



Paratextual Framing and Language Ideology: the Translation of Japanese Literature in Maoist China

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Article History

Received: 16.06.2026

Revised: 18.08.2026

Accepted: 03.09.2026

Published: 18.09.2026

Abstract: This study examines how Japanese literature was made readable and circulable in Maoist China through paratextual framing. Drawing on publication notes, prefaces, translators' afterwords, editors' notes, critical commentaries, circulation labels, and materials from the translated literature journal *Zhaiyi*, it argues that paratexts were not peripheral additions to translated works, but a central mechanism through which foreign literature was interpreted and managed. The analysis shows that these paratexts worked through repeatable routines of classification, warning, circulation control, and attribution. They classified authors and works before reading, warned against politically inappropriate interpretations, limited readership through internal circulation, and weakened individual translator identity through collective, pen-name, or absent attribution. In the case of Japanese literature, paratexts also produced a manageable image of Japan by narrating Japanese society as a site of capitalist crisis, framing literary value through a worker-peasant-soldier subject position, and arranging cultural knowledge through lists and columns. The article shows that translation during the Cultural Revolution was a language-ideological and cultural-political practice, through which foreign texts were turned into controlled objects of knowledge within a supervised system of publication and reading.

Keywords: Paratext; language ideology; Japanese literature; Maoist China; translation; cultural politics.

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Cite this article:

Xie, F., (2026). Paratextual Framing and Language Ideology: the Translation of Japanese Literature in Maoist China. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(9), 55-65.

1. Introduction

In 1971, Mishima Yukio's *Patriotism* was introduced into China in an internal-circulation translation. In the publication note placed before the main text, the editor offered an explicit political classification of the author and prescribed the work's legitimate use and reading position in advance. The note stated that

Japanese reactionary writer Mishima Yukio is a notorious right-wing fascist. He has written a large number of extremely reactionary and decadent 'poisonous weeds,' and has fanatically promoted militarist thought. ...The present translation of one of Mishima's representative reactionary works is now issued for internal circulation as negative teaching material, for use in criticism. (Mishima, 1971a)

Before readers entered the translated literary text itself, the author, the work, the purpose of circulation, and the acceptable reading position had already been defined. This publication note did not simply introduce the text. It classified it, limited its possible use, and marked the kind of interpretation that would be considered legitimate. In this sense, the translation of *Patriotism* shows a broader feature of Cultural Revolution translation. Foreign literary texts did not circulate as autonomous works, but were made readable through paratextual framing.

This study examines the translation of Japanese literature in Maoist China from the perspective of paratextual framing and language ideology. The relationship between translation and ideology has long been central to studies of Chinese translation, especially in discussions of text selection, translational manipulation, and the tension between faithfulness and ideological demands (Chang, 1998). In this study, translation during the Cultural Revolution is not treated as a purely technical procedure of linguistic transfer or as a neutral form of cultural exchange. Rather, it is understood as a language-ideological and cultural-political practice. It brought foreign works into Chinese, while also redefining how these works could be named, classified, explained, circulated, and used.

This perspective is especially important for the Cultural Revolution, when cultural production and publication were placed under highly organized political and institutional supervision. Translation and publication operated within planned arrangements (Zha, 2004). Decisions about text selection, circulation forms, and interpretive standards were also subject to sustained control by political authorities and responsible agencies (Wang, 2001). Foreign literature therefore had a double status. It could serve as material for understanding capitalist societies, imperialist politics, or social crisis abroad, but it could also be seen as an ideological risk. For this reason, the problem was not only whether a foreign work could be translated. It was also how

it could be made safe, usable, and politically readable.

The early 1970s saw a limited recovery of translation and introduction work, partly in relation to changes in China's external relations. Yet the overall scale of publication remained small. Between 1966 and 1976, only 89 works of foreign literature were published in China (Ma, 2013; Tian, 2015). Among them, 23 were Japanese literary works, accounting for approximately 26%, a noticeable proportion within this restricted corpus (Li, 2008). At the same time, *Zhaiyi*, a major translated literature journal of the period, also included a substantial number of Japan-related translations, commentaries, and short cultural and literary reports, alongside materials on Soviet and American literature. Japanese literature thus provides a useful case for examining how foreign literature was selected, translated, interpreted, and managed in Maoist China.

