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Art, trade, and cultural mediation in Asia, 1600–1950

by Raquel A. G. Reyes, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, xv + 131 pp.,
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BOOK REVIEW

Art, trade, and cultural mediation in Asia, 1600–1950, by Raquel A. G. Reyes, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, xv + 131 pp., \$61.75 (hardback) ISBN 978-1-13757-236-3

This book examines the patterns and processes of cultural mediation in the form of the diffusion of art and objects via trade across or beyond Asia between 1600 and 1950, the subtle influence of such diffusion on local communities, and the role played by intermediaries like artisans and missionaries. Europeans and Asians transported raw materials to where art and objects were created by local artisans in Asia with their own aesthetic practices under the influence or intervention of European religious motifs. And then, with the involvement of Europeans, these goods were traded to other parts of Asia, and to Europe and the Americas. Cultural mediation occurring in this East–West artistic exchange process is manifested not only in the cross-border trading of material objects, but also in the transfer of techniques and the conversation of norms.

In the first part, Introduction, the editor Raquel A. G. Reyes starts by describing an ivory statuette called *Virgin and the Christ Child*, with obvious oriental appearance, which was made in Manila by Chinese or Filipino sculptors, exhibited in a London museum. This statuette itself reflects the organized production line in Malina, Binondo, and Tondo as the workshop of luxurious fine craftwork like this Christian sculpture, and also of paintings and altarpieces for the local market and markets of Macao, Latin America, and Europe. It offers an interesting glimpse of the pattern of cultural mediation in Asia and beyond, with Europeans playing an important role, since sacred artistic objects were mostly ordered by missionaries and friars, and also desired by collectors, intellectuals, and natural philosophers in Europe. After reviewing the existing art historians' reserved tendency to treat such cultural relations along Western and non-Western binary lines, this part briefs this book's transnationally materialist approach to the study of cultural mediation via the circulation of objects across Asia, and beyond Asia to the Americas and Europe.

In the chapter on "Japanese Export Lacquer and Global Art History: An Art of Mediation in Circulation", T. D. Kaufmann traces the production, material composition, and circulation of Japanese lacquer ware. The raw material, such as *thitsi* lacquer and wood oil, was extracted by Europeans (like the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) and Asians from Southeast Asian trees, and the shipments of the finished product were carried by Portuguese and Dutch intermediaries to Southeast Asia and Europe. Specifically, Japanese artisans produced export lacquer ware called *nanban* ware, decorated with foliate patterns, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (imported from India) and gold and silver (possibly imported from the Americas). It was traded to various places in India and gifted by the Portuguese and Dutch to the Mughal court of India and the Siamese court of Thailand. More impressively, *nanban* wares were carried to Spain and Portugal via Africa for household and religious purposes, and even to Mexico via Manila as evidenced by Japanese lacquer screens found in the church of San Miguel de Milagro in a Mexican state. This chapter has discovered that Europeans played key roles in intra-Asia and worldwide circulations of lacquer materials and finished products. Besides, it reveals the existence of partnership between Europe and Asia based on their complex interactions in the global trading of Japanese lacquer ware such as Chinese vessels' shipments along with Dutch. Focusing on lacquer ware, this chapter give insights into

complex patterns of circulations of commerce, materials, and artefacts covering South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Raquel A. G. Reyes in the chapter "Paradise in Stone: Representations of New World Plants and Animals on Spanish Colonial Churches in the Philippines" explores the presence of New World botanical and animal images as architectural innovations and aesthetics in façades of Filipino colonial churches, as well as the context of such cultural exchanges. It first reviews the existing literature's observations about the identity and features of Spanish-era colonial churches in the Philippines, such as the presence of native craftsmanship in the use of local materials, and the blending of indigenous elements with those of Spanish, Latin American, and Chinese in façades of unsophisticated style. Then it investigates the material interactions arising from early galleon trade as well as the commercial and cultural exchanges such interactions facilitated. Starting from Manila, the Spanish colony's most remarkable political, religious, and trading hub, the galleons mainly brought spices, precious metals, Chinese silks, perfumes, foodstuffs, and other luxuries from the East to Acapulco, the Mexican port, and then returned with silver from Spanish America. Agriculture and everyday diets of Southeast Asia, East Asia, the Americas, and Europe were profoundly enriched via this route of crop and animal migration. For instance, the Old World wheat, cattle, and horses travelled to the New World, whose potato and tomato travelled to the Old World, and whose maize and cassava travelled to Africa, together with the spread of cereal, bean, peanut, pineapple, tobacco, chilli, etc. across the world. Most importantly, this chapter focuses on the examination of Churches in the southern Luzon and Visayas regions of the Philippines to interpret artistic depictions of New World flora and fauna therein from a historical materialist perspective. For instance, a pineapple image was carved in a pulpit of San Agustin Church and pineapple-shaped finials in Pan-ay Church, which could be closely associated with the profitable piña textile industry that significantly benefited the island's inhabitants.

