

⁷ John Francis Davis, preface to *The Fortunate Union, a Romance, Translated from the Chinese Original, With Notes and Illustrations. To Which is Added, a Chinese Tragedy. By John Francis Davis ... In Two Volumes* (London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1829), i. xv–xvi.

⁸ According to the advertisement written by Percy for his work (dated 1774 and later attached to the 1761 edition), he borrowed the manuscript from Captain Wilkinson, nephew of James Wilkinson, and returned it after the publication. It should also be

It is nearly seventy years since Dr. Hugh Percy, Bishop of Dromore, edited from a manuscript, partly English and partly Portuguese, and dated more than a century ago, what was little better than a copious abstract of our romance, and without the poetical passages, under the title of the 'Pleasing History.' In this (commencing, it will be perceived, with the very title), much was mistranslated, much interpolated, and a great deal omitted altogether.⁹

Davis goes on to specify several instances of mistakes made in Percy's work. His exposition not only serves as a marker for differentiating his own translation from that of his predecessor's, but also, it implies, at the beginning of *The Fortunate Union*, how this work is construed by its translator—that it will be as accurate and as faithful to the original as possible.

The note and letter found in the 1863 Duchuxuan edition of *Haoqiu zhuan* further testifies to the scholarly standing of Davis's new translation. According to Davis's note on the back side of the front board, the publication of this edition is commissioned by Sir Thomas Francis Wade, then British emissary at Peking, as a companion to *The Fortunate Union*:

Original of the "Fortunate Union", published by me in 1829, and which received the Royal Gold medal. The Secretary of Legation (now Sir T. Wade Emissary at Peking) prints this edition of the Haou-Kew Chuen, to accompany my Translation.

Next to this note is the enclosed letter from Wade to Davis transcribed below:

50 Upper Seymour St
Portman Square

2[6]th Nov
1861

My dear Sir John,
I have delayed answering to you my presence in the land of our fathers until the book

noted that in the manuscript, the first three volumes of the novel are done in English, yet the last volume is in Portuguese. It is Percy who translated this last volume from Portuguese to English. *Hau Kiou Choaan*, i. ix-x.

⁹ Davis, preface to *The Fortunate Union*, i. viii.

binder had delivered himself of the volume which accompanies this note. Your// experience will have taught you how much a rising Sinologue may be retarded by the want of a clear text, and I therefore resolved to print in a good bold type¹⁰ the novel you have made part of English literature by your// translation of it. The book was executed at Peking, and the copies struck in my house there, the style whereof, as the title page will tell you, is Bachelor's Hall.¹¹ In deference to your vote in favor of F^r Morrison's ortho-// graphy¹² I have had the volume lettered Haou Kew Chuen. My idea is to refer the student to your translation as giving the sense in good vernacular English and, if I live, to supplement this by a body of notes in explanation of historical allusions, grammatical difficulties [&c]. Professor Julien is at work// on the Yu Keou Le translated by Remusat "in the manner (says Julien) of Pauthier".¹³ The latter novel is an old set of mine, but, independently of the precedence your connection with the other work entitles it to, I have been

¹⁰ This is why the 1863 edition commissioned by Wade is in a larger size than many other editions of *Haoqiu zhuan* that one could now find.

¹¹ This is Wade's literal translation of Duchuxuan, the Chinese imprint of this edition.

¹² A reference to Robert Morrison, pioneering missionary and scholar of Chinese, whose *Dictionary of the Chinese Language, In Three Parts* (1815-23) is the first Chinese-English dictionary, printed at Macao.

¹³ That is, Jean-Pierre Guillaume Pauthier, French Sinologist and Indologist, author of *Dictionnaire étymologique chinois-annamite latin-français* (1867).

influenced by the consideration that, as you some where remark, // the quantity of poetry, and poetic prose in the Yu Keaou Le makes it a more difficult undertaking for a beginner. I believe my reprint will be found of solid use to our students, and I am glad that it has afforded me, at the same time, an opportunity of offering a small homage to yourself as our senior Sinologue.

