

# A Study of Arthur Waley's *The Nine Songs* from the Perspective of the Translator's Subjectivity

YU Yesheng

Zhejiang Yuexiu University, China

Received: February 10, 2021

Accepted: May 6, 2021

Published: May 30, 2021

**Abstract:** *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China* by Arthur Waley is a combination of translation and research of *Jiuge*, a collection of ancient Chinese poems created by Qu Yuan. As literary translation is a subjective process, this study aims to analyze *The Nine Songs* from the perspective of translator's subjectivity. It probes into the performance of the translator's subjectivity in the translation process and expounds subjective factors, such as translators' cultural positions, translation intentions, aesthetic views, etc., which will exert much influence on the translator's choice of the source-text, translation strategies and methods. It reveals that the translator's personal and socio-cultural interpretation will filter the language, context and style of the source text.

**Keywords:** translator's subjectivity; Arthur Waley; *The Nine Songs*

**Notes on the contributor:** YU Yesheng is an English college teacher of Zhejiang Yuexiu University with academic interest in translation theories and practice. Her email address is [2578177178@qq.com](mailto:2578177178@qq.com).

## 1. Introduction

Speaking of Qu Yuan, it is inevitable for us to talk about *Chuci*, an anthology of poems created by this great poet and his disciples or later imitators. It is considered as the origin of Chinese poetry. In view of the great significance of *Chuci*, a lot of translators, either domestic or overseas, devote themselves to translating it. So far, there have been as many as fifteen translation versions of *Chuci*, and the study of *Chuci* translation has also achieved fruitful results.

As a constituent part of *Chuci*, *Jiuge* is very special and unique. It is highly related to the original shamanism in the ancient Chu State. Wang Yi once said that people living in the south of Chu State around the Yuan and Xiang River believed in the ghost, so it is a custom for them to sing and dance during the sacrifice ceremony. When he was exiled to the south, Qu Yuan imitated these songs sung in the sacrifice ceremony and created the work *Jiuge*. The images of the ghosts which Qu Yuan invented in *Jiuge* reflect the original shamanism (Huang Shouqi and Mei Tongsheng 1984). *Jiuge* is full of romanticism with abundant imaginations, magnificent sentiments, colorful scenes, lively rhythms and delicate language, all of which form its impressive and affecting strength. Qu Yuan used the local folk songs as a basis to compose his own work to express his sorrow and longing for the sovereign. In 1955, Arthur Waley published the first cover-to-cover translation of *Jiuge* titled *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*, a great breakthrough in the study and translation of *Chuci* in the Western world.

## 2. Translator's Subjectivity

What is "subjectivity"? Subjectivity refers to the essential characteristics shown in objective activities. Specifically, subjectivity is the externalization of the essence of the subject in the objective activities. The subject rebuilds influences and controls objects actively. On the other hand, subjectivity is the unity of the activity and passivity, which is manifested in the dependence of human beings on objects and the conditionality of the object to human (Wei Xiaoping 1998). In *A Dictionary of Translation Studies* edited by Fang Mengzhi, the concept is as follows: a translator's subjectivity is his subjective initiative which is also known as the translators' essential characteristic and manifested in translation activities (Fang Mengzhi 2003). According to Xu Jun, the translator's subjectivity is the conscious personality and creative consciousness shown in the process of translation. The existence and the intensity of a translator's subjectivity will influence the whole translation progress as well as the translation result that is the value of the translation (Xu Jun 2003).

The translator is an important element in translation progress. Their translation purposes, translation strategies, translation activities and translation competence will greatly influence the translation result. As an individual, the translator has independent thinking, cultural standpoints and values. His or her subjectivity and initiative are often displayed in choosing source texts, deciding translation strategy, solving translation problems and pursuing translation purpose. Therefore, the translator has a vital influence on the translation process and results. As a group, translators bear responsibility for promoting the course of human culture by introducing source language culture and enriching the target language culture.

The translation process is a significant stage of translation activity, in which the translator's subjectivity is particularly prominent. Taking literary translation as an example, a translator at least has three literary identities in the translation process: reader, interpreter and author (re-creator). At first, as a reader, translators need to arouse their own emotions and inspire their imagination and aesthetics, which embodies a blank spot in understanding the work. Through adjusting their forecast, the translator can achieve a fusion with the work, and the fusion is the premise of constructing the meaning of the work fully. Secondly, as an interpreter, translators need to relate their literature taste and critical thinking. Only in this way can the translator explore the connotation and implication of the work and then analyze the literary value and social meaning of it (Gao Ning 1997). Then as a re-creator, translators need to focus on how to reproduce the information and language style of the original text.

