

# The Image Restoration of the “Regional Image” in the English Translation of “The Sichuan Road”

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**Abstract:** In the study of “image” of Chinese classical poetry, the generation of “regional image” is quite different from the traditional image. Regional image often has a strong local color. Compared with other poetic images, the regional image formed by a certain geographical space, it has a relatively fixed geographical location and writing group. The regional image is an aesthetic process from the objective “representation” to the objective combination of “image”. Regional image is more obviously affected by the internal laws of regional objective literature. Bashu region is characterized by its dangerous terrain, long culture and inclusiveness, which has formed a typical “regional image of Bashu” in ancient Chinese poetry. It is a unique branch of Chinese culture with distinctive regional color and profound spiritual connotation. Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, there have been countless poems and works related to Bashu regional culture. Among these works, “The Sichuan Road” is most typical one. This paper adopts case analysis and comparison method, comparing the translation of regional images in Yang Xianyi's and Sun Dayu's English versions of “The Sichuan Road”, aims to explore the cultural connotation of the Bashu nationality and the correct restoration of the Bashu regional image. It is expected to provide a reference for the study of ethnic culture in Bashu region and provide a new perspective for the study of Tang poetry and other poetry works related to Bashu.

**Keywords:** Regional Image, Place Name Translation, Myth Translation, “The Sichuan Road”

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## 1. Introduction

“Regional image” refers to the geographical and cultural image that is used to express the human landscape and local characteristics of a specific region, and because of its large, long-term and repeated use, it has become the reality and allusion that carries the local experience, historical memory, and cultural heritage of the region [1]. Many regional images not only spread locally, but also circulate in other places [2]. The “region” does not only refer to a specific geographical space area, but also contains the space that the poet inherits from reality, the poet's understanding and imagination, and this word contains the poet's feelings, emotions, subjective situational knowledge and value judgments when observing this space [3].

“Image”, as an important category of Chinese traditional aesthetics [4], refers to “the fusion and infiltration of subjective life sentiment and objective natural scene to create an ethereal realm of lively, exquisite and profound” [5]. In the study of Chinese traditional poetry image, “regional image” is

a unique category that is worth to pay attention [6]. For example, traditional images such as “flower”, “bird”, and “moon” have gradually become specific symbols bearing certain implications in poetry creation because of their natural attributes and the existence of personal vicissitudes [7]. The towering natural attributes and rich cultural connotation of Bashu region have formed a typical “Bashu regional image” in Chinese classical poetry. As an old theme of Yuefu, Li Bai's poem “The Sichuan Road” describes the hardships and dangers of the road in Sichuan. Sichuan Road has been famous for its precipitous mountains, sheep intestines, towering mountains since ancient times. The poem “It is easier to climb to heaven than take the Sichuan Road.” has been widely spread, and its regional image has also been deeply rooted in people's hearts [8]. This paper uses the comparative analysis method to carry out the place name translation and myth translation analysis of poetry [9], focusing on the regional image, exploring the translated words that are more compatible with the original poem, and analyzing the different English words used in the Bashu regional image of the

translated poems by tracing the "etymology" [10], so as to clarify the central image, and the more fluent translated words that are more consistent with the original poem [11], it is expected to show the target readers a more restored version of the Bashu regional image.

## 2. The Regional Image of Bashu in "The Sichuan Road"

The article "The Sichuan Road", "Riding the wind and clouds, whipping the sea" (General Theory of Poetry Mirror). With exaggerated brushwork, romantic imagination, legendary mythology, and endless melancholy of crying at night, the poet vividly depicts the magnificent and steep Sichuan Road. The poet used the rich "regional images" to spread the difficulty to climb Sichuan Road in front of him, which likes a picture scroll, so that he could be seen in the scene. Return to poetry itself, it can be roughly divided into three parts.

The first part, from "Long ago Can Cong and Yu Fu founded the kingdom of Shu;" to "Were bridges hooked together in the air", mainly describes the difficulty of opening up the road. From the ancient legend of the founding of Cancong and Yufu, the poet traced back the long history of isolation and no communication between Shu and Qin, and pointed out that because five heroes paid the price of their lives, they opened up a rugged and steep plank road in the mountains without human trace. It emphasizes the hard won of Sichuan Road.

The second part, from "Above, high peaks turn back the sun's chariot drawn by six dragons" to "This is a fearful way. You can not cross these cliffs", mainly wrote about the difficulty of trekking and climbing. This part can be divided into two layers. The first eight sentences are one layer, emphasizing the high mountains and rugged roads. First of all, the six dragons, yellow cranes, apes and animals who are good at flying and climbing have no choice but to face the situation of the Sichuan Road, to set off how arduous it is for people to climb the Sichuan Road; Also, Qingni Ridge, a prominent mountain in the Qin area, was chosen for exaggeration to show that the Sichuan Road is too high to pass through. The second floor, "Friend, when will you return from this westward journey?", depicts a series of scenes, such as sad birds, ancient trees, the night moon, empty mountains, dead pines, cliffs, flying torrents, waterfalls, etc., which are in the form of dynamic and static, sound and shape, in order to highlight the terrible environment and bleak atmosphere in the mountains. At the end of this part, the poet exclaimed that there were too many dangers through the Shu Road.

