

A Comparative Study of *The Story of the Stone* in English and Mongolian Translations (Chapter One)*

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Abstract—*The Story of the Stone* written by Cao Xueqin was one of China's Great Four Classical Novels. Many Redology researchers compared between the original text and English translations, but very few of them ever knew the Mongolian version, and compared it with the original Chinese texts and between English and Mongolian translations in new approach. This paper tends to investigate the unique features of Mongolian version. The comparison between the Mongolian and English versions is also conducted in the aspects of translating process, translations strategies and commentaries.

Index Terms—English translation of *The Story of the Stone*, Mongolian translation of *Honglouloumeng*, Mongolian translator Hasibao

The great Chinese classic work *The Story of the Stone* by Cao Xueqin who was the one of the greatest writer in the Chinese literature history. It was written in the middle of the 18th century during the Qing Dynasty. It was considered as a masterpiece of Chinese literature and was generally acknowledged to be the pinnacle of Chinese fiction. The English versions till now include *The Story of the Stone* by David Hawkes and *A Dream of Red Mansions* by the golden couple Mr. Yang Xianyi and his wife Gladys Yang. In the 19th century, the Mongolian translator Hasibao translated it into Mongolian, named *the New Translation of the Story of the Stone*. Many Redology researchers compared between Chinese and English translations or between English and English translations in traditional translation methods for a long time, but very few of them ever compared between English and Mongolian translations in a new approach. This paper tends to investigate the unique features of Mongolian version. The comparison between the Mongolian and English versions is also conducted in the aspects of translating process, translations strategies and commentaries.

I. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH AND MONGOLIAN TRANSLATORS OF *THE STORY OF THE STONE*

A. English Translations and Translators

1. David Hawkes

David Hawkes (6 July 1923 – 31 July 2009) was a British Sinologist. His most important translated work is *The Story of the Stone*, in his translation he poured all of his creative passion and invention. As he wrote, this was a novel "written and rewritten by a great artist with his very lifeblood". He was the first person to translate *Honglouloumeng* in English completely for the first time in the west countries. John Minford comments *the Story of the Stone: a Translator's Notebooks*, "These notebooks testify above all to Professor Hawkes' deep love of literature, and his total commitment to the task of translating the great Chinese masterpiece *Honglouloumeng*. Future generations of scholars will be able to find in these notebooks materials that will be of help in elucidating the art of translation."¹

2. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang

Mr. Yang Xianyi (also *Yang Hsien-yi*, 1915-2009, born in Tianjin) was a very diligent and productive translator. Gladys Yang (1919-1999) was a British translator of Chinese literature and the wife of Yang Xianyi. Her father was a missionary. From the childhood, she became a lover of Chinese culture. They were the first translators who ever have translated *Honglouloumeng* in English completely in the east countries.

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¹ Ai Junru, David Hawkes & The Story of the Stone, 2010/12/3
http://blog.163.com/rumeng_honglou/blog/static/2014/4/15

love grief among Baoyu, Daiyu and Baochai, and people and things that have direct link with them. On the whole, it belongs to translation variation. But it differs from the definition presented by Huang Zhonglian. Huang said it referred to the translator according to the special needs of specific readers under fixed conditions; Hasibao translated the original in line with his own needs. In addition, we can also analyze the English translations in translation variation. In the section, the author studies their translation features from vocabulary and sentences levels.

1. Vocabulary Translation

1.1 Person names

Liu Miqing (1998) in *Writing and Translation* said, “Translating proper nouns, including person names and place names, has to use transliteration.” (p. 127)

In Chapter One, Hasibao translated person names in transliteration, sometimes in free translation; Hawkes and Yang Xianyi mainly use transliteration, rarely in free translation.

TABLE 2.1

曹雪芹	甄士隐	神瑛侍者	霍启
Hawkes' translation	Zhen Shiyin (transliteration)	attendant Shen Ying (transliteration)	Huo Qi (transliteration)
Yang's translation	Zhen Shi-yin (transliteration)	Divine Luminescent Stone-in-Waiting (free translation)	Calamity (free translation)
Hasibao's translation	ᠵᠡᠨ ᠰᠢ ᠶᠢᠨ (transliteration)	ᠰᠡᠨ ᠶᠢᠩ ᠲᠡᠨ ᠶᠢᠨ (free translation)	ᠬᠤᠣ ᠻᠢ (transliteration)

From the table 2.1, person names should be use transliteration, e.g. “霍启” means *the beginning of disaster*, but in English and Mongolian translations, it is more proper to translate it *Huo Qi* or ᠬᠤᠣ ᠻᠢ, rather than *Calamity*.

