

Forum: "Chineseness" and "Europeaness" 【專題論文】

Where East and West Meet:
Chinese Revolutionaries, French Orientalists, and
Intercultural Theater in 1910s Paris
當東方遇上西方
——1910年代巴黎的跨文化劇界

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Keywords: theatrical tradition, translation of the play, Li Shizeng, Louis Laloy

關鍵詞：劇場傳統、劇作翻譯、李石曾、拉洛伊

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Abstract

This paper deals with the translation of Chinese and French-language plays and their staging outside the culture in and for which the plays originally were written. Such an approach can hope to yield insights only into specific, historically contingent constructions of "Chineseness" and "Europeanness" and not into "Chineseness" and "Europeanness" as such. This is all the more true since the two translators of the plays discussed in this paper were more interested in exploring how their respective theatrical traditions could be enriched by that of the other and were less interested in exclusive definitions of their theatrical tradition.

The two translators and their works to be discussed in this paper are Li Shizeng who translated two contemporary Western plays from French into Chinese and Louis Laloy who translated a classical Chinese play of the 13th century into French.

摘要

本文爬梳了李石曾與拉洛伊兩位劇作翻譯者的作品（李石曾曾中譯了兩部當代法語劇作，而拉洛伊則將中國十三世紀的古典戲曲譯為法文），以探索其各自所承載的劇場傳統。

本文從中、法兩種語言的戲劇作品及其譯本出發，討論存在於原始劇作與翻譯劇本之間各種文化面向的問題。此一研究途徑在吾人研究諸如「中國性」與「歐洲性」等問題時，提供了某種特定的歷史性洞見。

Li Shizeng

Li Shizeng's father, Li Hongzao (1820-1897) was a Grand Councillor and tutor to the Tongzhi emperor in the 1860s. Introduced to Western learning at an early age, Li Shizeng was able to take advantage of his father's connections and gain the chance of studying abroad in 1902 when he accompanied Sun Baoqi, newly appointed Minister to France, as an embassy student. Li, however, showed little interest in his duties and instead enrolled in the Ecole Pratique D'Agriculture in Montargis, south of Paris. After graduating from that school in 1905, he studied chemistry and biology at the Institute Pasteur in Paris. Li very soon became a Francophile. In his view, France was the center of humanism and superior to other countries because of France's commitment to freedom, creativity, and pacifism. At the same time, Li was introduced to the anarchist thought of Proudhon and Kropotkin, who had extolled the virtues of mutual assistance and cooperative endeavor free of state interference. Li also became attracted to the utopian ideals of the French geographer and utopian anarchist Elisée Reclus (1830-1905), in particular Reclus' faith in evolutionary progress, during which science and education would sweep away all the prejudices of the established order and create a new society based on cooperation and mutual help. In 1907 Li together with Wu Zhihui (1864-1953) and others began to publish the anarchist journal *Xin shiji* (1907-1910) or *Les Temps Nouveaux* as it was called by its French title.

In a series of articles on anarchism that appeared in the journal in 1908 Li defined "anarchist revolution" in terms of an education that would end all division within society by encouraging equality and harmony. Li believed that the lower classes were more hard-working and potentially more intelligent than the well-to-do because they had constantly to use their wits in a daily struggle for survival, whereas the wealthy, with no challenges to exercise their ingenuity, spent their lives in idleness. Based on this belief, Li engaged in a series of educational projects first

with Chinese workers who were brought to France from China under the "diligent work and frugal study" plan and later with students who came to France as work-study students. Li hedged the hope that work-study would bring about the interaction of Chinese students and workers in France. Both students and workers would become reformed in this process: students would divest themselves of their elitist attitudes and disdain for physical work by working with, and helping to educate, workers, while the latter would become more knowledgeable and less susceptible to backward customs. Some of the work-study students such as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping later came to national prominence. Li himself devoted most of his later career to education and Sino-French cultural cooperation.

