

# A Study on Sidney Shapiro's "Foreign Residence" Translation Thought and Practice\*

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**Abstract**—The study of the "foreign residence translation" is of great significance in clarifying the translator's multicultural identity and the translator's subjectivity under the influence of his aesthetic ideology. This paper is a case study on Sidney Shapiro, an immigrant translator after the founding of New China, taking his translation life and practice as the object, exploring the changing process of his translation thoughts under the influence of the foreign residence aesthetic ideology and the translator's subjectivity as a foreign resident embodied in his translation. This study has important referential meanings for solving many problems encountered in the process of Chinese literary translation.

**Keywords**—foreign residence translation; aesthetic ideology; Sidney Shapiro; translator's subjectivity

## I. INTRODUCTION

The large-scale "Western learning spreads to the East" in modern times began with the Opium War. The pride and dignity of the ancient Eastern civilizations were shattered by the artillery bombardment of the western steamships. The unequal treaties of losing power and humiliating the country brought disgrace to the Chinese nation, as well as the modern western civilization. European and American missionaries and diplomats entered the mainland of China first, opening up the large-scale cultural collision between China and the West. For the needs of religious, political, military or academic research, a large number of Chinese cultural classics have been translated into the native languages by the Westerners living in China so as to be spread overseas. At the same time, many works on western science and technology and philosophical thoughts have been translated into Chinese and introduced into China, and gradually understood by the Chinese people. With the social changes in China and more frequent exchanges between China and the West in the 20th century, a growing number of Westerners came to China to engage in foreign translation directly or indirectly. They have lived and worked in China for a long time, and even become Chinese in the legal sense.

Their translation practice has made great contributions to the cultural exchanges between China and the West. The "foreign residence translation" of these western translators was different from that of the "seated" western sinologists who shut himself up in his study doing translation practice in that they were not only influenced by the political environment and language policy of China, but also needed to find their own place among the multi-identity. Their translation practice in the overseas countries made up for the shortcomings of the native translators and perfected the Chinese translation practice system, and also provided a unique perspective for enhancing the soft power of the Chinese culture, shaping the image of China and disseminating the Chinese culture. This paper takes Sidney Shapiro, a representative of many foreign translators in China, as an example to examine the formation and influence of his aesthetic ideology in his translation activities as a foreign resident in China, with a view to exploring the reference and enlightenment of the practice of "foreign residence translation" to the translation of Chinese classics and the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture.

## II. "FOREIGN RESIDENCE TRANSLATION" AND SIDNEY SHAPIRO

"Foreign residence translation" originating from the religious, diplomatic and commercial activities in the history of Sino-Western exchanges, can be traced back to the translation of Buddhist Scriptures from the Eastern Han Dynasty to the prosperous Tang Dynasty. For the need to spread Buddhism, monks from India and other countries began to live in China to engage in the translation of Buddhist Scriptures into Chinese. After the Opium War in the modern times, more and more westerners lived or traveled in China and engaged in missionary, diplomatic, commercial and scientific activities. Besides their own work, some of them began to study Chinese language, culture and history, and even engaged in Sinology research, and gradually translated Chinese cultural classics and works. Different from western translators in their native countries, they can feel the cultural pulsation of China because they were in China. Some of their translation activities were sponsored and manipulated by the political groups or

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religious organizations in their native country, and some were bound and influenced by the local environment and language policies of China. However, they have stronger translator subjectivity and integration in the mixed cultural environment. The translation in the foreign residence was often based on the translator's accumulated humanistic views in China for many years. Those translators interpreted and translated Chinese ancient books and masterpieces, and presented to other countries in the authentic native language. "Foreign residence translation" has opened up a unique and effective way for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture, becoming an indispensable part of the history of Chinese cultural translation. As a typical representative foreign translator lived New China, Mr. Sidney Shapiro's translation practice and translation thoughts accumulated during the many years living in China as a foreign resident have great inspiration for the studying the translation and introduction of Chinese literature to foreign countries.

