

# A Translating Decision-Making Process Study of Newly Discovered Chinese Translation *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* by Yan Fu from Translation Sociological Framework

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**How to cite this paper:** Liu, J. Y. (2022). A Translating Decision-Making Process Study of Newly Discovered Chinese Translation *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* by Yan Fu from Translation Sociological Framework. *Chinese Studies*, 11, 31-42.  
<https://doi.org/10.4236/chnstd.2022.112003>

**Received:** January 7, 2022  
**Accepted:** March 28, 2022  
**Published:** March 31, 2022

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## Abstract

The English master copy of *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*, a book by W. Basil Worsfold, a British aesthetician, and its Chinese version translated by Yan Fu, have been revealed. As the only general aesthetic translation in the late Qing Dynasty, the book has not received the attention of academic circles so far, mostly because the translation is incomplete and has not been published. How Worsfold's ideas were presented to the Chinese audience is an interesting case study in intellectual diffusion. The newly discovered unfinished manual scripts on the margins of the original text by Yan are additions to a text with the intention of providing greater clarity for specific interpretive decisions. The paper reassesses Yan's agenda and position in translating and constructing literary esthetic modernity by scrutinizing how manual scripts interacted with the source text. It also argues specifically the use of manuscript material to investigate the various stages in the construction of the translation product—translated esthetic thoughts, literary criticism, artistic conception into China. The paper holds the value of this research material which has been drastically under-exploited in translation studies to date in investigating the mind-processing and decision-making of the translator and how it might complement and interact with other sources.

## Keywords

*On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*, English Master Copy, Translation, Fine Arts, Literary Criticism, Artistic Conception

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Significance of Translation Commentary in Translating Process

The English master copy of *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*, a book by W. Basil Worsfold, a British aesthete, and its Chinese version translated by Yan Fu, have been revealed. This is an important unfinished translation. As the only general aesthetic translation in the late Qing Dynasty, the book has not received the attention of academic circles so far, mostly because the translation is incomplete and has not been published. The discovery of this new material is helpful to further explore the corresponding translations of important terms in Chinese and western academic discourses, such as fine arts, art, literary criticism and artistic conception, and to clarify some misunderstandings due to lack of original texts in the early stage. It is pointed out that “fine arts” and “art” in Yan Fu’s translation are two parallel concepts, which are not related to each other and are different from the present meaning. “Meaning”, “image” and “artistic conception” are slightly different, but they all emphasize that they originate from the innermost feeling and express their feelings by means of objects. The newly discovered Yan’s translation is of great value, which makes up for the lacking traditional research. When researching the book, translators need to refocus on “reappearance of the scene” created by relevant first-hand documents such as manuscripts, archives, memoirs and autobiographies for in-depth investigation.

As an important source material for research on Yan Fu’s translation, the English source text selected for his translation of *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* and is the only one which a literary English copy with handwritten commentaries so far. Yan’s translating commentaries is an important form of literary appreciation and criticism. Most of the annotations consist of words and phrases hitting the mark.

### 1.2. Research questions

In this paper, translator’s handwritten commentaries refer in particular to translator’s notes and marks written on the original English copy for translation in the process of the translation and are regarded as a special translating journal. Major issues involved in this paper include: what the peculiarity of the translating journal of Yan Fu is; whether Yan’s thinking and decision-making of translation can be revealed by its peculiarity; and how Yan’s thinking and decision-making are embodied in his understanding, annotation and final translation. What are the relations of translator’s handwritten commentaries with his translation and comments? By reading the “commentary” carefully and studying relevant literature, the author attempts to discover artistic concept between Yan’s annotations and translation, clear up some misunderstanding and reproduce history beyond research on his translation.

### 1.3. Rationale of the Research

The Conceptualization of Habitus in Sociology of Translation “Habitus”, the term in contemporary usage, was used in sociology by Marcel Mauss’s and later re-elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu. The particular contents of the habitus are the result of the objectification of social structure at the level of individual subjectivity. Hence, the habitus is, by definition, same with the structural conditions in which it emerged. Bourdieu elaborates on the notion of habitus by explaining its dependency on history and human memory. According to [Bourdieu & Wacquant \(1992: p. 97\)](#), habitus refers to the subjects’ internalized system of social structures in the form of dispositions. The inculcation of social structure is a lifelong process of interactions between structure and agency. Through various and variable individual and collective past, every cultural actor thus develops a social identity: certain representation of the world and his position.

