
Modern Chinese Translation as a Political Act

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Politics seems to be deeply embedded in modern Chinese translation of the West in the first half of the 20th century. The political nature of translation is found in translating Western constitutional monarchy, Republican vision, and Communism as a form of struggle against colonization. It is seen in this period of literature translation as liberation of the exploited, the oppressed, and the downtrodden. It is also reflected in various debates over the language and criteria of translation, and intended readership among different schools and/or groups of translators with different political views, agendas and purposes. The Chinese experience of translation within a colonial context may inform studies on political implications of translation in this postcolonial world.

Political Translation

As postcolonial (Robinson, 1997; Bassnett & Trivedi eds., 1999), gender (Simon, 1996; Von Flotow, 1997), social (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996), and globalizational (Cronin, 2003) studies show, translation has many faces and dimensions. As a double-edged sword, it can serve as a tool for rebellion, resistance, subversion, revolution as well as empire, slavery, cultural hegemony, and gender and ethnic oppression and suppression. The present study tries to look at the trajectory of modern Chinese translation in the first half of the 20th century to see how politics was deeply embedded in and actively played out in translation and translatology within China's semi-colonized context. The political nature of this period of translation may be discerned in 1) the political background against which certain translations emerged, 2) particular texts that were selected, translated, accepted, and re-interpreted, and 3) the intentions of the translators who were involved in debates over translation.

The first half of the 20th century witnessed massive translation efforts in China. Textually, in literature translation alone, according to Tsai (p. 507), who based his research on the State Central Library of Taiwan's catalogue, more than 2,500 Euro-American novels, plays, poetry and prose works, and children's stories in translation were published. This largely incomplete list excludes translations of numerous poems, short stories, serialized novels, plays and fairy tales published in various magazines and journals. In a sense, this period of translation constitutes a "grand narrative" of China's social, intellectual, cultural, and particularly, political transformation.

Background

Historically, Chinese translation as a political act can be seen in cases such as the anti-Missionary-Converts' translation campaigns launched by Xu Guangzhi in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Yang Guangxian in the early Qing Dynasty (1616-1911) (Guo, 2002). It can be also seen in the Yangwu (Westernization Movement) translations after the Opium War with Britain in 1840, when China began to be colonized. In both cases, translation was manipulated to achieve different political ends. As members

of the feudal Confucian scholar-official class, Xu and Yang rejected and demonized the West, represented by missionary translations, as being morally, socially and philosophically evil and subversive. The Yangwu translation efforts aimed clearly at “learning from the (Western) barbarians in order to control them” (see Guo, 2002).

Those Sinocentric, occidentalist, and utilitarian attitudes towards translation contributed, in part, to China’s collapse at the turn of the 20th century in the face of the Western colonizers. As Kang Youwei (1858-1929) described in 1895:

In the North, Russia is keeping a hawk’s eye (on China); in the West, Britain is casting its covetous eyes; in the South, France is fiercely watching; in the East, Japan is glaring like a tiger. Being the Middle Kingdom caught in between these powerful neighbours, China is in imminent danger! Moreover, at least over ten other countries are clenching their teeth, licking their lips, thirsting for a part of China (in Chen, 1992, p. 105. Translation mine).

To save the endangered China, major reformists such as Kang himself, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), and Yan Fu (1853-1921) attempted to translate the European model of constitutional monarchy. However, before they had time to accomplish anything, China was carved up into different “spheres of influence” by the invasion of the Allied Forces of Eight Powers in 1900. When national survival was at stake, Chinese translation – in literal, social, moral, and cultural senses of the word – became even more politically oriented.

Translating Western Republican Visions

At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the most important political and social “translators” was Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925). At the age of 12, Sun went to Honolulu, where he attended missionary schools. His extracurricular activities included reading both Chinese books and the revolutionary stories of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Later he became a highly qualified doctor of Western medicine. In 1896, Sun went to London, where he read extensively about Western politics, diplomacy, law, military affairs, mining, agriculture, livestock husbandry, engineering and politico-economics. There, he also translated a book entitled *Red Cross First Aid* (1897) (see Zou, 2000). He might have become an important translator of Western medicine if he had not found political practice a better cure for China.

