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New Perspectives on Imagology

Edited by

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European Ethnotypes in Chinese Words: The Translation and Negotiation of Some Western National Characters in Early Nineteenth-Century China

Federica Casalin

Abstract

The *World Geography* (*Wanguo dili quanji* 萬國地理全集) published in 1844 by the Protestant missionary Karl F.A. Gützlaff was the first geographical account to introduce some European ethnotypes to China. Based on recent archival findings, my article compares this book with both its presumed Western source and its rendering in the 1847 edition of Wei Yuan 魏源's *Maps and Documents of the Maritime Countries* (*Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志). It thus explores the role that interlingual and intralingual transfers respectively played first in negotiating and then renegotiating two European stereotypes in their early travels to and within the Qing empire.

Keywords

China – European ethnotypes – translation – intralingual transfer – world geography

As a discipline born in Western Europe, imagology is primarily concerned with ethnotypes that originated from and proved functional to the emergence of both national states and nationalistic claims within Europe (Beller and Leerssen 2007, 17–32). This article proposes to broaden the scope of the research on European ethnotypes by retracing their textual travel to and within China during the first half of the nineteenth century, a phenomenon that still awaits scholarly investigation. In particular, this contribution intends to assess how some stereotypical images codified in Europe were transmitted to China, as well as how and to what extent they were adapted in Chinese sources during the first decades of the nineteenth century. With this aim, sentences concerning

two ethnotypes (the German and the French) will be excerpted from the very first full-length treatise on world geography written in Chinese by a Protestant missionary, Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (1803–1851), during the period concerned, the *Wanguo dili quanji* 萬國地理全集 (A Complete Collection of World Geography, hereafter shortened and italicized as *World Geography*). This book soon went out of print, but its contents—or at least a selection of them, as we shall see—were widely circulated thanks to their inclusion in one of the most influential collections of world geography for decades to come, the *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Maps and Documents of the Maritime Countries, hereafter *Maps and Documents*) by Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857).

Since the *World Geography* is generally considered to be the translation of a Western source, issues concerning interlingual translation or *translation proper* (Jakobson 1959, 233) will first be taken into account when examining the contents of this book related to foreign ethnotypes. Besides, as recent findings of some extant copies of the *World Geography* offer an unprecedented opportunity to submit this book and Wei Yuan's version to contrastive analysis, this article also investigates the intralingual transfer that took place in China during the 1840s. In so doing, it pursues three objectives: first, it tries to retrieve the travels of some Western ethnotypes to and within China at a time when China's vision of all non-Chinese people as "barbarians"¹ started to be questioned; second, it intends to contribute to applied research on intralingual transfer (Zethsen 2009) by proposing a case study practiced in a context of transcultural communication; third, by relying on the fruitful interconnection of imagology and translation studies (van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen 2016), it outlines some suggestions for further advancements deriving from a triangulation with sinological research.

1 Gützlaff's *World Geography*: Some Recent Findings

Gützlaff's *World Geography* belongs to a group of secular publications issued in Chinese by the first Protestant missionaries who tried to enter China after Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) in 1721 had prohibited proselytizing activities in the Qing empire (1644–1911). Forced to live in secret or to move outside the Chinese borders to nearby territories such as Singapore and Malacca, the few missionaries that operated in China before the first Opium War (1839–1842)

1 The supposed equivalence between various words used to indicate outside populations and their rendering as "barbarians" has recently been called into question by various authors. See for instance Nylan (2012) for what concerns antiquity.

devoted a part of their proselytizing efforts to publishing activities in the hope of reaching a broader audience. Almost two-thirds of their writings were religious tracts, the rest being works on history, geography, and medicine.² Before the publication of Gützlaff's *World Geography*, only three geographical sources were issued in Chinese (Zou 2007, 70–71): those three booklets, each consisting of no more than thirty double-sided folios, were all published in Malacca and had low circulation; their contents focused on physical and political geography, while national characterization was almost absent (Casalin 2016, 324–326). Compared to them, Gützlaff's *World Geography* occupies a prominent place in the history of the dissemination of geographical knowledge in China, as it was the first systematic treatise to update information about the outside world that had initially been provided by Jesuit sources during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. China's self-perception of being "Everything under Heaven" (*Tianxia* 天下), which had resisted its first encounter with Western missionaries, this time gradually but inexorably collapsed. In this context, the idea of "foreigners" coming from different countries, "having different beliefs (denominations) and value systems, different political systems, different mores and customs" (Fang 2001, 99–100) slowly gained prominence.³

