

# Research on Folk Culture Translation Based on Bassnett's Cultural Translation View

Xinran Zhang

Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu 610000, China

---

**Abstract:** Folk culture is the best witness of the development process of a country and the living background of its ethnic groups. It can explain each ethnic group from the deepest level to the development of each track. Having gone through 5,000 years of trials and rains, China has a long history and profound culture. The translation and dissemination of folk culture plays a positive role in promoting regional development, carrying forward Chinese culture and enhancing the soft power of national culture. This paper analyzes the research status and value of folk culture translation, and discusses the application of cultural translation in folk culture translation through some examples.

**Keywords:** Cultural translation view, Translation strategy, Cultural connotation, Folk culture.

---

## 1. Introduction to Cultural Translation View

Susan Bassnett embodied her thoughts on cultural Translation in her book *Translation, History and culture*, co-published with Andre Lefevere. Bassnett believes that: first, the unit of translation is not traditional words or texts, but culture should be taken as the unit of translation; Secondly, she classifies translation into two categories: intra-cultural translation and extra-cultural translation. She believes that the essence of translation is cultural exchange rather than simple conversion between languages, including intra-cultural communication and inter-cultural communication. Third, the essence of translation is to realize the multifaceted functional equivalence of the text in the target language culture, which should not be limited to the description of the source text. Fourth, translation has different principles and norms in different historical periods. Translation is to meet the needs of culture and different groups in a certain culture.

Simply put, Bassnett's "cultural translation view" is that translation is by no means a pure language act, it is deeply rooted in the culture in which the language is located. She believes that translation is the communication within and between cultures, and translation equivalence is the equivalence between the source language and the target language in terms of cultural functions. In China, the concept of cultural translation has been applied to the translation of many folk customs, cultural heritages, literary works, etc., and has played an important role in solving the misunderstanding and communication problems caused by cultural barriers. At the same time, translation shoulders the heavy responsibility of letting Chinese culture go abroad and letting international tourists understand Chinese folk culture. Based on Susan Bassnett's view of cultural translation, this paper will explore the enlightenment of cultural translation view on folk culture translation from a macro perspective, explore ways to accurately reproduce the cultural colors of Chinese customs in the translation, and subtly introduce Chinese folk culture to English translation readers, and provide reference ideas and methods for Chinese-English translation teaching and practice.

## 2. Introduction to Folk Culture

Folk culture, also known as traditional culture, is a national or a social group gradually formed from generation to generation of customs and life culture collectively. It is a series of intangible things formed by the ordinary people in the process of production and life, so in recent years, many experts in the academic circle have also called it "intangible cultural heritage". Chinese folk culture is extensive and profound, it is not only an important part of human society and culture, but also the accumulation of thousands of years of profound culture of the Chinese nation, is a cultural heritage with a long history. Folk culture involves all fields of social life. Hoffmann Krayer of Switzerland divides folk culture into 18 categories, including symbols, habitus and their original objects, skills and general arts, and folk poems, stories and dramas. Therefore, the inheritance and protection of folk culture can promote the construction of socialist culture and deepen China's foreign exchanges. Let foreign tourists feel the strong Chinese customs and customs, experience the rich connotation of folk culture, so as to promote the Chinese folk culture tradition.

## 3. Research Status and Value of Folk Culture Translation

As the outstanding intangible cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, folk culture reflects many deep traditional values and folk culture connotations in our country. In recent years, Chinese translation circles have paid more and more attention to the study of folk culture translation. Taking a comprehensive view of the research and development in this field in the past two decades, the domestic research on Chinese folk culture translation can be generally classified into four aspects: folk translation strategies and techniques, folk translation problems and phenomena analysis, translation theory discussion, comprehensive discussion and evaluation. (Yao Liwen: 2013) In foreign countries, many scholars in this field have also conducted relevant studies. Mona Baker, Kirsten Malmkjaer and other scholars have applied corpora to translation studies since the 1990s. Charles Bernstein argues that heterogeneity is crucial to folklore and translation studies.

At present, most of the researches related to cultural

translation in China only focus on the objective and are mostly reflected by some literary works. However, there are very few researches on the translation of Chinese folk culture, especially the researches on the translation of folk culture with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary for translation researchers to carry out in-depth research on Chinese folk culture translation in various aspects. The research on folk culture translation not only helps to spread Chinese traditional culture and realize the strategic goal of cultural "going out", but also provides useful inspiration and reference for translation practice in universities and colleges, and provides new ideas and fresh learning content for traditional translation teaching.

#### 4. Case Study of Folk Culture Translation

Chinese folk culture reflects all aspects of people's life, such as diet, daily life, and characteristic clothing, special customs and dialects and so on. Its translation also belongs to the category of cultural translation. Bassnett's view of cultural translation holds that culture should be the basic unit of translation.