In this context, paratexts played an important role. Publication notes, prefaces, translators' afterwords, editors' notes, critical commentaries, circulation labels, and attribution practices did more than provide background information. They created the language through which foreign texts could become meaningful and acceptable within a supervised system of publication and reading. They told readers what kind of author they were encountering, what kind of society the work represented, what political position should be taken, and what forms of interpretation should be avoided. In other words, paratexts translated political requirements into operational reading instructions.

The materials for this study mainly consist of Japanese literary works translated and published in China during the Cultural Revolution, together with Japan-related translated items and introductions in *Zhaiyi*. The analysis focuses on paratextual materials surrounding these translations. This article argues that paratexts were not peripheral additions to translated works. They were central sites where language ideology, cultural politics, and editorial authority met. Through paratextual framing, Japanese literature was made visible, readable, and circulable. At the same time, it was also restricted, classified, and governed. The study therefore contributes to discussions of multilingual and multicultural circulation by showing how translation can operate not only as a movement between languages, but also as a process in which foreign texts are reorganized through the ideological language of the receiving context.

2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Functional definition of paratext

In translation and cultural studies, paratext is generally understood as the set of materials that accompany a text and shape the way in which it is presented, received, and read (Genette, 1997). In *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Genette argues that a literary text is rarely presented by

itself. It is usually accompanied by elements such as the author's name, title, preface, illustrations, notes, and other verbal or material productions. These elements surround the text and help make it present to readers and to the public. For Genette, the paratext is therefore what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers (Genette, 1997).

Building on this definition, this study understands paratext not as a loose set of add-ons, but as a range of practices and discourses that accompany a text and shape its reception. In the case of translated foreign literature during the Cultural Revolution, paratextual materials were especially important because they helped define how a foreign work could enter a supervised system of publication and reading.

For analytical purposes, Genette distinguishes paratexts through several dimensions, including their location, timing, material form, audience, and function (Genette, 1997). At the spatial level, he distinguishes between peritext and epitext. Peritext refers to elements located within the same volume as the text, such as the author's name, title, preface, chapter headings, and notes. Epitext refers to materials located outside the book, such as interviews, conversations, letters, and diaries. Genette also discusses the temporal, material, and pragmatic features of paratexts. They may appear before, together with, or after the text. They may be verbal, visual, typographical, or factual. They may also be public, private, official, unofficial, or semi-official.

These distinctions are useful for identifying the forms of paratexts in Cultural Revolution translation. The materials examined in this study include publication notes, prefaces, translators' afterwords, editors' notes, critical commentaries, circulation labels, illustrations, and attribution practices. Most of them belong to peritext, since they appear inside or on the translated book itself. Some materials in *Zhaiyi*, such as editorial introductions, commentaries, and column-based literary information, may also be understood as paratextual discourse because they guided how Japanese literature and Japanese cultural information were selected, arranged, and read.

Genette emphasizes that the paratext is usually functional and subordinate to the text. He describes it as a discourse that serves the text and helps secure its reception (Genette, 1997). This point is important, but the case of Cultural Revolution translation also requires a historical adjustment to Genette's model. In a highly ideologized cultural production context, the paratexts attached to translated foreign literature did not always remain subordinate to the translated text. On the contrary, they often carried strong interpretive authority. They defined the political nature of authors and works, prescribed acceptable reading positions, and turned foreign texts into objects that could be used for criticism, reference, or limited study.

In this sense, paratexts in Cultural Revolution translation should not be treated as external explanations attached to the text. They were part of the process through which meaning was produced and controlled. In some cases, they even carried more interpretive weight than the translated text itself. This study therefore approaches paratextual framing as a language-ideological practice. It examines how ordinary editorial forms, such as notes, prefaces, labels, and commentaries, translated political requirements into concrete reading instructions and made Japanese literature readable within Maoist China.

2.2 The routinization and differentiation of paratexts

During the Cultural Revolution, only twenty-three Japanese literary translations were published in China. Except for Nishino Tatsukichi's *On the Road of Morning Frost* (1966), all the other twenty-two volumes included paratexts. Paratexts therefore became a routine feature within this highly ideologized publishing system. This suggests that translated Japanese literature rarely entered circulation as text alone. Rather, it was produced and read as a book-form totality, in which accompanying materials were repeatedly used to define readability, usability, and political legitimacy.

