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**Patronage and Translation:
A Case Study**

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Patronage and Translation: A Case Study

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Abstract

Patronage is an important social and literary phenomenon widely discussed in various fields of humanities and social sciences. This article mainly discusses the relationship between patronage and translation through a case study in twentieth-century China. The article reveals the prior function of a patron, i.e. to support instead of hindering the work of a translator, and demonstrates that a patron-translator relationship can be a harmonious collaboration, especially when the translator and his/her patron share some common principles and purposes. In the field of translation studies, patronage thus could be understood as the action of persons or organizations that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity.

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Introduction and literature review on patronage

There is no denying that patronage is a very important social and literary phenomenon widely discussed in various fields of humanities and social sciences. For instance, Lytle considers that ‘lay patronage was a permanent feature of English society’, and ‘new patronage’ was ‘a practical necessity for English religion’ (Lytle, 1981:111). Elizabeth I, for instance, inherited from her father and grandfather a tradition of literary patronage, within which, the Prince had the obligation to support writers, poets or scholars, and the latter were encouraged to espouse the policies of the country or engage in literary activities which could benefit the kingdom. For such service, they could get royal positions or other rewards. Thus, patronage was considered ‘an instrument for the formation and direction of public opinion’ (Rosenberg, 1955:1).

With a wide range of meanings throughout the Western history, the word ‘patronage’ may have manifold definitions depending on its application in different fields of study. For instance, in the medieval church, patronage refers to the person who had the right to nominate a parish clergyman. In political science, it refers to ‘the power and the acknowledged right of a political authority to appoint people to positions of responsibility following its own opinion, preference or interest’ (Bogdanor, 1991:423). At one footnote, when comparing patronage and preferment, Freedman points out that ‘patronage refers to appointments of government jobs as a reward for political support...’¹(Freedman, 1994:2)

In the field of literary and translation studies, it is Lefevere who consciously theorizes patronage in the literary system, but he is not the first scholar who embarks on this issue in the field of literature. In Rosenberg’s work *Leicester: Patron of Letters* (1955) the author studies the relationships between Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and his protégés—who were historians, or scholars, or translators, or Puritans—during the 16th century England. There is a whole chapter attributed to the discussion of the relationship between Leicester, the patron, and the translators like Arthur Golding, Sir Thomas North, James Sanforde, George Gascoigne, William Blandie, Robert Peterson, Timothe Kendall, etc. (Rosenberg, 1955:152-183) In Bennett’s *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557* (1952), *English Books and Readers 1558 to 1603* (1965), and *English Books and Readers 1603 to 1640* (1970), which are also a source of references of Lefevere’s discussions, there are independent chapters (‘Patronage’ and ‘Translations and translators’) dealing with the issues about patronage as well as the relationship between patrons and translations/translators (see Bennett, 1952:40-53, 152-177; 1965:30-55, 87-111; 23-39, 67-77).

Lefevere holds that there are two factors that may ensure ‘the literary system does not fall too far out of step with the other subsystems society

¹In *Brewer’s Politics: a Phrase and Fable Dictionary*, patronage is similarly defined as ‘the use of political power to allocate jobs to supporters and relatives, frequently in return for political loyalty of hard cash’ (Comfort, 1993:444).

consists of”: the first is represented by the professionals, such as teachers, critics, reviewers, and translators, who would repress certain works which are opposed to the dominant concepts about literature; and the second is called ‘patronage’, which Lefevere considers as ‘something like powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature’. (Lefevere, 1992a:14-15) Lefevere further clarifies three elements of patronage: namely the ideological constraint, economic provision and social status. If the three components are all dependent on one patron, this type is called undifferentiated patronage; otherwise it is a differentiated one. (*ibid.*:16-17) Both persons and institutions with power can act as patrons, who can either support or hinder a translation activity. The definition of patronage here, in effect, is not Lefevere’s earliest one. In his 1984 article entitled ‘The Structure in the Dialect of Men Interpreted’, he thus explicates patronage:

Some people who play a part both in the literary system and in its environment, the culture at large, act as patrons, and it should be stressed that the word has both positive and negative connotations. A ‘patron’ is any kind of force that can be influential in encouraging and propagating, but also in discouraging, censoring and destroying works of literature. Patrons can be individuals, and they come most readily to mind in this guise: we think of Maecenas, or Louis XIV, or the Chinese emperor, or the Sultan. But they can also be institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Communist Party, the BBC. (Lefevere, 1984:92)

This earlier explanation about patronage is similar to the later one and underlines the connotation of patronage, that is, it could be either positive or negative. It is worth noticing that, in Lefevere’s 1984 definition, he uses ‘force’ whereas ‘power’ in the 1992 interpretation. He points out that it is important to understand the term ‘power’ in ‘the Foucaultian sense’, ‘not just, or even primarily, as a repressive force’ (Lefevere, 1992a:15).

