

Research Article

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Foreign Translators Group in the PRC From 1949 to 1966: A STP Perspective

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Abstract: Throughout the history of translation in China, almost every major translation movement has been accompanied by the activities of foreign translators. China, during the seventeen years from 1949 to 1966, absorbed a large number of foreign translators, who made significant contributions to the translation profession of the People's Republic of China (PRC). These foreign translators participated in China's translation practice, resulting in distinct characteristics of the translators group. This article takes the concept of the "translator community" of the State Translation Program (STP) as the departing point to explore the characteristics of the foreign translators group engaged in STP in China from 1949 to 1966 and digs out the reasons behind the generation of the foreign translators group. It is found that the foreign translators group in the early 17 years after the founding of the PRC are specifically manifested as the translator positioning of state translators, the predominant translator identity of non-professionals, and the translator image of "gears" and "repairmen." The generation of these groups is the result of multiple factors, including the state's strategic requirement for translation output, the state's macro-regulation of the allocation of translation talent resources, as well as the state's manipulation of the translation process.

Keywords: foreign translators, STP, PRC, translator group

1 Introduction

As an integral part of the history of translation in China, foreign translators have made significant contributions in various aspects such as translation practice, discussions on translation theory and methods, training of translation talents, establishment of translation publishing institutions, and founding of translation journals (She, 2001, p. 60). It is inevitable to involve the activities of foreign translators when we delve into the history of translation in China, since "major translation activities [in China] depended heavily on foreign translators for language as well as cultural expertise" (Hung, 1999, p. 224). In recent years, research on foreign translators has been attracting increasing attention from scholars, focusing mainly on overviews and conceptual analyses of the translation activities of foreign translators (Gao & Ren, 2017; Huang & Dang, 2023; Ren, 2016), historical activities, and contributions of foreign translators (Harrison, 2021; Liu, 1995; Lu & He, 2016; Wu, 2013; She, 2001), changes in the composition of foreign translators (Tan & Xin, 2018a), the role of foreign translators in specific translation activities (Chen, 2017; Hung, 1999; Tan & Xin, 2017a, 2018b), and individual translation activities of foreign translators (Gao & Ren, 2017; Li, 2019; Ren & Lang, 2016; Ren, 2015; Tan & Xin, 2017b), among others. However, while the aforementioned studies offer rich perspectives, their overall depth of involvement is relatively limited. Particularly, there is relatively less research on the specific roles and positions of foreign translator groups in certain historical periods after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), with

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little attention paid to the group of foreign translators who participate in the State Translation Program (STP) at the early 17 years of PRC.

STP, initially proposed by Chinese scholars in 2015, is an original theory in translation studies. As “autonomous translation practices spontaneously carried out by sovereign states in the name of the state in order to achieve self-interested strategic objectives” (Ren & Gao, 2015, p. 96), STP is “both a comprehensive research object and a self-contained theoretical framework” (Ren, 2019, p. 68). PRC, since its founding in 1949, conducted STP activities that attracted and incorporated a large number of foreign translators, making positive contributions to China’s development and external communication. The early years following 1949 marked a vigorous period for the translation profession in the PRC, which continued until foreign policy was adjusted in 1966, when the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) began. As important participants in the STP during the early 17 years of PRC, foreign translators formed a distinct group in their translation activities. This article sets out from the definition of the “translator community” of STP to explore the foreign translators group which is a crucial component of the translators during the early 17 years after the founding of the PRC. It seeks to analyze the reasons for the generation of the foreign translators group, with the goal of further dissecting the translation activities and behaviors of foreign translators. Additionally, it aims to provide insights and references for the study of translator groups on both the Chinese and global stages.

2 Foreign Translators Group in “Translator Community” of STP

The translator, as the subject of translation, undergoes a change in attributes throughout history, and the attributes as a pure individual continue to dissolve. This has led to the emergence of “translator community” of STP. Translator community contains several translators groups, and foreign translators groups familiar with the language and cultural context of the foreign language are incorporated into the translation team. Their role in STP is gradually being explored.

2.1 The Expansion of Attributes of “Translator”

Since the formal proposal of the disciplinary concept of “translation studies” by Holmes (1972), the activity of translation as a specific research subject has received increasing attention. The translators, as the operator of translation activities, has gradually entered the field of researchers’ vision. In fact, from the very beginning of the emergence of translation activities around the world, scholars have embarked on extensive discussions about the role of translators. For instance, the Spanish philosopher Gasset (2000) referred to a translator as a “traitor,” Goethe (2010, pp. 263–264) likened translators to “mediator” and “merchant”, and Nida (1964, p. 153) described the translator as “pioneer, midwife, or teammate.” The evolving understanding of the translator’s role reflects the diverse vitality of translator research in the field of translation studies.

The development of hermeneutics provides new perspectives for the study of translators. Modern philosophical hermeneutics emphasizes the historicity of understanding, asserting that historicity is a fundamental fact of human existence. Interpretation is always embedded in history; both the interpretive subject and the interpretive object are influenced by historical contexts, thereby exhibiting unavoidable historical characteristics and limitations. Gadamer et al. (2004, p. 386) point out that “every translation is at the same time an interpretation. We can even say that the translation is the culmination of the interpretation that the translator has made of the words given him.” This viewpoint underscores the close relationship between translation and Interpretation, indicating that translators are undoubtedly constrained by specific historical contexts during the translation process.