Kobayashi Takiji was frequently translated during this period. In 1973, People's Literature Publishing House issued three of his works in Chinese translation, *Numajiri Village*, *The Absentee Landlord*, and *The Crab Cannery Ship*. These editions did not merely present the translated text. They were all accompanied by paratexts, including an author photograph, his handwritten signature, and a translator's afterword. Tanaka Kakuei's autobiographical *My Resume* (1972) also included a photograph. Such illustrations may be understood as iconic paratexts in Genette's sense. Other works by or about Tanaka, including *A Minister's Diary* (1973), *A Biography of Tanaka Kakuei* (1972), and *Tanaka Kakuei, The Man* (1972), also contained publication notes, content summaries, translators' notes, and additional materials on the author's background and Japan's political changes.

Kobayashi and Tanaka were among the few translated figures in the Cultural Revolution period who were not subjected to open criticism. This is partly because, from the 1930s through the Cultural Revolution and even into the present, Kobayashi has been consistently positioned in China as an allied writer associated with Japan's proletarian revolutionary camp (Kobayashi, 1930). The normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972 also reshaped translation conditions. Around Tanaka's visit to China, his autobiographical and biographical works were published more intensively, and references to diplomatic normalization appeared more frequently. The inclusion of author photographs therefore signaled a relatively favorable presentation. This stood in contrast to works that were

framed through warning and criticism.

Against this pattern, Mishima Yukio's Chinese introduction highlights the governing role of paratextual framing. He was also frequently translated during the Cultural Revolution. *Patriotism* (1971) and the four volumes of *The Sea of Fertility* (1971-1973) were translated, and each volume included a publication note. The paratextual framing of *Patriotism* was even more extensive. In addition to its publication note, it was accompanied by a critical essay titled "The Reactionary Writer and Right-Wing Fascist Mishima Yukio. An Introduction to His Person, Works, and Thought," and an appendix titled "The Reactionary Pornographic Film *Patriotism*, Produced, Directed, and Admired by Mishima Yukio." Together, these materials presented a sustained critique of Mishima and his work from beginning to end.

This extensive paratextual framing likely relates to Mishima's earlier stance on the Cultural Revolution. On 28 February 1967, Mishima, Kawabata Yasunari, Abe Kobo, and Ishikawa Jun published a joint "Statement on the Cultural Revolution" in the Tokyo Shimbun. The statement characterized the Cultural Revolution as a political revolution, protested the violation of the autonomy of scholarship and art by political power, and insisted that the principles of scholarship and art belonged to a sphere distinct from political authority. It also opposed both "literature in the service of the nation" and theories of "politics and literature" that ultimately reduced literature and art to instruments of power (Mishima et al., 1976). Although China issued no public response, this stance could be read as a critique of the Cultural Revolution's cultural practices.

Despite the limited number of Japanese literary translations during the Cultural Revolution, paratexts were almost standard. Together with the translated main text, they produced the book as a whole. At the same time, the intensity and type of paratextual framing were far from uniform. They often split into sharply opposed modes, leaving little room for ambiguity. Translations of Kobayashi Takiji and materials related to Tanaka Kakuei were usually favorably framed, which was unusual for the period. By contrast, Mishima Yukio's works received extensive and openly critical paratextual framing.

2.3 Sponsors as mediators of meaning

Since 1949, the translation of foreign literature in China gradually shifted from market-driven selection to state-planned selection. This shift established the institutional basis for the centralized governance of translation and publication during the Cultural Revolution. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the Central Cultural Revolution Group, which was dominated by Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen, took over the Central Propaganda Department, the Ministry

of Culture, the Ministry of Education, and Xinhua News Agency. In this way, the leadership of translation and publishing was drawn more directly into political and ideological operations (Liu & Shi, 1999).

Under Jiang Qing's directives, the "San jie he (Triple combination)" approach to cultural production was also promoted. This approach called for the integration of leaders, cultural workers, and the masses. It was often summarized in the formula that leaders provide ideas, the masses provide life, and writers provide skills (Yin, 2004). The same logic was extended to translation activities during the Cultural Revolution. In this context, leaders and supervising institutions may be understood as sponsors of translation. Their role in providing ideas meant that they intervened deeply in the interpretation and presentation of translated works. As Jiang and Ma (2022) argue, state institutions shaped translation management and translation beliefs through specific institutional arrangements. Under the Cultural Revolution system, this meant that translated works were often given an interpretive framework before they reached readers.

The ideological orientation of paratexts published with translated works was therefore not determined by translators alone. It was set and reinforced by sponsors of translation. These sponsors were not always individual editors. They could also include state institutions, supervising authorities, editorial collectives, chief editors, and editorial boards. Within the logic of the triple combination approach, sponsors provided interpretive standards and political direction, while editors and translators turned these standards into concrete paratextual forms. Since the Cultural Revolution remains a politically sensitive topic in China, many relevant archival materials and documentary sources have not been fully released. For this reason, this study discusses sponsors mainly through the broader institutional and political framework, rather than by identifying all individual actors.