The translator sees themselves as the guardians of the word and as the gate keepers and constructors of culture. They know they have the power to select, to transform and to define, which also provides them with the key to socially accepted values and truths. Furthermore, in situations where the professional field is not (or is only weakly) differentiated, this individualized history is likely to make up most of a translator’s habitus, say, in the period around early 1900s in China. Many social domains (political, religion, arts, economics) have been evolving into relatively autonomous fields over the past two centuries, and the translation is no exception.

Given the prevailing social and language hierarchies and barriers, the Western ideas had a hard time in this positional setting. How do individual translators find their way through the intricate web? How should we understand changes in their profiles and in their choices in relation to the overall dominate structural and normative model in China at that period? Yan Fu, as the most prominent translator, under the influence of social position, developed himself as a social identity: a certain representation of the world (agent between China and the West) and of the person’s position (a translator).

### 1.4. Structure of the Paper

This paper includes 1) a general translation introduction of Worsfold and his masterpiece; 2) a full exposure to Yan Fu’s the thinking and translating commentary, translator’s scripts and notes (“anyu”) from the perspectives of “habitus”; 3) a statistical method applied to extract translation segments and sentences with the word “art” and other key artistic terms in a comprehensive corpus of Yan’s translation; 4) a detailed investigation of Yan’s translation of artistic terms, carried out to further refine the translator’s translational choices, judgments and transformation in the process of translating. The study verifies that an archaeological sketch of the newly discovered edition of *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*, with lots of Yan’s scripts and marks on the content and the blank margins inside, contributes to decoding Yan’s translating process and

tracing his translation strategies, thoughts, comments.

## 2. Worsfold and His Masterpieces

### 2.1. Life of Worsfold

According to the website of Bodleian libraries, University of Oxford, Worsfold was born in Yorkshire on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1858. He studied at St. Peter's Church in Yorkshire, Wakefield School and University College of Oxford, and was admitted as a barrister in 1887. From 1891 to 1900, he was an instructor of economics and literature courses in the Oxford Extension Delegates of Oxford University? and the London Joint Board. In the past few years, Worsfold published seven books, three of which are related to African history. In 1904, he was appointed as the editor of Johannesburg Star, so he was in close contact with Lord Milner, Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner of South Africa. When Milner retired in 1905, Worsfold also returned to Britain and bought a dwelling in Kent in 1909, not far from the Sturry Court where Milner lived. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1939, Worsfold passed away.

A prolific writer and a scholar as he was, in the British Periodicals Collection, JSTOR, Periodicals Archive Online and other databases, only over 20 book reviews and newsletters about Worsfold's works are published such as The Spectator, The Academy, Edinburgh Review, The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and The Geographical Journal. Besides, he is not focused by academic communities. There are neither monographs on Worsfold and his works by Chinese and foreign scholars, nor entry for him in Wikipedia at present.

### 2.2. The Main Contents of *Judgement in Literature*

Mr. Worsfold wrote the volume *Judgement in Literature* initiated by the British publisher J. M. Dent & Company in 1900. Worsfold listed The Principles of Criticism in the bibliography of *Judgement in Literature*. From the previous analysis and comparison, it can be seen that the former work is not just the reference book of the latter. In fact, the two books have basically the same theoretical purpose. The brief history of the development of western literary theory are systematically sorted out, and the three generally recognized principles of truth, symmetry and idealization as well as their application in western literary criticism at that time are summarized. Therefore, *Judgement in Literature* and The Principles of Criticism are inextricably linked. Compared with the book The Principles of Criticism, the second chapter of *Judgement in Literature* is a new content, and some new contents have been added in its first and eighth chapters. The main viewpoints of the rest parts in The Principles of Criticism are basically the same as those of *Judgement in Literature*, and many large sections of discourses and quotations in two works are exactly the same. The difference is that in The Principles of Criticism, the contributions of many important western classical writers to literary criticism theory are mainly organized and summa-

rized in chronological order; considering *Judgement in Literature*, some important literary criticism theories according to special topics are remarked. The length of the main text of *Judgement in Literature* is about one third of that of *The Principles of Criticism*. The former, therefore, is a simplified version of the latter to some extent.