Sidney Shapiro was born in a Jewish family in New York in 1915, graduated from the School of Law of St. John's University at the age of 22, and became an anti-aircraft gun crew in American Army during World War II. Because of military strategic needs, the U.S. government selected and funded college-level soldiers for foreign language training. For various reasons, Shapiro was eventually assigned to learn Chinese, which bounded his life with China. After World War II, Shapiro studied Chinese language and Chinese history in Columbia University and Yale University, which laid an important linguistic and cultural foundation for his eventual arrival in China and his many years living in China as his foreign residence. Shapiro arrived in Shanghai in 1947, and he gradually turned from sympathizing with progressive activities to devoting himself to the Chinese revolution. He married Fengzi, a famous actor and progressive writer in the following year. Since then, Shapiro has been living in China and joined the Chinese nationality in 1963. From 1951 to 1983, Shapiro, as a foreign expert, held the position of translator and editor in the Foreign Cultural Liaison Bureau, Foreign Language Publishing House and People's Pictorial. He served as a member of the 6th to 11th CPPCC National Committee, and during that time, he visited many places in China and put forward relevant proposals. Shapiro has been engaged in Chinese-English translation for 50 years during his whole life, not only translated the novels, prose and poems of Ba Jin, Mao Dun and Sun Li, etc., but also translated the "Outlaws of the Marsh", one of the four classical Chinese works, and the long biography of Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of reform and opening up, "Deng Xiaoping and the Cultural Revolution: A Daughter Recalls the Critical Years", with a total translation of 10 million words. Mr. Shapiro has made great contributions to the cause of Chinese literary translation and the work of cultural exchanges with foreign countries that some scholars of China even named his translation model as "Shapiro translation model" [1]. As a translator with mixed cultural identities living in a foreign country, Shapiro and his translation practice provided a useful reference for the effective translation of Chinese literature into foreign languages.

### III. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIALIST AESTHETIC IDEOLOGY ON SHAPIRO'S TRANSLATION PRACTICE

Since the cultural turn of translation studies, people have gradually shifted the focus of translation studies from micro-study to macro-study, from internal study to external study of the text, and aesthetic ideology is the most appropriate entry point for macro-study and external study of translation. There are two aspects for the main meaning of ideology, on the one hand, it refers to a series of concepts and theories that constitute the theoretical basis of economy or politics; on the other hand, it reflects the thinking characteristics or ways of a group, a social class or an individual. Because material production determines social consciousness, people of different social status possess or produce certain ideology. [2] In 1992, Lefevere published three monographs which have far-reaching influence on translation studies, "Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame", "Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook", and "Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context".<sup>1</sup> In these three works, Lefevere comprehensively illustrated what ideology is and its relationship with translation. In his opinion, translation activities inevitably involve some form of ideological manipulation of the original text. The reason for this manipulation is that some social group shares common beliefs and values. When the values or beliefs of the source language are in conflict with the target language, ideology forces the translator or the text manipulator to mediate or adopt a specific value orientation for sensitive texts. In China, Mr. Tong Qingbing put forward "aesthetic ideology" in combination with the existing ideological concepts that "the so-called aesthetic ideology is necessarily a complex combination of aesthetic and ideological forms", and literature "is both aesthetic and ideological." [3] The theory "Aesthetic ideology" tries to integrate Marx's positioning of "ideological form" of literature with modern literary theory's understanding of "aesthetic self-discipline" of literature, thus forming a scientific and rational knowledge of literature, which is of pioneering and enlightening significance to Chinese literature and its literary translation theory.

In 1932, the first General Assembly of the Organizing Committee of the Soviet Union Writers League put forward the literary and artistic principle of "socialist realism", which was introduced into China rapidly with the worldwide socialist movement. Because of the same socialist aesthetic ideology, the literary and artistic norms of New China also follow the road formulated by the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature" in 1942 put forward the concept of "proletarian literature" and the combination of literary criticism of "political standards the first, and artistic standards the second". The literary and artistic ideas put forward in the speech were regarded as "the guiding principles for the further development of the proletarian literary movement" and became the ideological guide for the operation of the

<sup>1</sup> See Lefevere's three English monographs: Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook (1992), Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame (1992), Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context (1992).

contemporary literary and artistic system in China. As a result, the influence of political aesthetics on literature and art is further strengthened, and literature and art become an important part in the production process of political ideological discourse.

