

English Translations of the Character Images of *Chu Ci*

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Abstract:

Chu Ci is a precious treasure in the treasury of Chinese literature, a classic imitated and recited by later generations. Qu Yuan created a large number of characters in *Chu Ci* to express his joys and sorrows and to carry his ideals of beauty and politics. Therefore, it is undoubtedly effective to peep into the poet's literary heart from the characters. In this paper, we compare and contrast the English translations of the twenty-seven characters in *Li Sao*, the nine mythological characters in *Nine Songs*, and the forty characters in *Tian Wen*, and find that the translations of Xu Yuanchong and Yang Xianyi omit a large number of characters, while the translations of Zhuo Zhenying and David Hawkes are more faithful to the original works in comparison. The reasons for the differences among the four translations are mainly related to the translators' view of translation, the commentaries to which the translators referred, the time of composition, and the work itself.

Keywords:

Character Images, Comparative Study, Translation Strategies, Reason Explanation

1. Introduction

As a representative of Chinese classical literature, *Chu Ci* is very important in the traditional Chinese cultural system. With the deepening of the study of literary works and the gradual deepening of cultural exchanges, scholars from all walks of life have been studying the *Chu Ci* more and more diversely and deeply, and the English translation of *Chu Ci* is the focus of the study. "Poetry is precious to imagery", and the images in poetry permeate and map the poet's thoughts, emotions and aesthetic interests. The *Chu Ci* is full of materials, thus forming a large number of images. As far as the characters are concerned, they not only show the poet's artistic conception of metaphorical symbolism and imaginative romantic means of expression, but also reveal the poet's yearning for an ideal society and political scene in which the ruler and the ministers meet. The *Chu Ci* has attracted many scholars to explore and study it again and again, and has also caused Chinese and foreign scholars and translators to compete for the translation of the *Li Sao*. However, for the time being, there are relatively few studies on the English translation of *Chu Ci* characters. In this paper, we will discuss the current situation of character translation and the reasons behind it

from the twenty-seven characters in *Li Sao* in *Chu Ci*, the nine mythological characters in *Nine Songs*, and the forty characters in *Tian Wen*.

2. Literature Review

Translator Xu Jun (1996) once pointed out that "to translate a work, it is very crucial to understand the aesthetic characteristics of the original work, to appreciate the original intention and mood, and to capture the image of the original work." By searching the most authoritative Chinese academic journal network publishing database CNKI, Wanfang Data and related English websites for articles about character translation with the keyword of character translation, it is found that the current information in this area mainly focuses on the method of character translation and the challenges of translation, and there is no comprehensive review article on the theme of character translation. A more systematic combing of the field of character translation summarizes that the research in this field is mainly centered on the following two directions: research from the direction of the translator, which mainly includes: the factors affecting the reconstruction of the character image by the translator; research from the direction of the translation, which mainly includes: the entry perspective of the current research at the macro level. From the micro perspective, the main translation strategies adopted by different translators in improving the quality of English translation of characterization; and the requirements for translations to achieve perfect reproduction of characterization. Throughout the research results of the English translation of *Chu Ci*, at present, there is not enough attention in the academic world to the English translation of the characters of *Chu Ci*, and the current research on the English translation of *Chu Ci* involves translators and translations that are not comprehensive, and the research on the translations is relatively fragmented, so more new translations should be included in the future as the object of research. Starting from the English translation of characters, it is found that the translation of characters has gained greater attention. At present, it is the most popular and effective way to study the English translation of character images from a linguistic perspective, but the empirical research still needs to be further promoted. At present, the proportion of discursive research articles of general theoretical discussion or experience summarization is high, while the empirical research (such as the use of corpus) based on the survey and experimental data is relatively small, and the empirical research should be paid more attention to in the future, and should become the mainstream. research paradigm, providing a more reliable research background for the study.