After the publication of Worsfold's *Judgement in Literature*, the magazine *The Academy* published a book review in the same year, which put forward severe criticism: the biggest shortcoming of that book is the lack of clear, accurate and concise expressions necessary to deal with abstract and difficult topics, and the author is used to adopting redundant narrations, which leads to excessive verbiage, obscure rhetoric, and clumsy expressions; besides, some conclusions are unreliable. For example, the author rashly deduced the conclusion that "a great artist must be a good person" from Plato's theory of morality and art, which has actually been denied by art history. There is a straw man fallacy in some refutations, such as the author's objection to Ruskin's view that moral value itself cannot endow poetry with "unique artistic charm", although Ruskin did not have convey such idea; some expressions are vague and unacceptable. For example, according to the author, the characteristics of works of art can be regarded as "bringing pleasure", but "bringing pleasure" is not equal to the quality, but the result or effect brought by quality. These criticisms hit the nail on the head, so it is not difficult to infer that the book *The Principles of Criticism* is even more redundant and more obscure, which is actually the case. Perhaps this is the vital reason why Worsfold and his two monographs on literary criticism are not valued by the academic circles.

### 3. Yan Fu's Purpose of Translating *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* and the Concept of "Fine Arts"

#### 3.1. Yan Fu's Purpose

Why did Yan Fu render the title of the book *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* into "美术通论", not "文学中的论断" or the title "Literary Criticism" in the original work? What is the purpose of Yan Fu's translation of this book? Through investigation of Yan Fu's notes, some clues can be found. In the second chapter, Yan Fu expressed the original intention of the original author to write this book:

"Essentially, Fine Arts have miscellaneous laws. Since ancient times, experts have expressed their opinions on the fundamental function of Fine Arts and have sought for it." Evidently, Yan Fu fully recognized that literature and art is a vital means to enhance the civility and morality of the public that had been remarked by Herbert Spencer. Chinese people, nevertheless, usually thought it useless and paid less attention. Therefore, for Yan Fu, translation of foreign works has become an urgent task. This is probably why Yan Fu selected and translated this book, and took the word "Art" as the final title of the translation. He never forsook his dream, and concerned the state affairs and the sufferings of

the people, especially his deep expectation for the country and the nation.

### 3.2. Yan Fu's Manual Script

Yan Fu translated only the first three articles: "Art", "Literature" and "Critic", which were serialized in the third (October 1906), fourth (March 1907) and fifth and sixth (October 1907) issues of Shanghai Global Chinese Student Newspaper. There are more than 9800 words in the three English articles, and 15,400 Chinese characters in translations. In addition, there are 14 notes with more than 1500 Chinese characters, and 3 written comments. There are very few remarks by Yan Fu in the English version revealed this time. Only three ticks are written in Chapter One, of which two words are briefly written. This is in sharp contrast to Yan Fu's remarks on the English version of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (Liu, 2015). Presumably, Yan Fu's interest in translating this book may be limited, and it is difficult to find anything new from his written remarks.

The number of Chinese characters in Yan Fu's unfinished translation is more than that of English words by one third (over 5000 words). Through careful reading and comparison of the texts, it is found that Yan Fu basically translated the original text faithfully, with concise language and appropriate tone, reproducing the original narrations and adding his adjustments. The translation is smoother in reasoning and argumentation. Occasionally, supplementary translation with familiar words and contexts is added to readers, which is in line with the reading habits of intellectuals at that time. This is also his consistent translation techniques and styles.

Worsfold took the same war scene as an example to explore the differences between painting and literature in terms of expression emphasis, ways and details. Yan Fu supplemented some expressions on the basis of keeping the original translation, such as "卒徒山立", "势如云奔而潮至", "尘漫烟起", "立马于雪刃霜戟之林", "人马死伤卧地横草近者". This translation is a masterpiece, for it vividly depicts not only a grand war scene of fierce combating and heavy casualties, but also the war elements of the warring parties, such as weapons and equipment, military formations, offensive and defensive facilities, combat methods, and military geography, concisely. Such depiction can be regarded as an ancient military battle map familiar to Chinese readers. This translation method and expression form are easily accepted by readers, which effectively convey the views that the original author tried to express—"All art reproduces external reality in its mental aspect; but the arts—except poetry, which is the highest form of literature".

