

On the Translation of *Mencius*¹

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Abstract. *Mencius* is a very important Chinese classic; its translation has come through three stages: the early stage, the rapid development stage and the new era. Each stage has its own features both in translators and translations. The first stage is the enlightenment stage for *Mencius* translation, the second stage and the third stage bring not only rich translated versions of *Mencius* but also great amount of translator both at home and abroad to participate the huge work. A diachronic summary of *Mencius* translations and their translator is important and significant, which will greatly help readers and researchers know *Mencius* translation in history and at present.

Key Words: *Mencius*, translation, foreign translators, Chinese translator, stage

1. Introduction

Mencius is one of the greatest Confucian classics among “The Four Books”, which collects much essence of Chinese traditional culture. The translation of *Mencius* is relatively late among “The Four Books”, but as a masterpiece of Chinese philosophy and literature, *Mencius* has been translated into various languages, however, its translation hasn’t been systematically summed up by translators and researchers. This thesis aims to give a comprehensive, systemic and critical summary of *Mencius* translations by providing researchers and readers a diachronic clue for *Mencius* translation.³

2. The Early Translation of *Mencius*

According to Zhang Xiping(2009), Ma Zuyi& Ren Rongzhen(2003), *Mencius* translation started from the late 16th century, the time from the 16th to the 19th century is usually regarded as the early stage for *Mencius* translation. The earliest translated version of *Mencius* handed down doesn’t come from the 16th but from the 19th century, so the 19th century is regarded as the real enlightenment stage for *Mencius* translation, during which not many translations come out, but there’s no lack of outstanding translations, such as the masterpiece translated by James Legge.

Mencius translations in the early stage include: *The Chinese Classical Work Commonly Called the Four Books* translated by David Collie; *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes / Vol. 2, The Works of Mencius* translated by James Legge; *Confucius and the Chinese Classics, or, Readings in Chinese Literature* translated and introduced by James Legge and W Loomis; *The Chinese Classics: translated into English, with preliminary essays and explanatory notes, Vol. 2 The Life and Works of Mencius*, translated by James Legge; *The Chinese Classics: Life and Teaching of Confucius. Vol.2 The Life and Works of Mencius: with essays and notes*, translated and written by James Legge; *The Mind of Mencius or Political Economy Founded upon Moral Philosophy: a systematic digest of the doctrines of the Chinese philosopher Mencius* translated by Arthur Blokey Hutchinson.

Classic *Mencius* translations in this stage attract scholars and advanced readers a lot, but translations in this stage primarily pursue faithfulness to SLT, so obscure language is widely used by translators in this stage, especially in James Legge’s translation (Nivison, 1980:95), which makes it hard for general readers to understand and for modern readers to accept. But the groundbreaking work done by translators in this stage is creative and meaningful for later *Mencius* translation.

3. Rapid Development of *Mencius* Translation

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³ Due to limited space, we only discuss English translations of *Mencius* in this paper.

Mencius translation has experienced rapid development in the 20th century(Jiang Xin, 2009: 58), many more translators devote themselves to the work. Foreign translators are no longer the main members of *Mencius* translation, more and more Chinese translators come to join the team of *Mencius* translation.

3.1. *Mencius* Translations by Foreign Translators

During these one hundred years, *Mencius* translations by foreign translators mainly include:

Chinese Literature: comprising the Analects of Confucius, the Shi-King, the Sayings of Mencius, the Sorrows of Han, and the Travels of Fa-Hien translated by Epiphanius Wilson; *Mencius* translated by Frederick Storrs Turner; *Mencius* translated by Leonard Arthur Lyall; *Mencius on the Mind: experiments in multiple definition* translated by Ivor Armstrong Richards; *Literary Chinese by the Inductive Method. Vol I-III* translated by Herrlee Glessner Creel; *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* translated by Arthur Waley; *The Book of Mencius* (Abridged) translated by Lionel Giles; *Chinese Philosophy: sayings of Confucius, sayings of Mencius, sayings of Lao Tzu, sayings of Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu* translated and edited by Lionel Giles; *Passages from Mencius* translated by I A Richards, Stefan Anton George and G S Fraser; *The Significance of Mencius* translated and written by Carsun Chang; *Mang tzu. I.* translated by Ezra Pound; *The Sayings of Mencius* translated by James Roland Ware; *The Sayings of Mencius: A New Translation* translated by James R. Ware and edited by SHI Chao; *The Chinese Classics 2 The works of Mencius with a concordance table, and notes with a concordance table, and notes* translated by James Legge, Lindsay T. Ride and Arthur Waley; *The Chinese Classics: Biographical note* translated by James Legge, Lindsay T. Ride and Arthur Waley; *The Ox Mountain Parable* translated by I. A. Richards and Thomas Merton; *Mencius: a new translation arranged and annotated for the general reader* translated by William Arthur Charles Harvey Dobson; *The Wisdom of China: the sayings of Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu and Lieh Tzu* translated, edited by Peter Pauper Press; *Classics of the Chinese tradition and Buddhism: Mencius* translated by William Theodore De Bary & Irene Bloom; *Tai Chen on Mencius: explorations in words and meaning: a translation of the “Meng Tzu tzu-i shu-cheng” with a critical introduction* translated by Mansfield Freeman and Ann-ping Chin; *Mencius* translated by David Hinton.

3.2. *Mencius* Translations by Chinese Translators at Home and Abroad

Mencius translations by Chinese translators in these one hundred years mainly include:

Confucius and Mencius translated by Wu Tingfang; *The Four Books: Confucian Classics* translated and edited by Lin Zheng; *The Sacred Books of Confucius, and Other Confucian Classics* translated by Chu Cai and Winberg Cai; *Selections from Four Books Translated* translated and edited by Qian Shiwei and William Ho; *Mencius* translated by Dim Cheuk Lau; *The Sayings of Mencius* translated and edited by Shi Junchao; *Stories from Mencius* translated and edited by Li Weixiong etc.; *The Sayings of Mencius: Wisdom in a Chaotic Era* translated by Mary Ng En Tzu and edited by Tsai Chih Chung; *A Collection of Mencius' Sayings* translated by Li Tianchen and Liu Shisheng; *Mencius Says* translated and edited by D. C. Lau and precluded by Martin Lu; *The Life of Mencius* translated by Zhang Zengzhi; *A Collection of Mottos on Life from Confucius and Mencius with Modern Chinese and English Translations* translated by Li Zongjun; *Sayings of Confucius and Mencius: A Chinese-English Bilingual Textbook* translated and edited by Li Tianchen; *Source of the Confucian Tradition: The Five Classics and the Four Books* translated by Lao Guangxu and Ding Jun; *Mencius* translated by He Zuokang and Cai Xiqin.

During the 20th century, translators begin to seek new ways to translate *Mencius*, and they also begin to translate for readers of different levels, there are even translations for kids. Besides full translation method, variable translation methods are also widely used, some translators start to translate with rearrangement, deletion, etc. some even add their own thoughts, ideas and comments to their translation, so translations of *Mencius* in this stage become rich and diverse. Besides, some *Mencius* translators begin to seek cooperation with other translators or researchers, as a result, many translations are the cooperative achievement of two or more translators.

In this stage, Chinese translators begin to join *Mencius* translation, and they play pioneer roles in *Mencius* translation for Chinese translators. Among them, translators from Taiwan, Hongkong and abroad have played leading roles in the early years.

4. The New Era of *Mencius* Translation

When it comes to the 21st century, *Mencius* translation steps into a new era, during which many new translators, especially Chinese translators, come to engage in *Mencius* translation, which brings great prosperity to *Mencius* translation.

4.1. *Mencius* Translations by Foreign Translators

Mencius translations by foreign translators during these one hundred years mainly include:

Classical Chinese Literature translated by John Minford and Joseph S M Lau; *Selected works: 1919 - 1938 Vol. 5 Mencius on the mind: experiments in multiple definition* translated and edited by Ivor Armstrong Richards and John Constable; *Guodian* translated and edited by Catine Defoort and Xing Wen; *Classic Asian Philosophy: a guide to the essential texts* translated by Joel J. Kupperman; *Mencius: contexts and interpretations* translated and edited by Alan K.L. Chan; *Five Chinese Classics* translated by A. Charles Muller; *A Mencius Reader: for beginning and advanced students of classical Chinese* translated by Donald B. Wagner; *The Writings of Mencius* translated by James Legge; *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* translated and written by Daniel K. Gardner; *The Works of Mencius: with complete indexes of proper names and subjects* translated by James Legge; *Essential writings of Confucianism: the Analects of Confucius and the Mencius* translated by James Legge; *The Analects of Mencius: with a Selection of the Sayings of Mencius, the Way Its Power of Laozi* translated by James Legge and precluded by John S. Bowman; *Mencius* translated and edited by Irene Bloom and Philip J. Ivanhoe; *The Essential Mengzi: Selected Passages with Traditional Commentary* translated by Bryan W. Van Norden.

4.2. *Mencius* Translations by Chinese Translators at Home and Abroad

Mencius translations by Chinese translators during these hundred years mainly include:

Mencius translated by Zhao Zhentao etc.; *The Story of Mencius* translated and edited by Cao Yaode etc.; *Sayings from Confucius, Mencius, Laozi and Zhuangzi* translated and edited by Li Zhilin and Pan Lili; *The Life and Wisdom of Mencius* translated by Yu Ling and edited by Cai Xiqin; *Quotations from Mencius* translated by He Zuokang and edited by Cai Xiqin; *Mencius Speaks: The Cure for Chaos* translated by Brian Bruya and edited by Cai Zhizhong; *A Selected Collection of Mencius* translated by He Zuokang and edited by Cai Xiqin; *Mencius Says* translated by Yu Ling and He Zuokang, edited by Cai Xiqin; *The Quotation by Mencius: a Chinese-English Bilingual Book* translated by Li Yasi and edited by Jin Peilin; *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: from ancient philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* translated by JeeLoo Liu; *Aphorisms from MENGZI* translated by Li Yuliang etc.; *Quotations by Mencius* translated by Li Yasi and edited by Jin Peilin; *Mencius: A Benevolent Saint for the Ages* translated by Han Jia and Wang Guozhen, and edited by Xu Yuanxiang; *Quotations from Mencius* translated and edited by Wang Tianxing and He Dawei; *Mencius* translated and edited by Wu Wenzhang; *Confucian Wisdom for the 21st Century: a selected rendition* translated and written by Shiu Loon Kong; *Mencius* translated by David B.Honey; *Wisdom of Mencius* translated and edited by Wang Xiaowei etc.; *Quotations from Mencius* translated by Guan Xiaoxia.

Mencius translations no longer take academic researchers or advanced readers as their main TLR (target language readers), but turn to general readers. Versions for different levels of readers have come largely out. Modern language, pictures, rearrangement, etc are widely used in translations, which makes *Mencius* translations more readable. Besides, translators' critical thinking is also put into translations, which would greatly help readers grasp the essence, key ideas, culture and philosophical thoughts implied in *Mencius*.

5. Conclusion

The TLR of *Mencius* are dynamic as time goes on, readers' background, knowledge, aims, etc. are different, and the translation of *Mencius* shall never be stopped. There is no right or wrong *Mencius* translation, but better translation to convey ideas in *Mencius* exactly to TLR with the way readers can accept and easily understand. *Mencius* translation attracts more people's attention to Chinese classics, sinology and translation itself, and let more people better understand Chinese Confucian culture.

6. References

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