In the chain of translation and circulation, editors were not merely introducers of foreign texts. They mediated between higher-level requirements and concrete textual presentation. The foreign literature translation journal *Zhaiyi* provides a clear example. After 1971, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee Writing Group was formally organized (Zhang, 2010). One of its subordinate units was the *Zhaiyi* editorial office (Ding, 2005). Many editors came from universities and research institutes. They conducted pre-publication review and post-publication feedback, and they adjusted translation strategies when necessary. Within this institutional arrangement, editors had to judge repeatedly what could enter the journal and how it could enter in a safer and more appropriate way.

Translation work during the Cultural Revolution was shaped at multiple levels. These levels included overall

planning, text selection, political vocabulary, and modes of expression provided by sponsors, and they were then transmitted and implemented through editorial offices as an organizational link (Ma, 2006). At the same time, they could also gain greater discursive authority within institutional operations and, to some extent, come to function as sponsors themselves (Wu, 2014). Their participation as intermediaries of Cultural Revolution ideology also involved political risk.

After the Cultural Revolution, and especially after the adoption of the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China” in June 1981, the Cultural Revolution was officially defined as a serious mistake. Many participants were reclassified and subjected to political accountability and purge (Yatsuka, 2012). Zhu Yongjia offers one example. He had served as head of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee Writing Group and was involved in the operation of journals such as *Zhaiyi* (Zou, 2015). In the post-Mao period, he was officially labelled as a collaborator in the Cultural Revolution and sentenced to fourteen years’ imprisonment.

Reflecting on his experience, Zhu compared intellectuals in the Writing Group to “zhongshu sheren” of the Tang dynasty and “hanlin xueshi” of the Ming and Qing dynasties. By this comparison, he meant that they drafted various edicts on behalf of the ruler and constantly had to guess the intentions of those above. As he recalled, “if guessed correctly, it testified to the wisdom of the leadership. If guessed wrongly, I am the one who paid the price” (Wei, 2015). This reflection shows the unstable position of such editorial and intellectual actors. They helped produce ideological discourse, but they could also become politically vulnerable when official narratives changed.

Sponsors and editors in Cultural Revolution translation were therefore not simple conveyors of meaning. They were key agents in the production and enforcement of ideological frames. Their work shaped how Japanese literature was selected, introduced, classified, and explained. At the same time, their later reclassification in the post-Mao period shows that involvement and victimhood could become intertwined. This complex position helps explain why paratexts should be read not only as textual supplements, but also as traces of institutional mediation and political risk.

This framework leads to three research concerns. The study asks how paratexts predefined the themes, stance, and boundaries of meaning of translated Japanese literature. It also asks how editorial discourse guided readers toward politically appropriate interpretation and prevented forms of misreading. A further concern is how these practices became stabilized into repeatable routines, so that Japanese literature could become a manageable object of knowledge within the Cultural Revolution publishing system.

3. Materials and Methods

This study uses qualitative paratextual and discourse analysis. Its primary materials are Japanese literary translations published in China during the Cultural Revolution, together with Japan-related translations, commentaries, and cultural information published in *Zhaiyi*. The analysis focuses on publication notes, prefaces, postfaces, translators’ afterwords, editors’ notes, critical commentaries, circulation labels, illustrations, and attribution practices. These materials are treated not as neutral supplements, but as editorial discourse through which translated works were classified, explained, and made readable.

The corpus is defined by the twenty-three Japanese literary translations published in China between 1966 and 1976, with additional attention to relevant items in *Zhaiyi*. The article first identifies the types and distribution of paratextual materials attached to translated works. It then analyzes how these materials classify authors and works, guide interpretation, mark circulation status, and shape translator visibility. The analysis is historical and interpretive rather than statistical. It reads recurring expressions, labels, and publication forms as evidence of how translation was institutionally mediated under Cultural Revolution conditions.

This approach is appropriate because the article is concerned with the language surrounding translated texts. The main question is not only what Japanese works were translated, but how they were made usable and governable through the words, labels, and formats that accompanied them. Published materials are therefore used as the main evidence. Where archival access remains limited, the study draws on the institutional information available in published sources and uses it to reconstruct the broader conditions of editorial mediation.

