

# Comparative Study of English Translations of Tang Poetry "Shu Xiang" from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology: Illustrated with the Versions by Xu Yuanchong and Stephen Owen

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**Abstract:** As one of the valuable literary legacies of China, Tang poetry contains rich linguistic and cultural knowledge. Translating it into English not only helps spread the excellent traditional culture of China to the outside world, but also promotes people to delve into and re-experience its profound meaning, thus making it last forever. This study explores the two English translations of "Shu Xiang" from the perspective of Eco-Translatology, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of each translation in terms of "three-dimensional" transformation. Feeling the uniqueness of language through comparison and understanding the profoundness of culture through analysis, thereby enhancing cultural confidence. It provides reference for the translation of Chinese literary classics into English, and promotes the research on relevant models for the internationalization of Chinese literature and culture. The research results indicate that Xu Yuanchong's translation has the highest degree of integrated adaptive selection. The study also demonstrates that the theory of Eco-Translatology can be used to analyze English translations of poetry and provide a new perspective for the translation of poetry.

**Keywords:** Eco-translatology; Stephen Owen; Tang Poetry "Shu Xiang"; Xu Yuanchong.

## 1. Introduction

Eco-translatology, a translation theory proposed by Hu Gengshen, offers a more objective and operable criterion for evaluating the quality of translated texts. This theory emphasizes the "three-dimensional" transformation of "linguistic dimension", "cultural dimension", and "communicative dimension" in translation methods. This paper aims to explore three English translations of "Shu Xiang" from the perspective of eco-translatology, evaluating the pros and cons of each translation in terms of these three dimensions, and identifying the translation with the highest degree of "integrated adaptive selection".

After the An-Shi Rebellion, the poet Du Fu abandoned his official position and traveled west, eventually settling in Chengdu, Southwest China. With the help of local friends and relatives, he built a few huts along the Huanhua Creek for temporary residence. Although Chengdu was beautiful, it was not his hometown. In his spare time, Du Fu visited a nearby temple dedicated to Zhuge Liang, the Marshal of the Wu Kingdom, and wrote the poem "Shu Xiang" upon seeing and feeling the scene. The poem consists of eight lines with 56 characters, yet within these brief lines, there are narratives, descriptions of scenery, arguments, and expressions of emotion, all executed with vivid brushwork and profound sentiment, fully embodying Du Fu's style of "deep melancholy and frustration."

## 2. "Three-dimensional" Transformation

### 2.1. Linguistic Dimension

Due to the differences in language forms and language habits between English and Chinese, the linguistic dimension

mainly selects the translation of the source text from the levels of vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and language expression forms, so that the translation conforms to the language characteristics and habits of English readers. [11] The linguistic dimension is the translator's choice at different levels, which aims to reflect the style presented in the source text in the translation.

The original poem follows the rhyme scheme of "zuo" (仄起式) with the first, second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines rhyming. The rhyme feet are: "sen" (森), "yin" (音), "xin" (心), and "jin" (襟). The poem reads rhythmically and is catchy. Xu Yuanchong emphasizes the importance of rhythm and meter in translation, believing that "in addition to conveying the original content, translated poetry should also convey the form and rhyme of the original poem as much as possible... Translated poetry should not only convey the beauty of the original poem's meaning, but also its beauty of sound and form." [1] Xu Yuanchong has always adhered to maintaining the form and rhythm of the original work in his poetry translations, and his translations generally have strict rhyme schemes and forms that are consistent with the original poem. In Xu's translation, the first and second lines "shade" and "brocade," the third and fourth lines "spring" and "sing," the fifth and sixth lines "affair" and "compare," and the seventh and eighth lines "success" and "dress" adopt the aabb rhyme scheme, resulting in harmonious sound and cleverly reproducing the rhythm of the original poem. Stephen Owen's translation only rhymes "naught" in the second sentence with "heart" in the third sentence, which is obviously inferior in conveying the rhythm of the original poem.

### 2.2. Cultural Dimension

The adaptive selection and transformation of the cultural dimension refers to the translator's focus on the transmission

and interpretation of the cultural connotations of both languages during the translation process. Chinese poetry is a highly condensed form of Chinese literature and an important part of traditional Chinese culture. The process of translating Chinese poetry into English is also a process of disseminating Chinese culture. Therefore, words in the original poem that carry historical and cultural meanings must be reflected in the translation. A successful translation should convey the unique cultural imagery and cultural connotations of Chinese culture in the original poem.