Gützlaff's *World Geography* is, to my knowledge, the very first geographical source that tried to convey to China the idea of Europeans as a mosaic of diverse national characters.⁴ Chinese sources attribute this book to Guo Shila 郭實獵. This was the name that the Prussian missionary adopted when he reached the Qing empire. Born in 1803 in a small village in Pomerania, which in 1815 was included in the German Confederation, Gützlaff arrived in Asia in 1827 and operated restlessly for more than two decades by preaching, writing, and translating: he reportedly composed more than sixty works in Chinese, along with two dozen works in Japanese, Siamese, Dutch, German, and

2 Xiong (2010, 75) calculates that, among the 147 works published by Westerners in China from 1803 to 1842, 113 were religious and 34 were nonreligious. Nonreligious works are still little investigated and only some conjectures have been made concerning their composition: scholars usually define them as the result of translations (or cotranslations, with Westerners translating the source text orally and Chinese assistants writing the text in Chinese), but the source text is often unknown.

3 A rather late testimony of Sinocentric schemata of ethnotyping is described in this volume by Zhu Wenjun (part 3, chapter 10), who examines an illustrated travelogue published in 1891 and highlights its indebtedness to the traditional worldview encoded in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* dating from the first millennium BCE.

4 Some national characterizations can be found also in a historiographical work published by the same Gützlaff in 1838, but they are few, short, and rather indirect, as they are limited to exposing the morality of each country's rulers (Casalin 2019).

English.⁵ The *World Geography* was long considered to have been published in 1838 by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China (SDUKC), which operated in Canton from 1834 to 1839 (Chen 2012). During those years, Gützlaff acted as one of the two “Chinese secretaries” of the SDUKC and was in charge of the publication of the majority of its secular writings in Chinese; this role perfectly suited him, convinced as he was that knowledge and science were crucial to the diffusion of the true religion, Protestantism. In fact, the attribution of the *World Geography* to the SDUKC was recently confuted by Zhuang Qinyong (2019, xv–xvi),⁶ according to whom the sudden interruption of the Society’s editorial activities, caused by the outbreak of the first Opium War, prevented Gützlaff from completing the editorial project at that time. He managed to write the *World Geography* no earlier than in 1843 and the volume was published in 1844 by the Chinese Union, established in that year in Hong Kong by Gützlaff himself.

The *World Geography* is made up of thirty-eight untitled textual units called *juan* 卷; each *juan* is subdivided into titled units that for the sake of convenience can be called chapters. According to Zhuang (2019, xxi), while the *juan* related to Asia are based on Chinese sources, Gützlaff “edited and translated” (*bianyì* 編譯) the remaining *juan* by relying on *The Encyclopaedia of Geography* by Hugh Murray (1779–1846).⁷ At first glance, the *Encyclopaedia*’s macrostructure differs greatly from that of the *World Geography* both in length and content organization. Still, by focusing on some statistical data available in the *World Geography*⁸ and comparing three editions (1834, 1839, and 1840) of Murray’s *Encyclopaedia*, in which statistical information was progressively updated, Zhuang (2019, xxi) came to identify the edition of the *Encyclopaedia* issued by Lea and Blanchard in Philadelphia in 1839 as Gützlaff’s source text. In the following analysis, the discursive construction of two national characters in the *World Geography* will be examined and compared to the contents available in

5 The life of this controversial missionary was the subject of numerous publications, particularly by Jessie Lutz; for a monographic account see for instance Lutz (2008).

6 Zhuang located three copies of the *World Geography* in two European libraries: one is kept at Leeds University, while two other copies are kept by Leiden University Library. As I personally consulted Leiden’s copies, in this article all textual quotations will bear both the indication of one archival source (SINOL. KNAG 82) and Zhuang’s annotated edition. I take this opportunity to thank the librarians of the Special Collections of Leiden University Library for their courteous cooperation.

7 Interestingly, even Lin Zexu’s 林則徐 *Sizhouzhi* 四洲志 (A Treatise on the Four Continents), whose excerpts open every chapter of Wei Yuan’s *Maps and Documents*, is considered to be a “translation” of Murray’s *Encyclopaedia* (Lutz 2008, 202).

8 See, for instance, Zhuang (2019, xxxii, xxxiv, xxxviii, xl, xli, xlvi, xlvi).

the *Encyclopaedia*.⁹ My intent is not to contest the identification of Murray's book as the source of Gützlaff's information but rather to assess similarities and differences between the two sources and thus evaluate the importance of the two activities of editing (*bian* 編) and that of "translating" (*yi* 譯)—a word that I purposely put in quotation marks to highlight its problematic use—in Gützlaff's work.