3. Results

3.1 Comparison of Translations of *Li Sao*

Li Sao is a political lyric poem written by Qu Yuan. Wang Yi, who was the first one to write a commentary for *Chu Shi*, made a remark about *Li Sao* that was quite influential to the later generations: "The text of *Li Sao* is based on the Poetry, and it draws analogies and metaphors. Therefore, the good birds and herbs are used to match the loyalty and chastity; the bad birds and stinky things are used to compare with the gluttony and sycophancy; the spiritually cultivated beauties are comparable to the king; the anonymous women are used to the wise ministers; the gnarled dragons and luan phoenixes are used to support the gentleman; and the floating clouds and nimbus are used to the villain. The words are warm and elegant, and the meaning is bright and

clear. All the gentlemen admired its purity and elegance, praised its literature, lamented its lack of success, and counseled its ambition. Here, Wang Yi points out an important feature of the Qu fugue - “citing analogies and metaphors”. There are many characters in Li Sao, which can be roughly divided into the following sections:

(1) Ancestral Gods. The figures in this category in poetry are the ancestors of the poets

Table 1. Translation of Ancestral Gods.

Original Texts	Translated by Xu	Translated by Yang	Translated by Zhuo	Translated by David Hawkes
帝高阳之苗裔兮，朕皇考曰伯庸。	Descendant of High Sunny King, oh! My father's name shed sunny ray.	A prince am I of ancestry renowned, illustrious name my royal sire hath found.	I am descendant of Zhuanxu, a king of fame, And Boyong was my late sire's illustrious name.	Scion of the high lord Gao Yang, Bo Yong was my father's name.
皇览揆余初度兮，肇锡余以嘉名	My father saw my birthday bright, oh!	When first upon my face my lord's eye glanced.	Auspicious names were given to me by my sire	My father, seeing the aspect of my nativity

In this part, the significance of such figures is: such figures are used to show the noble identity and status of the poet, are the innate identification of the beautiful self-image of the lyrical protagonist, and express his reverence for his bloodline and love for his ancestors. [8]. In this part of the character translation, “高阳” is the title of the ancient Chinese emperor Zhuan Xu. Mr. Xu Yuanchong used the direct translation method and translated it as “High Sunny King”. In the minds of Chinese people, the sun has been a symbol of greatness and holiness since ancient times. With this cultural background in mind, the expression “High Sunny King” can portray a sun-like image of greatness, which coincides with the Chinese people's perception of Zhuan Xu's personality. Secondly, Mr. Xu translates the term “Huangkao” as “My father”. This translation seems to be simple, but it is quite in line with the Chinese habit of expression, concise and to the point. Mr. and Mrs. Yang Xianyi do not correspond to the original text, and several key points have been overlooked. First, “Di Gao Yang”; second, the word “kao” in Huang Kao means “deceased,” and “Huang Kao” can mean “emperor,” The term “Huangkao” can refer to “deceased father” or “ancestor of the Qu clan”, and “Bo Yong” means “my father” or “ancestor of the Qu clan”. “Bo Yong” is the name of “my father” or “Qu's ancestor”. These points are not clearly reflected in the translation, or there are errors. In comparison, the translations of Sinologist Hawkes mostly use direct translation, for example, he adopts the phonetic method to directly translate “Emperor Gao Yang” and “Bo Yong”, compared with The comparison shows that the whole sentence is more faithful to Huo's translation.

(2) Historial Figures

Table 2. Translation of Historical Figures.

Original Text	Translated by Xu	Translated by Yang	Translated by Zhuo	Translated by David Hawkes
彼尧、舜之耿介兮，既遵道而得路。	The first two monarchs were so bright, oh!	Two monarchs then, who high renown received.	King Yao and King Shun, who was just and	Glorious and great were those two, Yao and Shun.

			fair, believed.	
何桀纣之猖披 兮，夫惟捷径以 窘步。	The two last kings were in sad plight, oh!	Two princes proud by lust their reign abused.	Whereas Jie and Zhou, who their power had abused.	And how great was the folly of Jie and Zhou.
鲧婞直以亡身 兮，终然殁乎羽 之野。	"The flood- fighter selfless, steadfast, oh!	A hero perished in the plain ill- starred.	"This because of his uprightness that Yao was sent	'Gun in his stubbornness took no thought for his life
夏桀之常违兮， 乃遂焉而逢殃。	The last king of Xia's stormy age, oh!	And then the prince, who counsels disobeyed.	'Cause of his perverse acts Jie of the Xia Dynasty.	Jie of Xia all his days was a king most unnatural.