The third part, from "Sword Pass is steep and narrow" to "But it is best to seek your home", the dangerous geographical situation of Jiange is associated with the dangerous social situation at that time, the poet advised friends not to stay in Sichuan for a long time and return to Chang'an as soon as possible. This part can also be divided into two layers. The first five sentences are divided into first layer, and the

sentence "One man has a lotus halberd, and ten thousand men are winding. In a place of victory, bandits and relatives are not allowed to live" is used to highlight the narrow and dangerous way of Jiange. The last six sentences are divided into second layer, which implied that the local warlords would endanger the people if they rebelled against them, the local warlords like poisonous snakes and beasts who commit innumerable murders, therefore, the poet persuaded friends to leave the dangerous place as soon as possible.

The poem line "It is easier to climb to heaven than take the Sichuan Road." appeared three times in the whole poem makes the whole poem echo from the beginning to the end.

## 3. An Analysis of the Regional Images in "The Sichuan Road"

### 3.1. Place Name Translation of Regional Image

Version1 Yang:

The Sichuan Road

WHAT heights!

It is easier to climb to Heaven

Than take the Sichuan Road.

Long ago Can Cong and Yu Fu founded the kingdom of Shu;

Forty-eight thousand years went by,

Yet no road linked it with the land of Qin. [12]

Version2 Sun:

Difficult Is the Way to Shu — A Pindaric Ode

—The Poem in Triple-syllabic Measures —

Yi-Xu-Xi!

How dangerously high and steep, the way to Shu

Is more difficult than ascending the blue sky!

Can-cong and Yu-fu, it is mysteriously unknown how

They began to found their remotely ancient state.

Since then for forty-eight millennia

It had been separated from the Qin terrain. [13]

The title of a poem is often short and succinct, which goes straight to the theme. The three words "Shu Dao Nan" are the central idea of the whole poem. "It is easier to climb to heaven than take the Sichuan Road", which is a well-known aphorism throughout the ages, it is the keynote of the whole poem. The poet chanted three times, describing the difficulty of the Sichuan Road throughout the poem, so the key to the title of this poem is to highlight the word "difficult". In Yang's translation, the first version, only the word "the Sichuan Road" is translated, which is short and concise, but not enough to express the "difficult" emphasized in the original poem; The second version, the title of Sun's translation adopts inverted sentence pattern, which highlights the difficulty of the Sichuan Road, and explains the poetic style of this poem. Although the sentence pattern is long and slightly delayed, it completely expresses the theme of the whole poem. Compared with "The Sichuan Road", "the Way to Shu" embodies the the process of going to Sichuan, which is more prominent [14]. According to textual research, this poem was probably written by Li Bai when he was in Chang'an from 742 to 744 AD, he

sent his friend Wang Yan to Sichuan, the purpose of this poem was to persuade Wang Yan not to detain Sichuan and return to Chang'an as soon as possible. So what Li Bai wants to describe is that the road to Sichuan is extremely bumpy, and this trip will be very difficult [15]. Therefore, Yang's translation fails to reflect the two meanings of "access" and "difficulty", which deviates from the regional image of the original poem.

For the translation of cultural place names such as "Taibai" and "Qingni" in poetry, the two translators adopted different translation strategies. Yang translated "Taibai" and "Qingni" into "Taibai Mountain" and "Green Mud Ridge" respectively, using the methods of "foreignization" transliteration and descriptive translation, while Sun used descriptive translation strategies, translating "Noble White Alp" and "BlueSod Alps" respectively. Sun's translation kept the consistency of the choice of translation strategies before and after. "Taibai" refers to Taibai Mountain, the name of Qinling Peak, it is called "Taibai Mountain" because of the perennial snow. and "Qingni" refers to Qingni Mountain. The Annals of the County of Yuanhe recorded that "Qingni Mountain is a mountain with ten thousand cliffs, cloudy mountains, and rainy mountains. Travelers often meet mud, so it is called Qingni Ridge." Although Sun's descriptive translation method can completely restore the cultural color of these place names, showing the characteristics of Taibai Mountain and Qingni Ridge. Let the target language readers form a lofty ridges and towering mountains picture. However, for the translation of place names in poetry, it is more necessary to maintain their Chinese place name characteristics, vividly display the regional style, let foreign readers feel the Chinese flavor, understand Chinese culture, and transmit regional and cultural factors. Therefore, Yang's translation is more suitable for the expression of regional images in terms of retaining geographical names and explaining geographical things.

