

Geography Approach to Translation History Studies: A Brief Analysis on the Translators of GBA in Modern China

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ABSTRACT

Translators are the core contents in translation history studies. In the translation history of China, The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) boasts a multitude of translators and glorious translation history. In order to investigate the above unique phenomena, it is necessary to analyze the related reasons. Geo-translation Studies, a new research paradigm proposed by He Aijun, aims to build a theoretical system of space-time integration. Based on this theory, it is found that three geographical factors, being away from the of the sovereignty of the power-centralized government, the advantageous geographical location, and the regional folk customs of being brave, pragmatic and hard-working, result in the unique phenomena of GBA translation history in modern China.

Keywords: *Geo-translation Studies, Translation History, Translators Studies, GBA*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the millennium, the study of translators and the social nature of translation have become the central stage in translation studies research [1]. As the research focus in translation studies, the development of translators studies is booming, and a large number of monographs on translator studies have sprung up like mushrooms in China. These monographs included not only the large research works such as *Translators Through Chinese History* [2], but also the regional research works such as *A Study of Zhejiang Translators* [3], *On the Translation History of Fujian* [4] and *Translators of Quanzhou and Sino-western Communication: A Biographical Introduction and Research on the Translated Works* [5]. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) comprises of Hong-Kong, Macao and 9 cities in Guangdong Province (Canton, Foshan, Zhaoqing, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhuhai, Zhongshan and Jiangmen). GBA is one of the highest open and vibrant regions in China, and it plays an important role in the China's overall development. In the Chinese history of international communication, GBA plays an important role. Among them, Canton, Hong Kong, and Macao are

three best examples. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Canton was the only one port open to the outside world in China; and Hong Kong and Macao as colonies of Britain and Portugal in the history, they objectively promoted the exchanges between China and foreign countries. Geo-translation studies, proposed by professor He Aijun [6], which can be regarded as a new research paradigm to analyze the geographical factors of the phenomena in translation history and the development regularities of translation such as translator, translation centers, translation landscapes, etc. In this paper, the famous translators of GBA in modern China and authentic historical materials are investigate and the related reasons for the unique translation phenomena are analyzed from the perspective of Geo-translation studies.

2. BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE TRANSLATION HISCTORY OF GBA

As we know, a comprehensive presentation of the translation history of GBA is a grand project, which can be did as a huge research program in the future. That is to say, it can not be introduced in detail just in one paper. Therefore, a brief outline of the translation history of

GBA is drawn in this paper. As is depicted in the introduction above, the translation history of GBA includes the translation history of 9 cities in Guangdong Province, and two Special Administrative Regions Hong Kong and Macao.

2.1 Brief Outline of the Translation History of the 9 Guangdong cities

GBA is composed of 11 cities, among them 9 cities are located in Guangdong Province, i.e. Canton, Foshan, Zhaoqing, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, and Jiangmen. At present, there is no systematic academic work on the translation history of these nine cities, and most historical materials are like scattered pearls, which need to be sorted out and researched.

In 2019, Dr. Xu Ming and I were awarded a research grant on Zhuhai Translators Studies. Zhuhai, as the hometown of Yung Wing (pinyin: Rong Gong), there are many famous translators in modern China. In this project, 9 translators were selected to outline the translation history of Zhuhai. These translators are as follows: (1) Huang Sheng, a gunpowder translator; (2) Yung Wing, the first person who introduced western achievements to China; (3) Tang Tingshu, the promoter of English education in the late Qing Dynasty; (4) Rong Shangqin, a reformist translator; (5) Cai Tinggan, the first person to translate Tang poetry into English; (6) Tang Bao'e, Japanese translators; (7) Su Manshu, a translator, painter and monk; (8) Yang Pao'an, the pioneer of spreading Marxism in south China; (9) Wei Zhuomin, who translated Kant's philosophy into Chinese.

In fact, the clues of the famous translators can be found in Lin Huangtian's research work *A Companion for Chinese Translators* [7]. And the famous translators in 9 Guangdong cities is presented in a form (please see Table 1).

Table 1. Famous translators in Guangdong 9 cities

City	Famous translators in the history of Guangdong 9 cities
Canton	Din Cheuk Lau (Chinese classics translator and sinologist), Zhu Zhixin (communism translator), Lai Tianchang (literary translator).
Foshan	Kang Youwei (translation thinker, the leader of the Reform Movement of 1898), Weng Xianliang (expert in translating Chinese poetry into English), Feng Ziyou (political translator), Zhu Jieqin (historical translator).
Zhaoqing	Fu Qixun (Russian translator).
Shenzhen	He Daokuan and Tan Zaixi are professors from Shenzhen University.
Dongguan	Ye Weiqu (Japanese translator).
Huizhou	Liao Zhongkai (revolution translator),

	Qing Zhu (music translator), Liao Fushu (music translator).
Zhuhai	See contents above
Zhongshan	Zheng Kelu (France translator). Li Nanqiu (scientific and technological translator).
Jiangmen	Liang Qichao (translation thinker, the leader of the Reform Movement of 1898), Wu Jianguang(one of the most famous translators in modern China), Liang Zongdai (Shakespeare translator, French translator), Lei Shiyu (Japanese translator).