Labeled as a bourgeois-democratic movement in China’s official history, Sun and his followers looked more radically towards the West than the Reformists for establishing a republic. In 1905 in Tokyo, Japan, the Chinese Revolutionary League was organized with Dr. Sun as its leader. The slogans of the League were: Drive Out the Manchus, Restore China, Establish a Republic, and Equalize Land Ownership. It was stated in the League’s manifesto:

...in addition to the expulsion of the Manchus and restoration of China, the form of the state and the livelihood of the people must be changed. Although many complications are involved, the underlying spirit should be “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.” In the past there were heroes’ revolutions; today we need a people’s revolution (in Jian, 1981, p. 127).

As can be seen here, the League headed by Dr. Sun was introducing and speaking a new language of politics. The core vocabulary of their political vision, including 革命 (*ge ming*, revolution), 主义 (*zhu yi*, -ism, principle), 民主 (*min zhu*, democracy), 自由 (*zi you*, liberty, freedom), 平等 (*ping deng*, equality), 所有权 (*suo you quan*, ownership), and 共和 (*gong he*, republic), was all drawn from Japanese translations of the West. The strategies of the League worked, since what had happened socially, linguistically, and intellectually at the turn of the century had prepared the way for a people’s, rather than elite’s or heroes’, revolution. Five years later, in 1911, the new revolutionary force under Dr. Sun overthrew the Qing Dynasty. The Republic of China with Sun as 总统 (*zongtong*, president, a loan word from English) replaced the nearly three-hundred-year rule of the Manchus.

This inadequately mediated vocabulary of politics, however, was full of ambiguity, confusion and contradiction in relation to Chinese reality (Guo, 2000). It partly predetermined the failure of Dr. Sun's revolution as a utopian dream. In 1913, Sun had to hand his power as Provisional President of the Republic to the Warlord Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), who immediately outlawed Sun and his party, and dissolved 国会 (*guohui*, parliament, a loan word from English). Thus China came to be under twofold oppression: foreign imperialists and domestic warlords. But the new visions, ideals and dreams inspired by the translated ideas were still there, leading to the May 4th Movement.

Translating Marxism

The May 4th Movement of 1919, marked by students' protest against the warlord government in Beijing, is regarded as a demarcation line in modern Chinese history. Culturally, it refers to a decade of historical transition and transformation largely through ongoing translation more than to any particular event. In those days, students along with new intellectuals were passionately disseminating new ideas from the West. According to Hu Shi (1919), in 1919 alone, over 400 new magazines and periodicals were started by students and progressive intellectuals, providing different forums for debate over the future of China, and creating a space of unprecedented intellectual freedom and emancipation. The Movement directly led to the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party.

No one knows exactly when the theory of Marxism and the ideal of Communism (*gongchanzhuyi*, 共产主义, literally property-sharing/public ownership/co-production ism, a loan word from Japanese) were first introduced into China. The Russian Socialist Revolution of October 1917 sent a flood of Communist ideas to China on the eve of the May 4th Movement. As Chairman Mao said, "The May 4th Movement came into being at the call of the world revolution, of the Russian revolution and of Lenin" (in Jian, 1981, p. 144). The victory of Lenin's revolution offered the brightest hope to a group of young Chinese who were disappointed with China's previous attempts at reform or revolution. This group enthusiastically translated Marxist classics, including the "The Internationale," whose first Chinese translation appeared in *Laodongzhe* (*Labourers*) in 1920 (Gao, 1983). Soviet Union documents and Russian proletarian revolutionary literature were rendered into Chinese. Leading magazines and journals such as *The New Youth Magazine* ran special editions of Russian-Soviet literature. The Soviet Union was admired, appreciated, and idealized as the new land of liberation, freedom, equality and felicity of the majority – the working class.

According to Chen (2001), while Marxism had been fragmentally translated into Chinese before 1919, a complete version of the *Communist Manifesto* did not appear until August 1920. In January of the same year, the leader of the Chinese Communist movement Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) was released after being imprisoned for his revolutionary activities by the warlord government. Disguised as a merchant, Chen escaped from Beijing to Shanghai with an English version of the *Manifesto* borrowed from the Beijing University Library, hoping to find someone to translate it into Chinese. He soon learned in Shanghai that Chen Wangdao (1890-1977), a Marxist translator newly returned from Japan, was rendering it from a Japanese version. Chen sent him the English version for his reference, and proofread the manuscript when the work was done. Excited about the translation, Chen wanted to publish it in a book form, but there were no funds available.

