

A Study on the Chinese Translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* from the Perspective of Toury's Translation Norms Theory

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Abstract

As the founder of descriptive translation studies, Gideon Toury proposed the famous theory of translation norms, which has played a guiding role in the development of modern translation studies. This paper selects the classic translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* by American anthropologist Benedict (2012)—the translation by Lv Wanhe, Xiong Dayun, and Wang Zhixin from the Commercial Press, and analyzes the Chinese translation from the perspective of Toury's translation norms. Taking the translation of the first chapter as an example, the Chinese translation is analyzed from the three normative categories of preliminary norms, initial norms, and operational norms, aiming at exploring the influence of translation policy and translation directness on the selection of the text from the level of translation norms and translation practice, the influence of translation acceptability on the selection of translation strategies, and the translator's selection of the overall layout of the translated text and the method of translation, with the aim of providing certain reference and guidance to the translation and mediation activities for foreign literary works. Therefore, this paper will also provide certain reference and guidance for the translation and introduction activities of foreign literary works.

Keywords

Toury, Translation Norms, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*

1. Introduction

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, which has been regarded by Japanese aca-

demics as the “founding work of modern Japanese studies,” is a cultural study written by Ruth Benedict, a renowned American cultural anthropologist, folklorist, and poet. The book was originally a military research report done by the author at the behest of the U.S. government during World War II for the purpose of analyzing and researching Japanese society and Japanese ethnicity, in order to provide the U.S. government with a reference point for setting up battle plans. Although the author herself had never been to Japan, the results of her research were greatly recognized. Originally written in English, this book was widely broadcast and translated into more than thirty languages, with a total circulation of more than 30 million copies. Since the book was introduced into China, there have been many translations. The translation from the Commercial Press is one of the most popular translations (referred to as “the Commercial Edition”), which was translated by Lv Wanhe, Xiong Dayun, and Wang Zhixin, and will be analyzed and studied in this paper.

Most of the previous scholars’ studies of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* have been Japanese cultural studies or Benedict’s cultural modeling studies. Among them, few scholars have analyzed this work from the perspective of language and translation. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is a work of social science, and at the same time, it is also a work of literature. The author of this book, Benedict, is an anthropologist as well as a poet, and her work is interspersed with narratives that have emotional resonance alongside rational research. If *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* were to be positioned solely as a work of social science, its translations should be much the same, and it would suffice to convey only the scientific content. However, in fact, there is a big gap between the translations, which is inseparable from the fact that the author’s line has a strong literary character. By analyzing the different strategies adopted by translators in the process of translation, this paper is conducive to the promotion of exchanges between different languages and cultures.

At present, some scholars in China have also conducted various studies on the Chinese translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. For example, Luo Caihong takes Yan Fu’s “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance” translation standard as a reference and takes this book as a research object to explore the guiding role of this translation standard in the Chinese translation of academic monographs. Qian Kunqiang, Xu Heyi, and Chen Yao take two different Chinese translations of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* as examples and select two chapters to analyze the translations from the perspective of functional equivalence. Zhao Yu takes this book as the original English material and explored the cultural translation problems involved in the English to Chinese translation of literary works from the perspective of cultural translation through comparison, induction and deduction (Dong, 2017). All these studies have had a certain positive impact on the dissemination of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. However, there are relatively few studies that analyze this book in terms of Toury’s translation norms.

In general, domestic scholars have made some achievements in the study of

the Chinese translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, especially in the analysis of cultural translation, and have explored the language and content of the book at a deep level. However, there are still many shortcomings waiting to be solved, such as the phenomenon that the translations of this book still have uneven quality, and there is still a long way to go in translating Western works. Starting from the perspective of Gideon Toury's translation norms theory, this paper chooses the most representative commercial edition translation, analyzes the translator's reasons for choosing to translate *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, discusses the specific translation operations, summarizes the overall translation strategy tendency of this translation, explores the preparatory norms, operational norms and initial norms that this translation follows, and makes a summary of the paper from the perspectives of social background, translator's subjectivity, and the acceptance of target-language readers, providing a new perspective for future research.

