Study on the Strategies of Translating Toponymy in *Journey to the West*

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Abstract: Translating toponymy or place names in literary works is a particular branch of Culture Translation. Target readers always wonder about the real cultural meaning of the place names when they read translated literary works. As one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, *Journey to the West* is a masterpiece that contains a large number of place names. When translating the place names in *Journey to the West*, the selection of translation strategies is significant, for it may directly influence readers' understanding of the stories. The author chooses W.J.F. Jenner's English version of *Journey to the West — Journey to the West* as the research object. Firstly, the author classifies the toponymy in the novel into 4 types, then analyses the translation strategies and methods adopted in the English version, and finally summarizes the general rules of translating toponymy in *Journey to the West*. That is, transliteration is usually adopted in translating countries' and cities' names; when translating the names of buildings and natural places, the literal translation is the first choice; other methods like free translation, omission and amplification can be considered when simple translation method cannot express the cultural meaning of the places clearly. All in all, foreignization is the primary strategy adopted in translating toponymy in *Journey to the West*, and domestication is a minor or additional strategy.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of international cultural exchange, countries all over the world focus not only on developing their own culture but also on understanding the culture of other nations. Therefore, translation activities play a more and more important role nowadays.

China is a large country with a long history. Furthermore, the classics are one of the most important carriers of the fascinating culture of China. "Classics translation is an important aspect of cultural transmission, which plays a significant role in carrying national culture" [1]. Therefore, an extensive translation activity of classic Chinese literary works will make more foreigners know about Chinese culture.

Toponymy contains a lot of cultural information such as history, society, geography and traditional customs. Therefore, an accurate translation of place names will significantly help the readers understand the historical and cultural background of the literary works. Chinese place names usually have deep cultural backgrounds and even some unique stories. However, it is hard to

find studies focusing on toponymy's translation strategies in Chinese classics. Establishing some methods and principles in translating toponymy will inevitably help to spread traditional Chinese culture.

As one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, *Journey to the West* is a masterpiece which not only has a profound cultural connotation but also contains a large number of place names. When translating the names of the places in *Journey to the West*, selecting translation strategies is essential, for it may directly influence readers' understanding of the stories.

As a loyal reader of *Journey to the West*, the author chooses W.J.F. Jenner's *Journey to the West* as a research object and tries to summarize the strategies and methods of the toponymy translation in this translation work.

As we know, every translator has his own translation strategies and methods when doing a translation. Whether a translation is successful usually depends on the selection of translation strategies. There are many interesting places in *Journey to the West*, and most of them contain profound historical and cultural information. Precisely translating every place name in the novel is a challenging task. Jenner's *Journey to the West* is the first cover-to-cover translation of *Journey to the West*, which was translated by native English speaker [2]. In this version, he tries to translate characters and places smoothly acceptable for native English readers. In the author's opinion, this English version has much value to be researched for the translator's masterly selection of translation strategies.

Therefore, the objective of this study is clear. The author will try to summarize the strategies and methods used in this *Journey to the West*. Through the research, the author will try to discover some principles and rules for translating toponymy in literary works.

There are four chapters in this paper. The introduction chapter will show the research background, purpose, and structure of the thesis. The second chapter presents the literature review, which states the definition of some translation strategies and methods. The third chapter is the main part of the paper. The author will introduce place names in *Journey to the West* and analyze which translation strategies and methods are adopted. In the Conclusion part, the author will make a statement on the main findings of this thesis, point out the limitations and put forward his opinions on further studies.

2. Translation Strategies and Translation Methods

This chapter presents an overview of some translation strategies adopted in the toponymy translation of *Journey to the West* and introduces the relationship between translation strategies and translation methods.

2.1. Translation Strategies

Nida was the first translator who defined cultural translation. According to Nida, cultural translation is "a translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicating the original; opposed to linguistic translation" [3].

Nowadays, the preliminary study about cultural translation is how to treat cultural factors and issues in literary works and translate cultural information into the target language culture. In order to achieve the goal of an excellent cultural translation, selecting suitable strategies seems very important. Regarding the strategies for dealing with cultural elements in translation, there are usually two choices: make the translation closer to the author or the reader. The German philosopher Friederich Schleiermacher introduced different strategies of translation in his lecture: "There are only two (choices), either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible, and

moves the reader towards the writer; or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible, and moves the writer towards the reader" [4]. This is the first concept of "Domestication" and "Foreignization", and Venuti's detailed definitions were developed later.