Coincidentally, a Russian envoy from the Communist International was in Shanghai trying to establish contact with Chinese revolutionary organizations to explore the possibility of forming a Chinese communist party. The envoy met with Chen, and offered some funds for publishing the translation. The book was printed in August. Although many problems with both translation and printing occurred in this first edition, it was an epoch-making event. Nearly all the founding members of the Party were to be drawn into the Communist movement by this book. Mao Zedong once remarked that it was in 1920 when he had read

the *Communist Manifesto* that he came to understand that class struggle had existed from the beginning of human history as the motive power of social development. Premier Zhou Enlai once said Chen Wangdao was the educator of all the earliest Communists (see Chen, 1983).

According to Jian (1981, pp. 144-149), in the summer of 1920, China's first Marxist group was founded in Shanghai. It opened a Communism training program, with Chen Wangdao as an instructor and his translation as the textbook. In August, the Chinese Socialist Youth League was inaugurated. Meanwhile, Marxist groups and Socialist Youth Leagues were being established in major cultural, economic and industrial centres such as Beijing, Wuhan and Guangzhou. In Paris and Tokyo, similar organizations were formed among overseas students. While translating Marxist-Leninist theories into Chinese, they used those concepts and ideas as ideological weapons to analyze, reconceptualize and revolutionize China, including words whose Chinese equivalents were borrowed from Japanese translations of German and English terms such as (see Liu *et al.*, 1984):

阶级 (class), 社会 (society), 社会主义 (socialism), 生产 (production), 生产力 (Produktionskraft, forces of production), 剩余价值 (Mehrwert, surplus value), 生产关系 (Produktionsverhältnisse, relations of production), 世界观 (Weltanschauung, world outlook), 特权 (privilege), 唯物论 (materialism), 唯心论 (idealism), 宣传 (propaganda), 意识 (consciousness), 政党 (political party), 资本 (capital), 资本家 (capitalist), 无产阶级 (proletariat)

Soon the Chinese Communist Party was formally founded following the pattern of the Russian Bolshevik Party. It held its first congress in July 1921 in Shanghai, attended by thirteen delegates representing more than fifty Communist groups. With the emergence of the Communist Party, whose members and supporters were mostly political activists and cultural revolutionaries, Chinese translation entered a new stage of translating for political purposes.

Literature Translation as Liberation

The May 4th Movement facilitated the growth of Modern Chinese Literature, which was born with translation. In fact, one could hardly talk about modern Chinese literature without going to its source in translations. Almost all the major modern literary writers were “baptized” in foreign literary influences through reading Yan Fu and Lin Shu, through learning foreign languages, and through trying their hands in translation. In them, translation and creation were inseparable from each other. Similarly, nearly all the forms of modern Chinese literature (drama, fiction, poetry, prose, and literary criticism), along with their core vocabulary and grammar, came into being through translation.

Lu Xun and Translating the Exploited and the Oppressed

In the author that many consider to be the backbone of modern Chinese literature Lu Xun (1881-1936), one can see a whole range of combinations between translation and creation. Lu Xun was one of those influenced by Yan Fu and Lin Shu's translations. He himself translated over three million Chinese characters of foreign works from Russia-Soviet Union, Japan, France, Germany, Czech, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, Romania, Holland, Spain, etc. In 1902, he went to Japan to learn medicine, as he believed that the new medicine had been important to Japan's Meiji Restoration. However, like Sun Yat-sen, he found a better cure for his homeland in translation and literature.

