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The Comparison between Cicero and Zhi Qian in Translation

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Abstract

This article discussed the relationship between translation theories and cultural ideology, taking Cicero and Zhi Qian as an emxple. It analyzed the history background of translation theorists, and their theories to find that there are some connections. This may provide us with some help to understand the similarity and differences between theories lying on history background.

Keywords

Cultural ideology; Cicero; Zhi Qian.

1. History Background

Translation has a long history and it is part of history, which lies on the development of society, therefore, translation theory or other study should be done under certain history background. There are some similarity and differences between their history backdrop, which might give some clues of their different cultural ideologies and translation theories.

1.1. Cicero in the late stage of Republic of Rome

There is no doubt that ancient Rome was a great country, leaving the world numerous splendid achievements in politics, art, science, religion, military, literature and so on. The ancient Roman civilization can be divided into three parts generally, including royal period (753-509 BC), the republic period (509-27 BC), and the imperial period (27-476 BC/1453BC). Among them, the Republic of Rome was famous for its democratic republic polity which had ever led the world. Cicero was born in the late stage of Republic of Rome (104-43BC), when the Republic of Rome turned to decline from rising, therefore Cicero had seen the prosperity of Roman Republic and also was experiencing the collapse of the republic polity. Troubles make heroes.

Cicero was regarded as a politician, a philosopher, and an orator. He wasn't seen as a translator at that time, but he was well versed of Latin and Greek, and introduced a number of Greek books covering religion, literature, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and other fields. It is safe to say his translation activities existed in his whole life.

As for the military part, when it came to the period of Roman Republic, Rome started military expansion to expand its territory and enhance its power. From 3rd century to 2nd century, Rome had three wars with Carthage which was also a great country, set in 9th century BC in the North Africa. These wars were named as Punic Wars, where the Republic of Rome grabbed the control of the ocean from Carthage.

About the republic polity, it is sure that the republic polity of Rome cannot equal to the modern republic, however it still led the world in the pursue of democracy. In the republic system, there were two consuls erected by the Roman Citizens Assembly, whose term of office only lasted for one year. These two consuls exerted the administrative power, Roman Senate was a consultative department, while the Citizens Assembly was its power department. Romans were very proud of their republic polity, however, it was of course not perfect and there were some disadvantages and shortcomings.

At the very beginning, it should be clarified that the features and shortcomings were both decided by the development of productivity, economy and other social fields. The Republic of

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Rome was a kind of partial republic, because it only included the Roman nobles and Roman citizens, excluding the slaves, commoners who didn't live in Rome. While these excluded people, as the main part of Rome's population, were treated unfairly and exploited equality. These people didn't have the right to take part in the Citizens Assembly, which was the most important political. Among them, slaves were exploited most severely, and lived in the lowest level of the society. These slaves tried to combine with other commoners to request political right by leaving the Rome, while it didn't work. They were still exploited by the upper classes publicly. Also, as the Roman Republic gained a great development in many respects, expanded its territory, and accumulated fortune from other countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe, its government had started to corrupt in the inner side. The Roman Senate grabbed the power and became the real controller of the country, who was the representative of the nobles, so it was natural that it totally became an aristocratic republic. As a result, the War of Spartacus outbroke which lasted for two years from 73 to 71 BC. This war imposed irremovable influence on the Republic of the Rome in various aspects. At the end, the war was put out, however, the root of the Republic of the Rome was still shaken and undermined, which served as one of the main reason why the Republic came to the end.

Cicero both saw the glory days of the ancient Roman Republic and the gradual decline of the Republic. Cicero's translation activities continued throughout his life. In his youth, Cicero was pride of his Rome, and even was arrogant as a citizen of the great country, however, he also bore some worry about Rome's future, when he witnessed the corruption of the government and the collapse of the republic polity. Greek culture has always been regarded as a leading culture, and the ancient Roman Republic has always attached great importance to learning Greek culture. More importantly, this learning is not indiscriminate. "Without Greece, there would be no civilized and developed Rome. In this sense, Horace is full of respect for Greek culture, but Greek art also brings luxury and depravity." (Yue Cheng, 2015: 47-50) The ancient Romans recognized the backwardness of Greek culture and transformed it. Cicero also boldly transformed the Greek original text in his translation, "He was neither willing to just serve as a speaker of other philosophers, nor to just introduce Greek philosophical thoughts to Rome without any edition. Instead, he wanted to devote into screening, and interpretation, and make some comments on Greek philosophers of different schools and their thoughts." (Yue Cheng, 2015) Cicero's views showed the creativity of translator, which allowed them to adjust the form and even content of the original text.