### 3.3. Is Yan Fu's Translation of "Fine Arts" Consistent with the Modern Concept of "Fine Arts"?

There are 10 pages in Article I, with about 3700 words in English and 3 notes. The number of Chinese characters in the translation is more than 5300, including 4 notes, only 260 characters. In the whole article, the difference between the Fine Arts and the Mechanical Arts is discussed. The Fine Arts can be divided

into “visual” art and “auditory” art (arts of the “eye” and arts of the “ear”), as well as architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry. Is Yan Fu’s translation of “art” consistent with “art” in the modern sense? The original English title of Article I is called “Art”. Why did Yan Fu render it into “艺术” instead of “美术”?

Except for the title rendered by Yan Fu, “艺术” never appeared again in the whole text. Instead, the translation “美术” appeared 68 times. Therefore, it is evident that the expression “美术” was popular in 1900s. Yan Fu first of all rendered the catalogue of “Fine Arts”. Through comparison with the English master copy, Yan Fu classified the translation according to different purposes. For example, “美术” (“the art, the Fine Arts, the Fine Arts, or the arts”) includes architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, drama, and speech. “实艺” (“the ‘Lesser’ arts” and “the ‘Mechanical’ Arts”) is rendered into the “useful” arts (Worsford, 1900: p. 2).

Considering the difference between “美术” and “艺术”, Yan Fu observed that “the arts of the first class minister to the enjoyment of man, and those of the latter minister to his needs”. Yan Fu was not so much translating the works of Worsford as saying that he could express his own feelings through the author. There have been many research achievements on the concept of “Fine Arts” (Xing & Chang, 2006; Peng, 2016). There is a view that “Yan Fu divided ‘Fine Arts’ into three parts: art, prose and ancient literature, where Fine Arts is the upper limit concept of art. The ‘Art’ includes painting, sculpture and craft, while Fine Arts also includes literature and music in addition to those, which is almost the opposite of the later situation” (Cui, 2005). This statement, however, is incorrect, for the relationship between Fine Arts and art are not the upper conceptual one, nor does art include “painting” and “sculpture”.

Kurtz (2001) once criticized some linguists for treating the concept of social science as a proper noun, and some translations were partial, which failed to fully reflect the true meaning of the concept. Researchers can gain insight into the changes of history and society by analyzing the way a certain concept blends into other languages and cultural environments, especially in the era of fundamental intellectual changes. The meaning of “art” in western society has greatly evolved with the development of the times, and the connotation of translated names in different countries has also changed in different historical periods. At present, the words “Fine Arts” and “Art” used in Chinese are loanwords from the English counterpart about 100 years ago. They were taken from the Chinese characters “美術” and “芸術” which appeared in textbooks during Meiji Restoration in Japan. However, the meaning of early concepts is different from that of modern ones, so there is often confusion in literal expression or meaning in specific context of use. Yan Fu classified modern art into two categories: “Fine Arts” and “Mechanical Arts”. From the specific context of use of the word “Art” at that time, it was closer to the original meaning of “艺” in Chinese. In Chinese ancient books, “藝” was equivalent to “執”, meaning “planting skills”. Shuo Wen

Jie Zi (lit. Discussing Writing and Explaining Characters) says, “There were six types of arts in Zhou Dynasty. What music, archery, mathematics, ritual, chariot-riding and calligraphy to the Confucians is what planting to the farmer.” This is similar to the traditional meaning of Western art, with emphasis on technology, technique and production, and more emphasis on the meaning of “technique”, namely, operability.

## 4. Characteristics of Yan Fu's Translation *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*

### 4.1. Is Art Criticism “金石识别”?

In Article I, the question “what is criticism and critic” is raised. The definition of criticism and critic is determined. The principles of criticism and the principles of morality are put forward. The Alexandrian school period is gradually called “Hellenistic era” by western historians after 1930s (300 - 30 BC). Yan Fu explained in the script that “Nestorianism has been formed since 300 to 146 BC.” Many etymologies of western literary criticism and core linguistic terms in Chinese context come from Greek. In this regard, Yan Fu retained transliteration. It is evident to see that Yan Fu rendered “criticism” into “孤力狄实沁”. He transliterated “critic” into “孤力狄克”, and then added supplemented translation “衡鉴家”. He also added further explanation that “because ‘critic’ derives from Greece, so it is translated into ‘评鹭’”.

