

# Study on Translation of A Treatise on Coast-defence from the Perspective of Translation Norms

Shuping Ren, Xiaoyue He

*School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Jiaotong University, Chongqing 400074, China*

**Abstract:** *A Treatise on Coast-defence published by Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities was the first translation of the military theory of coastal defense in the late Qing Dynasty. It strongly promoted the rise of modern Chinese coastal defense thought and had a profound impact on modern China. At present, no scholar has conducted research on A Treatise on Coast-defence from the perspective of translation. This article uses Toury's translation norms as the theoretical framework to describe and explain the translation materials and translation strategies of A Treatise on Coast-defence. It is believed that A Treatise on Coast-defence conforms to the target language translation norms and is therefore widely accepted. This research helps to reveal the laws, features and forms of translation in a specific historical and cultural context, and at the same time provides references and references for contemporary military translation.*

**Keywords:** *Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities, A Treatise on Coast-defence, translation norms; acceptance*

## 1. Introduction

The Translation Hall of Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities was established in 1868. It is an important institution for the modern Chinese government to introduce Western learning. Its book translation activities and translation content mainly involve Western advanced technology, which has had a huge impact on modern China. In 1874, John Fryer and Hua Hengfang translated and published "The landmark coastal defense work "New Theory of Defense" (Zhang Ruirong, 2020: 28). The English book title A Treatise on Coast-defence was written in English in 1868 by the German military officer Scheliha who participated in the American Civil War. It mainly discussed the importance of modern coastal defense, coastal artillery and water. Obstacle equipment cooperates with the function of blocking enemy ships. At the same time, it also introduces in detail the structure, performance, deployment, use and removal methods of various mines, and the engineering technology of blocking enemy ships with sunken objects and floating objects.

The translation and engraving of A Treatise on Coast-defence strongly promoted the rise of modern Chinese coastal defense thought and had an important impact on the construction of the late Qing navy. After the book was published, it was highly valued by Qing government officials, especially military and political leaders, such as Li Hongzhang, Ding Baozhen, and Liu Kunyi. In the memorial, Li Hongzhang directly quoted the book's view that coastal defense should concentrate forces and guard fortresses. In 1879, Japan and Tsarist Russia successively coveted China's coastal territories. The issue of coastal defense once again triggered heated discussions in the court. The Prime Minister's Office issued an order to reprint the A Treatise on Coast-defence and distribute it to the governors along the coast. "After the publication, to 1880, a total of 1114 copies was sold, which was a not small number at the time" (Xiong Yuezhi, 1995:522).

A Treatise on Coast-defence has a large sales volume and a wide impact, which has great research value. At present, the research of A Treatise on Coast-defence focuses on the history of science and technology and military history (Wang Hongbin, 2005; Pi Mingyong, 1994), and no scholar has conducted research from the perspective of translation. This article will use Toury translation norms as the theoretical framework to analyze the translation materials and translation strategies of A Treatise on Coast-defence. Translation provides reference and reference.

## 2. Translation Norms

In the 1980s, translation studies experienced a shift from a linguistic research perspective to a

cultural research perspective. The Israeli scholar Turi inherited and carried forward his teacher Zohar's polysystem theory further puts forward the theory of translation norms.

In the book *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995), Toury systematically expounded the theory of translation norms. He believes that norms are based on the common expectation and acceptance of most members of a certain society or community as a basic condition, using rewards and punishments as the means of implementation, and a behavioral pattern that is internalized through social learning. Translators are usually restricted by three types of norms in translation: (1) preliminary norms, which are related to translation policy and the directness of translation. Translation policy refers to the influence of specific culture and time on text selection. Directness refers to directly translating the source language text into the target language text, or translating the source language text into another language, that is, through interlanguage translation; (2) Initial norms, which are divided into two types. One is "adequacy", that is, as close as possible to the source language, and the other is "acceptability", which is inclined to the target language; (3) Operational norms are the translator's decisions made during the translation process include matrix norms and textual-linguistic norms. The former is in terms of macro level, such as full translation, compilation and so on. The latter refers to the processing of the text at the micro level, such as sentence structure, vocabulary selection, and text features.