A translator always decides what to translate and how to translate based on the cultural needs in their opinion. Translation provides an opportunity for the meeting of two cultures, and it is a process of negotiation of two cultures. Of course, the translator plays an intermediary role in the process. However, it does not mean that the translator is culturally neutral. Their cultural orientation inevitably influences their decision on choosing source texts and translation strategy, which is considered to identify with the mainstream culture of the target language or emphasize the current ideology and literary concept. On the other hand, the influence of making choices may be regarded as overthrowing the current literary concept and pattern so as to attain the goal of reformation. Whether identifying or overthrowing, the translator's choice of the source text and translation strategy is a way to manifest the cultural awareness of the target language.

Although the translator's subjectivity can be manifested in the translation process and in the translator's awareness towards target language culture and target readers, it is restricted by many factors, such as the translator's pre-culture structure, bilingual and bicultural competence, as well as the original author.

In conclusion, the manifestation of the translator's subjectivity is influenced and limited by different elements which are closely related. The investigation of these elements could help translators in translating more successfully. Translators could take advantages of these restrictive elements, making them beneficial to their translation and manifest their subjectivity actively and properly. Only in this way can translators produce high-quality translations.

### 2.1 *Translator's subjectivity manifested in Waley's text-selection*

The process of translation is, in some way, a process of making decisions. The translator's choice runs through the whole translation process. When encountering different cultures and literary works, a translator may have different attitudes and standpoints, they decide "what to translate" and "how to translate". Of course, "what to translate" is the primary question faced by the translators. A genuine translator is not always a passive task receiver who only mechanically takes up a translation assignment. The decisions of "what to translate" depend on the translator's interests, intention and language understanding, etc. That is to say, the choice may be the result of the translator's personal interests, the purpose of his translating activities, his language ability, and so on. Therefore, the decision of "what to translate" is the first manifestation of the translator's subjectivity. As a creative translator, Waley's personal characters, such as his aesthetic preference, his life experience and his motivation for translation, are reflected in his selection of SL texts. The translation is often regarded as a way for a translator to express himself, and Waley's initial choice or decision duly determines his final translation product and manifest his subjectivity.

The great Chinese translator Fu Lei thinks, "To choose original texts is just like making friends. Some simply cannot go with me well, so I will not force myself to make friends with them" (cf. Chen Fukang 1992). Of course, Waley goes well with *Jiuge*, and that is why he chooses and then translates it and the foremost reason for this harmonious relationship is Waley's deeply fondness and profound understanding of *Jiuge*. Another famous literary translator and writer Tuan also has his own principle in choosing source-text for translating, "Firstly, it must be the first-rate poems which are recognized by the literary criticism or the contemporary public voice; secondly, it must happen to be my favorite which could touch my soul at the same time. Choosing the first-rate work is to introduce the best foreign poetry to Chinese readers and try to bring virtues to China, and choosing what I like is to make sure that I would do better in translating it" (Xu Jun 2002). From these remarks, we can definitely tell the importance of translator's taste in choosing SL texts.

Waley is one of the most outstanding sinologists in the 20th century in the United Kingdom, for his persistent research spirit and his abundant and pluralistic research results. Waley tries to introduce various kinds of Chinese poetry to English readers and makes them understand the multiple styles of it. From Waley's translation of Chinese classics such as *The Book of Songs*, *The Analects of Confucius*, it is concluded that the ancient culture Waley got to is all orthodox cultural notions from the Confucian school. However, Waley observed the culture different from the traditional Confucian culture in Qu Yuan's work of *Jiuge* (Waley later translated it into *The Nine Songs*). With its characteristic form, multiple connotations and florid style, *Jiuge* gains a significant position in the history of literature development. Through analysis, besides its literary value, Waley discovers the multiple connotations of *Jiuge* from the perspective of culture. He tries to explore the source and the spread of Chinese ancient shaman culture by studying *Jiuge*, which is full of grand scenes in which the deity and the shaman meet each other and have complicated feelings between them. All of these attract Waley's attention, but it is the shaman culture in this book that concerns him most.

