A Study of Formal Features of *Chu Ci* Translation and Research Texts in English Based on Variational Translation Theory

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Abstract

The dissemination works of *Chu Ci* (楚辞) in Western countries can roughly be divided into three groups: translation works, research works and literary works. The formal features of the dissemination works are intimately related to and determined by the variational translation methods which include adaptation translation, selective translation, translation and comment, translation and writing, introduction-translation, edited translation, reference translation, condensed translation, and so on. Research on the textual features of *Chu Ci* dissemination works in the West is of great help to the globalization of Chinese culture, especially to ancient Chinese literary and cultural classics' going global which is an important national policy of the Chinese government.

Keywords: *Chu Ci*; Translation; Dissemination; Textual features; Variational translation theory.

1. Introduction

China's national policy and strategies such as Chinese culture going global have remarkably promoted the translation of Chinese classics. As a great literary and cultural classic in China, *Chu Ci* (楚辞, *The Songs of the South*) is extensively disseminated in Western countries. There are various textual forms of *Chu Ci* dissemination works particularly with respect to translation, and these forms can be effectively analyzed by means of the categories in Variational Translation Theory (henceforth "VTT") formulated by Professor Huang Zhonglian (2002). According to (Huang, *et al.*, 2009), there are 12 variational translation modes, including selective translation (摘译, *zhaiyi*), edited translation (编译, *bianyi*), translation and report (译述, *yishu*), condensed translation (缩译, *suoyi*), summarized translation (综述, *zongshu*), review (述评, *shuping*), translation and comment (译评, *yiping*), translation and writing (译写, *yixie*), adaptation translation (改译, *gaiyi*), explanatory translation (阐译, *chanyi*), reference translation (参译, *canyi*) and imitation translation (仿作, *fangzuo*). The complete translation of *Chu Ci* in the West is rarely seen, and most of its renderings are produced by variational translation methods, such as selective translation and edited translation.

2. Research Methodology

This section will introduce the object of this study, the research questions as well as the data collection and analysis of the present study.

2.1. The Object of This Study

The *Chu Ci* has been disseminated mainly through translations and scholarly works in the West. In other words, translation has been playing an important role in the communication of the poetic canon in Europe and America. This study is aimed at working out the forms of translation in the translation and research texts by Western sinologists.

2.2. Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions with respect to the transmission of *Chu Ci* in the West from the perspective of VTT:
(1) What kinds of translation are seen in Western sinologists' translation and research texts of *Chu Ci*?
(2) Why do the sinologists use these kinds of translation in their texts related to *Chu Ci*?

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data in this study have been collected via the following channels: Index Translationum, Internet Archive, Amazon.com, John Benjamins Publishing Company's Translation Studies Bibliography, JSTOR, ProQuest, Web of Science, Project MUSE, and so on. The data will be analyzed based on Professor Huang Zhonglian's Variational Translation Theory. The term "variational translation" refers to a translation activity in which the translator employs seven adaptation techniques — adding, deleting, editing, narrating, condensing, integrating, and altering — to absorb the original contents based on the overt or covert translation requests of target readers in a specific condition.

The above seven adaptation techniques give rise to 12 variational translation modes, including selective translation, edited translation, translation and report, condensed translation, summarized translation, review, translation and comment, translation and writing, adaptation translation, explanatory translation, reference translation and imitation translation. Some of these variational translation forms are used in Western sinologists' translation and research texts of *Chu Ci*, and we will define and analyze them when we discuss the results of this study.

3. Results

It is noteworthy that *Chu Ci* translations are not "pure" in that there is always something else besides the translation. In other words, as an ancient text heavily loaded with culture, *Chu Ci* is generally handled by so-called "thick translation" or "ethnographic translation". Kwame Anthony Appiah (1993: 817) defines thick translation as a translation "that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich and linguistic context", while Joseph Casagrande points out that the aim of an ethnographic translation is to explicate the cultural background and anthropological significance of ST and the differences in meaning between "apparently equivalent elements of messages in the two languages" (Casagrande, 1954: 336). This kind of translation contains a large amount of explanatory material, whether in the form of footnotes, glossaries or an extended introduction (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997: 171).

