

An Analysis of the Translation of Mongolian Clothing in Two Major English Versions of the *Secret History of the Mongols*

Siqinbatu

(Foreign Languages College, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, Inner Mongolia Huhhot 010018)

Abstract : This thesis tries to make an analysis and contrast of the translation of Mongolian clothing in two major English versions of *The Secret History of the Mongols* (translated by Francis Woodman Cleaves and N.Dorjgotov and Z.Erendo respectively), and the research reveals that two translators adopt two different strategies in translating Mongolian clothing, namely, Cleaves adopts foreignization strategy , semantic translation method and adheres to the source language text strictly and provides with extensive notes, footnotes and brackets. On the contrary, N.Dorjgotov and Z.Erendo mainly adopt domestication strategy and communicative translation method by means of assimilation, deletion and globalization in translating the culture-specific terms in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

The author of the thesis reaches a conclusion that the two versions account for the different strategies the translators take into their translation, and each translation is adequate as its purpose (skopos) is achieved.

Key words: *The Secret History of the Mongols*; Mongolian Clothing; Translation Strategies and Methods

Library Classification Act : I046

Document Code: A

1. Introduction

Skopos theory was first developed in Germany in the late 1970s and the early 1980s by Hans J. Vermeer. He considers translation is a form of translational action based on a source text, which may consist of verbal and/or nonverbal elements. Vermeer explained that any action has an aim or purpose, since translation is considered as one of the human actions, it should have its own aim or purpose. So he called his theory on translation *Skopostheorie*, which means the theory that applies the notion of *Skopos* (purpose) to translation. As the core of the functionalist translation theory, skopos theory has managed to provide a detailed analysis on the decisive factors determining the translation process.

Attracted by this translation theory, which provides me with a brand new scope, the author of this thesis is trying to make an analysis and evaluation of the translation of Mongolian clothing in two major English versions of *The Secret History of the Mongols*.

The Secret History of the Mongols, the oldest surviving Mongolian-language literary work, is an epic chronicle left by the Mongols of the Great Mongolian State being one of the masterpieces of intellectual works of the Mongolian people. It was written some time after Chinggis Khaan's death in AD 1227, by an anonymous author and probably originally in the Uyghur script, though the surviving texts all derive from transcriptions into Chinese characters dating from the end of the 14th century.

2. Two Major English Versions of the *Secret History of the Mongols*

Of the various English translations of *The Secret History of the Mongols*, two are the most influential. One is the translation of a target language reader, American scholar Francis Woodman Cleaves in 1956, The other one is translated by the source language readers, Mongolian scholars N. Dorjgotov and Z. Erendo in 2006.

Francis Woodman Cleaves, Professor Emeritus of Far Eastern Languages, Harvard University and the founder of Sino-Mongolian studies in America, devoted his career to the study of ancient Mongolian, represented by the Sino-Mongolian inscriptions which he had collected in China as rubbings from stele and published in meticulously annotated translations. Cleaves' version of *The Secret History of the Mongols* is the first full translation into English out of the original tongue and provided with an exegetical commentary and a long introduction. It was published for Harvard-Yenching Institute by Harvard University Press, in 1982 though the translation was completed in 1956 and set in type in 1957 and for some personal reasons it was set aside and not published until then.

N. Dorjgotov and Z. Erendo's translation is the *latest* as well as the *first* version of *The Secret History of the Mongols* into English so far. *Latest* refers to the year 2006 when it is translated. By saying *first*, the present author tries to emphasize that N. Dorjgotov and Z. Erendo are among the first Mongolian translators, the SL readers to translate *The Secret History of the Mongols* into English from original Mongolian language, while Cleaves is the first TL reader to render full English translation of *The Secret History of the Mongols* out of the original tongue. In celebration of the 800th anniversary of Great Mongolian Empire, the preparatory committee endorsed the initiative taken by National University of Mongolia to render *The Secret History of the Mongols* into English. And in 2006, the Mongolian Minister of Education issued the resolution no.169 to put a team of scholars in charge of accomplishing this important task of translation.

3. An Analysis of the Translation of Mongolian Clothing in Two Major English Versions of

find any cultural equivalent to them. But N.and.Z change them into “a wedding present” and “black sable coat” to achieve their translation skopos of making the TL text more readable and closer to the general Western readers.

And there is a specific detail must be taken into our consideration: In Mongolian, “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” means the gift offered to the father and the mother of the husband when the new daughter-in-law presents herself before them. In this section, the “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” refers to the “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” (a black sable coat) which is a wedding present to the mother of Temujin—Chinggis Qan from Bort Ujin when she married him. And “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” is synonym of “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” in Mongolian while “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” is the appositive of the “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” in this example. That means “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*”, “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” and “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” are in fact one thing in the SL text. Then, we may understand why do N.and.Z use the same term “a black sable coat” to translate both “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*” and “*ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠭᠤᠨᠨᠠᠭᠤ*”. So, Cleaves’ keeps version of “emusgel” is also appropriate, as he achieves the intertextual coherence and the skopos with the addition of the notes.

4. Conclusion

The two translators have adopted diverse strategies and methods in translating *The Secret History of the Mongols* into English to achieve their respective skopos. When translating Mongolian clothing, Cleaves adheres to the source language text strictly and mainly adopts foreignization strategy and semantic translation method to achieve the translation skopos of giving a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work in the similar style and manner to the original writing

On the contrary, N.Dorjgotov and Z.Erendo’s skopos are to transfer the plots and ideas of the original into English in a vivid and fluent way and make *The Secret History of the Mongols* well-known among the target language readers by focusing on readability and acceptability. Therefore, they mainly adopt domestication strategy and communicative translation method by means of assimilation, deletion and globalization in translating the culture specific terms in *The Secret History of the Mongols*.

In this sense, although there are inevitably some differences and deficiencies in the two English versions of *The Secret History of the Mongols* respectively translated by Francis Woodman Cleaves and N.Dorjgotov and Z.Erendo, they are unquestionably equally successful because both have fulfilled their respective purposes and satisfied the social, cultural and historical needs of their respective eras, thus both versions can be justified by their respective skopos.

References

Baker.Mona *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*: Foreign Language Teaching And Research Press Routledge, 2000.

策.达木丁苏荣.蒙古秘史, [M] 呼和浩特: 内蒙古人民出版社, 2007.

Cleaves Francis Woodman, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, Harvard University Press, 1982.

额尔登泰, 乌云达赉.蒙古秘史 [M]. 校勘本, 呼和浩特: 内蒙古人民出版社, 1980.

杭爱.《蒙古秘史》跨学科文化研究 [M], 呼和浩特: 内蒙古人民出版社, 2004.

N.Dorjgotov and Z.Erendo. *The Secret History of the Mongols: translated from Mongolian into English*: Ulaanbaatar.: Monsudar Co,Ltd, 2006

特. 官布扎布, 阿斯钢. 蒙古秘史 [M], 北京: 新华出版社, 2007.

Received 8 March 2012;

Project name : 2012 Higher Education Research Project of Science and Technology, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.A Comparative Study of the Translation of Culture-specific Terms in Two English Versions of the *Secret History of the Mongols*;

The author: Siqinbatu , male, Mongolian , born in September 1979, Horqin, Inner Mongolia, Master of Arts. He is now a lecturer in Foreign Languages College, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, and his research interest includes bilingual education and applied linguistic.