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Ideology, patronage, and manipulation of translation in *Zouxiang weilai congshu*: With special reference to the translation and introduction of Max Weber

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Cultural Studies helps us to see that translation is not merely a simple and isolated process but is intricately bound to ideology, patronage, and poetics. Through the study of translated texts, we can explore power relations, and this has the potential to reflect such power structures within a wider cultural context. This paper examines *走向未来丛书(Zouxiang weilai congshu)*, literally “Toward the Future Book Series,” and focuses on its selection and introduction of western texts and its interaction with Chinese ideological trends, to explore the relationship between translation and politics in the 1980s, focusing on discussing the translation and introduction of Max Weber. Current studies of Max Weber largely focus on Weber’s thought, while the few that touched upon translation in China were merely brief descriptions lacking deep analysis. Moreover, there have not been any papers which place Weber in historical and cultural context to explore the interaction between translation and politics. This paper employs a different approach where the focus is placed on the series’ translation of Weber and the social ideology behind the translation. Not only does it unearth the influence of publishers’ and patron’s identities on the act of translation, but it also reflects on the role of the editorial board’s unique mode of operation in the translation process. The case study of this paper not only focuses on diachronic translation activities, but is also concerned with the cultural space in which translation events occurs, translators’ cultural objectives of translating, as well as foreign authors who enter the cultural context where the target language is used. By placing translated literature against a specific cultural time and space, this paper explains the cultural objectives and forms of literary translation, as well as translations that were specially made to achieve certain cultural objectives and the cultural effect of such translations.

KEYWORDS

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1. Introduction

Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, China entered a nationwide period of cultural introspection. The authoritarian culture and politics in Mao's China (1949–1976) were characterized by closedness, ignorance, and cruelty (Zha, 2006, p. 273) and was unable to meet the needs of both intellectuals and ordinary citizens for ideological emancipation and new enlightenment post-Cultural Revolution. This caused a shift of authoritarian culture and politics to the periphery of the target language polysystem from the center.

As Itmar Even-Zohar puts it, translated literature plays a dominant role within the target language polysystem under the following three circumstances: first, when the polysystem has yet to be fully formed, as its home literatures are “young” and underdeveloped; second, when its literatures are “weak” or in the “periphery;” third, when its literatures are in a state of crisis, at a turning point, or are existing in a vacuum (Even-Zohar, 2000, p. 193–194). Not only is this argument applicable to the relationship between the translation of literature and the target language polysystem, but it may also be useful in studying the translation and introduction of foreign cultures during the Chinese Cultural Fever of the 1980s. At the height of the Cultural Fever in the 1980s, translation of non-literary texts played a significant role. Through selected case studies, we are able to deepen our understanding of the polysystem theory and apply the theoretical framework to the analysis of such non-literary texts.

In the 1980s, China's cultural system experienced a cultural vacuum at its center. The academics and people of China thus immediately directed their attention to Western societies, hoping for cultural and ideological reconstruction. The academics and publishers began massively translating foreign works across disciplines and the critique of subjects such as foreign philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, and ethics experienced exponential growth. As Wang Xiaoming put it, “[i]f one has a good knowledge of the translation activities of the 1980s, s/he will have grasped the key to understanding the ‘new period’ of cultural reform in China” (Wang, 2005, p. 172).

走向未来丛书(*Zouxiang weilai congshu*; hereafter *Congshu*) was published in November 1983. It positions itself as having a mission to “present the ever-changing face of contemporary natural sciences and social sciences; reflect on the torturous pursuit of truth; record a generation's reflections on its country's destiny and Man's future” “in yet another great rejuvenation of the nation” and “on the arduous yet lively road to revolution” [Editorial Board of 走向未来[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1]. The series was intricately connected to the political and cultural contexts of Chinese society. The authors and translators of *Congshu* were drawn from the Chinese intelligentsia of the 1980s and it published a total of 74 works between June 1984 to May 1988, most of which related to social and natural sciences and included 25 foreign works in translation. There

were as many as a million copies printed of the series and every article undergone reprinting. As “a series which popularizes new Western ideological trends, and the first to effect widespread changes in China,” it became “a major think-tank which started an array of ideological trends in the humanities in China,” (Su, 1992) as a result creating a significant impact on an entire generation of Chinese.

This paper focuses on examining *Congshu* and discussing its translation and introduction of Max Weber's 新教伦理与资本主义精神(*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; *Xinjiao* hereafter) [translated by Peng and Huang (1986)] and Frank Parkin's 马克思•韦伯(*Max Weber, Weibo* hereafter) [translated by Liu and Xie 1987]). As these two books were published in quantities of astounding numbers (38,000 and 96,000 copies, respectively), and were pertinent to the Weber Fever of contemporary China, they will be used to explore the interactions between translation and politics in the 1980s, by situating the translation of foreign literature within the history of social thought in China.