2. Gideon Toury's Translation Norms

The term "norm" was first used in the field of sociology to denote a standard of behavior that is typical or accepted in a particular group in a society. In 1967, the Czech scholar Jiri Levy first applied this concept to the study of translation in Western translation studies. On this basis, Gideon Toury, a representative of the Tel Aviv School, who advocated taking translation studies away from the level of the linguistic text and studying the influence of external factors on the translated text, put forward the theory of translation norms in his descriptive translation studies. Since the 1970s, the Western translation researchers represented by Evan Zohar put forward the theory of multiple systems, which opened the prelude to the "cultural turn" of translation research. The Tel Aviv School, as a typical representative of the stage of "cultural turn", broadened the object of translation research so that it was not limited to the linguistic level of the text, but included external factors such as culture, economy, politics and so on. Therefore, in proposing the theory of translation norms, Toury believes that "it is not the relationship between the original language text and the translated text that determines the outcome of translation, but the constraints imposed by the society of the target language on the behavior of the translator." (Toury, 1980) "Such constraints are the translation norms brought about by the macro-level economic, political, and cultural aspects of the target language society, or by the micro-level value judgments and interests of individual members of the society." (Hermans, 2001)

In *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, published in 1995, Toury discussed the normative theory of translation in more detail. He argues that "translation activities have cultural significance, and translators need to undertake social tasks that belong to them so that their translations can ultimately fulfill the mission given by the society." (Toury, 2001) In the process of translation practice, the society of the target language has formed a set of norms to regulate the translator's choices in the translation process. Such norms run through the whole

process of translation practice, from the selection of translation texts, the determination of the overall strategy of translation, all the way to the translation techniques adopted for specific problems in translation practice. Translation norms provide standards for translators' translation practice, and can be used as a theoretical framework to guide all aspects of the translation process. Compared with the unchanging textual translation standards such as "faithfulness" and "fluency", translation norms are flexible and changeable according to the socio-cultural background of the target language, or even the context of a certain period of time.

Gideon Toury's translation norms can be divided into three levels: Preliminary norm, Initial norm and Operational norm, which play an important role in respective translation process.

Preliminary norm refers to the norms affecting the selection of texts, which play a role in the selection stage of translation, and involves the issues of "translation policy" and "immediacy of translation", with the former referring to the socio-cultural factors affecting the selection of translations in a specific era, language and cultural background, and the latter referring to the issue of whether there is intermediate language in translation. The former refers to the socio-cultural factors affecting the choice of translation in a particular period of time and cultural context, while the latter refers to the existence of an intermediate language in translation. The initial norm refers to "the norms that influence the translator's choice between the target language system and the source language system", which determines the degree of inclination of the translation as a whole (adequacy or acceptability). And the operational norm refers to the norms for making a decision in the actual process of translation, which generally refers to the translator's methods and techniques. It includes matricial norms and textual linguistic norms, the former being closely related to omission, augmentation, syntactic reconstruction, chapter cuts, etc. in the translation, while the latter focuses more on micro aspects such as the choice of words, sentences, rhetoric, etc. (Toury, 2001).

In addition, it should be noted that among these three types of norms, one of the most prioritized is the initial norm, which Toury calls the "supra-norm", the "norm of norms". It is not as early as the preliminary norm in terms of chronology, but it is embodied in all levels and stages of translation, and runs through the actual translation. Furthermore, the operational norms are also influenced by the initial norms, and it can be said that the operational norms are the modes represented by the "appropriate translation" or "acceptable translation", or the modes of the two modes. It can be said that the code of practice is the model represented by "appropriate translation" or "acceptable translation", or a combination of the two (Toury, 1980).

Toury's theory of translation norms has received widespread attention in recent years, and the theory of translation norms has "got rid of the drawbacks of the narrow and absolute traditional translation theories", and has moved from the language itself to a broader socio-cultural context. Therefore, with the help

of Toury's translation norms theory, this paper depicts the Chinese translation of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* from three levels of research and interpretation.

3. The Influence of Translation Norms on Translation and Translator's Decision Making

In recent years, Toury's theory of translation norms has received widespread attention in the academic world, and the theory of translation norms "gets rid of the drawbacks of the narrow and absolute traditional translation theory", and goes from the language itself to a broader socio-cultural context (Wang, 2013). Therefore, this paper summarizes the translation norms that translators follow in the whole process of translation from the three dimensions of preliminary norms, initial norms and operational norms.