Jin Guan Cheng is the alias of Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province today, which can also be referred to as Jin Cheng. During the period of the Shu Kingdom in the Three Kingdoms era, Chengdu's weaving industry was particularly developed, and Shu Brocade gained fame throughout the country, becoming an important source of financial revenue for the Shu Kingdom. The Shu Kingdom once established the position of Jin Guan and built Jin Guan Cheng to protect the production of Shu Brocade, giving rise to the name Jin Guan Cheng and its reputation spreading far and wide. Therefore, Jin Guan Cheng is a witness to history and possesses rich cultural colors. Among the two translations, Xu Yuanchong translated "Jin Guan Cheng" directly as "town of Brocade," allowing both Chinese and Western readers to understand its connotation and effectively communicating the cultural charm of Jin Cheng. Stephen Owen's translation of "Brocade City" also conforms to the reading habits of both Chinese and Western readers.

### 2.3. Communicative Dimension

The selection of the communicative dimension refers to the translator's focus on the communicative level due to the differences in aesthetic consciousness, cultural perspectives, values, and other aspects between English and Chinese languages. [2] In the theory of ecological translation, the adaptive selection and transformation of the communicative dimension requires translators to pay attention to the realization of the communicative intentions of the source language and the target language during the translation process. This adaptive selection and transformation of the communicative dimension requires translators to focus on the communicative level in addition to the conversion of linguistic information and the transmission of cultural connotations, and to pay attention to whether the communicative intentions in the original text are reflected in the translation. [3]

The first four lines of the original poem express the poet's feelings by describing the scenery of the Prime Minister's Shrine. It's early spring, and there is green grass on the steps of the shrine, and chirping orioles in the cypress trees. The described scenery is vivid and melodious, showing the spring scene inside the Wuhou Shrine. However, the poet thinks that the hope of the country's rejuvenation is slim, so he feels sad and melancholy. Therefore, he says "vain spring color" and "vain good sound". It can be seen from here that the author's intention is to express his sorrow for the country through the words "vain" and "self", and these two words reveal a sense of wanting to contribute to the country but feeling helpless. Xu translates "空(kong)" and "自(zi)" into "in vain", and uses the conjunction "and" to connect the two sentences, making the translation structurally rigorous and accurate in meaning. Stephen Owen translates "vainly" to point out the artistic conception of the word "vain", but he doesn't translate "self", and from the logical structure of the translation, there is no

conjunction "and" connecting with the previous sentence. Compared with Xu's translation, Wu's translation has some gap in conveying the overall artistic conception of the original poem. The last couplet of the poem further elevates the spiritual realm of this ancient outstanding politician. The last line of the poem not only refers to the tears of the poet as a mourner, but also includes the tears of countless patriots who have the same deep patriotism from ancient times to the present. The last two lines of the original poem have great appeal and strong empathy for later readers. The "hero's tears" here refer to the tears of patriotic heroes, so they do not contain any sense of decadence. On the contrary, they contain a kind of positive power that inspires people. Xu translates "ying xiong lei", which reproduces the style and meaning of the original poem in both momentum and content, and can also resonate with readers, achieving good communication effects. Stephen Owen translates it as "bold-spirited men fill their clothes with tears.", but in this poem, the hero does not refer to a brave person, but a warrior who performs well and is brave and fearless in war. So here it does not achieve good communication effects, and it cannot be said to be the highest degree of "translational adaptability and integration". The translation with the highest degree of "translational adaptability and integration" is Xu's translation.

### 3. Conclusion

The translation theory of Eco-Translatology maintains that only by emphasizing the transmission of linguistic forms, cultural connotations, and adaptive selection and transformation of communicative intentions can translators produce appropriate translations, that is, translations with relatively high degrees of integrated adaptive selection.

This article interprets and explores two English translations of "Shu Xiang" from the perspective of "three-dimensional" transformation. The research results indicate that Xu Yuanchong's translation has a relatively high degree of integrated adaptive selection. The study also demonstrates that the theory of Eco-Translatology can be used to analyze English translations of poetry, and it can expand a new perspective for the translation of poetry.

The manuscript should include a conclusion. In this section, summarize what was described in your paper. Future directions may also be included in this section. Authors are strongly encouraged not to reference multiple figures or tables in the conclusion; these should be referenced in the body of the paper.

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