

Translation of Sites in Cultural Heritage Readings Guided by Skopos Theory

Yiling Zhang

College of Foreign Languages, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610065, China

Abstract: *Along with the application for the list of world heritage of the Jinniu Road, its status is becoming increasingly prominent. As an important part of China's tangible cultural heritage, the translation of its cultural heritage readings plays a crucial role in the spreading process of Chinese culture. This paper analyzes the methods and techniques of translating the names of the sites in the book "The Propagation and Translation of the Remains of the Jinniu Road in the Three Kingdoms Period" under Skopos theory, suggesting that the translator should consider the readers' feelings and understand the specific situation of the sites in detail to make the translation precise and accessible to fully demonstrate the Chinese culture.*

Keywords: *Jinniu Road; translation of sites; Skopos theory*

1. Introduction

Along with the increasing cross-cultural exchanges, the interest of foreign readers and scholars in understanding Chinese culture is also increasing day by day. The cultural heritage carries the essence of Chinese culture, and in order to spread Chinese culture, a large number of bilingual introductory books on cultural heritage have been published, but some of them have a lot of errors in translation, making readers unbearable to read. Cultural heritage readings are supposed to be "windows to Chinese culture", but if their translations are not readable or convey vague or even wrong information to readers, it will be counterproductive and affect the spread of Chinese culture.

There are many historical relics of the Three Kingdoms period along the Jinniu Road, which is an important part of the Three Kingdoms culture. The book "*The Propagation and Translation of the Remains of the Jinniu Road in the Three Kingdoms Period*" (hereinafter referred to as "*Jinniu Road*") takes the historical relics of the Three Kingdoms period along the Jinniu Road as the research subject, sorts out the relevant historical events, collects the relevant military, geographical and folk culture, shows the reader the rise and fall on the Jinniu Road, and spreads the culture of the Jinniu Road. The contents of the book are presented in a bilingual format, involving the translation of a large number of Chinese cultural terms, among which the number of sites is particularly large. Site names are a kind of place names, which are the epitome and embodiment of history and culture, so the importance of ensuring their accurate translation is self-evident. Accurate and connotative translations of site names can greatly contribute to the dissemination of Chinese culture and enhance the international influence of Chinese culture.

2. Skopos Theory

In the 1970s, the German functional school emerged in the Western translation field, and their core theory of skopos theory also emerged, providing a new perspective for translation theory research. 1978, Vermeer first proposed Skopos theory, arguing that translation is a purposeful communicative activity and belongs to a sub-category of cross-cultural interaction. In 1984, Vermeer and Reiss co-authored the book "*Foundations of General Translation Theory*", formally proposing Skopos theory.

The main elements of the Skopos theory are three principles: the principle of purpose, the principle of fidelity and the principle of coherence. The purpose principle requires translators to fully consider the purpose of translation and select the best translation strategies and techniques according to different purposes. The principle of coherence emphasizes that the translator should consider the cultural background of the readers while taking into account the context of the translated language, so as to

achieve a coherent and smooth translation. The principle of fidelity requires that the translation should be faithful to the original text and its culture, and the meaning conveyed by the translation should not contradict the original text. Skopos theory regards translation as a purposeful communicative activity that takes into account the requirements of readers and clients, and the translator's reference system in the whole translation process is not the original text as emphasized by traditional translation theory, but the communicative function that the translation is intended to achieve in the cultural environment of the translated language. Since Skopos theory emphasizes the decisive role of translation purpose on translation strategy, many Chinese scholars believe that the theory is more applicable to the translation of non-literary texts with stronger purpose.

As a cultural heritage reading book, the text of *Jinniu Road* has a clear purpose, a large amount of cultural information, a large number of cultural characteristic words, and a profound cultural precipitation. The translation should not only uphold the purpose of intercultural communication, fully transmit the Chinese cultural information, stimulate foreign readers' interest in the culture of the Shu Road, and expand the international influence of the culture of the Shu Road, but also consider the cultural background of the audience and the readers' feelings and communication effect. Therefore, the following will analyze the translation strategies of site names in *Jinniu Road* based on Skopos theory to propose a translation reference.