Starting from 1903, Lu Xun began his career as a translator. His first translations included Victor Hugo's essay on *Les Misérables*, tales of the Spartan heroes, Jules Verne and some other science fiction, some of which he translated from Japanese translations. In 1909, in collaboration with his brother Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967), another major translator and writer, he published his *Yuwai xiaoshuo ji* (Collected Stories from Foreign Lands, in two volumes). It included translations of 37 recent short stories from

Northern and Eastern European countries, mostly “small and weak” ones that had been conquered or annexed. It marked a turning point in modern Chinese translation, opening up the Chinese view to a wider range of foreign literature, particularly literature of the colonized, exploited and oppressed nations like China. As Lu Xun wrote (in Wang, 1996, p. 205. Translation mine):

At that time, rather than writing (stories) myself, I concentrated more on introducing and translating especially short stories by writers particularly of the oppressed nations. Since at that time there was popular talk of driving out the Manchus, the cries and resistance of those writers found echoes in many (Chinese) young people.... Since the focus was on works of cries and resistance, I tended to look toward Eastern Europe, and I read a lot of works by writers from particularly Russia, Poland and the smaller countries of the Balkans.

Later, while continuing with his literary translation, Lu Xun began to translate his translations into literary creations in the vernacular, using the knowledge and understanding of his own culture from new perspectives gained through his literary translation. In May 1918, he published his short story “A Madman’s Diary,” an epoch-making success marking the beginning of modern Chinese literature.

“A Madman’s Diary” is a unique literary combination of a Chinese body with Western spirits that justified fiction as highbrow literature. It was based upon foreign literary influences. As Lu Xun himself admitted, the success of this story depended on the more than one hundred foreign works he had read and the medical knowledge he had obtained in Japan. Lu Xun mentioned in an article that “as early as 1834, the Russian writer N. Gogol had already written a Madman’s Diary; in 1883, Nietzsche told a similar madman’s story through Zarathustra’s mouth.” This story of Lu Xun’s was the first to put foreign literary ideas, forms, rhetoric and even scientific spirit within the Chinese context of socio-psychological and physical realities. Critics differ on whether its method is symbolic, realistic, romantic or stream-of-consciousness-like. However, they agree that it is the first modern Chinese literary achievement, and that it paved a modern Chinese way of literary approach with Western ideas and methods.

Encouraged by this experimental success, Lu Xun poured out in succession about twenty stories. They included, among others, “Kong Yiji,” “Medicine,” “My Old Home,” “The True Story of Ah Q,” and “The Divorce.” A general survey of his fiction will reveal that Lu Xun focuses on the wretched existence of three kinds of Chinese people: the peasants, the old and new intellectuals, and the women, who were victimized in a “man-eat-man” and male-dominated society.

The New Youth Magazine and Translating Ibsen

“A Madman’s Diary” was first published in *Xin qingnian* (The New Youth Magazine, started in 1915), a national magazine that influenced nearly all the modern Chinese scholars, writers, statesmen, etc. From the very beginning, the periodical laid great emphasis on translation and translation studies contributed by rising stars like Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren and Mao Dun (1896-1981). For instance, in the first issue, it published translations of works by Wilde, Turgenev, S. T. Smith and Tagore. All the other issues devoted considerable space to translated works from Britain, America, Russia, France, Portugal, India, Poland, Denmark and Japan (see Liu, 1983). While before 1917, the magazine showed special favour to European realism and aestheticism, from 1918, it turned its attention to literature from countries that shared more things in common with China. Meanwhile, accompanied by insightful introductions to or commentaries on the originals and their writers, the translations displayed the pattern of a systematic approach to foreign literature in general and individual national literature in particular.

In 1918, the magazine devoted its Volume 4, Number 6 to the Norwegian dramatist and poet, Ibsen (1828-1906). With the article “Ibsenism” by Hu Shi (1891-1962), and “Biography of Ibsen” by Yuan Zhenying, it included translations of *A Doll’s House*, *An Enemy of the People* and so on. The impact of this event can be discerned from an article written in 1925 by Mao Dun (in Wang, 1996, pp. 207-208).

Translation mine):

The Shanghai Drama Association is currently staging Ibsen's famous play *Ghosts*. Ibsen has an exceptional relationship with the "New Cultural Movement" that has shaken our nation over the last few years. Six or seven years ago, *The New Youth Magazine* published a special issue on Ibsen. It introduced this Northern European literary giant as a symbol of such new movements as literary revolution, women's liberation, anti-traditional thinking.... At that time, the name Ibsen rang in the hearts of the young people and lingered in their ears - in a way that today only names like Marx and Lenin can compare.

