

# On the Translation of the Allusive Idiom in *Fortress Besieged* from the Perspective of Domestication and Foreignization

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## Abstract

The allusive idiom is a special linguistic expression in China, which is brief in form but rich in meaning. Due to the cultural differences between Chinese and English, the translation of allusive idioms has always been a concern for many translators. *Weicheng* (“围城”) is a scholarly novel with Chinese characteristics, which contains a large number of allusive idioms reflecting Chinese traditional culture. The paper selects *Weicheng* (“围城”) and its English version *Fortress Besieged* as the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), analyzing the translation methods and exploring the effects of idiom translation from the perspective of domestication and foreignization, with the aim of giving an insight into the translation practice in literary work.

## Keywords

Domestication, Foreignization, *Weicheng*/*Fortress Besieged*, Translation Methods, Culture

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, it is believed that the globalization is the most significant phenomenon (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2000). Globalization is defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990). That is to say, with the trend of globalization, there is an elimination of geographical barriers among different countries and regions, resulting in increasing interdependence and interaction. In the context of globali-

zation, it is of great significance to realize cross-culture communication. For a country, cross-culture communication includes two continuous and coinstantaneous parts: the introduction of foreign culture and the promotion of local traditional culture. Nowadays, for better development, it is not only vital for a country to learn something remarkable from other cultures, but also to share a distinctive cultural identity with the world, in which translation plays an important role.

The allusive idiom, serving as a combination of allusions and idioms, is the essence of language culture with Chinese characteristics. In the meanwhile, allusive idioms themselves are the crystallization of Chinese culture, reflecting the wisdom of Chinese people, which gives full play to the charm of Chinese. As a vital part of the linguistic culture, the allusive idiom can serve as a medium for Westerners to know more about China. Thus, the study of the allusive idiom translation has aroused many concerns. However, there is little research about the possibility and the limitation of different translation strategies and methods for allusive idioms in literary works. At present, in the context of a great number of attention paid to the translation of the classics, it is inevitable for translators to meet with the difficulty of translating the allusive idiom, as it is widely used in Chinese literature.

*Weicheng*, written by Qian Zhongshu, is a scholarly novel enjoying great popularity in China. The author is thought to be one of the most erudite scholars and authors of the twentieth century in China. In the novel, the author uses many allusive idioms with affluent implications of culture. While the allusive idiom has been well refined throughout history, it is rich in meaning but brief in form, so it is hard for English speakers to get the gist of the meaning in certain contexts unless they are familiar with the background information. At the same time, there is a problem for translators to find a balance between transmitting this special idiomatic linguistic form carrying Chinese culture and maintaining the fluency of the text, as the allusive idiom itself typically has constitutional or literal meaning, while adding “further layer of symbolic meaning to the text” (Ho et al., 2014). Sometimes, the literal or constitutional meaning helps readers to understand the symbolic or metaphorical meaning of some allusive idioms in literary works. However, there is possibility that the literal meaning of these idiomatic expressions is of no use for understanding plots. Under such circumstances, if only the utterance meaning of the allusive idiom is conveyed, the cultural elements in the expression may be sacrificed. *Weicheng* was translated into *Fortress Besieged* by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao. *Fortress Besieged* is widely praised in that the author’s writing style was faithfully reproduced (Zhang & Wu, 2023). In the preface, translators say that they hope to draw attention to the author and the work, which suggests that their purpose of translation is to promote Chinese culture to go abroad. As the allusive idiom plays an important part in Chinese culture, the translation serves the function of accelerating traditional Chinese culture to go abroad and enriching Western culture. The study of the possibility and limitations of the translation of the allusive idiom is useful for

decision-making in translation practice.

The paper is composed of four parts. The first part is the introductory part, which introduces the research background, the objective and the significance of the research. The second part is the literature review on the definition and features of the allusive idiom. The third part analyzes the translation methods of allusive idioms in *Fortress Besieged* with possibilities and limitations from the perspective of domestication and foreignization, as domestication and foreignization provides a new angle for the study of idiom translation in literary works, which can help us to understand better how to effectively translate culture-bound elements in literary translation. In the fourth part, there is a conclusion, summarizing the major findings and giving some suggestions for further research.

