

The Translation and Research of Sichuan Modern and Contemporary Literature in the US

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on the translation and research of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature. Through the CNKI search system, the official website of Hong Kong magazine "Translation collection", "Today's Chinese Literature" and other search systems, this paper collects the information and data about the translated Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States from the early 20th century to December 2021, and then it draws the travel path of the literary works as well as analyzes the existing problems and opportunities in the process, and finally it puts forward countermeasures to promote the international publicity and translation of Chinese literary works.*

Keywords: *Sichuan Modern and Contemporary Literature, Translation and Research, US,*

With the implementation of the strategy of "Chinese culture going out", the Chinese government has set up a series of projects such as Chinese Translation Project, Chinese Contemporary Works Translation Project, classic China International Publishing Project so as to promote the overseas dissemination of Chinese literature. However, these projects intend to translate and publish all Chinese literary works overseas, and as a result, the literary works in each region can only get very limited financial support from them. Therefore, it is necessary to sort out the detailed history and feature of overseas translation and research in each regional Chinese literature so as to figure out specific problems and then work out targeted countermeasures to strengthen the external literary communication. This paper tries to sort out the translation and research track of Sichuan modern and contemporary in the United States since the early 20th century till the end of 2021, in hope of clarifying the detailed characteristics in transmission and finding the way to accelerate the dissemination in the United States.

1. History of Sichuan Modern and Contemporary Literature Translation in the US

Taking 1979 and 2000 as nodes, the translation and dissemination of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States can be divided into three stages. The initial stage begins in 1936 when Ba Jin's work "Dog" (1931) was translated and included in the collection "Living China" (1936) published by George Harap Publishing House in the US. This is considered as the beginning of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature translation in the US. The second stage starts in the year 1979, when China and the United States formally established diplomatic relations, and ends in 2000. It is generally considered as the development stage, in which the translation activities are much more active than the initial stage. From 2001 to December 2021, it is the third stage, which shows great challenges and opportunities.

1.1 The Initial Stage

Ba Jin is the first Sichuan modern and contemporary writer translated to the United States. T'ung Tso's translation of Ba Jin's short story "Dog"(1931) in Living China was first published by George Harap in 1936 and republished in the United States in *The Voice of China* in 1938. In the same year, the short revolutionary novel *Revenge and Other Stories by Ba Jin (1931)* was published by the Central Publishing House in an English and Chinese parallel edition. Six years later, Excerpts from Chen Chi's translation of "Home" (1933) was published in *Contemporary Chinese Stories* by Columbia Press in 1944. Apart from Ba Jin, Sha Ting is the second earliest modern and contemporary Sichuan writer translated by the scholars in the United States. In the year 1937, translation of Sha ting's Short story *A Flight Beyond the Law* (1932) was included in Edgar Snow's *Living China Modern Chinese Short Stories* published by Reynal and Hitchcock. From early twentieth century to the year 1949, when the

People's Republic of China was founded, there were two Sichuan modern and contemporary writers and four literary works translated and introduced into the United States.

Since 1949 Sichuan modern and contemporary literary works have mainly relied on the magazine *Chinese Literature* to be exported to the United States. In June 1950, the military conflicts broke out on the Korean Peninsula and the US representative to the UN slandered the image of the Chinese volunteers in Korean Peninsula. The misunderstanding of Chinese image urged the Chinese government to take the initiative to introduce modern and contemporary Chinese literature and culture to the world, especially to the Western world, in order to change and reshape China's international image. This diplomatic incident leads to the establishment of the English-language Chinese Literature magazine. Politics aside, Yang Xianyi, editor-in-chief and senior translator of the Chinese Literature, recalls: "Around 1950, many overseas scholars showed some interest in Chinese new literature, especially when the liberated area literature in the 1940s and 1950s, were almost unknown in foreign countries. So many Chinese scholars thought it was necessary to establish a magazine for overseas readers to know outstanding modern and contemporary Chinese literary works, and to promote the image of new China." (Zhang Ting, 2017). In 1951 Chinese Literature was first published in English. Due to the insufficient preparation, there was a single one issue published in 1951 and 1952, and it added to two issues in 1953. Later, thanks to the good response abroad, it became a quarterly magazine in 1954, a bimonthly magazine in 1958 and a monthly magazine in 1959. From 1951 to 1964, five modern and contemporary Sichuan writers and 11 literary works were translated to the United States, as shown in the table 1.

