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# Full Length Review Article

## TRANSLATION OF THE CULTURAL IMAGES IN THE ANALECTS

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#### ABSTRACT

The Analects of Confucius is the representative work of Confucianism. Covering a wide scope of subjects from politics, philosophy, literature and art to education and moral cultivation, *The Analects of Confucius* has a tremendous influence on Chinese and Western thought and values. This paper attempts to explore how the cultural value of Confucianism is transmitted to western countries through a comparative analysis of the translation of the key images in two English versions translated by James Legge and Ku Hungming respectively. In the process of comparison, the paper focuses on the discussion of the diversities of the images in the two versions, the reasons behind the translation strategy and the important role the translator plays in the translation. The paper concludes with a consideration of how translation creates possibilities for cultural assimilation, resistance and transformation.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

It is of significance to study the translation of Lun Yu in the sense of cultural communication between China and Western countries. Lun Yu, the most influential and enduring Chinese classic, is also known as The Analects, The Analects of Confucius, or The Confucian Analects, which shows its splendor as early as 2,400 years ago. The Analects, as the representative work of Confucianism, has a tremendous influence on Chinese, East Asian and Western thought and values even today. In The Analects, we can find many basic Confucian values including propriety, righteousness, loyalty, wisdom, moral understanding or judgment, and family love.. Therefore, the Chinese tradition places a great deal of emphasis upon self-cultivation (xiu yang) of individuals and upon moral education. As is well known, The Analects has been translated into many languages, most notably into English by James Legge, Arthur Waley, Charles Muller, Ku Hungming and William Edward Soothill. The reason that we choose the two versions translated by Ku Hungming and James Legge respectively is that the translators' background differences will well reflect the reasons behind their selection

<sup>1</sup>Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China, 200083 <sup>2</sup>Qufu Normal University, Rizhao, 276826, China. of different translation strategies. By comparing two typical English versions of the Confucian Analects by James Legge and Ku Hungming, the different styles of language and the different choices of translation strategy will be easily analyzed. That is Legge's fidelity to the source language and rigorous scholarship, and Ku Hungming's domestic approach to convey the thoughts of Confucian smoothly. Moreover, there are many concepts in The Analects, which deeply influence readers' understanding of this book. How to translate these concepts and faithfully convey the corresponding images to the target readers becomes an important question. Cultural image is considered as a historical deposit of national culture with rich connotation, which is usually composed by representation, denotation and connotation. Due to the cultural differences, the transmission of cultural images often fails. Therefore, beginning from an analysis of the understanding of cultural images in *The Analects*, this paper demonstrates the different translation purposes and shows the reasons that they have chosen different translation strategies. Through a comparative study of two English versions, a case study on translation of images is given to illustrate the differences in the process of cultural translation of The Analects.

#### Understanding of cultural images in the analects

Image is defined in the online dictionary——Merriam-Webster as a reproduction or imitation of the form of a person

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or thing. In this case, image can be considered as a symbol or emblem with its own connotation, which could conjures up a mental representation or picture of something else by seeing the image. An image triggers the reader's associations about the connotation of image instead of showing the connotation directly and implicitly to the reader. When image indicates cultural connotations, it can be called cultural image. Cultural image is considered as an integrated part of culture.

Culture is accepted as, according to Samovar, Porter and Stefani, "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, value, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (1998:36). This definition includes the major aspects of culture on which scholars currently agree: patterns of thought (shared meanings that the members of a society attach to various phenomena, natural and intellectual, including religion and ideologies), patterns of behavior, concepts, artifacts, and the culturally transmitted skills and techniques used to make the artifacts (See also Nida 2001). Hence, cultural image is a unique type of symbol containing wisdom and historical culture of a nation, and embedded by abundant special cultural connotations. Ancient totems, legends, religion, art and literature are usually considered as the origination of cultural images. Cultural images can be classified into the following categories:

#### (1) Lack of representation counterpart

In some cases, cultural image in one culture cannot find its corresponding culture in another culture due to different cultural backgrounds, such as the proper names of the disciples of Confucius: Yan Hui, Zi Gong, Zi Lu, etc., and the following terms such as 气功 (Qigong, 旗袍 (Qipao, 京剧 (Jingju, 财神 Caishen, 饺子 (Jiaozi, etc.

