

# A Comparative Study on Two Chinese Translated Versions of *Mansfield Park* based on the National Characters of England

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## Abstract

Translation studies contribute a lot to the world culture's spread, inheritance and transmission. The birth of a literary work is bound to be closely related to the author's life and cultural background. Only by knowing the relevant cultural and ethnic background in advance and properly converting the language of one ethnic group into that of the other, can cultural exchanges and mutual understanding be better promoted. Based on the study of national characters, this paper conducted a comparative study on two Chinese versions of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and analyzed the translation strategies from the perspectives of natural landscapes, religion, and aristocratic hierarchy. The study found that for the translation of natural landscape, it is necessary to reflect the cultural background and ethnic characteristics of the source language as much as possible, and foreignization translation strategy is generally adopted; for the translation of religious terms, translators need to verify their religious characteristics and choose accurate free translation or literal translation according to the specific context; for the translation involving the aristocratic hierarchy, translators are required to have a comprehensive understanding of the aristocratic hierarchy, and then assist the translation by means of annotation to better reflect the national characters of England.

## Keywords

**Mansfield Park; Jane Austen; National Characters.**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background Information of *Mansfield Park*

*Mansfield Park* (1814) is one of the most influential novels written by Jane Austen (1775-1817), who is a famous British woman writer. Jane Austen was born in a typical rural pastor's family in southeast England. Her father is the local parson, and her two older brothers are also engaged in the clergy profession. Her family imposed great influence on her both in life and writing. Jane Austen is well educated in religion and strictly abided by the creed of Anglicanism. She lived in England all her life, and this novel is also based on the country gentry manor in England, with the daily social interaction and love marriage between gentlemen and ladies of the aristocratic class as the mainline to show the theme of the novel. This novel reflects the national characters of England from all aspects of the life of the gentry and nobles.

### 1.2. The Unique Cultural Elements in *Mansfield Park*

In this novel, there are a lot of unique descriptions of rural natural scenery in England. This also makes the national characters of England impressive. At the same time, it is easy to see that both Jane Austen and her works are deeply branded with the English nation. Due to Jane Austen's strong attachment to the scenery of the English countryside, in the novel, the author presents us a beautiful picture of the English countryside in the late 18th century and early 19th century, with beautiful manors, fresh air, and green grass. In this novel, there are a lot of unique

descriptions of rural natural scenery in England. Her works have the distinctive English national color.

Anglicanism, commonly known as Anglican Church or Episcopal Church, is one of the three primitive Protestant denominations. Jane Austen lived in a religious family. Father and two brothers were both clergymen. Religion-related expression can also be found in her works. At that time, the clergy of the Church of England were mostly gentries, and they were also very knowledgeable. The pastor was also considered as a decent job. *Mansfield Park* describes a lot of scenes of English churches in rural areas. Religious themes have always existed in her novels in all aspects.

Aristocratic hierarchy has a long history in England. Jane Austen's mother was born in a noble family. In this regard, Jane Austen and her sisters must have integrated into the upper class and participated in various social occasions where celebrities gather. In Jane Austen's novels, there are a large number of aristocratic roles. At the same time, she also described many noble life situations. The English hierarchy is very strict and nobles enjoyed many privileges. These are all reflected in *Mansfield Park*.

### 1.3. Summary in Two Chinese Translated Versions

This paper selected the translation versions of Mr. Sun Zhili and Mr. Xiang Xingyao to make a comparative analysis of the nationality and culture embodied in *Mansfield Park*. Mr. Sun emphasized foreignization as the main factor to consider in translating foreign work into Chinese and domestication as the supplement, so she mainly used literal translation and free translation. Mr. Xiang mainly adopted the domestication translation method and annotation. From the comparative studies, apparently, translators need to analyze dialectically, remain neutral, and judge the correct translation through careful verification.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Development of “Comparative Study of Chinese Translated Versions”