In addition to the anarchist journal *Xin shiji* (Les nouveaux temps), Li Shizeng, Wu Zihui, Chu Minyi, Zhang Renjie, and Wang Jingwei collaborated on a number of additional publication projects. In 1907, they published two issues of a Chinese pictorial entitled *Shijie* (The World) that featured reports on famous scientists and philosophers, including Elisée Reclus, and contained in its second issue a substantial section on the history and current state of Western theater. The very last page of this section includes a brief discussion of the traditional Chinese stage and recent attempts at reforming it. In the writer's view, the reform of Chinese drama has been only superficial (such as the introduction of gas lights) and has not yet changed how plays are performed (without a stage set; men and women are not allowed to act on stage together, etc.) and has also not yet changed the lowly status accorded to performers. Other publications included a treatise on a new form of music notation and a series of translations of Western plays, including the translation of the play *L'Echelle* under the Chinese title *Ming bu ping* and the play *Le Grand Soir* under the title *Ye wei yang*.

Why translate foreign plays? Why not create plays on Chinese subjects? Why begin with the translation of plays? Why not begin with philosophical works, especially works related to anarchism? Or why not first translate textbooks or monographs in the sciences? Li provided partial answers to all of these questions in a

preface he wrote for a second edition of his translation of *Ye wei yang*. Although this preface was written more than twenty years after the initial publication of the play, it seems to me to reflect fairly accurately Li's thinking in 1908. In this preface he wrote:¹

Twenty years ago when I studied in France I was quite interested in introducing New Drama and New Music and had all kinds of hope and projects. Translating this play *Ye wei yang* was one of the experiments I undertook back then [.....] While studying in France, I was only for three years a full-time student, the remaining time I studied while at the same time I was engaged in popularizing science and advocating social reform. I used the Imprimerie Chinoise (Zhonghua yinzi ju) in Paris and its publications as propaganda tools. Those who were involved with me in this enterprise were Wu Zhihui, Zhang Jingjiang, and Chu Minyi. *Ye wei yang* was one of these publications. While translating this book, I received help from Mr. Wu who corrected many words and phrases.

I arrived in France in 1903. Not long afterward, I left for a small town three train hours away from Paris and enrolled in a agricultural school. At that time, in addition to my regular schoolwork, I liked to read books about evolutionary biology, demographics, cosmology, philosophy and the like. In both of these areas, I had a science teacher who directed me to read books by [Elisée] Reclus (1830-1905) and Lamarck (1744-1829). In this way, in the fields of the institute my view of science and life with my disposition as Chinese to love nature and to love beauty, and so engendered all kinds of hybrid ideas that were neither Chinese nor Western and unified the true and the beautiful.[.....]

1 Li Shizeng, "Chongyin *Ye wei yang* juben xuwen," *Juxue yuekan*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1932), pp. 1-7.

Although I had studied neither drama nor music, but because I liked both since my childhood, I got again interested in them and consulted with Mme. De Sanoit and Hautstont [two friends of Li Shizeng during his Paris days] how to effectively advance understanding between East and West in regard to drama and music. I also asked them to select a few Western plays that I could translate into Chinese. However, there were so many plays that I did not know where to begin. It just happened that around that time at the Théâtre Antoine and Théâtre des Arts the two plays *L'Echelle* (*Ming bu ping*) and *e Grand Soir* (*Ye wei yang*) were performed and both stroke a cord in people's heart. I then translated them as Nr. 1 and Nr. 2 in the New Drama Series. The aunt in *Ye wei yang* was played by Mme. de Sanoit. She introduced me to the author of the play, Mr. Kampf, and the director of the Théâtre des Arts, Mr. Robert D'Humière. [.....]

My translation of this play can therefore be traced back to my interest in the natural sciences at the agricultural school and was connected with my concern for humanist philosophy as well as with society and art. All of these interests seem to be very disparate and unlike each other, but this was exactly my foolish motivation of mixing all of these together in one pot.

When I devoted myself to collect and translate plays, I often discussed with Mr. Wu the function of drama. I said that schools have a tendency to instruct students in scientific understanding and application, but as to the sentimental education of mankind, schools are often ineffective and one should make drama into the school for this task. Therefore I think that drama in the spheres of education and the renewal of society has a very important role to play.