Current studies of Max Weber focus on Weber's thoughts, while the few that studied the translations of his works in China were merely brief descriptions. Moreover, there have not been any papers that contextualize Weber in historical and cultural contexts to explore the interaction between translation and politics. While there is a considerable amount of literature on the introduction and study of *Congshu*, introducing the people and events behind its publication in the form of memoirs or interviews, there are far fewer papers that place the series within the context of the Chinese literary history of the 1980s to observe its significance and influence. Yet, it must be noted that such literature carries significant historical value. Having said that, Wang Xiaoming's “Exploring Translation Activities in China of the '80s from a Unique Translation Organizational Structure’ is the only paper which makes its analyses from the perspective of translation studies. The paper analyses the editorial board's mode of operation and its influence on translation activities. However, the discussion of the paper lacks depth when exploring the three editorial issues of the 1980s simultaneously: the relationship between translations and publishers, the relationship between editorial boards and patronage, as well as the background and identities of patronage (Wang, 2005). In contrast to Wang, this paper employs a different approach where the focus is placed on the series' translation of Weber and the social ideology behind the translation. Not only does it unearth the influence of publishers' and patron's identities on the act of translation, but it also reflects on the role of the editorial board's unique mode of operation in the translation process. This present case study not only focuses on diachronic translation activities but is also concerned with the cultural space in which translation events occur, translators' cultural objectives, as well as foreign authors entering the cultural context of the target language. By setting translated literature against a specific cultural time and space,

this paper explains the cultural objectives and forms of literary translation, as well as translations that were specially made to achieve certain cultural objectives and the cultural effect of such translations.

2. The translation context of Max Weber in the 1950s–1970s: The absence of Weber’s works

When exploring the relationship between translation and politics in China and the constructive function of translation on the target language culture through studying the translation of Weber in *Congshu*, any analysis would be superficial if it were limited to the 1980s, as it would result in incomplete observations due to a lack of understanding. Since Weber’s prominence in the history of Western social thought is already clear, then why is it necessary to consider the 1980s, 30 years after the founding of the PRC, when discussing translations of Weber? As noted by Gentzler and Tymoczko, academics of translation studies “ought not only to analyze translated parts of source texts and source cultures but should also study those which have not been translated,” as studying relevant works that were neglected in the translation process brings about a recognition of “how dominant cultural forms and power result in the peripheralization of other forms and interpretations” (Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2007, p. xxxii–xxxiii).

Since the early 1950s, translation has under centralized mainstream ideology, become an essential component in the construction of national discourse. Translators and affiliated (i.e., the Chinese Writers Association) were brought to the Communist Party. As the ruling party, the Communist Party of China (CPC) established a Central Publicity Department and subordinate Bureau of Arts and Culture to implement top-down management of all central and local literary arts organizations. As such, an organizational relationship has arisen between the Party and various literary arts groups. Joining these organizations implies, to a certain extent, supporting and submitting to the CPC as well as the mainstream ideology that it advocates while displaying, in their works and translations, features oriented toward the mainstream ideology (Cui, 2019, p. 38). At the same time, a translation office has been officially established under the General Administration of Press and Publication. It plans and organizes translation activities and regulates the mode of operations in publishing agencies (Cui, 2019, p. 45–46). The centralization of ideology brings about the nationalization of publishers and disciplining translators into the system, resulting in the state’s role of patronage in the target language system, while suppressing literary concepts such as aesthetics and poetics. As professionals of the system, translators and critics are held responsible for building the patron’s ideology.

In a closed social system, conflicts are bound to arise between translations of Weber and the mainstream ideology of the target language context. The propagation of Weber in China cannot be separated from Karl Marx. The intense dispute that arose between western sociology and Marx’s ideas during the 19th and 20th centuries is perceived as one of the most important catalysts of modern sociology. Among multitudinous arguments, “Weber’s criticism is considered the most severe, the effects of which the most far-reaching” (Hong, 1998, p. 1–2). Ironically, due to the Sovietization and Sinicization of Marxism in the first half of the 20th century, Weber’s and Marx’s thoughts, which are more academic-oriented in Western societies, took on a far more overtly politicized status in China. During the Cold War period, the theories of Marx and Weber became political weapons or victims of the ideological conflict between socialism and capitalism.

It is worth noting that when Marxist theories and principles are integrated with Chinese revolutionary theories and practice, and when the theories are granted the position of mainstream ideology due to revolutionary fervor, political struggles, or the construction of the national discourse, they become politicized and ideologized. Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CPC formed an alliance with the Soviet Union out of national interest and established Marxism-Leninism as its dominant governing ideology and theoretical basis. The complete works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Joseph Stalin were translated and published by the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau as part of an ideological system essential for the construction of a new national discourse. In fact, upon entering China, Marxism had been perceived as a political doctrine for transforming China, averting its national crisis, and “fighting against imperialism and feudalism” (Zuo and Wang, 1991, p. 74). Therefore, when studying Marxism in the target language context, it is necessary to analyze Marxism and its place in the source language context, to explore the striking political significance of Marxism as it was propagated in China.

Due to the manipulation of Marxism by China’s the centralized political ideology between the 1950s to 1970s, an absence of Weber’s thought (including his debates and disagreements with Marxism, which are well-known elsewhere) from China then is reasonable. Even as early as 1921, Mao Zedong announced that “[t]he materialist conception of history is the philosophical basis of our party” (Mao, 1993, p. 4) when embracing Marxism as the national ideology. Despite numerous misappropriations by Mao and Chinese Communists, historical materialism, a core idea of Marxism, has invariably existed as a fundamental principle of Sinicized Marxism. However, Weber made a sharp criticism of historical materialism in 1922:

The so-called “materialistic conception” with the crude elements of genius of the early form which appeared, for instance, in the Communist Manifesto still prevails only in the minds of laymen and dilettantes [...] they content

themselves with the most threadbare hypotheses and the most general phrases since they have then satisfied their dogmatic need [...] The inevitable monistic tendency of every type of thought which is not self-critical naturally follows this path (Weber, 1922; Wu, 1993, p. 124–125).

Weber rejects the idea of dividing history into multiple stages and objects to Marx's use of historical materialism in its interpretation of historical change. Their debates were not limited to sociology, but also extends to philosophy, history, social science methodology, capitalism, and democratic politics (Hong, 1998, p. 2). Yet, it is not imperative that we inspect the substantive content of their debate. Instead, by situating this debate with the above analysis, it is apparent that since the lack of translation of Weber was an outcome of manipulation by the target language's political and cultural contexts, which deliberately ignored the introduction of Weber, leaving Marxist thoughts with no ideological opponents. Conflicts among academics in Western academia had evolved into ideological struggles under the Cold War. While Weber's criticisms against Marxism had advanced from the level of personal discourse to that of collective discourse and institutionalization, his advocacy of value pluralism, rejection of holism, and support for individualism are of no benefit to the CPC's disciplining of people from all classes with a centralized ideology and construction of a collectivist national discourse. For want of under ideological manipulation, Sociology as a discipline was abolished during an overhaul of Chinese higher education institutions in 1952, and these institutions were isolated from international academia for a considerably prolonged period. While Weber's reputation in international academia rose in the 1950s, his works and ideas hardly ever appeared in Chinese academia.

Interestingly, Weber's *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* was translated into Chinese by Zheng Taipu in 1936. Yet, the influence Zheng Taipu had on translation in China is still questionable, as there is no consensus on the degree of socio-economic impact stemming from the translation of *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* in China. On the one hand, Guo Luo found that Zheng Taipu's work had pioneering and ground-breaking contributions to the development of science in China, with his translations becoming important references for Mathematics and Physics in universities (Guo, 1987, p. 571). On the other hand, the literary magazine *读书(Reading)* held a seminar, "Max Weber: Portrait of a Thinker" in 1985 and only mentioned the translation in passing:

Due to the conservatism and the disregard for science in the academy, Chinese intellectuals was little known about Weber in the 1950s. There was only one translated book published in China. The research paper was almost nothing (Wang, 1985, p. 35).

In the summer of the same year, there was an international conference on history in Stuttgart. The historians spent 3 days on the discussion of Weberian theory (Fan, 2007, p. 139). However, due to the influence of the mainstream ideology during the 1960s to 1980s, there was no research on Weber in Chinese academia and Zheng Taipu's translations made no significant impact on society. After the 1980s, there has seen growing importance placed on Weber's research on the rise of Capitalism in the context of China, also known as Weber Fever.

3. The context of translating Max Weber's book in the 1980s

The late 1970s was another critical period in Chinese history, especially after the catastrophe of the Chinese Revolution. The Ideological Emancipation Movement led by the CPC began to unfold, accompanied by slogans such as "emancipate our minds, use our heads, seek truth from facts and unite as one in looking to the future—the primary task is to emancipate our minds" (Deng, 1994a, p. 141). Ideologies from Western capitalist nations was introduced to the country, impacting young intellectuals heavily. As Gan Yang, who led the introduction of western studies into China in the 1980s, recalled, "[t]he entire nation was filled with an atmosphere of the humanities, and an atmosphere of the humanities is an atmosphere with western texts as its basis" (Zha, 2006, p. 196).

The Chinese literary scene began reflecting upon the longstanding direction of using class conflicts as a key principle' in literary works. In October 1979, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that literary artists should abide by the characteristics and laws of literary arts, while leaders were responsible for "ensuring, through various areas including material needs, that literary artists fully utilize their intelligence and talent," "according to the characteristics and laws of the literary arts" (Deng, 1994b, p. 213), attempting to break through the overly politicized literary arts, and striving for independence. Such a declaration from national leaders invigorated the literary community's pursuit of ideological emancipation and provoked further reflection on the relationship between politics and the literary arts.

The Cultural Fever of the 1980s catalyzed the translation of Weber's book. The seminar "Max Weber: Portrait of a Thinker" in 1985. As noted by Xiao:

Weber's theory caters to the participants' desired sense of liberation, as historical development is no longer restrained by productivity like that of a high-pressure steam engine, while the active human brain is equally capable of leading global movements (Xiao, 2010, p. C08).

With *Congshu* upholding its historical mission of "recognizing world developmental trends scientifically"

and “paying special attention to the ideological development of science and the introduction and application of other peripheral disciplines” [Editorial Board of *走向未来*[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 2], the translation of Weber’s book became incredibly significant.

Paradoxically, it is worth nothing that while ideological emancipation became a new theme of the era, the pursuit of Marxism continued to in mainstream ideology. On the one hand, the Editors’ Note in *Congshu* emphasized the importance of Marxism in understanding the value of science. “On the torturous yet vital route to reform, I stood strong in the Marxist religion, understood the value of science, and gained progressively deeper insight into our era and nation;” “Today, the great ideology which shines upon our nation is none other than Marxism, the scientific spirit, our nation’s exceptional tradition, and innovation, which begins from this!” [Editorial Board of *走向未来*[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1–2]. This implies that Marxism continued to be a guiding principle of its editorial direction. On the other hand, the series published translated works of *Xinjiao* and *Weibo* in 1985 and 1986, respectively. As aforementioned, the sinicization of Marxism is precisely the reason for the absence of translations of Weber’s book in China from the 1950s to 1970s.

How should this paradoxical phenomenon be interpreted?

3.1. Impact of political ideology and publishers as patrons on translation activities

This section begins by examining the Sichuan People’s Publishing House, the publisher of this book series. The publisher played a crucial role throughout the process from editing to its eventual publication. The final translation was completed and produced by the publisher, then presented to readers through market circulation, thereafter, generating certain social effects. Sichuan People’s Publishing House is the patron of *Congshu*. Manipulation of translation activities can be conducted by patronage, which consists of the ideological, economic, and status components.

It is worth noting that before the 1980s, because of the CPC’s extensive manipulation of publishers, that is, the nationalization of publishers after the implementation of socialist joint state-private ownership of businesses in 1953, publications publishers had to closely abide by the mainstream ideology, neglecting market demands. Under the state control, editorial departments conducted stringent inspections of many areas of operations, including the selection of translated works. Publishing houses looked more closely at works in translation, under the pretext of examining their educational significance, and only allowed publication of those that fit into the centralized ideology, regardless of market demand. Following the end of the Cultural

Revolution and the implementation of economic reform, the CPC reformulated an ideological policy for the literary arts. In December 1977, the State Publishing Bureau held a National Publishing Conference, where Wang Kuang, then the person-in-charge, proposed to “break political shackles; break free from the constraints of publishing direction and content” (Fang and Wei, 2008, p. 232). In 1979, the State Publishing Bureau held another National Publishing Conference and promulgated the Publishing Regulations, which mentioned the need for the publishing industry to stand firm on its principle of “letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools contend” (Deng et al., 1984, p. 86).

It is evident that in this new context, subtle changes had taken place in the relationship between publishers and mainstream ideology. The authoritarian manipulation of publishers by “centralized” ideology began to crumble. Although mainstream ideology continued to pursue Marxism and Maoism, the diversification of a national ideology had begun to take shape. With the reform of national political ideology and opening to foreign ideologies, publishers gained more freedom. In 1983, the Central Committee of the CPC abolished the formulation of “class conflicts as a key principle” and replaced the slogan “serving politics” with “serving the people and socialism” (Ding, 2008). These adjustments offered an opportunity for publishers to break free from national control and reorient their operations to meet market demands. In the initial stages of economic reform, as demands for western culture and texts arising from the end of long-term material and spiritual deprivation during the Cultural Revolution increased continuously, it would only be a matter of time before the Sichuan People’s Publishing House (SPPH) conducted its large-scale publication of *Congshu*. Conscious efforts were made to meet large demands for cultural products.

Under the diversification of ideological forces, the atmosphere of Cultural Fever, as well as the marketization of publishers’ operations, it seemed necessary that the SPPH translated and introduced Weber’s works to cater to its readers’ curiosity toward and desire for fresh knowledge from other countries, despite Weberian thought being taboo in the former Chinese target language context.

A strategic approach was employed in the publication of *Congshu*, where Weber’s works were translated based on Marxism as a guiding principle. As SPPH continued to be a state-owned unit in the system, it had to act in accordance with the affirmation and promotion of Marxism by mainstream ideology. While the translation industry enjoyed more independence in the 1980s than in the past 30 years, the state, as the patron of translation activities, continued to retain some degree of control over publishers and translators. Although Deng pointed out in his 1980 speech, “目前的形势与任务” (The Present Situation, and Tasks before Us), “the slogan that literature and art are subordinate to politics. . . . has done more harm than good,” he also mentioned that “in no way does this mean that literature can

be divorced from politics. Every progressive and revolutionary writer or artist must consider the social effects of his works and the interests of the people, the state, and the Party” (Deng, 1994c, p. 255–256). Deng’s statement sent a clear message regarding the relationship between literature, art, and politics. The cautionary, supervisory, and manipulative functions of politics on literature and art would remain: “Once political ideology deems literature and art as a form of intervention and a threat to politics, political action will be taken to stifle its development” (Zha, 2003, p. 81). Even as the Publishing Regulations promulgated in 1979 responded to the call for “ideological emancipation,” they also affirmed that “publishers must uphold the four basic principles, serve the people, and serve socialism,” coinciding with Deng’s statement.