4. Results

4.1 Classification before reading

In Japanese literary translations during the Cultural Revolution, publication notes, prefaces, and postfaces often followed a stable pattern. Before introducing the content of the work, they first defined the political nature of the author or the work. They then indicated the position from which it should be read. As a result, meaning was rarely left to emerge from the narrative itself. A preferred direction of interpretation was usually established before reading began. Within this process, Japanese writers were placed within sharply opposed political labels. Some were defined as “a Japanese proletarian writer,” “an outstanding revolutionary writer” (Kobayashi, 1973a), or “proletarian revolutionary fighter and writer” (Kobayashi, 1973b). Others were marked as “a notorious right-wing fascist” (Mishima, 1971a), as discussed above. These labels were not neutral literary-

historical categories. They used opposing terms such as advanced and reactionary, proletarian and bourgeois, to establish the basic interpretive frame for each work.

The same strategy also appeared in the treatment of authors' personal experiences and social relations. Publication notes often used a biographical mode. They highlighted the author's place of birth, wartime experience, political position, and connection with China. These factors outside the text were then used to explain the meaning and value of the work. For example, the publication notes to Gomikawa Junpei's *Fictitious Righteousness: A Private Record of the Kwantung Army*, published by People's Literature Publishing House in March 1976, gave detailed attention to the author's personal background (Gomikawa, 1976). The notes emphasized his birth in Northeast China, his participation in Japan's war against China, and his postwar experience as a prisoner of war. They also stressed that he later reflected critically on the war. This biographical framing positioned Gomikawa's writing as a reflection on Japanese imperialist aggression, rather than mainly as an aesthetic or literary work.

A similar strategy appeared in the translation and introduction of works by Yamada Yoji. Among the limited number of translated film scripts, three works written by Yamada were selected. They were *The Castle of Sand* (1975), *Home from the Sea* (1972), and *Tora-san's Dear Old Home* (1972). The accompanying publication notes emphasized Yamada's childhood in former Manchuria (Yamada, 1985) and his postwar political stance. These factors repeatedly guided interpretation and gave clear political direction to themes such as loss of homeland and social suffering (Tsuzuki, 1997).

In some cases, even when an author was labelled a "bourgeois writer," the paratext could still create room for a usable reading. Ariyoshi Sawako is a typical example. In the publication notes to *The Twilight Years*, published in April 1975, she was identified as a "well-known bourgeois woman writer." At the same time, the notes stressed that she was "friendly toward our country" and had "visited it many times" (Ariyoshi, 1975). Through this framing, her work received a relatively positive evaluation despite the class label attached to the author. This example shows that paratextual classification did not depend only on the text itself. It also depended on the author's political position, personal experience, and especially the author's relationship with China.

4.2 The prevention of "misreading"

Once the political nature of the author or work had been defined, paratexts further directed how the text should be read. They did not only point out themes. They also guided readers on interpretive stance and warned them against certain ways of reading. Here, "misreading" did not mainly mean misunderstanding the plot. It meant arriving at

an interpretation that failed to fit the prescribed class analysis. This preventive mechanism appeared in several publication notes and commentaries. For example, the internal-circulation film script *Sandakan No. 8* (1976) stated that, because of the scriptwriter's class standpoint, the film failed to reveal the roots of oppression in capitalism and Japanese aggression. The key point was not simply to provide additional information about the story. Rather, the note used the need to "reveal the root cause" as a normative standard for interpretation. Readers were guided to focus on what the work was said not to have fully explained. In this way, the publication note helped complete a politically guided reading before the narrative itself was read.

A similar directive role appeared in commentaries on the state apparatus. In a review of the Japanese film *My Road* published in *Zhaiyi* in 1976, the commentary began with the phrase "as is well known" and claimed that the police and the courts in capitalist states were major instruments for protecting the interests of the monopoly capitalist class and repressing the working class (Liang, 1976). It argued that the film falsely presented the state as "upholding justice." On this basis, the commentary turned the question of whether to break the bourgeois state apparatus and establish proletarian political power into a dividing line between true and false Marxism. Here, interpretation became a matter of political position. A possible "misreading" was treated in advance as a political risk, and the reader's understanding was directed before it could move in another direction.

A comparable logic of warning can be found in the publication note for *The Castle of Sand* (1976). In addition to describing illness and social problems, the note claimed that the author, from a sympathetic stance, exaggerated extreme individualism and presented the police in an overly positive light. Through this framing, the work was placed under a condition of caution. The reader was asked to accept a warning line before accepting the narrative itself.