Steiner (1998, pp. 312–316) categorizes the translation process into four steps: trust, aggression, incorporation, and compensation. These steps show that translators must be fully involved in the translation process, including the selection of source texts, understanding of the translation text, transformation of content, and refinement of the translation results. Each step reflects the complex factors that translators engage in when

interpreting and recreating texts. As Lefevere (1992, p. 14) states, translation does not occur in a “vacuum.” Translators are inevitably constrained by various subjective or objective historical conditions, which leads to changes in their attributes as historical contexts continue to evolve. For example, in such a development trend, the emergence of machine translation expands the subjective attribute of translators from “human” to the domain of “machine.” Machines “select the sentence most similar to the target sentence from the existing source sentence library based on the analogy principle, then extract the corresponding target language sentence, and make appropriate modifications to generate the translation of the target sentence” (Hu & Li, 2016, p. 11). This translation logic actually operates on the translator’s basic translation process of “trust – aggressive – incorporation – compensation,” accomplishing the task of the translator in the translation work.

Similar to the further development of the attribute of “human” in machine translation, the translator’s production attribute of “individual” has also been expanded as history flows. Traditional translation studies often confine translators to “individuals” or multiple “individuals” who independently complete partial translations within a “small group.” They either focus on the translation activities of individuals who independently engage in the entire translation process or concentrate on collaboration among multiple individuals in translation. However, this understanding and focus on translators cannot fully explain many translation issues, especially the roles and functions of translators in translation activities led by the state, such as Buddhist scriptures translation during the Tang Dynasty in China and literary translation in the early 17 years of the PRC. Consequently, in order to more clearly explain translator behavior, researchers in the field of STP have proposed the concept of “translator community,” providing a new perspective for addressing the complex dynamics of translators in the translation process.

2.2 “Translator Community” of STP

STP focuses on the logic of the generation logic, operation mechanism, and evolutionary development of translation activities within the state system, providing a fresh perspective for translation under the state system as well as the study of translators. With regard to the translator in STP, Ren (2015, p. 26) suggests that there exists an expert system composed of the selector, translator community, and the reviewer within STP, forming a “translator community ecology,” which is shown in Figure 1.

In this “translator community ecology,” the selector and the reviewer are commonly indigenous people, organizations, or government. The selector is responsible for choosing texts for translation, while the reviewer assesses translation quality and finalizes translated texts. The operator engaged in actual translation tasks cannot simply be categorized as “individuals” or “small groups,” but rather have detailed role assignments, composing a “translator community.” The translator, as the identifier, transformer, and generator of language procedures, resembles precision instruments composed of many gears in STP. Their steady operation requires the participation of numerous individuals to ensure the smooth progress of translation activities. The existence of the “translator community” reflects the continuous subdivision of translation process, the increasing specialization of translator tasks, and the detailed delineation of translation procedures, leading to the institutionalization of translation as a whole. For example, during the Zhenguan era of the Tang Dynasty

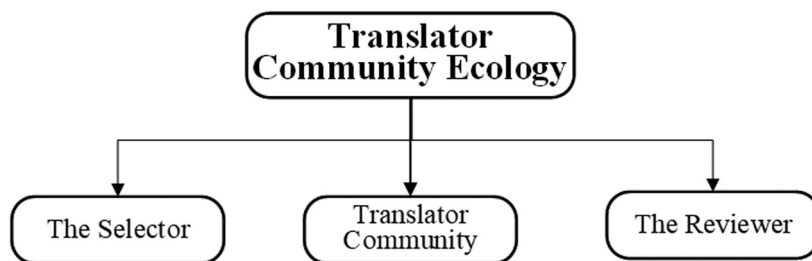


Figure 1: Composition of “Translator Community Ecology” in STP.

(627–649 AD), the translation of Buddhist scriptures was conducted through the translation field system established by the imperial court. The establishment of the Buddhist scripture translation field institution delineated different procedures involved in translation production and was executed by designated personnel. A “translator community” (Figure 2) was formed during the Zhenguan era of the Tang Dynasty.

In the translation field, the roles of translators are divided among 9–12 positions. Among them, Yizhu and Zhengfanben are responsible for macroscopic control and original–textual analysis, while Yiyu and Bishou achieve textual transformation. Canyi, Zhuiwen, Zhengyi, Jiaokan, Runwen, Fanbai, and Zixue are involved in refining and finalizing the translated text. In Ren and Wang’s research on STP in the Zhenguan era of the Tang dynasty, the specific division of labor for each position is illustrated as follows:

