

# Study on the Translation of Tops Terms in French Translation—A Dream of Red Mansions

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**Abstract:** Costume culture is an important part of the culture of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. To study the translation of traditional cultural terms in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the translation study of costume terms is an indispensable aspect. Based on the French translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, on the basis of establishing a parallel corpus of costume terms, this paper conducts a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the translation of tops terms, sorts out the French translation methods of traditional Chinese clothing and tops terms in the book, and discusses the translator's gains and losses in the facsimile of garment culture.

**Keywords:** *A Dream of Red Mansions*, French translation, tops terms

## 1. Introduction

*A Dream of Red Mansions* was written during the Qing Dynasty in China by Cao Xueqin. It is known as one of the Four Great Classical Masterpieces of China, along with *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Its status in Chinese literature and culture is remarkable, and *Redology* has flourished in China. However, its translation and dissemination abroad have lagged. In French, for example, it was not until 1981 that a full translation of the 120-volume *A Dream of Red Mansions* was released. This translation is the French version of *Le rêve dans le Pavillon rouge* by Chinese-French translator Li Zhihua and his wife Ya Ge, also known as the Li translation. The French translation of *Le rêve dans le Pavillon rouge*, translated by Li Zhihua and Jacquot and proofread by Dortmund, is one of the classic full French translations in existence.<sup>[1]</sup> Its publication not only means that a great Chinese literary work has entered the French-speaking world but also means that it opens a window for French-speaking people to understand traditional Chinese culture.

As we all know, there are numerous base books of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Li's translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* is mainly based on two primary texts: one is the 120-volume *A Dream of Red Mansions* published by the People's Literature Publishing House in 1957, which was annotated by Qigong; the other is the 80-volume Revised Version of *A Dream of Red Mansions* published by the People's Literature Publishing House in 1958, which was edited by Yu Bo-ping. In between, there are several references to other editions of *A Dream of Red Mansions* to select a more suitable base text. (Specifically, the first forty pages of the text are in Qigong's one hundred and twenty pages (1957), the middle forty pages are in Yu Pingbo's eighty pages (1958), and the last forty pages are in Qigong's eighty pages (1957)).<sup>[2]</sup> The first 80 stanzas of Yang's translation are based on the original version of "Qi Tingsheng's Preface" in the handwritten version, and the last 40 stanzas are translated from Cheng Gao's revised version by the People's Literature Publishing House. Other versions are also referred to.

*A Dream of Red Mansions* is a collection of traditional Chinese culture, covering almost every aspect of Chinese traditional culture. There are numerous examples of clothing, food, tea, wine, and architectural culture, of which clothing culture, i.e., costume culture, is an important part.<sup>[3]</sup> It is well known that the author, Cao Xueqin, came from the Jiangning Weaving House, a family whose ancestors served in manufacturing, and was well versed in the styles, fabrics, patterns, and colours of clothing. Therefore, a large number of traditional Chinese clothing names appear in the book, and they are described in detail. There are 44 references to costumes or jewellery in the first 80 pages of the book, with a total of 173 words. In the second 40, there are 38 references to costumes in 7 of the last 40. This is a great challenge for the translator, who needs to use appropriate methods to translate traditional Chinese costume terms.<sup>[4]</sup> The elements involved in costumes include fabrics, styles, colours, techniques, patterns, etc. Since most of the words do not have specific counterparts in Western

languages, the translator can only select the appropriate counterparts by deducing the specific meaning of each word in the unintelligible context and adopting appropriate combinations to present the elements of costumes, making up for the cultural deficiencies in different languages through various methods. In this paper, we study the translation method of the upper garment terms based on building a French--Chinese parallel corpus of costume terms in *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

## 2. Building a French-Chinese parallel corpus of costume terms in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The corpus of this paper is drawn from the Chinese version of *A Dream of Red Mansions* by the People's Literature Publishing House and the full French translation by Li Zhihua and Jacquot, proofread by Tolmens, by Gallimard Publishing House.<sup>[5]</sup> A manual approach was adopted for the terminology search work. Ancient Chinese traditional dress is divided into clothing and accessories. The clothing includes headwear (including caps, scarves, etc.), upper clothing (including robes, clothes, shirts, coats, capes, undershirts, and pockets), lower clothing (including skirts and pants), and footwear (including shoes, clogs, socks, boots, etc.). The accessories include shoulder and neck accessories, waist and abdomen accessories, belts, pendants, etc. The corpus uses term alignment to find the corresponding dress terms in the Chinese and French versions, and the statistics become an excel sheet.