Table 1

Year	Author's Name	Works translated
1954	Pa Chin	Comrade Huang Wen _yuan
1957	Sha Ting	An Autumn Night
1958	KUO Mo-JO	The Nirvana of Feng and Huang
1961	Sha Ting	The Contest
1961	Chen YI	Poems
1962	Pa Chin	The Heart of a Slave
1962	Pa Chin	A Moonlit Night
1962	Pa Chin	When the Snow Melt
1962	Ai Wu	Wild Bull Village
1964	Sha Ting	The Story of Old Droopy
1978	KUO MO-JO	The Nirvana of Feng and Huang

In addition to the high literary value of the literature itself, the selection of literary works have also been influenced by the following factors. The first factor is column setting. In 1954, Sichuan modern and contemporary literary works were selected for translation for the first time. This is because since 1954 the column arrangement of the Chinese Literature has begun to cover modern literary works such as novels, essays, book reviews, etc. (Ni Xiuhua, 2013), together with classical novels, poems, editor's notes, centerfold drawings. It can be seen that the works of modern and contemporary Sichuan writers have been selected and translated as soon as the Chinese Literature begins to publish modern literary works. The second factor is editorial policy. At the beginning of its establishment, the editorial policy was mainly to introduce the literature of the liberated areas to the outside world and to publish the works reflecting the main trend of the Times. It is found that as long as the literary works have been published by the People's Literature Publishing House, they would be soon selected, translated and published by the *Chinese Literature*. For example, Ba Jin's *Comrade Huang Wenyuan* (1953) was published in People's Literature in May 1953, and it was selected and translated in 1954. Similarly, Sha Ting's *Ni Zhui Wo Gan* (1960) was first published in The People's Literature in October 1960, and The English version of "*The Contest*" was published in the Chinese Literature in 1961. It can be seen that at the beginning of the publication, the editors of the Chinese Literature selected works from such literary journals as *People's Literature*, *People's Daily*, *Literary and Art Daily*, etc. The third is political factor. The magazine kept translating Sichuan modern and contemporary works from Ba Jin's *Comrade Huang Wenyuan* in 1954 to Sha Ting's *The Story of Old Smoke* in 1964. However, in 1965 the Cultural Revolution broke out. As a result, the Chinese Literature began to translate and publish revolutionary model operas and Lu Xun's works during the decade of the Cultural Revolution. It was in 1978 when the Cultural Revolution came to the end that the magazine come to publish the works of modern and contemporary Sichuan writers again. Yet, it is worth mentioning that during the cultural revolution, the academic research institutions overseas have come to pay attention to the Chinese modern and contemporary literature. For example: in 1965, Sha Ting's work *An Autumn Night* (1945) was included

in Genez Hanrahan's *50 Great Oriental Stories*, published by Bantam Books. Diana Granat's translation of Ba Jin's *A Good Man* was published in *Asian Pacific Quarterly* by Michigan Press in 1974. Ba Jin's novella *Home (1931)* was translated by Sidney Shapiro by Foreign Languages Press in 1958, and republished by Anchor Books in New York in 1972. Liu Sunyan's English translation of Ba Jin's novel *Cold Nights (1946)* was published by The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press in 1978.

Generally speaking, from 1936 to 1979, the literary works of Sichuan modern and contemporary writers were mainly translated and published by Chinese Literature into the United States. The writers involved were Ba Jin, Sha Ting, Ai Wu, Guo Moruo and Chen Yi. Although there were only four writers and 18 works translated in the initial stage, yet it has built the bridge for the Sichuan literary works to be known overseas.

1.2 The Development Stage

Since 1979, the literary exchanges and the translation activities between China and the US have become increasingly active. Therefore the translation channels and approaches in this stage are more diversified. Apart from the Chinese Literature, there have been nine publishing houses participated in the translation activities.

The Chinese Literature keeps the editorial policy at the beginning of its publication. From 1979 to 2000, five modern and contemporary Sichuan writers and eight literary works have been translated to the United States, as shown in the table 2.