2 The Germans and French in Gützlaff's *World Geography*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Germany was a fragmented territory; Napoleon's escape from Elba in 1815 roused the Germanic polities to form some sort of unity, which culminated in the founding of the German Confederation in the same year. In dealing with the Confederation (*juan* 20), Gützlaff first stresses what in his view bestowed unity and cohesion to its population:

The inhabitants all speak the same language, with the same pronunciation; this also applies to the books they write. But there are two faiths: Catholicism and Orthodoxy. By native disposition they love studying and there's nothing they would not pursue to advance each art and skill. They are even familiar with the book(s) of the Han [Chinese books] which are read through by the classicists.¹⁰

According to this brief passage, despite religious divisions the Germanic peoples were fundamentally united by two elements: not only did they share a common language but also a "native disposition" to learning and enterprise.¹¹

9 Due to limits of length, it is not possible to fully quote Murray's passages concerning the Germans and French, which are generally much longer than those in the *World Geography*. Therefore only some references will be provided in footnotes or in the main text in order to highlight significant differences or similarities.

10 「國民都講同樣話音不異，所著之書亦同，但其教門兩樣，即天主與正端。民之素性乃好學，以進各藝術，無所不務，連漢書儒所讀悉矣。」 (Gützlaff 1844, 20, f. 53r; 2019, 228). All translations are mine. The expression Han shu 漢書 is unclear: rather than the *Book of the [Former] Han*, it may indicate books in Chinese.

11 Such a focus on intellectual abilities and the exclusion of other stereotypical representations of the Germans—for instance as being "strong, warlike, uncivilized" (Beller 2007, 160) or simple-minded like the enduring "national figure" of the "Teutsche Michel" (Sagarra 1994)—somewhat recalls the "lofty intellectual ideal-type formulated by Mme de Staël in 1800" (Beller 2007, 161) in *De l'Allemagne*, a work "which has fixed the parameters for all later visions and descriptions of Germany" (Leerssen 1994, 44). Still, on the contrary, no binary opposition between a cerebral north and a sensuous south is made.

This unity finds no equivalent in the *Encyclopaedia*, as Murray reports that “the people that inhabit Germany are distinguished into two races, the Germans and Slavonians [sic]. The Germans [...] are divided into two families, High and Low German, distinguished less by physical differences, than by character, and particularly by the mode of pronouncing the language” (1839, vol. 2, book 1, 93). This clearly marks from the beginning the great distance of the *World Geography* from the *Encyclopaedia*, which stimulates some questions: If we admit that the *Encyclopaedia* was Gützlaff’s source, why did he alter the national characterizations that were originally formulated for English readers? What factor(s) guided his choices? Did the missionary’s nationality and religious affiliation play a role in this process? In this respect we may hypothesize that the initial depiction of the Germans as being profoundly united by both language and native disposition may derive from Gützlaff’s being a citizen of the German Confederation. Besides, two more statements in this passage clearly betray his “intrusion.” The most evident is the reference to German sinology, which is absent in Murray’s book, and may have been purposely added as an attempt to win the goodwill of the Chinese. The other statement concerns religion: his reference to Protestantism as “Orthodoxy” also reveals the confessional stance underlying the *World Geography*.

The issue of the national character of the Germans is addressed once more in the closing sentences of *juan 20*, but this time regional differences are taken into account: here the analysis departs from the traditional binary opposition between the “cerebral and austere north as opposed to the more sentimental and sensuous south” (Leerssen 1994, 47), as it proposes a tripartite vision of the population:

With regard to Germany, as they serve various rulers, its inhabitants have extremely diverse and assorted habits: the northern inhabitants are strong and healthy in spirit, they adore studying, and are good, accommodating, and placid. The people of the southeastern state love to eat and drink inordinately, and feed themselves to satiety and excess; they are satisfied with what stands in front of their eyes and by no means reprove their superiors nor bully their subordinates. The inhabitants of the southwest work hard to make a living, they do not perceive pressure and weariness at all.¹²

¹² 「至日國居民因服列君其風俗太異不同，北方居民精神強健，最好學，良順悅心。南方東國之民，好繁飲食，飽飫過量，以眼前之物自滿，並不怨上欺下。西南之民勞苦，以度食，並不知壓倦。」 (Gützlaff 1844, 20, f. 54v; 2019, 237).

This differentiation—which is absent in the *Encyclopaedia*¹³—somewhat recalls the heterogeneity that characterized the German self-image for centuries, perpetuating medieval characterizations of the various German tribes (Beller 2007, 162). One of the three areas, the “southeastern state” might refer to the Kingdom of Bavaria,¹⁴ whose inhabitants, according to Gützlaff, love to eat and drink to excess and tend to make do with what they have, being fair-minded and obedient. By contrast, the so-called “southwest” might refer to the linguistic group of Swabians residing in Baden and Württemberg, who in Western sources are often described as “diligent and stingy” (Beller 2007, 162). The most positive description concerns the people of northern Germany, which partly coincided with Gützlaff’s motherland: its inhabitants embody a perfect synthesis of vigour, intelligence, and amiability.

