

Domestication and Dissimilation in China's Translation History: Take the Journey to the West's Translation as Example

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Abstract: Domestication and dissimilation have gone through the whole process of development-evolution-maturity-perfection. According to the development rule of literary translation history, translation will develop in depth from a new perspective under the interaction of the two. *The Journey to the West's* English translation is an important work in the history of translation between China and the West. Anthony C. Yu's translation and Jenner's translation are two English Translations in *The Journey to the West* with relatively great international influence. The two translators adopt a lot of domestication and dissimilation translation strategies to deal with the cultural differences between China and the West. From the perspective of domestication and dissimilation translation strategies, this paper analyzes the typical examples and characteristics of two English Translations of *The Journey to the West*, and discusses the past development in China, present situation and future development of domestication and dissimilation , so as to improve the translation level.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the promotion of China's position on the international stage, China's classical books and traditional culture have gradually attracted the attention of the world, and the translation of classic works has also become one of the important means of cultural output. *The Journey to the West's* translation involves thoughts, culture and art, and its content is closely related to anthropology, folklore, religion and even economic management. How to convey the rich connotation of Chinese traditional culture and conform to readers' language habits, so as to attract readers, is the main difficulty in translation. Under the guidance of domestication and foreignization translation strategies, this paper analyzes the typical examples and characteristics of two English versions of *The Journey to the West*, and probes into the past development, present situation and future development of domestication and dissimilation in China, so as to improve the translation level.^[1]

2. A Brief Introduction to *The Journey to the West* and its English Versions

The Journey to the West is a masterpiece in the history of China's literary development. Although it is a ghost novel, its stories are closely related to social reality. Every story of learning from the West to subdue demons is interspersed with descriptions of the ancient customs of China, which can be

said to be the deposition of thousands of years' culture in China, with rich cultural connotations and a treasure of Chinese national culture. Therefore, *The Journey to the West* also has a great influence abroad. Since the 19th century, translators have translated it into many languages. Samuel Woodbridge, Zhai Lisi, James Ware, Richard Wilhelm, Wang Jizhen, Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie, Timothy Richard and Helen M Hayes. Arthur Waley, Chen Zhicheng and Chan Christina and Chan Plato all translated fragments. Because its content contains a lot of puns, metaphors, irony and other expressions with China characteristics, and its narrative method is even more complicated "payoff instead of payback", it is difficult to translate, so it was not until the 1980s that Anthony C. Yu, a Chinese American and a professor of humanities at the University of Chicago, completed the first full English translation-*The Journey to the West*. The other influential complete translation is *Journey to the West* translated by the British historian and sinologist W · J F Jenner. Although both of these two translations are famous for their complete translations, the remaining versions have been rated as the English versions closest to the original reading experience and most faithful to the original by many sinologists and translators such as Xia Zhiqing, Andrew H. Plaks, He Guli and Leo Oufan Lee in the history of translation and introduction in *The Journey to the West*. Due to the differences in the source and path of stylistic development, there are great differences between China's classical narrative and western narrative. Anthony C. Yu respects China's classical narrative style and tries to show the stylistic features of *The Journey to the West's* original text in translation practice, so as to obtain the truth of formal meaning and make China's poetics readable. He believes that "the secrets embedded in a certain language and cultural tradition can be penetrated, spread and shared"(Anthony C. Yu, 1980), so Anthony C. Yu's translation of *The Journey to the West* is full of charm with detailed annotations. Its translation not only retains the ideological essence and writing style of the original text, but also adopts standard authentic language, giving consideration to readers' readability and appreciation, which is of great artistic and literary value.^[2-3]