W. G. Clarence-Smith, in the chapter "Betel, Tobacco and Beverages in Southeast Asia", first describes the origin of betel quid, the common addiction of Southeast Asian to betel chewing from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century as well as its significance in their customs of marriage, love, and spirit world after death, giving rise to the use of artistically decorated betel sets in Southeast Asia. Then he analyses the temporally and socially uneven decline of betel chewing in different places in Southeast Asia due to the publicized ideas of modernity, civility, and hygiene. For instance, nobody in South Sulawesi chewed betel in 1950, even if betel sets were still passed on as family heirlooms and served in marriage rituals. Betel was replaced by or coupled with cigarette as offerings to the spirits in Malaya in the 1930s, and at funerals in places like Sulawesi and Cambodia in the 1970s. And hot beverages like tea and coffee competed with tobacco and betel in quotidian life and socialization occasions, neglected by Reid (1985) in his seminar paper examining the displacement of betel chewing in Southeast Asia. For instance, tea, especially imported from China, was drunk in Southeast Asia between meals or for visitors, and coffee was grown locally to meet increasing domestic demand. Importantly, drinking hot beverages was associated by religious groups with spiritually and a socially elevated lifestyle. Tea was regarded as Mahayana Buddhists' aid to meditation and Daoists' elixir of life. Chocolate, and tea and coffee were beloved by Catholic clerics and protestants respectively, while the affection for coffee was evident among Muslim Cham communities of Vietnam and Cambodia.

In the last chapter, "Domestic Interiors in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Batavia", Michael North investigates the domestic interior decoration mingling Western and indigenous patterns and styles in Dutch, Chinese, and Muslim households of Batavia based on relevant probate inventories recording art objects and material goods of colonial households. It first examines the demographic situation in Batavia, a multicultural city inhabited by the Chinese, Europeans, Mardijkers, Malay, and Balinese. These households of diverse ethnic backgrounds

usually commissioned art objects or brought from open markets like estate auctions. In Dutch households, building materials were imported from Europe, but with plastered outer walls and parallel roof ridges to guard against tropical weather, and with an interior cross-culturally furnished with European and Asian objects like porcelain, lacquer ware, and paintings. Chinese households were generally embellished with a bird cage, lantern, mirror, clock, and paintings of Chinese and western origin, while Muslim families decorated their houses with fashionable East Asian and Western objects. Notably, the author of this chapter also examines the role of estate auction of secondary cultural market as an art forum in mediation of different cultures in Batavia, as well as the role played by VOC in spreading Dutch decoration pattern to indigenous peoples.

The book, though titled *Art, Trade, and Cultural Mediation in Asia, 1600–1950*, actually focuses on peoples and locations of East Asia and Southeast Asia like China, Japan, the Philippines, and Batavia instead of the whole of Asia, involved in commercial and cultural exchange within and beyond Asia, excluding West Asia, North Asia, and Middle Asia. Therefore, “Asia” in the title is misleading given its actual narrow academic focus. Moreover, the East–West collaborative efforts in cultural mediation via trading or creation of objects are analysed with an inclination to give the colonizer and the colonized the same cultural and political status, which, though innovative in terms of perspective, downplays and understudies the hierarchical position of different parties in the mediation process. Notwithstanding, this collected volume offers an interesting insight into European mediators involved in the transfer of culture via the transnational transportation of raw material and finished products of artistic goods across and beyond Asia. Such diffusion of imported goods influenced the cultural fabric of communities, leading to local cultural innovation as in the case of colonial churches in the Philippines, and changes of perception, aesthetics, and representations.