### 3.2. Myth Translation of Regional Image

"Shu Dao Nan" is based on the description of the geographical conditions of the Sichuan Road. In order to use it to highlight the difficulties of the roads in Sichuan, the whole poem contains a lot of myths and allusions, which is a barrier in the process of translation.

Version1 Yang:

Westward from Taibai Mountain a bird track  
Wandered to the summit of Mount Emei;  
But not until brave men had perished in the great land-slide  
Were bridges hooked together in the air  
And a path hacked through the rocks.  
Above, high peaks turn back the sun's chariot drawn by six dragons; [12]

Version2 Sun:

In the west, it connecteth Noble White Alp with a bird's  
Flight route, and joineth with the topmost peak of E-mei.  
The earth yawned, the mountain crumbled, the five giants  
died;  
And then heavenward steps and rock-hewn flights of stairs  
are thus conjoined.

Up above there is the highest clift for Xihe

To drive and turn his six dragons of the sun-chariot round. [13]

The allusion used in "But not until brave men had perished in the great land-slide Were bridges hooked together in the air and a path hacked through the rocks" is the story of "Five brave men pioneer the mountain", it is said that King Hui of Qin wanted to conquer the Kingdom of Shu. Knowing that the King of Shu was lustful, he promised to give him five beautiful women. The king of Shu sent five warriors to pick up people. When warriors returned to Zitong (now the south of Sichuan Jiange), they saw a big snake enter the cave. A warrior grabbed its tail, and the other four people came to help and dragged it out. In a short time, the mountains fell and the earth cracked, the heroes and beautiful women were crushed to death. The mountain is divided into five ridges, and the road to Sichuan is accessible. Yang used the strategy of provincial translation to restore the death of the five warriors, but lacked the image of "the collapse of the earth and the destruction of the mountains". Here, the scene of "the collapse of the land and the collapse of the mountains" has not been restored. Sun used the method of literal translation and annotation to restore the grand scene of "the collapse of the earth, the destruction of the mountains and the death of the heroes" with an analogy sentence, it increases the sense of openness and strength of the translated text, respects the original author's expectation to highlight the "difficulty" of the Sichuan Road by using the cultural allusion, and explains the allusion in the annotation.

"high peaks turn back the sun's chariot drawn by six dragons" borrowed myths and legends. The legendary Xihe drove the six dragon chariot (the sun) here and approached the legendary sunset. Yang translated this line into "high peaks turn back to the sun's chariot draw by six dragons" by literal translation; In Sun's translation, this sentence is divided into two sentences: "there is the highest clift for Xihe" and "To drive and turn his six dragons of the sun chiiot round". It is obvious that the translator has made a specific and detailed addition to the allusion of "Six Dragons Returning to the Sun", presenting the whole myth and legend to the readers, and completely substituting the unique cultural phenomenon of ancient Chinese mythology into the target language context. This is commendable, it also reflects the translator's cultural consciousness, combines the regional image with the myth story, and makes the image restoration of the regional image much fuller.

Version1 Yang:

And the cuckoo, weary of empty hills,  
Singing to the moon.  
It is easier to climb to heaven  
Than take the Sichuan Road. [12]

Version2 Sun:

You would hear the cuckoos wailing at the moon, gasping  
out their griefs on bare mountain crests;  
The way to Shu is more difficult than ascending the azure  
sky; [13]

Here, "Zi Gui cries the moon at night" is a cultural allusion. According to Shu Ji, "In the past, there was a man named Du Yu, and his nickname was Wangdi. Yu died, and it is said that Du Yu was changed into Zi Gui. Zi Gui is also a bird's name.

When people in Shu heard the bird cry, they all said that was Yu's cry" Li Bai quoted this allusion here to express his grief, anger, and sadness about the officialdom, the lack of doors to serve the country, and the concern for the country and the people. The two translators generally abandoned the cultural significance of the image in their translations and chose the simplified translation strategy of literal translation. It is really necessary to take the second place due to the limitation of poetry structure and length. For the lack of the regional image, the author suggests that it is a compromise method to use notes to make up for it, which can retain the artistic conception and flavor of the original text.

## 4. Conclusion

The two translators' did not adhere to the form of the original text, although the representation of the regional image deviated from the original text, it could also convey part of the meaning of the text. As far as maintaining the true color of Chinese classical poetry, the transmission of the regional image of the original poetry is missing in both versions, which is caused by the huge difference between the language of Chinese ancient poetry and that of English poetry. Because of the unremitting efforts of translators, the regional image in the original poem can be restored to the greatest extent in the translated poem, especially the image of "Sichuan Road". In ancient poems, mountains and rivers are used to describe the ups and downs of official career, so does the translated poem. Over the years, the regional image of "It is easier to climb to heaven than take the Sichuan Road" is more deeply rooted in people's hearts.

## Fund Project

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