The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Translation

Edited by Chris Shei and Zhao-Ming Gao

The Handbook includes both a review of and a distinctive approach to key themes in Chinese translation, such as translatability and equivalence, extraction of collocation, and translation from parallel and comparable corpora. In doing so, it undertakes to synthesise existing knowledge in Chinese translation, develops new frameworks for analysing Chinese translation problems, and explains translation theory appropriate to the Chinese context.

The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Translation is an essential reference work for advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students and scholars actively researching in this area.

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EDITORS’ INTRODUCTION

Chinese translation studies enters into a new era with the advent of the twenty-first century. Large amounts of translation from Chinese into foreign languages and vice versa are in high demand due to China’s technological advancement and economic expansion. Both the industry and the academic world respond to the need for Chinese translators by creating opportunities for employment and education. Meanwhile, theorisation of translation is picking up the pace as an intellectual response to the increased activities of translation. This handbook offers a comprehensive survey of the current state of Chinese translation (defined here as translating into and out of Chinese in relation to other languages of the world, although the content of this book is largely based on translating between Chinese and English) and the theorisation of the contemporary practice of Chinese translation.

The practice (and to a lesser extent the theorising) of Chinese translation dates as far back as the appearance of Chinese Buddhist translation in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). The practice continued well into modern times, diversifying from religious translation to the translating of scientific essays, literary works, technical texts and so on. The theory of translation in traditional China, however, did not evolve into a well-established discipline on a par with the massive output of Chinese translation. The relatively sporadic discussions on translation in Chinese history were generally abstract and conceptual in nature and often fixed upon certain individuals. It is fair to say that no serious bodies of translation theory had been formed as a Chinese heritage. In this regard, the two volumes of *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation* compiled by Martha Cheung are well worth investigating by scholars intending to put traditional Chinese views on translation together, revamped into systematic theories with academic rigour. Most essays in this collection, in contrast, take the shortcut and largely ‘borrow’ translation theory from the West to examine contemporary practice of Chinese translation. However, this has in no way diminished the ‘Chineseness’ and the originality of the discussions and findings presented in this volume. Due to the fact that a dramatically different language pair (i.e., Chinese and English) has been put under the spotlight with maximised differences in external factors of translation from the usual language pairs (e.g., English vs. other European languages) on which Western translation theories are largely based, the findings presented in this book can still be original and exciting. For both Chinese and Western researchers, the collective efforts of the chapters in the Handbook will not only put the current Chinese translation theory and practice in perspective but also shed light on global translation studies as a whole.
This handbook is organised into eight parts. Part I Chinese translation in academic settings includes an introductory chapter by Zhu to link the current volume to the tradition of Chinese translation studies and set the tone for the unfolding of the nature of Chinese translation through the discussions in subsequent chapters. The other chapters in this section then focus on how Chinese translation is played out in the academic setting, including Zhong's survey of global translation programmes, Dong's discussion on translation competency and knowledge and skills required for Chinese translators, Song and Fang's look at assessment and accreditation issues in both China and Australia, and Shei's thoughts on the ideal of translator education and the practical side of translation teaching including an analysis of student translation errors.

Part II takes the reader through a series of investigations on the linguistic aspects of Chinese translation. This time, Sun kicks off the discussion by expounding the issue of translatability in search of the linguistic boundary of translation. Liu picks up the momentum with a bottom-up approach to illustrate the difficulties of Chinese translation at the word (or character) level. Sterk then takes over the wheel and makes an interesting turn towards the 'artistry' of syntactic manipulation in C–E (Chinese–English) translation. Next, Wang expands the scope of enquiry to include the discourse perspective of translating, offering a substantial number of socioculturally situated models for further speculation of translation issues. The section concludes with Pellatt's essential discussion on the importance of paratext to translation and her thoughtful addition of a note on Chinese punctuation in translation.

While Part I focuses on the academic setting of Chinese translation, Part III considers the social context of Chinese translation. Kung's chapter leads the section forward by expounding an analytical framework adopted by many works in recent 'sociological turn' of translation studies. The translation of Harry Potter is used as an example to illustrate how this model works. Next, Liu's chapter looks at Chinese media translation from linguistic, cultural and sociological perspectives. How a news text can be recontextualised to serve ideological purposes is something worth pondering. Wong then takes the reader through the process and nature of Chinese media censorship in his rarely available article. Thereafter Lee's chapter takes a sharp turn to explore the translator's choices as a function of the conditioning factors from their working environment and as a result of how they perceive their own role to be in the act of translation. As a concluding chapter for this section, Chan offers a mundane look at the Chinese translation market and touches upon highly implicational issues such as the translator's monetary reward.

Part IV of the Handbook offers a meeting ground for the process of translation and Chinese interpreting, where research on the translation process and that on interpreting intersect. Sun and Wen kick off the discussion with a comprehensive review of the problems involved in process research, the key points considered and the methods used. Zheng and Xiang adopt a psycholinguistic approach and offer more details about the methodological issues of translation and interpreting process research, extending the findings to their implication for translator training. Kumar offers a review of Chinese interpreting history and academic practice together with some pedagogical suggestions. Jin's chapter on consecutive interpreting rekindles the neurocognitive interest in process-oriented research, where he also makes several experimentally based suggestions for interpreter training. Lai's final chapter in this section completes the journey by offering a comprehensive review of public service interpreting occurring in different professional and regional settings.

In order to cover as many varieties of translation as possible, the Handbook also features a section on Chinese literary translation (Part V). Here, a fascinating story unfolds with Hu's account of Chinese literary translation intertwined with modern Chinese history. No less engrossing to the reader is Fan and Minford's in-depth analysis of various people and efforts involved in translating the Chinese classic novel The Dream of the Red Chamber. McDougall's
Editors' introduction

personal narrative again offers a grand picture of what Chinese literary translation has been like in the past half-century from the eye of an accomplished translator. This chapter is also a bold attempt on the part of the editors to initiate a ‘narrative-based approach to translation studies’ where valuable data can be extracted from translator’s personal stories for further analysis and scrutiny. The literary translation section ends with Pellatt’s second contribution to the volume, where she discusses the modern history of Chinese drama and the issues and techniques involved in drama translation.