With the development of the times, cultural exchanges between countries around the world are getting more frequently and profoundly, and many scholars in China attempted to translate foreign literary works into Chinese. Since 2000, comparative studies have developed vigorously in the field of translation. Wang (2003) compared the Chinese versions of *Gone with the Wind* in three different periods from the perspectives of translation and language variation and explored the changing track of modern Chinese since the 20th century and its reasons. Li (2007) compared *The Lord of the Rings'* s two Chinese versions from the perspective of system theory and advocated that in translation studies, we should make good use of connections and combine the connections of other elements in the overall social and cultural system. Chen (2012) made a comparative study of the Chinese versions of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* from the perspective of functional equivalence theory and analyzed the translation strategies and translators' attitudes of the two versions. In addition, Chen analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of the Taiwan version and mainland version and emphasized the importance of content equivalence. Li (2014) compared two Chinese versions of *Pride and Prejudice* to analyze the influence of translator's subjectivity on translated works from the aspects of language style and translator's attitude. Zhang (2014) compared two Chinese versions of *The Catcher in the Rye* from the perspective of domestication and foreignization and emphasized that it is necessary to keep the effectiveness of the original language and culture information transmission.

To sum up, in recent years, most of the comparative studies on Chinese versions have focused on the characteristics of the versions in different periods, comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the versions, and conducting translation studies from the perspectives of

translator's subjectivity, translation theory, and strategies such as domestication and foreignization.

## 2.2. Research Gap

Previous translation studies are mostly comparative studies on Chinese versions. Few are conducted on cultural communication and national characters. Jane Austen's works profoundly reflect the national characters and natural customs of England. Since 1980, the study of her works has gained more popularity in our country, and there are many types of research on the analysis of novel characters and the features of language style. However, there is still a lack of research on the national characters of her works. Therefore, this paper studies the translation from the perspective of national cultural characters by comparing two Chinese versions of *Mansfield Park*, which is to supplement the research in this field.

## 2.3. Research Significance

Any work, no matter what genre it belongs to, is produced in certain national soil, and it will inevitably epitomize the local conditions, customs, ways of thinking, psychological structure, and language expression system of the author's nationality. These national characters need to be recognized and understood by the target readers, so as to realize the mutual communication and learning between different nationalities and cultures. This paper aims to supplement the research in this field and to promote cultural transmission with appropriate translation theories and strategies.

## 3. Comparative Study of Cultural Translation in *Mansfield Park*

This part will analyze two Chinese versions from the perspectives of the natural landscape, religion, and aristocratic hierarchy. The following are several representative translation examples.

### 3.1. Translation of Natural Landscape

#### 3.1.1. Introduction to Natural Landscape in England

*Mansfield Park* is set in the English countryside, so it contains a lot of unique descriptions of the natural scenery in the English countryside. When translating them, the translator should try to retain the national cultural characteristics of the novel.

#### 3.1.2. Case Study

The source text will be referred as ST and the translated text as TT.

ST1:

And he directly saw a **knoll** not half a mile off, which would give them exactly the requisite command of the house. (70)

TT1(Sun):

他当即发现,不到半英里以外有座小山丘,站在上边恰好可以俯瞰大宅。(Sun, 86) (“小山丘”means small hill, a small, low, round natural hill.)

TT2 (Xiang):

他随即发现,半英里外有一个土墩,站在那里整幢住宅便一目了然。(Xiang, 91) (“土墩”means mound.)

"knoll" means "a low hill with gentle slopes and a rounded top (From Collins English-Chinese Dictionary)." *Mansfield Park* is set in the rural areas of southeast England, where the terrain is mostly hills and plains. There are many such "knolls" in the countryside of England, which take

the form of continuous hills with little fluctuation. As the manor is built in a low-lying area, people can simply overlook the whole manor from a slightly higher knoll. This constitutes a very representative picture of the English countryside. When translated as "土墩", it doesn't properly describe this image to readers. So, "小山丘" is more suitable. Considering the cultural background of the novel, foreignization, which emphasizes that the translator should pay more attention to the language characteristics and expression of the source language, is adopted here to restore the unique English rural landscape features.

ST2:

Or if we are, Miss Price will be so good as to tell him that he will find us near that knoll, the grove of oak on the knoll. (71)

TT1(Sun):

即使他看不见我们,还可以请普莱斯小姐告诉他,让他到山丘附近,到山丘附近的橡树林里找我们。(Sun:88) ("橡树林" means a deciduous tree of the genus quercus; has acorns and lobed leaves.)