3.1. Textual Features of Translations

As a matter of fact, the translations of *Chu Ci* are enclosed and embedded by a great variety of explanatory material. David Hawkes's 1959/1985 English version of *Chu Ci* is the one and only complete translation of the anthology in the world.[1] It contains large amounts of reader-friendly information in order to facilitate the understanding of the original. For example, the 1985 translation begins with the preface, the note on spelling as well as a 52-page general introduction; it ends with the glossary of names, the chronological table and the maps. Moreover, the concise introductions and detailed endnotes are provided before and after the rendering of each poem. It can be argued that Hawkes's translation is a kind of thick translation or ethnographic translation. At the local level, Hawkes sometimes incorporates many questions into a lengthy paragraph when he renders *Tian Wen* (*Heavenly Questions*). For example, he combines the questions 33-55 into a paragraph on the pages 128 and 129, resulting in the loss of the original verse form (see Figure 1). Judging from VTT, this translation strategy can be viewed as a type of adaptation translation whereby the content, form or style of the original is altered in some way (Huang, *et al.*, 2009: 190).

Figure-1. Hawkes's incorporation of 23 questions into a paragraph

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[1] According to Wang Yi (王逸), the most authoritative commentator of *Chu Ci*, there are 17 pieces in the canon. The so-called complete translations by Xu Yuanchong (1994), Zhuo Zhenying (2006) and Gopal Sukhu,(2017) are not complete renderings because they leave several pieces in the original un-translated. For example, Sukhu's version excludes *Qi Jian*, *Jiu Huai*, *Jiu Tan* and *Jiu Si*.

The *Chu Ci* disseminators tend to use selective translation in which textual selection takes place before translating (Huang, *et al*., 2009: 104). Selective translations of the classic are frequently seen in book form or included in anthologies of translated poetry. Arthur Waley's *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Waley (1955)* is basically a translation of *Jiu Ge* (*Nine Songs*). However, Waley translates only the first nine poems of *Jiu Ge*, leaving out the last two, namely "Guo Shang" and "Li Hun". Therefore, strictly speaking, Waley's *The Nine Songs* is a selective translation of *Jiu Ge*. The translator offers an 11-page introduction before the translations, a commentary for the translation of each poem (see Figure 2) and three appendixes in the end of the book.

