

Cultural Filtration and Compensation of Li Po's Poems about "Jiu"*

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Li Po's poems have been translated and disseminated internationally for hundreds of years. His poems about "jiu" have attracted many Western readers' attention after translation and introduction. Based on Li Po's poems, this paper proves the fact that Li Po's Jiu poems play an important role in the international communication of Chinese Jiu culture. With Chinese culture's "going out", translators should translate the types of Chinese Jiu and drinking vessels as well as the drinking customs more accurately, so as to make western readers realize the significance of Li Po's Jiu poems for understanding Chinese Jiu culture.

Keywords: Chinese Jiu culture, Li Po, Jiu poems, translation

1. Introduction

When it comes to poetry on wine, Li Po, who is known as "the immortal of poetry", is regarded as the acme of this genre. According to statistics, a quarter of his poems involve "Jiu" (酒). Among them, "Invitation to Wine", "Drink Alone Under the Moon", and "Parting at an Inn of Jingling" are very outstanding. As one of the most prominent poets in the Tang Dynasty, Li Po's Jiu poems have an important position and far-reaching influence at all times both at home and abroad.

So far, Li Po's poetry has been translated into different languages and disseminated throughout the world, and there are many famous English versions. As early as the 18th century, when Soame Jennyns translated some poems of Tang Dynasty, he included Li Po's Jiu poems. In the following years, although Joseph Edkins, Ezra Pound, Arthur Waley, H. A. Giles and W. J. B. Fletcher were not specialized in translating or studying Li Po's Jiu poems and merely chose the representative poets and their works of various times when they translated and introduced Chinese classical literature, some of Li Po's Jiu poems happened to be involved. Sometimes they not only translated Li Po's Jiu poems, but also evaluated and analyzed their themes and styles, which had played a positive role in the understanding of Li Po's Jiu poems for latter generations. However, it is because all of them

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can hardly understand Chinese and they can't translate according to the original poems that they can only rewrite Li Po's poems according to other people's literal translation, which makes their translation deviate from the original poems as well as his own creation. So, on the whole, they mainly used literal translation to translate Li Po's Jiu poems in ancient Chinese into vernacular language. But it is worth mentioning that Pound used both literal and free translation to avoid translation traps and the image of his translation is concrete and vivid and the language is concise and fluent. Basically, his translation could reproduce the meaning and artistic conception of the original poems. And his imagist writing also influenced other translators. Later in the 21st century, with the unceasing literature development, the study on the English translation of Li Po's poetry has become more and more systematic. Some translators, like John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau gave a detailed example of the evaluation of Li Po's Jiu poetry by the Chinese and Western critics when translating them. In addition, the famous sinologist, Stephen Owen translated and appreciated several Li Po's Jiu poems from various perspectives. And the Chinese translators, Xu Yuanchong also took the initiative in translating Li Po's several Jiu poems. Generally speaking, the English translation of Li Po's Jiu poems has made great progress over years based on further understanding of Chinese classical literature and Chinese Jiu culture.

2. Cultural Filtration and Compensation of Li Po's Poems about "Jiu"

Translation is an important means of information exchanges in cross-cultural communication. Due to the diversity of cultural traditions, social environment and aesthetic habits, the translator will inevitably encounter the phenomenon of cultural default in translation activities. Therefore, appropriate compensation strategies must be adopted in translation so that the target readers can understand the foreign culture embodied in the original poems and avoid misreading. Hence, when translating Chinese Jiu culture in Li Po's poems, such as the names of Jiu, the different types of drinking vessels and diverse drinking customs, the translator must have a deep understanding of the cultural differences between China and the West to enable readers of both sides identify and appreciate the translated version.

2.1. Translation of the Word "Jiu"

The corresponding words of "Jiu" in English are not limited to only one word. The commonly used words are "wine", "liquor", "beer" and "spirits". "Wine" usually refers to an alcoholic drink made from the referred juice of grades; wine can also refer to an alcoholic drink made from plants or fruits other than grades. "Liquor" is an alcoholic drink especially made by utilization as whiskey or rum. "Beer" is a kind of alcoholic drink made from malt and flavored with hops beers brewed in Germany. Most beers are made from barley. While "spirits" is a kind of strong distilled alcoholic drink. Due to the flexible and diverse creation and the avoidance of stereotype, the frequency of "Jiu" in Li Po's poems is very high, but it is not limited to the word "wine" or something, so do the English versions.