In order to meet the needs of the aesthetic ideology development, the Party and state leaders of China have invested large manpower and material resources in organizational setup, personnel training and publishing, and set up three national specialized translation agencies. In October 1949, China Foreign Language Publishing Administration was formally established. It was an institution affiliated to the Chinese Central Government, a news and publishing institution that undertakes the task of publicizing books, periodicals and Internet publications of CPC and China, and also the largest professional foreign communication institution in the history of New China. Following that, the Compilation and Translation Bureau of the CPC Central Committee was established in 1953, an institution directly under the CPC Central Committee, with the main responsibilities were the compilation of classical Marxist works, the translation of central documents, the study of Marxist theory and major practical problems, the construction of Marxist literature information resources, and the popularization of Marxist theory. In 1955, the Chinese Ethnic Language Translation Bureau was established, the only national-level translation agency for ethnic languages. Its main responsibilities were to publicize the line, principles and policies of CPC and the nation, safeguard national unity, social stability and national unity, promote the economic and social development of ethnic minorities and ethnic areas, put forward and flourish ethnic minority cultures, and promote the theoretical research and academic exchanges in translation of ethnic languages. The establishment of these three national translation institutions marked the establishment of a national translation practice system guided by socialist aesthetic ideology. It is under this background that Mr. Sidney Shapiro became a foreign residence translator of the New China.

It was because of Mr. Shapiro's wife Fengzi that he began to work in the Chinese national translation agency. Fengzi knew Hong Shen, who was then the head of the Foreign Liaison Bureau of the Ministry of Culture. At an occasional opportunity, Hong Shen found that Shapiro was translating "Daughters and Sons", and he enrolled Shapiro to work in the Liaison Bureau out of the urgent need for foreign experts during the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the understanding of Shapiro's ideological and political reliability. Shapiro was later transferred to the publishing house when the National Foreign Language Publishing House was established, where he met Yang Xianyi and Gladys B. Tayler, and formally engaged in his foreign residence translation practice for more than 60 years.

As a foreign expert residing in New China and engaged in translation work in the Chinese national translation agency, the translation activities of both Shapiro and Gladys B. Tayler were directly influenced by the national aesthetic ideology. Shapiro once said, "The works we translate are

usually introduced by some departments of the Central Government. There are also writers such as Zhou Yang and Mao Dun, who are highly literary and political, also recommend works to the editorial office of 'Chinese Literature Magazine'. [4] As a translator of a national translation agency, the choice of works to translate and translation strategies were undoubtedly constrained by the patron's aesthetic ideology, whether they are native translators or foreign residence translators. Therefore, the manipulation and rewriting of translation should be regarded as a cultural necessity in essence. In the process of translation, the translator would also be affected and constrained by various social and cultural factors. In addition to considering the author's original intentions, the original cultural context and other characteristics of the original text, the translator should also consider the factors related to the target language or acceptance culture, such as the purpose of translation, the function of the target language, readers' expectations and reactions, the requests of clients and sponsors, and the review of publishing and circulating agencies. Since the establishment of the National Translation Agency in China, a fixed hierarchical relationship has been formed between the translator and the national aesthetic ideology. The interaction of these relations constantly influenced the direction and theme of foreign translation of national literature.

During the 17 years from 1949 to 1966, Shapiro's translation practice focused on literary works reflecting the construction of China's new democratic revolution and socialist revolution, the most influential ones including "Daughters and Sons", "Wall of Bronze", "The Plains Are Ablaze", "Defending Yan'an", "Tracks in The Snowy Forest", "Annals of a Provincial Town", "Builders of a New Life", and "It happened at Willow Castle", etc., and the publishing and overseas spreading of these works have played a positive role in establishing a new Chinese image abroad. "Daughters and Sons" was published in the United States in 1952, which was the first red Chinese publication published in the West. Hugh Deane, an American journalist and former president of the New York Branch of the American-Chinese Friendship Association, wrote a positive comment on the book. It was well understood that in the early 1950s, when China and the United States were in direct confrontation on the Korean battlefield, the publication and circulation of the book in the United States had milestone significance for the establishment and dissemination of the overseas image of New China.