Drama, like anything else, is different from nation to nation, each has its own characteristics and therefore cannot be wholesale copied. Dramatic traditions of other nations have aspects that can be consulted and emulated but

when doing so one should keep the best elements of either tradition and get rid of what is insufficient in either tradition. This is what I refer to as the blending of Chinese and Western drama.

Certain themes stand out in this preface: like so many of his contemporaries, Li believed in the social function of the theater. Due to its nature, theater appealed to the masses and could be understood by anyone, even the illiterate. However, Chinese intellectuals often fretted about the fact that theater (and the novel) were often frivolous and led people to seditious ideas. Therefore the power of the theater was to be harnessed for proper purposes and needed to be reformed, including the repertory, the viewing habits of the audience, the theatre building, the stage and production of plays, as well as the social status of actors (actors, except for some stars, were rather looked down upon in late Qing and early Republican China). Reforms in these directions had begun to be undertaken since the 1890s, especially in Shanghai, first in the reform of traditional Chinese theater (reformed Peking opera) and beginning with 1906/7 in first experiments with spoken drama that was inspired by the West. Li might have known about the performances by the Chunliu she (Spring Willows Society) in Tokyo, commonly considered the earliest performances of spoken drama in Chinese. However, these performances were not based on translations of Western plays but rather were adaptations of Western novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *La dame aux camélias*, both translated by Lin Shu. What is more, the students in Tokyo did not publish the scripts of their performances and their performances also included a great deal of improvisation and retained singing of Chinese operatic arias. Li's approach was obviously very different from theirs: he selected for translation Western plays he had actually seen performed on stage and produced integral versions of them. Although he did not create his translation for a particular theater troupe or performance, his translations could have been used for stage performances (allowing for the usual changes that were made for any kind of performance such as cutting or re-arranging scenes, omission of secondary lines of action, etc.). In fact, Li's translation of *L'Echelle* was taken up by the Chinese

student group in Tokyo and performed there at the end of 1908 (see Figure 1), only a few months after the play in Li's translation was first published in Paris.²



Figure 1 Performance of *Ming bu ping* in Tokyo, 1908

It is interesting and significant that Li Shizeng chose contemporary plays for his translation series, especially given the fact that Li consulted with two native speakers of French who both were deeply steeped in the French literary and dramatic tradition and one might have expected them to point Li to the classical tradition (Racine, Voltaire, Moliere). That he did not choose that route speaks of Li's independence and maybe has also to do with the fact that drama or the theater was not Li's specialty and he therefore was not fixed on the classics. The least we can say is that, based on the preface excerpted above and the preface Li wrote for the

2 The play was most likely simultaneously published in Guangzhou. At least that was the case for *Ye wei yang*. Later in 1913, Li's translation was republished in Chengdu under a different title, i.e., *Huangjin ta* (The Pyramid [of Society]) in a supplement to a local newspaper (*Yuxian lu* Nr. 16). It is in this version that I have read Li's translation. The original Paris edition is exceedingly rare and at least so far I have not been able to locate a single copy of that original edition. The rareness of Li's original translation might have been one reason why it was republished in Chengdu.

original edition of his translation of *L'Echelle*, the most important factor for his choice was his personal observation of how the play affected the French audience at that time and Li himself.³

Li Shizeng's Translation of *L'Echelle*

What kind of a play was *L'Echelle*? This play was a short farce written in the tradition of the French vaudeville theater. Its author, Edouard Norès (?-1904), was a frequent collaborator of Courteline, the acknowledged master of this genre, and was seen more as something of a prankster rather than a serious playwright. However, despite of this, the play must have made a rather impression on the contemporary audience given the fact that it was performed more than 60 times during the theater season 1901-2 and more than 100 times during the theater season 1906-7, when Li saw the play. The very fact that the play was staged during two different theater seasons is an indication of its popular success (most plays did not have repeat performances). The play can be summarized as follows: the banker Dallegre is looking forward to his daughter's marriage to the son of the Duke of L'Estorade because he

