

Research Article

A Sociological Study into the Impact of Capital on Moss Roberts' Translation—*Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*

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Abstract

The study of translation has undergone a shift from language-level analysis to a cultural turn and, subsequently, a return to a more macroscopic social perspective. As social research in translation primarily targets external factors, it falls under centrifugal research in translation studies. To sustain the vitality of translation studies, there is a need for a balanced approach, combining centrifugal research with centripetal research. Moss Roberts' translation of *San Guo Yan Yi* is initiated by China Foreign Language Press and co-published by China and the US presses in 1991. It is considered the most academic complete English version of *San Guo Yan Yi*. Drawing on the social practice theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, this study analyzes Moss Roberts' translation practices of and the influence of capital in the English translation and dissemination field. It attempts a micro-level and reverse study of sociological aspects of translation by examining three key aspects: the influence of cultural capital, the impact of social capital, and the manipulation of power capital. The results showed that Moss Roberts' translation practices are deeply influenced by his cultural, social and power capital. Among them, his cultural capital enables the translation to be academic; his social capital empowers it to be accurate and faithful; and his power capital manipulates it where religious information arises.

Keywords

Social Perspective, Capital, Moss Roberts' Translation, *San Guo Yan Yi*

1. Introduction

San Guo Yan Yi or *Three Kingdoms* is one of the four classic literary masterpieces in ancient Chinese literature. It is the first to be completed as a book and the first to be translated into English among the four masterpieces. In recent years, the publicity or “going out” of Chinese culture and literature has been put on the agenda of Chinese government and has been promoted as a strategy among all other policies. Therefore, the study of translations of ancient Chinese literature is in accordance with the trend. This study probes into a sociological perspective of the translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*, aiming to

reveal the impact on the translated text on a societal level. Relevant studies on the translation of ancient Chinese literature mainly focus on the literary and at most the cultural aspects. There are scarcely any research investigating the issue on a broader and more macroscopic societal level, let alone the societal influence on a translated text. However, this is what this study has put emphasis on. To link the translated text to the social environment opens up a new angle for the study of translation, to which greater importance has been attached gradually by more and more researchers.

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For example, as a sociologist, Bourdieu has once discussed translation in terms of introducing foreign literature by small agents, large publishers as well as independent translators [1]. He puts translation studies against a background of the operation of social mechanisms. Besides, other sociologists have adopted Bourdieu's theory on social practice, Latour's theory on social behavior, and Luhmann's theory on social systems to study the social aspects of translation. Sapiro has followed Bourdieu's argument on translation which she applies to French literature in the book market of the United States [2]. Heilbron points out that linguistic diversity should be promoted by means of investing more into the translation of source languages other than English [3]. Based on Bourdieu's concept of capital, Casanova puts forward a new concept of "literary capital", which is measured by the number of translators of a literary text in the international literary field [4]. There are also scholars on translation studies who delve into the relationship between social settings and translation. Unlike sociologists who apply sociological theories to peripheral factors, translation researchers always use sociological theories to study concrete translators [5-8]. Most of their studies focus on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which means stable and lasting predispositions formed through an individual's social life [9]. Nonetheless there is a lack of text analysis.

All in all, although many efforts have been made to explore the relationship between social environment and translation, they all deviate from translated texts. As if sociological studies can only explain the surroundings of translation, they are rarely done to find out the societal influence on concrete texts. Moreover, translation researchers prefer to study the habitus of a particular translator, and Bourdieu's another concept—capital—is largely neglected, which is also capable of explaining, if not more objectively, the translation activities. In addition, despite all sociological studies on Chinese literary translation, there are hardly any such studies on the literary masterpiece *San Guo Yan Yi*. All these shortages provide a good opportunity for this study to fill the existing gaps. This study first looks back to the studies of translations of *Three Kingdoms*, trying to comb different perspectives of the studies. And then, we focus on the studies of Moss Roberts's translated version in order to determine our research object. Next, we give a summary of Bourdieu's field theory, also known as the theory on social practice, with a focus on his concept of capital and the division of capitals. Finally, we discuss the impact of capitals on Roberts's translated texts with detailed examples and make a conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Studies of Translations of *Three Kingdoms*