1.2. Zhi Qian in East Han Dynasty

Zhi Qian, living in AD 3rd centuries, was a translator in Buddhism, whose family came to China following his grandfather during the reign of Emperor Ling of Han. Zhi was born in China and had a good command of six languages including Sanskrit and Chinese, therefore he had an edge in the Sanskrit to Chinese translation. Zhi Qian was one of students of Zhi Liang, learned from Lokakṣema(支娄迦谶), who firstly introduced Mahayana Buddhism into China. Zhi Qian translated 88 scriptures of Buddhist sutra.

West Han dynasty was a miracle in history and all its people were proud of it, who created a centralized political system used for more than 2,000 years, gained a great development in science, medicine especially surgery, art and etc. However, when it came to the late East Han dynasty, the central government had become a puppet of its seigneurs. During the Three Kingdoms period, China stuck into wars and was controlled by three main seigneurs, whose influence to other countries around it was undermined.

Buddhism came into China during East Han dynasty in BC 67 and set up the first Buddhist temple, the White Horse Temple located in Luoyang, a city in Henan province. When the Buddhism was introduced into China as sort of way to become eternal, it didn't cause great influence at the beginning. When it comes to the reign of Emperor Huan and Ling, the two

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notorious incapable emperor in China's history, Buddhism began to gain more attention. Buddhism adapted to Chinese culture quickly and comforted a great number of Chinese people struggling under the clouds of wars and corrupted government. So, there was a huge need to translate sutra written in Sanskrit into Chinese.

An Shigao(安世高) and Lokakṣema were both pioneers in Buddhist translation. During that time, Buddhist translation most employed literal translation, leading to a rigid and obscure translation which was difficult to understand. A small group of translators put up with different points. Zhi Qian, as one of them, advocated that translation should be flexible.

2. The Comparison Between the Translation Theories of Cicero and Zhi Qian

Cicero and Zhi Qian lived in different time and different countries, but their theories both pay attention to literal translation and free translation. The comparison can provide us with the similarity and divergences between their theories.

2.1. The translation theory of Cicero

Cicero is regarded as the first in the western translation community who requested to translate more freely and flexibly, which has some similarity with free translation. Cicero was a politician, philosopher, and an orator first, so he translated not for translation itself.

At first, he saw translation as a way to learn Latin and improve his oratory skills. He was good at Latin, but he still wanted to improve it. Finally, he found that translation or creative translation is a good way. "The most useful way is the translation between Latin and Greek. This exercise can make your vocabulary accurate and rich, make your metaphors diverse, and make your argument more credible and powerful." (Pliny the Younger, 1879:225) Therefore, he advocated free translation which gave translators a wide space to select words, reorganize sentence and to create. "When translation became part of oratory training, translators were not required to be responsible to the author of the source text, not to mention the accuracy of the target text." (Liu Fang, 2016:22-28) In Cicero's view, the source text was not the standard of the translation, and the target text was allowed to change the form even the content of the original one. All this is because translation is not his aim.

In the aspect of translation strategy, Cicero preferred to critical translation. He not only translated but judged what was deserved to be translated into Latin and what form should be taken. "If we do not only to be an interpretum, but also reserved the valuable thoughts of those figures who had authority and edited it with our judgment: how could those objectors figure out any excuse to value the Greek style than the elegant target texts which were not only translation works?" (1914:7-9)

Romans indeed learned from the Greece, however, their aim lied in surpassed the Greece. They treated Greek culture as a kind of resources to be optimized and improved. In the aspect of culture, Cicero was a cultural conqueror. This was understandable for the powerful country like Roman. Cicero believed Roman had the power to take advantage of Greek culture and change it into Roman culture to exceed it. "Cicero thought that Greek philosophy could be robed, changed and absorbed into their own culture, as other achievements of Greece, if Roman need. His critical translation was a powerful example of his stance." (Liu Fang, 2018: 24)

2.2. The transaltion theory of Zhi Qian

Later in life, Zhi Qian moved to Dongwu from Luoyang, one of the Three Kingdoms and translated 36 scriptures at there. It is known to all that his translation had elegant language. On this feature, there were diverse comments: from the Three Kingdoms period to the Jin dynasty, Zhi Qian's elegant language gained high comments; during the Jin dynasty, scholars in the sutra

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translation began to argue his translation style; and then people criticized his elegant translation works.