Worsford points out in the text that “criticism” can be analyzed from five heads. English translations can be added to corresponding Greek words. Yan Fu transliterated the Greek words in the original text into “一曰底哇峻悉斯”, “次曰那奴悉斯”, “三曰特格尼”, “四曰额锡吉悉斯”, and “五曰孤力悉斯”, which correspond to the English translations respectively: “第其次序” (the arrangement of the matter), “审其轻重” (the fixing of accents), “观其会通” (the syntax), “详其疏义” (explanatory comment), and “衡其巧拙” (judgment on the merit and authorship of the work in question).

As can be seen from the above examples, Yan Fu failed to give a clearer Chinese translation for the core terms in modern western academic discourse. In the urgent mood of introducing Western Learning, Yan Fu adopted matching-meaning translation to explain and understand concepts in cross-cultural background by analogy and comparison, which only temporarily eased the pressure of vocabulary shortage. In 1901, Yan Fu translated “economy” in *The Wealth of Nations* into “计学”. Besides, he adopted a large number of ancient Chinese terminologies to render Adam Smith’s western economic terms, which is sort of compromise. Yan Fu could not completely “borrow” the existing vocabulary, but he needed to reproduce the connotation of original terms as much as possible, and his personal “emotional coloring” and “implied motivation” were hidden behind the choice of translations. In his period, because it was difficult for translators to find words that accurately express the target culture in their own language and culture, they often turned to expressions with similar connotations in the host

cultural system to convey heterogeneous concepts. Such translation method plays a certain role in dissemination. However, the translated words originating from local culture may cause a lot of serious consequences such as confusion of concept replacement, “name does not match reality” or even errors, which, to a certain extent, restricts the dissemination and acceptance of new ideas and new cultures.

#### 4.2. Do “意”, “意象” and “意境” Mean “Idea”?

In the previous study, due to the lack of the English master copy for comparison, some researchers speculated that “意境” was equivalent to “idea” (Jiang, 2007). From Yan Fu’s translation, it is found that “意”, “意象” and “意境”, as key translated words/names, appear many times throughout *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*. “意境” appears four times, and “意” seven times. In this section, firstly, all the relevant sentences in Yan Fu’s translated three articles extracted from the English version are compared between English and Chinese, so as to investigate whether Yan Fu’s translation is reasonable and conforms to the current context.

From tables below, there are three categories. Yan Fu rendered “the presentation of the real in its mental aspect” and “external reality in its mental aspect” in **Table 1** into “意”, with “presentation” and “mental aspect” as core words. In **Table 2**, “意象” comes from “the presentation of the real in its mental aspect”. In **Table 3**, “a mental aspect”, “the mental aspect of the reality”, “realities presented in a mental aspect”, “realities presented in a mental aspect”, and “the mental aspect of the realities” appear many times, with “mental aspect” and “reality” as core words.

Yan Fu selected “意”, “意象” and “意境” to translate corresponding English terms, which accorded with Worsford’s original meaning that emphasizes subjective perception and concrete imagination. “意象” as one of an indispensable

**Table 1.** Translation of “意” in the *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*.

<i>Judgement in Literature</i>	严译
1) All art reproduces external reality in its mental aspect; but the arts—except poetry, which is the highest form of literature... (Worsford, 1900: p. 11)	夫界说曰：托意写诚谓之美术，意主观也，诚客观也。(篇一)
2) which he thus covers present to the eye the appearance of a landscape or of an interior. Moreover, in painting, the prominence given to the mental aspect of the reality thus represented is greater than in sculpture—and...they are known—or the exact appearance of nature, that is represented in the picture. (3)	大抵其意景中之悬像耳，惟其不背于物则，故曰，写诚亦惟其景生于意中。故曰，托意彼之所为将不仅描摹仿效……美术之事皆写其意中之真像……(篇一)
3) Art then is the presentation of the real in its mental aspect. (4)	美术者何？曰：托意写诚是为美术。(篇二)