Part VI Specialised Chinese translation is a collection of four essays on translation issues related to specific discourse domains such as law and medicine. This section offers highly technical knowledge and is particularly useful to readers interested in or already working in these domains. First, Kuo shares her specialised knowledge in movie subtitling focusing on the quality, standardisation and parameters of subtitling. Tsai offers a general discussion on characteristics of technical texts before narrowing down to specific features of patent texts and strategies for translating patents. Poon’s chapter explores the translation of legal documents in the context of a transsexual wedding case, touching upon issues of sex and gender in legal translation. Finally, Pritzker dwells on the important topic of translating Chinese medicine, explaining the many difficulties and complexities involved in the endeavour and promoting the concept of ‘living translation’ as a viable solution.

More specialised chapters team up in Part VII Chinese translation and language technology to explore what changes have been brought about by language technology to the practice and theory of Chinese translation. Gao and Chiou start off the discussion by proposing an integrated machinery combining translation memory, terminology banks, statistical machine translation and parallel corpora to jointly complete a computer-aided translation task. Next, Shih calls for wider participation of the general public in the meta-MT editing effort and in acquiring the pre-editing and post-editing skills explicated in order to help MT achieve better output. Wang and Huang, on the other hand, give a comprehensive overview of corpus-based translation studies in China in recent decades, touching upon issues like corpora building, translation universals, translator’s style, multimodal interpreting corpora, development of corpus tools and so on. Finally, Ding and Li examine the benefits of translation technology in real context through issues like terminology standardisation and localisation, and the proposed convergence of technical translation with technical communication.

In the final section of the Handbook, Part VIII The future of Chinese translation, some new developments in Chinese translation are highlighted that are impliational for future research on Chinese translation. First Guo studies Chinese online translation communities and their possible involvement in social activism. Lee’s chapter looks closely at the growing trend of non-professional subtitling (or ‘fansub’) where translation projects are carried out by users of translation themselves for media content such as TV series and films. Bai’s chapter focuses on the relationship between translators, professionals and patrons in introducing Chinese works to foreign countries. While Bai adopts the sociological concepts of habitus, capital and agent to explicate the power and relation between the players in the act of translation; Chang’s next chapter, also focusing on China’s outbound literary translation, resorts back to polysystem theory and descriptive translation studies using the translation of Chinese weights to illustrate the concept of a nation’s ‘auto-image’. Tan’s concluding chapter ends the section with his proposed new directions for Chinese translation studies consisting of five fundamental tasks, five ‘major relationships’, a set of six themes for exploration and the reiterated China’s ‘new strategic cultural initiatives’ of promoting Chinese literary works abroad. We share his optimism that the future of Chinese translation is both challenging and promising.
PART I

Chinese translation in academic settings
1
THE CHINESE TRADITION
OF TRANSLATION STUDIES
Review, reconstruction and modernisation

Chunshen Zhu

1.1 Introduction: Chinese tradition of translation studies defined

1.1.1 The idea of ‘tradition’

To have a reviewable conception of the Chinese tradition of translation studies, or Chinese TS tradition for short, a question we have to answer first is: What is ‘tradition’? Tradition, first of all, is an idea. It is not an object like a family heirloom that can be physically transmitted from generation to generation, although transmittability is a defining factor of traditions. Benjamin has explained ideas with an analogy: ‘[ideas] are to objects as constellations to stars’, in the sense that an idea does not contain phenomena itself but is actualised by a constellation of objects that signify concepts in which phenomena are gathered and arranged (see Benjamin 1998: 34–5). And objects, inasmuch as they are elements of phenomena, cease to be natural objects but are semiotic artefacts of significance to human beings. In this light, ‘tradition of translation studies’ can be seen as an idea of ‘tradition’ specified by ‘translation studies’ to arrange the phenomena related to translation. In the literature, a ‘tradition of translation studies’ tends to be further specified with reference to a particular geographical region or ethnic nation, or a language, before it is delineated by a series of concepts (views and theories) derived from a variety of texts gathered to configure a genealogy of the knowledge in question. Following Benjamin’s analogy, we can say that a TS tradition is to translation-related texts as a constellation to stars. In other words, texts in this sense are not just printed matters but concept-bearing discursive artefacts that are gathered to form a constellation to sustain the intellectual identity of a perceived tradition.

1.1.2 ‘Translation studies’ and ‘Chinese’ defined

To bring the above conception of tradition to bear upon our review of the Chinese TS tradition, two more questions have to be answered. One of them is: What is ‘translation studies’? Since Holmes’s 1972 seminal paper ‘The Name and Nature of Translation Studies’ (Holmes 1988: 67–80), the term has been used to designate the study of translation as an academic discipline in a broad sense, rather than a specific approach to translation. As an idea, therefore, its constellation should in theory encompass all texts that relate to the phenomenon of translation. The other question is: What is ‘Chinese’? The term, to be sure, has often been used without
a clear definition in the literature (Bai 2009: 425). In this chapter, we shall follow Zhu (2004) and adopt a non-exclusive ethnic conception of nationalism that bases its legitimacy on such non-territorial and politically neutral factors as shared (to some extent) language, culture and ritual tradition (see Seymour 1998: e.g., 3). By this definition, Chinese translation studies as a denomination of the discipline similarly encompasses both pure and applied studies of Chinese-related translation beyond national or regional boundaries.