## 2. Literature Review on the Allusive Idiom

An allusive idiom is a set phrase that has prevailed in China for a long time, originated from historical events, notable figures or literatures, typically in four-character structure. In the academic field, the idiom is sometimes called *chengyu*, *xiyu*, or *shuyu*, which are interchangeable in some contexts, while they are different in some situations. In this research, the allusive idiom means the *chengyu*, often known as “Chinese idiom”. It generally consists of set of four characters that are derived from historical tales or classical literatures (Ho et al., 2014). Some of the *chengyu* are non-compositional, suggesting their meaning cannot be deduced from the literal meaning of each character, while some of them are “fully compositional and have no figurative meaning” (Ho et al., 2014).

### 2.1. The Characteristics of the Allusive Idiom

The last section points out the definition of the allusive idiom in this research. In a word, the allusive idiom is a special linguistic form, *chengyu*, coming from different sources with a set four-character structure. Such expression is a sub-category of idioms, connecting with historical events, well-known people and works of literature in China. Most of the scholars who have studied allusive idioms have examined the characteristics of them, which are summarized below.

One of the characteristics of the allusive idioms is that they have a fixed form (Lin, 2012). The structure of most English and Chinese idioms is inalterable, and they function as a whole, indicating that neither the constituent in the idiom nor the linguistic construction of the expression can be changed at will. For sample, there is an idiom in English, gild the lily, where the image “lily” cannot be replaced optionally while the language structure cannot be altered into “lily the gilt”. The situation is about the same in Chinese allusive idioms.

In addition, allusive idioms with images are always metaphorical (Li & Li, 2017). A large number of *chengyu* originates from allusions with both surface meaning and implied meaning, and their connotations are hard to be inferred from the literal meaning. For example, “画蛇添足” (hua she tian zu) is an idiom that comes from a fable, which means painting a snake with feet literally, while

the connotation is doing something superfluously. “gilt the lily” is the functional equivalence of “画蛇添足”. The metaphorical nature of allusive idioms suggests that they can be seen from the perspective of rhetoric and cognitive linguistics. Sometimes it is necessary to understand the allusion(s) included in an idiom for a better understanding of a *chengyu*.

Another feature of the allusive idiom is diachronic (Li & Li, 2017). With the passage of time, the meaning of some idioms may change, however, remaining relatively stable at a certain time.

At the same time, the allusive idiom is concise and comprehensive (Peng & Wang, 2008). The allusive idiom is often summarized and generalized from historical story, event and literatures that people are familiar with, composed of only four characters. They are short and catchy in form but rich in connotation. In this research, the four-character *chengyu* with allusion in *Fortress Besieged* is the object of discussion.

Based on the definition and characteristics of the allusive idiom, examples are extracted from *Fortress Besieged*.

## 2.2. Methods of Idiom Translation

To successfully convey the implication of an idiom, translators must choose appropriate translation methods. At the same time, the study of the translation methods of the idiom provides a solid foundation for the research on the translation of the allusive idiom in a literary context. At present, the study of the method of idiom translation is a hotly debated topic.

Different researchers have different opinions on how to translate idioms from distinctive angles. For translation strategy, it is said that there are two ways to realize idiom translation, one is to preserve the images and the other is to preserve the implication of the idiom (Chen, 2019). However, the opinion mentioned just points out two major directions of idiom translation, without illustrating specific methods of how to realize them in translation practice. It has also been argued that the mainstream methods of idiom translation are literal translation, free translation and the combination of literal translation and free translation (Kang & Yang, 2022). Applying the theory of functionalist school, some scholars have researched the approaches of the idiom translation in *Fortress Besieged* and classified them into three categories: literal translation, free translation and corresponding translation (Song & Cai, 2023).

Though there are similarities and differences among the ideas of different scholars, still, little research classifies the method of the idiom translation from the perspective of domestication and foreignization.

## 2.3. Study of the Idiom Translation in *Fortress Besieged*

Many scholars have conducted research on the translation of *Weicheng* from different aspects, most of which lay emphasis on the translation of metaphors and humor. Different translation theories are employed to analyze the effect of translation for metaphors and humor in *Fortress Besieged*. However, there is

only a handful of research concerning the translation of the allusive idiom.