3 This preface reads in part: "[...] Although the play is merely a short farce, it describes in full detail the perniciousness of social inequality and people's contempt for people with a different profession than their own. In 1901 this play was performed at the Théâtre de Renaissance in Paris and had a deep impact on the entire city. Because the play was so successful, in 1906 the proprietor of the Théâtre Antoine put it back on stage, so that I, the translator, could witness myself the success of the play. This play was given for several weeks in a row and was always sold out. There were always many who could not get a ticket and then quickly left. One evening when I and several friends went to see the play together, next to us sat a lady from the higher classes. [...] That evening at intermission we all went to the foyer to get some fresh air. Suddenly a poor elderly woman came out from the lower tiers of the theatre and when she saw the lady she went to her and greeted her, visibly in fear. The lady, however, shook hands with her and was extremely warm and gentle toward the old woman. Some bystanders, males in long trousers and high hats, were all stunned. However, after a short while they all seemed to understand and looked as if they felt ashamed of themselves. I briefly glanced at them and immediately knew that this [change] was caused by what they had seen on stage. [...] Alas! The reason why this play is useful to society, is evidently not just that it provides enjoyable evening entertainment for ladies and gentlemen of good society." "*Ming bu ping yinyan*," in Ah Ying ed. *Wan Qing wenxue congchao*, pp. 306-307.

anticipates that this marriage connection will allow not only his daughter but also himself to become part of the French aristocracy, this despite the fact that the banker professes to be a commoner and "democrat by temperament." However, the deal unravels when the duke demands that the two families have only informal relations and Dallegre refrains from publicly appearing with the duke's family members, including his own daughter, the future wife of the duke's son. In the next scene of the play, the banker praises one of his bank clerks only to rebuff him when the latter proposes to marry Dallegre's daughter. The bank clerk in turn makes fun of the chambermaid when she reminds him of the promise he had made to her the other day to marry her. He argues that his promise was meant only as a joke and that he could not compromise his career and future by getting married to a lowly chambermaid. The chambermaid is then approached by the coachman of the house who wants to start his own business and proposes to marry the chambermaid. Rebuked by the chambermaid for his indecent proposal, the coachman takes out his frustration on the black servant. The black servant in turn snaps at a beggar who appears unsolicited in the house, and the beggar finally takes out his anger on his own dog. As this summary of the play shows, this is not a deep play but if acted well definitely has its charms. (Li's claim in the preface to the play that it could bring about societal change by exposing people's hypocrisy and false sense of superiority therefore seems a bit overblown.) Li's translation of the play is in general faithful to the original, except for the first scene of the play where he changes the content. While in the original the banker contemplates how a simple orthographic change will transform him from a commoner (Dallegre without apostrophe) to a nobleman (D'Allegre with apostrophe), in the Chinese translation the banker, his daughter, and the chambermaid go over a pile of letters and photographs of possible suitors for the daughter. Through this change, Li avoids having to explain the linguistic distinction between Dallegre with and without apostrophe. What he gains through this clever rewrite is the opportunity to show the conflicting criteria by which the banker, on the one hand, and his daughter, on the other hand, choose the most appropriate marriage prospect. Predictably, the daughter prefers men with good looks, some learn-

ing, and a good character, while the banker prefers the candidate with the most money. He declares the traditional class system as obsolete and claims that rank in contemporary society is determined by money and nothing else. (Dallegre's desperate pursuit of a title of nobility stands, of course, in contradiction to this statement, a contradiction that is to highlight the absurdity of his position.) Through this change, Li made the play less place and time specific—after all the nobility in China played a rather insignificant role throughout Chinese history—and makes the play more universally applicable.



