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Types of Words Related to Shamanic Rites in the *Chu Ci* and Their Translation Methods

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Abstract:

As a literary and cultural canon, the *Chu ci* is full of culture-specific words, including words related to shamanic rites. These words can be classified into names of gods and ghosts, place names, names of sacrificial offerings, and terminologies of soul-summoning. They can be rendered by transliteration, literal translation, free translation, addition, omission, or combination of them. These translating methods should be used flexibly according to specific contexts, and then their cultural connotations can be represented effectively.

1. Introduction

The *Chu ci* (楚辞), a collection of poems by Qu Yuan and his imitators living between the 4th century B.C.E. and the 2nd century C.E., is the first anthology of romantic poetry in Chinese literature. Chu is an ancient kingdom in south China, mainly covering present Hubei and Hunan provinces, and the *Chu ci* literally means the songs of Chu. As one of the great sources of Chinese poetry or even Chinese culture, the *Chu ci* has a very important literary and historical value, representing the highest achievement of Chu culture and art, and embodying the very origin of the entire cultural system in south China. In this system, the colorful ancient traditions of the south and the remaining powerful shamanic religions are all preserved with a strong romantic color. There has been a strong cultural tradition of shamanism in the Chu or Jingchu region, namely present Hubei and Hunan provinces where people believe in shamans and ghosts [9], and put great emphasis on sacrificial rites. It is precisely because of this belief that the sacrificial offering is not only a religious activity, but also a performance to represent the shamanic culture which is unique to Chu people. This gives rise to the production of a large number of splendid myths as well as beautiful poetry and music. Therefore, the folk songs of Chu are full of primitive religions. The Chu people's love of music is well reflected in the story told

by Song Yu, one of the authors of the *Chu ci*, in his essay entitled *The Reply to the Questions of the King of Chu* as follows: a guest was singing songs in the capital of Chu named Ying at the beginning, and the names of the songs were "Xia Li" (Villages) and "Ba Ren" (country folks); then thousands of people sang with him together [7]. There are many other historical accounts like this, showing that the Chu people were very straightforward and good at expressing their inner feelings through singing and dancing. It is in this way that shamanic songs and dances are spread. The Chuci-style songs were developed on the basis of the folk songs of the kingdom of Chu through processing and refining. With strong local characteristics, the belief in ghosts and gods greatly influenced the lyrical style and content of works such as the "Li sao" and "Jiu ge", the two most important chapters in the *Chu ci*. The shamanic culture contained in the *Chu ci* and the unique sacrifice offering culture of Chu are closely related to each other, which makes the Chu customs carry a mysterious and romantic color. This cultural phenomenon can be seen as shamanic rites, a sacrifice offering culture with shamanic characteristics. In the following sections, we will explore the cultural connotations and translation methods of words related to shamanic rites in the *Chu ci*.

2. Types of Words Related to Shamanic Rites in the Chu Ci

In translating, cultural connotations which are a shared knowledge of source-language readers may be viewed as a kind of cultural presupposition which refers to "the implicit ideas, beliefs, and thoughts of a community, which are rooted in a certain culture and become widely prevalent"; they do not need to be described or clarified because they are so obvious to people [4]. Simply put, cultural presupposition is the cultural background knowledge shared by a certain cultural community. For example, the Chinese idiom "牛郎织女" (*niu lang zhi nyu*, literally "the Cowherd and the Girl Weaver") has the metaphorical meaning that a couple live separately. However, target readers who do not have the cultural background knowledge of the source culture will not understand the metaphorical meaning of this Chinese idiom. Therefore, we are not actually communicating effectively when we translate like that. When we translate materials of this kind, we should take into consideration both literal meaning and cultural connotation of words to tell the target readers that the boy herding the cattle and the girl darning are two lovers living in two separate places. Only in this way can the target reader clearly understands that this is a metaphor for a couple living separately. Likewise, we shall never neglect the translation of the cultural presupposition or the reconstruction of a context when we translate the words related to shamanic rites in the *Chu ci*. In other words, when we translate the source text, we need to keep an eye on putting the vocabulary in a specific cultural background and putting ourselves in the position of the target language readers.

The words related to shamanic rites in the *Chu ci* may be classified into four groups, including the names of gods and ghosts, place names, names of sacrificial offerings, and terminologies of soul-summoning (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 1. Names of gods and ghosts in the Chu ci.

Source Text/Pinyin	Target Text	Translation Method
东皇太一 Dong huang tai yi	The Almighty Lord of the East	free translation
山鬼 Shan gui	The Goddess of the Mountain	free translation
国殇	Those Fallen for the Country	free translation

Guo shang		
河伯 He bo	The God of the River	free translation
大司命 Da si ming	The Great Lord of Fate	free translation
云中君 Yun zhong jun	The God of Cloud	free translation
东君 Dong jun	The God of the Sun	free translation
湘君 Xiang jun	The Lord of River Xiang	free translation
湘夫人 Xiang fu ren	The Lady of River Xiang	free translation

Table 2. Place names in the Chu ci.