In line with what various scholars have identified as an age-old binary system in Western sources that contrasts the presumed German virtues of loyalty, sincerity, strength, and courage with the equally presumed “immoral, voluptuous, false, and cowardly French” (Beller 2007, 162), hereafter my analysis will shift to the discursive construction of the French national characterization in the *World Geography*, which is fully contained in a single paragraph:

The inhabitants of France are people of great spirit; they are ceremonious and welcome guests from faraway lands with politeness and magnanimity. They often sing, do not have worries or resentment. When they gather, men and women dance tirelessly. They do not worry at all about the future and are content with the joys of the present. In moments of danger they are brave and firm in action, nourish no fear and would rather die than lose their dignity. When a man likes a woman, he normally devises a plan to start an illicit liaison, so as to have many adulterous intercourses. French women are charming and lively, and their loquacity indeed conquers your heart. However, after they marry they have illicit liaisons. Neither the old nor the young, neither dignitaries nor humble people rush into extravagance, they dress well and are kind, each one at his own liking. [French] people speak out of turn, contradict themselves and are not credible. When they do some favor they are not generous.

13 After the initial bipartition between the Germans and the Slavonians, Murray divides the German population into “the nobles” and “the body of the German people.” The latter’s character “has many estimable features. They are, perhaps, the hardest-working nation in Europe; slow, heavy, and laborious [...]. Their habits are simple and domestic; and plain honesty and fidelity usually mark their transactions. [...] The character of the Germans is very military” (1839 vol. 2, book 1, 93).

14 As the passage contains no toponyms, this can only be conjectured.

First they promise and then they soon forget, one moment they are full in spirit and the next dejected. They are excessive in both joy and sorrow. They have always enjoyed [undertaking] military campaigns, and even if these have caused millions of dead and wounded, having achieved victory, they return to their homeland in triumph, oblivious to their fatigue and sacrifices. Because of this, from the past to the present they have sought pretexts to go to war with other countries, risking death and putting braveness in war to the test; and if they succeed in protecting their nation's integrity, they are satisfied.¹⁵

Several features in this paragraph stand out in comparison to what Murray describes as the “French national character” (1839, part III, 540–541). The first difference lies in Murray's awareness that stereotypization depends greatly on the point of view of the observer;¹⁶ indeed, he starts by comparing the French self-image as incarnating “all that is refined and polished” with the hetero-image of their “rougher neighbours, [who] brand them as artificial, effeminate, and fantastic” (ibid.). Murray also observes that “the impression of the general dissoluteness of French manners has been chiefly derived from the opulent circles of the capital,” while if one observes life in the provinces “the gay hilarity of the French character does not seem quite so universal as is generally supposed” (ibid.); such cautious distinctions find no equivalent in the *World Geography*. Besides, Murray underlines what he defines as “a very strong national feeling” but never mentions any love for military action, ruthlessness in campaigns, or fearless behaviour, let alone what Gützlaff describes as their being “brave and firm in action” to the point that they “would rather die than lose their dignity.” On the positive side, Murray highlights more than once what he calls the French “art of living in society,” explaining that they “resort habitually to the theatre, spectacles, and scenes of public amusement”

15 「佛國居民最係精神好禮，以惠厚待遠來之客。時常唱歌，不憂不怨。會集之際，男女跳舞無倦。毫不遠慮，乃以現時之樂為足。當危之際，敢作敢為，毫無懼之態，寧死不可失大體。男者戀愛女人，常有懷姦之計，節次私通。其女怪活，言語如流，甚取人之心。但結媾姻後，與別人溢 [the 2019 edition reads as 濫] 交也。男幼尊賤，種種不顧毫費，美裳麗澤，各俱所悅矣。其民言語多嘴，反覆無信心。施恩不寬量，即許即忘。忽興豪氣，又忽喪心，喜憂過量也。向來極喜武功，不論傷亡者千萬，若得獲勝，凱旋本國，則忘勞捨身。是以自古以今，與各國肇畔，效死奮勇相戰。若果能守國家之大體，便心滿也。」 (Gützlaff 1844, 21, ff. 54v–55r; 2019, 239).