3.1. The Influence of Preliminary Norms on Translation and Translator's Decision Making

Norms work at every stage of the act of translation. According to Toury, "from the point of view of the overall process in which a translation comes into being (as opposed to what goes on in the brain of one individual), norms may well be brought into the picture, and norm-governed behavior may also take part in the event (including the actual generation of the resulting text), e.g. by editors, revisers, publishers, censors, proofreaders, etc." (Wang, 2013: p. 10).

Preliminary norms are the earliest to govern the translation and operate before the stage of translation. Preliminary norms include translation policy and the directness of translation. Translation policy influences the choice of translated text and further determines the acceptance and popularity of the translation in the target language environment. *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword* is considered a must-read for the study of Japanese nationhood and is an outstanding example of the direct application of social science research to the practical operation of politics.

Upon analysis, there are two main factors influencing the choice of its translated text: first, the excellence and richness of meaning of the original work itself. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* was originally written by the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict on behalf of the U.S. government. Benedict was ordered by the U.S. government to analyze and study the Japanese society and Japanese nationality, aiming at guiding the U.S. how to control Japan after the defeat of the war. It was officially published in 1946, and the Japanese version was published in 1949, which caused a strong reaction in the U.S. and Japan. In fact, the U.S. government's post-war policy towards Japan has been very different from that of the U.S. government. In fact, the U.S. government's post-war policy toward Japan and Japan's corresponding response were basically consistent with the book's analysis. At that time, there was an international craze for the study of Japanese culture, and the Chinese had the deepest sense of Japan and the closest relationship with it, and the two cultures had a long historical

connection, so of course they were in a better position to study Japanese culture, which was precisely the motivation for the translator to translate this book. Therefore, the book is loved by publishers, and the reason why its Chinese translation has been vigorously promoted is also obvious.

Second, from the perspective of directness of translation, as far as the translators are concerned, the authors of the Commercial Edition are three of them, Lv Wanhe, Xiong Dayun and Wang Zhixin. These three scholars have a very in-depth understanding of Japan and Japanese culture and life experience, therefore, they utilize their practical understanding of the two countries to comment on the history, folklore, geography, and other difficult points involved in the original text that are not easy for the readers to understand, with vivid and informative language and accurate meaning, clearing up the obstacles for the readers to comprehend the authors' intentions. In addition, the translation of Japanese vocabulary and culture adopts the method of dissimilation to make it easier for domestic readers to understand, which is one of the important reasons why the Commercial Edition is widely acclaimed. The author refers to the Japanese translation of Matsuji Hasegawa's "菊と刀", the English original author's note is translated or recorded as it is, and the note of the Japanese translation and the Chinese translator's supplementary notes have been added with the words "Japanese Translator" or "Translator" respectively. The original has acknowledgements and index, but the Chinese translation has omitted them.

3.2. The Influence of Initial Norms on Translation and Translator's Decision Making

Initial norms refer to the overall choices made by the translator. If the translator follows the cultural norms of the source language, the resulting translation is "adequate". If the translator follows the cultural norms of the target language, the resulting translation is "acceptable". Toury points out that most translations are somewhere in between, in order to achieve a balanced initial norm between "adequacy" and "acceptability" (Xu, 2003). It serves as a constraint on the translator's overall tendency to translate. Translators need to choose between the source language norms and the target language norms, i.e., to emphasize the adequacy of the original message or the acceptability of the translated text in the target context. In translation, the most difficult thing to convey is culturally specific information, and it is a challenge for the translator to insist on the adequacy of the original text or to emphasize its acceptability. In this practice, the translator prefers the acceptability of the translation and chooses the strategy of paraphrasing to enhance the acceptability of the translation in the target readership. Under the guidance of the operational standard, the translator adopts specific translation techniques, such as augmentation, omission, lexical conversion, etc., to make the translation more in line with the Chinese language standard and closer to the target readers. Therefore, this paper chooses some typical examples of culturally loaded words and linguistic phenomena peculiar to the Chinese language to analyze the translator's overall tendency to translate.

