

Analysis of the English Translation of *Qingyu An: Yuanxi* based on Eco-Translatology Perspective

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Abstract: As one of the most revered forms of classical Chinese literature, Song poetry attracts audiences at home and abroad. Its translation into English has emerged as a prominent topic within translation studies, reflecting the intricate interplay between language, culture, and artistic expression. This paper, informed by the principles of Eco-Translatology, undertakes a comparative analysis of two English translations of *Qingyu An: Yuanxi*—one by Xu Yuanchong and the other by Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys B. Tayler. Utilizing the framework of "three-dimensional transformations", the study elucidates how Xu's translation exhibits a greater degree of adaptation and selection, thereby offering critical insights into the complexities involved in rendering classical Chinese poetry into English. This analysis not only highlights the unique challenges translators face but also underscores the broader implications of ecological considerations in translation practices.

Keywords: Eco-Translatology; Three-dimensional Transformations; *Qingyu An: Yuanxi*.

1. Introduction

As a significant genre in ancient Chinese literature, Song poetry is renowned for its profound emotional expression and refined artistic form. It not only serves as a literary treasure but also as an essential medium reflecting the societal, cultural, and historical background of the Song Dynasty. Poets of this era skillfully employed concise language and vivid imagery to convey complex emotions within limited space. Due to the poetic intricacies and unique cultural context embedded in Song poetry, its translation into English poses considerable challenges. Translators must not only remain faithful to the content but also strive to preserve the artistic beauty and cultural depth of the original work in the target language.

In this context, Eco-Translatology, first proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen in 2001, offers a valuable framework for addressing such challenges. It emphasizes translation as a process of ecological adaptation and selection, where the translator must balance the source and target languages, cultures, and communicative environments. By viewing translation as an ecological system, Eco-Translatology provides insights into how translators can regenerate the life of a text in a new environment.

This study focuses on the English translations of *Qingyu An: Yuanxi* by Xu Yuanchong and Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys B. Tayler, analyzing how these translations navigate the dimensions of linguistic, cultural, and communicative adaptation as outlined by Eco-Translatology. Through comparative analysis, the study explores how translators can achieve ecological balance in translating classical Chinese poetry.

2. Ecological Shaping in the English Translation of Classical Chinese Poetry

Eco-Translatology represents a paradigm shift in translation studies, emphasizing the integration of linguistic, cultural, and communicative ecosystems within translation activities. It has been increasingly applied in various domains

of translation, including subtitling, the translation of culture-loaded terms, and public signage, though its application to classical poetry remains relatively underexplored.

Chinese poetry, characterized by its emphasis on imagery and conciseness, differs from English poetry, which often relies on meter and rhyme. Achieving ecological balance between the two languages requires careful handling of contrasts such as abstract vs. concrete imagery and static vs. dynamic expression. *Qingyu An: Yuanxi* transports readers to a unique cultural and aesthetic world through its intricate imagery and rhythmic beauty, making it an ideal subject for ecological analysis.

In Eco-Translatology, translators must navigate the "three-dimensional transformations": linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. These dimensions guide the translation process, ensuring that the essence of the original work is preserved while making it accessible to readers of the target language.

2.1. Linguistic Dimension

The linguistic dimension refers to how the translator adapts and selects linguistic structures, grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical features to suit the target language. It requires maintaining the original's stylistic elements, such as rhyme and rhythm, while conforming to the linguistic norms of the target language.

In Xu Yuanchong's version, rhyme and rhythm are preserved, with lines like "flowers" and "showers," and "flute" and "route" echoing the musicality of the original poem. Xu's translation reflects the formality of the original, employing poetic diction such as "steeds" and "cabs" to evoke the classical tone. In contrast, Yang and Tayler's translation emphasizes meaning over form, simplifying the language to terms like "carriages" and "horses," which, while clear, lack the poetic resonance present in Xu's version. Xu's careful attention to sound and rhythm allows for a more authentic representation of the source text's formal beauty.

2.2. Cultural Dimension

The cultural dimension focuses on the translator's handling of cultural elements and the transmission of these elements to

the target audience. It requires balancing fidelity to the original culture with the target audience's ability to understand and appreciate the text's cultural nuances.

The title "Qingyu An," which refers to a Chinese historical allusion, is rendered by Xu as "Green Jade Table," preserving the cultural essence while clarifying the term's meaning for English readers. Yang and Tayler, on the other hand, choose a phonetic translation, "Qingyu An," which, while retaining the original sound, may be less accessible to non-Chinese readers.

In translating the phrase "鱼龙舞" (referring to traditional Chinese lantern performances), both translations avoid literal translation ("fish and dragon"), which could mislead readers unfamiliar with the cultural context. Instead, they adapt the phrase as "fish and dragon lanterns," effectively conveying the cultural activity without sacrificing comprehension. However, Xu's translation adds a layer of explanation, such as "with moth or willow ornaments" to describe "蛾儿雪柳," enhancing the target audience's cultural understanding.

2.3. Communicative Dimension

The communicative dimension refers to how well the translation fulfills the original text's communicative function. This includes the emotional and aesthetic impact on readers as well as the conveyance of the original work's deeper themes.

In the work, the line "笑语盈盈暗香去" evokes a sense of joy and celebration. Xu's translation, "Giggling, she melts into the throng with trails of scents," captures both the lively atmosphere and the subtle fragrance, ensuring that the festive mood is communicated effectively. Yang and Tayler's version, while accurate, lacks the vividness of Xu's rendering, diminishing the emotional impact. The communicative dimension underscores the importance of achieving not just accuracy, but also emotional resonance and aesthetic effect in translation.

3. Conclusion

Under the guidance of Eco-translatology, it becomes clear

that Xu Yuanchong's translation of *Qingyu An: Yuanxi* achieves a higher level of ecological adaptation and selection compared to the version by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys B. Tayler. By carefully balancing linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, Xu's translation manages to convey both the poetic beauty and cultural depth of the original work. This study highlights the importance of Eco-Translatology as a theoretical framework for translating classical Chinese poetry and its potential for fostering cross-cultural communication.

In conclusion, the application of the three-dimensional transformation theory in ancient poetry translation allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how translators can regenerate the "life" of the original text within a new linguistic and cultural ecosystem, thereby promoting the global appreciation of Chinese literary heritage.

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