The existing research of idiom translation in *Fortress Besieged* focuses on several areas. The translation of the allusive idiom in *Fortress Besieged* has been analyzed from the perspective of the aesthetic reception theory, and the translation methods are generalized to literal translation and free translation (Zhang, 2022). Nevertheless, the classification is not comprehensive. In translating some of the culture-bound elements, translators add explanatory notes, which is a kind of translation method that cannot be classified into either. It has also been argued that the idiom translation in *Fortress Besieged* is based on their intended function or connotation instead of their literal meaning, which is the culturally functional equivalence (Zhang & Wu, 2023). However, the research ignores that in *Fortress Besieged*, there are idioms which are literally conveyed and do not realize the intended function of the idiom, for example, the translation of “金榜挂名” (jin bang gua ming), which will be illustrated in the next part. Additionally, the statistics on translators' use of different translation strategies, domestication, foreignization, and the combination of domestication and foreignization in translating idioms with different features have been collected (Zhang, 2009). Domestication and foreignization provide a new angle for the study of translation at linguistic and cultural levels. However, the paper does not analyze the possibilities and the limitations of domestication, foreignization and the combination of domestication and foreignization in literary translation, which is significant to for translation practitioners make better choices of different translation strategies and methods for idiom translation in literary works.

In the next part, this research will first introduce the theory of domestication and foreignization, then evaluate the idiom translation by domestication and foreignization and probe into their possibilities and limitations.

### **3. Evaluation of the Translation of Allusive Idioms by Domestication and Foreignization**

Domestication and foreignization are two translation strategies, which seek to deal with translation at the level of both linguistics and culture. The introduction of domestication and foreignization provides a new angle for translation studies, especially in the translation of culture-bound elements in the source text. The allusive idiom is a kind of old expression that is rooted in Chinese culture, prevailing in society for a long time. What is more, the translation of the allusive idiom plays an important role in the transmission of Chinese historical and linguistic culture. In this part, the possibility and the limitation of the allusive idiom translated by different translation methods are analyzed from the perspective of domestication and foreignization.

#### **3.1. Definition of Domestication and Foreignization**

Shuttleworth and Cowie summarized the ideas of other researchers and defined the terminology domestication. Domestication is a terminology “to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted to minimize

the strangeness of the foreign text for target TL readers” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014). However, the concept of “domestication” was first presented by a German philosopher, Schleiermacher. Nevertheless, he did not generalize the strategy into a specific term. The term “domestication” was first introduced by the American translator Venuti. Here we borrow the explanation from Venuti to illustrate the term “domestication”. The practice of domestication is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values, bringing the author back home” (Venuti, 2008). In other words, it requires the translators to translate in a natural and transparent style to minimize the exotic elements in the target text to cater for the target language readers. For domestication, Eugene A. Nida is thought to be a representative figure, who put forward the translation theory of “formal equivalence” and “functional equivalence” or “dynamic equivalence”. In terms of “dynamic equivalence”, translators aim at “complete naturalness of expression” in the target text, while the translation “tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviors relevant within the context of his own culture” (Nida, 1964).

To sum up, when translators use the strategy of domestication, they try to erase the foreignness of the target text for a natural, fluent and comprehensible effect of the translation, while translators become invisible in this process.

Foreignization is a term used “to designate the type of translation in which a TT is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014). Venuti is a supporter of the strategy of foreignization in translation. Venuti thinks that foreignizing translation “can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations” (Venuti, 2008). In his mind, the cultural differences should not be covered, otherwise, which may result in ethnocentric, and foreignization can serve as a tool to against the imperialism.

In summary, when translators apply the strategy of foreignization, they try to keep the exotic elements in the target text, exposing the receptors to the differences between language and culture, which will result in non-fluent and heterogeneous translation, while the translators are more visible in this process.

Two translation strategies are necessary for dealing with the allusive idiom. In *Fortress Besieged*, we can see translators apply both translation strategies with their own strengths and weaknesses. The adoption of domestication and foreignization in different situations reflect different priority of the translator. Domestication is kind of reader-oriented while foreignization is a strategy that puts source text at first. In the next part, the methods of domestication, foreignization and the combination of domestication and foreignization are discussed with their merits and demerits in the translation of the allusive idiom in *Fortress Besieged*.

### 3.2. Analysis of the Translation of Allusive Idioms by Domestication

1) ST: 夏天哪里有杏花水仙花, 你是纸上谈兵。(Qian, 1991) (xia tian na li you xing hua shui xian hua, ni shi zhi shang tan bing.)

TT: Where would you get apricot blossoms or narcissus in the summer? You're nothing but an armchair strategist.