When *Congshu* was published in 1984, it found itself in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, it had to promote Marxism. On the other hand, its mission was to introduce Western texts, including Weber’s writings, many of which conflicted with the ideas of Marxism. Interestingly, *Congshu* benefited from these two contradictory positions. It abided by the mainstream ideology, and thus, avoiding censorship, but concomitantly fulfilled market demands and gained popularity. As the SPPH began its pursuit for profits and marketization in the 1980s, and as its relationship with mainstream ideology started to evolve, it seemed only reasonable that it would translate Weber’s works to meet market demands. Yet, even if there were a deliberate effort to break literature and art free from political manipulation, the government would continue to keep an eye on literature, art, and publishers. After the movements such as the Campaign against Bourgeois Liberalization 资产阶级自由化 in 1982 and the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign 反精神污染 in 1983, SPPH, as a patron of translation activities, ensured that the editorial principles of *Congshu* were politically correct and gained the initiative before the potential interference by the central government. When discussing its editorial strategy, the editor-in-chief Jin said that the project would “dare to innovate and take wild adventures in academics, but never cross the line in politics.” This is no passive strategy, but one that “sets a new line of attack: launching a folk academic cultural movement that would make ideological breakthroughs, to emphasize “Chinese cultural reform” (Qian, 2012, p. 214–215).

It is not a coincidence that this highly influential series, edited by elite intellectuals from Beijing, was not published by Beijing publishing houses or core publishers elsewhere, but by SPPH, a local publishing house. By publishing at SPPH, the series could avoid direct manipulation by Beijing, the center of the nation’s political ideology, allowing it to publish a large volume of translated Western texts. Additionally, it is also worth noting that Jin’s wife, Liu Qingfeng, is an important contributor to *Congshu*. Her father, Liu Yangjiao, was formerly a ministerial cadre in the central ministry, while her brother, Liu Maocai, was formerly publicity director of

the Sichuan Provincial Committee. The publication process was therefore aided by Liu Yangjiao’s former position and the support the series received from political figures in charge of publishing and publicity activities in Sichuan. The latter had played the role of “hidden patron” in the series’ translation process.

The close relationship between the editorial board and party cadres meant that the editorial board of *Congshu* had to promote reflections of Marxism prominently in its Editors’ Note. In this way, SPPH ensured that both the publisher and editorial board maintained a stable, politically correct stance while allowing the books in the series to enter the market and influence readers. Later events showed that a crucial component of Weber Fever was the perception that there was, in fact, no contradiction between Weber’s thought and Marxism, which arose from readers’ reflections on the relationship between the two thinkers since the publication of Weber’s book translation in *Congshu*.

As Liu Dong put it, an important reason that led him to translate Max Weber was to address misinterpretations of Weber’s thought in China due to the long-lasting influence of Marxism on the conceptualization of Weber. Liu later recalled:

Even though the main purpose of this book was not to “market” Weber, but to evaluate him accurately and rationally, it nevertheless displayed the vitality of Weber’s thought. Precisely because I did not begin with a superstitious mindset, I found everything about Weber more attractive [...](Liu, 2011).

This implies that there existed “superstitious” worship of Marxism among the public, resulting in the irrational long-term absence of Weber’s thought in translation. Thus, Liu’s translation objective corresponds with Jin’s and the other editors’ publishing objective, to “liberate a young generation of students from a linear, formulaic understanding of history and the world” (Ma, 2008).

3.2. Impact of political ideology and the consultant committee (as patron) on translation activities

As André Lefevre points out, a patron is an individual or organization capable of using professionals (including writers and translators) to influence the literary ecosystem for it to act in accordance with certain ideologies (Lefevre, 2004, p. 16). In the case of *Congshu* and the translation of Weber’s book, the Consultant Committee, which was a particularly special group in the Chinese literary scene, played the role of patron.

Congshu was published in 1984. Two of the translated works related to Weber were published in 1986 and 1987, respectively. It is worth noting that literature was independent of politics

during this period, the mid-1980s. As noted by Zha, the themes and subjects of literature published after the mid-1980s were “clearly in discordance with politics,” and “literary theorists have proposed a theory of ‘literary subjectivity’ to break literature free from political control and subvert firmly entrenched poetic norms” (Zha, 2003, p. 81).

This tendency is also reflected in changes in selection criteria for translated literature. Certain works that were once condemned by the mainstream ideology or considered politically taboo could now be translated in China. After the mid-1980s, as “economic reform” progressed, political authorities gradually shifted their focus to economic construction. This shift in focus, following the determining influence of Chinese society’s economic base on its cultural superstructure, resulted in ideological forces loosening their grip on translation. This made it possible for politically independent works, even potentially anti-Marxist ones, such as Weber’s, to be translated.

There was a significant reason behind this weakening of political control over the literary arts. During the CPC’s promotion of “economic reform” in the 1980s, there arose an ideological controversy within the top political faction (Kou, 2005; Zhao, 2009) which directly influenced the translation activities of *Congshu*.