2.1.1. Domestication

Domestication refers to the target-culture-oriented translation technique. By adopting the domestication strategy, the translator usually turns some unfamiliar words and expressions in the source literary works into those acceptable to the target readers. According to Italian translator Venuti, the definition of domesticating translation should be: "Keep the target language culture to abide by current mainstream values, openly using conservative assimilation means to the original, in order to make the version meet domestic canon, publishing trend and political needs" [5]. The translator tries to reduce the expression from other cultures and give the target readers a smooth and comfortable reading experience. In other words, domestication tries to make the author close to readers. American linguistician Eugene Nida is one of the representatives of domesticating translation research. He said, "Translating in producing in receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language message" [6]. In his opinion, translators should be responsible for the target readers.

Here are some examples of domesticating translation in *Journey to the West*.

Tu Di Shen -- Local god

Xing Jun -- Star lord

Yin Si -- The Underworld

Qin Lin Shan -- Mount Unicorn

In these examples, we can quickly notice that the Chinese cultural images are replaced by images familiar to English readers. In this way, the English readers will feel easier to understand. Therefore, domestication is a good choice for the translator to make the translation friendlier to the readers.

2.1.2. Foreignization

Foreignization, on the other hand, is a source-culture-oriented translation. It focuses on keeping the unique features of the source language so that the target readers can experience the new information from the original culture. Venuti defines foreignization as "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the readers abroad" and domestication as the "ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home" [7]. Venuti also regarded foreignization as an excellent attempt to get free from the constraint of local culture. Moreover, it can make different cultural information come in and give the reader an extraordinary reading experience. By adopting the foreignization strategy, the translators intentionally make the translation break through the conventional rules of the target language and add new content to it.

2.2. Translation Methods

Table 1: The relationship between translation strategies and methods

Domestication	Foreignization
Free translation Omission Amplification	Transliteration Literal translation

The foreignization and domestication strategies discussed above are just general principles and tendencies followed by translators. These strategies should be realized with some practical methods.

Some methods, such as free translation and omission, are frequently used to achieve the fluency and naturalness of the translated text while using literal translation and transliteration to maintain the foreignness of the original text. The relationship between translation strategies and methods is illustrated in Table1:

2.2.1. Free Translation

Unlike literal translation, free translation pays little attention to forms. It is a translation method that keeps the contents but not the forms of the source language. It ignores words' literal meanings and structure but focuses on their cultural meanings. Although it breaks away from the images and grammatical structures of the original texts, it is harmless to their meaning. When there are conflicts between content and form, content absolutely should be taken into consideration first. Furthermore, that is the reason free translation becomes possible. Free translation is often used to solve problems when there are significant differences in word order, syntactic structure and rhetorical figures between the source text and the target text.

Here are some examples in *Journey to the West*.

Tian Zhu Guo -- The Land of India

Ling Shan -- Miraculous Mountain

You Ming Jie -- The World of Darkness

Fang Cun Shan -- Heart Mountain

In *Journey to the West*, free translation is often used together with literal translation. In the example "Ling Shan", the character "Ling" is translated into "Miraculous" by free translation method while the character "Shan" is literally translated into "Mountain".

2.2.2. Omission and Amplification

Some complex expressions that contain cultural information and mean nothing to the target readers can sometimes be omitted as far as the main cultural information is kept. Omission refers to "a process of omitting a part or some parts in the original context by a translator to guarantee the target readers' understanding" [8]. The proper use of omission can make the translated text more exact and smooth. For example, "Tong Tian He" is translated as "The River of Heaven", and "Da Lei Yin Si" as "Great Thunder Monastery". Different from omission, amplification is to add words to express the cultural content more faithfully. For example, "San Qing Guan" is translated as "The Temple of the Three Pure Ones". Translation methods like free translation, omission and amplification are representatives of the strategy of domestication. By adopting domestication, some elusive expressions will be turned into those more acceptable and friendly to the target readers.

2.2.3. Transliteration

Transliteration refers to "a kind of translation technique by which the original text is replaced by the words with similar pronunciation in the target language" [9]. This translating method is to translate entirely by pronunciation without considering the meaning, which is the common translation method in such proper nouns as people names and place names like, "Tang Sanzang" and "Chang'an". Generally, place names in China are translated regarding Chinese pinyin. With transliteration, the characteristic of Chinese toponymy is respected. In Jenner's *Journey to the West*, he used a lot of transliteration when translating place names. However, we must admit that transliteration has limitations. This translation method may cause a loss of cultural information and readers' puzzle of understanding the cultural elements of the original text.