TT2(Xiang):

如果找不到,普莱斯小姐也会告诉他,他可以在土墩附近找到我们---土墩上的栎树林那儿。(Xiang:93) ("橡树林" means a deciduous tree of the genus quercus; has acorns and lobed leaves.)

An oak or an oak tree is a large tree that often grows in woods and forests and has strong, hard wood (From Collins English-Chinese Dictionary). The two translations here are "橡树" and "栎树", and we can find that there is little difference between them by looking up the encyclopedia of biology. From the perspective of its national cultural background, oak trees are very important in England. The military song of the England Navy is *Heart of Oak*, and the oak tree is also a symbol of rural scenery in England. Therefore, England has an indissoluble bond with oak trees, and it is also famous in the world. For example, Shu Ting, a contemporary Chinese poetess, wrote a famous poem – *To the Oak*. And the Chinese name of this poem is "致橡树", not "致栎树". Therefore, the translation "橡树" is more in line with the language habits of the target readers. They can get a glimpse of the landscape pictures of the English countryside. The translation strategy of foreignization is adopted here. There is little difference between the two versions. However, Sun's version is more in line with the cultural characters of the source language, so that readers can better understand the English national customs depicted in the novel.

### 3.1.3. Summary

When it comes to the translation of natural landscape, the translator should have a deep understanding of the national cultural characters behind it, so that the translation can retain the cultural characteristics of the source language. Usually, foreignization is adopted to solve this kind of translation problem.

## 3.2. Translation of Religion

### 3.2.1. Introduction to Religion

Jane Austen lived in an era with strong religious image. Most gentries are clergymen. She was deeply influenced by the religious atmosphere of her family and she was a devout Christian. In *Mansfield Park*, there are also a lot of descriptions related to religion.

### 3.2.2. Case Study

ST1:

“Don’t be affronted,” said she, laughing; “but it does put me in mind of some of the old heathen heroes, who, after performing great exploits in a foreign land, offered **sacrifices** to the gods on their safe return.” (77)

TT1(Sun):

“说出来你可不要生气”，克劳福德小姐笑着说，“这件事真让我想起一些异教英雄，他们在国外立了大功，平安回来后就奉献点**牺牲品**来祭神。”(Sun: 95) (“牺牲品”means sacrificial lamb.)

TT2(Xiang):

“不要生气，”她笑道，“这使我想起古代的一些异教英雄，他们在外邦完成了伟大的业绩后，便要他们的安全归来，向神贡献**祭品**。”(Xiang:p102) (“祭品”means sacrificial offerings.)

“Sacrifice” means “a surrender of something of value as a means of gaining something more desirable or of preventing some evil” or “a ritual killing of a person or animal to propitiate or please a deity, a symbolic offering of something to a deity (From Cambridge Dictionary)”. And here, it is related to religion-offering sacrifices to gods. Therefore, we should choose the version with religious connotation, and adopt free translation, which is more appropriate to translate as “祭品”.

ST2:

He has been considering her as a particularly welcome addition at the **Parsonage**. (9)

TT1(Sun):

他一直以为**牧师住宅**特别希望有个孩子。(Sun, 8) (“牧师住宅”means a house for clergyman)

TT2 (Xiang):

他本来以为孩子可以成为**牧师府**上受到欢迎一员。(Xiang, 6) (“牧师府”means is the residence of one or more priests or ministers of religion)

The religion in *Mansfield Park* refers to Anglicanism. The clergyman has a special residence called parsonage. We should consider the difference between “住宅” and “府”. “府” is a Chinese-style word with many meanings, and here we choose the meaning related to residence – the official residence of the chief executive or dignitaries. It can also refer to the honorific address of other people's houses (From Baidu Encyclopedia). Considering the translation strategy of domestication, which is reader-centered and emphasizes readers' reading experience, it is more appropriate to use “府” here. This version is a blend of Chinese features, and it also fits the Chinese cultural environment.

### 3.2.3. Summary

When it comes to the translation of religious culture, the translator should first check the multiple meanings of the source language, especially its religious meaning. Generally speaking, translators can use free translation. Besides, sometimes domestication is adopted to facilitate the understanding of the target readers.

## 3.3. Translation of Aristocratic Hierarchy

### 3.3.1. Introduction to England Aristocratic Hierarchy

Aristocratic culture in England has a long history and England has a strict aristocratic hierarchy system. In *Mansfield Park*, there are also many descriptions of aristocratic life. Translators need



to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of aristocratic culture to present a better translation.