Table 2

Year	Author's Name	Works Translated
1979	Liu Xin-wu	The Class Teacher
1979	Ba Jin	Autumn in Spring
1981	Li Jieren	Ripples Across Stagnant Water
1982	Ba Jin	Selected Early Writings
1984	Ba Jin	Stories of Ba Jin
1986	Liu Xin-wu	Bus Aria
1992	AI WU	Banana Vale
1993	Ngaleg	A Journey on the Highland

Since the 1980s, The Hong Kong Translation Collection magazine has joined in the translation activities. Its official website has published the works of Liu Xinwu, including *Black Wall*(1958) , *White Teeth*(1958) , *Bus Aria* (1986), *Wishful Thinking*(1982). It is evident that the selection style of Hong Kong Translation Collection magazine is more diverse and free, which is exactly complementary to the selection policy of the Journal *Chinese Literature*. In addition, the China Literature Publishing House, the Hong Kong regional publishing House, and the American university and commercial publishing Houses have also contributed to the translation and publication of modern and contemporary Sichuan literature in the United States. Ba Jin's *Autumn in Spring* translated by Wang Mingjie, Dai Naidi and Tang Sheng was published by China Literature Publishing House in 1981 as a single edition of Panda Series. Liu Sunyan's English translation of Ba Jin's novel *Cold Nights* was published in 1978 by the Chinese University of Hong Kong Press as a single book "*Cold Nights*". Later, this book was re translated by Jock Hoe and included into "*Selected Works of Ba Jin*" (including *Home*, *Spring*, *Autumn*, *The Garden of Rest*, and *Cold Nights*) and republished by Foreign Languages Press in 1988. Sally Lieberman's translation of Ba Jin's *First Memories* was included in *Renditions 38* in 1992 and published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Haili Kong and Howard Goldblatt also translated Ba Jin's diary novel *The Fourth Ward*, which was published in 1999. Ba Jin's *The General*, translated by Nathan Mao and collected into *Stories of Contemporary Chinese Fiction 1918-1948* (edited by Joseph S.M.Lau, Leo Ou-Fan Lee, and C.T. Hsia) was published by Columbia University Press. The translation activities of Sha ting's works include: in 1982, People's Literature Publishing House released a collection of panda books, which included five Sha ting's works: "*Murderer*" "*Magnet*" "*In his Sweet House*" "*In a Tea house*" "*An Autumn Night*" and "*The Story of Old Droopy*". In 1990, Ellen Yeung translated Sha ting's *The Way of The Beast* and it was published by Stanford University Press.

Apart from the various translation channels and approaches, re-translation phenomenon is prominent, especially the re-translation and republication of Ba Jin's works. *The Home*, Ba Jin's representative work, from 1944 to 1988 has been translated respectively by Chi Chen in 1944, Sidney Shapiro in 1958, 1972, and Jock Hoe in 1988, and the translated literature have been published by Columbia Press, the Foreign Languages Press, the Anchor Books. In addition, Ba Jin's early short story

The Slave's Heart, *Snow* and *A Moonlit Night* have also been translated and published first by Chinese Literature and then published by Panda Series again. Similarly, Sha Ting's works have also been re-translated and republished. "*An Autumn Night*" was first published in Chinese Literature in 1957, and then collected in *50 Great Oriental Stories* published by Bantam Books in 1965, and selected in a single collection of the Panda series in 1982. Likewise, *The Chasing After Me* was first published by Chinese Literature in 1961 and then selected in Kai-Yu Hsu's *Literature of People's Republic of China* published by Indiana University in 1980 (Yanqiu Cui, 2014). It is easy to find that the translators in the second stage involved are Native English speakers such as Sidney Shapiro, Jock Hoe, Haili Kong and Howard Goldblatt, all of who are either from the Department of Chinese language and literature in the United States, or are academic translators, yet in the first stage the translation activities were mainly carried by Chinese famous translators, such as Wang Mingjie and Tang Sheng.

On the whole, the translation Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States has made great progress during this period. Altogether, there have been six modern and contemporary writers from Sichuan including Ba Jin, Sha Ting, Ai Wu, Liu Xinwu, Li Jieren and A Lai, and 29 literary works in total translated and introduced into the United States, a significant increase compared with the previous period. Moreover, the translation channels are more diversified, not only including People's Literature Publishing House, Publishing House of Chinese literature, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, but also including Stanford University Press, Indiana University Press, Columbia Press, as well as Bantam Books and Anchor Books. However, the translation genre is relatively simple, mainly novels, including some documentary literature.