Example 1:

T: *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*

TT: 《菊与刀》

Analysis: The above example is the title of the source text. The original English title is *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, based on the ecological and cultural factors, the word “Chrysanthemum” in English is derived from the Greek words “chrysos (golden)” and “anthemon (flower)”, a plant which is associated with death or expressed as a symbol of remembrance of the dead in many cultures. However, in American culture, “Chrysanthemum” is more likely to be used as a symbol of positivity and optimism. Regarding the translation of the word “Chrysanthemum”, the earliest translation of the book’s title was 《菊花与刀》. While the title chosen by the later translators is 《菊与刀》. They chose the word “菊” to form a counterpart to the word “刀”, which is much more catchy, clear and rhythmic. Therefore, when translating the title, the translators mainly consider the comprehensibility of the readers of the target language culture and prefer the specific norms of the target language system, following the norms of acceptable translation.

Example 2:

ST: There were violent disagreements among those who knew the Japanese best.

TT: 这些问题在日本通中也引起了相当大的分歧。

Analysis: The translator has converted the definite clause of “those who knew the Japanese best” into the term “日本通”, which summarizes the main meaning of the original text well, and is more natural and fluent at the language level. From the perspective of cultural background, in the course of interactions among the nations of the world, there will be people who are familiar with other countries, and such people are often called “XX 通”. In the late Qing Dynasty, due to the frequent interactions between China and Japan, there were “中国通” in Japan and “日本通” in China. Translators follow Chinese cultural norms and translate the original text into cultural connotations familiar to the target language readers, resulting in a translation that is more understandable to the general public.

Example 3:

ST: When a serious observer is writing about peoples other than the Japanese and says they are unprecedentedly polite, he is not likely to add, 'But also insolent and overbearing.'

TT: 一个严肃的观察家在论及其他非日本民族时, 是不大会既说他们彬彬有礼, 又加上一句: “但是, 他们又很蛮横、倨傲。”

Analysis: From a grammatical point of view, this sentence is not difficult to translate, but it is challenging to express it into authentic Chinese, which re-

quires the translator to think carefully about individual words and then formulate sentences to translate it into Chinese. First of all, “unprecedentedly polite” can be translated as “前所未有的礼貌” according to the method of direct translation. However, this translation is hard and has a little translationese, here the translator translates it into “彬彬有礼”. The word “unprecedentedly” is understood as an adverb of degree, which is used to express the depth of “politeness”. The way the translator chooses to deal with this is more in line with Chinese language habits, reads more authentic, and better reflects the inner meaning conveyed by the original text, showing the “acceptability” of the translation.

3.3. The Influence of Operational Norms on Translation and Translator’s Decision Making

Operational norms constrain the translator’s choices in the specific translation process, including matricial norms and textual linguistic norms. By comparing the most direct research material, i.e., source text and target language text, observing and analyzing the phenomena of reciprocity and migration in translation. It is possible to reconstruct the operational norms implied in the translation process.

3.3.1. Matricial Norms

Matricial norms determine the macro arrangement of a text, such as the layout of the textual structure, the augmentation or omission of the original text as well as the splitting, merging or splitting of paragraphs or chapters at the macro level.

At the end of the first chapter, the author adds explanations of eleven phrases such as Russo-Japanese War, Gwa Island Scramble, Burma Campaign, Attu Island, Tarawa, Thailand, Biak, John Embree, and the Sword of Damocles. This is also a macro-level modification of the text by the author. By annotating individual words, it helps the reader to clarify the information in the original text. Appropriately added annotations can solve untranslatable difficulties, avoid misinterpretation, enhance the comprehensibility of the translated text, and avoid the loss of cultural information, as well as play its proper role in the translation culture. Annotation makes the content of the article properly arranged and gives readers a deeper understanding of the original text.

Example 4:

ST: When he says they act out of concern for others’ opinions, he does not then go on to tell that they have a truly terrifying conscience.

