

An Encyclopaedia of Translation

Chinese-English · English-Chinese

Edited by

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AESTHETICS

Aesthetics and Translation

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Historical Ties between Aesthetics and Translation

As in the West, China's exploration of translation artistry drew close the ties between classical aesthetics and translation studies. The exploration can be dated back to A.D. 220–230, when translators of Buddhist scriptures were seeking for philosophical backup. The first exploration in this direction can be found in Zhi Qian's 支謙 writing in which he quoted Lao Zi's 老子 maxim that "beautiful words are not faithful, and faithful words not beautiful" 美言不信，信言不美 ("Preface to Dhammapada" 〈法句經序〉), the time-honoured aesthetic controversy of "beauty vs truth", and introduced into translation studies a topic which hung on for seventeen centuries in China. It is no exaggeration to say that traditional studies of translation have never ceased to seek theoretical reference from Chinese classical aesthetics, chiefly in the area of literary aesthetics.

Commonness in Values

Aesthetics and translation share similar values. Traditional translation studies have long accorded with classical aesthetics in Chinese literature and philology in their exploration of the relationship between the following binaries: