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Sinkwan Cheng

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Conceptual history, the will to power, and a new politics of translation

Sinkwan Cheng

Duke University

ABSTRACT

Contrary to common undeclared pedagogical assumptions in translation skill classes that ‘faithfulness’ to the source text is the highest good guiding translation exercises, I draw from *Begriffsgeschichte* to demonstrate how translations which have found a place in history often achieve their authority not by being ‘the most faithful’ to the source texts, but by successfully dominating and displacing alternatives. Intrigued by Koselleck’s close attention to the ideologization and politicization of language, I transform his *Begriffsgeschichte* into a tool for examining the history of translation as driven by the will to power rather than truthfulness to the source text. Using as examples the Chinese renditions of two Western terms in the early twentieth century, I demonstrate how the translations which became standardized gained dominance by engaging the Chinese people’s will to empowerment when the country came under constant existential threats of subjugation by colonial powers. Thus channelling Koselleck via Nietzsche, new horizons are opened up for translation studies. The article concludes with a comparison between this and other approaches to translation, highlighting the distinctive contributions made possible by this Nietzschean-informed *Begriffsgeschichte* method.

KEYWORDS

Conceptual history; Koselleck; translation history and the will to power; translation and (post-) colonialism; translation and Chinese modernity; translation and Chinese nationalism

Concepts could be treated as articulations of the will to truth; they could also be interpreted as expressions of the will to power. Koselleck pays close attention to the ideologization and politicization of language in his investigations into conceptual changes since the *Sattelzeit*. Such practice is warranted by the fact that, beginning with the Enlightenment, semantics has become a core dimension of the political as the pen became mightier than the sword, and politics the continuation of war by other means. Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* method is for these reasons especially effective for demonstrating human history as driven by the will to power (which is often disguised as the will to truth). The history of translation in the late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century China, driven as it was by the Chinese intellectuals’ urgent mission to modernize China in order to save her from subjugation, was likewise very much entwined with issues of national identity and the Chinese will to empowerment.¹

Contrary to the common undeclared pedagogical assumptions in translation skill classes that ‘faithfulness’ to the source text is the highest good guiding translation

exercises, I will demonstrate that translations which have become classics succeed in establishing themselves as the standard or authoritative renditions not by being the most faithful to the original, but by dominating and displacing alternatives. In short, the history of translation is animated not by truth or accuracy in translation, but by power. To prove my point, I will analyze the Chinese translations of two Western terms and demonstrate how they manage to take root in the target culture by engaging the Chinese people's will to empowerment at a critical historical juncture when the country -- both an ancient civilization and a young nation -- came under constant existential threats of subjugation by colonial powers. The article will end with a comparison between this Nietzschean-informed historical method and other approaches to translation, arguing for the distinctive contributions made possible by the former.

Begriffsgeschichte is commonly translated as conceptual history. *Begriff*, however, is not an abstract word like its English counterpart 'concept.' *Griff* means 'handle.' *Begriff* gives one a handle on things; it provides the key to understanding the big picture. By analyzing certain concepts as articulated in the language of a certain country at a given time, one can gain insight into the social-political history of that country.

A good example can be found in Koselleck's analysis of the concept modernity. *Neuzeit*, the German term for modernity which literally means 'new time,' came into existence because people started to develop a new experience of time in the modern period. The concept of modernity (*Neuzeit*) emerged because a so-called new time (*neue Zeit*) came into being (Koselleck, 'Neuzeit').² Language, in other words, contains within itself the imprint of a people's life experience. Note, however, that concepts do not merely reflect but can also effect social and political changes. In Koselleck's words, concepts are not limited to defining given states of affairs, but can also 'reach into the future. Concepts of the future became increasingly new-minted; positions that were to be secured first had to be formulated linguistically before it was possible to enter or permanently occupy them.'³ Some concepts register past and contemporary experiences, others generate experience and are called 'concepts of expectation.' The range of possible actions are in large part determined by the concepts available. As Melvin Richter puts it, concepts 'frame and restrict, augment and limit the vocabulary available to their own and later generations.' Koselleck's analysis of 'Neuzeit,' for instance, explores not just the conceptual pre-conditions for the emergence of modernity but also the transformation of the modern condition by conceptual practice.

1. Part I. Conceptual changes reflecting and effecting social-political changes: Chinese translations of two Western terms

New concepts allow us to envision new ways of constructing society and conducting politics. They can limit certain actions while enable others. New concepts come about either through changes from within a cultural tradition, or by introduction from the outside, and translation is the instrument through which new concepts from one cultural tradition are made available to another. What is introduced from the outside is usually more radically heterogeneous than new thoughts generated within one's own tradition; the result of introducing new concepts through translation could thus be explosive or even revolutionary. To explore how translation can set in motion social-political changes, my own works transform Koselleck's theory in the following manner: Koselleck uses linguistic history

to interrogate social and political history, and examines the social and political ramifications of semantic changes; I appropriate Koselleck's method to investigate how changes in semantics brought about by translation can both reflect and effect social and political changes.

Due to the space limit, I can only provide two quick examples to illustrate how translation can both reflect and effect social-political changes. By doing so, I will scrutinize how translation choices that have won a place in history are often dictated by the will to power rather than faithfulness to the original – a phenomenon all the more pronounced in periods of rapid, violent, and unprecedented change produced by foreign aggression, as in the period of Chinese history under scrutiny – a period when translations were closely tied to how the Chinese ‘[answered] important questions about their national identity and [...] how their development [was] to be compared to that of other countries.’²⁴

First, let me use the history of Chinese translations of the term ‘Olympic Games’ to demonstrate how translations which ‘win out’ over other possible translations are often those responsive to the dominant ethos of the target culture in a given historical period. The history of translation, in other words, can give us certain insight into the social consciousness and conditions of a given people at a particular time. This is what I seek to prove with a brief reception history of various Chinese translations of ‘Olympic Games.’

1.1. Chinese translations of Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες

‘Olympic Games’ in Greek is Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες (*Olympiakoí agones*). *Agon* was a highly valorized concept in ancient Greece animating all aspects of the Greek civilization including politics, tragedy, and the Olympic Games. *Agon* refers to contest, struggle, and strife, viewed positively by the Greeks as the spirit through which members of the *polis* challenged each other to excel. A game is thus ‘a diversion of the nature of a contest, played according to rules, and displaying in the result the superiority either in skill, strength, or good fortune of the winner or winners’ (*OED*), or a ‘competitive activity or sport in which players contend with each other according to a set of rules’ (*Free Online Dictionary*).

Let me now provide a much abbreviated history of Chinese translations of Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες. The first modern Olympic Games took place in 1896. The year 1928 witnessed the first appearance of a Chinese translation in an English-Chinese Dictionary, the *Combined English-Chinese Dictionary* (综合英汉大辞典). ‘Olympic Games’ was translated as *Alinpike jingji dahui* (阿令辟克竞技大会 The Olympic Grand Contest) – rather faithfully capturing the original Greek meaning of ‘games.’ *Guoji yundong dahui* (国际运动大会 The Grand International Athletic Event) was suggested as a second alternative in the same dictionary. Annotations were given after those two translations, explaining the Olympic games as ‘再兴之近代万国运动会, 仍系每四年举行一次 (the revived international athletic event; continues to be held every four years).’ In the same year, *Dictionary for Chinese Education* (中国教育辞典), a far less influential dictionary, rendered ‘Olympic Games’ as *wangguo yundonghui* (万国运动会 International Athletic Event), with the annotation that ‘this is our country’s translation for the Olympic contests’ (奥林比亚赛会之我国译名). In the 1930s, the most authoritative dictionaries such as *Zhonghua Encyclopedic Dictionary of Phrases* (中华百科辞典), *An Ocean of Phrases* (辞海), and *Practical Bilingual English-Chinese Dictionary* (双解实用英汉字典) offered translations more

faithfully reflecting the etymology and the real meaning of ‘Games’ in Olympic Games, such as *jingji dahui* (竞技大会 grand contest), *saihui* (赛会 showdown), or *bisaihui* (比赛会 competition). The less scholarly publications, however, translated ‘Games’ as *yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event).⁵ 1937 was the last time when a major dictionary—*An Ocean of Phrases* (辞海)—rendered ‘Games’ in this manner. After the Communist take-over, *yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event) totally replaced the more faithful translations of *jingjihui* (竞技会 contest) or *bisaihui* (比赛会 game).

Interestingly, while the first translation aimed for accuracy, alternative translations already emerged in the same year as parallel if not competing concepts. Moreover, beginning in the late 1930s, the free translation *yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event) basically displaced the ‘faithful’ translations. A *Begriffsgeschichte* probing of the interactions between conceptual changes and social-political changes would reveal to us how and why the ‘unfaithful’ rendition became the master concept which totally trumped the ‘faithful’ versions, rendering the accurate translations non-concepts in the Chinese’s references to the Olympics. What happened was that *yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event) much more successfully tapped into the Chinese ethos and the Chinese will-to-empowerment since the later nineteenth century. After China’s repeated defeats by colonial powers, the Chinese increasingly traced one reason for their losses to the weakening of the Chinese people by opium. *Yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event) soon outstripped other competing concepts such as *jingji dahui* (竞技大会 Grand Contest), *saihui* (赛会 showdown), or *bisaihui* (比赛会 competition) as the most popular translation for ‘Games’ by a nation aspiring to health – a nation eager to be rid of the humiliating label ‘the Sick Man of East Asia (东亚病夫)’. Significantly, the ‘correct’ translation was basically displaced by *yundonghui* after 1937. It was on July 7 of that year that Japan launched its full scale invasion of China, and the call to the whole nation to stand up as a strong people became all the more urgent.

There were other reasons why the more accurate translations suggesting contest or competition faded out from the Chinese vocabulary for the Olympics. For one thing, those translations would only remind the Chinese in the early twentieth century of their humiliations, as they were far from being able to compete internationally in athletics as in other kinds of national achievements. Driven as international relations are by the will to power, it is of course important for nationalists when translating to consider how the development of their country is to be compared to that of others – especially to the countries associated with the source languages. By rendering the Olympics as an international ‘athletic event (运动会)’ rather than a ‘Grand Contest (竞技大会),’ *the focus of attention got shifted from competition to participation, and the meaning of honour got transposed from victory in contests to membership and participation in the international community*. The ‘unfaithful’ rendition created a new space for China to gain national pride from her visibility in international events, while simultaneously filtering out any reminder of China’s ability to gain visibility at the podium. Little wonder that the ‘inaccurate’ translation defeated the ‘faithful’ rendition and took root in the Chinese lexicon.⁶

Not surprisingly, *yundonghui* (运动会 athletic event) totally ‘usurped’ the more accurate translations under the Communist leader Mao Zedong who was obsessed with creating a people with strong constitution and stamina through rigorous exercise. He had the vision of turning China into a country of fit and strong people who could effectively defend their motherland, especially against the USA. and the USSR – the two superpowers of the

Cold War period. One of the many illustrations of Mao's mindset is the calligraphic inscription he produced for the All-China Sports Federation (中华全国体育总会成立大会) on 10 June 1952, which reads: 'Promote Physical Exercise; Strengthen Our People's Constitution (发展体育运动, 增强人民体质).'

To that end, Maoist China implemented twice daily routine exercises and post-lunch naps for the whole nation. Mao also set an example for his people with his cross-Yangzi swims, in 1956 and on 16 July 1966 at the age of 72.⁷ In fact, the obsession with remaking the Chinese people into a strong and healthy population dated back to Mao's early days. The first article he published in the radical journal *New Youths* (新青年) while still a student at the Hunan First Normal College in 1917 was entitled 'A Study of Physical Education (体育之研究).' The piece called on his fellow countrymen to strengthen themselves through regular exercise so that they could better serve their country. It is also worth noting that, within less than a month after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the central government convened a national congress which became the All-China Sports Federation (ACSF), calling for the development of 'a national, scientific, and popular new program of athletics.'

Furthermore, *yundonghui* was enthusiastically embraced by Mao Zedong and his followers as a Chinese counter-concept⁸ to Western 'Games' conveying China's concern with health in contrast to the big powers' obsessions with power and glory. The 'unfaithful translation' *yundonghui* allowed China to assert her Third-World moral upper hand (itself a counter-concept to the First World's military and economic upper hand): it expressed the CCP's position that athletic events should be about health and relaxation, and not about imperialistic competitions. Olympic Games ('Grand Contests') have been the occasion for powerful nations to scramble for glory ever since its modern revival in the midst of high imperialism.⁹ Proposals for international competitions were basically a nineteenth-century idea, and the revival of the Olympics in modern times (1896) took place during Europe's age of high imperialism. Pierre de Coubertin's ideals notwithstanding, the main theme and driving impetus behind the so-called 'international events' in the second half of the nineteenth century were imperial ideologies and major powers' competitions for (the monopoly of) glory. In the second half of the nineteenth century, different empires' attempts at monopolizing power took the form of scramble for colonies outside the West, and the civilized guise of international events inside the Western hemisphere.¹⁰ In contrast to the combative overtone of *Agones*, 'Athletic Event' suggests an occasion for promoting health consciousness and physical exercise. The 'unfaithful translation' reflects the CCP's will to project its difference from, and independence of, the different big powers' 'chauvinistic nationalistic and capitalistic-imperialistic competitive culture.'

Yundonghui (运动会 athletic event) has been naturalized as the standard translation for the word 'Games' in Olympic Games for so many decades by now that no scholarly attention I know of has been paid to how the expression is actually 'not truthful' and why it nonetheless has become the 'natural' and 'standard' translation for Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες.¹¹

1.2. Chinese translations of 'bus'

The 'Olympic Games' example concerns one kind of translation which achieved classic status not for its faithfulness to the original, but for its ability to express or reflect the

will and the values of the target audience. I will now turn to another kind of translation which successfully makes history due to its being consciously used as an instrument for directing historical movements.¹² In contrast to the first kind of translation which expresses the will of the target society, the second kind expresses the translator's will to transform social consciousness. I will now use two Chinese translations of 'bus' to examine how translation can actively forge a new social and political ethos and thus effect changes in those areas.

Bus has been rendered as *gonggong qiche* (公共汽车 public vehicle) ever since the founding of the Republic of China, and the term has continued to be in use in the People's Republic of China to date. By contrast, the loan word *bashi* (巴士 bus) has been adopted in Hong Kong. *Bashi* is directly borrowed from English. At least in the early stage when this term was borrowed – that is, before this loan word was normalized and taken for granted – the exotic term carried the aura of being English with all its attendant associations with superiority: such as being modern, advanced, and sophisticated.

The transliteration reveals something about the mentality of the Hong Kong Chinese under British colonial rule. The loanword's flair of sophistication sets off a contrast between the modern means of transportation and the old – that is, between the bus and the rickshaw. More importantly, the social semantics invested in the loanword sets up *bashi* as a counter-concept to *gonggong qiche*, marking the population who deployed the loanword (that is, the colonized Hong Kongers) as modern and cosmopolitan, in contrast to the population using the traditional Chinese translation (that is, the Mainlanders and the Taiwanese unexposed to 'British sophistication'.)¹³

In contrast to *bashi* which goes for 'social prestige and status,' *gonggong qiche* provides one of the many examples of Chinese intellectuals' will to revolutionize the social and political consciousness of the Chinese people. Like many other Chinese expressions beginning with *gonggong* (公共 public), *gonggong qiche* (公共汽车 public vehicle) designates, and by designating helps to inculcate, a sense of the public in the nation. The translation *gonggong qiche* (公共汽车) helps educate people with the concept of a facility that is of the public, for the public, and by the public. Translations is thus a tool of civic instruction.

It is significant that when Hong Kong introduced the first bus route in the 1920s, a neologism was invented instead of adopting the standard Chinese translation. While *gonggong qiche* attempts to bring the Chinese together as one re-public, the loaned word *bashi* bonded Hong Kong instead to the English civilization, dissociating it from China.

A good *begriffsgeschichtliches* reading of the two translations, in other words, reveals not only the differences in China and Hong Kong's relations to Britain. It can also shed light on the subtle role played by translation in colonialism – namely, how translation can help sever the ties between the colony and its native country, bonding it instead with the colonizer. *Bashi* renders the Hong Kong translation simultaneously a subconcept of the English 'bus' and a counterconcept to the Chinese translation. For those coveting the British flair in Hong Kong,¹⁴ *bashi* and *gonggong qiche* are not parallel but hierarchical and even counter-concepts, with the former representing the 'civilized and sophisticated' Hong Kong versus the latter which is associated with the 'backward and inferior' China.

While the implied counter-concept of the loan word *bashi* is a Chinese translation and Chinese usage associated with a vast Chinese population unexposed to Western language and sophistication, the counter-concept of *gonggong qiche* (public vehicle) is *shijia che* (私家车 privately owned automobile). Before the introduction of public transportation,

vehicles were privately owned by the most rich and powerful elites in China. The translation of bus into *gonggong qiche* (public vehicle) thus helped to inculcate in the people a notion of China's transition to democracy, and to the equality of all citizens of the new republic.

Note, however, that some variations of *bashi* (such as *daba* [大巴 big bus]) has been increasingly adopted by people in Mainland China in the age of globalization,¹⁵ even though *gonggong qiche* (公共汽車 public vehicle) continues to be the official term. Once again, in the linguistic change itself we can detect the social political changes. The increasing popularity of *daba* in China reflects the country's move away from Mao's anti-Westernization stance and its embrace of Western values. Especially worth noting in this abandonment of the term 'public vehicle' is the gradual decline of public consciousness in China. 'Bus,' in other words, has gradually lost its political significance of being 'of the people, for the people, and by the people.' What is left is merely a privatized, instrumental concept of the bus as a means of transportation for different individuals.

2. Part II. *Begriffsgeschichte's* unique contributions to translation studies

2. 1. Translation, diagnosis, and prognosis

A number of theories exist that discuss translation in relation to power, such as feminism, post-colonialism, and cultural studies. These approaches by and large confine themselves to critiquing existing power structures. No criticism of such kind I know of takes seriously translation as an instrument of historical change. Instead of confining the discussion to what translation *should not do*, *Begriffsgeschichte* analyzes what translation *could do* for society and politics. It does so by demonstrating how conceptual change could facilitate political action, and translation provides the quickest way of introducing new concepts to facilitate new kinds of political action. My paper 'Chinese Translations and Transformations of the Western Concept "Citizen,"'¹⁶ for example, concerns itself with why, in the period 1898–1910, '国民' rather than '公民' was a much more popular translation for 'citizen' (and this despite the fact that '公民' is more accurate). An important part of that paper focuses on analyzing how the use of '国民' to translate 'citizen' has given Chinese politics a new direction.

That *Begriffsgeschichte* is capable of elucidating the *positive* contributions of translation rather than confining its role to criticism of what the translation fails to deliver is a result of its unique attention to both prognosis and diagnosis, in contrast to other approaches which are usually confined to diagnosing power relations. *Begriffsgeschichte* invests in translation both diagnostic and prognostic functions. From the perspective of the *observer*, translated terms are useful because they register the experiences of a given culture in specific historical periods. From the perspective of the *actor*, translated terms are useful because they can make available new expectations for the future that can guide current action. Of all concepts that can generate experience, concepts introduced through translation are especially visible for its prognostic power. Given that translation transports concepts from another cultural context, it brings with it radically new modes of conceptualization and ways of navigating the world. Translation can transform a people's worldview at a more fundamental level and prepare them for all kinds of radical breaks from tradition.

This is precisely the subject matter of my essay ‘Conceptual History, the Introduction of Linear Time into the Chinese Language, and Chinese Modernity.’ It examines how, by introducing a linear temporal framework into the Chinese language, translation transformed the Chinese people’s *Weltanschauung* at a fundamental level – only with that transformation did China become truly ready for modernity. Tenses did not exist in classical Chinese. But given the prominence of the temporal dimension in Western languages, time markers were gradually invented for the Chinese language as intellectuals engaged in translations of Western texts. These time markers brought a linear concept of time to Chinese society, and only with that new way of experiencing time could ‘the modern’ become conceivable for the Chinese people. The time consciousness brought about by translation, in other words, gave the Chinese a new concept of the future and laid the path for China’s modernization.

2. 2. Restoring translation to the centre of the stage; historicizing translation and translation criticism

Whenever a translated text is used, most academic departments treat the text as the product of the author rather than the translator. Except for the Translation Studies Department, translation becomes a subject of discussion only when it is necessary to clarify how the translation ‘distorts’ the original. Furthermore, such ‘distortions’ are nearly always discussed in a static manner as if they were ‘pure’ mistakes regardless of the historical and cultural circumstances. Such discussions falsify translation as a mere slavish verbal delivery of the source text devoid of any conceptual struggles between the source and target texts, and strips the translation activity of its social-political contexts that give rise to those struggles in the first place.

Begriffsgeschichte, by contrast, makes clear that there is *no right or wrong translations, but only successful and unsuccessful renditions at a given moment in history. In other words, conceptual history removes the original text from the position of the source of authority against which all translations are supposed to be measured. Conceptual history foregrounds instead translation as a battlefield upon which different conceptual wars and their linguistic renditions need to be fought.* The battles for domination are waged not just between the source and the target cultures, but also among different possible translations. Even more intriguing, these battles are open-ended, and the history of translation can never be declared to have come to an end. What is deemed to be wrong translation in one historical period may become the authoritative translation at another time, and *vice versa*. Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible, for example, was initially condemned as heresy but became canonized after his successful maneuvers of the power structure.

Applying the conceptual history method to examine how translation reflect and effect social-political changes, one can restore translation to the centre of the stage. Under the scrutiny of the conceptual history method, the target text is no longer a slavish, always inferior copy of the source text, nor is ‘distortion’ of the source text mere ‘mistranslation’ passively awaiting criticism of its failure to live up to the original. Rather, the differences between the translation and the original call attention to the agency of the translator and his/her ability to subvert the power hierarchy between the source and the target cultures, and to creatively (mis-)understand, reinterpret, and to reformulate the source text in order to serve the target culture. László Kontler correctly highlights that the conceptual history

approach returns attention from the author to the translator, and that any translated text ‘must [...] be understood in terms of an agenda specific to the translator’s historical context’:

because [*Begriffsgeschichte*] regards translation as an act of reading, filtering into an independent speech act substantially conditioned by the translator’s historical circumstances, it prioritizes the intentions of the translator over those of the author of the text in its interpretation.¹⁷

I wish to take Kontler a step further. *Begriffsgeschichte*, in highlighting how each translation necessarily interacts with its historical and cultural circumstances, foregrounds the relations between translation and its historical contexts. For this reason, *Begriffsgeschichte* does not just reaffirm the dignity of the translation in relation to the original; it also draws attention to how the original text is haunted by what Benjamin calls an ‘afterlife’ – an afterlife which can never be closed. There is always the possibility of new translations, and along with it new cultural and historical circumstances to be brought into dialogue with the source text. Thus the source text is always already in exile, and always already shot through and through by history.

2.3. Historical evaluations of terms in both the source and target cultures

Approaches animated by political correctness tend to reify certain terms as either intrinsically good or intrinsically bad. Feminist translation critics, for example, tend to focus on sexist languages in the source and target texts. By contrast, *Begriffsgeschichte* always evaluates terms in their cultural historical contexts. For example, a conceptual historian would not call an English writer prior to the 1960s using the term ‘man’ to translate ‘humankind’ to be necessarily more male-chauvinistic than a Chinese writer deploying gender neutral language. Conceptual history does not only pay attention to the history of terms. By attending to the interactions between thought and society, conceptual history always carefully examines the ethos of the entire society and its historical change, and evaluate the history of concepts in that context. By historicizing both the terms and the ethos of the entire cultural context, and by exploring their interactions thereof, *Begriffsgeschichte* avoids the kind of binary thinking to which politically correct approaches may be vulnerable.

2.4. Re-examining the ethics of translation and deconstructing Venuti

The translation strategies described by Venuti as ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’ are nothing new in the history of translation. Nonetheless, the formulation by Venuti in terms of the ‘ethics of translation’ in 1995 captured the imagination of many, and remains influential in translation studies to date. Domestication prioritizes the target culture, foreignization the source culture. Domestication involves rendering the source text (ST) close to the linguistic and cultural conventions of the target language; foreignization breaks the conventions of the target language in order to preserve the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the source text. Venuti extols the latter as a principle ‘ethics of translation.’

Venuti goes so far as to equate domestication with ‘ethnocentric violence.’ This claim, regretfully, seems to be made without attention to the fact that ethical and ideological

analyses need to be conducted with attention to an act's *historical* context. Domestication is not intrinsically unethical as foreignization is not always already ethical. When comparing Hong Kong and China's translations of 'bus' via a *Begriffsgeschichte* method, it becomes immediately clear that it is the foreignizing translation (*bashi*) adopted in Hong Kong which reinforces the power structure and the dominant values of the colonizer. In contrast, the Chinese translation *gonggong qiche* resists the hegemony of the colonizer's culture by domesticating 'bus' into the Chinese language and Chinese cultural and social needs. Furthermore, the Chinese translation – immediately intelligible as it was even at the initial stage of its coinage to all Chinese with or without Western education – sent the message that vehicle and mobility were of the public, for the public, and by the public, by virtue of their equality in the new *re-public*. Far from reinforcing the power differential between the haves and the have-nots, the domesticating translation sought to introduce democracy and empower the weak.

Venuti, in other words, seems to have theorized about the ethics of translation in a power vacuum, without attending to the fact that his belief in the ethics of foreignization is a hasty generalization based on his privileged position as an American speaking about English translations of texts from less hegemonic cultures. For a translator-theorist whose mother tongue and target language are English, foreignization would look like the ethical way of preserving the voice of the weak. In cases where the source culture is an imperial power, however, violence against vulnerable cultures would far more likely be committed by foreignization, as my analysis of the Hong Kong translation of 'bus' already demonstrates. When it comes to the subaltern translating texts from the colonial master, foreignization would amount to perpetrating colonialism by eroding the native voice with the voice of the master. For colonized and semi-colonized countries such as China in the early twentieth century, nation-building is an urgent project, as is the preservation and protection of the national language against foreign encroachment. Domestication under such historical circumstances would be an ethical and political necessity.

Notes

1. Contrary to the common academic practice of associating the will to power with the will to domination, I am taking a different path by reading the former alongside China's will to empowerment and her will to resist domination.
2. Koselleck, "Neuzeit: Zur Semantik moderner Bewegungsbegriffe," and its translation as "Neuzeit: Remarks on the Semantics of the Modern Concepts of Movement."
3. Koselleck, "Begriffsgeschichte and Social History," 80.
4. Richter, "Conceptual History and Translation: An Interview with Melvin Richter," 227.
5. Such publications included *The Eastern Pictorial* (东方画报, 1934), *The English-Chinese Dictionary of Definitions, Composition, Grammar, and Synonyms* (英汉求解、作文、文法、辨义四用辞典, 1936), and *World Standard English-Chinese Dictionary of Phrases* (世界标准英汉辞典, 1936).
6. It was through years of efforts that the more cosmopolitan Chinese gradually convinced their fellow countrymen that the real urgent task was for China to gain recognition by the international community through her participation in the Olympic Events; whether the Chinese athletes could gain recognition at the podium should not be the primary concern. In 1904, many Chinese newspapers and journals contributed to educating the population by reporting on the Third Olympic Games. One magazine published an

introduction to the history of the Olympics in 1906. This was followed by a speech given by the highly respected educator Zhang Boling (张伯苓) at the Tianjin Schools' Sports Day (天津学界运动会 on 24 October 1907). Choosing the Olympics as his topic, Zhang emphasized that many European countries which did not expect to perform well nonetheless sent their athletes to participate in the Games. He strongly recommended China to take part also. After the London Olympics in 1908, a pro-active newspaper in Tianjin urged that China should fight for the opportunity to participate in the Olympics and even to bid for its hosting rights. Besides educating the population with its publication of the history of the Olympics, the newspaper also held a forum devoted to this international event. Inspired by the slogans "China in the Olympics (争取早日参加奥运会)!" and "China to host the Olympics (争取早日在中国举办奥运)!", the first pan-China sports events was held on 18–22 October 1910.

7. On the second occasion, it was more a matter of his drifting downstream with the tide.
8. Concepts were heavily mobilized as weapons by both the East and the West during the Cold War period. For instance, the PRC along with other Communist countries injected strongly positive semantics into the term "the people" (人民 *renmin*) and used it as a counter-concept to the Western concept "citizen." Likewise, *airen* (爱人 "my beloved") displaced the bourgeois nuclear family concept of "my husband/wife" (丈夫/太太).
9. For more detailed analysis between the Olympic Games and imperialism, see Guttman's *Games and Empires*, Beacom's *International Diplomacy and the Olympic Movement*, Llewellyn's *Rule Britannia*, and Levinson and Christensen's *Encyclopedia of World Sport*. One telling evidence of the imperialistic nature of such events was that Africans were not allowed to compete in the Olympics except as subjects. Only later did they gain their own autonomous status in such events.
10. Eighteen years after the beginning of the first modern Olympics, these competitions did finally took explicit military form, and the empires began their first *world war*.
11. For an elaborate analysis of this subject, please see my essay "Translation, 'International Athletic Event,' and International Relations: Chinese Translations of 'Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες.'"
12. Koselleck, "Neuzeit," 251.
13. Note that some variations on *gonggong qiche* "巴士" (such as 大巴 [big bus]) has been increasingly adopted by people in Mainland China since the age of globalization, even though *gonggong qiche* (公共汽车 public vehicle) continues to be the official term. Once again, in the linguistic change itself we can detect the social political changes. In this case, the increasing popularity of "大巴" in China reflects the country's move away from Mao's anti-Westernization stance and its embrace of Western values. Especially worth noting in this abandonment of the term "public vehicle" is the gradual decline of public consciousness in China. "Bus," in other words, has gradually lost its political significance of being "of the people, for the people, and by the people." What is left is merely a privatized, instrumental concept of the bus as a means of transportation for different individuals.
14. Long before social life in the pan-China region became impacted by globalization, Western-minded Chinese often mixed in English words in their daily speech to give themselves an air of superiority in contrast to others who could only use Chinese. This trend started in Hong Kong and then spreaded to Taiwan and Mainland China.
15. In the post-Mao era, China began its path of Westernization by learning from Hong Kong. It is thus not surprising that the loan word in Hong Kong gets assimilated into people's daily language in China.
16. The paper was given at the Re-thinking Power and the State in History Conference, Finnish Centre of Excellence in Historical Research, Tampere, Finland, October 12, 2015. It was published at the conference's website along with other papers until mid-2016, and is currently being revised for publication by a journal.
17. Kontler, "Translation and Comparison, Translation as Comparison: Aspects of Reception in the History of Ideas."

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