There aren't plenty of researchers discussing the translation of *San Guo Yan Yi* outside of China, the number of which is dwarfed by Chinese scholars. In *Three Kingdoms and Chinese Culture*, American scholars Kimberly Ann Besio and Con-

stantine Tung has pointed out that there are no studies into the translation of *San Guo Yan Yi* outside of China [10]. Luo and Wang also argue in a review of that book that Besio and Tung's monograph is the first to focus on *San Guo Yan Yi* in English, but it's a pity that they haven't discuss its translation [11]. After that, Junjie Luo publishes one of a book series edited by Ban Wang, a professor of Stanford University, namely *Traditional Chinese Fiction in the English-Speaking World*, which focuses on translations of *San Guo Yan Yi* from the first passage to the recent video games. The author holds that the early introductory passage belongs to simple translation and *San Guo Yan Yi* is a historical novel [12]. That is all about the researches into translations of *San Guo Yan Yi* outside of China. Contrary to the sporadic studies from abroad, the studies into English translations of *San Guo Yan Yi* in China is growing vigorously. The Chinese scholars usually conduct the research from two angles—its English translations or its dissemination in the western world.

As to English translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*, some scholars discuss the translation strategies of the novel, dividing them into free translation and faithful translation [13-15]. Other scholars look into the translation styles of different translators. They find that some translators like to use long sentences and abstruse words [16], and some translators prefer to adopt a concise and simple style [17]. Still other scholars analyze the para-texts of translated works, adopting the theory of "thick translation" proposed by Kwame Anthony Appia [18]. All in all, they probe into the translation on a text level. Also, there are researches exploring the dissemination of the translated versions. Some of them focus on the poetic context of translations, pointing out that there is a phenomenon of cultural misreading in all translated versions [19]. Others conclude that the effects of dissemination are not fully satisfactory, and there is still a lot to do in terms of publishing strategies [20-22]. Still others pay attention to the social and historical background of translations [23, 24], but most of them haven't upgraded their research to a sociological perspective. Even though a few researchers do adopt a sociological perspective [23], they haven't touched the relationship between sociological factors and texts.

2.2. Studies of Moss Roberts' Translated Version of *San Guo Yan Yi*

In the 1990s, Moss Roberts released a second complete translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*, and related research gradually followed suit. Most of them focus on the microscopic level of texts. For example, Zhang Haoran and Zhang Xijiu discuss the translation skills of Roberts, claiming that Roberts has used a variety of techniques including literal translation, paraphrasing, expansion and annotation [13]. Liu Hongquan and Liu Qihong classify the translations of "半" (half) in Roberts' version, giving a summary of many regular translation patterns [25]. Very few of the researchers probe into the macroscopic level of Moss Roberts and other actors' activities during the translation and publishing of *San Guo Yan Yi* [23].

Yet there is a paucity of research discussing how the macroscopic environment influences the microscopic texts. They either focus on the macro level or concentrate on the micro level. Therefore, this study brings centrifugal research back to centripetal research, investigating the missing link between the two levels.

3. Bourdieu's Social Field Theory

French sociologist Bourdieu has put forward the theory of "field". It is also called social practice theory. Field is defined by Bourdieu as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)" [26]. Based on such exposition, we can affirm that Bourdieu's concept of "fields" is employed to describe the interrelations between social structures and individual behaviors. In his theory, a field can be understood as a form of organization within social life, constituting a relatively independent social space characterized by various social forces, the distribution of resources, and governing rules. Individuals and groups within these spaces engage in competition to acquire limited resources such as power, status, and capital. The field is a structurally significant concept used to depict diverse domains of social life, including but not limited to the economic, political, cultural, and educational realms.