Other major periodicals such as *Xinchao (Renaissance)* and *Xiaoshuo yuebao (Fiction Monthly)* successively ran their own special editions on Ibsen. A translator wrote (in Wang, 1996, p. 211. Translation mine):

Ever since the 19th century, he (Ibsen) has been a bright and brilliant moon in the literary world that has almost outshone Shakespeare. This is because each and every one of his plays has an 'ism,' a question/issue. In between the lines are soaked his compassionate and humanitarian tears of misery.

Ibsen's major plays, including *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*, were staged in major cities in China. Lu Xun offered his analysis of Ibsen's popularity (in Wang, 1996, p. 212. Translation mine):

Why should Ibsen have been chosen? This is because a new, Western-style drama needs to be developed, the status of literary verisimilitude to truth through drama needs to be promoted, and it is necessary to advance prose drama with the vernacular. In addition, specific and concrete examples have to be used to stimulate the intuition of the educated... Furthermore, it is because Ibsen was brave enough to attack society and to challenge the majority alone by himself. I believe the introducers and translators of that time might have felt they were lonely fighters hemmed in an old fortress.

Through Ibsen, Chinese translators advanced Western-style drama (*huaju*) to a higher level using the vernacular. At the time when movies, TV and other modern forms of popular culture were not developed, drama served as a most effective means to reach the masses in a mostly illiterate society. Ibsen helped to undermine the traditional Chinese system of marriage and the lot of women. His works were further interpreted and translated against the Chinese reality by other staunch fighters for a new culture. For example, on December 26, 1923, Lu Xun delivered his famous speech "What Happened after Nora Left" at the Beijing Normal School for Women. He said (in Wang, 1996, p. 215. Translation mine):

But Nora left (her home) after all. What happened thereafter? Ibsen offered no answer.... For Nora's good, (I would say) money, or to use a more elegant term, economy, is of vital importance. Although freedom could not be bought with money, it can be sold for money. Human beings have a major shortcoming, that is, hunger. To compensate for this shortcoming, in order not to be a doll, economy then plays a most important role in our current society. Therefore, first of all, in the household, there should be equal distribution of properties between men and women. Secondly, in the society, equal rights should be secured for men and women. Unfortunately I do not know how that rod (of power) can be obtained. But I do know that it has to be fought for - perhaps through more violent forms of struggle than just requesting the right to participate in politics.

In fact, a new generation of Chinese women inspired by Nora were already fighting for an answer with their lives. This is best seen in Qiu Jin (1875-1907), the symbol of Chinese women's independence. As a young woman from a moderately wealthy family, at the age of 21 Qiu Jin was married, through arrangement, to an older man, whose conventional life style was destroying her young life. In 1903, she left him and went to Japan, where she became a leader, a fighter and a role model for Chinese women's liberation. Three years later, she returned to China and became a principal of a school for girls. She devoted herself to the emancipation of women from foot-binding, financial dependence, and lack of marriage or

career choices as well as to the cause of liberating China from the Manchu rule. The next year, she was executed by the Manchu government. In an article, the poet and dramatist Guo Moruo (1892-1978) said (in Wang, 1996, pp. 216-217. Translation mine):

I think the road Qiu Jin took was exactly the answer to *Nora*. “To acquire corresponding knowledge and skills in life so as to be independent, to win women’s self-liberation within the general liberation of the society, to shoulder women’s responsibilities for the general social liberation, and to accomplish these tasks at the cost of their lives” – all these are the contents of the answer.

It seems to me the answer Ibsen could not give has been given by Qiu Jin with her life.... Qiu Jin set up an awakening example for not only national liberation movements but also the women’s liberation movement.

Here it can be seen that the literary translations published by the *New Youth Magazine* initiated the Chinese into various kinds and forms of revolution.

Debates

The political and revolutionary nature of modern Chinese translation is clearly seen in debates among translators with different political agendas around issues of definition, language, methods, intended readership, choice of materials, and function of translation. These debates took on many different forms and went in different directions. There were arguments, quarrels and fights between the younger, more progressive and the older, more conservative translators, between those who returned from Europe/North America and those from Japan, between Left-Wingers and Right-Wingers, and between the reform-minded and the revolution-minded. Here are a few highlights.