1.1.3 Representing the Chinese TS tradition

No matter how the idea of tradition is specified, however, the formulation of a constellation to represent it is inevitably limited by the actual access to historical data and framed by the perspective and ideological agenda of the exercise. A tradition, when actualised via a constellation of artefacts, becomes an ‘established and generally accepted’ institution of beliefs, rules, customs, and practices, or ‘method of procedure[,] having almost the force of a law’ (entry ‘tradition’ in OED). In our case, formulating a constellation of texts to represent the Chinese TS tradition always implies an intention to realise it as an institution of this kind, making it transmittable for later generations’ reference. For that purpose, to convince the target community of the tradition’s historical authenticity and contemporary relevance, every representation entails efforts to reconstruct its foundational constellation, update its formulation and modernise its conception, by taking the tradition into a broader, contemporary discursive space. In this discursive space, each representation interacts and competes with other representations of the same tradition as well as with representations of other traditions in the same discipline. By such interaction and competition, the tradition is renewed with the expansion and modification of its constellation. So in our view, the Chinese TS tradition, or any TS tradition for that matter, is always in the making, denying and defying any ultimate representation. And every representation, such as seen in a historical account or an anthology, will in turn become an artefact itself contributing to updating the tradition’s foundational constellation.

1.2 Reconstruction of the Chinese TS tradition

The Chinese may boast a history of translation practice of more than 3,000 years, but Chinese translators and critics did not seem to be fully aware of the intellectual identity of a Chinese TS tradition until the late twentieth century, when, apart from translation textbooks and textbook-like volumes, there was a burst of interest in various issues concerning Chinese-related translation, its history and theorisation in particular. Among publications during that period, the 333-page Ma (1984) presents a concise yet comprehensive account of key translators of different ethnicities and periods and their works and ‘theories and methods’ (Publisher’s note, iii), as well as translation agencies from ancient times to 1919, the year of the May Fourth Movement that culturally jostled the nation into its modern era. It was followed by a more detailed 798-page Ma (1999) covering the history up to the end of Imperial China. The project, instead of producing a second volume to succeed the first, grew into a 3,009-page five-volume set (Ma et al. 2006) on the general history of Chinese-related translation from 841 BCE to 2000 CE, with volumes 2 to 5 dedicated to modern and contemporary periods. Enthusiasm about translation history seems unstoppable. Alongside general histories, there have been more focused ones such as the direction-specific Ma and Ren (1997), nation-specific Wang X. (2007), period-specific Fang (2008), and genre-specific Meng and Li (2005). Literary translation especially in the twentieth century is another focus of interest, with Xie and Zha (2004) followed by a two-volume
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Zha and Xie (2007) before the publication of a multiauthored six-volume series edited by Yang (2009) to chronicle the role translation played in building China into a modern nation during this volatile century.

If projects of this kind represent prima facie efforts of fact-finding to substantiate the Chinese TS tradition with increasingly extended and coherent constellations of texts, their ideological arguments are mostly contained in authors’ and editors’ voiceover-like interpretations and commentaries, or in prefaces and blurbs. Yet there is also a line of studies displaying a more express theoretical orientation. Among them are Chen’s (1992) history of Chinese translatology, Wong’s (1999) revisit to one of the time-honoured concepts fundamental to the Chinese TS tradition, i.e., xin-da-ya（信達雅, commonly translated as fidelity-expressiveness-elegance, but see further discussion below) and Zhu’s (2009) study of Chinese literary translation in the twentieth century from the perspective of domestication vs. foreignisation.

The year 1984 should be a remarkable year in the development of the Chinese TS tradition, for, further to Liu’s (1981) anthology, the year saw the publication of a significant pair of anthologies of essays arising from Chinese translators’ contemplation of their craft and profession over the centuries. One is Luo (1984), a collection of 180 essays prefaced by the anthologist himself (for an excerpt in English see Chan 2004: 230–5). In this collection, 30 essays from ancient times (third–twelfth century) are mostly prefaces to Buddhist sutra translations, seven from pre-modern times (sixteenth–seventeenth century) are mostly prefaces to scientific translations, and 37 from the turn of the twentieth century are mainly prefaces to literary translations. When it comes to the twentieth century, 42 are from the pre-1949 period featuring a greater variety including commentaries, debates, scholarly studies, as well as prefaces. And among the 65 in the section of contemporary period (from 1949 to the early 1980s) there are also a few articles by government-sponsored translators on the rendering of political texts. The other anthology is the two-volume FYLJ (1984), which collects 48 articles in Volume I (1894–1948) and 63 in Volume II (1949–83). The two publications represent a groundbreaking effort to reconstruct the Chinese TS tradition based on their respective collections of selected texts, an effort driven by a palpable ideology explicated in the opening declaration in Luo’s introductory preface to his anthology, which reads: ‘The translation theory of our nation has its own characteristics, it is one of a kind in the field of translation studies. Apparently, it should not be underestimated by our own scholars!’ (Luo 1984). The polemic, with a tone of defensive assertion and proselytisation, was directed at a presumed sense of inferiority to prepare, as it were, Chinese translation scholars for the influx of ‘a dazzling variety of foreign theories into our country’ (Luo 1984: 1; see also Bai 2009: 426) in the wake of the PRC’s opening up since the late 1970s. A partisan ideology is also discernible, among other editorial arrangements, with the chronological divide between the two volumes of FYLJ and between modern and contemporary periods in Luo set at 1949, the year the PRC was founded in the Chinese mainland.

Despite differences in coverage, the two anthologies in their collections share 40 texts from the twentieth century. When Chan, a Hong Kong-based scholar, presents the Chinese translation theory of the same century (Chan 2004: Part II) by selecting 38 essays and having them translated into English by a team of scholarly translators, his selection overlaps Luo by 16 items and FYLJ by 15. Put together, there is a pool of 12 ‘core’ texts shared by the three representations of the twentieth-century Chinese TS tradition. On the other hand, the ancient segment of Luo’s (1984) anthology is extensively expanded in Cheung (2006), which comprises English translations with commentaries of 82 selected Chinese discourses on translation from the earliest times to the twelfth century. In this volume, 17 from Luo are
included among the 57 primary texts in Part II on Buddhist translation. All these painstaking efforts to unearth and rescue from oblivion ancient and otherwise fragmentary texts and views are significant and admirable. They also contribute to addressing the three interrelated ‘childhood diseases’ (Lefevere 1993) translation studies has suffered from as an emerging discipline, namely, ‘ignoring its own history’, ‘always re-inventing the wheel’ and ‘not reading what other people have written’.