**Table 2.** Translation of “意象” in the *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*.

<i>Judgement in Literature</i>	严译
In order to realize the significance of this definition we will take each of the Arts separately, and consider (i) its material basis... (4)	美术者何？曰：托意写诚是为美术。又曰：美术者，以意象写物之真相者也。(篇二)

**Table 3.** Translation of “意境” in the *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature*.

<i>Judgement in Literature</i>	严译
1) ...to assist in the presentation of this mental aspect. But literature... (Worsford, 1900: p. 11)	是故，一切之美术，莫不假客观以达其意境。(篇一)
2) ...which it gives to the mental aspect of the reality which it thus presents to the mind. (4)	三其意境之显晦也。(篇一) 而无有意境之事寓于其间，则大不可。(篇一)
3) ..., though they are real, are also realities presented in a mental aspect. (5)	……亦惟其托质之少，其意境之事愈多。(篇一)
4) ...and the mental aspect of the realities represented is consequently more significant. (7)	

concepts in ancient Chinese literary theory, and therefore Chinese scholars in poetics focus the link between “意” and “象”, or namely, the link between “情” and “景”, “意” adopted by Yan Fu refers to “internal, abstract mind”, while “象” refers to “external, concrete being”. “意” stems from mind and is expressed by virtue of “象”, and the latter is an entrusting object. Accordingly, the translation “the presentation of the real in its mental aspect” corresponds to “象” to some extent, embodying the artistic treatment techniques of combining emotion with scenery as well as blending feeling and setting in harmony in Chinese poetics.

Burke & Richter (2012: p. 21) once observe that “the analysis of conceptual transfer and evolution in the Asian ideological field must be placed in the extremely unequal power context of the participants... When a concept transfer in two different cultures, the research needs to show multi-level complexity in the process of communication and adjustment. The analysis of translation effect should be combined with the acceptance of the target language and the translator’s translation strategies”. Yi jing is an important concept in Chinese poetry appreciation. Mr. Tong Qingbing, in the book *A Course of Literature and Art Theory* (Tong, 1998), believes that yi jing is the realm and mood of literary and artistic works through image description, and it is the image of the blending scene and reality in lyric works and the aesthetic imagination space induced and developed by it. In Yan Fu’s translation of “意境”, “意” corresponds to mental “meaning”; “境” indicates specific real realities, or virtue ones created by artistic works, a kind of realities presented in a mental aspect. Nowadays, “意境” is often rendered into “artistic conception”, “mental aspect”, in literal meaning, refers to ideological or spiritual aspect.

## 5. Conclusion

Munday (2014) suggested that translation researchers should pay attention to the research methods and theories of literature theory, history and sociology, which are widely used in translation studies. In the study of translators, Reconstructing the original texts, translations, manuscripts, archives, memoirs and autobiographies play a vital role, so as to construct a “witnessed testimony” that is in line with the current context. The excavation of the English version of *On the Exercise of Judgement in Literature* has enabled Yan Fu’s translation research to reproduce the “scene” and made up for the lack of traditional investi-

gation on Yan Fu.

Furthermore, Yan Fu's translation thoughts and translation techniques are re-discovered and reinterpreted, which expands the new fields and propositions of translation history research and has a new academic development foundation. Finding and making good use of historical translation materials has always been an important means to break through existing barriers and open up new fields and new paradigms of academic research. When translation studies emphasize the innovation of ideas and theories, the collation of historical documents is indispensable. In the construction of academic system of contemporary social sciences, the discovery and collation of historical documents constitute the cornerstone of basic research work, which is helpful to clearly restore the historical process of Yan Fu's translation and research works, and is also a crucial guarantee for constructing scientific methodology and shaping a good academic atmosphere, so that academic research is truly scientific and empirical.

### Funding

This paper marks a stage in a research that was made possible by the funding supported by National Social Science Program (grant #20BYY027); China national Committee for Translation and Interpreting Education (MTIJZW201816), Education Bureau of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Youth Elite Program (grant #NJYT-20-A01) and Postgraduates Pedagogical Reform and Practice (grant #YJG20181012613), Inner Mongolia University Course Design Program "Translation Theories" and "A General Introduction to Western Translation Theories" (grant #NGHWZ201702, 2018, 2019).

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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