Take Zhao Yanchun's translation for example:

《出妓金陵子呈卢六四首 其二》	"A singing girl in golden hill, to Lu sixth, four poems No2"
南国新丰酒， 东山小妓歌。	From south clime we have Newrich wine; From east hill there's a singer fine.

The English version, on the whole, rhymes better than the original poem. But the translator translated “新丰酒” into “Newrich Wine” in the way of literal translation, taking the corresponding words of “新” and “丰” and translating them word by word into “New” and “Rich”. However, “新丰” is just a name for a Chinese county, so such translation is unable to achieve the original effect of poetry. Direct use of the place name or an appropriate annotation to the present “creative” translation will be easier for the Western reader to get the point of this poem.

《杨叛儿》	“A lover’s lore”
君歌《杨叛儿》， 妾劝新丰酒。	You sing a lover’s lore; I urge you to drink more.

While Xu Yuanchong, a great translator in China, did not translate the expression “新丰酒”, and directly translated the line into “I urge you to drink more” by means of omission. In this way, the original meaning of urging people to drink more is better expressed, and even the hospitality of the host can be felt. Therefore, it has more profound implications. Moreover, 《杨叛儿》 is an ancient Yuefu Title evolving from nursery rhymes to tell the love story of the Empress Dowager and a witch’s son in ancient times, which is a kind of allusion. The translator translates it as “lover’s lore” and compensates the cultural default employed the strategy of adaptation, which focuses on the readers’ understanding of the original meaning.

While Paula M. Varsano translates Li Po’s “On the Ninth” (《九日》) as follows:

《九日》	“On the Ninth”
今日云景好， 水绿秋山明。 携壶酌流霞， 攀菊泛寒荣。	Today the sky is fine; The water green and autumn’s mountains gleaming. I take the gourd and pour some “Rose-cloud nectar”; Pluck a chrysanthemum and float the could petals on it.

He translated “流霞” (a kind of good Jiu) into “Rose-cloud nectar” in the way of literal translation with annotation, that is, manna or sweet dew. This translation is very eye-catching, because it expresses the Chinese meaning of “流霞”, a kind of drink like rosy clouds, to the extreme. It not only describes the beautiful color and flowing shape of the wine very well, but also reflects the value of the Jiu that it is the drink of the god and immortal.

2.2. Translation of Drinking Vessels

In English-Chinese translation, especially in literary translation, the translator plays a decisive role. His understanding of the text and choice of words in translation have a direct impact on the readers’ acceptance of the original writings. There are great differences in cultural background, logical thinking, customs and habits between China and the west, which results in different translation effects.

A comparative analysis of two English versions of 《月下独酌》 shows the various translations of Chinese drinking vessels:

Chinese version	Xu Yuanchong’s version	Arthur Waley’s version
《月下独酌》 花间一壶酒， 独酌无相亲。 举杯邀明月， 对影成三人。	“Drinking Alone under the Moon” Among the flowers, from a pot of wine, I drink without a companion of mine. I raise the cup to invite the moon who blends, Her light with my shadow and we’re three friends.	“Drinking Alone by Moonlight” A cup of wine, under the flowering trees; I drink alone, for no friend is near. Raising my cup I beckon the bright moon, For he, with my shadow, will make three men.

As we all know, Chinese classical poetry is an organic combination of sound, form and meaning. Both versions basically follow the form of the original poem, and the length between sentences is similar. However, Xu Yuanchong's version is neater in format and rhyme, which makes it easy to read, but Waley's is slightly less. In the original poem "花间一壶酒", Waley translates it as "a cup of wine, under the flowering trees", while Xu translates it as "among the flowers, from a pot of wine". First of all, "a cup of wine" and "a pot of wine" should be compared here. There is a great difference between "a cup of wine" and the original "一壶酒", and the "壶" here is translated with the same word as "杯" below, which is too different from the original. Moreover, Waley translates "无相亲" as "no friend of mine", compared with Xu's "without a company of mine", it obviously narrows the scope. This "亲" may not be a friend, but could be family members. The original poem intended to express the artistic conception of loneliness. Besides, in the translation of "三人", Waley narrowly translates it into "three men", which is ambiguous in Chinese and may lead to misreading. The advantage of Xu's "three friends" is to avoid the cultural default, and to create a harmonious relationship between the moon, the drinker and his shadow. Cultural compensation can be used here in the way of using functional words instead of content words. For example, "makes us three" can highlight the loneliness.