Source Text/Pinyin	Target Text	Translation Method
咸池 Xian chi	pools divine	free translation
鱼鳞屋 Yu lin wu	fish-scaled house	literal translation
龙堂 Long tang	dragon's hall	literal translation
紫贝阙 Zi bei que	Purple towers	omission
朱宫 Zhu gong	pearly wall	free translation

Table 3. Names of sacrificial offerings in the Chu ci.

Source Text/Pinyin	Target Text	Translation Method
秦篝齐缕 Qin gou qi lyu	basket and strings from east and west	free translation
竽瑟 Yu se	pipes and flutes	literal translation
肴蒸 Yao zheng	spiced meat	free translation
枹 Fu	rod	literal translation
鼓 Gu	drum	literal translation
瑱 Zhen	jade	literal translation
瑶浆 Yao jiang	jade-like wine	literal translation
琼浆 Qiong jiang	wine which looks like jade	literal translation
椒浆 Jiao jiang	Pepper sauce	literal translation
冻饮 Dong yin	ice-cold drink	literal translation
琼芳 Qiong fang	flowers sweet	literal translation
桂栋	Pillars of cassia	literal translation

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Gui dong		
薜荔 Bi li	orchid	literal translation
杜衡 Du heng	azaleas	literal translation
萧钟 Xiao zhong	bells	literal translation
翡翠珠被 Fei cui zhu bei	The pearly kingfisher bedspread	literal translation
肥牛之腱 Fei niu zhi jian	The fatted beefsteak	literal translation
吴羹 Wu geng	soup of Southern connoisseur	literal translation
千乘 Qian sheng	a thousand chariots	literal translation
郑绵 Zheng mian	central banners	free translation

Table 4. *Terminologies of soul-summoning in the Chu ci.*

Source Text/Pinyin	Target Text	Translation Method
占卜 Zhan bu	divine	literal translation
招魂 Zhao hun	requiem	literal translation

3. Translation Methods for Words Related to Shamanic Rites in the *Chu Ci*

The translation strategy is a systematic, planned, step-by-step method that can be realized by certain means for completing a specific translation work. A translation strategy contains certain goals, rules, and skills. The translation method is the starting point, while the translation strategy contains a goal or purpose [10]. On the understanding level of the cultural information of the source language, Liu Miqing [3] has put forward four strategies, namely historical perspective, textual internal and external verification, intertextual perspective, and humanistic mutual verification.

The historical perspective emphasizes that translators should understand cultural phenomena from a historical perspective. For example, the expression "五斗米" (*wu dou mi*, literally "five decaliters of rice") in the Chinese idiom "不为五斗米折腰" (*bu wei wu dou mi zhe yao*, literally "Do not bow low for five decaliters of rice") refers to the salary of a county magistrate in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 C.E. - 420 C.E.). However, in the eyes of the famous poet Tao Yuanming who was a county magistrate, five decaliters of rice is nothing but a small profit, compared with one's dignity and integrity [11]. In other words, culture-specific words should be handled carefully in understanding. As for the re-expression of culture-specific words, domesticating and foreignizing strategies can be used to translate them. The German theologian and translator Friedrich Schleiermacher [6] claims that "The translator can either leave the writer in peace as much as possible and bring the reader to him, or he can leave the reader in peace as much as possible and bring the writer to him" [5]. According to the Dictionary of China's Translation Studies, foreignizing translation refers to a type of translation that deliberately breaks the convention of the target language by retaining the exotic context in the original text, while domesticating translation means that "the

translation adopts a transparent and fluent style, so as to minimize the strangeness of the target language readers in the foreign language text" [1]. As far as target readers are concerned, foreignization and domestication in translation are a kind of feeling and impression of the target text, which is not determined by the translation method, but by the difference of language and culture. And foreignization and domestication can only be seen in the differences between the two cultures. In essence, the translation strategies of foreignization and domestication reflect the cultural orientation and moral attitude of the translator.

From the perspective of specific translation methods, it seems that translation methods should be explored with respect to solving the problem of non-standard and non-uniformity in the translation of words related to shamanic rites. In the following section, this paper will discuss some methods used to translate the words related to shamanic rites in the *Chu ci*.

3.1. Transliteration

Transliteration means that things or concepts in the original text are translated according to their pronunciation [15]. For example, the traditional Chinese musical instrument "竽瑟" (*yu se*, something like "flute and zither") is translated as "Yu and se" in the "Donghuang taiyi", the first piece of the "Jiu ge" This method is also called the Chinese pinyin method in the translation from Chinese to English.