In the definition of field, there is a concept of "capital". Capital originates from Marx's theories and Bourdieu consistently develop and transform this concept. Bourdieu believed that capital is not a singular concept but rather encompasses various forms and functions. His classification of capital includes the following types: economic capital, referring to material wealth such as money, property, and production resources; cultural capital, encompassing resources like education, knowledge, skills, and cultural background, which influence individuals' status and opportunities in society; and social capital, involving resources such as social relationships, networks, and trust that have an impact and value in society. Bourdieu also discusses another form of capital beyond these three—namely power capital. Particularly in Bourdieu's studies of socio-pragmatics, when addressing the relationship between language and power, he asserts that language exchange is a manifestation of power relations among speakers or their respective social groups [27]. The power relations among speakers are realized through language exchange, suggesting that the core of this linguistic interchange is power—essentially, power functions as a fluid form of capital. There is a need to navigate the differences between what we intend to say and what we are allowed to say, making com-

promises to ensure the expression is tactful. This study extracts Bourdieu's theories on cultural, social, and power capital, combining them with Moss Roberts' translated text to explore the manipulation of capital of *San Guo Yan Yi* within the field of English translation and dissemination.

4. The Manipulation of Capital in Roberts' English Translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*

4.1. The Influence of Cultural Capital

Moss Roberts (1937-) was born in an unobservant Jewish family in New York. He obtained his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees of literature in Columbia University in 1958, 1960 and 1966 respectively. In 1968, he joined New York University as a professor on Chinese and worked till now. His interests mainly focus on Chinese literature, philosophy and language. He became a fellow of Columbia University Translation Center in 1983 and 1993 and finished the projects of American National Endowment for the Arts and American National Endowment for the Humanities in 1984 and 1986. In 1996, he won the Golden Dozen Teaching Awards in New York University. By 2023, Roberts has been 86 years old. He has engaged in Chinese studies since he attended university. According to himself, the reason he pursued Sinology was that he believed "learning Chinese, Chinese history, and Chinese literature would have promising prospects in the United States and could provide employment opportunities" [28]. On the other hand, in comparison to teaching Chinese, he expressed less interest in the alternative of teaching English, as he found himself more inclined towards "jobs related to foreign languages" [28]. On one hand, this illustrates the utilitarian inclination of the American translator towards Chinese literature; on the other hand, it also indicates his fondness for the Chinese language.

Roberts' cultural capital has a significant impact on the full translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*, primarily evident in the portrayal of characters. As a Sinology professor, Roberts exhibits a steady hand and precise translation in character portrayal, contrasting with the somewhat comical undertone found in Brewitt-Taylor's work—the first full translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*. For instance, when depicting the reaction of Cao Cao upon realizing enemy troops are chasing him, the comparison between Roberts' translation, Brewitt-Taylor's translation, and the original text is illustrated as follows:

Fig. 1: Source Text (ST):后面一军赶到。操心甚慌。原来却是李典、许褚保护着众谋士来到。操大喜，令军马且行，.....

Roberts' Translation (RT): Before they could start, a company of men arrived at the rear. Cao Cao despaired, but it was only Li Dian and Xu Chu guarding the prime minister's advisers. Delighted, Cao Cao ordered his men to continue ad-

vancing.

Brewitt-Taylor's Translation (BT): ...another pursuing party came along and Ts'ao Ts'ao again was terrified. However, these proved to be friends escorting some of his advisers whom he saw with joy. When giving the order to advance again...

The original text describes Cao Cao's reaction, using the phrases “操心甚慌” (deeply worried) and “操大喜” (extremely pleased). Roberts translates “操心甚慌” as “despaired”, according to the *Macmillan English Dictionary*, meaning “the feeling that a situation is so bad that nothing you can do will change it”. On the other hand, Brewitt-Taylor translates it as “terrified”, defined as “extremely frightened” in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Roberts translates “操大喜” as “delighted”, and the dictionary explains it as “very happy, especially because something good has happened”. Brewitt-Taylor translates it as “with joy”, and the dictionary defines “joy” as “a feeling of great happiness”. In Roberts' full translation, meticulous consideration is given to the portrayal of major characters, such as Cao Cao, where emotional contrasts, typical of a military leader, are not too drastic and are logically justified. Another example is as follows:

Eg. 2: ST: 孔明厉声曰: “薛敬文安得出此无父无君之言乎?”