In the second part of the historical figures, these figures are characterized by the poet's strong subjective consciousness, which gives a glimpse of the poet's thoughts and feelings. These figures can be divided into two parts: the first is the virtuous kings who are praised in history, which contains the poet's praise and commendation, such as Yao, Shun, Tang, Yu, Wen and Wu; the second is the unwise kings who are criticized in history, which reveals the poet's disparaging attitude in the poem, such as Qiyi, Jiezhong and Zhou. Therefore, the characters in this section are not mere statements. The appearance of each character highlights the poet's political aspirations. The translation of this part is: "Yao and Shun are upright, and they follow the way and find their way". For this part of the translation, "He, Jiezhong and Zhou are rampant, and only shortcuts lead to embarrassment," Yang Xianyi also omits the names of the people in the body of the translation. Although this problem can be remedied through the form of commentary, the body of the translation still lacks the heaviness of a historical narrative poem. Yang Xianyi's translation method simplifies the cultural problems of the original text and reduces the reading obstacles for the readers of the English translation, but the loss of Chinese culture is greater. Mr. Xu Yuanchong's translation is beautiful in sound and meaning, but also not faithful to the original text. Mr. Zhuo Zhenying's translation, on the contrary, is a direct translation of the characters according to the original text, with simple explanations. More conducive to reader acceptance. Hawke's commentary is detailed, the basic points are: Yao and Shun are two wise rulers, the model of the ancient "Golden Age of Acceptance", and subjugate the distant tribes with virtue. Yao was described by Confucius as being of high moral character, and Yao was regarded as having inspired the world with his benevolence. In addition, Hawkes describes how Yao and Shun were descended from Gaoxin and Gaoyang, respectively, and that Yao married two daughters to Shun and abdicated to him, and that after Yao's death, he was buried in the southern part of the Chu region, where his two wives were worshipped as river deities. Finally, Hawkes suggests that the legend of Yao and Shun may be derived from the mixed memory of two tribal confederations, the Gaoxin and the Gaoyang, who alternated as leaders. Thus, Hawkes's exegesis has more cultural anthropological significance, emphasizing the virtue of the sage ruler and exploring the source of his historical memory, following the interpretive tradition of Confucian classics, and providing a vivid lesson for readers to understand ancient Chinese legends. [9]

3.2 Comparison of Translations of Nine Songs

The Nine Songs consists of eleven texts, each of which, with the exception of the Soul of the Rite and the National Gothic, is dedicated to a single god, and each of which depicts nine different gods. The archetypal imagery in the Nine Songs can be categorized into life-type archetypal imagery and non-life-type archetypal imagery according to their attributes. This paper focuses on the nine character-based archetypal imagery in the life-based archetypes. “East Emperor Taiyi”. Hong Xingzu cites Wuchen’s note: “Taiyi, the name of the star, the god of heaven. It is worshiped in the eastern part of Chu to match the Eastern Emperor, so it is called the Eastern Emperor.” “Zhu Xi’s Chu Ci Jie Zhu (Chu Ci’s Annotated Chu Ci) also follows this statement. Xu translation will be translated as “the Almighty Lord of the East”, “Lord” has “God, God” and “monarch” and so on. The Zhuo translation renders it as “the Sovereign of the East”, with “Sovereign” meaning “sovereign, king of the country”. “Sovereign” means “monarch”, “ruler of the country”, etc. The Xu translation emphasizes the meaning of “the Sovereign of the East”. Xu’s translation highlights the identity of the Sovereign of the East as a “god”.

