

Translation Analysis of the Myths and Legends of the Bai(Excerpt)from the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics Theory

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Abstract: Yunnan Province, as an ethnic area at the southwestern border in China, has nurtured many classical works with ethnic characteristics since ancient time. Among them, myths and legends have played a vital role in the history of minority literature. The translated text is selected from the first chapter “Genesis Myths” of Myths and Legends of the Bai. The main purpose of this paper is to take the beginning step for the “Chinese culture going global”. Given that there are few studies no matter at home or abroad about Chinese minority literature, most of the myths have been circulated abroad are the myths of the Central Plains. However, through an in-depth understanding of the mythology of Yunnan Bai people and combining with the parallel text of ancient Greece and Roman mythology, it is found that the Bai myth is similar to the Genesis Myths in western culture. Therefore, based on the Reception Aesthetics theory, the analysis will help English readers resonate with the Bai culture from their own cultural background, and understand the authentic Chinese minority culture deeply, hoping to promote the globalization of the ethnic culture with Chinese characteristics to the rest of the world. In addition, Reception Aesthetics, as a translation theory, has certain advantages of guiding the typical minority literature of Bai ethnic group, which the reason is that the source text embodies plenty of valuable ethnic aesthetics. Therefore, the horizon of reader’s expectation which can interpret the Bai myths as completely as possible is based on the reader's own personal acceptance and understanding. On top of that, under the help of Reception Aesthetics theory, the translation is more suitable for western reading idiomaticity and fulfills the first step of Chinese ethnic culture going global.

1. Introduction

Yunnan was called the “Dali Kingdom” in ancient time, and the population of Dali is mainly dominated by the Bai people. The development of the Bai and Yunnan are inseparable. The selected text Myths and Legends of the Bai is not only a record of myths and legends that have been passed down from ancient time, but also a product of the life of the Bai people. Obviously, it also reflects the social culture of that time. These traditional customs and developments symbolize the spread and development of culture and are invaluable materials for foreign readers studying minority

literature. The chosen chapter of the Genesis Myths has a guiding role in the whole collection, and contains several characteristics: First, the Genesis Myths embodies plenty of historical factors. Myths reflect that social life uses image thinking rather than logical thinking. Second, the Bai people's myths and religious consciousness are closely combined. Third, this mythology reflects the aesthetic concept of the Bai people. The myth was born in the process of understanding the nature and transforming nature by the ancestors of the Bai people. It embodies their aesthetic feelings towards social life and nature. It can be said that the Bai myth is a reflection of the earliest feelings and fantasies of the Bai ancestors to beauty.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Reception Aesthetics theory used in the translation is mainly from the reader's expectation horizon, considering that the target readers have a certain literary accomplishment and cultural level, which belong to the intermediate level in the cultural circle, that is, the readers who belong to the overly cultural circle(Jauss, 1983: 8). Therefore, the translation is mainly coordinated from the “fine carved, elegant and exquisite style of writing” and the “different style of entertainment”, it is necessary to ensure that the translation can reflect the original ideological and artistic charm to a certain extent, but also to ensure that the translation can give the reader a certain aesthetic pleasure(Dong, 2008: Vol 8). On the other hand, the mythological integration of the original text is similar to that expressed by Greek mythology. Therefore, according to the feedback received by the target readers when reading the English translation of the Greek mythology, the reader's national and geographical differences are combined. Furthermore, from the points of words and sentence structure, this report studies the impact of aesthetics on translation. The translation in this report mainly adopts the Reception Aesthetics as the basic theoretical framework, placing the relationship between works and readers at the forefront of literary studies, recognizing the creative role of readers in the meaning and aesthetic value of the works, and arguing that literary works have meaning only through the reading of readers. Translation is an exchange activity between the author and the translator, as the translator first communicates with the author and the characters in the works as a reader, and then begins to interpret and translate(Iser, 1978: 33-35). The translation of “Genesis Myths” mainly starts from these aspects and combines some translation strategies and methods, such as Literal and Free translation of words, Hypotaxis of sentence structure and Hermeneutics of local culture(Munday, 2012: 68-79), in order to achieve the degree of adaption between translation and the readers, and strive to achieve the translation complies with the original expression of the Yunnan Bai ethnic culture and enables the target readers to fully accept and understand the traditions and history of the ethnic minorities in China.