The "cultural translation view" takes cultural communication as the center of translation and advocates that the original flavor of the source language should be preserved in the target language and the content and form should be equally valued. What method to adopt in the translation process should fully consider whether the method is conducive to the communication between the two cultures and whether it can effectively solve the cultural problems in the translation. This requires the translator to exert his subjective initiative and make comprehensive use of annotation, image, addition and subtraction, and even modification, so as to adapt the translation to the needs of contemporary readers and achieve the purpose of promoting cultural exchanges. According to the view of cultural translation, the following cases are divided into three types and analyzed in turn. (1) Translation should take culture as the basic unit and pay attention to communication within and between cultures

E.g.1:

ST: 天下第一鼓——陕北安塞腰鼓

TT: The Majestic Ansai Waist Drum Dance of Northern Shanxi

In E.g.1, Ansai Waist Drum in northern Shaanxi can be performed by several people or thousands of people at the same time, because of its magnificent momentum and exquisite performance is called "the first Drum in the World", in translation, it cannot be translated as "No.1 Drum in the World" or translated as "the first drum in the world". The "first" here is a Chinese exaggeration to describe the majestic, "drum" is not a specific drum, but a folk art form "waist drum." Bassnett believes that the basic unit of translation is not words, sentences, or even texts, but culture, and "faithfulness" based on word equivalence or text equivalence does not exist at all. The original text is translated as "The Majestic Ansai Waist Drum Dance of Northern Shanxi". The characteristics of folk culture determine that special attention should be paid to the context of the connotation of folk culture in the process of translation. Only when it is put into the appropriate cultural context can its profound cultural connotation be truly embodied.

E.g.2:

ST: 蒙古靴

TT: Mongolian boots, traditional or namental knee boots with upturned toes suitable for Mongolian people walking on grassland or riding horses

In E.g.2, The traditional leather boots of the Mongolian people, "Mongolian boots", were invented by the Mongolian people according to their own living experience and living environment, and are suitable for the environment of grassland pastoral areas. This kind of leather boots, the general tip of the boot is pointed and turned up, the boot body is wide, and the boot upper is equipped with various patterns such as applique and embroidery. Its unique structure makes it suitable for horseback riding and grassland walking, and can prevent cold and sand. Therefore, in daily life, "Mongolian boots" are welcomed by the Mongolian people.

If the translator does not understand this information and simply translates it into "Mongolian boots", the rich cultural information contained in the original text will not be transmitted to the target readers. From the perspective of cultural translation, it can be translated as "Mongolian boots, traditional or namental knee boots with upturned toes suitable for Mongolian people walking on grassland or riding horses". This kind of translation can help readers understand the cultural information of the original text and help them understand the living habits of the Mongolian nation.

E.g.3:

ST: 罐罐茶

TT: Tea roasted and boiled in a heated clay pot

In E.g.3, Canning tea, also known as roast tea and Kang tea, is a kind of beverage for residents in Weining, Guizhou Province. The POTS of tea are made of clay POTS, which are made of raw materials such as clay Gausha. To make pot tea, first put the pot on the fire, heat it slowly, then add local tea leaves and shake it up and down in the pot until the tea is roasted and rich. Then add boiling water and boil it. The translation "Tea roasted and boiled in a heated clay pot" does not stick to the surface form of the text, but conveys to the audience of the target language the unique cultural information of the Yi nationality that "罐罐茶" is roasted and boiled in a heated clay pot, which not only accurately reproduces the information of the original text. It is also easy for the target audience to accept and understand, achieve the effect of cultural exchange, and meet the purpose and requirements of folk culture publicity.

(2) Translation should be a dynamic transformation process of equivalent cultural functions

Bassnett believes that the purpose of translation is to obtain the equivalence of cultural functions between the source text and the target text. In the process of translation, the translator has a greater initiative and can rewrite the original text flexibly, or even break the literary form of the original text. According to the cultural translation view, the equivalence in translation is not the "same", and the translator can reasonably rewrite the original text according to different contexts.

E.g.4:

ST: “花包”

TT: embroidered bag of affection (among Yao's young people)

In E.g.4, Yu Shijie mentioned the "flower bag" among the Yao youth in Yao Costumes and described it as follows: "Flower bag is the traditional mascot of the Yao folk in Yunnan-Guangxi border. It is mostly made of colored cloth with various exquisite patterns embroidered on the cloth and

sewn into a square cloth bag containing things such as Job's tears and flowers with four corners. It is a token of love for the young men and women of Yao." From this point of view, if the translation of “花包” is directly translated as "flowerbag" or "wedding bag", Western readers can also understand it, but the lack of the customs and customs of this object is a little mediocre, and can not achieve cultural integration. If the translator fully understands the cultural core embodied by the flower bag, he should interpret its special "feeling" function to deepen the reader's sense of identity to this minority culture. The revised translation can be rewritten as follows: embroidered bag of affection (among Yao's young people). In this way, readers can not only understand the material and users of the flower bag, but also understand that its cultural function is to "convey emotion", which more effectively highlights the cultural equivalence of the translation.