2.2 Brief Outline of the Translation History of Hong Kong

At present, there is no systematic and comprehensive academic work on the translation history of Hong Kong. However, we can still find some clues from the related papers, proceedings and academic works. In Zou Zhenhuan's paper [8], four research works, *Modern English-Chinese Translation: A Critical Survey*, *The Role of Hong Kong in the Cultural Interchange Between East and West*, *Proceedings of Biblical Chinese translation*, and *Translation and Negotiation of "Inheriting Foreign Literature Heritage"* were discussed. Kwan Sze Pui's academic book, *Hong Kong and the Construction of Chinese Knowledge in the British Empire* [9], is on the translation history of Hong Kong. In her book, four translators, Staunton, Fei Ji, Thomas Francis Wade, and James Legge were researched. In Chan Sin-wai's book, *Translation in Hong Kong: Past, Present and Future* [10], the important role played by translation in the modernization of Hong Kong is investigated, and other issues of the translation history, the present situation and future of translation are discussed.

From 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong, as colony, was once ruled by UK. Now it is one of the third largest financial centers in the world, and the central city of GBA. Since the late Qing Dynasty, Hong Kong has been an important bridge between China and English speaking countries. That is to say, the translation history of Hong Kong is rich and colourful, which can be a large research program for further research.

2.3 Brief Outline of the Translation History of Macao

Portugal's colonial rule over Macao began in 1553, in 1557 Portuguese settled in Macao, and in 1999, Macao returned to China. During the 446 years of Portugal's colonial rule, the communication between Portuguese and Chinese entirely depended on translation. The first academic work which systematically researched Macao's translation history was Dr. Li Changshen's book: *Modern Translation History of*

Macao [11]. This book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is about the translation of Macao from its port opening to the 19th century; the second chapter is about the establishment and development of modern Macao translation system; the third chapter is about the translation activities of Macao native Portuguese translators; the fourth chapter is about the roles of modern Macao translation activities in the cultural exchange between China and the West.

Most of the translators in Macao early history are Chinese from the Malay Peninsula and Nanyang (Southeast Asia). After occupying Malacca in 1511, the Portuguese turned their attention to China and occupied Macao in 1553. There is no doubt that translators play an important role in this communication. From the opening of Macao to the establishment of the Macao Council, Jesuits made great contributions to translation. For example, Matteo Ricc and Michele Ruggieri compiled the earliest Portuguese-Chinese dictionary. In Chinese history, the second translation climax was realized through Macao, and a large number of western natural science works was translated. In the 18th-19th century, with the development of foreign firms, gambling, opium trade, sending Chinese workers to make a living abroad, and the influx of Chinese people, the problem of language communication was put on the agenda. In 1865, the Portuguese-ruled Macao government established the first official translation team. In 1905, the first Chinese language school which aimed to train Chinese Portuguese translators was established, which was the predecessor of the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Macao Polytechnic University. The translation elites in modern Macao are as follows: Pe. Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves, José Martinho Marques, Antonio Alexandrino Melo, Pedro Nolasco da Silva, Eduardo Marques, José Vicente Jorge, Joaquim Fausto das Chagas, Francisco Xavier Anacleto da Silva, Abílio Maria da Silva Basto, and Luís Gonzaga Gomes. Objectively speaking, the translation activities in modern Macao history promoted the spread of Western works to the East, helped the development of China's coastal port cities in the late Qing Dynasty and the early times of Republic of China, and formed Macao's multilingual cultural environment. At the same time, it also led to the development of the resrarch of western sinology.

3. ANALYSIS ON THE TRANSLATION HISTORY OF GBA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GEOGRAPHY

In general, time is regarded as the clue to compile transltion history, which seems reasonable and scientific. With the continuous emergence of the research works of regional translators, we have to think about whether the translation history is related to the geographical environment or not? In literature studies, literary

geography is a research branch. In history, historical geography is a research branch. In translation studies, is there a research branch translation geography or geo-translation studies? In fact, geo-translation studies had entered into our sight. This part is divided into two parts: The name and nature of geo-translation studies, and the geography analysis of the translation history of GBA.

3.1 The Name and Nature of Geo-translation Studies

Why did a great number of famous translators come from GBA in modern China? Why does it has a brilliant regional translation history? In order to answer these two questions, we need to return to the meta-knowledge of translation history studies. In Holmes's [12] 'map' of translation studies and other later revisions such as Toury [13] and Zhang Meifang's editions [14], there is no place for translation history studies. Compared with the translation practice for thousands of years, translation history as the research object started much later. In Chinese mainland, relevant studies have emerged since 1980s, such as Ma Zuyi's *A Brief History of Chinese Translation: before the May 4th Movement* [15], Tan Zaixi's *A Short History of Translation in the West* [16], and Chen Fukang's *Chinese Translation History* [17]. Internationally, translation history studies emerged 1990s, and *Pym's Method in Translation History* [18] was the most outstanding academic work. In general, translation is not only a text, but also a cross-cultural action; and studies on translation text, translator and translation method without considering translation history is not convincing [19]. There are two research objectives in translation history: translation in history and the role of translation in history. In detailed studies, these two aspects should be related and referred to each other. Traditionally, time is the clue in the writing of translation history which focuses on translators and translated works. This pattern seems reasonable, actually, it ignores the internal blending of time and space in translation history. Generally speaking, there is a close relationship between the static distribution of translators and the geographical environment, while the dynamic distribution is closely related to the social factors such as the study, work, promotion and relocation of translators.