3. Translation standards

So far, there is no unified standard for the translation of geographical names in China. Many translators in China have discussed this issue, and Ge Xiaoqin (2009) pointed out that phoneticized geographical names have a tendency of pronunciation deviation and meaning loss in international acceptance, and the translation of Chinese geographical names needs to take the effect of international acceptance into full consideration, so free translation should be adopted. Yin Shaodong (2018) argued that the translation of geographical names should follow the local customs, and there is no need to adopt free translation. The cultural identity of China should be maintained when translating geographical names, and therefore transliteration should be adopted. Mei Huan (2019) believed that the translation of Chinese geographical names should respect the respective development directions and laws of the English and Chinese languages, so the translation of Chinese place names should adopt transliteration of the proper name and free translation of the common name. Transliteration and free translation have their own advantages. The former retains the unique heritage of Chinese culture, while the latter is simpler and easier to understand for foreign readers. For the names of the sites in *Jinniu Road*, from the perspective of Skopos theory, it is decided to adopt the transliteration of proper names and free translation of common names, which not only preserves the cultural characteristics but also has a high readability, so as to achieve the best cultural communication effect.

4. Example analysis

Skopos theory holds the view that the whole process of translation behavior is determined by the purpose of translation, and the main purpose of translating cultural heritage readings is cultural export. Based on this, translators should focus on whether they can effectively deal with cultural factors and convey cultural connotations when translating. When translating the names of sites in the original language, the translator must strike a balance between accurately conveying the cultural connotation of the original text and conforming to the linguistic norms of the target language, so as to help readers better understand Chinese history and culture. Therefore, translators should adopt flexible translation strategies and techniques with the orientation of spreading Chinese culture. The following is a list of examples of translations of site names in *Jinniu Road* that under Skopos theory.

(1) Pass

The undulating terrain and dangerous traffic along the Jinniu Road, coupled with the constant wars during the Three Kingdoms period, led the countries to set up passes at many dangerous places for defense. In the process of translating *Jinniu Road*, translations of the passes can be found everywhere.

Example 1

TT: Jiangyou Pass, Baima Pass

Among the many passes of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period, the five passes on the Jiannan-Shu Road are the most famous, of which Jiangyou Guan and Baima Guan are among them.

The Chinese word “guan” means a place set up in ancient times to guard a dangerous place of traffic or border access, and is often called “guankou” or “guansai”. The translation of “Jiangyou Guan” can refer to the existing translation of “Jiayu Guan”, both of which are in the form of “place name + guan”. Jiangyou and Jiayu are both Chinese place names, and the place name can be directly translated as a proper name in Pinyin, so “Jiangyou Guan” can be translated as “Jiangyou Pass”. For the translation of “Baima Guan”, we can refer to the existing translation of “Shanghai Guan”, because both “Baima” and “Shanghai” are words with specific meanings. There are two common translations of “Shanghai Guan”, which are “Mountain Sea Pass” or “Shanghai Pass”, so we can also translate “Baima Guan” as “White Horse Pass” or “Baima Pass”, but there is a trade-off between these two. There is also a White Horse Pass in the state of Alaska, USA, which is a famous attraction in the area. Therefore, in order to avoid repetition and to follow the principle of purpose, and to preserve and spread cultural information of the Chinese nation, the translator decided to discard “White Horse Pass” and still use the pinyin translation of “Baima”. In English, A pass is a narrow path or route between mountains. Both Jiangyou Pass and Baima Pass are located between two mountains, and the terrain is dangerous, so “pass” is a more appropriate translation here.

(2) Mountain and slope

As “the road to Shu is harder than the sky”, the ruggedness and difficulty of the Shu Road are well known to the world. The Sichuan basin is surrounded by the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, the Daba Mountains, and the Huaying Mountains, and there are many mountains and valleys, so the translation of *Jinniu Road* naturally involves many mountain names.