16 Ruth Florack similarly observes that, “as tradition and wisdom will have it, the French are aristocratic, well-bred, and hospitable, yet also changeable, fickle, and profligate [...]. These are a few of the ideas that have been harboured about the French—a wide range of positive and negative attributes which appear in various combinations and from different moral perspectives” (2007, 194).

(*ibid.*), but he never mentions men and women dancing together, as the *World Geography* does. Murray states positively that “the French possess estimable qualities,” as they are “ingenious, acute, active, and intelligent” (*ibid.*): this seems to be in keeping with what the *World Geography* describes as their being spirited, educated, kind, and generous, particularly toward people from far-away lands; also the sentence according to which, from dignitaries to humble people, they all “dress well” recalls Murray’s statement according to which “the polish of the higher ranks seems to have descended even to the lowest circles” (*ibid.*). Finally, both sources contain some gender-based characterizations: while the *World Geography* speaks of both men and women, the *Encyclopaedia* only describes French women’s “system of regular flirtation” after marriage, as well as their deportment, which, “however embellished by *tournure* [italics in the original], and the graces, does not accord with *our* [italics mine] ideas of social and domestic propriety” (*ibid.*).

The pronoun *our*, highlighted above, betrays the subjective judgement of the English author of the *Encyclopaedia*, whose contents differ in many respects from those contained in the work by the Prussian missionary. The *World Geography*, on the other hand, reveals on more than one occasion Gützlaff’s promotion of his own national identity—as opposed to other nationalities, particularly the French—as well as his religious affiliation. All in all, despite being called a “translation”—particularly by Wei Yuan, as we shall see below—the *World Geography* shows very little equivalence with what is believed to be its source text. If Gützlaff effectively relied on the *Encyclopaedia*,¹⁷ then his work may perhaps be considered as the outcome of what Justa Holz-Mänttäri (1984) defined as *translatorial action*, namely a mediated intercultural communication without a fixed and distinctive source text. Such a *translatorial action* took place by Gützlaff’s combining different “sources” of information, that is, a foreign book on geography and his own set of stereotypical ideas on the European populations, and by negotiating various concerns, including the proselytizing targets of Protestant missionaries in opposition to their Catholic rivals.

3 Wei Yuan and the Adaptation of Some European Ethnotypes in China

As anticipated in the opening paragraph, Gützlaff’s *World Geography* was lost for almost 150 years, until three extant copies were found in two European libraries (Zhuang 2019); previous studies mentioning this source usually refer

17 Due to the lack of documental proof, the possibility that Gützlaff relied on another foreign source cannot be completely ruled out.

to the version edited by Wei Yuan. The contents in Wei's *Maps and Documents* are arranged by continents, each of which is further subdivided into the countries it then comprised. Each country is described through the collation of a series of preexisting texts of various periods and authors—both foreign and Chinese—that Wei Yuan fragmented and reassembled according to their geographical area. Wei Yuan progressively enlarged the sources he relied upon to describe the world, so that the first edition, divided into fifty *juan* and dating from 1844, was followed in 1847 by an enlarged edition divided into sixty *juan*; in 1852 a newly enlarged edition divided into 100 *juan* was issued (Zou 2007, 345–346, footnote 26). The contents taken from the *World Geography* first appeared in the 1847 edition and were then maintained in all subsequent editions and reprints. In quoting the *World Geography*,¹⁸ Wei Yuan never mentions having somewhat altered his source. Did he faithfully quote it? If not, how did he modify it and why? These questions inspire the contrastive analysis I provide below.

In what follows, Gützlaff's *World Geography* will be called the “source text,” while Wei Yuan's version will be called the “received text.”¹⁹ My analysis examines two aspects: (1) the relationship between the source text and the received text; (2) the role of the Chinese agency in mediating and adapting foreign contents for a targeted audience. Concerning the first, in the “Afterword” to the 1852 edition of his *Maps and Documents*, Wei lists some of the books he consulted after publishing the first edition in order to broaden his sources of information: the *World Geography* is ranked in a group of block-printed volumes that were “translated in Guangdong [province]” ([1852] 1998, 7). Wei thus explicitly considered the *World Geography* a “translation” (*yi* 譯). As he almost certainly did not consult the original source, his version does not fit into the category of “retranslation” in Gambier's (1994, 413) sense. In fact, Wei was not trying to supersede an existing translation²⁰ but rather adapt a source written in his own language to his intended audience: so the received text ought to be examined in the framework of intralingual transfers. What kind of intralingual transfer took place through Wei's brush?

18 Excerpts taken from the *World Geography* are always explicitly marked by the title, which is slightly modified by adding the character *tu* 圖 (maps) at the end. Wei never reports the name of the foreign author.

19 I prefer to avoid using the expression “target text” as it may convey the idea that it is the result of a work of translation, while the nature of Wei Yuan's text is still to be assessed.