Your very true
T. Wade

One could see that Wade and Davis are communicating upon the grounds of ‘Sinologue’ and the education of students who aspire to become a ‘Sinologue’. For them, compared to that of another Chinese novel *Yu jiao li* (that is, ‘Yu Keaou Le’), which contains too much poetry, the text of *Haoqiu zhuan* is a better choice for learning the Chinese language, a purpose totally out of bounds and unthought of in Percy’s era. In this sense, it becomes clear that Davis’s new translation is now directed to a specific audience—those that are interested in learning the Chinese language and in Chinese literature and culture in general. It is them who would have the need to read the translation along with the original, hence Wade’s printing of the original in Beijing.

Similar sentiments are indeed expressed by Davis in one of the articles printed in his *Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes* (1865). In terms of Rémusat’s translation of *Yu jiao li*, ‘Les Deux Cousines,’ Davis comments that ‘The whole story turns very much upon verse-making and *bouts-rimés*, and is not a bad illustration of their notions of poetry as an accomplishment, female as well as male.’¹⁴ As for Percy’s *Hau Kiou Chooan*, his criticism here is more straightforward than that in the preface to *The Fortunate Union*:

The mere outline of a rather celebrated romance, called *Haou-kew-chuen*, the history of the “Fortunate or Well-assorted Union,” had been published by Bishop Percy, from a MS.

sent from Canton, being translated afterwards into French and published at Lyons in 1766. On examining the original work, and observing how little of its merits were apparent in this brief and imperfect abstract, abounding as it did in the most palpable mistakes, a version of the whole was undertaken, and printed by the Oriental Translation Committee in 1829, being published in two volumes.¹⁵

Davis also mentions Wade’s printing of the original with a larger font and clearer text in Beijing:

Mr. Wade, our Secretary of Legation at Peking, and a first-rate Chinese scholar, has taken advantage of his residence at the Chinese capital to print a larger and more correct edition of the original *Haou-kew-chuen* than ever has been seen before. His object is, that, for the use of students, it should accompany the translation, in two volumes, made thirty-five years ago; and the recognition, in such a quarter, of the general accuracy of the translation, is of course a source of satisfaction.¹⁶

This passage can be cross-examined with the note and letter found in the 1863 Duchuxuan edition as transcribed above.

Overall, such is the case with *Haoqiu zhuan*’s reception in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England: from Percy’s *Hau Kiou Chooan*—mediating an authentic Chinese novel to a general reading public, to Davis’s *The Fortunate Union*—more of a disciplinary textbook for the growing ‘Sinologues’ at play. The whole process could be read against the following description of the era set down by Jürgen Osterhammel in his monograph *Unfabling the East* (2018):

Between around 1750 and 1820 it seemed far more self-evident than at any time before, and indeed at any time since, that the scholarly and educated public in France and Great Britain, Germany and Italy should keep abreast of conditions and developments overseas Along with the classics of the ancient world and the Bible (commonly read as a work of history), it served as a raw material for an empirical science of humankind

¹⁴ John Francis Davis, *Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes* (London: John Murray, 1865), 72.

¹⁵ Davis, *Chinese Miscellanies*, 72.

¹⁶ Davis, *Chinese Miscellanies*, 73.

This global knowledge base collapsed in the nineteenth century—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it fragmented. For civilizations outside Europe, experts in the emerging field of oriental studies and in the likewise newly minted discipline of ethnology (or anthropology) were now the responsible authorities. There they fraternized among themselves, leaving scholars in the most prestigious and influential disciplines of academic life to narrow their focus on Europe ...¹⁷

Wade's letter to Davis, in which Rémusat, Julien, Morrison, and Pauthier are mentioned and information on recent studies and translational works exchanged, is just one instance of how 'experts in the emerging field of oriental studies'—in this case, experts in China—'fraternize' among themselves, to borrow the words of Osterhammel.

Indeed, as one observes, Percy's *Hau Kiou Choan*, though a temporary digression from more traditional literary ventures, is nevertheless not entirely detached from contemporary literary discussions and repertoire in England. Later, however, in the nineteenth century, translation of the same Chinese novel becomes more exclusively associated with the group of early English sinologists, and no longer really discussed in the context of English literature *per se*.

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¹⁷ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, trans. Robert Savage (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 8–9.

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