1.2 Place names

In line with Liu Miqing, person names should be translated in transliteration, as well as place names. Generally speaking, in the aspects of place names' translation, we should comply with the principle of the transliteration. Place names should be translated in transliteration, rather than in free translation. Using transliteration, there is no ambiguity. In free translation, although it expresses the meaning of the words, fails to correctly express the meaning. On the contrary it will produce ambiguity. Hasibao, Hawkes and Yang translated them mainly in transliteration, and mixed with free translation. Please see the examples below.

TABLE 2.2

曹雪芹	北邙山	无稽崖	阊门
Hawkes' translation	Mount Beimang (transliteration)	Baseless Cliff (transliteration)	Changmen Gate (transliteration)
Yang's translation	Bei-mang Hill (transliteration)	Incredible Crags (free translation)	Chang-men Gate (transliteration)
Hasibao's translation	ᠪᠡᠮᠠᠩ ᠰᠢᠨ (transliteration)	ᠤᠨ ᠵᠢ ᠰᠢ (transliteration)	ᠴᠢᠩ ᠮᠡᠨ (transliteration)

“无稽” means *without foundation, baseless; Incredible* means *beyond belief or understanding*. According to the original author, it is more proper to translate it as *Baseless Cliff*.

1.3 Cultural words and expressions

Hasibao, Hawkes and Yang translated these words in free translation. In this way people can more easily understand the meaning of words. Hawkes' translation is more correct than Yang's.

TABLE 2.3

曹雪芹	绛珠草	通灵宝玉	金陵十二钗
Hawkes' translation	Vermilion Pearl Plant	Precious Jade of Spiritual Understanding	The Twelve Beauties of Jinling
Yang's translation	Crimson Pearl Flower	Magic Jade	The Twelve Beauties of Jinling
Hasibao's translation	ᠵᠢᠨᠯᠢᠩ ᠰᠢᠨ (transliteration)	ᠲᠣᠨ ᠯᠢᠩ ᠪᠠᠶᠤ (transliteration)	ᠵᠢᠨᠯᠢᠩ ᠲᠡᠪᠦᠳᠦ ᠲᠡᠨ ᠶᠢᠨᠯᠢᠩ (transliteration)

2. Negative words translation

In general, there are some certain rules on translation of negative words. Please see Table 2.4.

TABLE 2.4

Chinese	negative words+ verbs	不行
English	negative words+ verbs	can not to do
Mongolian	verbs/nouns + negative word	ᠪᠢᠶᠢᠨᠠᠭᠤᠨ (transliteration)

fire and poverty. In the end, he was disappointed to become a monk. *Zhen Shiyin* is homophone for “真事隐” in Chinese; “*ᠵᠡᠨ ᠰᠢᠶᠢᠨ ᠶᠡᠨ ᠰᠢᠶᠢᠨ*” in Mongolian; *Hide the true facts* (Hawkes) in English. It means the book conceals the truth and makes up a story.

The third thing was that Jia Yucun became an official. He was a poor scholar, living in a ruined temple called Gourd Temple, and was a friend of Zhen Shiyin. Finally with the help of Zhen, he became an official. *Jia Yucun* sounds like “假语存 or 假语村” in Chinese; “*ᠵᠢᠶᠠ ᠶᠤᠴᠤᠨ ᠶᠡᠨ ᠰᠢᠶᠢᠨ*” in Mongolian; *Rustic language* (Hawkes) in English, it means *The Story of the Stone* is a fictional story.

B. Translation of the Book Title *Honglouloumeng*

The word *Hong Lou* has three meanings: firstly, referring to luxurious buildings; secondly, referring to the boudoir; thirdly, like *brothel*, that is, a whore house. Cao Xueqin used *Hong Lou* to contain all of the above meanings. *Honglouloumeng* has nine kinds of English versions.

TABLE 3.1
THE STATISTICAL TABLE OF ENGLISH VERSIONS OF HONGLOUMENG (1830- 1978)⁴

English name	Translator	Time
<i>Chinese poetry</i>	John Davis	1830
<i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>	Robert Tom	1846
<i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>	E.C.BOWRA	1868
<i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>	Bencraft Joly	1892
<i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>	王良志	1927
<i>Dream of Red Chamber</i>	王际真	1929
<i>The Dream of Red Chamber</i>	Florence & Isabel McHugh	1958
<i>The Story of The Stone</i>	David Hawkes	1973
<i>A Dream of Red Mansions</i>	Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang	1978

From table3.1, it is clear that most of them are called *A Dream of Red Mansions* (红色宅院之梦), *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红色阁楼之梦), only Hawkes named it *The Story of the Stone* (石头记). In my opinion, his translation is most proper for readers to understand. From the Chapter One, we can easily find that *the Stone* was the clue of whole story, which leads to a series of stories: the Stone meeting a monk→Zhen Shiyin daydreaming→the origin of Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu→Zhen Shiyin suddenly meeting a monk→ Zhen Shiyin’s house on fire→Zhen Shiyin becoming a monk→Jia Yucun becoming an official. Therefore, this paper uses the name *The Story of the Stone*.