20 When quoting other translated sources, Wei sometimes calls himself a “recompiler” whose work followed that of the “European original author” and that of the “translator” (Mosca 2013, 275).

In his annotated edition of the *World Geography*, Zhuang defines Wei Yuan's editorial activity as consisting of "collecting and editing" (*huibian* 彙編): in his view, Wei "only aimed at understanding the general idea of each paragraph and section, assimilating the significant information and the main points of what he was reading [...]. He did some simple editorial work such as cutting out [superfluous parts] or polishing and amending the language by supplying missing characters, removing replications or adding some characters of his own" (2019, lxxxvii). Interestingly, Zhuang also expresses his own impressions as a Chinese reader when reading Gützlaff's *World Geography*, in which he finds various flaws²¹ that make the book "rather difficult to read" (*ibid.*, xxxvii): this may contribute to explaining Wei Yuan's decision to edit the text for his readers. In order to assess the nature, extent, and results of his editing, a contrastive analysis of the source text and the received version is provided below. The analysis starts from the first passage concerning the overall population of Germany:²²

In Germany, language and pronunciation are the same, this also applies to the books they write; there are two faiths: Catholicism and Heterodoxy. By disposition they love studying and are devoted to art and technique, they are even familiar with China's books.²³

This paragraph offers several examples of rephrasing that do not alter the meaning and seem to be aimed at simplifying and shortening the source text. This happens for instance with the expression "inhabitants all speak the same language, with the same pronunciation," which is rendered as "in Germany, language and pronunciation are the same." But sometimes Wei Yuan's rephrasing alters the source text, as for instance when the sentence "but there are two faiths: Catholicism and Orthodoxy" is modified as follows: "there are two faiths: Catholicism and Heterodoxy." This difference is clearly a mistake since

21 "Mistaken words and incorrect characters, as well as redundant expressions and missing words can be found throughout; the translation of toponyms is inconsistent; punctuation in place names is sometimes wrong; the lexicon is poor, grammar tends to be incorrect and the influence of foreign syntax can frequently be perceived." See Zhuang (2019, xxxii–xxxvii).

22 Here and below, for the sake of readability I only report the resulting version in English, while modifications are reported only in the Chinese version in the footnotes. Characters between square brackets are suppressed, bold characters added.

23 「國中[民都講同樣話]語音不異，所著之書亦同，[但]其教門[兩樣]有二，即天主與[正]異端。民[之素]性[乃]好學，[以進各]務藝術，[無所不務，連漢]並中國之書[、儒所]皆讀悉[矣]。」(Wei [1852] 1998, 1273).

in the received text Catholicism is opposed to Heterodoxy and not (Protestant) Orthodoxy, thus subverting the religious stance of the source text. Besides, the received text omits the adversative conjunction “but,” thus leaving out what for Gützlaff probably was an incomprehensible contradiction, namely the fact that German people were united by a common language *but* had different faiths. Wei Yuan also substitutes the expression *Han shu* 漢書 (*Book of the [Former] Han* or perhaps books in Chinese), which probably sounded unclear, with the generic expression “China’s books,” and leaves out the reference to the social group of the *ru* 儒, the classicists who perpetuated the Confucian tradition in China. This might simply be due to the fact that the expression “China’s books” included texts of the Confucian tradition and mentioning the *ru* would thus sound redundant. Whatever the reason, this omission deprived the national characterization of the Germans of a peculiar hue of erudition.

Coming to the second paragraph on the Germans in Gützlaff’s book, Wei Yuan renders it as follows:

As they serve different rulers, its inhabitants have peculiar and diverse habits: those from the north are strong in spirit, robust and healthy; they adore studying. Inhabitants of the south and east love to eat and drink inordinately. Inhabitants of the southwest struggle a lot to make their living.²⁴

Here again we find some rewording (“extremely diverse and assorted habits,” for instance, is rendered as “peculiar and diverse habits”) as well as what seems a misunderstanding, since the expression “inhabitants of the southeastern state” is turned into “inhabitants from the south and the east,” thus referring to two geographical areas rather than one, and omitting the reference to a geopolitical entity which—as stated before—probably corresponds to Bavaria. Besides, in this passage Wei Yuan omits a few sentences: if some may have been discarded because they sounded redundant (i.e. “feed themselves to satiety and excess,” which reiterates the concept “love to eat and drink inordinately”), in other cases the original contents are irremediably lost, such as the sentence according to which people from the north “are good, accommodating, and placid,” or the fact that inhabitants of the southeastern state

²⁴ 「[至日]國中居民，因分服列君，[其]風俗[太]殊異[不同]：北方居民，精神強健，最好學[，良順悅心]。南方、東方[國]之民，好繁飲食[，飽飫過量，以眼前之物自滿，並不怨上欺下]。西南之民勞苦[，以]度生[食，並不知壓倦]。」 (Wei [1852] 1998, 1276).