Figure 2 Cover of *Ye wei yang*, Guangzhou 1928

Li Shizeng's Translation of *Le grand soir*

Unlike *L'Echelle* which is only a one-act play, Leopold Kapmf's (1881-1913) *Le grand soir* is a full-fledged, three-act play that in performance would last at least 2 hours. In a tour de force Li Shizeng translated the entire play including scene descriptions and stage directions. He diverted only occasionally and even then only minimally from the playscript. Like in his translation of *Ming pu ping*, Li translated *Le grand soir* into colloquial Chinese. This was quite an effort as the printed text of the translation runs almost to 200 pages. With *Ye wei yang* Li produced the first integral translation of a Western play, a feat that was matched only much later in the late 1910s.

Le grand soir had an immediate appeal to Li Shizeng and his colleagues: for the play is about a group of anarchists fighting against the authoritarian regime of the Russian tsar by printing propaganda material (a journal entitled *La lumière* [The Light, *Guangming* in Chinese] and flyers), organizing workers encouraging them to strike, and carrying out suicide bombings. The play is filled with rhetoric of heroism and self-sacrifice for "the cause" and ends with the indirect representation of a suicide mission carried out by the main male protagonist of the play who is helped in fulfilling his mission by his lover (she places a candle in the window of her aunt's apartment in order to signal the male protagonist that the police chief was approaching and that he step into action). Like the young revolutionaries in the play, Li and his fellow Chinese were fighting against an oppressive regime, with the difference of course that they carried out their fight from abroad rather than from within China itself. They, too, made use of the printing press as an important tool to spread their message among the expatriate Chinese communities in France and elsewhere as well as in China proper through their publication of *Xin shiji* (*Les temps nouveaux*), for example. They were also interested in organizing workers, although in their case, the main emphasis was on education and aimed at bridging the gap between Chinese students and workers. However, unlike the characters in the play, Li and his friends did not engage in suicide bombings or other forms of terrorist action al-

though they did not object to the practice. They further shared the characters' privileged background.

Kampf's play was extremely successful in Europe and was even performed in the U.S. in German, Yiddish, and English. It was translated in quick succession in many different languages including French, English, Yiddish, Turkish, and other languages. The play was banned in Germany what ignited the public's interest in the play rather than to diminish it. Through Mme. De Sanoit who played a part in the play Li got access to the author, and Kampf even contributed a preface to Li's Chinese translation of the play as well as his picture that features prominently on the cover of the translation (see Figure 4).



Figure 3 Illustration of Act 1 of *Le Grand Soit*

In his preface to the second edition of *Ye wei yang* expressly addresses the issue of intercultural performance. He remarked that the kind of direct translation of foreign plays that he produced with *Ye wei yang* was probably not the best way of conveying the play's intent and meaning. And Li saw another obstacle to the successful performance of foreign plays by Chinese in the different physiology and costumes of Chinese and foreigners. As a solution to these problems he suggested the following:⁴

I have a French friend, M. [Louis] Laloy, who is a Sinologist and teaches at the Université de Paris while at the same time serving as director general of the Théâtre National de Paris. He is the translator of [Ma Zhiyuan's] *Han gong qiu* (Autumn in the Palace of Han) that was performed in Paris to great acclaim of the French audience. This is a Chinese play, as everyone knows. When it was staged in France, it was performed in French, which goes without saying. Even the set and the costumes of the play were not entirely according to the Chinese manner. One could say that this was a creation that combined the best of China and France. And yet the play was extremely beautiful. Therefore I was led to think that when Chinese perform Western plays, they not necessarily have to use Western costumes. I have never seen it even once that when a Chinese actor wears Western clothes on stage that there is no artistic dissonance. By the same token, when Westerners with their high noses and deep eyes wear our traditional costumes, this too is not pretty.