Besides anthologies that explore traditional Chinese thinking on translation, there have been studies that display more specific theoretical orientations with recourse to theories, approaches and methodologies adopted from different traditions and disciplines. For instance, functional linguistics (combined with cognitive, text or corpus linguistics or semiotics in some cases) has served as the theoretical framework for Zhang (2005), Wang (2006), Si (2007), Jiang (2003) and Zhao (2007), and case studies featured in Huang (2006), Wang P. (2007), Wu (2008) and Liu (2011). While studies on (literary) translation, such as Cai’s (2001) and Liu’s (1995/2005, 2000) philosophical reflections and Jiang’s (2002) gestalt-informed examination of images, tend to adopt an interdisciplinary stance, Xie (1994/2011), Gao (2009), and Sun and Qi (2007) have related translation studies to comparative literature and cross-cultural studies. Indeed, our cursory survey of book series launched over the past decade or so, such as ‘SFLEP Series of Translation Studies’ (外教社翻译研究叢書) by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, ‘A Series of Chinese Translation Studies’ (中華翻譯研究叢書) by Hubei Education Press, and the ‘Translation Theories and Practice Series’ by Qingdao Press, further affirms that Chinese-related translation is now being studied from different perspectives under a variety of translatologies or fanyixue (翻譯學). Among them, there are subject-matter-based ‘science translatology’ (Huang and Li 2007) and ‘literary translatology’ (Zheng 2000), approach-based ‘pragmatranslatology’ (Hou 2008) and ‘descriptive and communicative translatology’ (Cheng 2003), methodology-based ‘corpus translatology’ (Hu 2011), and goal-based ‘mediо-translatology’ (Xie 1999).

1.3 Identity and engagement

1.3.1 A self-contained identity?

With historical perspectives recovered and new approaches adopted, the constellation that sustains the disciplinary identity and delineates the intellectual capacity of the Chinese TS tradition is constantly being modified and expanded. The situation has led Luo to argue for a ‘self-contained’ (zicheng tixi 自成體系) identity of the Chinese TS tradition. To support his argument, Luo (1984: 19) has linked up four influential pronouncements on translation to chart a conceptual evolution from anben (案本, ‘ST-centred textualisation’) and qiuixin (求信, ‘ST-oriented fidelity-seeking’) to shensi (神似, ‘TT-oriented resemblance in spirit’), before reaching a heightened state of huajing (化境, ‘TT-centred transformation’) in which the hua suggests a transmutation by dissolving the ST to reform its material into a TT that should be a work of art in its own right. Yet instead of serving to justify the claimed uniqueness of the tradition, the string bespeaks an ST-to-TT shift of emphasis seen in translation studies at large, although unlike polysystem and skopos theory, the Chinese thinking was then still prescriptive in nature and fond of sweeping generalisations dominated by impressionistic aperçus, or sanlun (散論, ‘random and fragmentary remarks’) as Tan (2000: 187) has called them. Probably that is why the Chinese tradition has experienced the emergence of a diversity of research interests and methodologies instead of becoming more of a ‘self-contained’ monolithic system since entering the 1990s and the new century, with increasing exposure
to other, seemingly more rigorously rendered and persuasively presented theories and discourses.

**1.3.2 Critical engagement**

Scholars may not all agree with Luo, however, especially in view of various studies published since the 1990s that do not follow the traditional mode of argumentation. Instead, in pursuing their own research agendas, they demonstrate an increased awareness of logical rigour and analytical objectivity and present a diversity of arguments based on authentic evidence rather than personal experiences or impressionistic observations. Diversity is a virtue, but the identity of the tradition is at stake if one of the three ‘childhood diseases’ is left unattended to; that is, ‘not reading what other people have written’. To treat the disease calls for more substantive engagement of a critical nature, besides affirmative, supportive and appreciative referencing, to interrelate different arguments so as to establish the originality and worthiness of particular research projects. It also helps to avoid another disease of wasting energy on ‘re-inventing the wheel’ (Lefevere 1993). For instance, of the following monographs that have Chinese ‘translatology’ in their titles, Huang Zhending (1998) argues for integration of art and science in translatology and criticises Huang Long (1988) and Liu (1990), which he found to be ‘seemingly’ the only systematic studies of translation at the time, for lacking theoretical systems undergirded by proper conceptual frameworks and logical rigour (Huang 1998: 217–24). A decade or so later, Tan (2000) defines translatology instead as a science. His argumentation draws on an extensive review of the nature, goal and content, approaches, history and semantic implications of the discipline. Chapter 9 of the book, in particular, offers a comparative review of Chinese and Western theories to tease out complementarities between Chinese and non-Chinese systems. Yet neither Huang (1998) nor Huang (1988) and Liu (1990) were included in the review. A later study, Lü and Hou’s (2006) translatology, tries from a ‘constructivist perspective’ to orient the current ‘turn’ in translation studies back to translation proper. Their literature review (Chapter 2) observes three research paradigm shifts in Chinese translation studies to support their proposed ontology theory (Lü and Hou 2006: 89), but similarly no specific Chinese translatologies were outlined for critical attention.