(now called the “south and the east”) are happy with what they have, they “by no means reprove their superiors nor bully their subordinates.”

Wei Yuan's editorial selectiveness is much more evident in the paragraph concerning France, whose length is about one third of the original:

The inhabitants of France are people of great spirit; they are ceremonious and magnanimously welcome guests from afar. Men and women gather to sing and dance, they only rejoice for the present and disregard the future. In moments of danger they are brave and firm in action, and would rather die than submit. As for women, their clever words sound like flutes; they are indeed delightful. However, they do not fully comply with ritual propriety. People promise easily and renege easily. They nurture a keen interest and pleasure in military actions; they often stir up trouble with other countries, risking death and displaying bravery in war.²⁵

Once again we find examples of rewording that do not modify the original meaning, such as when the sentence “[they] do not worry at all about the future and are content with the joys of the present” is rendered as “they only rejoice for the present and disregard the future.” Besides, some long passages are summarized in a few words: the four-character idiomatic expression “[People] promise easily and renege easily,” for instance, summarizes two rather redundant expressions, namely “contradict themselves and are not credible,” and “first they promise and then they soon forget.” Yet, content omissions still account for the major changes: in the received text French people “lose” their presumed elegant bearing (nobody “rush[es] into extravagance, they dress well and are kind, each one at his own liking”), their temperamental excesses (“one moment they are full in spirit and the next dejected. They are excessive in both joy and sorrow”), as well as their national pride.

Some textual modifications concerning gender relations in France also deserve special attention: while the source text depicts both men and women

25 佛蘭西國民最係精神好禮，[以惠]厚待遠[來之]客。[時常唱歌，不憂不怨，]男女會集歌舞[之際]，男女跳舞無倦，毫不遠慮，乃以現時之樂為足]惟樂目前，不慮久遠。[當]危[之際]時敢作敢為，[毫無懼之態，]寧死不居人下[可失大體]。[男者戀愛女人常有懷姦之計，節次私通。]其女巧言如簧[怪活，言語如流，]甚悅[取]人意[之心]。但不甚守禮[結媾姻後，與別人溢交也。男幼尊賤，種種不毫費，美裳麗澤，各俱所悅矣。]其民[言語多嘴，反覆無信心。施恩不寬量，即許即忘]輕諾寡信[，忽興豪氣又忽喪心，喜憂過量也。向來極]豪興喜武[功]，[不論傷亡者千萬，若得獲勝，凱旋本國，則忘勞捨身。]是以[自古以今，]常與各國肇畔，效死[奮]勇[相]戰[若果能守國家之大體，便心滿也]。(Wei [1852] 1998, 1268).

as prone to infidelity, the received text omits this content as related to men. As for women, the sentence “after they marry they have illicit liaisons” is substituted by a rather generic expression: “they do not fully comply with ritual propriety.” The reasons for these changes can only be conjectured and might be due to the fact that *Maps and Documents* was conceived as a tool to “use the barbarians in order to manage the barbarians” that were threatening the integrity of the Qing empire (Wei [1852] 1998, *juan* 1, 1); contents related to private relations might have sounded irrelevant to this intent. Finally, a peculiar example of rewording as related to women occurs in the use of the four-character expression “their clever words sound like flutes,” which substitutes “[they] are charming and lively, and their loquacity indeed conquers your heart.” Wei uses an undeclared quotation from the most ancient collection of Chinese poetry, the *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), whose 305 poems, dating from 1000 to 600 BCE, contributed to the codification of Chinese moral standards for more than two millennia. In the original poem this expression was used to criticize the sweet but malevolent words of some slanderers. Since Wei continues this passage by saying that French women are “delightful,” he probably did not intend to confer a fully negative taint to his words.²⁶ Still, his rewording adds an ambiguous hue that cultivated readers in China would probably have noted.

These examples induce us to reconsider the editorial work done by Wei Yuan. Besides “polishing and amending the language” (Zhuang 2019, xxxvii) so as to optimize readability, Wei’s major interventions related to national characterizations consist in rewording and—even more importantly—“omitting” some content. These interventions were most likely due to a series of concurring factors, ranging from the need to suit the reading standards of his intended audience, to that of shortening the overall length of the *Maps and Documents*, and facilitating his aim of using the collection as an instrument to protect the empire from a rather generic foreign adversary, to whose (presumed) national identities most Chinese were probably still rather indifferent. Whatever the reasons, the result of Wei’s intralingual transfer produced some rather evident shifts and changes in characterization which departed from the explicit wording and implicit intentions of the source text.

