

Social and Economic Power in Robert Morrison's Social Network

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This paper investigates the work of Robert Morrison (1782–1834) using social network theory and Digital Humanities techniques to uncover the role of social and economic power in nineteenth century translation practice. Having input information about Morrison's social network gleaned from various online and print resources, an extensive social network emerges, revealing that Morrison actively sought and maintained contact with hundreds of individuals from various social strata. These individuals ranged from highly-placed figures such as Sir George Staunton to itinerant preachers in Tahiti, and was maintained both through direct contact and a vast and voluminous correspondence. This extensive network is one of the key factors in Morrison's success as a translator and cross-cultural communicator, opening up doors for him in terms of job opportunities; it also enabled him to be one of the most successful fundraisers among the early missionary translators. He was able to solicit funds from the East India Company, members of the aristocracy and the professional classes, and from church-goers throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. These funds provided the necessary foundation for his dictionary project, his translation activities, and the Anglo-Chinese College. The network analysis highlights these aspects of his career.