One of the significant features of Foucault’s idea on power is his emphasis on its productive nature. For him, power is productive, and this assertion marks a distinction to the negative conception of power manifested in radical and Marxist writing, ‘where power is seen as repressing, constraining, distorting, and so on’ (Philp, 1983:35). In Foucault’s works, we may find such vehement remarks on the negative interpretation of power, ‘We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “abstracts”, it “masks”, it “conceals”. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth’ (Foucault 1979:194). But in Lefevere’s work patronage is considered as a ‘control factor’ (1992a:15) and we may find such words as ‘hinder’, ‘discouraging’, ‘censoring’, and ‘destroying’ about patronage, which could obviously give the negative impression of a patron. In one of his early articles, he says all writing of literature is under “two constraints”, one of which is patronage (Lefevere, 1985:232); in the chapter entitled ‘The Power of

Patronage' in his book *Translation/History/Culture*, he began with this statement on the restrictions exerted by patrons upon translators: 'Translators tend to have relatively little freedom in their dealing with patrons, at least if they want to have their translations published' (Lefevere, 1992b:19).

Lefevere's seemingly ambivalent definition on patronage may give rise to the following questions: if a person/institution does not support, but only 'hinders', or 'discourages', or 'censors', or 'destroys' the translation/translating, can he/she/it be considered a patron of this translator? If a person/institution supports first, but later 'hinders' the translation, can he/she/it still be a patron? If so, why does a translator seek such a patron who 'hinders' his translation activity? What is the prior function of a patron? We could further ask: How close is the relationship between a patron and a translator? How is it different from an employer-employee relationship? What extent of independence or freedom does a translator have?

Let us consider the original meaning of the word 'patron' first. In fact, the English term 'patron' directly follows the Latin word *patronus* in the meaning 'protector' and 'defender'. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'patronage' has the meanings like 'the action of a patron in using money or influence to advance the interests of a person, cause, art, etc.', 'protection, defence', 'justification, support; advocacy' (Simpson *et al*, 2008). And the word 'patron' refers to 'a person standing in a role of oversight, protection, or sponsorship to another' (Simpson *et al*, 2008). In Gundersheimer's article 'Patronage in the Renaissance: An Exploratory Approach', he says, 'Patronage, broadly defined as "the action of a patron in supporting, encouraging, or countenancing a person, institution, work, art, etc." has been clearly established as one of the dominant social processes of pre-industrial Europe.' (Gundersheimer, 1981:3) Kent & Simons consider that 'all would agree with' this assertion (Kent & Simons 1987:1). The definition quoted is not made by Gundersheimer, but is from *The Oxford Universal Dictionary* (1955:1449). This definition has no much difference from that given in *Oxford English Dictionary* as mentioned above. All these definitions contain rather positive significance! The patron may have influence to hinder an activity or prevent someone from doing something, but according to the definition provided here, we may find that to hinder is not its original meaning.

In practice, we may find many cases that translators are generally strongly supported by their patrons either economically or spiritually or ideologically. In the following, we will analyze a translation activity in the twentieth-century China and explore the patron-translator relationship between Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 (1903-1987) and Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), two prominent literary figures in Chinese intellectual history, and hopefully it can shed some light on at least part, if not all, of the above questions.

A case study on the patron-translator relationship¹

Liang Shiqiu was an important writer, critic, lexicographer and translator in modern China. He is the first Chinese translator who finished the rendition of the complete works of Shakespeare. When talking about his translation of Shakespeare, another more important literary figure must be mentioned, that is, Hu Shi, without whose initiation and support Liang would not have started this gargantuan task. Besides his numerous articles and translations, Hu Shi was also a man with ‘power’ both inside and outside the academia at his time: he was one of the advocates and leaders of New Culture Movement and was remembered as one of the most prominent and influential intellectuals in modern China. He was a professor at Peking University, and also took the presidency of this renowned university (1946—1948); in addition he also took other positions like Ambassador to United States (1938—1942) and President of the Academia Sinica in Taipei (1958—1962).