As a sinologist in the UK, although W · J F Jenner has worked in the Foreign Languages Bureau since he graduated from college and studied the sinology culture in China for many years, he still understands China culture from a more objective perspective. When translating ancient books in China, he will pay attention to respect for foreign cultures, especially the language of *Journey to the West*, which is humorous and relaxed. Therefore, he will selectively avoid some social dark sides when translating, which will inevitably lead to cultural loss. At the same time, as a native English speaker, he will give more consideration to the readers, focus on the target language, adopt the "cultural replacement" translation method, and be closer to the target culture, which will undoubtedly make his translation easier for readers to understand. They have different cultural identities towards China culture, and their understanding of the local culture of the source text is quite different in different countries. In contrast, W · J F Jenner's translation is faithful to the original text, restores the expression of the original text, pays attention to literal translation, is conservative and rigorous, and accurately reproduces the content of the original text, while the rest of the translation is just the opposite, pays attention to free translation, and tries its best to make the translation and the original text "similar in spirit", and the translation is smooth, easy to understand and natural. In addition, their translation purposes are fundamentally different. Anthony C. Yu is more concerned about letting China culture "go out" and will be more complicated when translating words with profound cultural connotations. W · J F Jenner cares about translating China literature into English itself, with the aim of making foreigners understand the contents of the book and simplifying the translation of complicated paragraphs.^[4-5]

3. Domestication and dissimilation in China's Translation History

Domestication and dissimilation have been applied in practice for a long time, but it was not until

1995 that Lawrence Venuti, a famous American translation theorist, systematized them and explained them in detail in *The Translator's Invisibility*. Domestication and dissimilation are different from literal translation and free translation, which focus on the form and meaning of language processing. Dissimilation and domestication are based on cultural context, focusing on culture and aesthetics and other factors on the basis of language processing.^[6] Dissimilation refers to retaining the characteristics and connotation of the original text and being faithful to it. Domestication is to convey the content of the original text in a way familiar to the target language readers, and to make the original text more acceptable to the target language readers by adjusting sentence phrases. As Venuti said, the dissimilation method is to "bring readers to foreign scenes", and the domestication method is to "bring the original author to translate human culture" (Lawrence Venuti, 1993).

There is a dispute between domestication and dissimilation in the earliest translation of Buddhist scriptures in China. For example, Zhi Qian, a translator in the Eastern Han Dynasty, changed "Huyin" to Chinese meaning when translating the first *Leng yan Jing*, that is, transliteration was changed to free translation. It can be seen that Zhi Qian's translation tries to adapt to the tastes of the Han people, and the faithfulness of the translation has to be affected to some extent. By the end of 19th century, there were several great translators in the history of China, and Yan Fu was one of them. Yan Fu engaged in translation activities at the critical moment when foreign powers invaded and the Chinese nation was facing life and death in the late Qing Dynasty. Yan Fu believes that translation must be chosen according to the social and historical reality of the target country. With the rise of the May 4th New Culture Movement, many translators tried to draw nutrition from foreign literature in order to transform literature and society. In translation, the translator takes the national literary tradition and specific historical and cultural purposes as the main theme, taking into account the readers' cultural and linguistic background, and adopts prudent strategies in terms of wording, sentence formation, writing structure and translation style, so as to make the translation closer to the expectations of the expected readers, facilitate their absorption and digestion, and win their recognition. The reason can be said to be related to society, ideology and readers. After the reform and opening up, with the influx of western translation ideas, dissimilation has sprung up, attracting more and more scholars' attention. Many scholars have put forward the view that "dissimilation is the main factor, while domestication is the auxiliary factor", which shows that the translation circle affirms and respects dissimilation. Some dissimilation has been applied to people's daily life, enriching China culture to some extent.^[7]

There is always a debate about the choice between domestication and dissimilation. However, in translation practice, domestication and dissimilation cannot be clearly distinguished. Instead, a reasonable choice should be made according to the style, language style, translation purpose and target audience of the original text. There is no absolute dissimilation and absolute domestication, which complement each other, and the flexibility of their application determines the quality of the translation. Generally speaking, when it is necessary to faithfully translate the thoughts of the original author and preserve the flavor of the original, dissimilation can be adopted; When it is difficult to achieve one-to-one correspondence with the original text, the understanding of the target language readers should be taken as the core consideration, and domestication should be adopted to make the translation fluent and understandable.^[8-9]