“纸上谈兵” (zhi shang tan bing) is a Chinese idiom which originates from a historical story. It is said a historical figure, Zhao Kuo, had a good command of military theory. However, Zhao Kuo was defeated by the Qin army later because he did not know how to adapt the theories in literature into practice when he was in command of the Battle of Changping. The idiom is now used as a metaphor for the inability to apply theory to solve problems practically.

In this case, translators applied the method of substitution. In English culture, the idiom, “an armchair strategist” has a similar connotation as “纸上谈兵”. “纸上谈兵” and “an armchair strategist” have different images so they are not the same. However, they are functionally equivalent as they have similar implications. With the functional equivalence, the barriers of linguistics and culture between Chinese and English are removed. Westerners can understand the TT easily, improving the readability of the translation. Nonetheless, if the dynamic equivalence is applied to all cultural expressions, it may lead to ethnocentrism.

2) ST: 如他那位原配的糟糠之妻，凑趣地死了，让他娶美丽的续弦夫人。(Qian, 1991) (ru ta na wei yuan pei de zao kang zhi qi, cou qu de si le, rang ta qu mei li de xu xian fu ren.)

TT: For instance, his wretched first wife did her part and died, allowing him to take a beautiful wife in a second marriage. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

There is an old saying in China, “糟糠之妻不下堂” (zao kang zhi qi bu xia tang), which implicitly suggests that a man should not abandon his wife who has spent a hard time with him. This saying and the idiom “糟糠之妻” comes from a historical figure, Song Hong, an official in the Han Dynasty. He refused the offer of the emperor to marry the princess as he did not think it moral to desert his wife who had shared the hardships with him. “糟糠” literally refers to coarse food such as distiller's grains, husks and chaff, which metaphorically indicates the tough times, and “下堂” means to drive his wife away from their home, apertaining to abandon his wife. Now, the allusive idiom “糟糠之妻” is regarded as a metaphor for a wife who was with her husband through the hard times.

In this example, the free translation is applied. The idiom is translated domestically into “wretched first wife”. The translation is comprehensible and acceptable for the target readers, although at the cost of missing the imagery which is culturally meaningful in the original expression. The translation is judged acceptable by most people in the target language (TL) culture, when it is fluent, and “when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent” if it reflects “the essential meaning of the foreign text” (Venuti, 2008). Thus, such practice is good for the promotion of *Fortress Besieged* in the English world.

3) ST: 买书画买了假的，一文不值，只等于 wastepaper。(Qian, 1991) (mai shu hua mai le jia de, yi wen bu zhi, zhi deng yu wastepaper.)

TT: If you buy calligraphy or paintings which turn out to be faked, they aren't worth a cent. They just amount to wastepaper. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

This allusive idiom is related to a Chinese figure, painter Shen Zhou in the Ming dynasty. The literal meaning of “一文不值” (yi wen bu zhi) is never worth even for a “文” (wen), exclusive to Chinese culture. As wen is a very small unit of currency, the idiom is always used to describe a worthless thing nowadays.

In this case, translators use the method of substitution. The original monetary unit “文” is displaced by “cent”, a unit of currency prevailed in several English countries. Though they are two different units, representing different monetary cultures, they can serve the same function. When the target readers see this expression, “aren’t worth a cent”, they can get the point as the receptors of the source language (SL) readers reading “一文不值” because they are functionally equivalent. However, with the strategy of domestication, English readers lose a chance to learn more about Chinese culture. More and more western scholars began to take eastern culture seriously as they realized that some readers read translations of foreign literatures precisely for appreciating foreign culture and learn more about the outside world, suggesting the unique style and content of the ST is important for them (Chen & Xu, 2014). However, domestication advocates “leave the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (Venuti, 2008). Though elimination of the culture-specific item “文” can make the TT more idiomatic and comprehensible, it may also destroy the original flavor of the ST.

4) ST: 以后这一星期，两人忙得失魂落魄，这件事做到一半，又想起那件事该做。(Qian, 1991) (yi hou yi xing qi, liang ren mang de shi hun luo po, zhe jian shi zuo dao yi ban, you xiang qi na jian shi gai zuo.)