4.3 Publication formats and attribution strategies

During the Cultural Revolution, paratext was not limited to textual materials such as publication notes attached to foreign literature translations. It also took the form of institutional and highly visible publishing markers. In terms of publication format, three main types can be identified in this period. They are public translations, internal translations, and latent translations. Public translations were rare and tended to be limited to works regarded as politically safe and readily classifiable as proletarian or progressive. Among the twenty-three Japanese translations published during the Cultural Revolution, only three were public translations, and all three were works by Kobayashi Takiji. By contrast, internal translations were more common. They circulated in a limited manner among officials and a small number of researchers, and they were

not available to ordinary readers (Liao, 2018).

The paratextual character of internal translations was often marked by institutional wording printed on the book. Covers or title pages carried labels such as “for internal reference,” “internal distribution,” or “internal reading material.” Publication statements further specified intended uses, such as “for internal research reference” or “for critical study by relevant cultural departments and specialists.” Such markers did more than limit access. They also preset the purpose of reading and kept interpretation within a manageable and controllable range. Within Japanese literary translation, twenty volumes were internal translations, far more than the three public translations.

A marked depersonalization of translator attribution accompanied this controlled structure of internal translation. In Cultural Revolution translations of Japanese literature, collective attribution, pen-name attribution, and no attribution were common. Collective attribution was often given in the name of an institution or a teaching and research unit. For example, Yamasaki Toyoko's *The Grand Family* (1974) was credited to the “Japanese Teaching and Research Group of the Department of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Normal University.” Matsumoto Seicho's *A Proposal for the Reconstruction of Japan: The Death of Kita Ikki* (1975) was credited to the “Literature Group of the Japanese Studies Office, Jilin Normal University.”

Pen-name attribution also replaced real identities with names carrying clear period connotations. For instance, the translator of Yoshida Seiichi's *A History of Modern Japanese Literature* signed as “Qi Gan,” a name suggestive of “doing it together.” Kaneko Soichi's *The Boy and the Pigeon* (1975) was translated under the name “Yi Yin,” which may be read as implying an “appropriate voice” for the times. In addition, the Mishima Yukio works discussed earlier, as well as translations such as Togawa Isamu's *Shosetsu Tojin Sanmyaku*, published in 1976, did not list the translator. In these cases, the question of who translated the text became secondary, and the translating subject was pushed into invisibility.

Within the Cultural Revolution discourse of “destroying the private and establishing the public” (Yoshimura, 2008), translators' personal authority, naming rights, and interpretive rights were systematically restricted. When texts circulated through internal channels and appeared under collective, pen-name, or no attribution, these paratextual features became one of the most visible mechanisms of control in Cultural Revolution translation practice.

5. Discussion

5.1 Narrating Japanese society as “crisis”

Across many publication notes and critical commentaries, Japanese society was often presented as

being in a state of crisis. Economic crisis, inflation, worsening living conditions, the spread of crime, and moral decline were repeatedly placed together and described as results of capitalism. This kind of narration usually worked through broad generalization. Economic crisis became an umbrella term. Individual experiences and concrete social phenomena were then placed into a larger political reading frame.

In some publication notes, phrases such as “rising prices and an increasingly negative social atmosphere” (Haguruma-za, 1973a) and “the growing impoverishment of the lower and lower-middle groups” (Yamada et al., 1974) were shaped by this crisis lens. Difficulties in everyday life were turned into visible signs of a structural problem. They were not presented as outcomes produced by multiple social factors working together.

Descriptions such as “widespread crime and violence” (Yamada et al., 1974) and “scenes of corruption and moral decay” (Yamasaki, 1974) also placed social disorder and moral deterioration within the same narrative. As a result, paratexts produced an overall negative picture of Japanese society.

Through this pattern, paratexts did not only describe Japan. They organized Japan as an object of political interpretation. Japanese society was made readable as a capitalist society in crisis, and the translated work was guided toward this larger explanatory frame before or alongside the reading of the literary text.

5.2 The worker-peasant-soldier subject and anti-imperialist, anti-revisionist enemies

The second recurring pattern moved beyond the critique of capitalist crisis. It used the political language of the Cultural Revolution to create a mobilizing interpretive template. Paratexts repeatedly emphasized the laboring people and the worker-peasant-soldier as the central subject. They also named the main enemies in a regular way, including imperialism, militarism, aggressive war, and, in the anti-revisionist context, Soviet revisionism. In this structure, the meaning of a work was organized through opposition. Evaluation focused less on narrative or aesthetic form than on whether the work could be connected to a struggle narrative centered on the revolutionary subject.