RT: Kongming answered harshly: “So, then, you mean to deny both king and father? ...”

BT: K'ung-ming angrily replied, “Why do you speak so undutifully, as if you knew neither father nor prince?...”

In this instance, when “孔明厉声曰” is translated as “Kongming answered harshly”, the word “harsh” chosen by Roberts, as defined in the *Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary*, conveys a sense of sternness, cruelty, and severity, which aligns well with the context of the phrase. Roberts' translation, opting for “harsh” instead of a more simplistic “angrily”, demonstrates his keen understanding of Zhuge Liang's character, showcasing the accuracy and appropriateness of his portrayal.

Moreover, as a scholar, Roberts' translation language is characterized by its academic nature. In contrast to Brewitt-Taylor's language described as “profound, elegant, and fragrant with antiquity”, Roberts' translation is characterized by its precision, objectivity, professionalism, and conciseness. For example:

Eg. 3: ST: 孔明曰: “昔田横, 齐之壮士耳, 犹守义不辱; 况刘豫州王室之胄, 英才盖世, 众士仰慕。事之不济, 此乃天也。又安能屈处人下乎!”

RT: “Tian Heng,” answered Kongming, “the stalwart loyalist of Qi, held fast to his honor and refused to disgrace himself. A scion of the royal house, renowned in his time, looked up to by men of learning everywhere, how could Lord Liu do less? His failures are ordained and not of his own making. He will not be humiliated.”

BT: “Well, you know Ts'ien Hêng, that hero of the state of Ch'i; his character was too noble for him to submit to any

shame. It is necessary to remember that Liu Pei also is an off-shoot from the dynastic family, beside being a man of great renown. Every one looks up to him. His lack of success is simply the will of Heaven but manifestly he could not bow the knee to any one.”

In this example, Roberts' translation is characterized by several notable aspects. Firstly, it is meticulous; he appends a footnote at the end of this translated sentence, providing additional background information about Tian Heng and remarking that the metaphorical reference to Tian Heng is historically grounded, emphasizing the importance of interpreting it within its historical context. In contrast, Brewitt-Taylor's two-volume complete translation lacks any footnotes. Secondly, Roberts' translation is objective; he renders “壮士” as “stalwart loyalist” rather than “hero”, maintaining a more neutral tone. Additionally, Roberts' translation reflects a high level of professionalism, rendering “王室之胄” as “scion” (descendant of the royal family) rather than the simpler “off-shoot”. Lastly, his translation is concise; in this particular passage, the word count is more economical compared to Brewitt-Taylor's translation, and the sentences are not as elaborate and lengthy.

In summary, Moss Roberts' cultural capital as a Sinology professor has contributed to the precise and fitting portrayal of characters, an academic language style, and a “domesticating” translation strategy easily understandable to Western readers in his full translation. Despite some scholars characterizing Roberts' translation strategy as “foreignizing”, Roberts himself asserts that he employs a “domesticating” approach, and we have identified examples supporting this claim in his translated work. Upon analysis, Roberts' “domestication” does not involve oversimplifying or omitting the original meaning; rather, it faithfully translates the original meaning into English in a way that is comprehensible to Western readers. In conclusion, Roberts' full translation exhibits a high quality and is truly deserving of the prestigious title of the “finest complete translation” of *San Guo Yan Yi*.