Figure-2. Waley's commentary on the first poem in *Jiu Ge*
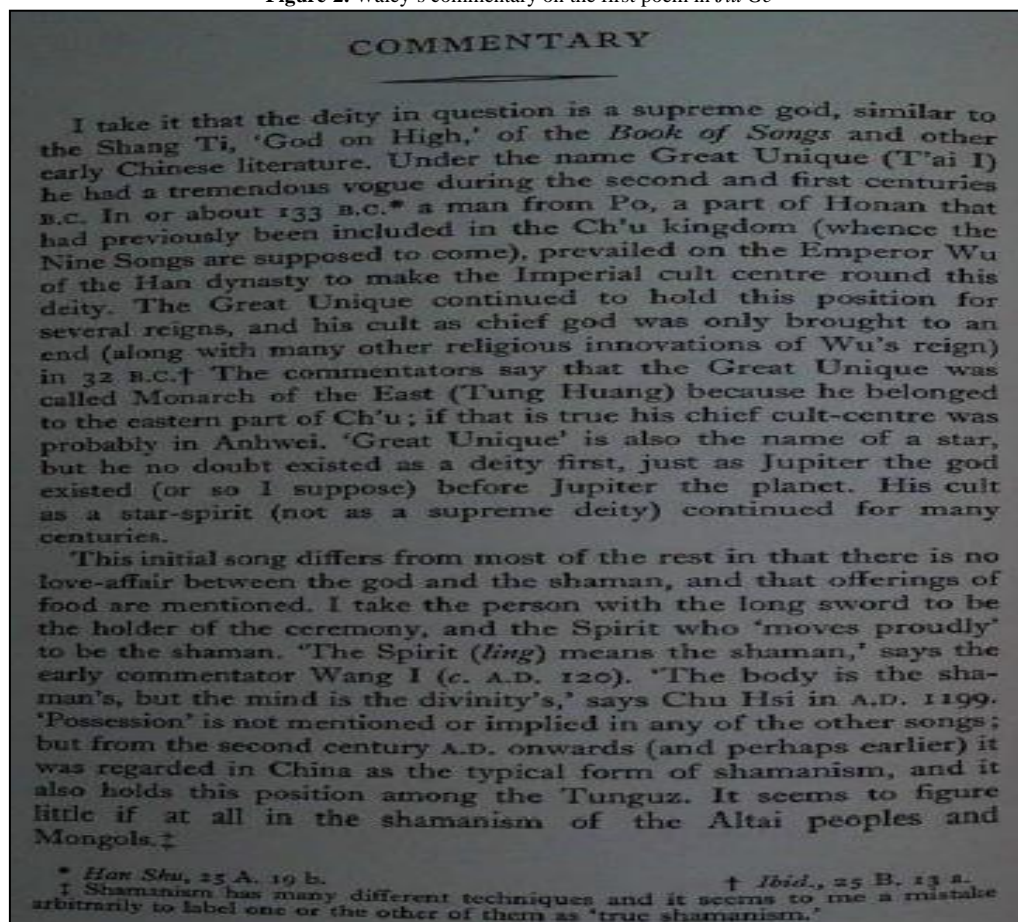
Seen from VTT, Waley's combination of translation and commentary may be regarded as the method of translation and comment whereby the source text (ST) is first translated and then commented (Huang, *et al*., 2009: 170), but as a whole the book is a thick translation because it is full of explanatory material, such as introduction, commentaries, notes and appendixes. Stephen Field's rendering of *Tian Wen* in his book entitled *Tian Wen: A Chinese Book of Origins* (1986) is different from Waley's *The Nine Songs* in textual form. Both Field's and Waley's books contain an introduction and notes, but Field provides neither a commentary for the translation nor an appendix. What is outstanding in Field's book is the bilingual text in which the original Chinese text is placed on the left page and the English text on the right page (see Figure 3). Moreover, the Chinese text uses traditional characters, thus producing a classical flavor and impression.