E.g.5:

ST: “打花猫”

TT: Coloring Faces on Wedding Banquets for Blessing and Peace

In the Miao nationality area of Guizhou in China, there is a "flower cat" activity. If the translator translates this as "Striking Calico Cats," Western readers will not understand why they strike cats with markings. In fact, the "hit the cat" activity has its own unique form and content. In the Miao area, the day before the bride is married, the man's family sends a team to greet the bride, including a young man of the same generation as the groom, who is called "Pa Chieh" in Miao language. After the arrival of the bridal team, the bride's home took out good wine and good food to entertain. In the middle of the feast, people would rub their hands painted with black pot and ash on the face of the "Pa Chieh", leaving black hand marks, and the "Pa Chieh" could neither get angry nor run away. "打花猫" has fun factors, adding a festive atmosphere, but also related to ancient legends. According to legend, tigers and leopards often hurt people in the mountains where the Miao people lived in ancient times. At the time of marriage, in order to prevent these beasts from hurting the bride, people painted black pot ash on the face of the "Pa Chieftain" to greet the bride, to intimidate the tiger and leopard, and as expected, the tiger and leopard did not dare to hurt anyone again. This custom has been followed until now, and has become a symbol of exorcism and praying for happiness. After understanding the connotation of the custom of "whiting cat", we can translate it as "Coloring Faces on Wedding Banquets for Blessing and Peace". In this way, Western readers can understand the connotation of this wedding custom of the Miao nationality and realize the equivalence of the cultural functions of the translated text and the original text.

The principles and norms of translation should change with the needs of different periods and groups

E.g.6:

ST: “三层楼式”服装

TT: embroidered bag of affection (among Yao's young people)

In E.g.6, Zhuang women in Longlin area of Guangxi Province have a very unique style of dress, which likes to fold the blouse, pleated skirt and trousers. Liu Hongxiao described this kind of clothing in Guangxi Ethnic Costumes as follows: "The clothing is generally divided into three layers, including short clothes and bottoms, skirts and trousers, which are stacked and scattered like floors. It is called 'three-storey'

style clothing by the locals. If translator directly translated it into "three-floor costumes" in the English, it is inevitable that the readers would not be able to understand, because floor in English culture is a word in the field of architecture and cannot overlap with costume, and there is no such metaphorical collocation. The cultural translation view holds that the principles and norms of translation should change with the needs of different groups in different periods. Language is a living text that changes and develops over time. The translation attached to the language is not invariable, and different expressions will appear in different historical stages and be accepted by different groups. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators are required to exert their subjectivity as much as possible, comprehensively use appropriate translation strategies, and find the most suitable translation version for the current context and readers' habits on the premise of achieving cultural equivalence. Therefore, we may wish to change the concept of "层楼" in Chinese into the vocabulary layer in the field of clothing and explain it as follows: "three-layer costumes by mixing and matching top, pleated skirt and trousers in some Zhuang ethnic group regions. The word "layer" also contains the concept of "overlapping", It is more appropriate than the literal translation of the word floor, and it also realizes the equivalent transformation of cultural functions. In addition, the verb "mix and match" is a popular word in the western fashion field in recent years, meaning "mix and match". Using this word not only fits the meaning of the word, but also makes the translation keep pace with The Times and easier to be accepted by young western readers, which can expand the audience of cultural communication to a certain extent.

## 5. Conclusion

Translation is not only a bilingual communication, but also a cross-cultural communication. The purpose of translation is to break through the language barrier and realize and promote cultural exchange. The essence of translation is cross-cultural information transmission, and it is a cultural activity in which the translator reproduces the original text in the target language. Its main purpose is cultural transplantation and cultural blending.

Chinese folk culture has its own cultural characteristics, such as pluralism, compound, class and locality, and such characteristics determine that special attention should be paid to the cultural context of folk culture in the process of translation. The "cultural translation view" holds that translation should meet the needs of different objects in a certain culture. On the whole, in the process of translation of folk culture, we can use a variety of translation methods comprehensively, because the purpose of translation is to faithfully and accurately convey the cultural connotation of folk culture, ensure that Chinese folk culture is effectively "faxed" into the target culture, and constantly improve the international recognition, influence and competitiveness of Chinese culture. As Chinese translation studies and cultural researchers, we should first base ourselves on the Chinese cultural soil and investigate the important role of translation in the construction of Chinese new culture and new literature. (Wang Ning, 2009: 6) When interpreting China's distinctive folk culture and strong national characteristics, translators should mainly aim at conveying cultural connotations, choose appropriate translation methods, and accurately convey the information of the original text to readers while maintaining

the cultural connotations and characteristics of the original text as much as possible, so that foreign readers can truly understand and feel the original folk culture with Chinese characteristics.

## References

- [1] Bassnett Susan & Andre Lefevere: Translation, History and culture (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, China 2004).
- [2] Bassnett Susan & Andre Lefevere: Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, China 2001).
- [3] Haring, L.: Cultural Creolization, Acta Ethnographica Hungarica, Vol.49(2004)No.1, p.1-38.
- [4] Jiang Honghong: Exploration of Folk culture Translation, Foreign Language Teaching, (2007)No.3, p52-57.
- [5] Liu Miqing: Theses on Cultural Translation (China Translation Press, China 2016.).
- [6] Wang Ning: The Cultural Turn of Translation Studies (Tsinghua University Press, China 2009).
- [7] Chen Yingfeng: Yi People in Qingzhen (Guizhou Nationalities Press, China 2005).