As far as the representation of the Chinese TS tradition is concerned, engagement within the tradition contributes to strengthening the coherence of its foundational constellation before it enters further engagement with non-Chinese traditions. Through such engagement, even those earlier theories or discourses, vague, impressionistic and intuitive, evaluative and judgemental, or assertive and prescriptive as they may appear to be (see Chan 2004: e.g., 3, 4), can have some food for thought to offer. Take Luo’s above quadruple formula for example. A conceptual and methodological linkage extending beyond its contour can be traced out when we observe the four components more closely. Qian Zhongshu’s (錢鍾書) notion of huajing or transmutation may have been too protean or imprecise (Chan 2004: 8) to be operable, a methodological basis in syntax can however be found in Fu Lei’s (傅雷) shensi or transforming resemblance in form into resemblance in spirit (see Chan 2004: 92, 104), and further in Lin Yutang’s (林語堂 1933) theory of ‘sentence translation’ (in Luo 1984: 417–32). In his defence of the notion of resemblance in spirit, Fu has counted on syntactic management for its realisation, asserting that ‘I do not mean that we can neglect the structures of the original sentences. On the contrary, we have to retain [the structures of the original sentences] as far as possible [provided the translation reads] like an authentic Chinese text’, since there ‘is no other way to transfer style except through working on the syntax’ (in Chan 2004: 171). If the vague ‘spirit’ still remains a loophole in the argument, then exploring further into the literature we can find in Lin’s essay on
translation a definition of ‘spirit’ as ‘Gefühlston (or “feeling-tone” in Sapir’s terms), meaning the emotionally suggestive power of a word to be realised as an integral part of the ‘overall meaning’ or ‘Gesamtvorstellung’ of the sentence. The beauty of a piece of writing, according to Lin, resides in syntax-based stylistic manner (ti 體) rather than subject matter (zhi 質) (see Lin in Luo 1984: 422, 425, 426, 428, 429, 431). And the key to this beauty in texture, in turn, can be traced back to Ma Jianzhong’s (馬建忠) conception of ‘felicitous translation’ (shan yi 善譯), which, in his (1894) proposal to the imperial court for the establishment of a translation institute (in FYLJ 1984: I, 1–5), is depicted as a rendering responsive to interplays of sound, shape and sense in both source and target texts. Incidentally, an awareness of such interplays may prompt a researcher to look further into the phenomenon of language iconicity that has a significant cognitive and stylistic bearing on translation. Reading Luo’s quadruple formula in conjunction with other views key to the Chinese thinking on translation, we can see a Chinese tradition that develops not by following a linear progression that discards one concept in favour of another. Instead, it follows a spiral expansion not only into the profundity of the Chinese poetics of art creation and appreciation, but also contemporary discourse studies that examines the text, be it a source or target text, as an autonomous discursive entity operating in the macro context of culture and society.

1.4 From ‘taking home’ to ‘going global’

1.4.1 ‘Taking home’

The development of the Chinese TS tradition into a conceptually and methodologically more sophisticated institution of heteroglossia has benefited from its exposure to and engagement with different non-Chinese traditions, since the 1980s in particular. Further to Chan’s (2004: 49) list of 11 authors from various countries including the former Soviet Union in the 1950s, and apart from discrete titles such as Jin and Nida (1984), Tan (1984, 1991) and Chan and Chang (2000), the launch of a string of book series in the twenty-first century dedicated to introducing non-Chinese theories has broadened the Chinese audience’s horizons to an unprecedented extent. In ‘A Series of Translation Studies Abroad’ (國外翻譯研究叢書, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press) and ‘FLTRP Series of Translation Studies’ (外研社翻譯研究文庫, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in Beijing), dozens of contemporary non-Chinese authors are republished in original English editions in the PRC, while A Series of Translation Studies Outside China (Hubei Education Press) features Chinese authors’ book-length introductory overviews of contemporary translation studies in such countries as America, France, the UK and the former Soviet Union. Among all these publications, Shan’s (2007) comprehensive overview of the philosophical aspects of translation deserves a special mention in that it provides an adumbration of the ‘language turn’ (under three rubrics, viz. ‘Text and Translation’, ‘Language and Translation’ and ‘Politics and Translation’) that leads the twentieth-century philosophy in the West to approach translation as a phenomenon of epistemological significance.

1.4.2 ‘Going global’

In return, slowly but surely, research on translation in a Chinese vein is making its presence more and more visible in the world, as seen, for instance, from the 1996 special issue of Perspectives on Chinese Translation Studies to the 2009 special issue of The Translator (15: 2) on Chinese Discourse on Translation. In this ‘going global’ drive, Chan (2004) stands out as one of the first efforts to present to the world a comprehensive picture of Chinese
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translation studies in the last century. It also offers a useful complement to the two 1984 anthologies in Chinese (Luo and FYLJ) in their accounts of some ideologically sensitive events in relation to translation. The debate between Lu Xun (魯迅) and his fellow leftist writer Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白) and another one between Lu (with Qu) and Liang Shiqiu (梁實秋) and Zhao Jingshen (趙景深), two ‘enemies of the proletariat’ (Wong 1999: 262) in Lu’s eyes, in the 1920s–30s are a case in point. The former debate, or ‘friendly interchange of ideas’ in Chan’s words (2004: 20), was rather substantially presented in Luo (1984: 265ff) and FYLJ (1984: 1, 215ff), but the latter one, a ‘constraining partisan’ debate (Chan 2004: 180), has by and large been ignored in the two Chinese anthologies, even though they are highly related and equally meaningful as far as the choice of translation strategy and the building of a national language are concerned. (See Wong 1999: 240–72, the chapter ‘Translation and Class Struggle’, for a detailed account of the political implications of this debate in the guise of argument over ‘fidelity’ versus ‘fluency’.) The second debate, however, is more substantively presented in Chan (2004), where Lu’s and Liang’s (counter-)arguments are made directly available (essays 19 and 20) and brought into perspective with their ideological as well translational ramifications explained (Chan 2004: 22–5, 179–80). In general, the anthology is careful and thoughtful in preparing its English readership for the representative concepts, arguments and texts it has assembled in eight sections, with the anthologist’s four review chapters in Part I to put the reader in the picture, followed by introductory notes leading each section in Part II where the essays are collated. Chan’s anthology is followed by Cheung (2006), a landmark anthology that captures the tradition from such ancient canonical texts as Tao Te Ching and The Analects to the Buddhist project of sutra translation till the twelfth century. With primary texts elaborately annotated to unveil their relevance to present-day concepts and terminology in translation studies, Cheung, in the spirit of ‘thick translation’ (Cheung 2007), has delved more deeply than Luo (1984) into the origins of Chinese philosophy of language and communication.