#### (2) Lack of connotation

Some cultural images in one culture have the same representations and denotations but different connotations in another culture. For example, 松树 (songshu) in China and pine in English both refer to the same kind of plant and share the same denotation: "a tall tree with thin sharp leaves called needles that do not fall off in winter, and hard brown fruits called cones". However, in Chinese, songshu is bestowed by the connotation of the honest, upright and fair-minded. Whereas in English pine (tree) is a word with no such connotations. For example, in The Analects, there is such a saying,"子曰:'岁寒,然後知松柏之後雕也'", Legge translated this sentence as the following: The Master said, "When the year becomes cold, then we know how the pine and the cypress are the last to lose their leaves." Ku Hungming's version is as follows: "Confucius remarked, 'When the cold of winter comes, it is then you know that the pine tree and the cypress are the last to lose their green'." From the comparison of the two versions, we can find that both two versions faithfully convey the underlined meaning of the original, but the connotative meaning of the pine tree and cypress has lost.

#### (3) Partly overlapping in connotation

There are some cultural images which share the same denotations and representations but with partly different connotations. For example, in *The Analects*, there is such a

sentence "君子不以绀緅饰, 红紫不以为亵服 (A gentleman should never permit anything crimson or scarlet in colour to be seen in any part of his dress; even in his underclothing he should avoid anything red or of a reddish colour----translated by Ku Hungming)". In Chinese, "red" carries the connotations of loyal, happiness, and good luck, sometimes angry and bloody; and red clothes are not considered as the formal address. In western culture, the word "red" only indicates the meaning of "angry, fierce and bloody". So the word "red" share partly overlapping connotations in both China and Western countries.

#### (4) Divergent and conflicting connotation

This refers to the cultural image that can find its counterpart cultural image with the same or similar denotation and/or representation in another culture, but with completely different connotation. For example, in *The Analects*, there is a word "凤 鸟 (phoenix)" in the sentence "凤鸟不至,河不出图,吾已矣夫 ! (The phoenix does not come; the river sends forth no map: it is all over with me!)". The word "Phoenix" in Chinese means "a kind of auspicious Chinese bird", but in the western culture, it indicates the meaning of "rebirth or resurrection".

#### (5) Same pragmatic meaning

This type refers to those different cultural images with distinct components except the same pragmatic meaning. For instance, in *The Analects*, 五十而知天命 (At fifty, I understood the truth in religion), "天命" means "decree from *Tian*", but in western countries, people tend to use "the truth in religion" to express the above-mentioned meaning.

Therefore, we can find that *The Analects* is not only a philosophical work, but also a literary work that reflects social, historical and cultural facts. As translation is understood as more a cultural rather than a linguistic transfer, and the act of translation is no longer a "transcoding" from one text into another, but an act of cross-cultural communication, the study of translation activities will necessarily take cultural factors into consideration.

# Comparison of the translation of key images in the two versions

The connotations of many concepts of Confucian ethics, such as Propriety (li), Righteousness (vi) and Humaneness (ren) are different from those of Western terms. According to Nida, "both language and culture are collective enterprises, and no one person ever controls completely a language or a culture" (2001: 142). Nida further points out that, the context "not only determines how a word is to be understood, but also how it is to be translated" (ibid: 164). The determination of contextual information on word translation is generally seen as a matter of choice of translators and as a part of the interpretation process of text itself. Context and text are closely related. Texts are the basic and ultimate units that carry meaning, and therefore, mistakes in translation can be readily made if a translator has not read an entire text before undertaking to translate a part.

Therefore, in the analysis of the verbal aspect of *The Analects*, we will take the text, the reader and the cultural context into consideration. For the sake of study, this part will be grouped

into the following two categories: proper names and culture-loaded images.

#### (1) Proper Names

Because *The Analects* is in the form of conversation, it is of great importance to clarify persons' names so as to make out which sentence is said by which person. Throughout the whole passage, the ideas presented by Confucius constitute a great portion of the work. Therefore, the appropriate translation of the most frequent expression in *The Analects* " $\neq(\exists)$ " takes the priority to other names. The various rendering of names in *The Analects* will reveal translators' different choices of words and translation approaches. Please look at the following examples:

Egl:子曰:"学而时习之,不亦悦乎?"

(Legge) : The Master said: "Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?"

(Ku Hungming): Confucius said: "It is indeed a pleasure to acquire knowledge, and as you go on acquiring, to put into practice what you have acquired."