“Xiangjun” and “Xiangwufu”. The identity of these two deities has been much debated by scholars. Wang Yi believes that Xiangjun is the god of water, and Lady Xiang is the second concubine of Shun; Han Yu believes that Xiangjun is E Huang, and Lady Xiang is Nu Ying; Wang Fuzhi believes that: “Wang Yi said that Xiangjun is the god of water, and Lady Xiang is the second concubine of Shun. Or, E Huang is Xiang Jun, and Lady Ying is Lady Xiang. This theory began with Dr. Qin’s delusion about the first emperor. There is no such meaning in the Nine Songs. Xiangjun is the god of Xiangshui, and Lady Xiang is her match.” There is also a difference in the translation of “Lady Xiang” between the two translators. Xu translates “Lady Xiang” as “the Lady of River Xiang”, while Zhuo translates it as “the ladies of the Xiang River”. and Zhuo translates it as “the ladies of the Xiang River”. Xu favors Wang Fuzhi’s commentary, while Zhuo favors Wang Yi’s view. The translations of Xu and Zhuo are basically the same for the god Xiangjun.

“Dasimian” and “Shaoximian”. Wang Fuzhi, in his “Interpretation of Chu Ci”, says: “The Great Simian is responsible for the life and death of a person, while the Lesser Simian is responsible for the existence of a person’s heir. In order to its division of the baby, so it is called less; big, then the word of domination also.” Dasiman is the god in charge of the life span of the earth, while Shaoximan is a beautiful goddess in charge of the heirs of the earth. Xu translated “the Great Lord of Fate” and “the Young Goddess of Fate” as “the Great Lord of Fate” and “the Young Goddess of Fate” respectively. Since the two are a pair of gods, the relationship between the two may be better reflected by using the words “God” and “Goddess”. The Zhuo translation is “Fate the Great” and “Fate the Minor”, which emphasizes the correspondence between the two gods.

“Hepo” and “Shangui”. The “He Bo” and “Shan Gui” are the gods of rivers and mountains respectively, which express the worship of mountains and rivers by the Chinese ancestors. Among them, “He Bo” is the god of the Yellow River. Wang Fuzhi’s commentary is more liberal: “He Bo is also the god of the river.” The Ghosts of the Mountains, on the other hand, portrays a beautiful goddess of the mountains and rivers. Zhu Xi cites the “Monster of Wood and Stone” in the Guoshu (The Language of the State) as the name of the “Mountain Ghost”. According to Guo Moruo, the “mountain ghost” is the “goddess of Wushan”. Mr. Xu Yuanchong translates “Hebo” as “the God of the River”, preferring Wang Fuzhi’s commentary; Zhuo Zhenying translates it as “the Count of the Yellow River”. The translations of

Xu and Zhuo are basically the same for the God of the Mountain Ghost. The “Lord of the Clouds” and the “Lord of the East”. The translations of the two deities “Lord of the Clouds” and “Lord of the East” in Xu’s and Zhuo’s translations are basically the same.

By comparing the translations of the nine gods in Xu Yuanchong’s and Zhuo Zhenying’s Nine Songs, we can find that both translators focus on the preservation of the mythological imagery in the original poem, and their translations are more or less the same, conveying the cultural imagery of the original poem more perfectly. In detail, Xu’s translation focuses on highlighting the identity characteristics of each god, with more meaning, focusing on the comprehensibility and acceptability of the translation, while Zhuo’s translation also reflects this feature, but in comparison, there are more direct translations, focusing more on the fidelity of the translation.

3.3 Comparison of Translations of Tian Wen

The Tian Wen talks about the structure of the heavenly bodies, the shape of the earth, natural phenomena, and mythological figures such as Nuwa, Yao, Shun, Yu, and the descendants, as well as the historical events of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, with mythological references interspersed throughout the text. The characters in this section are mainly mythological as well as historical figures.

Example 1: 女岐无合，夫焉取九子？

伯强何处？惠气安在？

Xu translates:

Unwed was Star Divine. How could she have sons nine?

Where is Wind Star who frees. The freshening warm breeze?

Zhuo translates:

How comes it that Lady Nüqi

Had got nine sons without a spouse?

Where dwells Boqiang,

the God of Gales.

And whence do the Breezes arouse?