As for Horizon of Expectation, it refers to the pre-estimation and expectation of the literary object according to the reading experience and aesthetic taste of the recipient before entering the acceptance process.(Wen, 2008: 52-54) Specifically, it is the structure by which a person comprehends, decodes and appraises any text based on cultural codes and conventions particular to their time in history.(He, 2018: 45) These horizons are therefore historically flexible meaning readers may interpret and value a text differently from a previous generation. It emphasizes the reader as an important element in the processing of texts(Jauss, 1983: 75-79). It is the psychological basis of aesthetic expectation and is proposed by Jauss, one of the representatives of Germany's Reception Aesthetics. According to Jauss, the reader approaches a text armed with the knowledge and experience gained from interactions with other texts. These earlier texts arouse familiarity for the reader based on expectations and rules of genre and style(Holden, 2013: 15). Horizon of expectation generally consists of three levels: stylistic expectation, image expectation, and implication expectation. These three levels correspond to the three levels of art work. To put it

simply, the horizon of expectation is the understanding of the artistic features and aesthetic values of art works that the recipient has acquired and accumulated in the past.(Chou, 2003: 06) The horizon of expectation of the recipient is not static. Every new art appreciation practice is subject to the original horizon of expectation, but at the same time it is all in the process of broadening the original one. Because any outstanding art work has the personality and new ideas of aesthetic creation, it will provide the recipient with new and different aesthetic experience(Liu, 2005: 24).

3. Analysis

3.1 Words Related to the Bai Gods' Names

There are many Bai God names in the selected chapters which has the same symbolic meanings in Western mythology. This can be fully illustrated in the following example.

Example 1: Literal Translation

Target Text: The descendants of the Bai people remembered their ancestors' contribution and honored Laogu and Laotai and their children as their own Patron Gods -- the gods of their own territory. The Bai people honor Laogu as the father of heaven, Laotai as the mother of the earth, Ciwu and Daosuo as the gods of hunting, Shehuduo and Juluwang as the gods of fire, Hainaoxie and Daogao as the gods of wood, Guihu and Bishi as the gods of textiles, Hengzhuozhi and Banzhuozhi as the gods of fish, Wunu and Jijie as the gods of agriculture, Suoxu and Daozhaokun as the gods of flowers, Fuzheng and Henglao as the gods of kitchen, Haite and Guzhuo as the gods of medicine, Jimiran and Xiganpiao as the gods of songs, who will all have the sacrifices from people forever.

The reason to choose the translation "Patron Gods" in this example is because there are also many Gods name in foreign classical literature, such as in Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice*, where the word "Patron" was used to describe local merchants who were regarded as local fortune gods (sponsor), and the political and religious cultural characteristics of capitalist society at that time. Classical literature includes many works, such as the Central Plains myths and Bai myths in China, and Greek and Roman mythology in the western world. Therefore, Greek and Roman mythology text can provide many useful translation opinions for the Bai myths,, especially in some words which have the same connotation.

In this example, many Bai gods are contained. Because Bai people were influenced by religion earlier, the gods in Bai myths are similar to those in ancient Greek mythology in the West, which means that one God is in charge of a position, and this explains the translation "father of heaven", mother of the earth", "gods of fire", and "gods of agriculture" . Such as "Tiangong" in Bai myths corresponds to 'Zeus', Dimu" to 'Hera', "Shennong" to 'Demeter', "Huoshen" to 'Apollo' and so on. In Bai myths, each God is divided according to his own abilities and enjoys the worship of human beings, which is mainly embodied in clothing, food, housing and other aspects. This example adopts the literal translation method of analyzing parallel texts to make these gods perform their duties in order to make English readers, with the knowledge of Greek mythology, have a corresponding understanding.