Attack on the older generation of translators

As early as 1918, as part of the Literary Revolution, two editors of the *New Youth Magazine*, Qian Xuantong (1887-1939) and Liu Bannong (1891-1934), launched an attack on the older generation of translators represented by Lin Shu (who had translated over 180 Euro-American literary works) and Yan Fu. Partly motivated by a desire to challenge Yan and Lin’s prestige and overpower them in interpreting the changing culture, the two editors laid charges against Lin, without regard to the historical factors that had been working, for his lack of discretion in the choice of originals, and sinicization of characters in those works. The two writers criticized Yan Fu for his appropriation and “naturalization” of Western concepts as well as his adoption of the pre-Qin style of prose that had won him fame.

Other fighters of the Literary Revolution joined the attack. For instance, in his “Reflections on Translation,” Fu Sinian (1896-1950) severely reproached Yan Fu:

Mr. Yan’s translations of *Evolutions and Ethics and Other Essays* and *L’esprit des Lois* are among the worst (of his translations). Had Huxley and Montesquieu lived a few years longer, mastered Chinese, and read Yan’s translations, they would have filed a lawsuit against him.... This is because Mr. Yan is not responsible to the original writers. He is responsible only to himself. He is responsible only to his fame, reputation and status (in Chen, 1992, p. 218. Translation mine).

Yan was attacked not so much because of his translations, but because of his political position. He had advocated a constitutional monarchy after Britain as opposed to the Sun Yat-sen revolution with its republic ideal. He had supported the warlord Yuan Shikai in his attempt to restore China back to the feudal order. He had published a series of essays and lectures on returning to the Confucian past. Naturally, Yan was now against the vernacular movement, regarding it as throwing away the meat to gnaw the bone (see Gao & Wu, 1992, pp. 1-38).

Translating: For whose sake?

With the nationwide political crisis deepening due to the struggle between the Warlords, the Nationalists and the Communists, translators became more politically divided and translation more politically oriented. At a superficial level, their debates centred on the technical issues, including ways to determine Chinese equivalents, standardization of loan words and concepts, different methods and styles of translation (literal, liberal, rigid, mechanical) in relation to the literary language of the vernacular, and standards of and attitudes towards translation (see Editorial Board, 1984). At a deeper level, however, they were about where the new culture should go, given the domestic and international situations.

The most notable was the correspondence between Lu Xun, head of the “Left-Wingers Alliance,” with his comrades. For years, they debated with various influential men of letters who can be loosely categorized as Right-Wingers. One of Lu Xun’s comrades was Qu Qiubai (1899-1935), top leader of the Chinese Communist Party who had travelled extensively in the Soviet Union and met Lenin twice. As an organizer and leader of the May 4th student movement, Qu contributed to the Communist revolution through translating Marxist literary theory, reporting on the Soviet Union and editing journals and magazines. In a letter to Lu Xun in 1931, shortly after Lu Xun published his translation of *Razgrom* by the Soviet writer Fadeyev, Qu expressed his ideas about the role of translation, and criticized Yan Fu, Liang Qichao and Hu Shi. He believed in the power of proletarian translation in changing the Chinese language in order to revolutionize the political consciousness of the working class. To him, translation was an intellectual weapon and political tool.

Qu’s letter prompted Lu Xun into contributing a number of most insightful essays to Chinese translatology. In his response to Qu, Lu Xun brought a major issue to the horizon of Chinese translation: for whom was a translation intended? Without a sound understanding of this point, any talk of standards, purposes and functions of translation would be futile (see Editorial Board, 1984).

As a de-colonizing thinker, Lu Xun at times showed postcolonial and postmodern foresights in his debates over translation. In an article “Eight Drawbacks in Current Writings,” Lin Yutang (1895-1976), one of China’s best writers in English who “contributed most to Chinese translatology among non-Left-Wingers Alliance in 1930s” (Chen, 1992, p. 327), criticized Lu Xun and his followers:

...In literature, (they) introduce Polish poets today, and Czech literary masters tomorrow, resenting the already famous writers of Britain, America, France and Germany as out of date... Which is like women being crazy about fashions - they feel inferior and disadvantaged for being females, and try their best to please (their male masters) with colourful fashions...(in Editorial Board, 1984, p. 248. Translation mine).