Example 1 is a representative stanza in which the author asks questions about myths and historical facts. The imagery in this part of the poem is concentrated, and the translators’ construction of the imagery varies from one translator to another. In the case of the two mythological figures “Nü Qi” and “Bo Qiang,” Xu translates them as star constellations, breaking away from the linguistic shell and showing the characteristics of traditional Chinese culture. Both Zhuo’s and Field’s translations translate “Nüqi” and “Bo Qiang” directly, but the difference lies in the fact that Zhuo Zhenying adds “lady,” the The difference is that Zhuo Zhenying adds “lady,” “the virgin,” and “he God of Gales,” which logically paves the way for the next line and conveys the connotation of the imagery, while Field utilizes “wherein” to reflect the relationship between conception and birth, and “bliss” to convey the meaning of the imagery. Field uses the word “wherein” to show the relationship of conception, and “blows” to show the divine power of Bo Qiang. [5]

4. Discussion

The above results will be elaborated from the following aspects

4.1 From the perspective of translator's background

Mr. Xu Yuanchong's translations strictly use the rhyme scheme of abab, strictly abide by the expression form of the original poems, with neat structure, fluent flow and good meaning. Therefore, in the translation of symbolic characters, Mr. Xu Yuanchong's first principle is to consider whether or not to press the rhyme. Because of this principle, unfaithfulness to the original text has also emerged

The translations of Mr. Yang Xianyi and Mr. and Mrs. Dai Naidian are different from Mr. Xu's translation in that they do not pursue strict adherence to the rhyme scheme of the original poems, but adopt the rhyming forms of aabb, aaab, and aaaa. In terms of translation strategy, they preferred dissimulation. Although Yang Dai's translation is very different from Xu's, both of them reflect a common feature, that is, the translators have added their own deep understanding to the translation. At the same time, it must also be noted that, from the perspective of scholarly research in general, less emphasis has been placed on the translation of Li Sao, which is the first work of Yang Xianyi's translation of Chinese literature, for two reasons. One is that the translation of Li Sao was only his personal amateur behavior during his student days, a kind of hobby, not a systematic and large-scale formal translation work, let alone considering it as a career. When he was a young man studying at the New School in Tianjin, he occasionally translated individual English and American poems into old Chinese poems for fun. While studying English Literature at Oxford University, Yang Xianyi translated Li Sao into 18th-century English verse and showed it to his English tutor, Professor Brendan, who was a poet. Yang reflected this love of poetry and literature in his translations, which led to the creation of the Li Sao translation. This was the first time he translated classical Chinese literature into English. Secondly, the translation of Li Sao is debatable in the academic world, that is, Yang Xianyi's attitude of "playing with translation" is slightly controversial. This attitude of "translating anything" reflects Yang Xianyi's view of translation in the early period of his life: he did not pursue fidelity and did not stick to the original works. [6]

Empathy in translation refers to the translator imagining himself in the situation of the poet or the me in the poem to understand his thoughts and feelings, and it also refers to the translator, after entering the poet's psychological state or simulating his aesthetic stereotypes, "externalizing" his feelings into the image of the poem to spiritualize and personalize the image of the poem, and to make the poet's image spiritualized and personalized. The image is spiritualized and personalized, thus resonating with the poet's aesthetic feeling. (Zhuo Zhenying 2001:53) Empathy needs to be based on a thorough understanding of the original text. Therefore, Yang Xianyi's translators will briefly elaborate on the characters when they proceed to translate the Chu Ci to make it easier for the readers to understand.

Sinologist Hawkes, as a foreign translator, Hawkes used the free form of English poetry to translate Qu Yuan's works without meter or rhyme. In the English translation of the characters, he used pinyin words and attached English notes to explain them. Chinese history is so profound and deep that Hawkes could only use the method of direct translation with annotations in order to face the audience of foreign readers.

4.2. From the perspective of translators' reference to commentaries

Different translators refer to different commentaries, which to a certain extent has led to the creation of different translations. For example, scholars have not reached a consensus on the identity of the two deities “Xiangjun” and “Xiangwufu” in the translation of the Nine Songs. Two scholars, Wang Yi and Wang Fuzhi, did not share the same viewpoint. Xu Yuanchong’s translation favors Wang Fuzhi’s view, while Zhuo Zhenying’s translation favors Wang Yi’s view. Therefore, the translations of “Lady Xiang” by the two translators are also different.