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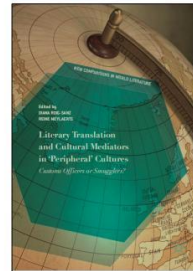
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Diana Roig-Sanz and Reine Meylaerts (Eds.), **Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures: Customs Officers or Smugglers?** London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 373 pp., \$98.44 (hardcover).

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The existing literary and translation studies generally ignore peripheral literary exchanges (Cronin, 1998), and tend to regard major languages (like English) as cultural exporters and minor languages (like Hungarian) as cultural importers (D'Haen, Damrosch, & Kadir, 2012). In response to this, **Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures: Customs Officers or Smugglers?** abandons the focus on "innovative" centers and "imitative" peripheries. It analyzes the agents and processes of cultural mediation in so-called peripheral cultures based on interdisciplinary methods of sociology, translation, cultural transfer, and cultural history.

This book studies cultural mediators in multilingual peripheral cultures from an interdisciplinary viewpoint, deliberating mediator's plural roles as well as various ways these roles interact and influence each other. Specifically, the following questions are explored in this book: (1) How do cultural mediators perceive and implement their transfer activities? (2) What's their role in the intercultural network? (3) What's the relation between cultural transfer and construction of cultural identities? (4) What's the political-cultural historical context in which these transfers took place?

The book is composed of 12 chapters. The first chapter is an introduction of research background, general theoretical basis, research objective, and methodologies, as well as the main idea of each collected paper. Chapters 2–7 focus on a variety of mediators in cultural transfers in peripheral communities, while chapters 8–12 address the process of cultural mediation.

Chapter 2 describes the birth and development of institutionalized promotion of translations in unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral modes to build a positive image of the newly founded country Czechoslovak through translation as cultural diplomacy, based on the analysis of Emil Walter's personal trajectory of cultural mediation in the changed role from translator to press attaché and diplomat.

Chapter 3 explores Edoardo Weiss's translations of Freud as a cultural mediator and psychoanalytic practitioner after examining the social context of Trieste as a multilingual city and the conflicts that accompany these translations. This chapter supports the importance of multilingual identity for translating Freud by citing the example of Weiss's faithfully translating "Es" in the triple structure of Freudian mind topography into "Es" in Italian.

Chapter 4 first reviews the evolving position of Yiddish language in Jewish culture from the end of the 19th century to 1948. It then examines Jewish intellectuals' translation and publication of Yiddish literature into Spanish for the Jewish community in Argentina, especially the young Jewish generation, for the purpose of communicating the spiritual wealth of Jewish ancestors and their Jewish consciousness, against the background of the anti-Semitic movement and prosecution of Jewish people in Europe. In particular, the author analyzes Resnick's involvement in the intellectual promotion project of Jewish culture in an interwar period.

Chapter 5 examines how *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*The Short Story Magazine*) served as a platform for literary importers of peripheral literature into China during the 1920s. The author first describes the background of the literary revolution in China when *Xiaoshuo yuebao* was founded and the evolving mission of this magazine with changing chief editors, especially Mao Dun and Zheng Zhengduo. Then it elaborates on its publications of translated small literature and the logic of text selection. In particular, this chapter looks at Chinese indirect translation of Blasco Ibáñez's works from Spanish.

Chapter 6 analyzes the selection of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African literature, especially on the theme of health, translated via English into Urdu by the publishing house Mashal Books. Then it examines the process of transfer, overlap of actors' roles, and national/transnational literary exchange. Mashal Books stands out as a cultural mediator linking texts from East Asia and the Indian Ocean Rim to Urdu readers in Pakistan, India, and beyond, offering exceptional windows into challenges facing Pakistan's neighbors. Chiefly, this chapter investigates how Mashal Books helps to regulate power relations and renegotiate hierarchies among different communities across Asia and beyond.