4.2. The Influence of Social Capital

In the acknowledgments of Roberts' complete translation of *San Guo Yan Yi*, he expresses gratitude to several key figures from the Foreign Languages Press, including Luo Liang, Vice Editor-in-Chief, Xu Mingqiang, Vice President, Huang Youyi, Vice Editor-in-Chief, Zhao Yihe, Vice Editor-in-Chief, and the renowned translator Ren Jiazhen, among other experts. These individuals were prominent foreign language specialists in China, and their names are still well-known today. Roberts also acknowledges his teachers P. A. Boodberg and W. T. de Bary, as well as editors from the California University Press, including William McClung, James Clark, and Brian George, who facilitated cooperation between the two publishers. He expresses gratitude to Professor Hegel, who provided advice on the manuscript, and to John S. Service, a U.S. political advisor and initial reviewer, invited by California

University Press to assess the manuscript. Additionally, editors from Patheon Books consistently encouraged Roberts in his translation project. Roberts expresses thanks to Brewitt-Taylor, noting that he first encountered *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* through Brewitt-Taylor's complete translation when he did not yet possess sufficient proficiency in Chinese. Finally, Roberts mentions his students and colleagues, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning.

The impact of Roberts' social capital on the complete translation of *San Guo Yan Yi* is evident. Below, we will compare it with his selected translation in 1976. The choice of comparing these two versions is deliberate for several reasons. Firstly, the selected translation was completed by Roberts without as much assistance from Chinese and foreign experts, providing a clear contrast to the influence of later social capital on the complete translation. Secondly, the selected translation covers a relatively rich content, essentially encompassing the narrative of all 120 chapters of *San Guo Yan Yi*, albeit selectively translating certain stories. Thirdly, the content of the complete translation includes that of the selected translation, making the comparison convenient by referring to the selected translation's content and identifying corresponding passages in the complete translation. Lastly, the selected translation is not an adaptation of the original work; it does not deviate significantly from the source text. While it involves the selective translation of certain stories, it remains an English translation and not a reimagining, providing a solid foundation for comparison with the complete translation.

Under the influence of social capital, the translation of specific cultural information in the complete version is more accurate and rigorous compared to the selected translation. For instance, in the original text when describing Zhuge Liang's clever manipulation of Zhou Yu, Zhuge Liang utters the following two sentences:

Eg. 4: ST: 将军决计降曹，可以保妻子，可以全富贵。国祚迁移，付之天命，何足惜哉！

Roberts' Selected Translation (RST): The plan you have formed to submit to Ts'ao ensures the safety of your kinfolk and provides for maintaining your wealth and status. And if the sacrificial services are to be removed elsewhere, why—ascribe it to the mandate of Heaven. Need we burden our memories with these things?

Roberts' Full Translation (RFT): The general's plan to submit to Cao ensures his family's safety and protects his wealth and status. What if the sacred throne of the house of Sun is transferred to another house? Why, ascribe it to the Mandate of Heaven. What do we need these things for?

Firstly, the translation needs to determine whether "将军决计降曹" refers to Zhou Yu or Sun Quan. Based on "决计降曹," Sun Quan has the authority to make such a decision, and whether to surrender to Cao Cao is not something Zhou Yu can decide. Therefore, in this context, "将军" should refer to Sun Quan. In the selected translation, "将军" is translated as

"you," indicating Zhou Yu as the recipient of Zhuge Liang's words. In the complete translation, Roberts corrects it to "The general" and uses pronouns like "his", clearly indicating Sun Quan. Such attention to detail reflects the commitment to precise translation in the complete version, demonstrating its excellence built on social capital.

Secondly, in the original text, "妻子" is translated as "kinfolk" in the selected version, while in the complete translation, Roberts corrects it to "family". This again showcases the meticulous perfection of details in the complete version.

Lastly, and most significantly, the phrase "国祚迁移" is a pointed remark by Zhuge Liang to provoke Zhou Yu, criticizing him for relinquishing the imperial power of Wu without any regret. The term "国祚" specifically refers to the imperial power of Wu because Zhou Yu wouldn't be concerned if the imperial power of the other two kingdoms was handed over to someone else. In the selected translation, "国祚" is misunderstood as "the sacrificial services", leading to the translation of "迁移" as "to be removed elsewhere", missing the cultural nuance. In the complete translation, Roberts meticulously verifies the cultural information, translating "国祚" as "the sacred throne of the house of Sun" (referring to the sacred imperial power of the Sun family), and "迁移" as "is transferred to another house". This level of precision surpasses other translations and even surpasses those done by Chinese native translators, providing readers a glimpse into the scene where Chinese experts and Roberts discussed the true meaning of "国祚".