1.3 The Present Challenge Stage

Sichuan writer, A Lai was born in Maerkang city, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. In May 2000, A Lai's first novel *The Dust Settles* (formerly known as *Red Poppy*) won the fifth Mao Dun Literature Prize, and he became the first Tibetan writer to win the prize, which triggered overseas translation activities of A Lai's works. In 2018, Mushroom Circle won the seventh Lu Xun Literature Prize for Novelette. Thus, A Lai became the first winner of the Mao Dun Prize and Lu Xun Prize in the history of Sichuan literature. This event marked that Sichuan modern and contemporary literature has been further recognized by Chinese modern and contemporary literary circles, and brought new opportunities and challenges for the translation of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature outside the region.

A Lai's *The First Road* was first translated and published in Chinese Literature in 1993. And it was not until 2000 when he won the Mao Dun Literature Prize that A Lai's works have drawn the attention of overseas scholars. In 2001, Herbert Batt translated *Wind over the Grasslands* and incorporated it into *Tales of Tibet: Sky Burials, Prayer Wheels, and Wind Horses* published by Rowman and Little Field. In 2002, Howard Goldblatt, SyIvia and Li Chun lin co-translated the *Red Poppies*, later renamed *The Dust Settles* published by Houghton Mifflin. Later "*Blood Ties*" was translated by Karen Gernant and Chen Zeping and published in 2005. In 2007 Columbia press published *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* edited by Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt, which contains A Lai's *Fish* translated by Howard Goldblatt. In 2012, The Foreign Languages Press published *Chinese Literature Today* including four A Lai's works: *An Excerpt from King Gesar*, *The Shepherd's Dream*, *The Hydroelectric Station* and *The Threshing Machine*.

In this period, under the influence of Mao Dun Literature Prize, there have been eight works of A Lai translated. In 2018, Alai won the seventh Lu Xun Literature Prize, which will once again arouse foreign attention to Sichuan modern and contemporary literature. The data on the translation and dissemination of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States was collected by December 2021, so it is still difficult to make an accurate judgment on the future trend of the translation and dissemination of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States. However, it is believed that with the accelerating pace of Sichuan's modern and contemporary literary works "going out", translation activities will continue to increase.

2. History of Sichuan Modern and Contemporary literature Research in the US

Until December 2021, American academic circles have published a total of 14 academic achievements related to Sichuan modern and contemporary literature, including 4 academic journal papers and 10 academic dissertations. At present, there is a phenomenon of "uneven hot and cold" in

the study of Sichuan modern and contemporary Literature in American academia. The study mainly focuses on Ba Jin and A Lai, and other writers are seldom discussed.

The dissertation on Sichuan modern and contemporary literature named *A Study of European Grammar of "Family"* first appeared in 1975 by Cormelius Charles Kubler of Cornell University. Kubler makes a detailed comparison between the original version of *"Home,"* published in 1931 when Ba Jin was 26, and a revised version published in 1957. Then in 1989 Minghan Xiao graduated from Ohio University with the dissertation named *The Deteriorism of Upper Class Families in the Works of William Faulkner and Ba Jim*. Xiao compares the similarities and differences between Chinese writer Ba Jin and the American author Faulkner in dealing with story background and plot setting, and claims that both authors are full of humanistic concern. In 1993 there were two doctoral dissertations dealing with Ba Jin including Craig Sudler Shaw's PhD thesis *Ba Jin's Dream: Sentiment and Social Criticism in "Jia and The Transparency of Chinese Realism: The Textual Studies of Lu Xun, Ba Jin, Mao Dun, and Lao She,* by Rujie Wang of State University of New Jersey at New Brunswick. Apart from the text analysis of fiction, there are also biographical descriptive research, analyzing impacts of the author's life experience on his literary creation. For example, in 2011 Yi Ju Huang of University of Illinois finished the doctoral dissertation named *Wounds in Times: The Aesthetic Afterlives of the Cultural Revolution*. It discusses the influence of the Cultural Revolution on Ba Jin's creative style. The style of Ba Jin's late works became more and more verbose, which was a reflection of the author's inner trauma. In 2016 Kristin Stapleton's work *Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's Family* was published by Stanford Press. It is a quasi-biography of Ba Jin, which maps Ba Jin's real-life experiences to his fictional plots. Moreover, Craig Sudler Shaw's PhD thesis *"Ba Jin's Dream: Emotional and Social Criticism in "Home"* and Nimrod Baranovitch's *Literary Liberation of Tibet's Past: Indigenous Voices in A Lai "Red Poppy"* are both based on a closed reading of the text, followed by a discussion of the author's creative intentions and social impact in the context of his work.

