

Study on Medical Translation of Modern Chinese Female Translators

Teng Tian, Linlin Tang, Jiarui Li and Meng Sun

School of Foreign Studies, Minzu University of China, Beijing, 100081, China.

Abstract

Due to the turbulent and changing social situation in China in the first half of the last century, the group of modern female translators differs greatly in terms of their family backgrounds, their educational experiences in studying abroad, and the professions and translation fields and directions. The paper compiles eight domestic and foreign female translators in medical translation. Based on their educational backgrounds, work experiences and translation achievements, the author analyzes and summarizes their group characteristics and their relationship with the social history of their time, hoping to provide a reference for a comprehensive and objective study and evaluation of the achievements of this group.

Keywords

Female translators, Medical translation, Modern and Contemporary China.

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, translation studies have been deepening in the direction of descriptive and cultural research, and translators as the main subject of translation studies have been discovered and become a new topic (Mu Lei & Shi Yi, 2003). The focus of translation research in China began to shift to the socio-historical investigation of translators and their translation activities. In addition, after the 1980s, as Western feminist literary criticism and gender theory knocked at the door of translation studies (Junping Liu, 2004), the subjectivity of female translators gradually became a hot topic of research in the translation field in China. However, most of the studies on modern Chinese female translators have focused on the literary translation, and there are almost no studies on female translators in the medical translation. Pym (2007: 5) argues that the study of translation history can be subdivided into at least three fields according to the traditional method, namely, archaeology, criticism and interpretation of translation. According to him, the archaeology of translation is a set of discourses concerned with answering all or a part of the complex question "who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect?" Therefore, the translation archaeology of female translators in the field of modern medicine is also an integral part of the study of modern Chinese translation history.

2. Native Female Medical Translators

According to the author's current collection of female translators in the field of medicine and related historical materials, there are five native modern Chinese female medical translators. Their personal profiles, educational backgrounds, work experiences and major translations are provided as follows.

2.1. Caifan Yu

Caiyan Yu (1911-2007), was born in Shanghai. She entered Peking Union Medical College in 1931 and graduated with an M.D. degree in 1936. She returned to Shanghai in 1942 to practice

after the occupation of Peking Union Medical College by the Japanese invasion of China, and then went to the United States in 1947. Since then, she has been engaged in long-term gout research, starting at Columbia University, then the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York in 1957. She became the first female full professor there in 1973, retiring in 1992. Her major translations include *Advances in Internal Medicine*, vol. 2 by George Baehr & I. E. Gerber published by the Chinese Medical Association, Shanghai in 1948, and *The Current Status of Penicillin Therapy* by M. J. Romansky published by the Shanghai Chinese Medical Association in 1949.

2.2. Hongwen Wang

Hongwen Wang was born in Changshu, Jiangsu Province. In 1932, she graduated from the College of Science and Medicine of Suzhou Dongwu University and then studied medicine at Peking Union Medical College, graduating in 1936 with a doctorate in medicine. In 1941, she studied at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health in the United States and received a master's degree in public health. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, she returned to China and became the head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Chongqing Central Hospital. After the victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, she served as a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the National Shanghai Medical College, and as the chief physician of obstetrics and gynecology at Zhongshan Hospital and China Red Cross Hospital (now Huashan Hospital). After the founding of the People's Republic of China, she was appointed as head physician of obstetrics and gynecology at the International Peace Maternity and Child Health Hospital of the China Welfare Association, founded by Song Qingling in 1952. Her major translations include *The National Government and Public Health* by J. A. Tobey (U.S.), published by the Hankow City Government Secretariat in 1930.

2.3. Guanfang Li

Guanfang Li, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was born in Sichuan. She attended Nanjing Huewen Middle School and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Nanjing Huewen Women's University Hall in 1925. She received her M.A. from Boston University in 1926 and her M.Ed. in Religious Studies in 1927. She worked in China as the editor of the *Women's Doxology Monthly* and as a teacher in schools such as the Chinese and Western Girls' School. Her major translations include *Little Mother's League* by S. J. Baker (U.S.), published by the Shanghai Guangxue Society in 1930.

2.4. Lanhua Liu

Lanhua Liu, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was born in Yuzi, Shanxi. She attended Belmont High School and Concordia University for Women. Then she received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin University and a Master of Education degree from Columbia University. She was the vice principal of Belu Girls' High School in Taigu, the director of the female department of Qilu University in Shandong, a member of the National Young Women's Christian Association, and also the president of the Jinan Young Women's Association. Her major translations include *Information Pertaining to Children from Birth to One Year* by A. C. Hausske (USA), published in 1938 by the Shanghai Broad Society.