4.3. The Influence of Power Capital

Roberts' translation, even with collaboration from Chinese colleagues and his one-year tenure at the China Foreign Languages Press, still exhibits some seemingly paradoxical "translation errors". In fact, these occurrences are influenced by power capital. This influence is specifically evident in the following aspects: Firstly, Roberts' complete translation primarily adopts the "foreignization" strategy of "rejecting generality and eliminating vagueness" [14]. However, when encountering information related to religious divine power, such as the Taoist practice of "Zhuge Liang praying to the Northern Dipper, lighting lamps, and extending life", Roberts tends to employ a strategy of obfuscation by directly omitting such information. Secondly, when faced with religious honorifics, Roberts chooses to substitute directly with Christian terminology or secular expressions instead of using transliteration with annotations or other methods. The emergence of these "translation errors" may be a deliberate choice by the translator to avoid potential criticism from the power capital in the target language society. Alternatively, it could be an unconscious product of the translator's shaping by power capital. Nonetheless, both scenarios highlight the shaping force of power capital in the translation process. This phenomenon involves the trade-off of power capital, illustrating the inherent challenge of reconciling

conflicting elements. The following two examples illustrate Roberts' deletion and substitution treatment of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist information.

Eg. 5: ST: 行及数里，妇人辞去。临别对竺曰：“我乃南方火德星君也。奉上帝敕，往烧汝家。感君相待以礼，故明告君。君可速归，搬出财物。吾当夜来。”

RFT: Several li farther on the woman said good-bye, adding, “I am the deity of solar fire, sent by the Supreme God to destroy your household. Your commendable gentility has moved me to give you this warning: rush home and remove your valuables. I am due tonight.”

In this example, the term “上帝” (Shangdi), translated as “Supreme God”, refers to the supreme leader of the Taoist heavenly court, namely the Jade Emperor. It unequivocally does not correspond to Jesus Christ in Western Christianity, Yahweh in Judaism, or Allah in Islam. Since English language offers various titles for the cosmological creator based on different religious traditions, it is inappropriate to use “God” as a universal substitute. However, Roberts does precisely that. This seemingly natural act, possibly constrained by power capital, appears to be undertaken without much contemplation. Nevertheless, it sharply contrasts with Roberts' treatment of other cultural information, suggesting a deliberate choice on his part. Whether intentional or not, this translation approach, or “error”, underscores the significant influence of power capital. Since the readership of the complete translation is Western, distributed within Western territories, and subject to Western governmental oversight, it must align with Western ideologies and cater to Western power capital. Moreover, considering Roberts himself is an American Jew by birth, his ideological predispositions likely influenced this decision without substantial justification. This example highlights the impact of power capital.

Eg. 6: ST: 山上有一老僧，法名普净，原是汜水关镇国寺中长老。二十七回中之人，至此忽然照出。后因云游天下，来到此处，见山明水秀，就此结草为庵，每日坐禅参道，是普净法师，不是热闹和尚。身边只有一小行者，化饭度日。

RFT: On the hill lived an old monk whose Buddhist name was Pujing, or Universal Purity. He was the abbot of Zhenguo Temple at the Si River pass. 3 In his jaunts through the realm, he had come to the mountain and, attracted by its charming scenery, had built himself a thatched shelter there. In this hermitage he would seat himself for meditation each day, searching for the truth of life. Beside him was a single novice; they lived on the food they could beg.