- (1) Yizhu (譯主), the translation field host, was proficient in Sanskrit and well-versed in the Dharma. While translating, Yizhu was orally proclaiming and explaining the original Buddhist scriptures, and was able to judge and resolve any problems;
- (2) Zhengfanben (證梵本), also known as Zhengwen (證文), promptly pointed out the errors in time while listening to Yizhu recite the original Buddhist scriptures;
- (3) Yiyu, also known as Duyu (度語), interpreting the original scriptures into Chinese to make other monks understand the meaning of the scriptures;
- (4) Bishou (筆受), proficient in both Sanskrit and Chinese, and having high attainments in Buddhism, translated the recorded Sanskrit sounds into Chinese according to the syntax of the original scriptures after Yizhu finished his reading;
- (5) Canyi (參譯) was to check the original and translated scriptures, and verify the translation with the original texts for any ambiguities;
- (6) Zhuiwen was responsible for organizing the records of Bishou and smoothing them out to make them conform to the Chinese syntax;
- (7) Zhengyi, Yizhu’s assistant, examined the meaning of the translated and original scriptures while Yizhu was explaining the original scriptures, and discussed with Yizhu if there was any discrepancy;
- (8) Jiaokan (校勘) led to reduce the redundancies of the translated scripture chapters and check sentence meaning;
- (9) Runwen (潤文) was in charge of embellishing the translated scriptures, usually served by court officials with high literacy skills;

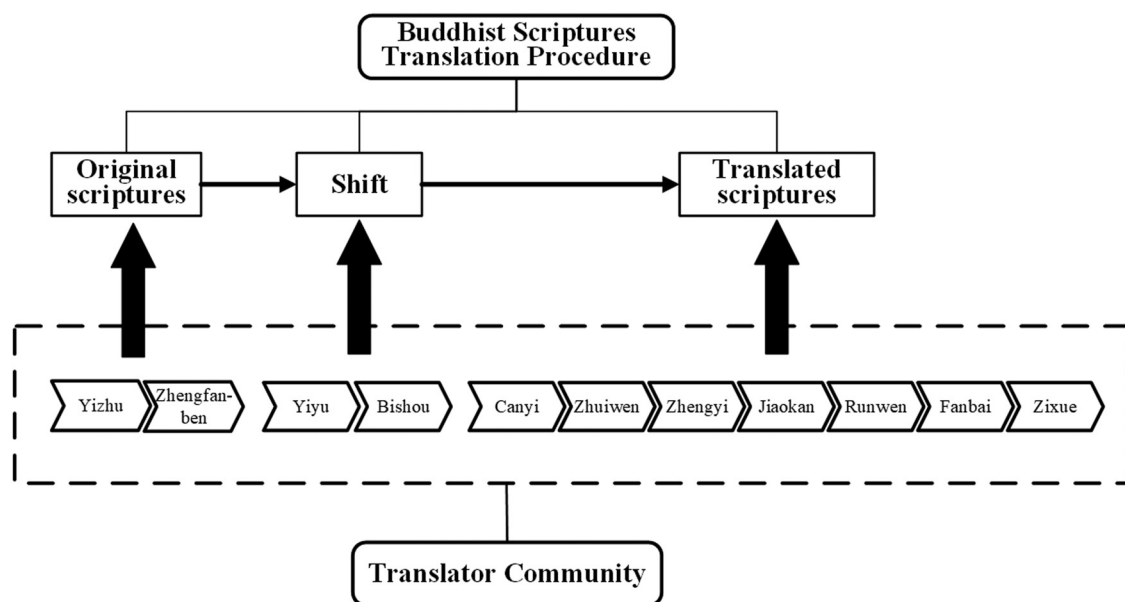


Figure 2: “Translator Community” in Xuanzang’s Buddhist scriptures translation field.

- (10) Fanbai (梵唄) recited the translated scriptures repeatedly in Sanskrit rhyme and rhythm to make them catchy;
- (11) Zixue (字學), a non-permanent post responsible for the discrimination of rare and unusual Chinese characters in the translated scriptures;
- (12) Guardian Ambassador (監護大使) was an imperial envoy appointed by the emperor to supervise the interpretation and translation of scriptures on behalf of the court.

(Ren & Wang, 2024, pp. 6–7)

Personnel in the translation field are assigned specific tasks at each stage and collaborate precisely, under the control of superiors, to complete the entire translation process of “source text - shift - target text.” In the translation field, each part of the translation procedure is handled by dedicated personnel, who collectively constitute the “translator community” for the translation of Buddhist scriptures. These specialized personnel within the system collectively assume the role of the translator to better accomplish the translation procedures of Buddhist scriptures.

In Chinese history, the “translator community” of STP has been widely present and constitutes a rigorously complex structure, often involving both source language and target language users, commonly composed of both foreign and domestic translators. For example, the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Tang Dynasty involved foreign translators in addition to domestic translators. He (2024, p. 40) found that the number of translators in the Tang Dynasty was dominated by foreign translators, and the total number of foreign translators was three times that of domestic translators. Foreign translators were widely involved in the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Tang Dynasty. In the organization of sutra translation during the Tang Dynasty, Yizhu were often from Indian or the Western Regions, and they did not use Chinese as their mother tongue. There were those who were fluent in both languages, as well as those who did not know Chinese. The positions involving the conversion of source languages, such as Bishou and Duyu, also involved foreign translators.

On the whole, the “translator community” of STP represents a further expansion and reanalysis of the abstract concept of “translator,” involving the hierarchical distribution of power from high to low levels among participants in translation activities and the assignment of roles from the initial to the final stages in the translation procedures. Through detailed decomposition of the translation process, translators, originally seen as “individuals” or “small groups,” are broken down into several small units, each engaging in corresponding translation tasks, while collectively fulfilling the functions of “translator,” generating the “translator community.”