At present, there are more and more translation studies on *The Journey to the West*, and because its content and language features are closely related to China traditional culture, it is more necessary to flexibly use domestication or dissimilation translation strategies to deal with the difficult expressions of traditional China vocabulary and ancient Chinese. This paper compares the differences between Anthony C. Yu's and W·J F Jenner's Translations from the perspective of the development of domestication and dissimilation translation strategies, analyzes the literary effects of their respective versions and the shortcomings caused by their improper handling, and looks forward to the future research direction of domestication and dissimilation while providing reference for the

translation of other classic works.^[10]

4. Corpus analysis based on examples

With the improvement of domestication and dissimilation translation theory, many works are more cautious in the application of domestication and dissimilation in translation.^[11] Translators need to find the center of gravity between the author's original intention and the reader's understanding. The author and the reader are like two ends of the scale, and they can choose to be more inclined to the author or the reader according to the specific content of the original text, but no matter which side they are inclined to, they should not be too far away from the other side, which means that dissimilation cannot affect the reader's understanding and make the translation obscure. Domestication should not go against the author's original intention and lose the flavor of the original text. In translation practice, domestication and dissimilation should be complementary and unified.^[12]

Table 1: Concrete Example from Journey to the West

Original Text
gan pan gu kai pi, san huang zhi shi, wu di ding lun, shi jie zhi jian, sui fen wei si da bu zhou: yue dong sheng ying zhou, yue xi niu he zhou, yue nan zhan bu zhou, yue bei ju lu zhou.

Yu's Version: Following Pan Gu's construction of the universe, the rule of the Three August Ones, and the ordering of relations by the Five Thearchs, the world was divided into four great continents. They were: the East Purvavideha Continent, the West Aparagoda niya Continent, the South Jambu dvi pa Continent, and the North Uttarakuru Continent.

Jenner's version: Moved by Pan Gu's creation, the Three Emperors put the world in order and the Five Rulers laid down the moral code. The world was then divided into four great continents: The Eastern Continent of Superior Body, the Western Continent of Cattle-gift, the Southern Continent of Jambu and the Northern Continent of Kuru.^[13]

According to the translation of two different versions of table 1, by comparing the treatment of the two culturally loaded words "san huang wu di" and "si da bu zhou" in the translation, we can see that Jenner adopts the domestication translation strategy, so that readers can understand the original text without any obstacles, but the cultural connotation behind it is omitted, so that readers can read the text smoothly, but they can't appreciate the traditional culture of China. Anthony C. Yu, on the other hand, chose the dissimilation translation strategy and explained the two words by means of endnotes. Especially when translating "si da bu zhou", in order to spread its inherent Buddhist connotation, he even referred to the Sanskrit interpretation of "si da bu zhou", which fully retained the cultural connotation, but it also made readers more difficult to read and could not read fluently.

Table 2: Concrete Example from Journey to the West

Original Text
pu sa wen yan, ji ming hui an xing zhe dao : "ni ke kuai xia tian gong, dao hua guo shan, da tan jun qing ru he."

Yu's Version: When the Bodhisattva heard this, she said to Disciple Huian, "you must leave heaven at once, go down to flower-fruit mountain, and inquire into the military situation."

Jenner's Version: When the Bodhisattva heard this she said to Huian the Novice, "hurry down from heaven to the mountain of flowers and fruit and find out about the military situation."