TT: 也不会既说他们的行动完全出自考虑别人的评价，即自己的面子，又说他们具有真诚的良心。

Analysis: On a macro level, there are many parallel structures in the text similar to this sentence. “does not” originally means “没有”, but here, the translator translates it as “不会(去做)”, which makes the logic clearer. Secondly, when foreign literary works are translated, specific cultural vocabularies or proprietary words will appear in the text, and in the process of translation, such words need

to be translated in an augmented translation or in a literal translation with footnotes, so as to play the role of further explanation. “they act out of concern for others’ opinions” is translated literally as “他们的行动完全出自考虑别人的评价”, and the translation is added “即自己的面子” complies with the requirements of the structural norms at the macro level, explains the proprietary vocabulary, and meets the needs of readers of the target language culture.

3.3.2. Textual Linguistic Norms

The textual linguistic norms at the micro level of the code of practice affect the choices made by the translator with respect to the linguistic aspects of the Cebuano text, specifically sentence restructuring, word choice, and the use of italics or capitalization for emphasis.

Example 5:

ST: Comments by Westerners are few and superficial.

TT: 西方人的论述也是凤毛麟角，浮光掠影。

Analysis: From a lexical point of view, the extensive use of four-character structures is a prominent feature of Chinese. Generally speaking, certain adjectives, nouns and some special structures in English can be processed into Chinese four-character structures to make the translation fluent and authentic. In this sentence, the translator translates “few and superficial” as “凤毛麟角，浮光掠影”, which accurately reflects the meaning of the original text and at the same time enhances the literary character of the work. The original meaning of “few” is rarely, and the original meaning of “superficial” is shallow. If translated according to the method of literal translation, this sentence would be translated as “西方人的评论很少，而且很肤浅”. However, as a translator, under the premise of guaranteeing the correct meaning, he should choose the right words according to the characteristics of the text and make an appropriate translation. The words “凤毛麟角，浮光掠影” show the unique phonetic beauty of the Chinese language, which adds a phonetic beauty to the translated work that the original English text does not have. Secondly, it is also more in line with the reading habits of Chinese readers, easier for them to accept, and also conducive to its dissemination and sales in the Chinese market. Therefore, the choice of words is very important, and the translator translates the meaning behind the words, not only the words themselves, so that the readers can maximize their understanding of the meaning of the original text.

Example 6:

ST: Men and women from Europe and America had set down their vivid experience.

TT: 欧美人用生动的语言写下了他们在日本的经验。

Analysis: In this sentence, the translation of “men and women” deserves our consideration. If the translator translates it as “男人和女人”, it seems that the

translator follows the principle of word-for-word and one-to-one correspondence, but in fact, it will make the target language readers feel that the translation is rigid. Through analysis, we can conclude that “men and women” in English wants to express the concept of a group, based on the norms of the text language, the translator can translate it as “人、人们”, which is a more simple and concise sentence and meets the reading habits of the target language readers. The translator can translate it as “people” based on the linguistic norms of the text. And through the contextual understanding, the translator has added a description of the experience, i.e. “他们在日本的经验”, which makes the whole text more coherent.

4. Conclusion

Translation norms are the reflection of the abstract social value shared by the translators. This kind of social value has a close association with the special historical context, and plays a crucial role in affecting translators' ideology and individual translation behavior. The theory of Toury's translation norms sheds some light on translation practice. Toury's translation norm theory encompasses all the processes of actual translation, and thus can make a fair evaluation of the translated text. The major findings are as follows. Seeing from the preliminary norms, the Chinese translation is governed by macro social factors and micro linguistic norms. By analyzing some fragments of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* with the theory of translation norms of Toury, we can find that the translated text mainly follows the acceptable translation of the preliminary norms, focuses on the understanding of the target readers, and is mainly subject to the constraints of the cultural norms of the English language and makes the translation smoother by means of augmentation and other ways. And the translators' choices of ways and techniques are as much as possible biased in favor of the readers of the translated text, and try to conform to their way of thinking, so as to stimulate the reading interest. Translators choose the ways and techniques to favor the readers of the translated text as much as possible, trying to match their way of thinking, so as to achieve the effect of stimulating the reading interest and make *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* more acceptable to Chinese readers. This paper follows the translation norms of Toury and does not violate the translation norms, which fully reflects the applicability of translation norms in translated texts. And at the same time, this paper also provides a new perspective for the analysis of the text of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, hoping to provide a certain reference value for future research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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