Toponymy is a proper noun that is suitable for transliterating. However, when simple transliteration cannot entirely show the original text's meaning, it should usually be aided by other

translation methods like literal translation, which is also the common method used in toponymy's translation. In the following examples, the translators use one transliteration word plus one common noun to translate the original place name.

Wu Zhuang Guan -- Wuzhuang Temple

Kun Lun Shan -- Mount Kunlun

Ao Lai Guo -- The Country of Aolai

We can see that a meaningful word is added before or after the pinyin-word in these translated texts. By this way, the text is more readable comparing with simple transliteration.

2.2.4. Literal Translation

Literal translation refers to the translation that keeps the original information and its linguistic structure. The use of literal translation is either to retain foreignness or to import fresh expressions from foreign languages. It "is not only a word-for-word translation. Its main idea is to express the style of the original text without distorting it" [10]. Literal translation has its advantages. Generally saying, this method can transmit the cultural information of the original text directly and reproduce its language style simultaneously. As a result, in the translating process, if the translator tries to transmit various cultural information of the original language into the target language as much as possible, the literal translation is his best choice. However, when there are great differences in word order, linguistic structure or cultural images between two languages, literal translation will probably cause the missing information of the source language. So appropriate literal translation can only be used in "the same or similar grammatical and rhetorical aspects between the source and target language" [11]. Despite the disadvantages, literal translation is often an important method in translation activities. Here are a few examples of literal translation in *Journey to the West*.

Huang Feng Ling -- Yellow Wind Mountain

Liang Jie Shan -- Double Boundary Mountain

Lian Hua Dong -- Lotus Flower Cave

Bai Hu Ling -- White Tiger Ridge

The two translation methods above are commonly used to embody the strategies of foreignization which focuses on respecting the source language's characteristic. By adopting this strategy, the target readers can get the new information from the original culture and the target language can be enriched at the same time.

3. Strategies and Methods Adopted in Translating Toponymy in Journey to the West

Jenner's *Journey to the West* adopts many translation strategies and methods. He chose different strategies when translating different types of toponymy. In this chapter, the author will analyze the translator's selection of the translation strategies dealing with each type of place name.

3.1. Categorization and Features of Toponymy in Journey to the West

As we know, the main story of *Journey to the West* was based on the experience of the monk Xuan Zang in Tang Dynasty. Many place names in *Journey to the West* were taken from the historical materials of Tang Dynasty, which is the main feature of the toponymy in this novel. However, *Journey to the West* is also a mystery novel. Many place names in it are imaginary. In other words, they did not exist in the real world. That is absolutely another important feature of the toponymy in *Journey to the West*. However, in this thesis, the author will not discuss whether the place is real. The study will take all the place names in the novel into consideration. According to incomplete statistics, there are approximately 300 place names in *Journey to the West*. In order to

make a better foundation for the following study, the author classifies all the place names in *Journey to the West* into four types. They are the names of countries and cities, the names of palaces and temples, the names of natural places, and the names of other special places.

3.2. The Analysis of Translating Toponymy in Journey to the West

Table 2 shows of the numbers of each type of the place names in *Journey to the West*. We will mainly discuss the first three types in this section.

Table 2: Numbers of each type of the place names in *Journey to the West*

Type of place names	Amount	Examples
Countries and cities	44	Chang'an, Tianzhuguo
Palaces and Temples	90	Wuzhuang'guan, Shuijing'gong
Natural places	119	Wuxingshan, Shituoling
Other special places	48	Dongshengshenzhou
	301	

3.2.1. Countries and Cities

As is mentioned in Section A, one of the most important features of the toponymy in *Journey to the West* is its historical background. In Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West*, many of the place names were borrowed from the historical data of Tang Dynasty. For example, the famous ancient city "Chang'an", which is called "Xi'an" nowadays. Other examples like, "Guanzhou", "Hongzhou", are places that really existed in Tang Dynasty. Dealing with this kind of place names, the translator usually uses transliteration method. The reasons are as follow.

First, these places really exist in history, and lots of people have already known that, so it is acceptable to call them by their original pronunciation. Second, the original cultural meaning of these old place names is too difficult to clarify and meaningless for the reader nowadays. Let us look at another example, "Tian Zhu Guo" (The Land of India). This toponymy is not suitable to be transliterated obviously. As we know, in Tang Dynasty, people in China called the land of India "Tianzhu", as for Jenner, his purpose is to bring *Journey to the West* to the English readers, so he adopt domestication here.