2.3 Foreign Translators Group

Foreign translators in STP are typically concentrated in China in a specific period of time and maintain a fixed position within the structure of the translator community during that particular period, resulting in a “foreign translators group”. In STP, foreign translators often serve as “experts” within the “translator community,” specializing in specific translation tasks, supplementing the source language or target language skills lacking in domestic translators, and completing translation procedures that domestic translators are unable to undertake. For instance, in the translation of Buddhist scriptures during the Zhenguan era of the Tang Dynasty as mentioned in Section 2.2, foreign translators primarily assumed responsibility for conducting textual analysis of the source text.

In STP, foreign translators can be classified into different types. According to Ren (2016, p. 2), there are three main categories of foreign translators in China. The first category is “[foreign translators] who come to China autonomously or are invited by the supreme ruler or the state. They have purely foreign identities, aiming to translate classical texts they bring with them.” These foreign translators are commonly found in ancient China’s translation activities of classical texts, such as the state-led translation of Buddhist scriptures

during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. The second category comprises “[foreign translators] who are invited to China and hold cultural identities of the target language country and serve as language experts to provide translation services for specific procedures, without assuming the identity of translation subject.” The third category includes “[foreign translators] who come to China autonomously but are naturalized in the host country and have an independent translator identity.” Since the founding of the PRC, foreign translators mainly refer to the latter two categories. The different types of foreign translators also determine their respective roles within the “translator community,” leading to variations in their group characteristics across different periods and translation activities.

In fact, the history of China’s STP cannot be separated from the presence of foreign translators, who have played a vital part in driving forward China’s translation profession. The unique role of foreign translators in translation activities has led them to develop group characteristics distinct from those of domestic translators. Studying the role and status of foreign translators in Chinese translation history, and exploring their unique characteristics within the “translator community” of STP, holds significant research value.

3 Foreign Translators Group From 1949 to 1966 in the PRC

Between 1949 and 1966, China employed a large number of “foreign experts,” who were widely present in Chinese translation institutions. According to a summary of expert work by the Chinese Foreign Languages Press (the main foreign publishing organization of the Chinese government) in 1956, there had already been a total of 24 foreign experts from 12 different nationalities working in the Foreign Languages Press by the end of 1956 (Dai & Chen, 1999, p. 62). The planning document *On the Hiring of Foreign Experts during the Two Five-Year Plans* submitted by the Chinese Foreign Languages Press to Expert Studio of the Ministry of Culture of the RPC also outlined a plan to hire 42 foreign experts from 1956 to 1967 (Dai & Chen, 1999, p. 62), reflecting the active involvement of foreign translators in STP during the early 17 years after the founding of the PRC.

During the years from 1949 to 1966, foreign translators made significant contributions to the dissemination efforts of the PRC. As an important component of the “translator community” in STP, foreign translators during the period form a unique translator group. In terms of translator positioning, foreign translators from 1949 to 1966 are considered state translators, primarily responsible for translating state texts which are expected to promote Chinese culture and political thoughts of the CPC. In the field of translator identity, they are often non-professional translators and tend to be overlooked in translation history. Regarding translator image, their ability to independently carry out translation work is often limited, and they often serve as “gears” in the translation process and “repairmen” of translated texts.

3.1 Translator Positioning: State Translator

Under the influence of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, China at the beginning of its founding faced the hostility, isolation, and blockade of Western countries represented by the United States. During the early 17 years of the PRC, China faced a complex international situation and an urgent need to open channels for international communication, as well as to disseminate political and cultural ideas abroad. To achieve this, a large number of state texts were selected, translated, and disseminated through state institutions. State texts refer to “various texts formed in the process of state governance, expressing national discourse, interests, and positions through textual means” (Ren, 2022, p. 58). The translation of state texts is a national profession. In the early 17 years of the PRC, foreign translators participated in the translation of state texts within the state system, acting as “state civil servants” (Ren & Gao, 2019, p. 144). They were important components of the “translator community” for the translation of state texts and were positioned as state translators. Their mission is to disseminate Chinese culture and promote the political ideals of the CPC, which gives them dual identities as state servants and political propagandists. Based on known and available literature, reports, memoirs, and other written accounts, the accessible foreign translators and their translated works during the period from 1949 to 1966 involved in translation activities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Translated works of foreign translators and their state text types (1949–1966)