In shaping this subject, paratexts often used standardized praise to strengthen the agency of the laboring people. For example, when *Zhaiyi* introduced the Japanese theatre group Haguruma-za's *Downriver Town* in no. 2 of 1973, the preface stated that the work reflected the feelings of the laboring people, their unyielding fighting spirit, and their firm confidence in victory. It also stressed that the work emerged from among the people and grew together with them. Similar language appeared in the postfaces to Kobayashi Takiji's works. Characters were presented as

advanced elements of the working masses who led workers, peasants, and soldiers in resisting oppression (Kobayashi, 1973a). Workers were also described as heroes and as sources of hope because of their willingness to struggle and sacrifice (Kobayashi, 1973b). Through such expressions, these works were first read as texts of struggle, rather than mainly as individual narratives or literary forms.

The naming of enemies was especially clear in paratexts attached to themes of war and state violence. In materials on Okinawa-related topics published in *Zhaiyi* in no. 2 of 1973, expressions such as “drive out the U.S. troops” and “overthrow monopoly capital” (Haguruma-za, 1973b) directly organized the issue as an anti-imperialist struggle. The repeated references to imperialism, militarism, and aggressive war also strengthened the division between the people and the enemy. In the anti-revisionist context, prefaces to texts on the Soviet navy (Yolkin, 1973) often used evaluative terms such as glorification, showing off force, and promoting militarist education. These terms defined the work in advance as part of an expansionist policy and required it to be read through criticism.

By repeatedly emphasizing the revolutionary subject and named enemies, this pattern created an interpretive template that could be applied across different works. Texts that could be connected with the struggle of the laboring people were made more publishable and more usable. Texts that had a weaker connection with this struggle were more likely to be framed through warning and critical reading.

5.3 Constructing a manageable knowledge landscape through “Cultural and Literary Updates”

The third recurring pattern mainly appeared in informational sections, especially in the “Cultural and Literary Updates” column in journals such as *Zhaiyi*. During its four-year run of thirty-one issues, *Zhaiyi* published twenty update items related to Japanese literature and the arts. These texts usually presented information chronologically, through itemized lists and brief summaries. Their style was closer to reporting or cataloguing than to direct instruction. This made them different from the first two patterns, which more openly guided interpretation.

Even so, these records also managed boundaries during the Cultural Revolution. They defined what could be introduced, which names and cultural objects entered the reader’s field of vision, and how such information was arranged into columns and categories. In this way, cultural information could circulate in a less directly political but still controllable manner. This logic was not limited to journal columns. It also appeared in publications such as Yoshida Seiichi’s *A History of Modern Japanese Literature*, where Japanese literary knowledge was organized into a form that could be consulted, retained, and reused.

More concretely, these texts often organized

information about Japanese literature and film into lists that readers could consult quickly. For example, the “Cultural and Literary Updates” section in *Zhaiyi* no. 4 of 1974 provided a concentrated list of the winners and winning works of major Japanese literary prizes in 1973. These prizes included the Akutagawa Prize, the Naoki Prize, the Mystery Writers of Japan Award, the Dazai Osamu Prize, the Tanizaki Prize, and the Noma Literary Prize (“Works That Won Japan’s Major Literary Prizes in 1973,” 1974). The same section also listed the results selected by Kinema Junpo for 1973, including the Best Ten Japanese Films of the year and awards for director and screenplay (“The Japanese Magazine Kinema Junpo’s Best Ten Films of 1973,” 1974). Through this approach, knowledge of Japanese culture was turned into the practical act of reading lists and locating reference points. The column did not always state a clear political position, but it suited a reading context in which foreign culture was treated as material to be collected, screened, and stored.

A similar cataloguing logic can be found in introductions to research information and cross-border reception. For example, the article “Water Margin in Foreign Countries,” serialized in *Zhaiyi* no. 6, no. 7, and no. 8 of 1975, collected research from places such as the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. It presented the names of scholars and short outlines of their arguments. After Water Margin became part of a politicized debate in the later Cultural Revolution, such research materials could easily be used as citable resources and made to fit the reading frame of negative examples. Likewise, the short news item “Chinese Literary Works Such as *Yan Yang Tian* Translated into Japanese and Published,” published in *Zhaiyi* no. 2 of 1973, listed works and themes in brief outline form. Although presented as external circulation news, the item turned questions such as which Chinese works were translated and what themes were highlighted into a list-based account that could be monitored and retained.