China literary and artistic work was almost at a standstill in the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, except for a few Model Dramas promoting the Cultural Revolution. Shapiro's personal translation practice has also fallen into low ebb that only one book "Outlaws of the Marsh" has been translated and published during these ten years. However, it was this novel that has become the pinnacle of Shapiro's translation career. The translation and publication of "Outlaws of the Marsh" was an important work plan of the Foreign Language Bureau of China in the 1960s. Choosing Shapiro to translate the novel also has an important relationship with his own personality and artistic aesthetics. Shapiro once said, "I like



every work I translate." Shapiro's love for "Outlaws of the Marsh" has something to do with his love for Kungfu novels and his advocating for the chivalrous behavior of helping others. "One without courage and uprightness, or the love to swordsman chivalrous deeds cannot translate the novel."<sup>2</sup> [5] In the process of translating "Outlaws of the Marsh", Shapiro also encountered the pressure and interference from the "Gang of Four", and the so-called "Outlaws of the Marsh" version and translation disputes. Shapiro's earliest choice of text was the edition that first 70 chapters of Jin Shengtan version and the last 30 chapters of Rong Yutang version. But when he translated to 54 chapters, he was interfered by the "Gang of Four" and had to change his version to the Rong Yutang version. At that time, Shapiro strongly opposed such deeds, but with no result only because of the ideological pressure at that time. It was not until the "Gang of Four" was crushed that Shapiro re-translated Jin Shengtan's first 70-chapter version as planned. The publication and overseas distribution of Shapiro's version of "Outlaws of the Marsh" have won the praise of western literary critics. Joseph McClelland, a famous American sinologist, commented in the Washington Post, "Like Robinson Crusoe, beneath the fascinating surface of "Outlaws of the Marsh" is a work of resistance to society. When readers finish reading this book, most of them will admit that it is a world famous book." [6]

After ten years translation depression during the Cultural Revolution, Shapiro's translation career has reached its second peak with the crushing of the "Gang of Four" and the beginning of reform and opening-up. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping put forward the viewpoint that "literature and art are not subordinate to politics, and should not be separated from politics" in his article "Current Situation and Tasks", which laid a basic tone for the relationship between poetry and politics in the 1980s. [7] It was acknowledged that abolishing the slogan of "literature and art serve politics" was a great progress. Politics has loosened the bondage to literature and art, and literature and art have gained greater space for free development, which is mainly manifested in the tolerance of the political factors of aesthetic ideology to the methods of literary and artistic creation. During that time, Shapiro has more freedom in his translation practices. Besides the Chinese national translation practice activities required by the national political, economic and cultural propaganda, Shapiro has the right to make his own choices. Shapiro once said that "translation is my own work, and the second is out of curiosity. Chinese literature, culture, philosophy, and religion all are rich in connotations. In addition, it can enrich my life. Translation is my favorite career, and I will do as much as I can". [4] In addition to finish the task of Chinese national translation, Shapiro devoted more energy to self-writing. His publications include "Ma Haide: The Saga of American Doctor George Hatem in China", and his autobiography "My China: The Metamorphosis of a Country and a Man", which satisfied his long-cherished desire to become a writer. He also wrote the

book "Experiment in Sichuan: a Report on Economic Reform" based on his own experience of investigations at the grass-roots level of Chinese society. In addition to paying attention to Chinese social reality, he has also devoted a lot of energy to Chinese history and culture, collating and compiling books such as "Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars", "The Law and the Lore of China's Criminal Justice", and "A Sampler of Chinese Literature From Ming Dynasty to Mao Zedong", etc. These works with high academic research value have attracted the attention of the international community, and his translation strategy also reflects the great changes of translator's subjectivity and aesthetic ideology.