Figure-3. Field's bilingual text of *Tian Wen*
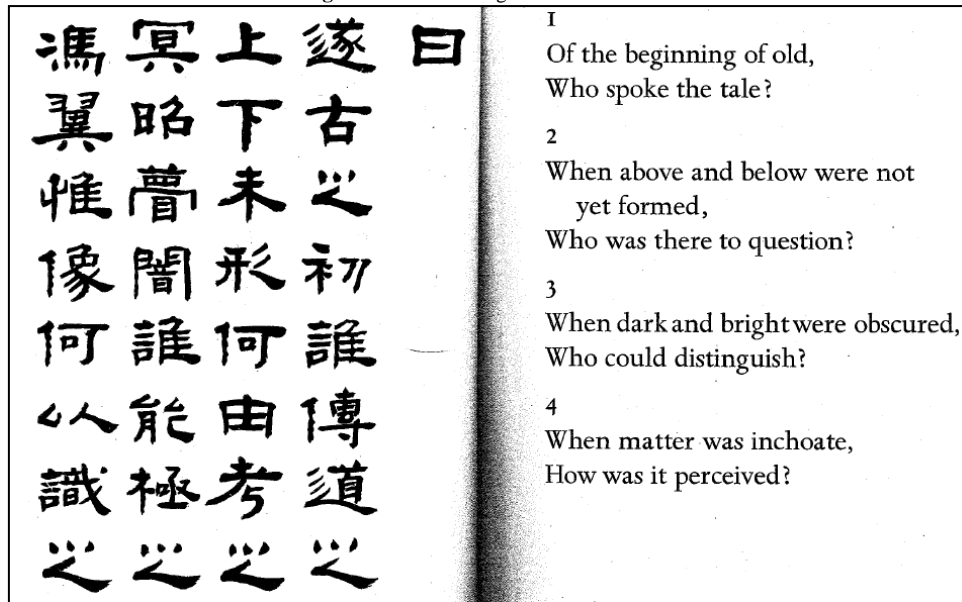
It seems that Lim Boon Keng's rendering of *Li Sao*, namely *The Li Sao: An Elegy on Encountering Sorrows* (1929) is the "thickest" translation because there are a great variety of (para)texts in the book, including the prefaces, introductions, commentaries, notes, glossaries and bibliography (see Figure 4). Lim's translation may be labeled an ethnographic translation in its true sense because the translator attempts to create an authentic cultural context for the target reader to have a full understanding and appreciation of the ST. According to VTT, it can also be regarded as a kind of translation and writing whereby the translator first renders the whole of the original, part of it or its main idea, and then makes a comment, explanation or extension on it (Huang, *et al*., 2009: 181).