This pattern did not directly instruct readers how to interpret. Instead, it shaped cultural common knowledge through catalogues, name lists, and collected materials. It allowed Japanese literature and related cultural information to circulate in a quieter way, while still providing background coordinates and reference resources for later publication notes and more directive commentaries.

5.4 Implications and limitations

The implication of this analysis is that multilingual and multicultural circulation should not be understood only as the movement of texts across languages and borders. In the case examined here, circulation depended on a surrounding language of classification, warning, and editorial explanation. This language shaped what could be said about Japan, what could be learned from Japanese literature, and

how foreign culture could be made communicable in Chinese. Paratexts therefore functioned as a practical site where language ideology, cultural politics, and publication governance met.

This study also has limitations. It relies mainly on published books, journals, and paratextual materials, while archival documents on editorial decision-making remain difficult to access. It therefore reconstructs institutional mediation from the traces left in published forms, rather than from internal editorial records. The article also focuses on the production and framing of translated texts, not on actual reader responses. Future research may examine how local readers accepted, negotiated, or departed from the interpretive frames provided by paratexts. Such work would connect the study of translation and paratexts with broader questions of reading practice and cross-cultural communication under political supervision.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined how Japanese literature was organized, interpreted, and circulated in China during the Cultural Revolution through paratextual framing. The analysis shows that paratexts were not secondary materials placed around the translated text. They formed part of the translated book and helped determine the conditions under which foreign literature could be read. Publication notes, prefaces, editors' notes, postfaces, critical commentaries, circulation labels, illustrations, and attribution practices all shaped how Japanese literature entered a supervised system of publication and reading. The translated work did not appear as an independent literary object. It was accompanied by discourses that defined its political status, its proper use, and its acceptable reading position.

These paratextual practices worked through repeatable routines. Authors and works were classified before reading. Possible interpretations were narrowed through warnings against "misreading." Circulation labels marked the intended readership and use of a text. Collective, pen-name, or absent attribution reduced the visibility of individual translators. Such practices did not simply reflect ideology in a general sense. They made ideology work through ordinary editorial procedures. A short publication note, a label on a cover, or the absence of a translator's name could shape how a foreign work was recognized and how its meaning was controlled.

Translation during the Cultural Revolution therefore involved more than the movement of texts from Japanese into Chinese. It also involved the production of a language for speaking about Japan and Japanese literature. Through this language, Japan was often described as a capitalist society in crisis. Japanese literary works were made usable as materials for criticism, reference, or limited study. Cultural information was arranged through lists, columns, and short notices that made it easy to collect and retain.

Japanese literature became visible in Chinese, but this visibility was produced within a restricted field of meaning.

This point is relevant to the study of multilingual and multicultural circulation. Circulation is not only a matter of texts crossing linguistic and national borders. It also depends on the forms of explanation, classification, and institutional mediation that make those texts readable in a receiving context. In Maoist China, the language surrounding translated Japanese literature was shaped by publishing institutions, editorial collectives, political sponsors, and the ideological conditions of the period. Japanese literature was made available to selected readers, but it was also classified, limited, and governed.

The case of Japanese literature also needs to be understood in relation to Japan's specific position in Chinese historical and political imagination. Japan was not treated as a neutral foreign country or as a simple literary source. It was read through memories of wartime aggression, anti-imperialist discourse, socialist cultural politics, and the diplomatic changes of the early 1970s. This made Japan both familiar and politically sensitive. Paratexts helped manage this tension. They allowed Japanese literature to enter circulation while defining the terms under which it could be understood.

By focusing on paratexts, this article has shown how power can enter reading through forms that appear routine and editorial. Notes, labels, prefaces, commentaries, and names decide not only what is translated, but also how translation becomes meaningful and who is allowed to speak through it. Paratextual framing thus connects translation to wider questions of language ideology, cultural politics, and the management of cross-cultural knowledge.

Disclosure Statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding: This research was funded by the 2023 Doctoral Research Start-up Fund of the College of Foreign Languages, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology.

Data Availability Statement: The materials analyzed in this study are published books, journal items, publication notes, and other paratextual materials. No new dataset was generated for this study.

Declaration of Generative AI: During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT to assist with language editing, grammar checking, readability, and formatting. All content was critically reviewed and revised by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final version.

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