TT: During the next week, they were busy to the point of distraction. As soon as they were half finished with one thing, they remembered something else which had to be taken care of. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

The idiom “失魂落魄” (shi hun luo po) with allusion takes roots from a variety play in the Yuan Dynasty in China. The connotation refers to those people acting abnormally out of fear or panic. “失魂落魄” literally means a person losing the soul and the spirit. However, if it is translated directly without intervention, it is difficult to understand what the idiom means in this context by the readers. Meanwhile, the author here just wants to convey the extended figurative meaning of “失魂落魄”, which is the two characters are too busy to the point of distraction and he does not emphasize this idiom itself.

Though it is an idiomatic Chinese expression, the translators here applied the method of free translation to convey the connotation of it and try to make the depiction as vivid and comprehensible as possible, which is corresponding to the aim of the author. Additionally, readers can maintain the reading consistency because they do not need to look for the explanation of this certain idiom. Nevertheless, it is a method with the expense of an opportunity to learn more from the SL culture.

5) ST: 兄弟为个人打算，也愿意千方百计扣住你们。(Qian, 1991) (xiong di wei ge ren da suan, ye yuan yi qian fang bai ji kou zhu ni men.)



TT: For my own sake, I'm ready to go to great lengths to keep you here. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“千方百计” (qian fang bai ji) is a *chengyu* quoted from *Zhuzi yulei* (“朱子语类”). The literal meanings of “千方” and “百计” are respectively “a thousand ways” and “a hundred schemes”, while the metaphorical meaning is employing all kinds of methods and strategies for a goal.

In this case, translators domesticated the idiom for English speakers with the method of substitution. “千方百计” is translated to “go to great lengths”, indicating sparing no effort for a goal, which is also a functional equivalence of the idiom “千方百计” in this context. If the idiom is translated literally, it is not accurate in connotation, as “千” and “万” mean many instead of a specific number, which is typical in ancient Chinese. In ancient times, a number did not necessarily represent a specific number in its own right, as they were always used for exaggeration, emphasis or simile. By domestication, the message of the source text can be expressed more clearly and accurately for the readers. Otherwise, an explanation should be added, however, which influences the reading experience of readers.

6) ST: 不过，我在你家里孤掌难鸣，现在也教你尝尝味道。(Qian, 1991) (bu guo, wo zai ni jia li gu zhang nan ming, xian zai ye jiao ni chang chang wei dao.)

TT: But then, I'm alone and helpless in your family. Now you have a taste of what it's like. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“孤掌难鸣” (gu zhang nan ming) is an allusive idiom with allusion coming from *Han Feizi* (“韩非子”). The constitutional meaning of the *chengyu* is that one palm cannot clap. Nowadays, the expression is often applied to depict a situation that it is difficult to achieve anything without support.

The free translation is adopted by translators to deal with this idiom, which is translated into “alone and helpless”. The connotative meaning of the idiom is conveyed expressively. However, the application of domestication is at the expense of Chinese cultural images, which may lessen the charm of the ST, as the extensively use of idioms is a feature of the ST.

### 3.3. Analysis of the Translation of Allusive Idioms by Foreignization

7) ST: 我们新吃过女人的亏，都是惊弓之鸟，看见女人影子就怕了。(Qian, 1991) (wo men xin chi guo nv ren de kui, dou shi jing gong zhi niao, kan jian nv ren ying zi jiu pa le.)

TT: Having recently been jilted by women, we are like birds afraid of the bow; we are frightened even by a woman's shadow. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“惊弓之鸟” (jing gong zhi niao) is extracted from a Chinese fable. In the past, there was a person named Geng Ying, who was proficient in archery. One day he was talking about archery with the king of Wei. Suddenly, a bird was flying away. Geng Ying pulled the bow and shot immediately without an arrow. Surprisingly, the bird fell to the ground just hearing the sound. The king of Wei wondered and Geng Ying explained, “The bird was wounded by an arrow, which

can be judged from its sadly wailing and slowly flowing. When it heard the sound of the bow, it fell from the sky with the thought that it was short again. However, it was just frightened by the sound of bowstring.” The extracted idiom is often used to describe those extremely frightened people now. Nevertheless, the specific meaning may be different in different contexts.

In this example, the idiom was translated into “like birds afraid of the bow” with the method of literal translation. The idiom can be understood easily with the context, which means that they are scared of women because they were hurt by them, just like the bird afraid of the bow as it was wounded by it, even though the images “弓” and “鸟” are kept in the translation without seeking the functional equivalence. Through reading the translation, translators could know how the Chinese express some meaning with certain images. The literal translation well keeping the images promotes Chinese culture.