Figure-4. The Contents page in Lim's translation of *Li Sao*

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Besides the selective translations in book form, there are many selective translations of *Chu Ci* in collections of translated poetry, such as Waley's *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (1918), Payne's *The White Pony* (1947) and Liu & Lo's *Sunflower Splendor* (1975). Waley selects and translates "Guo Shang" in *Jiu Ge*, with a short introduction to Qu Yuan. This mode of translation cannot be properly placed within the categories of VTT, and it may be called an introduction-translation. In *The White Pony*, there is a 2-page introduction to Qu Yuan, followed by the translation of *Li Sao* by Robert Payne, *Jiu Ge* by Shen Yu-ting and "She Jiang" in *Jiu Zhang* by Yu Min-chuan, with a limited number of footnotes. It is noteworthy that in rendering some poems in *Jiu Ge*, the translator adds before the verse lines the names of the interlocutors due to the obscurity of the speakers' identity, such as "lady", "lord" and "ministrant" (see Figure 5). These added names are not found in the original, but this addition helps clarify the speaker's identity and thus it is reader-friendly, even though it seems unfaithful to the author. Also, the name of the translators except the editor Robert Payne is indicated in the end of the translations, which shows some respect for the translators.

Figure-5. The translator's addition of the interlocutors' names
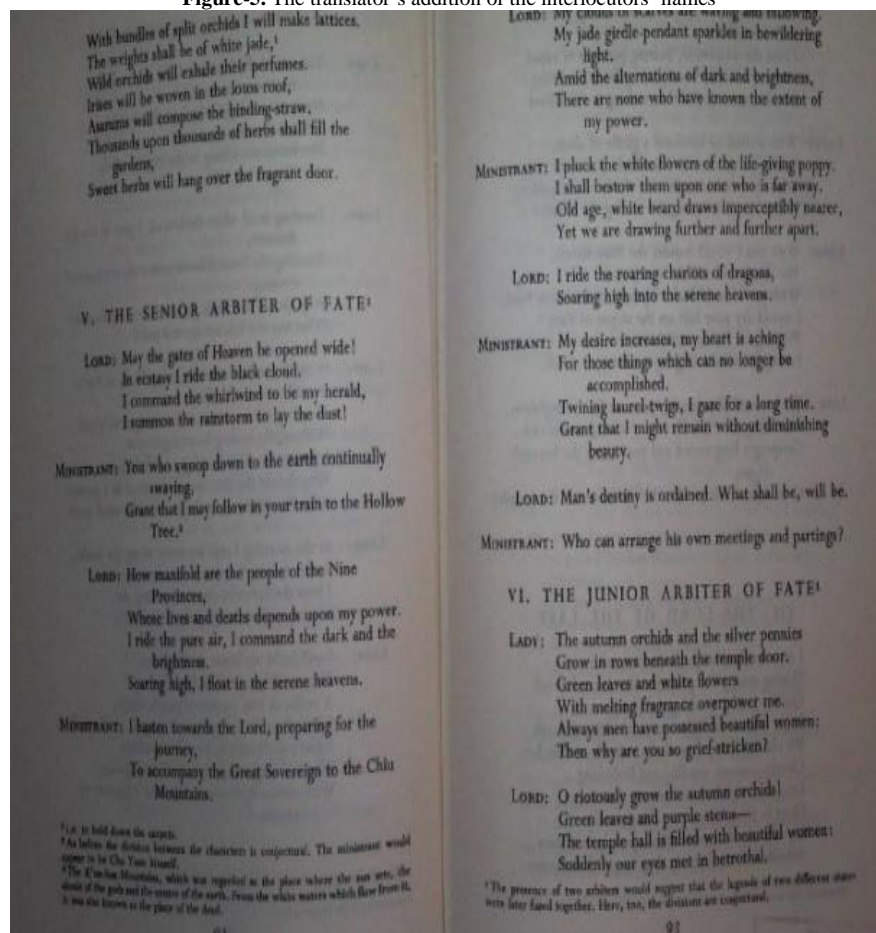
In *Sunflower Splendor*, "Ju Song", "Xiang Jun", "Da Si Ming", "Ai Ying" and part of *Li Sao* are translated by the Editor Wu-chi Liu whose name is indicated in the end of the translations. If we compare *Sunflower Splendor* with *The White Pony*, we can find that there is something in common between them, namely their indication of the translators' names. However, *Sunflower Splendor* does not provide an introduction to Qu Yuan or the ST. Instead, it offers an appendix to introduce the background of the poets and poems. Moreover, the number of footnotes is much smaller in it.

As far as Gopal Sukhu's 2017 English version of *Chu Ci* is concerned, it is neither a complete rendering nor a selective one. It may be labeled an **edited translation** whereby the translator first processes the ST and then translates it (Huang *et al.* 2009: 115). It is remarkable that Sukhu incorporates two poems into the ST which are absent in Wang Yi's authoritative edition of the canon: *Mourning Qu Yuan* (吊屈原, *Diao Qu Yuan*) and *The Owl Rhapsody* (服赋, *Fu Fu*). This addition may be based on the Song-dynasty scholar Zhu Xi's commentary on the classic because the poems are seen in it. Sukhu leaves out *Qi Jian*, *Jiu Huai*, *Jiu Tan* and *Jiu Si* which are not translated in *The Songs of Chu*. Moreover, the translator alters the structure of the ST. He puts *Jiu Ge* before *Li Sao* which is traditionally the first chapter of the canon; he combines *Bu Ju* and *Yu Fu* to constitute Chapter Six, and arranges *Diao Qu Yuan* and *Fu Fu* as constituting Chapter Eleven. In a word, the translator's editing work is especially conspicuous in the translation.

3.2. Textual Features of Scholarly Works

In addition to the above complete, selective and edited translations of *Chu Ci*, other forms of its translation are extensively existent in various kinds of academic literatures, including monographs, journal articles, PhD and Master's theses and conference proceedings. Some translation modes are frequently employed in scholarly monographs, such as selective translation, reference translation, adaptation translation and condensed translation. Reference translation is a variational translation method whereby the translation is used as a reference or evidence (Huang *et al*. 2009: 205), while condensed translation is a variational translation method whereby the main idea of the ST is represented in target language via a much shorter text than the original (ibid.: 147). Reference translation is most frequently seen in academic writings, with selective translation, adaptation translation and condensed translation as its common devices with respect to *Chu Ci*-related monographs.