## 3. Analysis of French translation of upper garment terms

In this paper, according to the ancient Chinese costume classification standards, the upper garment terms appearing in *A Dream of Red Mansions* are divided into eight categories: robe, coat, shirt, jacket, gown, cape, undershirt and pocket. This paper will analyze this in turn.

### 3.1 Robe: robe clothing

Robe refers to laminated, long clothes with cotton wool. A long coat. Length is usually below the knee. More common after the Warring States, both men and women can wear. Initially, it was mostly used as underwear, when worn outside another coverlet. Its system is more like two layers, of cotton wool. The text mentions "robe" clothing 9 times, all translated as robe (*vêtement féminin composé d'un corsage et d'une jupe d'un seul tenant*). There are some special robes involved, the translator translates as follows.

Python robe: embroidered with python pattern robe. Qing dynasty officials and women wearing a dress. Round neck and arrow sleeves, long to the foot hock. Usually worn within the coat. The colour used and embroidered python book is slightly different. Prince, county king through embroidered nine pythons.

Taoist robe: the robe worn by Taoist priests, and monks. Made of white, grey, brown cloth and silk, large lapels and wide sleeves, long to the knee, collar, sleeves, lapels, train edge with black edge.

Yellow robe: the Qing dynasty emperor's robe, dragon robe and even raincoat are too bright yellow for it. Consort's robe also likes it.

### 3.2 Clothes: the common name of human clothing.

Fur: winter clothing made of animal skins. According to the record of Tian Gong Kai Miao, among the flying birds, there is to take the belly of the eagle, goose ribs, Cui Hui, kill a million, is to get fur. This shows the rarity of this clothing. The text mainly mentions three kinds of fur coats: bird gold fur, eider dimple fur and lynx sinking ship big fur.

(1) Bird gold fur: fur coat made of peacock fur fabric. Light warm texture, gorgeous appearance, mostly for noble winter clothes.

(2) Eider dimple fur: the fur coat made of wild duck head and neck hair, emerald green, lustrous, a noble and precious product.

(3) Lynx big fur: ancient rare animals made of a precious leather clothing, lynx is a kind of wild cat, produced in the northeast mountains, fur is extremely valuable. In the Qing Dynasty, the dignitaries wearing lynx fur was very popular.

Overcoat: Coat of bird feathers. Crane cloak: fur made of bird feathers. Most of those who wear crane overcoats become phi, phi clothes in general, more spacious and draped on the outside. The overcoat appears 3 times in the text, respectively.

### **3.3 Shirt: a general term for a single garment or a piece of clothing.**

The word shirt appears 7 times in the text, 4 times as robe, 1 time as vêtement, and 1 time as tunique (vêtement droit plus ou moins long, porté sur une jupé ou un pantalon.). The author believes that the original meaning of shirt is a general term for clothing, and that all six translations in this text are possible.

### **3.4 Jacket: short coat**

Zori is a lined top, Zori means short coat, which evolved from the short jacket, originally mostly used as underwear, named jacket. It is usually made of a thick fabric with a lining and is commonly called a jacket. The word jacket has the highest number of occurrences in the text, 46 times. Among them, 14 times translated as tunique, 17 times translated as robe, 8 times translated as camisole (chemise de nuit courte old time refers to short pajamas), 5 times translated as veste (vêtement à manches, boutonné devant, qui couvre le buste jusqu'aux hanches. tement (Tout ce qui sert à couvrir le corps humain pour le protéger, le parer.

(1) Small jacket: Underwear.

(2) Cotton jacket / Mian jacket: In which cotton wool is used to make a kind of cold clothing, commonly known as "Mian jacket", generally worn within the long coat. Both men and women can wear it. The word "mian" is derived from silk, because it is made of silk and cotton, but later it was changed to cotton, and the word "mian" is derived from wood, and its system is large lapels, narrow sleeves, and the bottom is longer than the waist.

(3) Leather jacket: A short jacket lined with fur. It is worn in winter.

Cotton jacket or cotton jacket: It is made of cotton wool and is generally called a cotton jacket and is usually worn under a long coat. Both men and women can wear it. The word mian comes from silk because it is made of silk and cotton, but later it is made of cotton, and the word mian comes from wood, and the system is large lapels, narrow sleeves, and the bottom is longer than the waist.