C. An Analysis of Three Kinds of Translations

1. An analysis of English translations

1.1 David Hawkes: *The Story of the Stone*

It has about 6,000 words and 173 paragraphs; the author divides the long sentences into several small pieces, such as the first paragraph of Chapter One. There is a long paragraph with nine sentences, and Hawkes translates it into four paragraphs. In terms of words translation, Hawkes mainly uses transliteration. For example, he translates “无稽崖” into *Baseless Cliff*. In translation of person names, he uses literal translation, such as translating “甄士隐” into *Zhen Shiyin*. In addition, the author uses many idiomatic expressions in translation, *nothing to be done, a man with one foot in the grave, you have hit the nail on the head, this is where our paths divide*.

1.2 Yang Xianyi: *A Dream of the Red Mansions*

It has about 7,000 words and 192 paragraphs. The translator ignores the purpose of the original author and divides the whole translation into two parts, and the first part is the origin of this book, in this part has three major contents, and they are: a) the Stone meeting a monk and a Taoist; b) the Stone meeting a Taoist called Vanitas; c) the relationship between the Stone and Crimson Pearl Flower. The second part is called *The Land of Illusion*. It consists of two parts. The first one is Zhen Shiyin’s daydreaming and meeting the Stone and, Jia Yucun went to examination with the help of Zhen Shiyin; another one is Zhen Shiyin’s suffering including missing the daughter and having a fire before he become a monk. In terms of words translation, Yang Xianyi mainly using transliteration, for example, he translates “绛珠草” into *Crimson Pearl Flower*, “贾雨村” into *Jia Yu-cun*.

2 An analysis of Mongolian translation

The New Translation of the Story of the Stone has about 5, 000 words and 4 long paragraphs. In the first paragraph, the translator orders the purpose of the original author. The second paragraph is the opening part, and it mainly studies the origin of the Stone. In the third paragraph, Hasibao narrates the whole story which was recorded on the Stone in general terms. In the last paragraph, he writes the whole story in details. Hasibao mainly uses transliteration at the aspect of words and on translation of the sentences. He uses three kinds of translation variation in Chapter One, such as, addition, condensation and adaptation respectively. Moreover, there are several special points in Hasibao’s translation that have been referred above.

⁴ Fei Yu, *the only correct English translation of Honglouloumeng* 2010-04-09. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5052da350100hxxb.html 2014-04-15

3. A comparative analysis of English and Mongolian translations

In terms of arrangements, there are some similarities in Hawkes' and Hasibao's translations. Both of them don't set the title in Chapter One or divide it in several parts; also they are very faithful to the original without changing its pattern. Yang and Hasibao add more information in line with their own needs, such as both of them told the reason why the Stone became attendant Shen Ying. On translation of words and sentences, the three translators mixed transliteration with free translation. There are many idiomatic expressions in Hawkes' translation; Yang uses more four words idioms; Hasibao nearly does not use gorgeous words, telling a story with vernacular language.

From the whole translation, Hawkes pays attention to convey the meaning of the original, in translation of language is correct, but lost the original taste. Yang has a deep understanding on Chinese traditional culture; his translation is full of Chinese taste. But in terms of translation words, there are many mistakes. Hasibao translates it into idiomatic Mongolian, and as for the language, he uses beautiful and correct. In a word, the three translators have their own translation characteristics; they play important roles in translation circles.

IV. CONCLUSION

The author makes a comparative analysis of English and Mongolian translations of *The Story of the Stone*. By studying Chapter One of *The Story of the Stone* in terms of words, sentences and writing arrangements with translation variation theory as the research theory, the author reaches a conclusion that Hawkes' translation pays more attention to formal equivalence and uses words correctly, and accorded with the character images. However he is a foreigner, who does not know much about Chinese traditional culture. Yang Xianyi has a deep understanding of Chinese traditional culture; therefore his translation is full of Chinese taste. But there is a problem. He has some shortcomings in translation of words. He translates “赤瑕宫” into “Sunset Glow Palace”, the word “赤瑕” into “Red Jade”.

There are several special points in Hasibao's translation. There were 11 pictures of Beauties of Jinling drawn by the translator and accompanied by corresponding verses. At the end of each chapter, there are some commentaries called *huiji*. In *huiji*, the translator mainly wrote three things. The first one was to analyze the roles; the second was to research the things which happened in this chapter; the last was to discuss the thoughts and its influences on society. At last, Hasibao translated *the Story of the Stone* in Mongolian, first Mongolian version of *Honglouloumeng* in the Mongolian translation history. It was fully understood and absorbed by Mongolian readers.

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