In ancient China, people called the males they respected as " $\neq$ ", which usually followed the family name, such as " $\mathbb{H}\neq$ ". In most cases, in *The Analects* only one word " $\neq$ " is used to refer to " $\mathbb{H}\neq$ ". By a comparative study of the two versions, we find that the original word " $\neq$ " is rendered as "the Master" and "Confucius" respectively. Legge translated " $\neq$ " into 'the Master' in order to express the relationship between " $\mathbb{H}\neq$ " and his students so as to make the version easy to understand. Ku Hungming rendered " $\neq$ " into "Confucius" by way of literation and conventionalization. The name "Confucius" is the Latinized form of the Chinese characters, K'ung Foo-tsze, meaning, "The master, K'ung." There are a lot of such examples. Now look at another similar example:

Next, let's look at how to translate " $\mathbb{H}$ -" and other names in *The Analects*.

Eg 2: 孔子于乡党, 恂恂如也, 似不能言者.

(Legge) : Confucius, in his village, looked simple and sincere, and as if he were not able to speak.

(Ku Hungming): Confucius in his life at home was shy and diffident, as if he were not a good speaker.

Eg3: 南荣三复白圭,孔子以其兄之子妻之。

(Legge) : Nan Rong was frequently repeating the lines about a white scepter stone. Confucius gave him the daughter of his elder brother to wife.

(Ku Hungming): A disciple of Confucius was fond of repeating the verse:-- "a fleck on the stone may be ground away; a word misspoken will remain always." Confucius married his niece to him.

From the comparison, we find that the original proper name " 孔子"are all translated as "Confucius", although "子" is translated as "the Master" and "Confucius" by Legge and Ku Hungming respectively. In addition, as to other names such as "南荣", Legge transferred it as "Nan Rong", while Ku Hungming translated them as "A disciple of Confucius". Comparatively speaking, we can say that Legge's version tends to be confined to the original, but Ku Hungming's version takes much more readers into consideration and gives much more connotative meanings to the proper names.

#### (2) Culture-loaded Images

*The Analects* is abundant with cultural images. Cultural images are diverse in different cultural backgrounds, reflecting unique cultural connotations. There are many kinds of cultural images, such as allusion, religion, social phenomenon, something in myth, characters in literary works, and so on. In the translation process, the translator has to take into account the distinctive cultural background and the intertextual relations between the two cultures concerned. In this sense, the translation of cultural images could be regarded as the absorption and transformation of cultural meanings between source and target texts. This is because imagination reconstitution is not only a psychological process but also a culture construction process so as to reproduce in the mind the corresponding image hinted by description, model, signal etc. Please look at the following examples.

#### Eg 4: 子入太庙,每事问。

(Legge): The Master, when he entered grand temple, asked about everything.

(Ku Hungming): When Confucius first attended the service at the State Cathedral (Ancestral Temple of the reigning prince), he enquired as to what he should do at every stage of the service.

"太庙" in the original message refers to the Royal Ancestral Temple in Beijing. Built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), emperors of the Ming-Qing (1644-1911) period offered sacrifices to their ancestors at the temple. In the target versions, the original image "太庙" is translated as "grand temple" by Legge and "the State Cathedral (Ancestral Temple of the reigning prince)" by Ku Hungming respectively.

From the comparison, we can find that the first version abides by the alienation approach, while the second version adopts the domestication approach. That's to say, the first version retains cultural flavor and meanwhile extends some cultural message to the target audience; while the second version changes the Chinese image "temple" into Western "Cathedral" which has a strong color of Western religion. The two versions have their own advantages. The first version faithfully conveys the original image i.e. the royal grand ancestral temple for the first reigning emperor in ancient China, and therefore spreads Chinese culture successfully. The second version, with the Western color of Christian religion, is inscribed with linguistic and cultural values that are easily intelligible to specific Western audiences. In such a case, the most consequential of these effects is the formation of cultural identities. That is to say, the selection of different translation strategies helps to shape attitudes towards Chinese culture, attaching esteem or stigma to culture-specific ethnicities and nationalities. Meanwhile, the results of translation wield enormous power in constructing representations of Chinese culture to Western readerships.

It is of significance to successfully convey the basic Confucian concepts such as *Ren, Li, Xiao, Junzi*, etc., as it is very helpful for our understanding of Confucianism. The following diagram shows the different choices of the words regarding the translation of the social image of Confucian concepts.

Parameters	James Legge's version	Ku Hungming 's version
仁	benevolence; virtue; humanity; excellence	moral character; moral life
礼	ritual; propriety; morals	courtesy; good manners; propriety
君子	superior man; propriety; perfect virtue; virtuous man	a wise and good man; a wise man; a gentleman
天	Heaven	God
神	spirits; spiritual beings	supernatural beings

Eg 5:曾子曰:"堂堂乎张也,难与并为仁矣。"

(Legge): The philosopher Zeng said, "How imposing is the manner of Zhang! It is difficult along with him to practice virtue."