26 The first English translator of the *Shijing*, the Protestant missionary James Legge (1815–1897), renders this expression as “their artful words, like organ-tongue.” For a full translation of the poem see Legge ([1871] 1983, 340–343).

4 Sinology, Imagology, and Translation Studies: Some Future Perspectives

The case study examined in this article suggests the need to further develop connections between the fields of sinology and imagology, an endeavour that would greatly benefit from a synergy with translation studies, as I will explain below. As far as sinological research is concerned, existing works on the circulation of information about the outside world in China during the 1830s and 1840s are still rather limited; yet, those decades were crucial for China to form a comprehensive idea of the contemporary realities beyond its borders. Both foreign and local agencies contributed to framing this integrated view: in the field of geographical knowledge, as evidenced by Matthew Mosca, works produced by Protestant missionaries were never taken as an “unmediated authority” but rather “continued to depend on their reception, analysis, and evaluation by Chinese scholars” (2013, 222). Wei Yuan was only one—though probably among the most influential—of such scholars; in fact, any future analysis on the topic of the transmission of geographical knowledge could and should be extended to other sources so as to include, for instance, Lin Zexu’s *Treatise on the Four Continents* (1839), as well as the *Yinghuan zhiliu* 瀛環志略 (Brief Account of the Maritime Circuit) published in 1849 by Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲 (1795–1873).²⁷ For Zhuang (2019, lxxxvii), Xu’s approach to Western sources was different from Wei Yuan’s: while the latter “collected and edited,” the former tended to “compose and write” (*zhuangxie* 撰寫). How, then, did the editorial choices of these literati differ in mediating foreign ethnotypes and for what reasons? To what extent did each of them preserve or alter the national characterizations they relied upon? Furthermore, did the European practice to depict national characters play a role in China’s definition of a national self-image toward the end of the nineteenth century? These are some of the questions that sinologists, relying on imagological theory, methods, and findings, may want to face in order to enhance our understanding of the circulation of knowledge about the outside world in nineteenth-century China and its impact on forming the modern Chinese state. Conversely, the research conducted on Chinese sources would also help to retrieve “the intertextual

27 This book also had a lasting impact on the circulation of information about the outside world for decades to come, as demonstrated by the fact that some of the Chinese envoys of the Qing government who reached Europe during the last three decades of the nineteenth century explicitly referred to the descriptions of the world they read in Xu Jiyu’s *Brief Account*.

trail of transmission and dissemination” (van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen 2016, 3) of European ethnotypes well beyond Europe, something that imagological studies may want to further investigate in the future.

As this article demonstrates, when dealing with the transcultural mediation of ethnotypes to and within China, processes of both interlingual and intralingual transfer are to be examined. Trying to define whether such transfers ought to be considered as translations by applying more or less encompassing theoretical definitions (Göpferich 2007; Zethsen 2009) goes beyond the scope of this article, whose main target is to assess how some national characterizations underwent negotiation and renegotiation under the influence of differing agencies. Still, this case study offers an opportunity to reflect on the very concept of “translation” in transcultural and diachronic perspective²⁸ by focusing on the Chinese word that is commonly considered an equivalent of “translation”: *yi* 譯. Investigating translation history, D’hulst has already highlighted the risks of using “in a straightforward manner modern translational categories for the analysis of historical translations and translation processes” (2010, 403). In consideration of this, is it correct to apply modern conceptualizations of translation to nineteenth-century occurrences of the term *yi* 譯 at a time when Chinese had no translation theory and when the target culture was considered “infinitely superior and hence not quite the ‘recipient’” (Chan 2004, 3–4)? What did Chinese scholars of the time mean when using the character *yi* 譯? The semantic value of this word ought to be thoroughly studied by experts in translation studies, who could benefit from the theoretical framework of what Lydia Liu, investigating early twentieth-century Sino–Western encounters, codified as “translingual practice” (1995, 26). By tracing the textual trajectories of images across the Eurasian continent, translation scholars would thus not only help imagologists locate the alterations that European ethnotypes underwent in their travels to China, highlighting the role of translation as a “dynamic force co-constructing differences rather than merely reflecting them” (van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen 2016, 5); at the same time, they would also help sinologists assess the role played by different agencies in negotiating the construction of foreign national images in China during the nineteenth century, right before the collapse of the Qing empire and the advent of the modern Chinese nation.

28 On this topic see St. André (2012), particularly pp. 11–26.

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