As a special type of academic works, books of literary history tend to offer a concise introduction to the main idea of a literary text, and this introduction may be seen as the condensed translation of the text. For example, in Giles's *A History of Chinese Literature* (1923), there is a 2-page introduction to *Li Sao*, while Burton Watson's *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry* (1984) provides a 4-page synopsis of *Chu Ci*. As a book of literary history, Giles's *Gems of Chinese Literature* (1884) introduces *Bu Ju* via adaptation translation which alters both the form and content of the original (see Figure 6). Giles is very much like a storyteller or narrator, representing the poem by making the author speak out in his own verse lines and generalizing the name of the Diviner Zheng Zhanyin as "Chief Auger". This kind of adaptation translation may also be regarded as the method of translation and report whereby the translator reports the main idea or some ideas of the original in his or her own words (Huang, *et al*., 2009: 142).

Figure-6. The transformation of the original poem into a prose

CH'Ü-P'ING.

4TH CENTURY B.C.

[A famous minister of one of the feudal princes. Being unjustly dismissed from favour, he committed suicide by drowning, and his death gave rise to an annual spring festival, known as the Dragon-boat Festival, at which an imaginary search for his body is made in every available stream of water throughout the Eighteen Provinces.]

CONSULTING THE ORACLE.

THREE years had elapsed since Ch'u-p'ing* was dismissed from office, and still he was unable to obtain an audience of his prince. His fervent loyalty had been intercepted by the tongue of slander. He was broken in spirit and knew not whither to direct his steps. In his doubt he repaired to the Chief Augur and asked for a response. The Chief Augur thereupon arranged the divining-grass and wiped the tortoise-shell, saying, "What, sir, are the points on which you desire to be enlightened?"

"Tell me," cried Ch'ü-p'ing, "whether I should steadily pursue the path of truth and loyalty, or follow in the wake of a corrupt generation. Should I work in the fields with spade and hoe, or seek advancement in the retinue of a grandee? Should I court danger by outspoken words, or fawn in false tones upon the rich

Selective translations are common in works of literary history, as illustrated by Watson's *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry* which provides the translation of "Yun Zhong Jun", "Shan Gui", "Guo Shang" as well as part of *Li Sao*, with 42 footnotes in total. These selective translations, in most cases, stand on their own. In other words, they are not mixed with the main body of the work; instead, they appear as "independent" textual fragments, used as an example or evidence. Sometimes, the ST goes together with the translation. For instance, the Chinese text is placed on the left and the translation on the right in Zornica Kirkova's *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse* (2016) (see Figure 7).

Figure-7. Bilingual example in Kirkova's *Roaming into the Beyond*
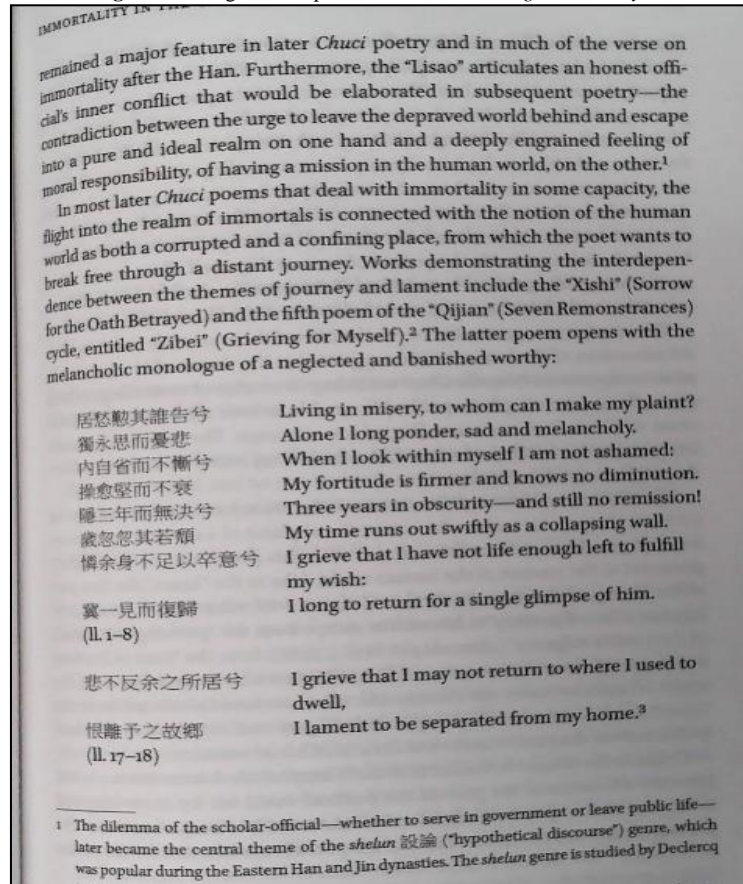
Sometimes the reference translation is a mixture of word-for-word rendering, ST and Chinese pinyin version, followed by a natural, idiomatic translation (see Figure 8). A good case in point can be found in Zong-qi Cai's *How to Read Chinese Poetry* (2008) which offers the first four lines of *Li Sao* as an example to help readers appreciate Chinese poetry.