Chapter 7 analyzes the state agencies of Israel and The Netherlands in promoting national literature abroad through translation. In the case of The Netherlands, the Dutch Foundation for Literature subsidizes translations, joins international book fairs, offers translator training, and brokers between Dutch and foreign publishing houses. In the Israeli case, the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature is in charge of promoting Hebrew literature in the world. Its evolving budget component drives its literary mediating role from translation funder to state literary agency in the context of Israeli intellectuals' challenging the Jewish-Israeli community's consensus on Zionist ideology.

Chapter 8 studies Fatma-Zāida's intervention and manipulation of source text in the translation of the Quran. In particular, it examines her role as a creative translator and cultural mediator, especially on the themes of marriage, education, divorce, and slavery. It reveals her feminist translation ideology and her efforts to construct a new image of Muslim women in Western culture against the existing prejudiced misconception, and to encourage endowment of respectful marital relations, rights to divorce, and free access to education.

Chapter 9 examines some influential mediating agents of Flemish folk songs endeavoring to win Belgian national and transnational recognition. Specifically, Jan Frans Willems edited the anthology *Oude Vlaemsche Liederen* to include medieval songs in French, Flemish, and German into European heritage; French musicographer de Coussemaeker compiled the bilingual Flemish-French anthology *Chants Populaires des Flamands de France*; Victor Wilder assembled the anthology *Chansons Populaires Flamandes* of ancient Flemish folk songs; and Earnest Closson conducted intra-Belgian transfers of folk songs by compiling *Chansons Populaires des Provinces Belges*.

Chapter 10 offers a case study of Georges Eekhoud for a three-level analysis of cultural transfer modalities including material foundations, transfer chain, and textual transformation. Also, the motivation of financial interests and commercial imperatives are analyzed for Eekhoud's bilingual production as a mediation activity. Specifically, the first level is characterized by the dynamic exchange between Dutch and French language actors; the second level is mainly about the interaction between Flemish and Francophone serial translations; and the third level features Eekhoud's central position in the mediation process influencing the Flemish version.

Chapter 11 focuses on the analysis of writing, translation, self-translation, and bilingual writing of André Brink as discursive cultural transfer activities in South Africa from the 1950s to 2012, which depicted the social realities in South Africa, challenged the apartheid regime, and portrayed the backgrounds of such works as the censorship system, which drives his self-translation from Afrikaans into English.

Chapter 12 studies how indigenous cultures and languages are preserved in the Peru cultural field by observing the cultural mediation activities of José María Arguedas and Gamaliel Churata. In particular, Arguedas contributed to such cultural mediation by creating literature in Spanish with Quechua words and Andean knowledge, by translating Quechua songs and popular Andean texts, and by transcribing the colonial oral philosophy, such as the Huarochiri Manuscript. Gamaliel Churata founded the magazine *Boletín Titikaka*, devoted to the inclusion of indigenous cultures, and wrote the novel *El Pez de Oro*, which, though written in Spanish, is permeated with Quechua and Aymara, obviously manifesting indigenous culture and language.

Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in 'Peripheral' Cultures contributes to the literature by exploring the mediated production and consumption of peripheral cultures across linguistic and cultural borders through translation, writing, editing, or artistic creation. Different from existing studies, its perspective is not central-to-periphery or nation-to-nation; the cultural mediator is not examined based on a single role but multiple and overlapping transfer roles. The negotiations, struggles, and tensions of the translators, publishers, critics, and dealers involved in intercultural interaction are closely investigated, compared with the common text-centered and translator-oriented practices in previous studies.

In conclusion, the book takes the agent and process of cultural mediation as the research focus, but it is primarily related to production, without enough exploration of transmission such as publication and marketing activities. The book tries to avoid the definition of "central" and "peripheral" cultures, but it seems that all cultures other than English, French, and German cultures are deemed peripheral, which definitely needs justification. Notwithstanding, this book is quite valuable for readers interested in world literature, translation, cultural history, or cultural transfer to unravel extensive cultural movements across languages by mediators of multiple roles in peripheral cultures in discursive and nondiscursive modes.

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