Example 2

TT: Fule Mountain

Fule Shan is located in Mianyang, Sichuan Province, in the southern section of the Jianmen Shu Road, formerly known as Dongshan Mountain. According to *Fang yu sheng lan* (an imperial geography written by the Southern Song-period), in the winter of the 16th year of Jian’an (211), Liu Bei entered Shu and met with Liu Zhang on this mountain, drinking wine, enjoying the panoramic view of Shu and saying: “How rich (fu) Shu is and how happy (le) we are today!” Therefore, the mountain was renamed Fule Mountain.

The Chinese characters are pictograph, and the character “shan” is a typical example, as just one character “shan” encompasses various types of mountains with different meanings. In English, “mountain” corresponds to “a very high area of land with steep sides”; hill is “an area of land that is higher than the land that surrounds”; “mount” is more solemn and is mostly used for mountains in religion or poetry. In addition, many ranges are abbreviated as “mountain” in Chinese, but there are differences between the concepts of “mountain” and “range” in English. China often names islands in rivers, lakes and seas as mountains, such as Putuo Shan in Zhejiang Province and Jun Shan in Hunan Province, which are called mountains but are actually islands, so they need to be translated as “island” in translation. In the translation of mountain names, the translator needs to consult relevant background information and have a certain understanding of the object in order to translate the meaning accurately. The translation standard for mountain names in China stipulates that the unified English translation for “highlands with altitude >500 meters, relative undulation >200 meters, and steep slope” is mountain; while the English translation for “mountains with altitude <500 meters and relative undulation <200 meters” is hill. According to the data, Fule Shan is about 600 meters above sea level, and there is no religious and cultural color, so according to the basic meaning of mountain, “Fule Shan” should be translated as “Fule Mountain”.

Example 3

TT: Fallen Phoenix Slope

Luofeng Po, located in Baimaguan Town, Luojiang, Sichuan, is not a real relic of the Three Kingdoms period, but was actually established by later generations. In *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Liu Bei personally selected a cemetery for Pang Tong in recognition of his loyalty and merits, and finally chose a great site looking south, where Pang Tong was buried, which has since been called “Lufeng Po”. Since *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was widely circulated, during the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, Liang Shouzu, the governor of Luojiang County, selected a place similar to the one described in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and set it up as “Lufeng Po”, and erected a stone monument there as “the place where Marquis Jing Pang Tong sacrificed”.

Pang Tong’s pseudonym is Fengchu, meaning “little phoenix”, which is a metaphor for Pang Tong’s

youthfulness and talent. In *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the place where Pang Tong was killed by an arrow is “the place where the phoenix fell”. Based on this, the translation of “luofeng” can be “fallen phoenix”. As for the translation of “po”, it is defined as “the place where the land slopes”, such as “xiepo” and “shanpo”. In *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, there is also a Changbanpo, where Liu Bei fled from Nanyang to pass through at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty and met Cao Cao’s army and fought a battle, which is known as the Battle of Changban Po in history. In Moss Roberts’ translation, Changban Po is translated as “Steep Slope”, in English a slope is the side of a mountain, hill, or valley, which is consistent with the Chinese meaning of “po”. Therefore, “Luofeng Po” can be translated as “Fallen Phoenix Slope” with reference to “Changban Po”.

(3) Grave, tomb and temple

During the Three Kingdoms period, numerous wars took place in the area of Jinniu Road, and many heroes and soldiers were buried there. Therefore, there are many sites about graves, tombs and temples, so their translation is especially important. There are five words in English: grave, tomb, mausoleum, temple and shrine, and their meanings have certain differences. “A grave is a place where a dead person is buried.”; “A tomb is a grave, especially one that is above ground and that usually has a sculpture or other decoration on it.”; “A mausoleum is a building which contains the grave of a famous person or the graves of a rich family”; “A temple is a building used for the worship of a god or gods, mostly built by later generations”; and “A shrine is a place of worship which is associated with a particular holy person or object.” Based on the above preliminary analysis, the translator can proceed to the next translation with much clarity.