(Ku Hungming): Another disciple of Confucius, speaking of he same disciple alluded to above, remarked, "What a style that man carries about with him! It is really difficult to live out a moral life along with such a man!"

'Ren' is the core of the Confucius system. To understand this concept, we must probe into various dimensions of Ren, such as its nature, function and content. In the above example, regarding the translation of the social image "仁" (Ren), the two versions are "virtue" and "moral life" respectively. Frankly speaking, both versions are very successful. But comparatively speaking, "Virtue" in the first version, meaning in English moral excellence and righteousness, express the essence of Ren as both Confucian thought and moral content. In this context, "moral life" conforms to the intonation and contains much more meaning than the first one and is much better. This is because Confucius's doctrine of Ren is, in fact, a doctrine to improve one's character set for human. Confucian ethics is based upon empathy and understanding other people, rather than following divinely ordained rules. To live with humaneness requires keeping the Confucian version of the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want them to treat you.

Eg 6: 子曰:"不知**命**,无以为**君子**也;不知**礼**,无以立也; 不知言,无以知人也。"

(Legge): The Master said, "Without recognizing the ordinances of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man. Without an acquaintance with the rules of Propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established. Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men."

(Ku Hungming): Confucius remarked, "Without religion a man cannot be a good and wise man; without knowledge of the arts and of the principles of art, a man cannot form his judgment; without the knowledge of the use of language, a man cannot judge of and know the character of men."

In the original sentence, the three social images: "命 (Ming)", "君子 (Junzi)" and "礼 (Li)" are translated as "the ordinances of Heaven", "a superior man" and "the rules of Propriety" by Legge; and "religion", "a good and wise man", "knowledge of the arts and of the principles of art" by Ku Hungming. First, as to the translation of the Ming, Legge adopted the foreignization approach and translated it as "the ordinances of Heaven", while Ku Hungming took the reader's reception into consideration and translated it as "religion". Owing to historical limitations, Confucius could not account for many phenomena that he came across. This, together with the influence of traditional ideas, led him to resort to the concept of "Ming", which is governed by "Tian" (Heaven) and other supernatural powers. Strictly speaking, Confucius' concept of "Tian" refers to the social and natural laws that he could not understand, the highest standard of moral or ethical ideas, or the mysterious power humans cannot control. Legge once criticized Confucius in the prolegomena of The Chinese Classics for being "unreligious" (Legge 1893:99), and that "by the coldness of his temperament and the intellect in this matter, his influence is unfavorable to the development of true religious feeling among the Chinese people generally" (ibid). Therefore, with his profound knowledge of Chinese culture, he translates Ming into "the ordinances of Heaven" instead of "the ordinances of God" or other dictions, thus faithfully transferring the original idea of Ming. While Ku Hungming translates the word Ming into "religion", thus making it easy for Western readers to understand. In other cases, such as in the sentence "君子有三畏:畏天命,畏大人畏圣人之言" (There are three things which a wise and good man holds in awe. He holds in awe the laws of God, persons in authority, and the words of wisdom of holy man - by Ku Hungming), Ku Hungming translated "天命" into "the laws of God". Comparatively speaking, the translation of "religion" is not as appropriate as the other two choices of translation. This is because "religion" is a broad category, including many

Second, as to the translation of Junzi, it's hard to find the corresponding version in English. A correct understanding of this term is of great importance for a desirable translation. Junzi was a term coined by Confucius to describe his ideal human. To Confucius, the functions of government and social stratification were facts of life to be sustained by ethical values; thus his ideal human was the Junzi. The term junzi literally means "lord's son". As the potential leader of a nation, a son of the ruler is required to have a superior ethical and moral virtue. Later, any righteous man willing to improve himself could become a Junzi, and this term was often translated as "gentleman", "superior person" and sometimes "exemplary person". Legge's translation of Junzi as "a superior man" and Ku Hungming's translation of "a good and wise man" are successful in the sense of the transference of the essence of the original meaning, but still far less than needed. This is because the connotative meanings of Junzi are much broader than the two versions given above. It is suggested that the annotation is required in order to accurately convey the original meaning, for example,

meanings beyond the Chinese term Ming.

The word *Junzi* (君子) describes Confucius's ideal person, who any one of us, rich or poor, has the potential to become.

