



THE DOUBLE-ARCH BRIDGE OF INDIRECT TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF CULTURAL TRANSMUTATION IN THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE MUSIC OF CENTRAL ASIA

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This paper examines the practice of indirect translation through the case study of the Chinese translation of the seminal ethnomusicological work, *The Music of Central Asia* (edited by Theodore Levin, Saida Daukeyeva, and Elmira Köchümkulova). It conceptualizes indirect translation not as a mere technical process but as the construction of a “double-arch bridge” facilitating complex cultural transmutation. The first arch represents the initial translation undertaken by the original editors: transforming the diverse, often oral, musical practices of Central Asia—characterized by instruments like plucked and bowed lutes, unique vocal styles, and complex forms like the *muqam* suites—into a structured English-language academic discourse. This act itself is an interpretive mediation, framing Central Asian soundscapes within Western ethnomusicological paradigms.

The second arch is the translator’s task of rendering this English academic text into Chinese for a readership that shares geographical and historical ties with parts of Central Asia, particularly through the Silk Road. This stage involves navigating significant challenges: constructing a coherent Chinese terminology for ethnomusicological and local concepts; mediating between the source text’s perspective and the target cultural context; and positioning the translation within China’s own scholarly discourse on Silk Road music cultures, which includes recognized heritage like the Uyghur Twelve *Muqam*—itself a product of Indian, Persian/Arabic, and Chinese syncretism. The study argues this “bridge” is not a transparent conduit but an active site of re-creation.

While enabling knowledge exchange, it inevitably reshapes the cultural image through dual editorial and translational mediation. The translator thus acts as a cultural interpreter. By employing strategies like scholarly annotation, indirect translation transcends its limitations to become proactive academic engagement. It demonstrates how indirect translation serves as a strategic, generative force in global dialogues about cultural heritage, achieving effective cultural transmutation and deep exchange through dynamic “connection” and “re-creation”.