

# Translation of Allusions in Xu Yuanchong's Translation of "The Romance of the Western Chamber" From the Perspective of Polysystem Theory

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**Abstract:** Wang Shifu is a famous dramatist in the Yuan Dynasty. The story of the west chamber is a Yuan zaju created by him, which is widely praised in the history of Chinese literature. The book adds a lot of artistic brilliance behind its artistic achievements. Xu Yuanchong's translation of the romance of the west chamber has the highest recognition among many versions. The use of translation strategies, neat and poetic forms, makes the translation of Allusions in the book smooth, natural and easy to understand. This is due to the new perspective brought by polysystem theory to Xu Yuanchong's translation strategy. From this perspective, we can have a clearer and deeper understanding of the allusion translation strategies in Xu's translation of the romance of the west chamber.

**Keywords:** Polysystem theory; Xu Yuanchong; Translation strategies

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## 1. Introduction to the Theory of Multivariate Systems

In the 1960s, Ivan Zohar was dissatisfied with the linguistic research approach of translation at that time. Therefore, he proposed the "Multisystem Hypothesis" in 1970, which was not officially renamed "Multisystem Theory" until 1979. After absorbing the positive factors of Russian formalism, structuralism, general system theory, and cultural symbols, he regards translated literature as a subsystem of literary pluralism, objectively describing the acceptance and influence of translated literature in the main culture, in order to effectively reveal the norms and laws that constrain literary translation.

This theory suggests that various forms of human communication dominated by symbols, such as language, literature, society, economy, ideology, etc., form an open and dynamic large system, that is, a network system. Literature itself is a diverse system that can be divided into classical literature and non-classical literature; Adult literature, children's literature; Original literature, translated literature, and a series of opposing systems, but their status is not equal. The development status of subject literature determines the position of translated literature in diverse systems, either on the periphery or at the center, and the position of translated literature in diverse systems, on the periphery or at the center, will determine the translator's choice of translation themes and strategies, either domestication or foreignization, or literal or free translation. If a nation's culture is in a dominant position and belongs to a dominant culture, translated literature is in a disadvantaged position. In this case, translators often use domestication translation methods, resulting in insufficient adequacy and high acceptability of the translated text; If the ethnic culture is in a disadvantaged position and belongs to a disadvantaged culture, translated literature is in the main position. When the status of ethnic culture changes, from weak to strong or from strong to weak, the balance within the diverse system will be disrupted, and translators will also choose a new translation strategy.

## 2. The Definition and Classification of allusions in "The Romance of the Western Chamber"

### 2.1 Definition

The name "allusion" comes from the "Biography of Dongping Xianwang Cang" in the "Book of Later Han": "Respecting one's mouth with respect, bowing to one's mouth with courtesy, and every time a banquet mouth is given, the mouth is raised and the

appearance is changed, and the palace is worshipped with respect." In this article, the allusions in "Records of the Western Chamber" mainly refer to the system of laws and regulations, as well as the stories and legends of historical figures. Familiarity with the definition of allusions is beneficial for translators to better identify allusions and, guided by the theory of multiple systems, apply the most appropriate translation strategies to make the entire text clear and easy to understand.

## **2.2 Classification**

There are many allusions in ancient and modern poetry and prose, which are concise and concise, with valuable words, rich in meaning, and implicit in meaning.

From different perspectives, Chinese allusions can be roughly divided into allusions and language allusions, familiar allusions and obscure allusions, personal and book allusions, and canonical and counter allusions.

According to the author's summary, in the book "Records of the Western Chamber", the most frequent occurrences of allusions and language allusions are followed by personal name allusions, and the least are counter allusions.

## **3. The Translation Strategies of allusions in "The Romance of the Western Chamber" under the Influence of Polysystem Theory**

### **3.1 The Choice of Literal and Free Translation under the Influence of Polysystem Theory**

Literal translation is a translation method or text that preserves both the content and form of the original text. Free translation refers to translating according to the main idea of the original text, without translating word by word or sentence by sentence.

The theory of polysystem suggests that literal translation and free translation are manifestations of the interaction between the culture of the source language country and the culture of the target language country. When the source language and culture are in a relatively central position, the driving force in this field tends to lean more towards literal translation; When the target language culture is in a central position, it tends to lean towards free translation. Through a correct balance analysis of the relationship between literal translation and free translation of allusions in "The Romance of the Western Chamber", we will fully understand the significant significance of Xu Yuanchong's translation.