Foreign translators	Translated works	State text types
Pavel Fyodorovich Yudin (USSR); Nikolay Trofimovich Fedorenko (USSR); etc.	<i>On Practice</i> (1950)	Political text
Elizaveta Pavlovna Kishkina (PRC/USSR); Pavel Fyodorovich Yudin (USSR); Nikolay Trofimovich Fedorenko (USSR); etc.	Russian version of <i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Volumes I–IV)</i> (1961), Russian version of <i>Selected Works of Zhou Enlai</i> (unknown publication time)	Political text
Frank Coe (USA); Many Reiss (USA); Sidney Rittenberg (USA); Israel Epstein (PRC/POL); Solomon Adler (USA); etc.	English version of <i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Volumes I–V)</i> (1961–1965)	Political text
Denise Ly-Lebreton (FRA)	French version of <i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung</i> (1961–1962), French version of <i>Selected Works of Zhou Enlai</i> (unknown publication time)	Political text
Janaki Ballabh (IND)	Hindi version of <i>Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Volumes I–V)</i> (unknown publication time)	Political text
Rewi Alley (NZ)	<i>Peace Through the Ages</i> (1954), <i>he People Speak Out</i> (1954), <i>Poems of Revolt</i> (1962), <i>Tu Fu Selected Poems</i> (1962), <i>Not A Dog — An Ancient Tai Ballad</i> (1962), etc.	Literary text
Gladys Yang (UK)	<i>Li Sao</i> (1953), <i>Changes in Li Village</i> (1953), <i>Chu Yuan: A Play in Five Acts</i> (1953), <i>Selected Tang Dynasty Stories</i> (1954), <i>The Sun Shines Over the Sanggan River</i> (1954), <i>Wang Kun and Li Hsiang-hsiang</i> (1954), <i>The White-Haired Girl</i> (1954), <i>The Palace of Eternal Youth</i> (1955), <i>Selected Works of Lu Hsun (I)</i> (1956), <i>Selected Works of Lu Hsun (II)</i> (1957), <i>Sanliwan Village</i> (1957), <i>Ashma</i> (1957), <i>The Scholars</i> (1957), <i>Ancient Chinese Fables</i> (1957), <i>Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger</i> (1957), <i>Keep the Red Flag Flying</i> (1957), <i>Fifteen Strings of Cash</i> (1957), <i>The White Snake</i> (1957), <i>A Short History of Classical Chinese Literature</i> (1958), <i>Selected Plays of Guan Hanqing</i> (1958), <i>Selected Tales of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties Periods</i> (1958), <i>The Man Who Sold a Ghost: Chinese Tales of the 3rd–6th Centuries</i> (1958), <i>Big Lin and Little Lin</i> (1958), <i>Selected Works of Lu Hsun (III)</i> (1959), <i>A Brief History of Chinese Fiction</i> (1959), <i>The Magic Gourd</i> (1959), <i>The True Story of Ah Q</i> (1960), <i>Selected Works of Lu Hsun (IV)</i> (1961), <i>Old Tales Retold</i> (1961), <i>Third Sister Liu: An Opera In Eight Scenes</i> (1962), <i>The Red Cliff</i> (1966), etc.	Literary text
Sidney Shapiro (PRC/USA)	<i>Rhymes of Li Yu-Tsai and Other Stories</i> (1950), <i>It Happened at Willow Castle</i> (1951), <i>Daughters and Sons</i> (1952), <i>Between Husband and Wife</i> (1953), <i>Wall of Bronze</i> (1954), <i>Mistress Clever</i> (1954), <i>The Plains are Ablaze</i> (1955), <i>Living Hell</i> (1955), <i>Spring Silkworms and Other Stories</i> (1956), <i>Village Sketches</i> (1957), <i>The Family</i> (1958), <i>Defend Yenan!</i> (1958), <i>Annals of a Provincial Town</i> (1959), <i>Tracks in the Snowy Forest</i> (1962), <i>Soy Sauce and Prawns</i> (1963), <i>Builders of a New Life</i> (1964), etc.	Literary text
William Jenner (USA)	<i>From Emperor to Citizen</i> (1963–1965), <i>Journey to the West</i> (1965–1986), etc.	Literary text
Shirley Wood (PRC/USA)	<i>Bitter Herb</i> (1966)	Literary text
Archie Barnes (UK)	<i>The Goddesses</i> (1958), <i>Thunderstorm</i> (1958), <i>Sunrise</i> (1960), <i>Songs of the Red Flag</i> (1961), <i>Red Sun</i> (1961), <i>Taming the Dragon and the Tiger: A Play in Six Scenes</i> (1961), <i>Morning in Shanghai</i> (1962), <i>Schoolmaster Ni Huan-Chih</i> (1958), etc.	Literary text

The statistical data presented in Table 1 indicate that during the early 17 years of the PRC, the translated works by foreign translators primarily focused on political publicity texts and literary texts, which were considered as state texts. From 1949 to 1966, a plethora of important central documents were translated to disseminate the experience of the Chinese revolution and promote the theoretical innovations of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Numerous foreign translators were recruited and extensively engaged in translation activities for this purpose. Notably, the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* alone involved dozens of foreign translators such as Elizaveta Pavlovna Kishkina, Pavel Fyodorovich Yudin, and Frank Coe. Other political texts also witnessed the participation of foreign translators. According to the statistics by Zhou and Qi (1999, p. 63), from 1949 to 1965, over 3,000 Chinese books were translated into more than 20 different languages for dissemination abroad, among which 536 were works by Mao Zedong. The translation of these works mostly required proofreading and editing by foreign translators.

Simultaneously, the translation of state literary texts was also greatly undertaken by foreign translators. These translated texts predominantly focused on contemporary literature, with classical literature playing a secondary role. Many of these works depict contemporary Chinese stories or portray traditional Chinese culture to show the cultural connotations and geographical landscapes of China. Taking the example of Sidney Shapiro, during the period of 1949–1966, nearly all of the approximately 16 literary works he translated belonged to contemporary literature. Among his translations, works such as *The Plains are Blaze* and *Daughters and Sons* stand out for their prominent themes of China's Red Revolution, demonstrating distinct state characteristics. In comparison, the translated works of Gladys Yang, Archie Barnes, and others mainly focused on contemporary literature depicting the Chinese revolution and social landscape, with occasional portrayals of traditional Chinese culture in classical literature, also reflecting their positioning as state translators.