2.5. Yunlan Chen

Yunlan Chen, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was born in Wujiang, Jiangsu Province. She graduated from the Physical Education Department of Nanjing Jinling University in 1930 and then served as a teacher in Suzhou Jinghai Girls' High School. Then, in 1931, she became the head of the Physical Education Department of Suzhou Women's Normal in Jiangsu Province. Her major translations include Jane Bellows's *Individual Exercise*, published in 1935 by the Shanghai Qinfen Publications. The cover of the book is a flagrant exercise movement for women. The book is accompanied by a brief biography of Ms. Chen, and the preface of the translator

introduces “in the midst of the wave of sports to save the country”, which was translated for the purpose of improving school sports, correcting posture, and promoting physical health. And she also pointed out the problems faced by athletic translators, “the translation from English to Chinese is often not easy to understand, especially for those specialized terms”. She also stated that “according to the title of the book, it should be translated as personal gymnastics. However, due to the content of the book are half medical and corrective exercises, so I used ‘practical women's medical exercises’ for its title. Not daring to be different but seeking its practicality”. The translation made reasonable adaptations within the framework of faithfulness to the original text, which shows that the translator is not bound to the original text and reflects the translator’s dynamism. The translator’s language is sincere and reveals the strong emotion of hope for the nation’s health and strength, In addition, the book is translated into vernacular, making it pleasant and fresh to read.

3. Foreign Female Medical Translators

Based on the author’s recent collection of female medical translators and relevant historical references, there are three foreign female medical translators in total. Their personal profiles, educational backgrounds, work experiences and major translations are provided in the following paragraphs.

3.1. Lichun Jie (D. C. Joynt)

D. C. Joynt, whose birth and death dates are unknown, was an Anglican priest. She has worked for the Shanghai Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese, translating literature for women and children and medical and health works. Her major translations include *Physiology and Hygiene* by John R. Ritchie (English), published in 1913 by the Shanghai Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese.

3.2. Zhenzhu Di (Madge Dickinson Mateer)

Madge Dickinson Mateer (1851-1939), educational background unknown, pastor of the North Presbyterian Church (USA). In 1890, she came to China, and in 1891, she married Robert McCheyen Mateer (1853-1921), an American minister. She was gifted, amiable, and proficient in the practice of medicine. Together with her husband, she founded Wenhua Middle School and Wenmei Female High School in Wei County, Shandong Province, all of which gained great success. After her husband’s death in 1921, she continued to stay in Wei County to preach, give medical advice and promote education. She retired around 1932 and moved to Qingdao, where she died in 1939 at the age of 88. Her major translations include *Short Talks with Young Mothers on the Management of Infants and Young Children* by C. G. Kerley, published by the Shanghai Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese in 1931, and *Obstetrics for Nurses* by Joseph B. de Lee (U.S.), published by the Shanghai Guangxie Book Company in 1948, year of first edition unknown, revised 4 editions in 1948.

3.3. Yizhen Gai (Nina Diadamia Gage)

Nina Diadamia Gage, whose birth dates are unknown and died in 1946, was an American Yale-China missionary nurse. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Willis Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science from New York University. She came to China in 1908 and was affiliated with the Chinese Nursing Association, serving as the first president. During the period of her stay in China, she founded several nursing schools and served as an instructor and principal. Her major translations include *Bacteriology in a Nutshell, a Primer for Nurses* by Mary E. Reid, published by the Chinese Nurses’ Association in Shanghai in 1917.

4. Specific analysis of the eight female translators

Similar to the female translators in other fields, the translations of these eight female medical translators are mostly from English to Chinese. All three foreign female medical translators came to China as ministers or missionaries from British and American countries. Among them, the educational backgrounds of D. C. Joynt and Madge Dickinson are not known while Nina Gage is not from the medical profession, but has a degree in literature and science. The Western medical translation by missionaries to China not only promoted the spread of modern scientific knowledge in China, but also transplanted the modern Western scientific knowledge system to China, which helped establish and develop the modern Chinese natural science system and laid the foundation for modern Chinese science education.

Meanwhile, the five native female medical translators also show some similar characteristics. First, most of them had education or work experiences in the United States. Yu Caifan conducted her research at Columbia University and worked at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Wang Hongwen studied at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Li Guanfang studied at Boston University and Liu Lanhua studied at Oberlin University and Columbia University. Second, most of them held master's or doctoral degrees. Both Yu Caifan and Wang Hongwen received doctoral degrees, while Wang Hongwen, Li Guanfang and Liu Lanhua received master's degree. Third, not all of them graduated from the medical school. Only Yu Caiyan and Wang Hongwen have medical PhDs. Of the other three, Li Guanfang majored in literature and religious education, Liu Lanhua majored in literature and education. Female translators emerged in the course of the promotion of female studies and the formation of new females to achieve the goal of a strong nation. They were not originally trained as translators, but the demand for foreign language skills and knowledge of Western studies in the policy of establishing female schools with equal emphasis on East and West objectively provided the conditions for the emergence of female translators. Thus, the first group of female translators in China was more of a conscious choice of feminist culture.

5. Conclusion

The study of female translators is an indispensable part of the process of composing the history of female translation in China. At present, the domestic scholars have accumulated some research on female translators in the field of literature, which has provided us with a good start, but the research on female translators in the field of medicine is almost a gap. Only by filling this gap can we find out the development line of female translation in modern times and promote the research on gender and translation in China.

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