#### IV. SHAPIRO'S TRANSLATION THOUGHTS AND FOREIGN RESIDENCE TRANSLATOR'S SUBJECTIVITY

Mr. Xu Jun has mentioned in his paper "Creative Treason and the Establishment of Translational Subjectivity" in January 2003 that, "The so-called translator's subjectivity refers to the translator's conscious personality consciousness and his creative consciousness in the process of translation. The existence, strength and weakness of this subjectivity consciousness directly affect the whole process of translation and the final result, that is, the value of the translated text. The so-called "translational subjectivity" refers to the subject of translation and the artistic personality consciousness embodied in the translation. Its core is the aesthetic requirements and creativity of the translational subjectivity." [8] In the same edition of "Chinese Translators Journal", Professor Zha Mingjian also proposed that "translator's subjectivity refers to the translator's subjective initiative in translation activities for the purpose of achieving translation while respecting the translation text. Its basic characteristics are the translator's conscious cultural consciousness, humanistic character, cultural and aesthetic creativity". [9] It can be seen that translator's subjectivity refers to the subjective initiative of the whole translation activity under the premise of respecting the objective translation environment and having a full understanding of the target language. It embodies the translator's active consciousness in the aspects of language operation, cultural characteristics, artistic creation, aesthetic ideology and humanistic quality.

As a translator under the influence of socialist aesthetic ideology in New China, the foreign translator in China undoubtedly embodied his subjectivity more vividly than the native translator. In respect of the relationship, foreign translator has more advantages than the native translator. Firstly, the cultural identity of the translator in a foreign residence makes his understanding of the cultural context of the target language more appropriate than that of the native translator. Secondly, the linguistic advantages of the foreign translator can enable him to examine his translation model and the quality of his works as the target language reader, so as to reach the height that the native translator cannot reach in language. Thirdly, the foreign translators in China have a better understanding of the market demand of target language publishing and the process of text circulation. The advantages of foreign translators' subjectivity in the above-

<sup>2</sup> Zhou Mingwei, former director of the State Administration of Foreign Languages, once talked about Shapiro's love of Kungfu novels. See in Zhang Xiao's "Shapiro and Outlaws of the Marsh", "International Talent", 2016: (7): 13.

mentioned areas are well reflected in Mr. Shapiro, whose translation works were well received by the market.

The western language and cultural background on Mr. Shapiro and his political and cultural identification with China perfectly integrate his own cultural mix with the aesthetic ideology of his foreign residence country. Shapiro never shrugged off being a Jew, and he even put being a Jew before being an American. To study the history and current situation of Jews in China, Shapiro was invited to become the first Chinese citizen to visit Israel. At that time, China and Israel had not established diplomatic relations. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Israel, Mr. Shapiro also maintained close relations with the Israeli Embassy in China. The more one kept in touch with Mr. Shapiro, the better people around him would find that he has multiple identities but in harmony and be natural: the shrewdness of Jews, the humor and independence of Americans, the gentleness and kindness of Chinese people, and finally become a typical and interesting combination. [10] Shapiro's independent and free character and mode of thinking of Westerners accompanied his whole life. "He is not a very moderate person trained by Chinese philosophy. On the contrary, he is very principled and has very sharp views. He is not afraid to make suggestions, and every time he can make constructive suggestions." "He doesn't care about who is the higher level official. Sometimes he's sitting next to a big politician who is known to all. He'll quietly ask who is this guy? He has no sense of hierarchy." said by Shu Yi. [10] Although Shapiro has a Western cultural background, he has devoted his life to China from the moment he set foot in China. Zhou Mingwei, a former director of the Chinese Foreign Language Bureau, said, "Shapiro cares about his Chinese identity. In 2011, Phoenix Satellite Television awarded him the Lifelong Achievement Award for Chinese People in the World. This award was previously awarded to Chinese, such as Jin Yong, Yang Zhenning and Yuan Longping, but Shapiro was the first Chinese of foreign origin to win this honor. He was very happy to win the prize because he thought it was the acknowledgement with his Chinese identity." The mixing of cultural identities is Mr. Shapiro's advantage in translation practice. [10] He has a profound understanding of the cultural collision between the source language and the target language, which is beyond the reach of most of Chinese native translators.