Here, based on the translation of two different versions of Table 2, both of them adopted domestication translation strategy to translate "tian gong" and "xin zhe", but it led to improper translation. Jenner misinterpreted "xing zhe" as "Disciple", but in fact it refers to a Buddhist who has become a monk but has not been shaved, which is a proper term of Buddhism. Obviously, it deviates from the author's original intention. Anthony c. Yu translated it as an apprentice, which lost the meaning of Buddhism and caused the lack of cultural connotation. At the same time, both of them

translate the place where immortals live into “heaven”, but in the west, Heaven refers to a place where all people are likely to arrive after their death. Though, in China, a place where only immortals can live seems to be the same, it is very different, which does not accurately convey the original meaning.^[14]

Table 3: Concrete Example from Journey to the West

Original Text
you zhao da xian ming zhong shi, ba nan san tu hui bu die.

Yu’s Version: One day when the Great Limit ends your lot, for eight woes and three ways, your grieve too late.

Jenner’s Version: One day when my life come to an end, it will be too late to regret the punishment in store.

The translation of Table 3 between these two versions is quite different. In Buddhism, the “Ba Nan San Tu” refers to three ways: hell, hungry, beast, short life, blindness and deafness, stupid, foolish, being born before becoming Buddha and after becoming Buddha and reincarnation (hell, beast and hungry ghost). Jenner adopted the domestication translation strategy to translate it into the punishment that will happen, which is beneficial to the understanding of the target language readers, while Anthony C. Yu adopted the dissimilation translation strategy and added endnotes to explain the words. Both translators have some merits in their handling here. Jenner's choice of words as a native English speaker is very appropriate, while Anthony C. Yu's is to let the target readers know more about the corresponding cultural background and let the western readers know the cultural connotation of “Eight difficulties and three ways”.

Table 4: Concrete Example from Journey to the West

Original Text
qiao fu dao: “bu yuan bu yuan, ci shan jiao zuo Ling Tai fang cun shan, shan zhong you zuo xie yue san xing dong”

Yu’s Version: the woodcutter said, “this mountain is called the Mountain of Mind and Heart, and in it is the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars. . .”

Jenner’s Version: The woodcutter said, it’s not far from here. This mountain is the Spirit Tower Heart Mountain, and in it there is the Cave of the Setting Moon and the Three Stars.

Table 4 contains many Chinese traditional cultural factors, so we should pay special attention to the choice of domestication and dissimilation in translation. One of *The Journey to the West's* original purpose is to cultivate the mind. In the whole work, the author compares the journey of learning from the scriptures to a journey of cultivating the mind. This narrative of mind cultivation constructed by the author is mainly reflected in the word game of “Xin” in different chapters and the nicknames of characters in the text. When naming the name of Xubodhi Cave House, the original author borrowed the nickname of “heart” as the human organ. in different contexts and presented the image of “heart” as the human organ three times in order to emphasize the important position of “heart” as the human organ in the text. Among them, “Ling Tai” comes from a famous sentence in *Zhuangzi GengSangchu*, which was later used as another name for “heart” as the human organ by Taoism, while “Fang Cun” also comes from another well-known sentence in *Liezi ZhongNi*; “Fang Cun” also refers to “heart”, while the oblique moon behind it is the rhetoric of “heart”. The “oblique moon” corresponds to the bottom of the word “heart” as the human organ, while “three stars” represents the three points above the word “Xin”. When Anthony C. Yu translated the images of these three “heart”, he took the ontology of two metaphors, Lingtai and Fangcun, and translated them into “mind” and “heart”. By using these two words together, the image of “Xin” in the name of the abode of fairies and immortals was enhanced, while Jenner did not understand the ontology of “Ling Tai”, but translated the

metaphor “Ling Tai” into “spirittower” by literal translation. Secondly, regarding the ideographic rhetoric of the name “heart”, Anthony C. Yu translated “three stars” as “slanting moon”, showing the image connection between the crescent moon and the word “heart”, and explained the connection between “a hole named oblique moon and three stars” and “heart” in his translation introduction. In contrast, Jenner translated the word “slanting moon” into “setting moon”, which not only failed to outline the pictographic relationship between the bottom of the word “heart” and the moon, but also failed to explain the meaning of the word, which made the relationship between the slanting moon and the bottom of the word “Xin” in the original text dissolved and the theme of mind was not highlighted.^[15]

Table 5: Concrete Example from Journey to the West

Original Text
ba gua lu zhong tao da sheng, wu xing shan xia ding xin yuan.