4 Li Shizeng, "Chongyin *Ye wei yang* juben xuwen," pp. 5-6.

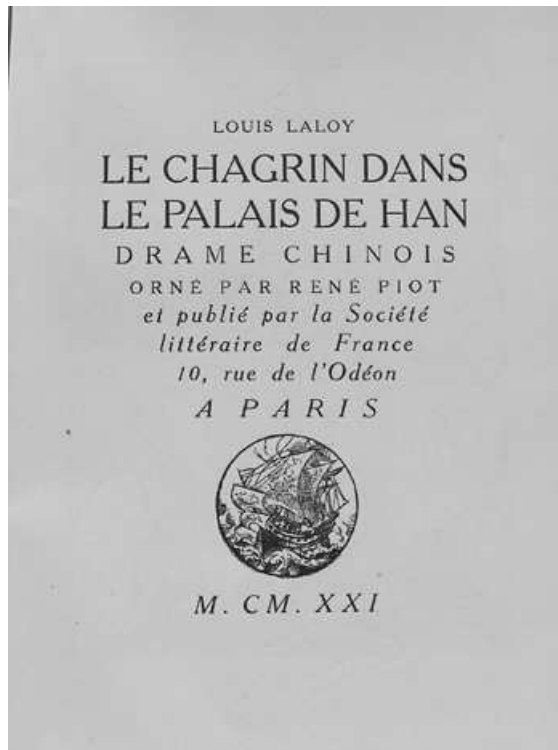


Figure 4

Louis Laloy

Li Shizeng and Louis Laloy met each other around 1906 in Paris and established a lifelong friendship. Their mutual appreciation can be seen from Li's praise of Laloy's translation and staging of *Hangong qiu* cited above and from Laloy's travelogue entitled *Le miroir de la Chine* (1933; English translation, *The Mirror of China*, 1936) in which Laloy speaks very highly of Li Shizeng (he calls him the "philosopher"). The travelogue documents Laloy's one and only trip to China (he took the sea route on the way to China making stops in Port Said, Jibuti, Colombo, Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong, and finally Shanghai) during which time Li

Shizeng served on the Central Supervisory Committee of the Kuomintang and was involved in educational affairs.

Louis Laloy (1874-1944)—scholar, writer, musicologist, music critic, and (amateur) Sinologist—was a central figure in the musical scene in Paris in the early decades of the twentieth century. Best known for his close association and friendship with several contemporary French composers such as Claude Debussy and Albert Roussel, he played also an important role in introducing the French public to Asian, and in particular, Chinese music, dance, and theater. He began to learn Chinese with Arnold Vissière (1858-1930) at the *École des langues orientales* around 1904 and was soon helped in his study of Chinese language and culture by a group of Chinese students whom he had befriended, among them Li Shizeng and Chu Minyi. Although not a professional Sinologist, Laloy published several books and many articles on Chinese literature and culture. Here only the works most pertinent to the topic of my talk shall be mentioned. In 1911, he translates, or rather adapts for the stage, Ma Zhiyuan's variety play *Hangong qiu* into French under the title *Le chagrin dans le palais de Han*.⁵ In the following year, he published one of the earliest reliable studies on Chinese music (*La musique Chinoise*). In the same year he wrote together with Han Jou-Kia a long article on the Chinese revolution of 1911/2 ("Histoire de la révolution chinoise," in *La Grande Revue*), demonstrating his intimate knowledge of Chinese current affairs. In 1913, he wrote a detailed account on opium, praising the effects of the smoking of opium, which Laloy himself was known for. In 1933, as mentioned above, he published *Miroir de la Chine* (Mirror of China) and in 1934 he published a faithful translation of another variety play, *Huangliang meng* (Dream of the Yellow Millet), under the French title *Le rêve du millet jaune*, with a substantial preface on the history of Chinese drama from its origins to the 13th century.⁶

5 The play was first printed in the journal *La Grande Revue* (25, Dec., 1911). The book publication of the translation followed only much later in 1921 by the Société littéraire de la France.