Many place names are translated by adopting the strategy of domestication in Jenner's version, Such as "Nyu Er Guo" (Womanland), "Bao Xiang Guo" (Elephantia), "Xiao Zi Cheng" (Boytown). The imaginary place is one of the charms of *Journey to the West*. In order to express the cultural meaning of these interesting places, free translation is usually adopted. For example, "Nyu Er Guo" is a country where all the residents are female, so the "Womanland" is quite a vivid translation.

Table 3 shows the translation strategies and methods of countries and cities in *Journey to the West*.

Table 3: Translation strategies and methods of countries and cities

Type of place names	Translation strategies	Translation methods	Amount	
Countries and Cities	Domestication	Free translation	12	12
		Omission & Amplification	0	
	Foreignization	Transliteration	31	32
		Literal translation	1	

From the table we can see that, about 70% of this type of place names are transliterated. That is to say, when translating names of countries and cities, transliteration is the translator's first option.

3.2.2. Palaces and Temples

There are many palaces and temples in *Journey to the West*, most of them are the living places of the gods and immortals.

In fact, most of the palaces in *Journey to the West* are imaginary, which are translated by adopting domestication. For example, "Da Xiong Dian" is translated as "Buddha Hall" and "Pi Sha Gong" as "Vaisravana Palace". "Da Xiong Dian" is a hall in "Da Lei Yin Si" (Great Thunder Monastery) which is the settlement of the many buddhas, as a result, translation like "Great Hero Hall" is obviously wrong. "Pi Sha Gong" is the settlement of a god named Vaisravana, so "Vaisravana Palace" is a quite reasonable translation. Let us look at another example, "San Qing Dian" (The Hall of the Three Pure Ones). Here, the translator used the method of amplification. As we know, "Sanqing" refers to the three greatest gods in the Taoism, and the translators add more words in this expression and try to show the readers this culture element.

However, most of the palaces in Jenner's *Journey to the West* are translated by literal translation. For example, "Yue Gong" is translated as "Moon Palace". The expression of the source and target language are similar grammatically and rhetorically. The target readers may easily understand the "Moon Palace" is a settlement for the immortals on the moon. In this case, the strategy of foreignization is suitable to be adopted. Other examples are: "Bai Hu Dian" (White Tiger Hall), "Tai He Gong" (The Palace of Great Peace), "Shui Jing Gong" (Crystal Palace) and so one.

In *Journey to the West*, most of the temples and monasterys are buildings of Buddhism. Like the palaces just mentioned, temples are often translated literally, examples are: "Jin Guang Si" (Golden Light Monastery), "Huang Hua Guan" (Yellow Flower Temple), "Fu Long Si" (Subdued Dragon Monastery), etc. Transliteration is also widely adopted. Examples are: "Fa Men Si" (Fa Men Monastery), "Wu Zhuang Guan" (Wuzhuang Temple), "Guan Yin Yuan" (Guanyin Monastery) and so on.

There are also examples of domestication, such as, "Tu Di Miao" (Local God's Temple), "Pu Ji Si" (The Monastery of Salvation), etc. "Tudi" are immortal local officers or some small gods who live under the ground in many stories of *Journey to the West*. Therefore, the translator used the expression "local god" which is easier to accept by the English readers.

Table 4 shows the translation strategies and methods adopted in translating names of palaces and temples in *Journey to the West*.

Table 4: Translation strategies and methods of palaces and temples

Type of place names	Translation strategies	Translation methods	Amount	
Palaces and Temples	Domestication	Free translation	12	18
		Omission & Amplification	6	
	Foreignization	Transliteration	13	72
		Literal translation	59	

From the table we can see that, about 60% of them are translated by using literal translation. That is to say, foreignization strategy is the most frequently used in translating palaces and temples' names.

Obviously, the strategy of foreignization really fit the translation of this type of toponymy. In fact, most of these buildings have their own story in the novel. Let us cite "Fu Long Si" (Subdued Dragon Monastery) as an example. In Chapter 63 of *Journey to the West*, the local people tamed a dragon to protect the treasure in the monastery. The Monkey King soon gave the name "Fu Long Si" to the monastery which means the dragon will be subdued in this monastery forever. Therefore, the strategy of foreignization really seems to be a good choice to show the origin of the building to the reader.