In September 1986, the series published Weidlich Haag’s 定量社会学(*Concepts, and Models of a Quantitative Sociology*), which included a list of consultants and members of the *Congshu* editorial board. Bao Zunxin, who held the post of editor-in-chief in 1984 and 1985, was listed as a consultant, while former editor Jin Guantao took over the position of editor-in-chief in 1986. The rest of the list consisted of two deputy editors Chen Yueguang and Tang Ruoxi, and 29 other members. This structure continued until the last book of the series 探索非理性的世界(*Exploring the Irrational World*) was published in June 1988. Back in 1982, a *Congshu* editorial board had already been established, consisting of 24 members with Bao Zunxin as the editor-in-chief. An executive editorial board was set up under this editorial board, with Jin as the leader (Wang, 2005, p. 177). If the executive board led by Jin took charge of the material selection and copyediting of the series, then Bao and other consultants, regardless of status, played the role of ideologist for the series, while Jin and his members were the actual editors.

This subsection begins with an analysis of the list of consultants from September 1986 onwards, including Bao Zunxin, Yan Jici, Du Runsheng, Zhang Liqun, Chen Yirong, Chen Hanbo, Zhong Peizhang, Hou Wailu, and Qian Sanqiang. Bao was a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of History (1981–1989). Yan served as Dean of the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) Graduate School (1978–1985) and was also the President of USTC (1980–1984) and a long-term Vice-Chairperson of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee (1983–1993). Du held important posts in rural work as Mao and other top

managers of the CPC thought highly of him when the PRC was founded. In 1983, he was made Director of the Rural Policy Research Office of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Rural Development Research Center of the State Council. From 1982 to 1986, he chaired the drafting of the annual “Document No. 1 of the Central Government,” promoting rural reform with other reformist leaders including Hu Yaobang and Wan Li. In the 1957 Anti-Rightist Movement, Zhang was exempted from being associated with the rightists due to Hu’s protection. In 1980, Zhang transferred to the Institute of Youth, which was affiliated to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the research institute that collaborated with the SPPH and Chinese Academy of Sciences to publish *Congshu*. In 1983, he was transferred to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, where he was made Director of the Office for Propaganda and Education, establishing close ties with Hu. Chen Yizi worked at a think-tank that led rural, economic, and systemic reforms in China, and was the main driving force behind rural reforms in the 1980s. In the mid to late 1980s, he was promoted to Director of the Institute for Economic Structural Reform and was highly regarded by Hu and Zhao Ziyang. In 1976, Chen Hanbo headed the Publication Administrative Bureau under the State Council. During his 4 years in office, the Chinese publishing industry stepped out from the shadow of the Cultural Revolution, gradually becoming more open and revitalized. From 1980 onwards, he served successively as the first Chairperson and second Honorary Chairman of the Publishers Association of China. In 1982, Zhong transferred to the Publicity Department of the CPC’s Bureau of News, becoming its director. “Following Hu’s commitment to the nation’s economic reform, Zhong worked furiously throughout his 4 years in office” (Zhong, 2011) until Hou took over the post. Qian was well-known in China’s scientific industry for returning from the United States after the founding of the PRC. In 1980, he gave a lecture titled “A Brief Introduction to the Development of Science and Technology” to the leaders of the CPC.

These consultants shared the same ideals and goals. They were either outstanding scholars and thinkers of Chinese society who shared close connections with the high-ranking reformist leaders of the CPC, such as Bao, Yan, Zhang, and Qian, or were high-ranking reformist leaders of the CPC themselves who directly participated in the process of ideological reform, such as Du, Chen, Zhong, and Hou. Although this group of consultants did not have direct involvement in the editing and publishing work of the series, the ideology which they represented had turned them into powerful patrons of the series in its introduction of Western texts. They could utilize professionals such as critics, reviewers, teachers, and translators to manipulate the literary system, provide support for literature and artistic creations or translation activities, or safeguard the social status and political security of other editors, writers, and translators.

3.3. Impact of the editorial board's mode of operations on translation activities

To prevent the manipulation of publication and editorial work by mainstream ideology, the organizer of translation activities must subvert the established system of publishing and translation. As all publishers in China then were state-owned, there were plans to establish an editorial group independent from the publisher during the initial stages of planning for *Congshu*.

When Jin and other editors first discussed publishing the series with the Hunan People's Publishing House (HPPH), HPPH wanted a series about youth knowledge and self-cultivation, but Jin preferred one that encouraged thought enlightenment among adults as well as youth (Han, 2008, p. 57). This raised the question of whether the publisher or the editor had more say in the direction of the series. Jin determined that the first condition for collaboration was for him to hold the right of final review.

With the help of Liu Maocai's networks, Jin established an independent editorial board outside Chengdu during his collaboration with SPPH. Upon realizing that they needed a "body bearing political responsibilities to manage" them, Jin collaborated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Youth, which precisely played this role. Through this affiliation, the editorial board rode on the coattails of the Institute of Youth to gain legal status (Ma, 2008). However, "the Institute of Youth had no right to replace the editor-in-chief or editors or intervene in specific and internal operations of the board" (Qian, 2012, p. 214).