On the other hand, Xu translates "金樽清酒斗十千" in the poem "Hard is the Way of the World (《行路难》)" into "Pure wine in golden cup costs ten thousand cions, good!". Both "樽" and "斗" are drinking vessels in the poem, while Xu translates "金樽" into "golden cup" but does not translate "斗", so his version means that "the wine in the cup is worth a lot of money", which is against the original text. Actually, although "樽" and "斗" are both Jiu containers, there are still some differences between them. For example, the capacity of "斗" is different from that of "樽", and "斗" here is more of a quantifier, so it is necessary to translate both words at a time. To make sure that the final version is in line with the original text, and this cultural filtering does not cause misreading, it's better to translate it as "Pure wine in golden goblets, ten thousand cash a cup". In this way, the meaning of "per cup of wine costs ten thousand" is well expressed and it embodies the two different types of drinking vessels.

2.3. Translation of Drinking Customs

Customs are not only the most representative of a country's culture, but also the most difficult element in translation. Therefore, in literary translation, the translator must adopt a variety of ways to reconcile the original culture with alien ones.

Free translation is a kind of compensation way to translate the thoughts of the original text, not the words, especially when the cultural default of the original text does not affect the readers' understanding of the poem, free translation is a good choice. Take Xu Yuanchong's translation for example:

《金陵酒肆留别》	"Parting at a Tavern in Jinling"
风吹柳花满店香，	The tavern's sweetened when wind blows in willow down;
吴姬压酒唤客尝。	A southern maiden bids the guests to taste the wine.
金陵子弟来相送，	My dear young friends have come to see me leave the town.
欲行不行各尽觞。	They drink their cups and I, still tarrying, drink mine.

Although there are cultural defaults in "吴姬" and "金陵子弟", they will not affect readers' understanding of the whole poem even if they are not translated. On the contrary, free translation is adopted to better convey the role of the two people who bid the guests to taste the wine.

Chinese version	Zhuo Zhenying's version	Xu Yuanchong's version
岑夫子， 丹丘生， 将进酒， 杯莫停。	Mister Cen, and you, Mister Yuan--both friend of mine. Would you please have your cups fill'd and refill'd with wine!	Dear friends of mine, cheer up, cheer up! I invite to wine, do not put down your cup.

"Both friend of mine" translated by Zhuo Zhenying is not in the original text, but an explanation of "岑夫子，丹丘生". In this way, it shows the relationship between them, and the readers can understand it as well. Xu Yuanchong omitted this sentence directly and replace it with "dear friends of mine". They both adopted the same approach, liberal translation, in the following translation whose words are simple and light.

Later, when it comes to banquets, that is "陈王昔时宴平乐，斗酒十千恣欢谑", Xu Yuanchong translated it as "the prince of poems feast'd in his palace at will, drank wine at ten thousand a cask and laughed his fill". Actually, "陈王" is an image of allusion in Chinese, which couldn't be found in English. If it is translated directly, the reader can't understand it. But the translated expression of "The Prince of Poets" can be comprehensible for western readers.

3. Conclusion

Chinese Jiu gradually develops from a material drink to a spirit, and a symbol. In the international communication of Chinese Jiu culture, the English versions of Li Po's Jiu poems play an important role. When the translator is translating Li Po's poems, he or she must understand or even master the meaning, customs and a series of culture behind the poems. Only in this way, can the western readers understand the connotation of Chinese Jiu culture in Li Po's poems, that is, drinking Jiu, unlike drinking water which is only for meeting the physiological needs, can stress civilization and elegance, nobility rather than vulgarity; good Jiu also needs to be equipped with beautiful drinking vessels and a comfortable and cozy environment, yet it may be a bustling urban hotel, or in the mountains, or in the bright moonlight, or by the country-road. The way of drinking should also be elegant; it may be enjoying drinking alone, or being accompanied with friends, or being entertained with songs and dances. Li Po's Jiu poems make the Jiu culture get rid of vulgarity, rudeness, savagery and vulgar performance, and make the dissemination of Chinese Jiu culture elegant, intellectual, interesting and meaningful, so as to improve the cultural taste of Chinese Jiu in the international community.

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