3.2.3. Natural Places

Plenty of natural places have been mentioned in *Journey to the West*, and the names of mountains and caves account for the majority of them. Many famous Chinese mountains appear in the novel. "E Mei Shan" (Mount Emei), "Kun Lun Shan" (Mount Kunlun), and "Tai Shan" (Mount Tai) are very familiar to readers. In Jenner's version, most of these mountains' names are transliterated. There are also some imaginary mountains in *Journey to the West* like "Shi Tuo Ling" (Lion Ridge). In this example, the mountain's name is translated by adopting domestication strategy. Because "Shi Tuo" is a kind of mythical creature in ancient China which looks like a lion. If we translate it by using literal translation, the text may probably cause misunderstanding to the readers.

On the other hand, literal translation is also frequently adopted to translate mountains in *Journey to the West*. Examples are as follows.

Bai Jiao Shan -- Mount Hundredfoot

Hei Feng Shan -- Black Wind Mountain

Hua Guo Shan -- The Mountain of Flowers and Fruit

Compared with other natural places in *Journey to the West*, the caves are the most artistic and mysterious. There are various devils, spirits and gods living in these caves. In other words, every cave has a unique story. In *Journey to the West*, the caves' names are mostly translated using literal translation. The examples are as follows.

Huang Feng Dong -- Yellow Wind Cave

Huo Yun Dong -- Fire-Cloud Cave

Shui Lian Dong -- Water Curtain Cave

When the names can clearly show the information of the caves to the readers, the translator adopts the foreignization strategy to respect the original text maximumly. In the author's opinion, one of the purposes of choosing this translating method is to vividly express the unique style of the owner or the special environment of these caves. For example, the owner of the Yellow Wind Cave is a monster who can blow heavy wind; the owner of the Fire-cloud Cave is an immortal who can make fire; the Bottomless Cave has a huge underground space.

Table 5 shows the strategies and methods adopted in translating names of natural places.

Table 5: Translation strategies and methods of natural places

Type of place names	Translation strategies	Translation methods	Amount	
Natural Places	Domestication	Free translation	19	20
		Omission & Amplification	1	
	Foreignization	Transliteration	22	99
		Literal translation	77	

From the table we can see that, nearly 64% of the natural places are translated by using literal method, which demonstrates the foreignization strategy still plays a main role in translating this type of place names.

4. Conclusion

Table 6: Translation strategies and methods of place names in *Journey to the West*

Translation strategies	Translation methods	Amount	
Domestication	Free translation	58	70
	Omission & Amplification	12	
Foreignization	Transliteration	72	231
	Literal translation	159	

In this thesis, the author makes some studies on the strategies of translating toponymy in *Journey to the West*. Table 6 shows the translation strategies and methods adopted in the translation of all the place names in *Journey to the West*.

From the table above, about 77% of the place names are translated using foreignization and 23% by domestication. Among the translation methods adopted, literal translation is used the most frequently, and the proportion is about 53%.

According to these statistics, we can summarise the methods adopted in translating toponymy in *Journey to the West*.

Translators take transliteration as the first option in translating countries and cities. The proportion of it is about 70%. When simple transliteration cannot express the cultural meaning clearly, it will be used together with the free translation.

In translating buildings like palaces and temples, literal translation is the translator's first option. About 60% of these buildings' names are translated using literal translation. In the translation of natural places, literal translation is still the most frequently used. Nearly 64% of the natural places are translated by using literal method. Other methods like free translation, omission and amplification can be considered secondly when a single translation method cannot express the cultural information in the place name.

All in all, foreignization is the primary strategy adopted in dealing with the toponymy translation in *Journey to the West*, and domestication is a minor or additional strategy.

Nowadays, many Chinese scholars are discussing whether domestication or foreignization should be used in translation. The author holds that any translation strategy can be used to reach the translation purpose. Each translation strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages. Foreignization can make people enjoy the original appearance of the source text, while domestication can help the readers understand the foreign culture more easily. In Jenner's *Journey to the West*, he concentrates on helping the target readers experience the unique charm of the original version. As a result, he takes foreignization as his first option. However, when dealing with some complex and elusive elements, he still considers domestication. Thus, foreignization and domestication are not contradictory.

At the end of the paper, let the author point out the limitations of the work and put forward his opinions on further studies. In this study, the author researches only one English version of *Journey to the West*, and there is no comparison between Jenner's translation strategies and other translators'. The statistics are not precise enough either. The author will try to study more translation works and summarize their translation strategies of them in the future.

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