### **3.5 Gown category**

Gown: clothes that cover the outside of the robe. The Qing Dynasty's gown is a dress, usually round collar, lapel, and sleeve end flush, covered in the outer edge of the robe. There are two forms: one for the long coat, also called the long shirt, under the long to the knee, with it to prepare for the ceremony, also known as the ceremony coat; a short coat, long to the crotch, dedicated to travel, so-called line coat, also known as "horse coat It was also called horse coat. The term tunic appears 23 times in the text. Among them, 7 are translated as unique (loose waistcoat that hangs down to or below the hips), 6 as veste (top, blouse, (short) coat), 4 as robe (long coat, dress, dress shirt for women), 3 as a cape (cloak, cape), 2 as manteau (coat, jacket), 1 as mante (old-time cloak, cape). There are some special "coats" involved, which the translator translated as follows.

(1) Grey rat coat: A kind of leather coat made of grey rat skin. The gray rat, also known as the green rat, has a dark gray color and a white belly.

(2) Silver mouse coat: a kind of precious fur coat in ancient times. Silver mouse is a kind of white needle of gray mouse skin, high price, extremely valuable.

(3) Eagle blouse: This is a traditional Chinese clothing style unique to ancient China, a kind of shoulder with sleeves, popular in the Qing Dynasty.

(4) Xuan fox coat: refers to an ancient coat made of black fox skin.

(5) Pai Sui coat: coat made of long-haired sheepskin. Pai Sui, sheepskin name, that is, wheat ears. White and soft, can make winter clothes, extremely valuable.

### 3.6 Capes

Cape: Draped on the shoulders of the sleeveless outer clothing. There are different systems: single-layer, double-layer and cotton wool, available for both men and women. In the Ming and Qing dynasties to use silk fabric production, not limited to the use of rain and snow days, also used to avoid the wind and cold. The word cape appears three times in the text, all translated as a cape, a kind of shawl coat.

Cloak: The cloak evolved from the Demoiselle, which was initially woven with brown hemp to protect against rain and snow. To the Ming and Qing dynasties, only more with silk fabric production, and unlimited use on rainy and snow days, then called the coat, is a kind of cold clothing, there are long and short types, with a high collar and low collar. When winter is out, both men and women officials and common people, like to wrap cloaks. After the middle of the Qing Dynasty, women wearing a cloak is very common, and the production is increasingly sophisticated. cloak for draped over-the-shoulder sleeveless jacket. Is a kind of cotton wool in the cloak? The lapel, straight collar or round collar, under the long to the knee. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was made of cloth and silk and was generally used in winter. The word cloak appears 15 times in the text, of which 11 times are translated as the cape and 4 times are translated as capuchin.

### 3.7 Undershirt

Vest: Also known as a half-back. Commonly known as shoulder or vest. It is a sleeveless garment. There are 5 references to the undershirt as a clothing style, and only 1 of the 5 references is to veste sans Manches, which is a short sleeveless top.

Long undershirt: Long undershirt refers to a kind of casual clothing in Ming and Qing dynasties. The system is like an undershirt, with a large lapel and round collar, and the bottom is long and waist. Mostly used for young women. It was generally worn in addition to the short jacket to keep out the cold. There is 1 mention in the text.

Bi-shoulder: That is, an undershirt.

### 3.8 Pocket category

Brassiere: Covered in the chest of the small intimate clothing. It is usually made of brightly coloured silk, with colourful embroidery, and is worn with two belts tied around the neck and two belts tied around the waist. The system depends on the climate. There are single and laminated, and a few also have cotton wool, which can be used to cover the shame, but also to protect against the cold. The text of the brassiere appears 2 times

Pocket belly: Covered in the chest of the small intimate clothing. It was called this name in the Ming and Qing dynasties. And brassiere should belong to the same attire. Belly appears 1 time in the text, as follows.

## 4. Conclusions

The French translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, translated by Li Zhihua and Ya Ge and proofread by Dorman, tries to restore Chinese culture to the greatest extent possible and help Chinese literature to go global. In general, Li's translation does a good job of transmitting traditional Chinese costume culture, although there are some mistranslations in the translation that do not quite match the original text, in general, this French translation provides an important reference for the foreign translation of Chinese literature and traditional Chinese costume culture. The heterogeneity of Chinese and Western cultures increases the difficulty of translating culturally distinctive terms, and translators are required to choose appropriate costume cultural terms in the incoming language to translate the costume cultural terms in the original language.

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