3.2 Translator Identity: “Invisible” Non-professional

Unlike domestic translators who were professionally engaged in China's translation work, the foreign translators during the early 17 years of the PRC were mostly part-time translators, except for some specialized translators recruited from abroad. For example, foreign translators involved in translating *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, such as Israel Epstein, Solomon Adler, and Elizaveta Pavlovna Kishkina, were not professional translators trained specifically in translation. Most of them originally hailed from other fields of expertise, such as economists, journalists, and teachers, or were relatives of such professionals. They were later invited by the CPC to participate in the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. However, due to the lack of professional training in translation skills, although foreign translators were very familiar with the target language, their understanding of Chinese was relatively limited. Furthermore, although foreign translators are respected by Chinese translation teams and receive higher remuneration than domestic translators, they have weaker discourse power in the translation process. They are often guided and directed by Chinese translators, unable to decide on modifications to the translation content or determine the final draft of the translation. Consequently, they usually only made modifications and adjustments to the fluency, grammatical correctness, and other aspects of the translations produced by domestic translators. Sidney Rittenberg, who was involved in the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, pointed out the tasks of foreign translators in translation. In his narration, domestic translators adopted a “literal translation” and “word for word” approach to Mao's series of works, which often resulted in the fact that “the style and diction of their translations were often inadequate, or “the English renderings of some of Mao's concepts were not accurate.” The job of these foreign translators was merely to “remedy those shortcomings” (Rittenberg & Bennett, 2001, p. 253). This illustrates the translation constraint under their “non-professional” identity of foreign translators.

As non-professional translators primarily engaged in tasks such as refining translated texts, foreign translators typically do not bear the responsibility of interpreting the original text or ensuring the fidelity of the translation to the original. In cases of disagreement between foreign translators and Chinese translators, decisions are often made by Chinese supervisors. Moreover, during the early 17 years of the PRC, the field of

translation “did not emphasize the attribution of authors and translators” (Huang, 2020), resulting in most foreign translators remaining “invisible” in the overall translation activities during the initial stages of the country’s establishment.

3.3 Translator Image: “Gears” and “Repairmen”

During the first 17 years of the PRC, literary translation and political text translation were two major parallel translation activities. The translation activities of foreign translators in China’s STP were carried out under institutionalized translation, with limited emphasis on their translating independence and autonomy. As institutionalized translators under this system, foreign translators were subject to strict management and control by state institutions. On the one hand, due to the presence of specialized selectors responsible for selecting translation texts, foreign translators in the “translator community” did not participate in the selection of translation texts. They often followed superiors’ arrangements to participate in the translation of designated texts, greatly weakening their subjective initiative and acting more as “gears” to facilitate the operation of the translation process. On the other hand, apart from a few literary translators, most foreign translators were not directly involved in the language conversion process. Instead, they engaged in the process of modifying translated texts after language conversion. This portrayal of foreign translators in STP during the early 17 years of the PRC in China reflects an image of being “repairmen.”

Overall, political text translation was primarily undertaken by the second category of foreign translators during the early 17 years after the founding of PRC. Due to the specialized nature of political texts, these translators often lacked the ability to independently carry out translation work. Instead, they were extensively involved in subsequent translation processes such as modifying and polishing the translated texts after the initial draft was completed. In political translation, for instance, for the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, apart from Chinese translators like Cheng Zhenqiu and Yang Chengfang, there were also foreign contributors such as Frank Coe and Manya Reiss who refined the translations of volumes I–III, and foreign translators like Solomon Adler, Israel Epstein, and Sidney Rittenberg who participated in the finalization of the English translation of the fourth volume (Cheng, 1993, pp. 2–3), showing their image of “repairmen” of translated texts. In contrast, foreign translators engaged in literary translation, such as Sidney Shapiro and Shirley Wood, mainly belonged to the third category. Given their extensive study of Chinese culture, understanding of the Chinese language, and high political awareness, they were able to participate in more procedures of translation work and appear to relatively independently carry out literary translation work after being selected by superior authorities to target works. Subsequently, their translations were reviewed by specialized personnel before being published and distributed by Chinese Foreign Languages Press. Additionally, there was another type of foreign translators who had not acquired Chinese nationality but possessed certain proficiency in the Chinese language and political awareness. Engaged in literary translation, they mostly collaborated with Chinese translators. However, their involvement in the translation process was relatively limited. For instance, Gladys Yang’s literary translations were often determined by superiors, initially translated from Chinese into English by her husband, Yang Xianyi, and then polished by Gladys Yang. After being reviewed by relevant departments, the translations were finally published. Although these Foreign literary translators were no longer only engaged in the modification work of translation, they still cannot fully undertake all the work from the translation material selection to the manuscript finalization and still act as the image of “gears” in the translation process.