1.4.3 ‘Theory’ vs. ‘discourse’

Readers may note that, instead of following the mainstream literature and adopting a loosely defined term ‘theory’ or lilun (理論), Cheung has chosen to designate those Chinese narratives on translation in her collection as ‘discourse’ in the post-structuralist sense of the term (Cheung 2006: 1). Critics may not all concur with the distinction, but differentiation between ‘theory’ and ‘discourse’ can be useful in depicting the development of translation studies along the two parallels of evaluative, prescriptive discoursing and (more recently) analytical, descriptive, explanatory theorisation. In this connection, Iser’s (2006) observation is to the point:

discourse is deterministic, whereas theory is explorative… Discourse draws boundaries [i.e. ‘governed by rules’ and ‘basically confined to the division between true and false… to assert what is taken for truth’ (Iser 2006: 174)], and theory lifts them, thereby opening up new territories of anthropological significance.

(Iser 2006: 12)

In this light, any discussion about translation, if it is prescriptive or ‘deterministic’ rather than ‘explorative’ in nature and rule-establishing and method-finding in operation, should fall under ‘discourse’, which, according to Iser (2006: 172), ‘is of equal importance in the humanities today [and] has a comparatively long history’. The distinction also suggests that theorising about
translation, in parallel with discoursing, should be an explorative and explanatory undertaking supported by a descriptive-analytical methodology.

1.4.4 Emergence of empirical and analytical research

Engagement with contemporary translation studies at large enables the Chinese tradition to develop new methodologies as well as new approaches to translational phenomena, as seen in those Chinese publications noted above. Against the backdrop jointly projected by Chan (2004) and Cheung (2006) – with the 700-year lacuna from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century to be filled by a forthcoming 2017 volume – new research directions are becoming visible too, with more recent monographs as well as numerous journal publications presenting more focused descriptive-analytical investigations in English. Chan’s (2010) readership study on reading and reception of translated literature in Chinese is one of the kind. And in a more empirical vein, apart from the five Chinese TS-related titles in the book series of ‘New Frontiers in Translation Studies as of 2016’ (see Li 2015–), there have been two doctoral thesis-turned monographs, one is Hou (2014), a quantitative and qualitative study of the linguistic phenomenon of nominalisation in three English translations of a Chinese literary classic, The Dream of the Red Chamber, and the other is Zhang (2015), a systemic functional linguistics-informed study focusing on the management of interpersonal (or rather, international) relations in producing and translating diplomatic discourses. Further to this list, cross-cultural efforts to theorise about translation, as seen in Robinson (2015) among others, represent a timely step towards realising translation studies’ disciplinary potential for ‘opening up new territories of anthropological significance’ from a philosophic perspective.

1.5 Future directions beyond utilitarianism

1.5.1 Utilitarianism critiqued

Interaction with other traditions is also a process of understanding and presenting oneself as well as others through translation and in translation, which may lead to more serious introspective self-reflection apart from methodology renovation. In such self-reflection, some conceptions that used to be taken for granted within the purview of the tradition may become problematic and call for re-examination. One of them is a deep-seated utilitarian attitude towards translation which, as Chan (2004) sees it, is arguably associated with the instrumentalist perception of language among Chinese cultural linguists such as Shen Xiaolong. While Chinese cultural linguists believe that the Chinese language is an exclusive system off limits to non-(native)-speakers because of its ‘cultural content’, some Chinese translation scholars, in a similar spirit, have taken issue with the notion of ‘global translation theories’, insisting that translation as language operation is technically instance-specific and that translation theory has to seek prescriptive rules to guide practice (see Chan 2004: 34–6, 38–9, 223–4 for more specific comments, and 55 for a discussion of the prescriptive orientation of Chinese translation studies). But this utilitarian approach has been questioned from a cross-cultural perspective by Xie (2003: 2–10), among other scholars, who has identified three ‘erroneous zones’ in Chinese translation studies: two of them are the utilitarian attitude towards translation theory and the instrumentalist obsession with ‘how to translate’, with the claim of an elusive Chineseness that marks the tradition off from others being the third. To illustrate how the utilitarian attitude has influenced the Chinese tradition’s understanding of others as well as itself, let us take a look at two examples. One is the Chinese translation of the notion of norms as guifan (規範) and the other is various English
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translators of xin-da-ya, a set of three concepts that has been prevalent in the tradition over the past century.

1.5.2 Norms in Chinese and xin-da-ya in English

In English, norms are supposed to be neutral and descriptive in the first place, denoting normal patterns of translational behaviour identified and systemised in their various manifestations, before they are adopted or applied by practitioners or trainers as normative guidelines or even ‘a series of coherent laws’ (Toury 1995: 16, emphasis in original) as necessitated by actual needs and circumstances (see entry ‘Norms’ in Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997; and Baker 1998). Unlike such noncommittal terms as changshi (常式, ‘common, normal, or regularly/frequently used modes of practice’), guifan, the accepted Chinese translation of norms, can be used as a noun or a verb to mean ‘(making someone to conform to) established models/regulations/standards’ (HDC). The Chinese term thus implies a strong bias towards the regulatory aspect of its English counterpart. In this way, a concept that plays a primary role in descriptive translation studies has taken on a strong prescriptive overtone that helps strengthen the tradition’s utilitarian stance.

The utilitarian preference is also behind the tradition’s century-long interpretation of Yan Fu’s concepts of xin, da and ya. Originally, in the preface to his translation of Thomas Henry Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* (1896/1984), Yan gave them as three hurdles in translating an intellectually sophisticated text: ‘Translation involves three difficulties: xin, da, and ya.’ He admitted that to negotiate these difficult situations he had to resort to methods that may not be reckoned to be proper translation, and confessed:

> For a foreign thing or idea, to decide on a Chinese name may have cost me weeks’ hesitation and deliberation. I know where I have sinned; but I have kept my rendering as it is for the perspicacious and perceptive to judge.  