To this accusation, Lu Xun, in his usual, cold, poignant, ironic and sarcastic tone, replied:

But (being crazy about) this kind of “new fashions” enjoys a fairly long history. “Introducing Polish poets” started thirty years ago...At that time, the Manchus ruled China and enslaved the Han people. China’s situation was similar to that of Poland, and Polish poetry found ready echoes (in us). There was no intention to ingratiate ourselves with any masters.

Lu Xun went on to mock Lin’s lack of historical consciousness, and made a point that is still of practical significance:

Those happy youth born and growing up in the Republic do not know (the historical context described above), and still less do those snobbish and money worshipping lackeys know (about it). Even if today we continue to introduce Polish poets and Czech literary masters, why should it be called “ingratiation?” Don’t those countries have “already famous” writers of their own? Moreover, who are those who know those “already famous (writers),” and where have they got to know them? Indeed, “Britain, America, France and Germany” have missionaries in China. They had or still have concessions, military bases, fleets, lots of merchants and Chinese employees in China—so many that

ordinary Chinese only know that there are “*daying* (Great Britain),” “*huaqi* (the Stars and Stripes, i.e. USA),” “*falanxi* (France)” and “*qiemen* (Germany)” in this world but not Poland or Czech. However, the literary history of the world is seen with literary, rather than snobbish, eyes. Therefore, literature does not need to be screened or covered by money or rifles and cannons. Although Poland and Czechoslovakia did not join the Eight-Power Allied Forces in attacking Beijing, they do have literature, only that it is not “already famous” to some people (in China) (ibid.).

Although Lu Xun was here counterattacking those Right – or non-Left – Wingers with some factional implications, what he said actually touched upon some fundamental issues still challenging the present postmodern and postcolonial world, including the relationships between knowledge and power, and between centre and margin. It pointed to complications and complexities that China, and indeed all non-West nations, were facing in translating the outside world dominated by the Euro-American Empire. It alerted the reader to the danger of one-sidedness in global translation characterizing the colonial history.

In 1936, Lu Xun died and the most thoughtful, insightful and militant voice of Chinese translation stopped. The next year, Japan invaded China. The 8-year War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945) broke out. In the face of the fact that the very existence of the Chinese nation was at stake, the Nationalists and the Communists temporarily joined hands in forming a united front against the invaders. Accordingly the course of translation changed, spontaneously turning to be part of the national defense effort in translation.

Modern Chinese translation displays a kaleidoscopic picture of translation within colonial and postcolonial contexts. As an anti-colonizing act, it can be likened to a prism that reflects different faces of what is being translated. As Chiang Kai-shek, the most powerful political “translator,” said of the ongoing radical political translations (Chiang, 1947, pp. 99-100):

In 1913, the arguments for a parliamentary system, a cabinet system, and a presidential system in reality reflected the differences between the British, the French, and the American political systems. In 1920, the opposing theories of a centralized as against a federal state reflected the differences between the French and the American systems of local government. The theoretical basis of the monarchy of Yuan Shih-k'ai was provided by an American editorial, and the constitution of Tsao K'un was an exact copy of the Weimar Constitution of Germany.

Chiang believed the struggle between the Liberals and Communists “was merely a reflection of the opposition of Anglo-American theories to those of Soviet Russia.” However, Chiang, himself well educated in and by the West, failed to understand China in relation to the West. With the ending of the anti-Japanese War and WWII in 1945, instead of uniting all the political forces within China to democratically and constructively rebuild the Chinese identity, Chiang continued to practice his suppressive and oppressive policies. As a result, China fell into the three-year Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists. The war almost put a halt to textual translations and translation studies. Some well-established translators either died or fled from place to place for life. Others left mainland China for Hong Kong, Taiwan, America and Europe. Without a unifying vision for the future of China, Chiang, although supported by the United States, gradually lost his roots in the mainland. Finally in 1949, he had to flee to Taiwan with his corrupted government and army, leaving behind a memory of millions and millions of lives tragically lost in the war of “translating” the West.

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