3.2 Words Related to Daily Life

There are many distinctive vocabulary in Bai dialogues in daily life. Here the wirter chooses several typical examples to illustrate the translation methods so as to meet the readers' expectations.

Example 2: Explanation (Hermeneutics)

Target Text: The sun burned more intensely in the belly of the dragon, with intestine like black chestnut charcoal, the belly like carmine-colored mushroom, the heart of the dragon like purple

eggplant, the liver like young lotus pouch...

There are many distinctive words in Chinese classical literature, which play an essential role in literary works. They not only symbolize the local culture in classical works, but also reflect the characteristics of classical works. There are also many such characteristic words in Bai mythology. Because of the long history of mythological creation and the oral form, the color of the characteristic words in the source text is more intense. Therefore, when dealing with such words and culture, the writer needs not only to have a good understanding of the local culture, but also to have a deep understanding of the target culture.

In this example, there are many metaphors in the source text, and these metaphors contain a large number of Bai characteristic words. These words are easy to understand in Bai language, while they can cause misunderstanding if they are forced to translate to English. "Heilitan" is a kind of chestnut with black color in Chinese, so 'black' is more in line with the local expression when translating; "Yanzhijun" represents a mushroom with the same color as carmine in Bai language, that's why this 'carmine' is also expressed in translation so that readers can understand this analogy more easily; the last "Chuhebao" in Bai culture refers to the newly born flower bud, which is pink and tender in color. It also means that the liver of the dragon burns badly. The translation here is also corresponding to the lotus which can be understood in English. All these other words in the later source text are translated by free translation, hoping that target readers can understand the Bai language based on their knowledge background and aesthetics.

Example 3:

Target Text: The king Miaozhuang pointed and said, "Forty percent in the city and sixty percent outside the city."

For Chinese illogical sentences, they often have deep meanings. As for the dialogue in mythological stories, a sentence often contains multiple meanings, and the superficial words alone can not reflect the implied meanings. On the contrary, English tends to express the meaning of a sentence more directly and quickly. In this example, it includes the dialogue in the story and the meaning expressed in Chinese is rather classical. If this expression is directly corresponding in English, it will show the wrong meaning. For example, "Liangdian" and "Sandian" in Chinese, if they are translated directly into English, will be "Two Points" and "Three Points". However, the expression here is quantity of rainfall, and point is too different from the amount in Chinese. Therefore, when translating into English, the writer uses free translation to explain "Liangdian" and "Sandian". This can not only express the content of the source text, but also enable English readers to understand the storyline of "Xiayu". What's more, the expression of "percent" is pretty popular in western literature, which means more suitable for English readers' aesthetics.

4. Conclusion

Bai ethnic group, as one of the typical representatives of minority ethnic group on the red earth of Yunnan, has its own unique cultural background, and its myths and stories contain many local customs. The Reception Aesthetics selected in this paper belongs to the theory of literary category, so its value is embodied when it is combined with the translation of Bai mythology. In the spirit of carrying forward the culture of ethnic minorities, it is the most important stuff for Westerners to understand the development of Bai culture. The use of Reception Aesthetics in the text is based on the horizon of Western readers' expectation and the translation is to the extent acceptable to Western readers, so as to achieve the effect of empathizing with the readers. When translating the original text, based on the theoretical framework of Reception Aesthetics and from the lexical and syntactic perspectives. At lexical level, the writer mainly uses the methods of literal and free translation and explanation to express the characteristic words and Bai culture respectively, and translates them into

English based on the background of Western readers' identification to meet the western aesthetic standards and cultural acceptance, so that readers can understand and appreciate Bai culture more deeply; in terms of syntactic level, the writer mainly uses the strategy of Hypotaxis to deal with the Chinese diffusive sentences and non-subject sentences. By splitting the original sentence pattern, adding connected words and subjects, the writer means to make the translation more in line with the English expression, thus achieving the horizon of reader's expectation. In the case study, it also proves the feasibility of combining Reception Aesthetics with literary translation. However, it is also a bold attempt to apply this theory to the translation of minority literature for the first time. This paper hopes that it will be helpful to the study of translation of minority literature and spread of Chinese minority literature abroad.

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