(Year 1896/1984: 6, 7; an English translation by Hsu can be found in Chan 2004: 69–71)

While Yan himself sounded rather realistic by viewing the three as ‘difficulties’, the trinity has constantly been upheld as the primary criteria or even ‘infallible standards’ (‘金科玉律’, Yu Dafu (郁達夫 1896–1945) cited in Wong 1999: 79) for evaluating a translation (see, for example, He’s 1925 review article in FYLJ 1984: I, 113–25; Shen’s 1998 book-length disquisition; Wong’s 1999 ‘reinterpretation’; and Chan’s 2004: 4–6 comments). The following is a list of nouns and adjectives used in Xu (1962/2009) and by different translators in Chan (2004), two of the latest representations of the set in English:

**XIN:** faithfulness, fidelity, accuracy, correct, objectivity, equivalent, credible, expressiveness, truthful.

**DA:** expressiveness, articulateness, fluency, comprehensibility, adequate transmission, complete transmission.

**YA:** flair, elegance, propriety.

It is interesting to note that a coherent characterisation of the trinity, which the Chinese terms may not have spelt out, can be worked out as follows thanks to these English glosses. To begin with, the requirement of xin in terms of ‘faithfulness’, ‘fidelity’ and ‘truthful[ness]’ presupposes on the one hand the existence of an absolute ST that must have expressed ‘accurately’ a one-and-only ‘correct’ meaning. And on the other it implies the existence of a perfect protocol to
‘accurately’ transfer this ‘correct’ meaning into a TT that, likewise, is the ‘equivalent’ of the ST that can be ‘objectively’ verified with absolute ‘credibility’. As means to achieve this ‘faithful’ rendering of the ST, the da has been glossed to indicate communicative requirements while the ya, apart from the vague and idiosyncratic ‘flair’, has been glossed to suggest stylistic ones.

The validity of this absolutist conception of translation, however, has been called into question by Ye on the grounds of relativity of meaning, reading, and translating in his (2004) ‘debunking’ essay, where da has been pushed up from ‘adequate’ to ‘complete transmission’ of the ST message (Ye 2004: 77, 83) to be falsified. The significance of Ye’s deconstruction of the traditional conception of xin-da-ya is twofold. First, it reminds us that the three were not originally given as an inventory of norms derivable, say, from Yan’s own translation, let alone normative criteria or mandatory doctrine proposed to govern, or guifan, translation practice in general. Second, the deconstruction of the three as such cannot be taken to mean a disintegration of the Chinese TS tradition that seems to rest so much on the trinity. Instead, its ongoing popularity among Chinese translation critics should urge researchers to look for the coherence of the three at a deeper level from a perspective informed by contemporary studies of translation, that is, to make them ‘more accurate’ (Chan 2004: 11) with finesse and to reconstruct their contemporary relevance as a tripartite analytical framework, rather than discrete evaluative criteria, for describing and explaining text production in translation. As Xu (1962/2009:125, 126) has rightly noted, Yan’s insight has its ‘functional significance’, covering the ‘fundamental categories of translation’ ‘substantively, linguistically and stylistically’. In Zhu’s (1996) model of structure of meaning, this functional significance has been expounded with reference to ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions in systemic functional linguistics as well as locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in speech act theory. The interconnectivity established as such, as Halliday (2008: 192) sees it, is evidence of complementarities in language arising from translation.

Further to Zhu above, Neubert and Shreve’s theory of translation models, especially its concept of ‘virtual translation’, can provide another text-linguistic perspective on the nature of xin. That is, what a purported xin translation tries to be faithful to cannot be a physical ST but a ‘virtual translation’, an ‘incarnation’ of the ST in the translator’s mind:

a composite… a mental model of the elements and relations which exist in the mental space between real source and not-yet-realised target… [and which] includes the propositional content and the illocutionary force of the messages underlying the source text.

(Neubert and Shreve 1992: 14, 15)

It follows that da is not necessarily a requirement of ‘expressiveness’ (which should be biao 表 rather than da 達 in Chinese) on the translator’s part but an angle to observe the TT’s textual quality. That is, how it has made accessible or otherwise what the translator sees as true in the ST through the prism of her ‘virtual translation’. Incidentally, this is exactly what the Chinese word da means: ‘reaching, arriving (without obstacle)’ (HDC).

With xin and da perceived as such, ya will find its due position in this analytical framework. While pointing out that construing Yan’s ya as ‘elegance’ is partial and superficial, Shen (1998: 49–50) has reminded us that one of its semantic senses is being appropriate or proper, which ties in with the gloss ‘propriety’ in the list (see also entry 雅 in HDC). As such, with the translator being truthful to what she sees as true in the ST and with the message being made accessible to the target reader, a ya translation is a text that is appropriate to the TT’s expected genre membership and discursive function in such a felicitous manner that it can be accepted as an authentic, proper piece of writing in the target culture. Interestingly, the question of how
to be discursively appropriate so as to stay in line with the ideology that the translator or the patronage espouses at a particular time has opened translation to studies from different perspectives such as aesthetic, sociological and political – all have to do with culture as a communal mode of text production, or as Kramsch (1998: 6) puts it, ‘the invisible ritual imposed [by culture] on language users’.

By such a descriptive-analytical approach against the parameters of truthfulness, accessibility and appropriateness, it is discrepancy rather than similarity between source and target texts that has much to tell about the realities of the profession. For instance, to explain any perceived lack of truthfulness one may ask: Is the mismatch due to some cognitive, historical, social, ideological or linguistic disparity? Similarly, when a TT does not appear as accessible as expected, can it be a case of foreignisation, resistance or manipulation? And when a TT is seen as not appropriate to the target norms, can it be a manifestation of creativity, a sign of manipulation or an indication of subversion?

