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

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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

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

The Secret History of the Mongols

Different nations have some unique conventions and names of their clothing. And even the same thing often contains different connotations in different cultures. Mongolian dress has changed little since the days of the empire, because it is supremely well-adapted to the conditions of life on the steppe and the daily activities of pastoral nomads. The Mongolian robe or deel "here" is the most precious dress of the Mongolian nationality, all people wear Mongolian robe, it is a serious thing to wear the Mongolian robe in grand festival and grand occasion, respecting oneself as well as honor others.

Therefore, the translation differences of the Mongolian clothing in *The Secret History of the Mongols* between the two translators are almost inevitable. However, the main difference between the two translations lies in the skopos of the two translators who decide to apply different translation strategies in their translation. For example:

Cleaves: "Elder brother, elder brother,

[if] a body have a head,[it is good]

[if] a garment have a collar,[it is] good."

His elder brother, Buya Qatagai, regarded not as any thing those his words.

N.and.Z: "My brother, my brother. It is better that if head is on its body,

Collar is on its garment."

His elder brother Buqa-qatagai did not attach any importance to his words.

Here, Cleaves translates the "%" என்ன என்ற என்ற என்ற என்ற " என்ற " என்ற" into "[if] a body have a head,[it is good], [if] a garment have a collar, [it is] good." And N.and. Z translate it into "It is better that if head is on its body, Collar is on its garment." So, their translations differ little in terms of rendering the specific cultural terms.

See the Table 4.3.3:

	Cleaves's translation	N.and.Z's translation
ec)	body	body
ᠳᠣᡳᠷᠣᠺᡥᠣ	head	head
9•6• ₹	garment	garment
~~/ ₇	collar	collar
41111	good	better
⁶ ^९	[if] a body have a head,[it is good], [if] a garment have a	It is better that if head is on its body, Collar is on its

مسام مسر مسر مسر	collar,[it is] good.	garment

Table 4.3.3

As it is shown clearly in the table above, Cleaves and N.and Z. use exactly same words "body", "head", "garment" and "collar" to translate "%\", "outpole", "outpole", "and "m/" respectively, while use different forms of one word "good" and "better" to translate "outpole". But the primary (isolated) meanings of the terms in SL text may differ and the connotations of "%\", outpole outpole

"mm/" means "good" in Mongolian language. but the connotation of "mm/" in the example "%? "oncome on the connotation of "mm/" is "mm, "mm/" is "mm/" is "mm/" (better, would be better) in the SL text. Cleaves translates "mm/" into "good", as he attempts to recreate the precise flavor and tone of the original and preserves the SL author's idiolect, peculiar form of expression, however, the connotative meanings are lost. N.and.Z translate "mm/" into "better", and change the lexical style slightly to keep the communicative function. From the perspective of skopos theory, N.and.Z's translation achieves the translation skopos as they conveys the connotation of the culture specific term and is a more adequate translation.

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(2) מיניסדעל זיג יויגרפג אָיסגטייעל זבעל זיגרספט י ריגניסל ליניגרעל פ ארץ שניגרי זגרה פט מיניסדט זייניסטים זייניסטים איניסטים איניטטים איניסטים איניסטים א
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Cleaves: Journeying from the Senggur Stream, they pitched, encamping at the Burgi Escarpment, [at] the head of the Keluren River. Saying [that it was] the Sidkul51 of the mother [in law Hoelun]Cotan had brought a coat of black sables. Temujin, Qasar, and Belgutei—all three—took away that coat.... Having made a wife to light [at my tent] I have brought the emusgel53 for thee

Note51;Sidkul gift offered to the father and the mother of the husband when [the new daughter-in-law] presents herself before them.

Note53; emusgel synonym of sidkul

N.and.Z: From the Senggur Stream they moved on and settled on the Burgi Escarpment at the source of the Kerulen River. Chotan had brought a black sable coat as a wedding present for Temujin's mother.Temujin Qasar, and Belgutei—all three took away that coat..... When I took my wife, it came to me as dawry. I have brought this black sable coat to you.

From the table we can see, the "૧૬૧ કમેન્મા" and "stanslated almost in the same way by Cleaves and N.and.Z. One is "a coat of black sables" and the other is "a black sable coat". However, the "પંખાલી" and "મંખલી" are translated differently by them. Cleaves transferred both "પંખાલી" and "મંખલી" as "The Sidkul⁵¹" and "emusgel⁵³" respectively while adding a note to each of them, as it is hard to

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, "'\time\delta" 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 "\time\delta\delta" refers to the "\time\delta\gamma\delta" (a black sable coat) which is a wedding present to the mother of Temujin—Chinggis Qan from Bort Ujin when she married him. And "\time\delta\delta" is synonym of "\time\delta\delta\delta" in Mongolian while "\time\delta\delta\delta" is the appositive of the "\time\delta\delta\delta" in this example. That means "\time\delta\delta\delta", "\time\delta\delta\delta" and "\time\delta\delt

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.

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