Foreign translators in the translation of both text types reflected the procedural and institutionalized characteristics of translation. In the 17 years following the founding of the PRC, institutionalized translation became the predominant mode of translation. Translators engaged in integrated translation activities under a translation system, with a clear division of responsibilities. Throughout the translation process, multiple translators worked according to the system, discussing the final translation. Foreign translators primarily served as “gears” in the entire translation process, mostly responsible for ensuring the quality of the

translation. Only a small number were qualified to complete the conversion process from the original text to the translated text, but they were also strictly monitored by the state.

4 Reasons Behind the Generation of Foreign Translators Group

Under the state machinery, foreign translators are integrated into the state translation process as part of the collective intelligence, subject to the management and macro-level control of the state and the CPC. During the years between 1949 and 1966, the interests of the state and the CPC had a high degree of consistency, and the behavior of the state also reflected the will of the CPC. Within the “translator community” of STP, they often serve as translation validation programs, executing specific translation tasks. The multifaceted characteristics of foreign translators are largely influenced by the state and the CPC’s power of selection and control. The emergence of the foreign translators group in STP in the early 17 years of the PRC was the result of multiple factors, including the State-CPC’s strategic requirement for translation output, the state-CPC’s macro-regulation of allocation of translation talent resources, and the state-CPC’s manipulation of the translation process.

4.1 State-CPC’s Strategic Requirement for Translation Output

The founding of the PRC witnessed an increasingly complicated international situation, and China faced multiple restrictions in political, economic, military, and other domains in the 1950s–1960s. In this reality, political and cultural output and exchanges emerged as powerful means to break through these constraints. Translation, as a vital tool for disseminating Chinese political ideology and culture, received high attention from the state and the CPC. Unlike domestic translators, foreign translators possess a natural advantage in their native language and a comprehensive cultural background, which can effectively compensate for the shortcomings of domestic translators (Ren, 2016, p. 1). The cultural identity of foreign translators developed during their stay in China, combined with their identification with and sense of belonging to China, gradually formed a unique “dual cultural identity” (Gao & Ren, 2017, p. 97). This determines the unique perspective of foreign translators engaged in translation activities, enabling them to leverage cultural advantages that domestic translators do not possess. They can not only draw on their cultural identity from their home country but also ground themselves in the Chinese reality, meeting the cultural translation output needs of China. Therefore, a large number of foreign translators were incorporated into state institutions under the national demand and actively participated in China’s translation activities from 1949 to 1966, fulfilling the requirements for screening translations of state texts.

In addition, the state and the CPC’s output demand prioritized the inclusion of political texts and a portion of literary texts in the translation planning, leading to a significant concentration of translation materials for foreign translators on state political and literary texts. Foreign translators were directly positioned as state translators and subjected to the control of the state and the CPC. Following the founding of the PRC, the state issued explicit instructions requiring translated texts to align with the country’s external publicity needs. For example, the report submitted by the Culture Committee of the Government Administration Council on April 28, 1952, *On the Reorganization of the International Press Bureau into the Foreign Language Press*, stipulated specific limitations on the content of publications, mandating that translated works should “broadly and comprehensively introduce the achievements of New China’s construction, the policies of the CPC and the Central People’s Government, as well as the experiences of China’s revolution and construction” (Dai & Chen, 1999, p. 24). Furthermore, to meet the political and cultural output requirements, China established the International Press Bureau in 1949, tasked with external publicity. Since its inception, the bureau has had foreign advisors such as Betty Graham (USA) and Dave Springhall (UK), responsible for broadcasting and compiling government and party external publicity texts (Dai & Chen, 1999, p. 4). Subsequently, the International Press Bureau was reorganized into the Foreign Language Press in 1952, which served as the precursor to

the state translation agency, the China Foreign Language Publishing Administration. Following this, China successively established two major state translation agencies: Compilation and Translation Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in 1953 and China Ethnic Languages Translation Centre in 1955, both of which employed foreign translators. Additionally, to better promote *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, in May 1950, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee decided to establish the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's Compilation Committee for *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, responsible for the unified compilation, annotation, organization, and publication of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Members of this committee included Yudin, Fedorenko, and many other foreign translators. During this period, foreign translators were widely present in various state translation agencies or affiliated publishing institutions, engaging in translation activities as state translators within state institutions.

4.2 State-CPC's Macro-Regulation of Translation Talent Resources Allocation

During the early 17 years of the PRC, the planned economy system became the fundamental economic system, where “all work in the country has to be planned in advance by the state” (Teng, 2009, p. 84). This economic system inevitably led to the establishment of a “planned translation policy” (Teng, 2009, p. 84), whose formulation and implementation exemplified the state's exercise of macroeconomic control mechanisms. This policy aimed to concentrate translation resources, allocate existing talent, and better serve state interests. In STP during the early 17 years after the founding of the PRC, the state mobilized translation talent resources, with domestic translators responsible for the initial translation work of state texts. Meanwhile, foreign translators, as outsiders to Chinese culture, were tasked with transforming foreign language features into language characteristics understandable to their respective nations. The collaboration between these two groups of translators to a certain extent realized the effective and accurate output of cultural ideas while ensuring the acceptance and dissemination of translations. Wang (2010), the Secretary-General of the Translators Association of China, highly praised this translation model under state control, which integrated both foreign and Chinese translators. He stated, “the best translation in China is the four volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Why? It's because the state provides funding, combines the best Chinese translators with foreign experts, and has them work together in China for several years, staying at the Friendship Hotel, focusing on translating *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* word by word. So it's a fine product, all because of the support of the state” (quoted in Teng & Wu, 2015, p. 113). Here, “the support of the state” also refers to the role played by state macro-control of funding and translation talents. In the “translation community” during the first 17 years of the PRC, “foreign translators paid more attention to the acceptance of target language readers, while domestic translators focused more on the output of local culture” (Gao, 2016, p. 129). Under state resource allocation, foreign and domestic translators were closely integrated, jointly carrying out translation work. This effective allocation of state translation talent resources enhanced both the quality and speed of translation, demonstrating the advantages of the state-controlled translation profession.