An institution was also related to Liang’s translation of Shakespeare, namely, China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture 中華教育文化基金董事會 (hereafter ‘The China Foundation’). The China Foundation was established in 1924 with the purpose to distribute the proceeds of the Second Remission of the Boxer Indemnity to promote education and culture, and later in 1927 the Translation and Compilation Committee 編譯委員會 was founded. (Compiling Committee of Education Chronicle of the Ministry of Education, 1948:1568, 1573) In 1930, Hu took up the post of Chairman of the Committee, under which Liang started this Shakespeare project.

The China Foundation had ample fund. For example, in 1930, the year when Hu assumed the position of Chairman, the Foundation received an amount of 1,432,808 dollars of Boxer Indemnity and 486,913 dollars of other income. (Wang, 1974:326) It was only in 1942 during the Sino-Japanese War that a shortage of income brought the work in the Translation and Compilation Committee to an end. (Compiling Committee of Education Chronicle of the Ministry of Education, 1948:1573) The sufficient fund, at least in the 1930s, ensured that some translation projects including the translation of Shakespeare could be carried out.

Hu as the initiator of Liang’s translation of Shakespeare

It took more than thirty years (1931-1967) for Liang to finish the translation of Shakespeare. It can be said that there would not be Liang’s Shakespeare had it not been for Hu’s support and ‘enthusiastic initiation’ (Liang, 1970:98).

When Hu took up the post of Chairman of the Translation and Compilation Committee of the Board of Directors of the China Foundation, the translation of the complete works of Shakespeare was only one of his ambitious plans. Hu’s New Culture Movement had greatly shattered the status of the old literary forms; now it was time to construct a new paradigm of literature. It was greatly

¹ This part has referred to the Chinese article of Bai (2001).

important to imbibe nourishment and introduce new literary styles from the outside world; thus translation played an essential role during this period. For Hu, one of the most important things was to translate the first-class works from the West, among which Shakespeare was the nonpareil. A considerable number of translations, including Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*, René Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, a number of Greek tragedies, the works of Thomas Hardy, Conrad and Dumas fils, and many others like *Robinson Crusoe*, *the Travels of Marco Polo*, were arranged by this Committee and subsequently got published by the Commercial Press.

In the mail to Liang dated on December 23 1930, Hu informed him that he had officially taken the position at the Translation and Compilation Committee and would like to invite Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946), Chen Tongbo 陳通伯 (1896—1970), Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931), Ye Gongchao 葉公超 (1904—1981) and Liang, all of whom were important intellectuals in the twentieth-century China, to discuss the translation of the complete works of Shakespeare. Hu considered that the most important issue was to decide on the type of language to use in the translation, and suggested that they could do experiment first, that is, Wen and Xu try verse and Chen and Liang try prose. After the experiment, they would decide whether to use prose or both prose and verse. Payment was also mentioned in Hu's mail: Hu was optimistic about the sell of the translation and offered the translators the highest rate of payment. (Liang, 1970:94)

Two months later, Hu worked out a more detailed plan about the translation project, including translation procedures, allocations, payment, translation style, as well as translation strategies, which was explicated in Hu's next mail to Liang dated on February 25 1931. The plan was made carefully through discussions between Hu and Liang, Ye and Xu; a *Tentative Arrangement for the Translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, which was made by Liang with Hu's slight modification, was proposed; and a translation Committee for translating Shakespeare was formed by Wen, Liang, Chen, Ye and Xu with Wen as the Chairman. It was tentatively scheduled that the translation be finished within five years with each translator finishing one play in about half a year. Within the Committee, the translators would have close cooperation with each other. After each play was translated, it would be circulated among the other four members for proofreading, and annual meetings were also suggested to be held during the summer vacation to exchange views and discuss translation problems.