### 3. A Treatise on Coast-defence and Translation Norms

#### 1) Translation material selection and translation motivation

The choice of text for translation is by no means an accidental phenomenon. In addition to being related to the personal preferences of the translator as the subject of translation, it is also closely related to the translation norms of a specific historical and cultural context. As Toury (1995) said, the choice of text will be affected by a particular culture and time. When selecting a text, the translator usually considers whether the selected text meets the needs and expectations of the target language in order to make the translation smoothly enter the context of acceptance and be accepted by the target language audience.

Looking at the selection of materials for the translation of *A Treatise on Coast-defence*, we can get a glimpse of the background of the establishment of the translation hall of the Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities where the translators John Fryer and Hua Hengfang worked. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Qing government was poor and weak, and internal and external troubles continued. Some people with lofty ideals realized that to change the backward situation, it is necessary to carry out the Westernization Movement, that is, to introduce and learn advanced Western science and technology to develop capitalist industry and commerce. In 1868, the Translation Hall was completed and opened.

"The fact that the Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities set up a library to translate western books began in the winter of 1867 in the Western calendar. This was accomplished with the help of Xu and Hua. At that time, the two served as assistants in the bureau. It is not difficult to see that the Translation Hall of the Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities was established in response to the urgent needs of the times, "it is inextricably linked to the politics and reform movements of the time" (Zhang Meiping, 2009: 48). In this way, the selection of the text by the translation library will not be arbitrarily, but is closely related to the needs of the times. According to textual research, most of the more than 200 works translated by the translation hall involve mathematics, military affairs, mining and metallurgy, and navigation (Deng Liang, 2016: 285).

When talking about the choice of translation texts, John Fryer once said: " I usually choose calligraphy, which is closely used by Westerners and Hua Shi to choose their own, regardless of whether their books are matched with other books, so there are several books such as botany, zoology, celebrity biography, etc. that have not yet been translated. "

As one of the translators, Hua Hengfang talked about the motivation for translating this book in the Preface to *A Treatise on Coast-defence* in *A Treatise on Coast-defence*: Although fortified everywhere, everyone talked about it, and defended it. Insufficient strength, there are not many weapons to fight, but it can be with a powerful country, to stand by the day, do not go to death, and it is strong. I said that all those who use soldiers must first hold the handle of victory, and then they can discuss it. War; must first be in a place of defeat, and then be able to discuss defense; and must first be prepared for war and defense, and then be able to negotiate peace. "(John Fryer, Hua Hengfang, 1874: 3).

It can be seen both the Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities and the translators themselves, have a clear

purpose and motivation, that is, to learn from the advanced western coastal defense theory and technology to change China's backward coastal defense situation at that time. It is no wonder that the publication of *A Treatise on Coast-defence* will be highly valued by government officials and will have a profound impact on modern China.

## 2) Translation Strategies

The initial norms in Toury determine the overall tendency of translators towards translation, namely "sufficiency" and "acceptability". *A Treatise on Coast-defence* belongs to the scientific and technological style in terms of style, specifically involving military and construction engineering discourses. Li Yashu believes that the translation of this type of style should focus on objectivity, standardization, scientificity and reality (Li Yashu, 2017: 58). The author believes that the "objectivity and normativeness" here can be roughly equivalent to the "sufficiency" in the diagram, that is, move closer to the source language, try to be faithful to the original text, and let the target language readers get close to the original author.

John Fryer once mentioned the translation model of the translation library. "As for the translation method in the library, the translator must understand the Westerners first. Read it sentence by sentence in Chinese. If there is something unspeakable, he will discuss with Hua how to understand it; if Hua has something unclear, explain it" (Dagenais, 2010: 546). *A Treatise on Coast-defence* was translated by John Fryer and Hua Hengfang. We think this is a more complicated issue, but we can still get some clues through the comparative analysis of English and Chinese texts and the translator's discussion of the translation process and translation thoughts. The author believes that from the perspective of translation strategy, *A Treatise on Coast-defence* has the following characteristics:

### (1) "Sufficiency", the content is more faithful to the original text;

*A Treatise on Coast-defence* is a military monograph on coastal defense. It discusses the reasons for the defeat of the southern battlefield in the American Civil War, coastal defense technology and equipment, in order to highlight the importance of coastal defense. When translating, the translator noticed the stylistic features of the original text. In terms of content, especially personal names, place names, and military and architectural engineering expertise, they were more faithful to the original text. We analyze some examples:

The first category: people and place names

The translator keeps the same with the original text when translating the names of people and places. This article only provides two examples for analysis.