Translator's subjectivity is a whole category with comprehensive connotation and expression, and the smooth operation and transformation of two or more languages are also indispensable aspects. "Shapiro has always believed that the most difficult thing in translation is not the word-to-word translation itself, but the culture carried by words. He believes that the words in each work are the same, but they reflect different cultural connotations. The translator must know the tone of everyone's words, the clothes one wears, the food one eats and why he eats it. This is what makes Mr. Shapiro different from others. He really got into the background of these words." [10] The translated language is not only the smoothness of the text, but also the collision and coincidence of the two different cultures behind the text.

Shapiro's translation language is not only the direct conversion of two kinds of written symbols, but also the communication and exchange between the two cultures. "Literary works have their own style. We should translate the text and also show the style. Like knowing Qin, it is only when you can hear the different vibrations of the strings of the player that you can understand the original text very well. There is no certain model for how to reflect the content of Chinese literary works in foreign languages. Every literary work is different, and everyone appreciates it differently. We should not only make foreigners understand, but also let foreigners feel the high level of Chinese literature. Everyone's translation will be influenced by himself, so the quality of translation should be judged by others." [4] In Mr. Shapiro's view, translators should not only have profound literary skills, but also have a deep understanding and reflection on the two cultures. Although the foreign translators have the advantages of the target language and cultural background compared with the native translators, they still need to have a deep understanding of the history and culture of the source language in order to achieve greater results. Mr. Shapiro once made a brilliant illustration on this, "It is hoped that young people engaged in literary translation will have a better understanding of the development of Chinese history and culture and learn more about ancient Chinese philosophy. It's hard, but it's a lifetime thing. Nowadays, no matter who the author is, what he writes must be influenced by the development of ancient history and culture. Many words have developed from classical Chinese to Putonghua. Therefore, it is not difficult for a translator to translate only according to a dictionary. Every word has not been translated incorrectly, but such a translation is inappropriate." [4] There is no doubt that Mr. Shapiro's language requirements for translation have increased from the correspondence of characters to the cultural equivalence behind the word symbols. It has always been Mr. Shapiro's translation thought that to understand and respect the aesthetic ideology of the country the translator lived and actively find the balance between the two languages and cultures, which also guide Mr. Shapiro to create excellent works that universally acknowledged in China and foreign countries in his translation career.

## V. CONCLUSION

The translation of Chinese literary classics into foreign languages is of great significance on the overseas spreading of Chinese culture, but the operation mode should be carefully organized and designed. Mr. Shapiro's practice of foreign residence translation proves that the effect of literary publicity translation is far from satisfactory if only in the form of one-sided aesthetic ideology. As Gao Fang pointed out when talking about Chinese literature "going-out", "literary communication is the exchange of souls, and impatient mentality or imposed posture should be abandoned". [11] Overemphasis on aesthetic ideology in literary translation will lead to difficulties in the acceptance of overseas translations. Chinese Literature Publishing House once introduced Chinese literature overseas through "Panda Series", but it was forced to stop publishing in 2001. What happened to "Panda Series" tells us that although

active translation for the purpose of cross-cultural communication is guided by local culture, the acceptance of the translated version is restricted by the target culture system. "All works will inevitably be manipulated or even deformed in the process of being received abroad." [12] The acceptance of the translated text by the readers of the target language culture may be influenced by the poetics or aesthetic ideology of the country of the target language, as well as by the language norms or social history of the country of the target language. Various constraints need to be balanced in Chinese literary translation. Mr. Shapiro, as well as the foreign residence translators such as Gladys Taylor and Ruth F. Weiss, combine their mixing cultural identity with the aesthetic ideological requirements of the source language and the target language, give full play to their dual roles as translators, and display their translation literacy and linguistic advantages to the best extent. These foreign translators who lived in New China have provided us with a unique perspective to study literary translation from the perspectives of politics, communication studies, translator's subjectivity and identity, and have also served as an important reference for how Chinese literature and culture can effectively go abroad on the premise of shaping Chinese national image, strengthening cultural sovereignty and language policy.

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