3.2. Literal Translation

Literal translation, just as its name implies, focuses on the literal meaning of the words related to shamanic rites. In other words, the translation is carried out word for word according to the expression of the original. Similarly, we take "竽瑟" in the "Donghuang taiyi" as an example. It can be literally translated into "Pipes and Flutes" [14].

With the improvement of the international status of China, foreign readers have a deeper understanding of China now. Because of that, transliteration or zero translation can be adopted to deal with words of this category. In other words, Chinese pronunciation can be used for this kind of translation to a greater extent, which helps Chinese culture go global.

3.3. Free Translation

Free translation is a translation method that does not retain the literal expression form of the original text. It directly expresses the connotation of words in the original text, and simplifies the profound truth of words, as illustrated by "pools divine", the translation of the mythological place "咸池" (Table 2).

3.4. Combination of Transliteration and Addition

The transliteration method is to directly use Chinese pinyin to transfer the pronunciation of the words related to shamanic rites in Chinese [11]. This method avoids the problems caused by zero translation, literal translation and free translation. That is to say, there will be no inconsistency in the emotional tone of the literal translation and the integrity of the words related to shamanic rites. Moreover, it is full of exotic customs for foreign readers who have just come into contact with the *Chu ci*. However, it should be pointed out that the transliteration method still has many defects. Firstly, transliteration is difficult to achieve the "faithfulness, expressiveness

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and elegance" of translation. Secondly, the transliteration of words related to shamanic rites is almost useless for target readers, because the information they can get is almost zero. Moreover, as the pronunciation rules of Chinese Pinyin are very different from those in English, target readers may not even be able to pronounce a transliterated word accurately. In the existing English versions of the *Chu ci*, translators mostly use the method of combining transliteration and addition. For example, "桀" (*jie*) was the last ruler of the Xia Dynasty. When we translate it, we cannot directly transliterate it as "Jie", because in this way, target readers do not know the meaning of this word. So we can add the word "King" to the transliteration "Jie" and the whole translation is "King Jie" [8].

3.5. Annotation

In translation practice, annotation is generally used in combination with other methods, such as literal translation, free translation, transliteration, and so on [11]. For instance,女娲 (*Nyu Wa*) can be translated freely into "Snake-Queen", and then a note is provide to explain it: "The Snake-Queen had a snake's tail instead of leg which is from the translation by Xu Yuanchong [13].

3.6. Omission

Omission, as opposed to addition, refers to the omission of words in the original text. A case in point is "稻粢稿麦，挐黄粱些" (*dao zi zhuo mai, na huang liang xie*) in the "Zhao hun", or "Summoning Souls" which means "rice, millet and new wheat mixed with yellow sorghum". When translating the names of the grains, Xu Yuanchong [12] translates them as "With yellow millet, early wheat and rice" in which "粢", "稿麦" and "粱" are omitted.

3.7. Generalization

Generalization in translation refers to "generalization or abstraction of the specific words in the original text" [11]. For example, the translation of "肴蒸" (yao zheng, literally "sacrificial meat") appears in the "Donghuang taiyi". Xu Yuanchong translates it as "spiced meat", while Zhuo Zhenying [16] translates it as "steamed meat". Because Chu people are good at making cold food and Chu's dried meat is usually spiced, "spiced meat" may be more suitable. However, the sacrificial food is usually made fresh, so it seems also reasonable to use "steamed meat". In addition, the three animals used for sacrifice in ancient times were horses, cattle and sheep [8]. Horses and cattle should be used less for sacrifice. Therefore, we cannot confirm that the sacrificial food is pork or mutton. Under this circumstance, we can just use the generic term "meat".

3.8. Conversion of parts of Speech

Sometimes, proper nouns cannot be translated directly, and translation needs to play an explanatory role at the same time [15]. Then, conversion of words' part of speech can be taken into consideration. For instance, the word "掌梦" (*zhang meng*) in the "Zhao hun" refers to the officer who took charge of dreams in ancient times, and it is a noun. However, Xu Yuanchong [13] translates it as "fulfill your dreams" which is a verb, and Zhuo Zhenying [16] translates it as "charge of dream". This is to translate nouns into verbs through the conversion of parts of speech in translating.