### 3.3.2. Case Study

ST1:

And as your uncle will **frank** it, it will cost William nothing. (14)

TT1 (Sun):

你姨夫盖免费邮递的戳记, 威廉就不用再交费了。(Sun,14) (“盖免费邮递的戳记”means stamp with free mail.)

TT2 (Xiang):

你的姨夫可以免费寄信, 不需要威廉付一个钱。(注: 当时英国还没有邮票, 信件由驿站传递, 费用较贵, 但一些要人, 如议员等, 可以免付邮资, 只要签字即可。) (Xiang, 13) (“免费寄信”means send a letter free of charge.)

“Frank” means “to print a mark on a stamp so that the stamp cannot be used again, or to print a mark on an envelope to show that the cost of sending it has been paid (From Cambridge Dictionary).” Before the birth of stamps, postal charges were calculated one by one according to the number of sheets of paper for letters and the distance of delivery, and the recipients paid the postage. However, some people with high social status, such as nobles, parliamentarians, etc., can be exempted from paying postage, as long as they sign. Here in the novel, Edmund's father, Sir Thomas, was a member of parliament at that time and he had this privilege. Although the meaning of Sun's translation was achieved, it did not reflect the advantages brought by the aristocratic identity at that time. Xiang's translation is more appropriate by means of annotations, which is also beneficial for readers to appreciate the aristocratic hierarchical culture implied in it.

### 3.3.3. Summary

When it comes to the translation of aristocratic hierarchy, some words with a specific cultural background will inevitably appear. It is suggested that the translator should annotate the relevant content to complete the translation, which can improve the translation and effectively convey the cultural connotation of the original text to the readers.

## 4. Conclusion

Through the novel *Mansfield Park*, we can have a glance at England in the early 19th century from the eyes of Jane Austen. This novel profoundly shows the rural natural landscape, religious culture, and aristocratic hierarchy in England, and constitutes a unique picture of England. The translation is an important bridge for cultural transmission. Translators should pay attention to the national characters and follow the author's intention and style when translating. For the translation of natural landscape, the translator should try to restore the language style of the source language and reflect the unique rural natural features of England. It is suggested that translators should adopt foreignization, which makes it easier for readers to get into the artistic conception described in the original text, and also retains the cultural features of England to a greater extent. It is conducive to promoting cultural communication (Zhao & Xue, 2021). At the same time, there are a lot of descriptions of religious culture in *Mansfield Park*. It is suggested that translators should have a comprehensive understanding of English religions, which is conducive to accurate free translation or literal translation. Especially when translating into the target language, the translator should choose words with religious meanings, which can better reflect the religious culture of England. In addition, Jane Austen described the lives of many aristocratic people. When it comes to the translation of aristocratic hierarchy, it is suggested

that translators should consult more materials and use annotations to improve the translation. This will facilitate the target readers to understand the meaning of the original text and the related aristocratic culture.

In addition, through a comparative analysis of Sun's translation and Xiang's translation, Sun's understanding of the original text is more profound and accurate. His version is faithful, accurate, and in line with the original author's language style. Mr. Xiang mainly adopts the domestication translation method, which is easy for readers to understand. However, his version emphasizes the content too much and ignores the form, and there are some misinterpretations of the original text and lexical and grammatical errors. This enlightens us that in future translation practice, we should pay more attention to the culture and national characters of the original text, strive to convey the cultural meaning of the original text, and enhance the readability of the translation.

In short, to complete a good translation and achieve the goal of accurate translation and cultural transmission, the translator needs to know the relevant cultural background in advance, feel the author's emotions and attitudes, follow the author's intentions, and use appropriate translation strategies.

This paper made a comparative study of two Chinese versions based on the national characters of England and provides some translation suggestions for translators. However, this paper also has some limitations. First of all, there are only five translation examples, which are not enough to cover all translation studies involving every aspect of culture. In addition, this paper only studies two Chinese versions, and there may be more worthy versions to study. Therefore, it is suggested that in the future, with the help of computers and the comprehensive corpus, more versions and examples can be used to enrich comparative translation studies in this field.

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