

**WANG, H.Y. (2003): *Critique of Translation Theories in Chinese Tradition* (in Chinese), Wuhan, Hubei Education Publishing House, 301 p.**

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## Comptes rendus

WANG, H.Y. (2003): *Critique of Translation Theories in Chinese Tradition* (in Chinese), Wuhan, Hubei Education Publishing House, 301 p.

It is rather hard to do modern interpretations of traditional Chinese translation theories. The intrinsic features of Chinese characters and the influence of the ancient Chinese philosophy and the cultural tradition make the category, concept and proposition of the traditional theories very difficult to analyze, and the intension and the extension of the traditional theories are mainly flexible and overlapped. So many ideas and propositions are hidden in the vast historical data and the translator's few isolated words and phrases in his foreword and postscript to his translated versions. It is known that they harbor great treasures, but very few people are willing to take the trouble to extract them from the vast material. *Critique of Translation Theories in Chinese Tradition* (hereafter referred to as CTT) is the first in China as well as the world to do such research systematically. It is the blending of history and comment, stressing the latter. The research itself is extremely valuable.

CTT, as an effort to the construction of translatability, is the modern interpretation of traditional Chinese translation theories. It assumes that there are two types of translatology: one transcends national boundaries and is universal, the other within national boundaries but is working its way towards the former as an ideal model. Translatology in China is moving precisely along this trajectory. At its present stage, Chinese translatology can be regarded as at once a logical development of the evolution of traditional Chinese translation theories and a natural outcome of the historical development of Chinese translation tradition. To contribute to the growth of translatology in China, efforts should be taken to reinterpret, in a scientific and vigorous manner, the major traditional Chinese translation theories so that they can be transformed into the central components of modern Chinese translatology.

CTT contains three sections. The first deals with the theories in ancient China (146-1840), the second the theories in modern China (1840-1949), and the third contemporary theories (1949-2000). It tries to complete three tasks, i.e., the division of the traditional Chinese translation theories, the general recognition of them, and the modern interpretations of them. The book considers that traditional Chinese translation theories refer to the ones that are of strong Chinese tradition in translation propositions, study approaches, techniques of expressions, theoretical features and objectives. It divides traditional Chinese translation theories into ancient, modern and contemporary periods historically, and into initiative, classical, reflective and intuitive periods in the light of the development of translation studies.

As for the general recognition of them, CTT considers that there are five characteristics of traditional Chinese translation theories, namely, 1) stressing ethics because they consider translation as a life-long devotion, 2) serving the public, 3) humanism being the potential theoretical guidance to translation studies, 4) considering social sciences and humanities as the major text type, they tend to adopt the art of literary translation in their material content, language type and mind-exercising, 5) regarding philosophy and aesthetics as the consistent theoretical basis.

The above five features obviously demonstrate the shortcomings of traditional Chinese translation theories, i.e., lack of theoretical consciousness, lack of basic category, and weak

in academic basis. CTT tries to sort out the propositions of traditional Chinese translation theories and transform them into modern ones. Traditional Chinese translation theories are weak in theoretical consciousness, but contain some valuable propositions such as literal and liberal translations, literal translation and retranslation, transliteration and liberal translation, translating meaning and taste, alike in spirit and form, criteria, translatability, lofty realm, language, and translator. The book, in the light of the planning of modern translation theory, transforms them into ontology, methodology, epistemology, criterion or principle, subjectivity, and translatability. It considers that they lack the propositions such as translation process, effect evaluation, style correspondence, semantic transference, and translation criticism.

CTT is completed through the process of sorting out, interpretation, transference, ending and sublimation of traditional Chinese translation theories. This approach is of great value in theory and methodology, and it is of great significance in translation studies. It opens a new era in studying the traditional Chinese translation theories.

Apart from the above sections, the appendix of the book, by summing up its author's experiences, proposes ten expressionistic approaches for literary translation. They include naming and renaming, sentence rendering, concision and consideration, unity and variety, taste and plasticity, image and imagination, rhythm in freedom, cohesion in fluency, textuality redesigned, and title and type. It also proposes the criteria for literary translation: literary format, poetic taste, language expression, cultural consideration, ideological inclination, and style typology. Based on the criteria, it divides translation products into three levels: excellent, good and clumsy. These achievements will undoubtedly promote the development of literary translation studies.

In sum, the book under review is extremely useful, although it only chooses ten typical traditional Chinese translation theories, and these are sometimes inharmonious in style.

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KELLMAN, S.G. (ed.) (2003): *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft*, Lincoln/London, University of Nebraska Press, XIX + 339 p.

This book is a collection of articles and excerpts from the works of authors who write or have written in a second language or, in rare cases, have refused to do so. More often than not, the second language in question is English. The pieces range from a nine-line poem to a 21-page book excerpt. A few of them are (English) translations, in three cases by the editor himself.

In a number of these texts, the authors are explaining either why they write in their second language or what it feels like to do so. The original English pieces here (the majority) show that their authors are remarkable writers of this second language. The other general observation one can easily make is that, at the moment, English is the language which writers wishing to reach a world audience learn to write in.

An important exception to this latter generalization is, of course, French. The editor has translated into English a sample of the French writings of Léopold Sédar Senghor (pp. 35-41) and of Assia Djebar (pp. 311-318). Not surprisingly, the other language from which the editor has translated a sample of a bilingual writer's work is Spanish. This is the case of Esmeralda Santiago's "Introduction to *Cuando era puertorriqueña*" (pp. 131-134).

Translation is also represented directly by "The Prague Manifesto," issued on the occasion of the Eighty-First World Esperanto Congress in July 1996, and printed here in the