The translation style and strategies were also stipulated. It was recommended on the whole to use rhythmic prose to translate. To difficult passages, it was suggested to provide detailed footnotes. For the sake of uniformity, translators were required to submit a list of transliterations of proper names so that one of the members could standardize them. Translations done by those other than the Committee members could also be accepted on condition that they met the standards. The payment for the translation was also arranged in detail including payment for the translation, books and other miscellaneous expenses; and before translating, the translators could get a sum

of advanced payment. It was provisionally suggested that at first Xu translate *Romeo and Juliet*, *Ye Merchant of Venice*, *Chen As You Like It*, *Wen Hamlet*, and *Liang Macbeth*. (Liang, 1970:96-97)

From the above analysis, we may see that Hu as well as the Translation Committee of the Board of Directors of the China Foundation acted as the initiator and patron of this translation project. But unfortunately only Liang took this arduous task and the other four did not take part for various reasons. In the 1930s, Translation and Compilation Committee had sent seven plays translated by Liang to the Commercial Press for publication, namely, *Hamlet* (1936), *Macbeth* (1936), *King Lear* (1936), *Othello* (1936), *the Merchant of Venice* (1936), *As you like it* (1936), and *The Tempest* (1937); and Liang himself sent *The Twelfth Night* directly to Commercial Press and had it published in 1939. During the process of Liang's translation, he also received Hu's guidance. For example, in his mail to Liang dated on April 11 1936, Hu forwarded him the questions raised by one of the editors for his reference (see Liang, 1970:108).

When the Sino-Japanese War broke out, the work of the Translation Committee had to come to an end, but Liang still got Hu's encouragement and spiritual support. When they later met in Taiwan, Hu encouraged Liang to finish translating the complete works of Shakespeare, and said he would hold a grand banquet when Liang finished this project. (Liang, 1989a:20)

The consensus between Liang and Hu in terms of translation strategies

Liang's translation methods are concisely enumerated in the *Foreword* to his version of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Liang pointed out that his translation was mainly in *baihua* 白話 (vernacular Chinese) prose, but the rhymed parts and episodes were translated into rhymed language; as for the parts which were difficult to understand, he would make notes to elucidate when necessary; and he would also provide annotations when it was not possible to translate some puns and allusions. (Liang, 1979:1) Here we could find a consensus between Liang and Hu in terms of the means to translate.

While Hu's mail to Liang on December 23 1930 proposed to have experiments first before they decided whether to use prose throughout or both prose and verse, the *Tentative Arrangement for the Translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare* did not specify what kind of literary style they should follow, but suggested rhythmic prose. It can be said that Liang's use of prose to translate is the result of the experiment suggested by Hu.

As one of the leaders in New Culture Movement, Hu was the person who strongly advocated the use of *baihua*, instead of *wenyan*, in literary works. Since 1917, Hu published a series of articles—e.g. 'Wenxue gailiang chuyi' 文學改良芻議 [Tentative Suggestions for a Reform of Literature] in the journal *Xin Qingnian* 新青年 [New Youth] — to promote the use of *baihua* in literary works. In terms of using *baihua* or *wenyan*, Liang stood at Hu's side. For example, he said it was a pity that the *Critical Review* employed *wenyan* at the time when *baihua* was widely used as the use of *wenyan* could cause misunderstandings among readers thus hindering the dissemination of Babbitt's

thoughts in China. (Liang, 1977:2) Liang was more than a translator; he was also an independent professional; his preference to *baihua* was definitely not out of the pressure from Hu, but due to his own free will. It is not Hu who chose him, rather, they chose each other for there was a mutual understanding or rapport between them though certain difference inevitably existed.

The *Tentative Arrangement for the Translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare* stipulated that detailed footnotes should be added for difficult passages; and in Liang's *Foreword* we may see that he also emphasized this point. When Liang recalled the process of translating, he said that among the earlier translations, there were fewer footnotes, yet more and more in the later ones. It was because of Hu's suggestion and encouragement to add annotations that he also became more attentive to providing detailed footnotes in his translation. (Liang, 1970:110) There are both advantages and disadvantages of certain translation methods and a translator generally had only one choice, which could be made not solely by the translator, nor solely by the patron, but through negotiation between both parties— it may not necessarily be the Hobson's choice offered by the patron.

Liang was also one of the influential literati in the 20th century and did not rely on Hu solely either ideologically or economically. Both Liang and Hu were initiators of the literary monthly *Crescent Moon Monthly* 新月, of which Liang was one of the Chief-editors and Hu the *de facto* leader though his name did not appear in the editorial board, thus both of them were generally taken as chief members of the *Crescent Moon School* 新月派, a literary school in the 1920th and 1930th China. Both strongly criticized the Government at that time (e.g. they wrote many articles to denounce autocracy and advocate democracy in *Crescent Moon Monthly* and other publications), and both were animadverted by some common adversaries. In terms of economic factor, although Liang got translation fee from Hu's Translation and Compilation Committee, it was surely not his major source of income. Liang as a translator did retain considerable freedom and independence, which, he considered, was inherited from Hu – he once said that he appreciated a word Hu said very much, that is, 'The lions and tigers forever walk alone, whereas only foxes and dogs gather in a horde!' (Liang, 1989b: 105). Liang definitely was not a fox that needed the protection from a big tiger like Hu, but with the latter's initiation, support and encouragement, the Shakespeare translation project became possible and fruitful and such a Herculean task was eventually finished in 1967.