8) ST: 这够叫人内愧了; 他心境不好, 准责备儿子从前不用功, 急时抱佛脚, 也许还有一堆“亡羊补牢, 教学相长”的教训。(Qian, 1991) (zhe gou jiao ren nei kui le; ta xin jing bu hao, zhun ze bei er zi cong qian bu yong gong, lin shi bao fo jiao, ye xu hai you yi dui “wang yang bu lao, jiao xue xiang zhang” de jiao xun.)

TT: If his father were in a bad mood, he would undoubtedly rebuke him for not having studied harder before and only cramming everything in at the last minute. There might even be admonitions about “Repairing the fold after the sheep are lost,” or “One learns as one teaches.” (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“亡羊补牢” (wang yang bu lao) is another allusive idiom that comes from a Chinese fable. The moral is that it is never too late to repair the broken sheepfold, as the repair can avoid greater losses. This idiom is now often used as a warning, when seeing a problem, people should try to remedy it so as not to suffer greater losses in the future.

Translators translated the idiomatic expression with the method of literal translation. It is translated into “repairing the fold after the sheep are lost”. The connotative meaning of the idiom is that it is never too late to learn, which can be inferred from the context. While the introduction of the exotic expression provides a good chance for readers to learn about other cultures, the strategy of foreignization facilitates cultural communication.

9) ST: 我知道这种女人路数多, 有时用得着她们, 这就是孟尝君结交鸡鸣狗盗的用意。(Qian, 1991) (wo zhi dao zhe zhong nv ren lu shu duo, you shi yong de zhao ta men, zhe jiu shi meng chang jun jie jiao ji ming gou dao de yong yi.)

TT: I know that sort of women have many of their own special ways of doing things and can sometimes be useful. That’s what Meng Ch’ang-chün had in mind when he befriended men who could crow like a cock or steal like a dog. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

Note: Meng Ch’ang-chün (d. 279): a native of the state of Ch’i. When he was put in prison, one of his retainers, who could steal like a dog, was able to steal a fur robe for the King’s favourite concubine. She then persuaded the King to re-

lease Meng Ch'ang-chün. Later the King changed his mind and sent a courier after him. Meng would have been stopped at the frontier gate, which was not opened until cockcrow, had not another retainer, who could crow like a cock, been able to have the gate opened for Meng. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“鸡鸣狗盗” (ji ming gou dao) is connected with a historical story in China. This idiom originally referred to stealing like a dog and crowing like a chicken. Later, it was always used to describe people who do not make a living decently.

In this example, the Idiom is translated literally with extra-textual notes. On the one hand, it can make the audience know about a Chinese historical story and it is acceptable for them with the help of an explanation about this allusion. Additionally, the practice can make the target readers realize cultural differences. In the English world, expressions with the image “dog” are mostly positive, while the idioms with this image are always connected with negative connotations in China and using the image “dog” to describe a nasty person is exclusive to Chinese culture (Chen, 2022). In this context, it is easy to get the negative connotation of this expression, which can make them aware of the different ideology systems further. On the other hand, the extra-textual note will influence the reading experience for readers as they have to look for the explanation of this expression for their unfamiliarity, which may lead to the discontinuity of reading.

10) ST: 董斜川道：“好，好，虽然‘马前泼水’，居然‘破镜重圆’，慎明兄将来的婚姻一定离合悲欢，大有可观。”(Qian, 1991) (dong xie chuang dao: “hao, hao, sui ran ‘ma qian po shui’, ju rn ‘po jing chong yuan’, shen ming xiong jiang lai de hun yin yi ding li he bei huan, da you ke guan.”)

TT: Tung Hsieh-chün said, “Well, now. Though ‘water was poured before the horse’, still, the ‘broken mirror was made round again’. Shen-ming’s future marriage will certainly be full of vicissitudes. It should be worth watching.” (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

Note: From the story of Chu Mai-Chen of the Han dynasty, whose wife left him because she could not stand his poverty. Later he rose to a high position through diligent study, and his wife, who was by then destitute, begged to rejoin him, but he replied, “If you can pick up spilt water, you may return.” She then went away and hanged herself. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

Note: An expression meaning to retie a loose marriage knot, used to refer to a divorcée who marries the same person again. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

The extract contains two allusive idioms, “马前泼水” (ma qian po shui) and “破镜重圆” (po jing chong yuan). “马前泼水” is related to a historical figure in Han Dynasty. The connotation of the idiom is that the divorced couple could not go back to the way they used to be as spilt water is impossible to collect again. “破镜重圆” is linked to a historical story, which is metaphorically indicating the reunion or the reconciliation of couples.