Figure-8. Form of an example in Cai's *How to Read Chinese Poetry*

ancestor	Gao	Yang	of	offspring	descendant	xi	帝高陽之苗裔兮	(dì gāo yáng zhī miáo yì xi)
my	honored	father	called	Bo	Yong		朕皇考曰伯庸	(zhèn huáng kǎo yuē bó yōng)
she	*ti*	point	to	beginning	first month	xi	攝提貞于孟陬兮	(shè tí zhēn yú mèng zōu xi)
on	*geng*	*yin*	I	hence	descend		惟庚寅吾以降	(wéi gēng yín wú yǐ jiàng)

In some cases, a scholarly work may be affixed with a translation as an appendix whereby the reader can better understand the writer's viewpoint. For instance, in Gopal Sukhu's *The Shaman and the Heresiarch: A New Interpretation of the Sukhu (2012)*, the renderings of *Li Sao* and *Jiu Ge* (Appendixes I and II) are offered besides the bilingual examples in the main body of the work. It can be argued that a translational appendix can be seen as a special form of reference translation in that it serves as an indirect evidence to support the author's argument or idea.

As far as journal articles are concerned, the textual form of translation in them is similar to that in monographs. Various forms of reference translation are seen in articles, such as selective translation, edited translation, condensed translation, explanatory translation as well as translation and comment. Explanatory translation is a variational translation method whereby the transparency of the original is strengthened via amplification (Huang, *et al.,* 2009: 198). For example, in Schlegel's article review "The Li sao Poem and Its Author by Schlegel (1896), as a difficult culture-laden word, the traditional Chinese astrological term "She Ti" (**攝提**) in the second line "**攝提貞于孟陬兮**" of *Li Sao* is paraphrased in detail as follows:

[…] *Sheh-t'i* or *Sheh-t'i-kih* was also the name of an asterism, corresponding to И, Ц, т, ξ, o and л of Bootes; and as these stars are always directed to the tail of Ursa Major, which, at the time when our author lived, indicated by its direction to the East at sunset, the time of spring, it is more likely the author of the poem spoke of the asterism *Sheh-t'i* (Bootes) than of the planet *Sheh-t'i* (Jupiter) (Schlegel 1896: 92-93).

The method of translation and comment is sometimes used in journal articles. A typical example is "The Far Journey: An Archaic Chinese Poem" (1983) by J. P. Hobson published in *Studies in Comparative Religion*. The article begins with the translation of *Yuan You* with 54 footnotes (pp.1-11), followed by a 4-page commentary. Sometimes, the translation and comment may be part of an article and serves as an evidence to support the viewpoint of the main body of the article. For instance, Paul Kroll's "Kroll and Paul (1996) which was published in *Journal of*

