



## A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation

<b>Presentation Details</b>	
<b>Title of Paper:</b>	Translating “Towns and Cities”: The Canton City Question in Post-Opium War Sino-British Relations
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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>Historians generally believe that the so-called “Canton City Question,” which troubled seriously Sino-British relations for almost two decades after the First Opium War, was caused by a mistake in the translation of the Treaty of Nanking (1842). In the original English version, both the British citizens and consular officers were allowed to live with restrictions in the “towns and cities” of the five ports, including Guangzhou (Canton). But in the Chinese version translated by the British translator/interpreter John Robert Morrison (1814-1843), there are two different translations for the term “towns and cities”: for the Consular officers, they might live in the <i>chengyi</i> 城邑, which generally mean the entire city or town; whereas for the British people, they would only be allowed to stay at <i>Kangkou</i> 港口, meaning that they were restricted to the harbour area. The present paper argues that this difference in the two versions of the Treaty of Nanking was not the cause of the dispute. In fact, the negotiators of both sides had agreed that all British were allowed to live and travel freely in the entire city. It also explains why John Robert Morrison adopted <i>kangkou</i> in his translation.</p>

### Author's Biography

**Lawrence Wang-chi WONG** is Chairman and Professor of Humanities, Department of Translation and Director of the Research Centre for Translation, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is chief editor of *Fanyishi yanjiu* (Studies in Translation History) and *Journal of Translation Studies*, and executive editor of *Renditions*. He has published extensively on Chinese literature and Chinese translation history. In recent years, he works mainly on translation issues in Sino-British relations in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.