4.3. From the perspective of creation time

Publication Year Content	Translator	Title	Length of Translation
1953	杨宪益, 戴乃迭	Li Sao & Other Poems of Chu Yuan	96 pages
1959	David Hawkes	Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South	182 pages
1994	许渊冲	Poetry of the South	238 pages
2006	卓振英	The Verse of Chu	237 pages

Western culture is inseparable from the tide of translation, and so is Chinese culture (Koo 2007: 182). With the increasing influence of Chinese culture, more and more scholars pay attention to Chinese cultural works, so the time of creation also has a certain influence on the presentation of works. An in-depth understanding of literary characters also helps translators to choose translation strategies that reproduce characterization. [2]

4.4. From the perspective of the works of Chu Ci

As a model of romantic poetry in ancient China, Li Sao has won the lasting attention of translation scholars with its gorgeous and elegant style, and occupies an important position in the translation of Chinese canonical books. The translation of Chusuo as a canonical work is different from the translation of other works. The translation itself is extremely difficult. When it comes to the words and phrases in Chu Ci, people feel the literary style and the profound expression of the words, which is “the first ‘peak’ in the history of Chinese culture”. The translation of canonical books requires the translator to promote it in all aspects as much as possible, and to express the cultural character of the canonical books as completely as possible. In other words, the translation of canonical books requires the translator to do the saint's business: to take a high academic position, cultivate the national culture and personal cultivation to do the saint's work for the West; at the same time, the translator should also learn from both the East and the West, be unbiased, and accumulate the Chinese and Western philosophies as well as the Chinese and Western schools in a single body; to touch the readers with the rich ideological and spiritual spirit of the Chinese culture and the excellent language of the translated text; the translated product should be solemn but not kitschy, elegant but not rude, friendly and pleasing to the ears. The translation should be solemn but not vulgar, elegant but not rude, and friendly but pleasant to read. [10]

5. Conclusion

Among the existing translations, Mr. Xu Yuanchong’s translation strictly adheres to the original form of expression. It is very catchy and has a sense of rhythm, but the

fidelity is not high, and many characters appear to be omitted from the translation; Yang Xianyi and his wife's translators mostly adopt the method of Italian translation, which is mainly related to their creative background, and the translation of individual chapters of Chu Shi is only his personal amateur behavior during his student days, a kind of hobby, not a systematic and large-scale formal translation work, let alone considering it as a career; compared to the translations of Zhuo Zhenying and Hawks, which are more faithful to the original text, the translations of Mr. Xu Yuanchong and Mr. Xu Yuanchong are more faithful to the original text. In comparison, the translations of Zhuo Zhenying and Hawkes are more faithful to the original text. In comparison, the translations of Zhuo Zhenying and Hawkes are more faithful to the original text, while Hawkes, as a foreign scholar, still needs to improve his translation in terms of spreading Chinese culture in its original flavor; the reasons for the differences among the four translations are mainly related to the translator's outlook on translation, the annotated texts that the translators have referred to, the time of creation, and the works themselves.

At present, although the English translation of the characters of Chu Ci has made certain achievements, there are still the following deficiencies:

(1) Insufficient attention: most of the scholars focus on the imagery of Chu Rhetoric is focused on non-life-like imagery, while a large number of mythological and historical characters appear in Chu Rhetoric, which should be emphasized.

(2) The research method needs to be improved: most of the scholars carry out the research through the comparative analysis method at present. At present, the corpus method can be adopted to integrate the scattered corpus and strengthen the systematic research.

(3) Dissemination needs to be strengthened: most of the characters in Chu Shi are mythological and historical figures, so if it can take root and grow in a foreign culture, it is necessary to find a good entry point in the culture of the translated language. Let foreign readers maximize the feeling of Chinese culture in the translation process.

Conflicts of Interest

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