Having full control and dominance in all areas, the editorial board could then establish a robust three-tier review system for its time. An editorial board independent from the publisher, combined with a thorough review system, signified the establishment of a brand-new translation-led mechanic (Wang, 2005, p. 177).

Support from patrons sharing the same ideals as the editorial board was needed for the board to gain independent legal status. To that end, the list of consultants consisted of thinkers and officials who were supportive of reform in China and held executive positions in major organizations or who were from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. As their role was to "bear political responsibility," the translation work would have been impossible without their support.

How would such an editorial ecosystem influence the actual translation of Weber's book? To answer this question, an analysis of the editorial influence on the selection of material to be translated is first required. As mentioned in the Translators' Note of *Xinjiao*, while Weber was an influential philosopher in Western academia, his the "long-term closure and confinement" of China (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 1).

Thus, Weber's representative work in religious and sociological theory was chosen (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 1) to "introduce readers to the generative relationship between religious ideas (Protestant ethic) and the psychological drive behind capitalist development (the spirit of capitalism)" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2). The translators' introduction of Weber's "essence of the capitalist spirit" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2) and the advocacy of "ascetic Protestantism" as a "sociocultural foundation" (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 2) contradicted long-held Marxist ideology that pursued socialism and atheism in the target language context.

Part of the objective of translating this work was to reflect on and even dispel Marxist ideology. The translators put forth "a proposition which called for deep thought:"

Even though Weber's analysis is made in the capitalist context, could there be a universal significance to it? In other words, capitalism, and the spirit of capitalism, which supports and promotes capitalist development, are fundamentally natural formations. Not only does it create a more robust political and economic system, but also a more complete system of science and technology that generates unprecedented levels of productivity. In that way, can we say that these are singular effects of a new cultural framework? (Peng and Huang, 1986, p. 3).

This translation includes American sociologist Talcott Parsons' Preface to the new edition of Protestant Ethic, reminding readers of Weber's "rational bourgeois capitalism" (Parsons, 1986, p. 7). This, together with the comments in Translators' Note, showed that the translators and editors had a comprehensive understanding of the influences behind Weber's thought, their reflection on the present situation, and Weber's contradiction of Marxist ideology. Lefevre once claimed that translation is a form of rewriting and that rewriting is manipulation (Lefevre, 2004). In the translation process of *Xinjiao*, the editors and translators manipulated *via* deliberately selecting which works to translate, as well as translating extremely specific appraisals of these works. This allowed them to guide readers in their analysis and interpretation of the original work. Once *Xinjiao* was published, it rapidly provoked reflections on Chinese society, specifically about China's failure to achieve modernization. As Xiao put it, remembering the influence this work had,

Isn't a lack of ascetic religious beliefs precisely the reason China had not been able to achieve modernization? [...] for a long time, China only had shame culture, but not Western guilt culture. Since capitalism (and capitalism was considered modernization then) only takes place under the protestant ethic, should China then completely part with its traditions and introduce Christian Protestantism in its entirety? (Xiao, 2010).

This reflection echoes the “proposition” in the Translators’ Note.

In 1987, in Liu Dong and Xie Weihe’s translation of Frank Parkin’s *Max Weber*, the contrast between Marxism and Weber’s thought was discussed directly. As mentioned in the original editors’ Preface to the book, “(Weber) was concerned with developing a subject which would have appeared to Marx to be at best a highly partisan “science” of society and at worst a “bourgeois ideology” (Hamilton, 1987, p. 2). “Weber’s sociological models [...] stress a methodological individualism opposed to both Marxian and Durkheimian constructs of social collectivities, a belief in the value of individual insight” (Hamilton, 1987, p. 2).

Since the mid-1980s, the spread of Weber’s thought in Chinese academia rapidly led to a Weber Fever, to the extent that academics “could not open their mouths without citing Weber.” As they were “eager to break free from ideological discourse and establish an independent space on campus for “engaging in academics as a vocation,” Weber’s “value neutrality” served as a robust theoretical basis for their pursuit of liberation from political influence” (Xiao, 2010).

Weber’s book translation was in line with Jin and the editorial board’s mission of thought enlightenment. Through empirical reasoning, Weber guided readers to face the challenging and ever-changing future with a serious attitude and encouraged them to embark on socialist modernization in “yet another great rejuvenation of the nation” [Editorial Board of *走向未来*[Towards the Future], 1984, p. 1–2]. This was precisely the editorial board’s fundamental objective of translating Weber’s works. It is worth noting that among 25 translated works in the series, those of academics from European and American countries are the majority, with 14 by Americans, seven by British, Italians, Germans, Austrians, and Dutch combined, with only two by academics from Socialist nations such as the Soviet Union and Hungary. Some of the main themes of these works are science, philosophy, and sociology. Among these works, Weber’s book translation most clearly reflects on ideology and exposes the flaws of Marxism.

The fact that Weber’s thought and works were considered for translation by the editorial board strongly suggests that its organizational structure provided it with greater autonomy.