the American Oriental Society contains three parts: main body, translation and commentary. The main body is an 8-page annotated discussion of the topic, while the translation and commentary may be viewed as the supplementary materials for the main body of the article. Judging from VTT, the article may roughly fall into the category of translation and writing, and the only difference is that the author reverses the order of translating and writing. Such reversed order of translation and writing is also seen in James Legge's serialized article "The Li Sao Poem and Its Author" (1895) published in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. In fact it contains three articles published respectively in January, July and October. The January and July articles are academic research on the poem and its author, while the October article is a combination of the Chinese ST and its English translation. The purpose for providing the source and target texts in the article might be that, one the one hand, they can support the preceding arguments; on the other, they offer the reader a chance to make a further study of the ST. The imitation translation whereby the translator produces a somewhat creative text based on the ST by imitating a work in target culture (Huang, *et al.*, 2009: 211). seems to be used in the article "On Encountering Sorrow" by Luo Zhicheng and Michelle Yeh (2003) published in *Manoa*. In fact it is a translation of the Taiwan-based writer Luo Zhicheng's Chinese text by Michelle Yeh. Luo's Chinese text is an imitation of Qu Yuan's *Li Sao*, and thus it can be regarded as an intralingual imitation translation. This intralingual imitation translation changes into an interlingal imitation translation via Yeh's English rendering. It may be classified as a special kind of imitation translation.

As a main component part of academic literatures related to the Western dissemination of *Chu Ci*, the PhD and Master's theses share many similarities with the monographs and journal articles, such as use of reference translation in different ways. It is frequently seen that the translation as an example is, in some cases, mixed with the main body of the thesis, or stands on its own or appears with the Chinese text. The textual form of translation is especially remarkable in Geoffrey Waters's and Monica Zikpi's PhD dissertations. As for Waters's thesis *Three Elegies of Ch'u* (1980), the translation as an evidence is presented in rich form: ST, four types of phonetic transcriptions, word-to-word rendering, metaphrase and paraphrase (see Figure 9). The phonetic transcriptions are based on archaic Chinese, classical Chinese, modern Chinese and Karlgren's Grammata Serica Recensa; the metaphrase is a literal rendering, while the paraphrase is a free translation.

Figure-9. Waters's translation example in his PhD thesis

Zikpi's PhD dissertation *Translating the Afterlives of Zikpi and Monica (2013)* also uses many translation examples and it may be viewed as a hybrid text from a linguistic perspective. In the latter part of the thesis, Zikpi uses the verse lines in *Chu Ci* as the headings followed by the Chinese pinyin versions, interlinear commentary translations, Chinese commentaries and their translations. Due to the fact that it functions as an evidence or provides an authentic cultural context, this kind of textual fragment can be seen as a reference translation or thick translation, even though its form is complex.

4. Discussion and Implications

Variational translation which embraces all forms of translation except complete translation is extensively used in the Western dissemination of *Chu Ci* by the translators and researchers. In other words, the transmission of ancient classics is not merely dependent on complete translation, but also on other forms of translation such as adaptation translation, selective translation, explanatory translation, edited translation, condensed translation,

reference translation, imitation translation, translation and comment, translation and report as well as translation and writing. These forms of translation play a crucial role in communication of world culture and production of scholarly knowledge. At present, Chinese culture's going global is a major national policy and strategy of the Chinese government, and the variational translation modes successfully and effectively used in the dissemination of *Chu Ci* can be used flexibly in the dissemination of Chinese culture which is mainly recorded in Chinese classics such as *Chu Ci*.

5. Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the textual forms of translation in *Chu Ci* dissemination works are rich and complex due to the use of thick or ethnographic translation. The complete translation of the canon is seldom seen in the West, and most translations of it can be defined as translation variations, including selective translation, edited translation, condensed translation, explanatory translation, translation and comment, translation and writing, introduction and translation, and so on. The nature of the translations and academic works may be implied by the key words in their cover page or title page, such as "translated", "edited", "annotated", "commentary", "introduction", "notes", "glossary", and the like. The textual forms of translation are greatly varied, ranging from a thick complete translation to a selective translation of a single word in the original or a multimodal representation via the combination of language and picture in a few scholarly works, such as Florence Ayscough (1939) and Laurence Schneider (1980). The Western sinologists' translations of *Chu Ci* can provide some implications for disseminating Chinese classics around the world, thus facilitating the implementation of present-day China's national policies and strategies such as Chinese culture going global and establishment of the community of shared future for mankind.

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