The rendition of these two idioms is the literal translation plus note. The advantage of literal translation in this example is the preservation of cultural ele-

ments with Chinese characteristics, which promotes Chinese culture. Through the literal translation with note, the target readers can have a more thorough understanding of the Chinese.

11) ST: 真是金榜挂名, 洞房花烛, 要算得双喜临门了。(Qian, 1991) (zhen shi jin bang gua ming, dong fang hua zhu, yao suan shuang xi lin men le.)

TT: That's really a case of having your name on the golden rolls and figured candles in the nuptial chamber—they call double happiness. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“金榜挂名” (jin bang gua ming) is an allusive idiom quoted from a Chinese literary work. The literal meaning of the *chengyu* is “having the name on the golden rolls”, while the original connotative meaning is succeeding in the imperial examination. Nowadays, the set phrase means passing an examination. “金榜” refers to a list of successful candidates in the imperial examinations and it is related to the ancient Chinese examination system with strong Chinese characteristics.

Translators applied the method of literal translation to keep the exotic images in the translation. Though the practice attempts to preserve the cultural elements and facilitate communication between Chinese and English cultures, it is not easy for the target readers to understand the meaning of the text.

### 3.4. Analysis of the Translation of Allusive Idioms by the Combination of Domestication and Foreignization

12) ST: 信后又添几句道: “塞翁失马, 安知非福, 使三年前结婚, 则此番吾家破费不费矣。” (Qian, 1991) (xin hou you tian ji ju dao: “sai weng shi ma, yan zhi fei fu, shi san nian qian jie hun, ze ci fan wu jia po fei bu zi yi.”)

TT: The postscript read: “This may be a blessing in disguise. If you had married three years earlier, this would have cost us a large sum of money.” (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

Note: Literally, “just like the old frontiersman losing a horse, who knows but that which seems a misfortune may be a blessing in disguise.” (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

“塞翁失马” (sai weng shi ma) is a Chinese idiom with allusion, which is related to a Chinese indigenous fable. An old man, who lived on the border of two countries, lost a horse one day. However, he did not regard it as a bad thing. Later, the horse came back with another horse. It should be a good thing but the old man did not think so. Afterwards, his son broke his legs when riding the new horse. Still, the old man did not think it necessarily a bad thing. A war suffering heavy casualties broke out soon after, and the old man's son was saved from joining the army because of the leg injury. Thus, people often use this idiom to describe the interdependent relationship between fortune and disaster, indicating a temporary misfortune is not necessarily a bad thing in the long run. However, it is hard to balance the relationship between conveying cultural information and realizing the fluency of the translation in this context. If the translators keep the cultural elements, they should add annotations within or outside the text owing to the unfamiliarity of the target readers. Nonetheless, the conse-

quence of foreignization, in this case, is interrupted reading since foreigners have to read and digest the information about this idiom itself, linking the constitutional meaning to the figurative meaning, instead of the connotation of this expression in this context.

Translators replace the original idiom with an English idiom that is functionally equivalent with an extra-textual note. As a result, the TT is natural and idiomatic, because the target readers are more familiar with this English idiom, while the cultural image of this idiom is well kept in the note, and the stylistic feature of the ST is shown. What is more, the way of substitution plus note could satisfy the needs of different readers. People who are interested in Chinese culture can read the note for more information. Meanwhile, the substitution ensures the reading experience of general readers.

13) ST: 自信这一席话委婉得体, 最后那一段尤其接得天衣无缝, 曲尽文书科王主任所谓“顺水推舟”之妙, 王主任起的信稿子怕也不过如此。(Qian, 1991) (zi xin zhe yi xi hua wei wan de ti, zui hou na yi duan you qi jie de tian yi wu feng, qu jin wen shu ke wang zhu ren suo wei “shun shui tui zhou” zhi miao, wang zhu ren qi de xin gao zi pa ye bu guo ru ci.)