1.5.3 Cross-lingual naming in translation

Beyond the comfort zone of utilitarian guifan-setting, Yan has more prompts than the xin-da-ya to offer to the Chinese tradition in its drive for modernisation. One of them comes from his hesitation about naming a foreign thing. In one direction, it takes us through history to the third-century Buddhist translator Zhi Qian (支謙) who noted that conveying the actual meaning of the ST is not easy because of the discrepancy between the name and the thing it names as well as the difference between the names of the same thing in different languages (‘名物不同, 傳實不易’ in Luo 1984: 22). In another direction, this concern with naming shared by two accomplished translators 17 centuries apart, and probably by all translators, may prompt us to explore, in the spirit of pure research, into the nature of translation as cross-lingual naming in connection with the nature of language as saying and naming (see, for example, Benjamin 1916/1997; Heidegger 1971). As Benjamin (1916/1997) maintains, naming a thing in any human language is an over-naming, which is neither pure nor proper because of the biased knowledge and judgement of good and evil inherent in individual languages. Translation as cross-lingual naming is thus always a paradoxical undertaking in that translation both enables dissemination and induces distortion of the reality the ST strives to name. To be more specific, a name given in translation for a thing that has been named in the SL cannot but be a somewhat skewed compromise, a ‘sin’, or a necessary evil in the dissemination of knowledge through any human languages.

An awareness of the impurity of naming and the paradoxical nature of cross-lingual naming will keep us mindful of what meaning may be seen coming out of the ‘abyss’ – to borrow Benjamin’s (1923/1973: 82) word – of translation into which the ST has plunged, to furnish a TT before the latter plunges into the abyss of interpretation in the target system. By this ‘dissemination with distortion’, the naming in the ST is lifted out of its native context and its truthfulness is subject to cross-cultural re-examination. Through such re-examination the nuance of the reality named is further revealed and refined in a broader cultural and epistemological context. Probably that explains why Chan (2004) has resorted to heavy elaboration and Cheung (2006) to ‘thick translation’ in projecting the Chinese TS tradition onto an English screen.

1.6 Concluding remarks

To review the Chinese TS tradition, we have adopted a language-based, ethnically non-exclusive conception of Chinese and an encompassing notion of translation studies, alongside a perception
of tradition by Benjamin’s constellation analogy. In this light, the Chinese TS tradition is viewed as an idea actualised via dynamic representations profiled by a constellation of texts that document different modes of practice, deliberation and rationalisation of Chinese-related translation beyond any ethnic or territorial boundaries. We then proceeded to trace the reconstruction of the tradition in its varying representations, covering historical perspectives and contemporary perceptions presented in a number of anthologies and monographs since the 1980s. It becomes evident that for its reconstruction and modernisation, the tradition has been active in extending and strengthening its foundational constellation by incorporating approaches and theoretical insights from other traditions, as well as in going global to participate as an integral, contributing ‘star’ in the constellation that profiles translation studies as a whole.

There are two issues identified in our review. One is to enhance critical engagement in research methodology both within the tradition itself and with other traditions. From such engagement new problems – as well as complementarities – are bound to emerge, and efforts to address them will bring about new theories and discourses of interest to expand and consolidate its foundational constellation, making it more powerful and persuasive. In such engagement, no two approaches are mutually exclusive. Whereas individual approaches may have their own focuses and interests and a particular one may attract more critical attention at a particular time, translation studies as a whole advances by paradigm expansion rather than linear turn shifts. Iser (2006: 7) has certainly made a good point when he remarks: ‘Physical theories [as a prime example of natural science theories] are discarded when they no longer stand the test, whereas humanistic theories move in and out of focus, depending on changing interests.’ By critical engagement with others, a TS tradition of any kind, qualified either by nation, area, culture, language or approach, can play a constructive role in broadening and refining our understanding of what translation is, as well as how it works.

For its future development, we argued that the Chinese TS tradition needs to step out of its comfort zone of utilitarianism in its conception of translation and translation studies. As our review of Yan’s concern with naming in translation tries to show, beyond the self-limiting utilitarian view of translation as a tool for communication, an ontological inquiry into translation as a ubiquitous manifestation of communication will elevate Chinese translation studies onto a philosophic level to contribute to our understanding of the nature of language and knowledge. As Richards (1953: 261) has pointed out, the study of translation has, ‘over and above the aid it may afford the translator[, to fulfil its] peculiar duty toward man’s self-completion’. For translation, delicately perched on the tension between translatability and untranslatability, underlies all the issues bedevilling human beings in communicating themselves to the world. And it is towards this ‘man’s self-completion’ that the Chinese TS tradition is progressing and contributing. As suggested by the theme of a most recent collection of essays edited by Robinson (2016), ‘the pushing-hands of translation and its theory’, the tradition, drawing upon its grounding in Chinese philosophy for its intellectual momentum, is poised to enter a dialogic pushing-hands mode of reciprocation with other traditions in bettering our understanding of translation, especially with respect to its nature, theorisation and application.

Notes

1 English translations of citations in this chapter are the author’s.
2 Of the four compilations, some of the corresponding texts are not identical in length presumably due to editorial considerations; for instance, entries in Chan (2004) are mostly excerpts from their original texts.
3 Indeed, cultural linguists claim to have identified certain ‘peculiarities of the Chinese language’, viz. ‘economy of expression’, ‘phonological harmony’, function and content word balance, and freedom in
using parts of speech (see Chan 2004: 35 for a critique), but these are more of aspects of textual felicity that is language-neutral than elements of typological peculiarity of the Chinese language. If there is anything that might suggest a Chiineseness of the language, it should be the fact that the concept of part of speech is typologically foreign to it. In an ontological sense, the language in its use acts out intimately the philosophic nature of language as naming: In Chinese, what can be grammatically viewed as a ‘verb’ is in essence a sign that names an act, action or movement, as much as a ‘noun’ that names an object or state of affairs.

Further reading

A comprehensive anthology of interest to those who are researching on Chinese translation studies in the twentieth century.

An anthology of ancient Chinese discourses related to translation with detailed annotations to explain their historical origins and contemporary relevance.

This is a posthumous sequel to the first volume, which is edited by Robert Neather covering the gap between Cheung (2006) and Chan (2004).

This collection of essays points to a new, philosophic orientation the Chinese TS tradition is taking, by applying the idea of Tai Chi pushing-hands to the study of translation as a reciprocal engagement between civilisations as well as languages.

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