6 The translation was very favorably reviewed by a professional German Sinologist in *Monumenta*

Laloy explained his interest in China in his memoir *La musique retrouvée, 1902-1927* in the following way:⁷

I cannot enough praise the devotion, kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, and in some, the quality of the spirit [of my Chinese friends]. They cannot among my most reliable companions of my thought. Since [befriending them], one of my favorite axioms has been that I feel more at ease with a scholar from China ("in letter de la Chine") rather than with a financier from Europe, because nowadays it is the difference of the professions, rather than nationality, that determines the intellectual formation of a person. Once I had access to Chinese literature and philosophy [through the study of the Chinese language], I have never left from there, finding in them at once the pleasure of clearing an almost virginal ground and the joy of discovering the thoughts that to my mind encompasses in its vastest outlines our knowledge of the universe. Between the subject and object, the external world and the conscience that is its witness, neither the Chinese poets, nor the artists, or the moralists take side for either. In this they differ from their counterparts in Europe who only contemplate nature in order to impose on her their feelings; the Semites who despise or ignore her; or the Hindus who, just do the opposite and dissolve themselves in things abdicating any form of personal will. In their paintings or their poems, the forces of nature, the sky, and water maintain a supreme independence that never degenerates into disorder or overabundance. Their ethics considers human beings in their relationship with other human beings and mandates them to treat everyone as fellow human being, granting each of them what him or her is due. China has only

Serica in 1936. The reviewer highlighted in particular Laloy's preface as a major contribution to the Western understanding of Chinese theater because in this preface Laloy introduced the Western reader to Wang Guowei's influential reflections on the origins and history of Chinese drama.

⁷ *La musique retrouvée, 1902-1927* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1928), p. 149-150.

two cardinal virtues but they are sufficient in all cases, because one of them is called humanity and the other justice.

This admiration (and idealization) of the Chinese people and culture runs through all of Laloy's writings (even in those that are not directly on China) and even endured Laloy's encounter with the realities of Chinese life on his 1931 trip through China.

Louis Laloy's Translation of Ma Zhiyuan's *Hangong qiu*

Unlike Li Shizeng who came to translate Western plays out of his own interest, Laloy's translation of *Hangong qiu* was done as a commission from theater professionals. In 1911, Jacques Rouché, who had taken over the direction of the Théâtre des Arts in Paris one year earlier, asked Laloy to translate a Chinese play so as to provide the stage set designer of the theatre, René Piot, with the opportunity to create a "Chinese scenery in ancient style" ("des décors chinois dans le style ancien").⁸ Laloy readily agreed to the commission and chose Ma Zhiyuan's four-act play *Hangong qiu* for this purpose. This play had been previously translated into English by John Francis Davies under the title *Han Koong Tsew or The Sorrows of Han. A Chinese Tragedy* (London, 1829), albeit only in a truncated version (Davies, like the first translator of any Chinese play into an European language, Père Prémare, left the arias, the main focus of a Chinese play, untranslated). Davies' translation was harshly criticized by two French Sinologists who pointed out the many omissions and factual errors of the translation.⁹ A faithful French translation was said to be in the works by another French scholar but that translation never appeared. It is proba-

8 Laloy, *La musique retrouvée*, p. 199.

9 See Klaproth's review in *Journal Asiatique*, July, 1829, pp. 1-21, and Abel-Rémusat's review in *Le Journal des Savans*, Feb., 1830, pp. 78-89.

bly because of these critiques that Laloy devotes a considerable part of his preface to the play explaining the guiding principles behind his translation:¹⁰

I have tried hard to imitate rather than translate the play, thinking that the best tribute to his memory would be to give the French audience of today the impressions the playwright had given his contemporaries if only through entirely different means. [One has to understand that] Chinese plays are operas without recitatives or stage sets: spoken prose alternates with sung poetry in such a way that the prose conveys the events, and the poetry conveys the emotions. Furthermore, indications as to place and circumstances are contained in the text of the play only and not in the stage decoration. In order to transport a work of such a nature to the French stage, I had to reinforce the dialogue, having made it of equal value to the lyrical sections, and I had to squeeze the style of the lyrical sections, given the fact they lacked support of the melody. I therefore had to develop more fully the characters and emphasize the passions, being careful not to be too analytical so as not to chase away the poetic quality of the play together with its mystery. ♦

10 Louis Laloy, *Le chagrin dans le palais des Han* (Paris: La Société littéraire de la France, 1921).

The text of the translation appeared earlier in *La Grande Revue*, 25, Dec., 1911, pp. 779-800.

♦ Responsible editor: Hsun-Ting Hu (胡薰庭).

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