There was an argument on elegance translation school and simple translation school. Zhi Qian didn't support any side directly, but his translation works usually used elegant language, so some people took him as an example of elegance school. However, Zhi Qian's translation could not be simply seen as elegance or simple school. "Even if we judge a translator with distinctive style like Zhi Qian, comments will be diverse and these critics' stances also cannot be directly divided into elegant school or simple school." (Liu Fang, 2016:33)

However, it is not proper to say Zhi Qian' translation belongs to elegant school. He did use the elegant language to remove the obscure of translated sutra and make it easy to understand. Literation was a common method to translate when these sutra began to come into East Han dynasty. This method indeed was more loyal to the source text and its author, but it also put numerous reading barriers in front of target readers, which did harm to the communication between Chinese culture and Buddhism. That's why it was hard for people to understand the sutra. Zhi Qian found that point when he translated sutra, so he tried to use the proper language to help Chinse understand. People must understand the words first and then they might believe in that region.

Therefore, Zhi Qian changed the language form of the source text and reorganize its sentences to make it easier for Chinese people to grasp the main idea of Buddha. This is a little like communicative translation strategy. A religion must be easy to understand, and then there will be more people believe in it. All t

=he translation methods were guided by this aim.

Also, what cannot be ignored is that parallel prose gained great attention at that time, and even Hanfu started to become more and more refined in the language form, especially pursue antithesis and elegance. Zhi Qian just followed the literature trend.

2.3. The Comparison between Cicero and Zhi Qian

Firstly, Cicero and Zhi Qian were both translators and they put up with translation theories to guide their translation. Translation theories come from translation activities and also can guide them. Cicero and Zhi Qian's theories were both specific and useful, however, these theories were not organized into a system. Secondly, their focus was different. Cicero focused on the translation methods while Zhi Qian focused on the article style. Cicero select free translation based on his translation aims that he wanted to pursue people and surpass Greek culture at cultural level. Zhi Qian wanted to make people understand and accept these sutra easily. Elegant language was just a kind of article style people living in that time preferred. Thirdly, cultural meanings were quite different. Cicero aimed to surpass Greek culture by translating its great works, while Zhi Qian aimed at introducing religion. Fourthly, Cicero changed the form of source text totally, while Zhi Qian was more conservative.

3. Cultural Ideology and Translation Theory

Cultural ideology comes from history, politics, culture and etc. These cultural ideologies can also impose influence on these aspects of a country. Different history, politics and culture breed different cultural ideologies, and cultural ideologies can affect a country's cultural strategy. As a result, this country's cultural development path and characteristics will be influenced.

Roman is a conqueror to Greece, and Cicero is a representative of the powerful culture. Cicero's translation shows that he treated Greek culture like other trophies that he didn't respect and he believed that he could change it freely as he likes, which is a kind of conqueror's cultural hegemonism. Under the ideology of cultural hegemonism, conquerors can control, transform and even destroy the conquered culture. So it is not weird that Cicero edited the Greek source

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texts greatly as long as the translated version can achieve his goals. Cicero's free translation is a symbol of Roman's cultural ideology, a conqueror's ideology.

The West Han dynasty was a powerful country, but the East Han dynasty was not one. East Han dynasty was not very influenceable as the West Han dynasty was. Its central government corrupted and lost effective control to the local governments, causing numerous wars lasting almost one hundred years. These wars divided the country into three main parts controlled by three seigniors including Cao Cao, Sun Quan and Liu Bei. These three kingdoms controlled the whole Three Kingdoms periods. China stuck into the civil wars, so the culture in that time wasn't very oppressive to foreign culture.

Chinese culture isn't the conqueror's culture, so its translators also didn't mean to conquer any culture or treat other culture like a robber. Translation is a process to communicate and enrich our culture.

4. Conclusion

The author discussed the different history backgrounds of Cicero and Zhi Qian, especially the political and cultural background, which provided their distinctive ideologies. Then the author compared the theories of these two translator and translation theoriess. Last but not least, the connections between the cultural ideologies and translation theories were discussed. Then a conclusion was made that ideology can put an influence on the translation theories.

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