However, as the state demand for translation continues to grow and related business expands, despite being subject to state allocation, there is a relative shortage of foreign translators with target language and cultural backgrounds. In 1962, according to data compiled by the Foreign Languages Press in the *March Overview of Foreign Languages Press and Various Editorial Departments*, there were a total of 211 translation personnel in Chinese Foreign Languages Press, among whom 29 were foreign translators (Dai & Chen, 1999, pp. 141–142), accounting for only 13.7% of the translation team. As a scarce state resource, it becomes crucial to continuously attract and convert foreign translators. To address this challenge, the state and the CPC continue to play a role in talent management, transferring experts from other industries to engage in translation work and offering high salaries to foreign nationals with language proficiency and cultural background from other fields. They are transformed from foreign nationals into non-professional translators to meet the personnel needs of translation and serve the country. The cultivation and absorption of foreign translators are also part of the state-CPC's efforts in resource allocation and macro-control to better achieve state objectives. It was precise because the state translation team extensively absorbed foreign talents from various industries and

converted them into foreign translators that characterized foreign translators group during this period as having cross-field and multi-occupation non-professional cluster features.

4.3 State-CPC's Manipulation of Translation Process

The translation model in the PRC underwent a fundamental shift in its early years, transitioning from a mode dominated by individual translation in the late modern and early contemporary periods to one led by state institutions after the founding of the PRC (Xia, 2021, p. 73). As institutionalized translators within state agencies, foreign translators inevitably underwent ideological scrutiny and manipulation during the translation process, while also needing to adhere to the translation standards set by the state and the CPC.

On the one hand, foreign translators seeking accreditation for translation work had to undergo ideological scrutiny and met specific criteria. During the early 17 years of the PRC, some foreign translators were international communists, while others were professionals who had worked in China for an extended period. They had witnessed or participated in China's democratic revolution, liberation movement, and the founding of the PRC, giving them a deep understanding of China's revolutionary ideology and social reality. They were able to accept and endorse the mainstream ideology of China and adjust their translation accordingly under ideological influence. Additionally, the institutionalized translation model in which foreign translators operated inherently involved multiple levels of monitoring and manipulation by the mainstream ideology throughout the translation process.

On the other hand, in STP, there were political red lines that foreign translators had to adhere to in their translation activities. During the first 17 years of the PRC, political standards became an essential dimension for foreign translators engaged in institutionalized translation, and they were strictly monitored throughout the translation process. Russian translator He (1950, p. 19) once pointed out that "translation work cannot be separated from politics" and believed that if translation were viewed purely as a technical task divorced from political positions, it would be considered "ignorant." In 1954, in a keynote address at the First National Conference on Literary Translation Work, Mao Dun also emphasized that foreign and domestic translators' "literary translation must be carried out under the leadership of the Party and the government, with plans formulated, organizational efforts made, and methods implemented in a unified manner by the competent authorities and relevant parties" (Mao, 1984, p. 508), stressing that translation must be conducted under the supervision and manipulation of the party and government institutions. The translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* exemplified the integration of "politics - faithfulness" translation standards. *The Working Regulations of the English Translation of Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Draft)* in March 1962 explicitly stipulated standards for all translators, including foreign translators, requiring that "the political standard of translation comes first, faithfulness comes first, the text serves the ideas, and the form serves the content" (Pan & Dong, 2015, p. 64). Under such ideological manipulation and political standardization, although foreign translators were an integral part of STP during the early 17 years of the PRC and were indispensable "gears" in the translation process, they failed to enter the core of the state translation industry, portraying a collective image of being mere "repairmen" of the translated texts.

5 Conclusion

During the period from 1949 to 1966, foreign translators played a significant role in China's translation industry. They often held positions as target language experts in STP, actively engaging in tasks such as refining and revising translated texts. Overall, foreign translators during this period were characterized by their positioning as state translators, their identity as "invisible" non-professional translators, and their image as "gears" and "repairmen" in the translation process. The emergence of these characteristics was influenced by various factors, including the state-CPC's strategic demand for translation output, the macro-control of

translation talent resources by the state and the CPC, and the state-CPC's manipulation of the translation process. Against the backdrop of China's contemporary cultural and theoretical dissemination on the global stage, the successful experience of translation in the early years of the PRC is worthy of reference and reflection. Moreover, the roles and functions of foreign translators in translation activities in various countries also merit reevaluation and further research.

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