**Example 1:** Admiral Dupont had engaged the fort with his iron-clads on April 7th, 1863; a heavy artillery duel ensued...

**Example 2:** As early as 1862 the Confederates lost by direct attack or by evacuation, necessitated by strategic movements of the enemy, the following points: Fort Henry, on the Tennessee River; Fort Donelson, Clarksville...

The name "Dupont" in Example 1 is translated as "Doubend", and the place name "Fort Henry, on the Tennessee River; Fort Donelson, Clarksville" in Example 2 is translated as "Fort Henry on the Tennessee River; Fort Donelson, Clarksville". The fortress of "Dan Alsen", we can see that the treatment of names and place names between the translated text and the original text is centered on the original text, thus highlighting the differences between American names and place names and Chinese names and place names.

The second category: military and construction engineering expertise

(2) "Acceptability", the way of expression conforms to the cognition of the target language readers and the expression habits of the target language

The first type of expression conforms to the cognition of target language readers Example 3: The success of local defence supposes: fortifications, that will withstand the fire of modern artillery; batteries, able to affect the amour of iron-clads, such as will hereafter be used in attacks on fortified points; and obstructions sufficiently strong to prevent the enemy's steamers from passing out of reach of these batteries without leaving them time for continuing their fire at close ranges.

The second type of expression conforms to the target language expression habits Example 4: Fort Morgan

Fort Morgan is situated on Mobile Point, the extreme Western end of a narrow and low strip of land projecting from the eastern shore of Mobile Bay for several miles in an almost due westerly direction. The fort, a brick structure, was built in 1633. Its object is the protection of the entrance to Mobile Bay from the Gulf of Mexico.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the Chinese translation of *A Treatise on Coast-defence*, the author believes that the choice of translation materials is in line with the needs of China as country with a weak coastal defense at that time. In terms of translation strategy, the translator is faithful to the military expertise of the original text, aiming to introduce advanced theories and technologies, and at the same time make appropriate adjustments to the way of expression to make it easier to be accepted. *A Treatise on Coast-defence* not only provides us with materials for studying translation rules and translation patterns in a special historical context, but also provides references for contemporary military translation.

#### Acknowledgements

This paper is an achievement of the project "The Training of Applied Translation Talents in Transportation Colleges under the Background of One Belt and One Road" sponsored by

Chongqing Federation of Social Science Research, Project Number: 2021WYZX08 and achievement of the project "Corpus-based Research on Scientific Translation of Kiangnan Arsenal" sponsored by Chongqing Education Commission, Project Number: 21SKGH087

#### References

- [1] L. Deng (2016). *A new textual research on the translation of science and technology works by Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities. Studies in the History of Natural Sciences, vol.3, no.1, p.285-296.*
- [2] Fryer, John (1874). *Hua Hengfang. A New Theory of Defense against the Sea. Shanghai: Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities.*
- [3] Y. Li (2017). *Scientific Translation Studies. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.*
- [4] S. Lian (2010). *A Contrastive Study of English and Chinese. Beijing: Higher Education Press.*
- [5] M. Pi (1994). *On the introduction of Western naval warfare theories during the Westernization Movement. Military History Studies, vol.1, no.1, p. 89-97.*
- [6] H. Wang (2005). *Coast Defense in the Late Qing Dynasty: Research on Thought and System. Beijing: The Commercial Press.*
- [7] Q. Wen (2014). *The beginning and end of organizing the affairs of Yi. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.*
- [8] Y. Xiong (1995). *The Eastward Spread of Western Learning and the Society of the Late Qing Dynasty. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.*
- [9] M. Zhang (2009). *The book translation activity of the Kiangnan Arsenal Authorities Translation Hall and its influence. China Science and Technology Translation, vol.4, no.1, p. 48-52.*
- [10] R. Zhang (2020). *The forerunner of the dream of a maritime power: A study on the translation and introduction of western coastal defense works in the late Qing Dynasty. Chinese Translation, vol.2, no.1, p. 26-34.*
- [11] Dagenais, F. *The John Fryer Papers. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010.*
- [12] Scheliha, V. *A Treatise on Coast-defence. London: E & F.N.SPON, 48, CHARING CROSS, 1868.*
- [13] Toury, G. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995.*