In this example, when translating terms for Buddhist clergy without honorifics like “老僧”, Roberts opts for “old monk”. However, when encountering respectful titles like “长老” or “小行者”, he translates them as “abbot” and “novice”, respectively, replacing Buddhist terminology with Christian terms instead of rendering them as “elder of the Buddhist monastery” or “young ascetic”, more reflective of Buddhist characteristics or secular terms. The original text emphasizes

reverence for “普净法师” (Master Pu Jing) in contrast to the “热闹和尚” (Animated Monk), but Roberts deletes this sentence. Additionally, while “化饭” is indeed translated as the secular term “beg”, the meaning of “beg” is “to solicit or ask for something”, which deviates significantly from the spiritual connotation of “化饭”. In these examples, unlike his consistent practice of adding annotations to historical information in the complete translation, Roberts does not explain these religious factors. Instead, he straightforwardly substitutes Christian or secular terms or deletes them. This demonstrates Roberts' unwavering and unexplained stance on matters of religious belief. Such content is sensitive, and excessive explanation might discomfort Western readers, so Roberts' choice not to explain aligns with expectations.

The existence of such “mistranslations” in Roberts' complete translation is believed to be closely related to the shaping of power capital. As mentioned earlier, power capital refers to the choices and selections made under the influence and constraints of ideology about which words should be spoken and which should be avoided. Uttering the right words and avoiding the wrong ones earns favor from power capital; otherwise, one may face rejection or even exclusion. The final publication of Roberts' translation was spearheaded by the University of California Press, which actively sought the participation of John S. Service, a U.S. diplomat and political advisor, to serve as the “reader” or, one might say, the “inspector” for the translation. This underscores the influence and shaping of power capital on the translation.

Service wrote a preface for the complete translation, expressing in it, “His erudition and patience have produced a clarity of language and yet enable us to enjoy the subtleties and wordplays of the original.” Service also acknowledged the presence of many “subtleties” in the original text. As a diplomatic advisor—a representative of power capital, Service undoubtedly approves of Roberts' handling of the religious aspects in the original work.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Roberts' translation is influenced by cultural capital, social capital, and power capital, with clear and typical examples. Under the cultural capital influence of being a Sinologist and professor at New York University, his translation exhibits characteristics of academic translation: concise, accurate, professional, and objective. Recognized as the “most outstanding translation” in the history of English translations of *San Guo Yan Yi*, it stands as a rare model of transplanting Chinese culture into foreign soil.

Under the social capital influence of Roberts' colleagues at the Chinese Foreign Language Press, the translation provides a comprehensive and accurate interpretation of Chinese historical and cultural information. It is highly suitable for scholars engaged in the serious study of Chinese history and culture as they strive to promote Chinese culture to the wider

world.

Under the influence of Western societal power capital, Roberts' translation shows characteristics of seemingly paradoxical "mistranslation", particularly in the deletion and substitution of original religious information. Such translation aligns with the needs of Western power capital within its linguistic context and reflects the translator's ideological manipulation, a seemingly natural or inevitable choice. Whether to rectify such "mistranslation" depends on the translation's purpose. If the goal is for the translation to gain widespread popularity in the West without immediate consideration of cultural influence, or if the aim is to gradually consider cultural influence after initial dissemination, then these adaptations and transformations to align with Western power capital may be permissible to some extent. However, if the purpose is to maintain cultural dignity, emphasizing the uniqueness of the culture, then there may be room for further improvement in such "mistranslations".

In summary, Roberts' complete translation provides a quite accurate interpretation and transplantation of Chinese culture, especially Chinese history. Given the complex intertwining of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in the original work, where considerations are multifaceted, what is labeled as Roberts' "mistranslation" is placed in quotation marks. It does not imply inadequacy or actual error in translation but rather reflects a strategic approach to handling the translation.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|-------------------------------|
| SGYY | San Guo Yan Yi |
| ST | Source Text |
| RT | Roberts' Translation |
| BT | Brewitt-Taylor's Translation |
| RST | Roberts' Selected Translation |
| RFT | Roberts' Full Translation |

Author Contributions

Yuedan Gao is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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