3.9. Combination of Literal/Free Translation with Annotation

As the name implies, combination of literal translation or free translation with annotation is to annotate the translation on the basis of the literal meaning, and try to reproduce the deep meaning of the original text. The annotation method, namely use of in-text notes, footnotes and endnotes, can achieve this purpose. For example, Xu Yuanchong [13] translates "八柱撑天立于何处?" (*ba zhu cheng tian li yu he chu*) in the "Tian wen" or "Heavenly Questions", into "Where did Eight Pillars stand?", and provides a note for "Eight Pillars" like this: "The Eight Pillars were the eight mountains which held up the sky. The Fury butted against the northwest Pillar, causing the earth to tilt up and the sky to fall in that region, with the result that in the southeast the Pillar no longer touched the sky".

3.10. Combination of Transliteration and Annotation

The essence of combining transliteration with annotation and combining literal translation or free translation with annotation remains the same. Both of them show the inner cultural background of the source text to the target reader through annotation. The only difference between them lies in the methods of translating the words and phrases related to shamanic rites. For ecample, Xu Yuanchong [12] translates "启代益作后" (*qi dai yi zuo hou*) into "How did Qi take Yi's place", and offers a note for "Qi" like this: "Qi was the son of Yu who chose Yi to be his successor. Qi fell in disgrace and was put in prison by Yi".

4. Discussion and Implications

It seems necessary to discuss the methods: combination of literal translation or free translation with annotation and combination of transliteration with annotation. Although the two methods have the same effect, they play a very different role in conveying cultural connotations of the original. It is believed that the method of combining transliteration with annotation is better than the method of combining literal translation or free translation with annotation [10]. Together with transliteration, annotation can reflect the historical allusions and emotional tone contained in culture-specific words. This translation method will contain the following effects: As time goes by, readers of the target language will have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Combined with the openness and inclusiveness of English, the transliterated words may be completely integrated into the English vocabulary and the annotations can be gradually omitted. We believe that the advantages of the two methods proposed by some scholars can be adopted. However, the shortcoming of combining transliteration with annotation is that it cannot combine the images contained in Chinese allusions with the artistic conception in conveying the meanings of cultural words. The same pronunciation in Chinese can correspond to many different words and meanings, which is difficult for foreign readers who do not have a deep understanding of Chinese classical culture. However, if the method of combining literal translation or free translation with annotation is adopted, the cultural connotation of words with a cultural image can be spread at the same time, which not only plays an important role in interpreting the connotation of the words related to shamanic rites, but also has a positive effect in helping foreign readers understand Chinese culture.

5. Conclusions

The strategies and methods of cultural translation should be tried and determined under the guidance of scientific cultural translation principles. Cultures are created equal, just as men are created equal. Therefore, cultural translation should not be one-sided. This requires the translator to use foreignization and domestication in cultural translation practice carefully. From the perspective of moral attitude, the domestication strategy reflects the translator's respect for the culture of the target language, and at the same time ignorance of the culture of the source language. The foreignization strategy is just opposite to the domestication strategy in that the translator pays more attention to the culture of the source language than to the culture of the target language. In some cases, it is difficult for the translator to strike a balance between source and target cultures, and it is difficult for the translator to stand in a neutral point between the two cultures, so it is necessary for them to make choice of cultural preference. Once this choice is made, the translator also makes a choice between the two strategies of domestication and foreignization and between the two cultures of the target language and the source language. A desirable attitude in cultural translation is to make an objective choice between domestication and foreignization according to the actual needs of translation, and to consider the combination of domestication and foreignization in translating the same text or even the same sentence. A choice made by a translator should be based on the premise of intercultural communication. In particular, the translation of traditional cultural works, such as the translation of the words related to shamanic words in the *Chu ci*, not only expresses a story or an object, but also introduces the whole cultural system of a certain period in the history of China. We should be more careful when we make choice of a translation strategy because the *Chu ci* is an ancient Chinese work, and we should first translate classical Chinese into vernacular Chinese, and in this process there will be many personal preferences before we translate it into English.

Some translation methods and techniques are closely related to foreignization and domestication strategies. Generally speaking, literal translation, transliteration and transplantation are the main means to achieve foreignization. Free translation, substitution, addition and omission are the main methods to achieve domestication. It should be pointed out that the relationship between specific translation methods and domestication and foreignization should be considered dialectically. The same translation method may be domestication or foreignization due to its different translation operations. In the practice of cultural translation, annotation is one of the most commonly used methods. In general, there are three types of annotation: in-text citations, foot-notes and end-notes. Short notes can be placed within the sentence, with parentheses to distinguish them from the main text. These are in-text citations. Use of in-text citations should be limited, as they can interrupt the flow of reading. A moderate number of words in notes can be placed in the footer, which is a footnote. If the explanatory notes are very long, they can be placed at the end of the translation. This is the endnote. That is to say, the annotated text should be concise and comprehensive, with clear cultural background information. In translation practice, we should never separate the translation strategies, methods and skills and choose them one-sidedly. Any translation should be the result of one translator's repeated evaluation of various translation strategies and methods.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

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