



The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage

Norman J. Girardot

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In this magisterial study, Norman J. Girardot focuses on James Legge (1815-1897), one of the most important nineteenth-century figures in the cultural exchange between China and the West. A translator-transformer of Chinese texts, Legge was a pioneering cross-cultural pilgrim within missionary circles in China and within the academic world of Oxford University. By tracing Legge's career and his close association with Max Müller (1823-1900), Girardot elegantly brings a biographically embodied approach to the intellectual history of two important aspects of the emergent "human sciences" at the end of the nineteenth century: sinology and comparative religions.

Girardot weaves a captivating narrative that illuminates the era in which Legge lived as well as the surroundings in which he worked. His encyclopedic knowledge of pertinent figures, documents, peculiar ideologies, and even the personal quirks of principal and minor players brings the world of imperial China and Victorian England very much to life. At the same time, Girardot gets at the roots of much of the twentieth-century discourse about the strange religious or nonreligious otherness of China.

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