Yu’s Version: From the Eight Trigrams Brazier the Great Sage escapes; Beneath the Five Phases Mountain, Mind Monkey is still. (notation: The phrase, “The Monkey of the Mind and the Horse of the Will ” is made up of metaphors commonly used in Buddhist writings.)

Jenner’s Version: The Great Sage Escapes from the Eight Trigrams Furnace / The Mind-Ape is fixed beneath Five Elements Mountains.

Table 5 deals with the translation of the most important word “heart” of Journey to the West. The “ The Monkey of the Mind and the Horse of the Will ” composed of “The Monkey of the Mind” and “ the Horse of the Will ” in the text is an important symbolic meaning of the original text. They refer to the Monkey King and the Dragon Horse respectively, indicating that the journey from the Monkey King making a scene in heaven to putting on a spell and then learning from the scriptures is a “metaphor for seeking peace of mind” and points to a journey of cultivating the mind. When Anthony C. Yu translated “Xin Yuan”, he translated it into “Mind Monkey” to show that “Ape” actually refers to the Monkey King, the incarnation of “Monkey”, and let readers know the relationship between the spirit of mind and the original intention of cultivating the mind through the notes at the end of the article. Jenner literally translated “The Monkey of the Mind” into “Ape”. However, due to the differences between Monkey and Ape in English expressions, the translation not only lost the implicative relationship between “The Monkey of the Mind” and “Monkey King”, resulting in the confusion of narrative logic on the surface, but also lost the deep narrative meaning because it didn't point out the purpose of cultivating the mind. It can be seen that, at the level of meaning, Anthony C. Yu didn't give up seeking truth, just like the early translators did, because it was difficult to understand the truth of the translation after the implication of seeking truth, nor did he just seek the truth of the literal meaning, ignoring the pragmatism of serving readers, just like Jenner did. He takes the implication of the original text as the goal of seeking truth, so that readers can appreciate the theme behind the hidden words in the original text, and do both truth-seeking and pragmatism in the meaning level, without giving up, so as to realize the loyalty in the meaning level of the translation.^[16]

5. Conclusion

Under the background of globalization, it is an important proposition of the times for China culture to go abroad. Translators shoulder the important responsibility of introducing and spreading Chinese culture to the world. From ancient times to 1970s, China's translation was mainly based on domestication, but it can be seen that Anthony C. Yu began to explore dissimilation in the stage of translating *The Journey to the West*, which is actually closely related to contemporary China cultural propaganda. Before the 1970s, the focus was on learning foreign cultures. With the development of China, translators are more inclined to spread Chinese traditional culture as much as possible and

communicate with the West instead of blindly accepting or exporting it. Over the years, there have been many successful examples of dissimilation, such as “long time no see”, “Kongfu”, “Kowtow” and so on, these words with China characteristics have been accepted by westerners. *The Journey to the West* as a masterpiece of China's traditional culture, not only carries the history and politics of China, but also has some defects and controversies over a long period of time, so it is difficult to translate them into English. If they want to have a certain influence in the international arena, translators should apply dissimilation in the process of translation, so as to avoid cultural misunderstandings and conflicts caused by language, and then to show China's characteristic culture in more detail.^[17]

This paper takes Anthony C. Yu's and Jenner's English version of *The Journey to the West* as an example to make an in-depth study of the past, present and future of domestication and dissimilation translation strategies in China. While studying *The Journey to the West*'s translation, we have a deeper understanding of the current development of domestication and dissimilation translation strategies, and also provide ideas for more English translation studies of China's traditional works in the future. In a word, domestication and dissimilation complement each other in translation. Only by combining the two theories can we achieve high-level translation and better spread China's culture and thoughts.

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