Xu : My husband ended at the capital his life,  
Leaving helpless his orphaned child and widowed wife.  
Now in the temple stays his coffin on its way.

Analysis : The "Fanwang Palace" comes from the poem "Purple Sun Flower" by Bai Juyi in the Tang Dynasty: "In what year was it planted on the altar of immortals, and sooner or later it was transplanted to the Brahmin family." The Fanwang Palace is the most revered deity in Brahmanism, the Great Brahmin Heavenly King, and refers to a Buddhist temple. ". Wang Shifu cited this allusion to point out that the Zheng family, due to obstacles along the way, stopped Cui's father's coffin and saved him from the temple. Xu Lao adopts the technique of free translation and directly translates it as "sample", which is beneficial for foreign readers to understand.

### **3.2 Provincial translation creates the beauty of melody**

Xu: Although I am not a good lutist, she may be a lute-lover.

Analysis : This passage describes the orioles burning incense in the backyard at night, burning until halfway through, leaning against the railing and sighing deeply. Zhang Sheng peered through the wall and felt his emotions, which led to this singing passage. Sima Xiangru's song "Phoenix Seeks Phoenix" Winning the heart of Zhuo Wenjun is a beautiful story in Chinese history. Here, Zhang Sheng compares himself to Sima Xiangru and compares Yingying to Zhuo Wenjun, which means that there is a deep connection between the two hearts, and the desire to pursue beauty through the sound of the qin is a clear expression. At the same time, this allusion also implies that Zhang Sheng and Yingying, a talented and beautiful couple, will break through feudal traditions and marriage systems like Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun, and establish a love and marriage relationship of mutual love and loyalty System.

### **3.3 The Choice of Alienation and Naturalization under the Theory of Multivariate Systems**

Naturalization is the process of localizing the source language, targeting the target language or translated readers, and using the expression methods that target language readers are accustomed to convey the content of the original text. Naturalization translation requires the translator to approach the target language readers, speak like the native author, and if the original author wants to have a direct conversation with the readers, the translation must become an authentic native language.

Alienation refers to the translator's effort to avoid disturbing the author and bring readers closer to the author. In translation, it means accommodating the language characteristics of foreign cultures, incorporating foreign language expressions, and requiring translators to approach the author and adopt corresponding source language expressions to convey the content of the original text, that

is, taking the source language culture as the destination.

According to the theory of multiple systems, if the literary system in the target language culture is a dominant culture and the translated literature belongs to a secondary position, the translator can only submit to some existing norms in the system and tend to choose domestication translation methods to suit the taste of the target language cultural readers.

Xu : Having studied hard in summer as in winter, I have acquired a deep knowledge of literature, but I am still a wanderer here and there and do not yet know when I can realize my noble aspiration.

Analysis : "Yingchuang Chenxue" is a combination of the two allusions "Firefly" and "Yingxue Reading" by Mr. Wang Shifu. "Firefly" comes from During the Jin Dynasty, Che Yin was eager to learn from a young age. Due to his family's poverty, he couldn't afford to buy lamp oil to study at night. On summer nights, when he saw fireflies dancing outdoors, he hung the fireflies he had brought up on a white cloth bag to read. Mr. Xu's translation did not show fireflies and snow, but instead used summer and winter to replace them. He also translated the meaning of diligent learning implied in the allusions, achieving a clear understanding and preserving the imagery of the allusions.

In translation, we always face the choice of foreignization and domestication, which helps the translation find a "fusion point" between being close to the reader and the author. This "fusion point" is not an unchanging "center point". It is sometimes closer to the author and sometimes closer to the reader, but regardless of which side it is close to, a principle must be followed: when approaching the author, it cannot be too far from the reader; When approaching readers, one should not be too far away from the author. When foreignizing, it does not hinder the smoothness and comprehensibility of the translation, and when domesticating, it does not lose the flavor of the original text.

## Conclusion

There is very little research on the translation of allusions in "The Romance of the Western Chamber" in China. Based on this reason, the author, from the perspective of the theory of polysystem, writes this article with the aim of expanding the research perspective of the book on allusion translation.

The translation of Xu Yuanchong's "The Romance of the Western Chamber" was completed in the early 21st century. During that period, China's economy developed and its international status continued to improve. Translators all hoped to spread Chinese culture abroad and let Chinese culture go global. So when Xu Yuanchong translated, he chose more literal translation and domestication as translation techniques. In order to make the book easy for European and American readers to read, Xu Lao also pays great attention to the transliteration of the book, making each paragraph present a beautiful sound.

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