礼 (LI) in the original sentence is another key Confucian concept. It is frequently mentioned with music, which are both beautiful things reflected in an ideal society. In Confucius's system, Li covers everything from daily behavior to the three vears of mourning on the loss of one's parent, from the institution of parenthood to the appropriate attitude toward national propriety and from the sacrificing to gods to the observance to the social and political institutions. Confucius believes that the rules of propriety-whether religious forms or the etiquette of daily life-are essential for a good society. A person who restrains his actions according to the rules of propriety will certainly build good character; conversely, the goodness of a person's character can be seen in how well he keeps to the rules of propriety. Legge's translation "the rules of propriety", meaning "the laws concerning the state of being correct in behavior and morals", perfectly does justice to the original. Ku Hungming's version "knowledge of the arts and of the principles of art" focused on the aspect of "art", which is often used to appeal and connect with human emotions. The concept "art" can arouse aesthetic or moral feelings, and can be understood as a way of communicating these feelings. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and modes of expression, including music, literature, film, photography, sculpture, etc. From this perspective, Ku Hungming's version encompasses many detailed meanings, and therefore is also a very good version.

#### Translator's subjectivity and translation strategy

Many factors influence the translation of the cultural images in *The Analects*. Among those factors, the translator's subjectivity is the most important one. As one of the pillars of culture, the translation of *The Analects* is a great challenge to translators. The different choices of the words and style reflected in the two versions are closely related with the full play of the translators' subjectivity.

Translator's subjectivity refers to the subconscious or conscious manipulating and manipulated nature in translating process. The translator's subjectivity is mainly concerned with the consciousness of the translator: such as the subjective interpretation of the source text and the translation activities of the target text. Meanwhile, the translator's subjectivity is heavily influenced by the cultural backgrounds in which they live. Legge and Ku Hungming have different cultural backgrounds, which inevitably influence their interpretation of The Analects and the selection of translation strategies. Besides translation purpose, they will inevitably feed their own beliefs, experiences and attitudes into the processing of texts, so that any translation, to some degree, will reflect their own mental outlook and idiosyncratic features despite the impartial intention. Legge regarded the translating of the Chinese Classics as part of his religious career, and had a deep understanding of China and its traditional culture. In order to maintain the style and the characteristics of The Analects, he treasures rigorous scholarship and fidelity to the source language. Legge wrote in his Preface to The Chinese Classics (Vol.I) that he thought indeed at one time of recasting the whole version in a terser and more pretentious style. He determined, however, on reflection to let it stand as it first occurred to him, his object having always been faithfulness to the original Chinese rather than grace of composition, not that he is indifferent to the value of an elegant and idiomatic

rendering in the language of the translation, and he hoped to combine in a considerable degree correctness of interpretation and acceptance of style (Legge 1893, P.X). Legge studied and translated *The Analects* in a way befitting a wise Chinese scholar rather than a foolish Western missionary. Thus the most outstanding characteristic of Legge's translation is his faithfulness to the original.

While the reason why Ku Hungming translated Confucian classics is to save the whole world as well as China on the basis of his understanding of Confucianism and the world at large and to erase the prejudice of the western people towards Chinese culture (Ku Hungming 2003). In other words, Ku Hungming translated Confucian classics so as to make the whole world understand China by way of his understanding of Confucianism and the world at large. In addition, a reading of Legge's version of *Confucian Analects* brought about much dissatisfaction in him, which prompted him to translate another version, because he thought, for one reason or another, beyond Western missionaries, to accurately convey the thoughts of Confucian. And his version is entirely different from Legge's because of his strong Western style, which tries to cater to the Western reader in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers. The domestication strategy Ku Hungming advocated and adopted is in agreement with the literary norms of the Western culture, thus his translations achieved great success.

Generally speaking, as discussed above, Legge adopts a foreignization approach, while Ku Hungming adopts a domestication approach. Foreignization is a strategy in which a target text is produced which deliberately breaks target convention by retaining something of the foreignness of the original. This method is "an ethnodeviant pressure on targetlanguage cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, send the reader abroad" (Venuti 1995: 20). While domestication is a strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers. This approach is "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home" (ibid). The selection of foreignization and domestication depends on the requirements of translation. Any translation approach that fulfills the functions of translation is regarded as good.

#### Conclusion

This study attempts to explain how cultural factors influence the translating images in *The Analects*, and how images translation draws heavily on culture. In the translation of the cultural images, the cultural factors should be taken into consideration. The success of the translation of *The Analects* is a function of the relationships the text has with its cultural context and the preparation of the target audience. It is the translation purpose that determines the choice of translation approaches. After a comparative study of the two English versions, it is clear that Legge's version conforms mainly to foreignization and Ku Hungming's version tends mainly to domestication. Foreignization and domestication are not the antagonism which mutually repels. They should exist side by side and will be both alternatively employed in translating practices.

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