

# 論信達雅

——严复翻译理论研究

沈苏儒 著



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# 论 信 达 雅

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# On "Xin-Da-Ya": The Chinese Principle of Translating

by SHEN Suru

## A Brief Introduction

Venerated as one of the greatest scholars of the Chinese Enlightenment and the greatest translator and translation theorist of modern China, YAN Fu (YEN Fu) (1845-1921) translated into Chinese many Western works of philosophy and social science, among them *Evolution and Ethics* by T. H. Huxley, *Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* by A. Adams and *Spirit of Law* by C. L. S. Montesquieu. This tremendous translation work was accomplished in twelve years at the turn of the last century and had a great impact on the ideology of the whole nation. In the *Translator's Remarks* of the Chinese edition of *Evolution and Ethics*, first published in 1898, Yan summarized his translation experience and proposed Xin-Da-Ya(XDY) as the principle of translating. Xin(信): the translation and the translator should be faithful to both the original text and the author, Da(达): the contents of the original text should be adequately and intelligibly expressed in the translation, and for this purpose equivalence in form can sometimes be modified; Ya(雅): the translation should be of the best

of translation theories. A comparison of their theories with Yan's theory reveals that they have many things in common, and that assimilation is possible.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of Yan's theory, and to discover the "rational core" and the secret of its century-long popularity, the fourth and fifth parts of the book present a thorough study of the nature and process of translation. This book concludes that "translation is cross-language cross-culture communication", and translating must involve three stages: understanding (of the original), transferring (into another language for an audience with a different cultural background), and consummating (the translation). The XDY principle conforms with the nature of translation and, in the most concise form, highlights the main requirements in the three stages of the translating.

The sixth and last part of the book re-evaluates the XDY principle in three aspects: theoretical value, practicality and universality.

This book is scheduled for publication in 1998 to commemorate the centenary of the publication of Yan's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* in which his Xin-Da-Ya principle was first proposed. The publisher of this book, The Commercial Press, one of China's most prominent publishing houses, which has just celebrated its centenary in 1997, was also the publisher of nearly all Yan's translation works.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shen, Suru, born in 1919 and a 1945 graduate of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department, National Central University, has engaged in translation work for half a century and was cited as a distinguished scholar by the government of the People's Republic of China in 1993.

He was a founding Council Member of the Chinese Translators' Association, the Chinese Association for International Understanding, and the Chinese Association for Cultural Exchange with Foreign Countries.

His career as a translator began in 1945 while working for the China Division, U. S. Information Service in Chongqing, China's war-time capital. Later, he was an editor of the English daily *The Shanghai News* and the multi-language monthly *People's China*. He retired as Vice Editor-in-Chief of the multi-language monthly, *China Today* (formerly *China Reconstructs*), founded by Mme. Sun Yat-sen (Soong Ching Ling) (1893 - 1981).

After retiring from the executive duties in 1985, he served as Editorial Adviser for The World Bank Resident Mission in China and Adviser for the Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China. He also lectured on international communication in the School of International Studies,

Peking University, and many professional training programs in various parts of China.

Among his many publications, the most important works include:

### **Major Book Translations**

*Woman in World History Soong Ching Ling (Mme. Sun Yat-sen)* by Israel Epstein. The translation won State Book Award in 1993, 2nd print 1995, 3rd print 1997, People's Publishing House, Beijing, China

*The Struggle For Mastery in Europe (1848 - 1918)* by J. P. Taylor, 1987. The Commercial Press, Beijing, China

*Rise and Fall of The Third Reich — A History of Nazi Germany* (part) by W. L. Shirer, 1996. Shijie Zhishi Publishing House, Beijing, China

### **Major Publications on Translation Theories and International Communication**

*Reporting on China for Abroad*, published in 1990, reprinted in 1992. This book has been widely used as a textbook for professional training in China. China Today Publishing House, Beijing, China

*About Quality of Translation*, *Chinese Translators' Journal*, No. 1, 1991, Beijing, China

*On Developing Chinese Modern Translation Theories*, *Chinese Translators' Journal*, No. 5, 1992, Beijing, China

*On Xin-Da-Ya*, *Collection of Works on Translation Theories*, 1984, The Commercial Press. Beijing, China

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