

Beyond Europe. Before James Holmes.

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Abstract

In this paper, we take Far East China as a case study to show what happened regarding Translation Studies elsewhere beyond Europe and before James Holmes.

Thus far, the prevailing consensus in the narratives of Translation Studies is that the discipline originated in 1972 with James Holmes's seminal paper "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies". We take the stance that this perceived starting point, self-chosen by Western Translation Studies, indicates two imbalances: a temporal bias that tends to downplay attempts to trace the discipline's origins to periods preceding 1972 and a geographical bias that marginalises endeavours from non-Western regions. Current contestations challenging these biases predominantly stem from Eastern Europe and have provided evidence that "Translation [S]tudies has traditionally been strongly Eurocentric in orientation" (Baker & Saldanha, 2019, p. 21). In order to find out if anything happened before 1972 and beyond Europe, we employed Holmes's 1972 paper as a reference point and conducted a study of relevant Chinese literature (such as "*Fan Qing Shuo* [繙清说; *On Translating into Manchu*"]) from the 1950s back to 1740. We compared these Chinese works to that of James Holmes in terms of three aspects: (i) The name of Translation Studies; (ii) Translation theories, including the theory by Yan Fu, who is well known to the Western TS scholarship, and (iii) Translation as an academic discipline. Conclusions were made from our comparisons so as to assess the functions of these early Chinese texts on translation.

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