Conclusion: Patronage, a 'Productive Network'

It is no doubt that Hu acted as Liang's patron in this Shakespeare project, at least in the 1930s, although this is by no means a sort of undifferentiated patronage. This is also a case in which the patron at the same time was one of the most influential professionals during that period. Hu initiated, encouraged and strongly supported Liang's translation, and we cannot associate such terms

as ‘hinder’, or ‘discourage’, or ‘censor’, or ‘destroy’ with the patron-translator relationship between them.

A patron is a person or organization which may have some privilege, but it does not mean that such a person or organization is necessarily a patron. In the 1920s and 1930s, there were also some very prominent people, like Lu Xun, or Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899—1935), who were definitely not Liang’s patrons as there were sharp differences between them in terms of various issues concerning literature, translation, and politics. If a person ‘hinders’, or ‘discourages’, or ‘censors’, or ‘destroys’ a translator’s work, this person, more often than not, is not his/her patron; of course, this person can be a patron within another parallel patronage system, within which, he/she supports instead of hindering another translation activity. If the translator is unfortunately under an unfavorable patron, most probably, if circumstances permit, he/she will try to find another one who really encourages and supports his/her work. It is true that a person or institution can support a writer or translator; he/it also has the potential to suppress a writer or translator. But in the latter case, more often than not, he/it might not be considered as a patron any more.

Of course, there are cases that when a patron is unsatisfied with the translator, the former could hinder the latter’s translating. But under such circumstances, the translator could make some adjustments or amendments and thus could get the latter’s support again. Otherwise, there could be a deterioration of the relationship, which is doomed to be broken. Yet under such circumstances, the translator, more often than not, could have the right to find a new patron.

The existence of patronage is due to an inequality of resources between translators and their patrons. Patrons are generally in a position to have more material/spiritual resources, which translators generally do not have direct access to. Translators, on the other hand, provide their translations, or even bring reputation to their patrons and in this way patrons could acquire even more resources. There could be a win-win patron-translator relationship benefiting both parties.

From the case of Liang and Hu, we find a harmonious relationship, even like that between friends, though Hu enjoyed more fame and prestige. There were also cases when friendship could be involved in a translator-patron relationship in history; for instance, during the Renaissance, a friend could be a patron, and friendship was ‘both a fundamental value and an essential social relationship’ (Lytle, 1987:47). If the translator’s principles in life or translation *per se* are similar to those of the patron, and both parties can be on good terms with each other — this could be an ideal form of translator-patron relationship, a kind of collaboration to reach a common goal.

The study indicates that, at least under differentiated patronage, the translator-patron relationship is a loose one. It is not an employer-employee relationship and is established voluntarily and may also end in the same way, and a translator oftentimes could have the freedom to choose or not to choose a patron. Hu originally invited five translators to translate Shakespeare collectively, yet none but Liang accepted the invitation. Liang, like many

intellectuals in modern China, valued the independence of thinking and personal freedom very much, and his relationship with the patron was based on personal will and mutual understanding.

Patronage is a complicated issue in translation studies and it may have different variations under different situations, and it is hard to have a law which could explain every aspect of the patron-translator relationship. The case study demonstrated a positive and constructive side of patronage. Foucault, from whom Lefevere borrowed the meaning of ‘power’, says that power is ‘much more than a negative instance whose function is repression’, and to take power as ‘the force of a prohibition’ is ‘wholly negative, narrow, skeletal’ (Foucault, 1980:119). When studying patronage, we should also avoid only looking at patronage from such a perspective. From the case study on Liang, we find patronage—here I borrow Foucault’s words on this power—truly ‘traverses and produces things’, ‘induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse’, thus, ‘it needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression’ (*ibid.*:119). In the field of translation studies, patronage can thus be positively defined as the action of persons or organizations that offer financial support or use their influence to advance a translation activity; a patron is a sponsor or a supporter of a translation activity. A patron surely has certain restraint upon a translator, but it is important to bear in mind that this is not the prior function of patronage.

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