Example 4

TT: Zhangren Tomb, Jiangwan Tomb

Zhang Ren was a general under Liu Zhang, a minister of Yi Province during the Three Kingdoms period, known for his loyalty and courage. In the 19th year of Jian’an (214), facing the attack of Liu Bei’s army, Zhang Ren personally went to the battle of Yanqiao Bridge and was captured and preferred to die rather than surrender. So Liu Bei killed Zhang Ren, buried his body in the side of the bridge, in recognition of his loyalty.

Jiang Wan, the governor of Guangdu County, initially accompanied Liu Bei to Shu. In the beginning, he irritated Liu Bei for ignoring political affairs, but was saved from death by Zhuge Liang’s intercession. Later, he was re-instated and was cultivated and reused by Zhuge Liang. After his death, he succeeded Zhuge Liang and took charge of the military administration of Shu Han. He died in 246, and was buried in Fucheng (now Mian Yang, Sichuan).



Figure 1: Zhangren Tomb



Figure 2: Jiangwan Tomb

Although Zhang Ren’s tomb (Figure 1) and Jiang Wan’s tomb (Figure 2) are roughly similar in appearance, with Zhang Ren’s tomb in a round arch and Jiang Wan’s tomb in an octagonal shape, the overall difference between the two is not significant, as both are in the form of a stone monument in front and a tomb in the back. Since the structure of both Zhang Ren’s tomb and Jiang Wan’s tomb is relatively simple, the primary consideration is “grave” and “tomb”. In the West, “grave” refers to a coffin buried in the ground and a flat grave on the surface, so when you walk into a “graveyard”, you will only see the tombstone but not the grave. Obviously, “grave” is not applicable to the translation of Zhang Ren’s tomb and Jiang Wan’s tomb. On the other hand, “tomb” refers to a grave that is above the ground, and relatively speaking, “tomb” is a more expensive and extravagant tomb, so “tomb” is applicable to the translation here. Therefore, “tomb” is suitable for this translation.

Example 5

TT: Temple of Pangtong, Loyalty Temple of Zhuge

Pang Tong, the military advisor of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period, was deeply trusted and valued by Liu Bei. In the 19th year of Jian'an (214), Pang Tong was unfortunately killed by arrows, and Liu Bei was saddened by his death. In the 1st year of Zhangwu (221), Liu Bei became the emperor and posthumously named Pang Tong as the Marquis and built a temple for him as a memorial.

Zhuge Zhan, a minister of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period, son of Zhuge Liang. Zhuge Shang, a general of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period, the grandson of Zhuge Liang and the eldest son of Zhuge Zhan. In the winter of the 6th year of Jingyao (263), Deng Ai, a general of Wei, attacked Shu and Zhuge Zhan led his army to resist and was eventually killed in battle. When Zhuge Shang heard the news of his father's death, he rushed into the Wei camp and killed the enemy bravely, finally dying a heroic death at the age of 19. To commemorate the loyalty and bravery of Zhan and Shang, the Loyalty Temple of Zhuge was built (Figure 3).

The original meaning of "ci" is a building for the family to worship their ancestors, but later it was derived to be a hall for commemorating famous and great people. Pangtong Ci (Figure 4) and Zhuge Shuangzhong Ci were both built by later generations to commemorate Pangtong and Zhuge. The official English translation of "Wuhou Ci" is "Temple of Marquis Wu", which is a memorial hall for Zhuge Liang, the prime minister of the Shu Han Dynasty. From the picture, we can see that both Pangtong Ci and Zhuge Shuangzhong Ci are of a certain scale. Based on the previous article, "a temple is a building used for the worship of a god or gods", whose meaning coincides with the meaning of "ci". Therefore, we can determine that the word "ci" should be translated as "temple".