The influence of this organizational structure on translation strategy will now be analyzed. Co-translation was a customary practice among the 25 translated works: only 6 of them were completely translated, while there were eight hybrid works which included both translations as well as original content, concentrated in the first 3 years of the series. This paper focuses on the case analysis of the translation of Weber’s book. *Xinjiao* was translated from Talcott Parsons’ 1958 English translation, which was translated from Weber’s 1920 revised edition. It is important to note that notes added to the 1920 edition by Weber

were retained in Parson’s translation. While pointing out the lengthiness of the notes, Parsons explained that he hoped “these notes could bring clarity to how the issues under discussion surfaced in Weber’s mind. Any compromise on this for the sake of artistic perfection would be regrettable.” Therefore, he reminds readers to “read the notes closely, as large masses of vital information are enclosed within” (Parsons, 1986, p. 1–2). However, these notes, crucial to a better understanding of Weber’s thought, were omitted in Peng and Huang’s translation. Moreover, the notes and index of the original work were also omitted.

It is observable that there was little concern about the equivalence in diction and essay structure as emphasized in conventional translation criticism, while a greater focus was put on the immediate social effect produced through rewriting. On another level, such expeditious methods of rewriting, such as team translation, editing, and abridging catered to readers’ pressing need for nutritive western texts after the long cultural drought in Chinese society. The rapidly emerging phenomena of Cultural Fever and Weber Fever, together with the strategy of rewriting, fueled each other’s development. Publishers frequently deleted references in scholarly books, a practice that is quite common in Chinese academia then. There was also no standardization for academic publication. For instance, although the translators required to retain the references, publishers often deleted them without seeking the author’s agreement due to the consideration of cost (Wang, 2005, p. 187).

This paper has examined material selection and translation strategy to analyze how the unique organizational structure of independence from publishers and owning rights to final review influenced the editorial board’s translation activities. While the editorial board’s level of freedom was groundbreaking, the extent of this freedom should not be exaggerated. Its organization remains an attempt within the system, and its independence was only relative to what came before. As Gan Yang put it, “Ideological emancipation is limited by disciplinary requirements: Regardless of who, or what ideology, ‘emancipation’ has to take place within the existing system and dominant ideological framework.” (Zha, 2006, p. 276). As the publisher of the series, SPPH had to enforce mainstream ideology and influence the editorial board to conform to the system. This explains why the editorial board advocated for Marxism in the Editors’ Note, while searching for suitable “patrons” to serve as series consultants on the other. Once the political ideology changed and patrons’ political statuses came under attack, this mode of operation was bound to be scrutinized and changed. In 1989, *Congshu* was ordered to cease all publications. This is exactly the outcome of a changing political ideology intervening in publishing activities.

After putting down the rebellion [consider indicating Tiananmen Square protests in brackets], [...] investigations showed that especially after 1987, a minority of books became platforms for defying the Four Cardinal Principles and advocating bourgeois liberalization.

[...] Inspections revealed that these 74 books can be classified into the following four groups: [...] (3) [...] it has been found that certain bourgeois theories or translated works were introduced without any analysis or criticism, some of which was suspected of disparaging the present by extolling the past, some involving wanted figures and long-term representatives of bourgeois liberalization. [...] (4) Serious political issues have been found, including defying the Four Cardinal Principles, advocating bourgeois liberalization, or the authors being wanted for participating in the Beijing counter-revolutionary riots and for long-term support of bourgeois liberalization (Long, 1990, p. 132–133).

4. Conclusion

The Cultural Fever of the mid-1980s was essential to the intelligentsia in the 1980s. Lively discussions of the relationship between tradition, culture, and modernity, as well as between Chinese and Western culture were abundant amongst the intellectuals and the culturally inclined. *Congshu*, targeted at promoting Western texts, triggered the first large-scale reading fervor since the economic reform, through the translation of Western books. Of this, the translation of Weber's book precipitated Weber Fever, giving an ideology of modernization and encouraging reflections on Marxism in the political and cultural context of the 1980s Chinese society. Through this process, ideologies had both guided and restrained translation activities in political, economic, and social contexts. The selection, translation, and interpretation of texts by editors and translators did not take place in a vacuum but were subject to ideological influence.

It is worth noting that the "latest achievements of contemporary science" [Editorial Board of *走向未来*[Towards

the Future], 1984, p. 2] were not targeted for suppression. Instead, older, classical western theories were scrutinized. These included Immanuel Kant's, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's and Martin Heidegger's philosophy, Benedetto Croce's aesthetics, Sigmund Freud's, and Carl Gustav Jung's psychology, Bronislaw Malinowski's anthropology, Ernst Cassirer's semiotics of culture, and Weber's sociology. How much farther would enlightenment in China have developed, if the knowledge map, with which the Chinese gained a renewed understanding of the world, included these classical theories from the beginning? How did these theoretical resources, introduced from the West, influence Chinese society in the post-1990? How were these classical theories perceived when synchronously translated in Chinese academia? These are vital issues for future research.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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