In the paper *The Name and Nature of Geo-translation Studies: An Interview with Professor He Aijun*, He Aijun gave the definition of geo-translation studies. It is based on translation studies and with cultural geography as the reference, which focuses on the formation, movement and distribution features of translation phenomena and their relationship with human geography and physical geography, and reveals the geographical background of the translation phenomena such as translators, translation centers and

translation landscapes and the related development regularities [6]. He Aijun pointed out that the research objects of Geo-translation Studies included at least three parts: translation regions, the geographical distribution of translators, and the re-localization of target texts from the geographical space of the source texts. The new paradigm of Geo-translation Studies aims to build a theoretical system of space-time integration, which provides a new theoretical resource and methodological reference for the research of regional translation activities and regional translators.

3.2 Reasons Analyses

The new paradigm of Geo-translation Studies provides a new theoretical resource for translation history studies. In this part, it is divided into three aspects to discuss the reasons for the translation phenomena of GBA in modern China.

The first reason is away from the of the sovereignty of the power-centralized government. The industrial revolution began in Britain as early as the 18th century, while China's Qing Dynasty was still sleeping in the dream of world center dynasty. The visit to China by the British George Macartney diplomatic mission in 1793 and by the British William Pitt Amherst diplomatic mission in 1816 ended in failure, which also foreshadowed the passivity of the Qing government in its foreign exchanges. After that, the Opium War, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement and the second Opium War made the Qing government trapped. In modern history, China entered into a semi-colonial and semi feudal society. As we know, GBA area is away from Peking and Nanking, the power centers of Qing government and the Republic of China (ROC). In Qing Dynasty, communication with foreigners was forbidden and teaching foreigners Chinese was beheading death penalty. Because of being away from power center, the translation activities did not stop and developed more quickly than other areas in China. At the same time, Hong Kong and Macao was away from the rule of Qing government because of their colony positions. In ROC, the Northern Expedition began in Canton. All these positive factors provide good environment for translation activities.

The second reason is the advantageous geographical location. In Qing Dynasty, GBA was affiliated to Canton Regional Government and Zhaoqing Regional Government. As we know, in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Canton was the only one foreign trade port in China. And Zhaoqing was the governer station ruling Guangdong Province and Guangxi Province, which lasted more than 150 years. After the Opium War, Hong Kong became a British colony, which developed quickly and became the center of international trade and finance in East Asia. Macao was settled by Portuguese in 1553, officially became a Portuguese colony in 1887

and returned to the motherland in 1999. For the colonial rule of 446 years, the communication between Portuguese and Chinese had always depended on translation. For example, Din Cheuk Lau, Chinese classics translator and sinologist, came from Canton; Yung Wing, the first person who introduced western achievements to China, came from Zhuhai; Li Nanqiu, scientific and technological translator, came from Zhongshan; Liang Qichao, translation thinker, the leader of the Reform Movement of 1898, came from Jiangmen; Liao Zhongkai, the revolutionary translator, came from Huizhou.

The third reason is the regional folk custom of being brave, pragmatic and hard-working. The GBA is located in the Pearl River Delta, with a dense population and facing China South Sea. In history, the contradiction between people and land was prominent, which resulted in the historical tradition of bravery. In order to improve the quality of life, many people went abroad to make a living or did international trade. Going to Nanyang (Southeast Asia) to make a living or did international trade is a good example. This regional folk custom provided a good atmosphere for cultivating a large number of translators. In modern history, a large number of translators have emerged in GBA area, which is also inseparable from the local people's folk custom of pragmatism and hard work. Before the abolition of the Imperial Examination in the Qing Dynasty in 1905, ordinary people took it as the right way to enter the official position by reading *Four Books and Five Classics* (not by learning science and technology). In fact, there were only 26849 excellent candidates in the Imperial Examination [20] and just 114 champions in total in the whole Qing Dynasty. Many translators from the GBA area abandoned the Imperial Examination and chose to study abroad, which shows their pragmatic and hard work spirit.

4. CONCLUSION

The new paradigm of Geo-translation Studies aims to build a theoretical system of space-time integration. In this paper, a brief introduction of translators and translation history in GBA is made. Then the author uses Geo-translation Studies as theory source to analyze the translators and translation history in GBA. Translations are not made in a vacuum [21]. Boasting a large number of translators and brilliant translation history is inseparable from these three geographical factors: being away from the of the sovereignty of the power-centralized government, the advantageous geographical location, and the regional folk customs of being brave, pragmatic and hard-working. Being faced with the unprecedented changes that had not occurred in China, they took the responsibilities of learning western works, national salvation, enlightenment and the international exchange between China and the West without hesitation.

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