



Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture (Global Asias)

Michael Gibbs Hill

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Lin Shu, Inc. explores the dynamic interactions between literary translation, commercial publishing, and the politics of "traditional" Chinese culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It breaks new ground as the first full-length study in any Western language on the career and works of Lin Shu and his many collaborators in the publishing, academic, and business worlds. Integrating literary scholarship, translation studies, and print history, this book provides new insights into a controversial figure in world literature and his place in the profound transformations in authorship and cultural production in modern China.

Well before Ezra Pound and Bertolt Brecht transformed Western-language poetry and theater with their inventions of Chinese culture, Lin Shu and his collaborators had already embarked on a translation project unique in modern literature. Although he knew no foreign languages, in a 20-year period Lin Shu worked with 19 different assistants schooled in English, French, and other tongues to complete more than 180 book-length translations into classical Chinese. Through burgeoning print outlets such as the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan), Lin and his collaborators offered many readers in China their first taste of "Western literature" - usually 19th-century novels and short stories from the United States, England, and France. At the same time, Lin Shu leveraged his labors as a translator to make himself into a leading authority on "traditional" Chinese literature and cultural values. From what one publisher called his "factory of words," Lin issued scores of textbooks and anthologies of classical-language literature, along with short stories, poems, essays, and a handful of full-length novels.

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