In 2000, A Lai won the fifth Mao Dun Literature Prize, and American scholars began to pay attention to his works, especially his masterpiece *The Dust Settles*. Mary Vipuri's 2003 paper *"Red Poppies by A Lai: Pre-occupation Tibet, a brutal world talks about the question of identity in A La's Red Poppies."* In 2019, the journal *World Literature Today*, published an interview with D Dayton on A Lai, titled as *"Emerging New Literature: Growing New Forms of Literature: A Conversation with Tibetan Writer A Lai"*. It not only discusses translation and creation, translation and language, literature "globalization" and "localization", but also measures to promote the development of contemporary Chinese literature in the world cultural exchange.

To sum up, the scope of research on dissertation is broad. Both American scholars and overseas Chinese students pay attention not only to the internal differences between Chinese and Western literary works, but also to the internal and external comparative studies of literary works. In the past few decades, it can be found that the depth and breadth of American academic research on modern and contemporary Literature in Sichuan still need to be improved. The main reason is that the number of modern and contemporary Sichuan literary works translated in the United States is small, and there is a serious shortage of works for research.

3. Countermeasures for the Dissemination of Sichuan Modern and Contemporary Literature in the United States

In recent years, many outstanding writers have emerged in Sichuan literary circle, such as Yan Ge, Hu Yun, Qi Jinnian, Ning Hangyi, A Wei Muyiluo, Zhou Kai, etc. They have created excellent works in the fields of fiction, poetry, prose and so on, and made remarkable achievements. However, there is no denying that Sichuan modern and contemporary literature is in a state of prosperity at home and cold abroad, which has a great deal to do with the insufficient translation and research of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States. At the same time, in the face of the urgent need for Chinese literature to "go out" of *The Times*, it is necessary to take the following three measures in the future to speed up the spread of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States.

First, increase government support. In recent years, in order to support The "going out" of Chinese literature, the Chinese government has issued a series of policies, increased financial input, and set up a series of projects, such as Chinese Translation Project, Chinese Contemporary Works Translation Project, Classic China International Publishing Project and so on. However, these projects are facing all Chinese literary works, and the specific funding for Sichuan modern and contemporary literary works is very limited, which hardly meet the overall demand of Sichuan modern and contemporary literary

works to "go out". Therefore, the local government is required to subsidize the foreign translation activities of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature. Second, subsidize modern and contemporary writers from Sichuan to participate in international academic exchanges. It provides regular opportunities for modern and contemporary writers from Sichuan to participate in international academic exchanges and to communicate with internationally renowned Chinese scholars. To a great extent, it can promote many excellent translations of Modern and contemporary Sichuan literature in the United States. Third, based on colleges and universities, "send out" Sichuan writers and "invite in" American translators to provide them with regular dialogue and exchange opportunities, deepen American scholars' correct cognition and understanding of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature, and create powerful conditions for the translation and research of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States.

4. Conclusions

Through combing through the information on the Sichuan modern and contemporary literature translated and published in the US from early twentieth century to the end of the year 2021, this paper finds out that the translation and publication channels are becoming more various. Apart from the main support from the Chinese government, more and more commercial publishing houses have joined the translation activities. Besides, the Mao Dun prize effects are noticeable, which is very typical in the translation heat of Sichuan writer A Lai's works in the recent years. However, on the whole, the translation selection has been restricted within few renowned authors, and therefore, more government support and international academic exchanges are expected to promote more desirable conditions for the translation and research of Sichuan modern and contemporary literature in the United States.

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