TT: He was confident his little speech was tactful and proper, especially the last part, which had been sewn together as flawlessly as “a divine suit of clothes”; it would achieve his objective in every way, what Chief-secretary Wang called as naturally and effortlessly as “pushing a boat downstream”. (Kelly & Mao, 2003)

The *chengyu* “天衣无缝” (tian yi wu feng) originates from a Chinese fable. It is said that there was a person named Guo Han, who met a fairy on a summer night. She was dressed in white and was extremely beautiful. She told him her name and Guo Han was attracted by her dress. He scrutinized it and could not see a thread seam in it. He was curious and asked her surprisedly. She replied: “The clothes in heaven don’t need a needle and thread to sew.” The connotative meaning of this expression is that something is perfect and that nothing can be found wrong.

In this case, the method of compensation is applied. “天衣无缝” is translated into “as flawlessly as ‘a divine suit of clothes’”, which is a result of the combination of domestication and foreignization. On the one hand, it reserves the images of the source text language, promoting Chinese unique linguistic culture. On the other hand, it considers the readers and tries to make the idiom as comprehensible as possible by compensating the cultural void. The way seeks to find a balance between promoting traditional culture and ensuring the reading experience, which combines the best of two strategies.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the idiom translation in *Fortress Besieged*, translators use both domestication and foreignization strategies. There are two methods of domestication in the TT, substitution and free translation. When translators try to domesticate the allusive idiom, there are some advantages and disadvantages. From the perspective of the TL culture, domestication can make the translation idiomatic, fluent and

natural, which reads like the original one rather than a translation. In the meanwhile, domestication emphasizes the charm of the TL, for example, the substitution of the Chinese idiom with an English idiom. Thus, the use of domestication can enhance the cultural confidence of the TL readers. Nevertheless, Overuse of domestication can lead to ethnocentrism, which is bad for cultural communication under the background of globalization. For receptors, the reading experience will be better when translators domesticate those culture-bound idioms, as readers do not need to stop reading to think about their unfamiliar expressions or look for explanation. In addition, the text translated by the strategy of domestication is more comprehensible than foreignization in that the TT is fluent and natural. However, the cost of domestication is that the target readers lose an opportunity to learn something new from other cultures. From the perspective of the SL culture, it is good for the promotion of *Fortress Besieged* in the English world because it is more reader-friendly. To a certain degree, a successful literature dissemination is culture transmission.

As for foreignization, there are two ways to realize it, literal translation and literal translation plus note. From the perspective of the TL culture, ways of foreignization can bring in new culture and facilitate cross-culture communication. For readers, the advantage of the foreignization is that it provides a good context for those who are interested in Chinese to learn more about Chinese culture, broadening their horizons. Nonetheless, the reading experience may be not that good. On the one hand, readers have to stop reading for explanations for some exotic expressions with cultural connotations due to cultural differences, which may lead to interrupted reading. On the other hand, too much unfamiliar information may reduce their reading interest. At the same time, From the perspective of the SL culture, the language stylistic in *Fortress Besieged* is partly kept by foreignization, and the perseverance of those cultural messages can help the Chinese culture go abroad.

By observation, the translation of the allusive idiom can also adopt the strategy that combines domestication and foreignization. It can be realized by substitution plus note, compensation. The advantage of the combination is it finds a balance between ensuring readability and transmitting Chinese culture.

By analyzing the translation of the allusive idioms in *Fortress Besieged*, it is found that the translators pay much more attention to conveying the specific connotation of the allusive idiom in certain contexts instead of the information of the allusive idiom itself, with the aim to ensure the fluency and naturalness of the TT, so that the target readers can have a better reading experience, which is reflected on that the domestication is used more than foreignization.

At the same time, this paper suggests that domestication, foreignization and the combination of domestication and foreignization in the allusive idiom translation have their own advantages and disadvantages under the context of literary translation. In translating allusive idioms in literary works like *Weicheng*, which carries abundant idiomatic expressions, translators should take more factors into account, not just focus on this special linguistic form. It is necessary for transla-

tors to consider comprehensively their translation purpose and the effect of different translation strategies and methods on the fluency of the TT, which provides a good basis for decision-making in the ways of translation. Translators should flexibly adopt different translation strategies and methods to translate idioms in specific contexts.

However, this research does not pay attention to reader reception on allusive idioms separately translated by domestication, foreignization and the combination of domestication and foreignization. In future research, scholars could focus on this area and make it more clear which strategy is better for idiom translation in literary work.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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