Some translators translate "ci" as "mausoleum", but compared with "grave" and "tomb", "mausoleum" is "a building", which is obviously much larger than the former two. The equivalent word in Chinese is "lingmu", which refers to the tomb of an emperor or a vassal, usually on a grand scale and with a majestic atmosphere, see "Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor". Although both "lingmu" and "ci" are large in scale, the fundamental difference between them is that "lingmu" is usually planned and built by the tomb owner himself, while "ci" is built by descendants. A lingmu is still essentially a tomb, whereas a ci is more of a memorial, so the use of "mausoleum" to translate "ci" in this case is clearly inappropriate. Some translators also translate "ci" as "shrine", but it is not appropriate here. The word "shrine" is of Latin origin, originally referring to a box or chest used to store important documents, and in the religious sphere to a receptacle in which the remains or relics of a saint were kept. Nowadays, its meaning has been expanded and is often used to denote the graves of saints and religious buildings where the relics of saints are kept. First of all, from the dictionary, we can see that the object of "shrine" is a "holy person", namely a god or a saint, such as the Bodhisattva Guanyin in Buddhism and Jesus in Christianity. Obviously, Pang Tong, Zhuge Zhan and Zhuge Shang do not match the definition of "holy person", and there is no such thing as shrine in China. Secondly, if we look up the names of other places with "shrine" as reference, we can find that most of them are scenic spots in Japan, such as Heian Shrine in Kyoto and Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, which are religious places where Japanese people worship Shintoism. Therefore, the word "shrine" is full of divine and religious colors, both from the dictionary and from the existing translations. Pangtong Ci and Zhuge Shuangzhong Ci are not religious buildings, but merely memorial halls built by later generations to commemorate real people in history, so the word "shrine" should not be adopted here.



Figure 3: Temple of Pangtong



Figure 4: Loyalty Temple of Zhuge

In addition, there are translations of "Pangtong Ci" as "Temple and Tomb of Pangtong". However, it is proved that the real body of Pangtong is not buried in Pangtong Ci, but in the mountain about 1.7 kilometers away from the Pangtong Ci, named "Blood Tomb of Pangtong". If the word "and Tomb" is added after the original "Temple", readers will rightly think that Pang Tong is buried in Pangtong Ci, which is bound to cause misunderstanding to readers; or when readers see "Blood Tomb of Pangtong" afterwards, they will think Pang Tong was buried here. From the view of Skopos theory, both of these

situations are not conducive to the identification of the site and the dissemination of its culture by foreign readers and scholars, so this translation is undesirable.

Example 6

TT: Blood Tomb of Pangtong

According to the “*Pang Tong’s biography in Records of the Three Kingdoms*” records, In the 19th year of Jian’an (214) summer, Pang Tong with Liu Bei attacked Luocheng, on the way unfortunately killed by arrows, and the blood soaked his clothes. Liu Bei buried bloody Pang Tong on the spot and built a tomb, which is why the locals call this tomb the “Blood Tomb”. In 1989, the local government erected a stone monument in front of the original tomb, the monument engraved “Han Jing Marquis Pang Tong’s tomb”.

The Blood Tomb of Pangtong (Figure 5) is located next to the Fallen Phoenix Slope, as a place to bury the body of Pangtong, which is only simply maintained today. The shape of the tomb is similar to that of Zhang Ren's tomb and Jiang Wan's tomb (Example 4) in the form of a front monument and a back tomb, so it is translated as “Blood Tomb of Pangtong”.



Figure 5: Blood Tomb of Pangtong

5. Conclusion

Excellent translations of Chinese cultural heritage readings are a bridge of communication and understanding between Chinese and foreign cultures. The translation of site names seems to be simple, but it requires careful consideration in the translation process, and to effectively improve the quality of translation, the right remedy should be found for the problem. Chinese is vague and general, and a single Chinese character has a broad scope, and the same Chinese character may convey different meanings in different site names, while each word in English has a narrower and more specific definition. When translating, the translator should first carefully understand the background information of the site itself, and then carefully identify and select the best translation, so that the message of the original text can be accurately conveyed. If the translation is arbitrary or wrong, the message will be deviated and the original meaning will not be conveyed, thus causing confusion or even misleading to the readers of the target language. Only when the translation is accurate can readers understand accurately and effectively convey the cultural connotation of the original text. To better spread and promote Chinese culture, translators need to devote more energy and be more careful in their translation work.

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