Waley's interest in *Jiuge* is also influenced by French sinologist Marcel Granet (1884–1940), who first put forward the question what is the essence of shaman culture. When Granet did his doctorate at the University of Paris, he focused on investigating ancient Chinese cultures, such as the social pattern, marriage system, traditions and religious beliefs in Chinese federal society. Grenet's question on the essence of shaman culture had incredibly aroused Waley's interest in ancient Chinese shaman culture, so he determined to find out the answer to the question, which Grenet brought forward yet did not give a clear explanation. Waley thought it was his duty as a sinologist to explore this and present a full picture of China to western readers. In addition, at that time, Waley already got great achievements in sinology and was familiar with the history of Chinese literature. Undoubtedly, the significant religious value came into Waley's notice. Under this circumstance, it is natural for him to translate *Jiuge* to expand his own horizon, perfect his ideological system, and satisfy his interests and curiosity.

However, as we turn to Waley's translation *The Nine Songs*, we easily find out that Waley did not translate the whole eleven pieces of *Jiuge* but only nine. The foremost reason why he did that would trace back to the original because in the academic fields, the constituent pieces of the original *Jiuge* are controversial. Scholars' views on this are diverse. Some claim *Jiuge* has nine pieces that is why it is called *Jiuge*, but others argue the number of Nine is just the imaginary number which means plenty, and it has no relationship with the title of *Jiuge* (Xu Zhixiao 1991). Facing this confusing situation, Waley had to figure out his own way to solve this problem. In Waley's translation, he omitted *Guoshang* and only gave a brief translation of *Lihun* without any comments like other pieces. However, what he did is not for the purpose of making his translation consistent with the title *The Nine Songs*. He held his own opinion on these two works.

First of all, Waley thinks, "Appended to *The Nine Songs* are a *Hymn to the Fallen* (to warriors fallen in battle), and also a sort of envoi, making eleven pieces in all. But the last two did not, I think, form part of the original series" (Waley 1955). In addition, *Guoshang* (Waley once translated it into *Battle*) is Waley's earliest translation of *Chuci*, which was collected in his poetry anthology *Chinese Poems* (Francis 1968), and published in 1916 at his own expense. Therefore, Waley did not repeat it in *The Nine Songs*. As regards *Lihun*, Waley thinks it is intended to be sung at the end of the ceremony, so he only appends the brief translation without any explanation (Waley 1955).

Secondly, after reading *Guoshang* and *Lihun*, Waley claims from the point of coherence that these two do not belong to the original *Jiuge*. They may be attached to *Jiuge* by some later scholars.

Last but not least, the main subject of Waley's *The Nine Songs* is the study of shaman culture in ancient China. Waley takes *Jiuge* as the essential material for his shaman culture research. He tends to explore the origin, development and spread of Chinese shaman culture by analyzing the work of *Jiuge*. However, we can see *Guoshang* and *Lihun*, the former is the hymn for dead warriors, and the latter is the indication of the end of the official ceremony. Therefore, they have nothing to do with the shaman culture. In this sense, it is reasonable for Waley to omit these two pieces. Waley does it on purpose to emphasize the subject of *The Nine Songs*. Although it is not so authorized, Waley's solution wisely settles the argument on the continent pieces of *Jiuge*, which has perplexed many scholars for a long time. It also injects fresh vigor into the research of *Chuci* (Zhang Minhui 2007).

## 2.2 *Translator's subjectivity manifested in Waley's views on poetry translation*

It is known that ancient Chinese poetry is a kind of special literary production, which brings a great challenge to the people who want to translate it. This tough work causes a heated dispute among the translators. Those who adhere to maintaining the rhyme of the source text think that the translator should take into full consideration

of the formal beauty. However, those who prefer to translate ancient Chinese poetry into free verse hold that the efforts should be made to reveal the true essence of poetry rather than the rhyme, the rigid use of which is likely to hinder the natural rendering of the meanings and the translation should cater to the aesthetic taste of the modern reader (Yan Xuejun 2005). Xu once said that it is not enough to translate the metrical poetry into the free verse was too inadequate because even the free-verse translation could totally present the meaning, the emotion and the imagery of the original poem, it could not convey the incontrovertible charming of the classic poetry (Xu Yuan-chong 1984). On the contrary, the Free Verse School represented by Weng Xianliang holds that the translation of Chinese classic poetry should not be restricted by the phonology of the Chinese language. Meaning is the most important factor in translation, and it is difficult to take account of meaning as well as form at the same time. As long as the meaning of the original poem is fully reproduced, it is not necessary to imitate the form of the original.

In the matter of poetry translation, Arthur Waley prefers free verse, and he rarely uses rhyme in his translation. He thinks, when translating Chinese classic poetry, translators may pay much attention to reconstruct the same rhyme as the original poem, but sometimes the translation of rhyme will weaken the conveyance of the meaning. Waley's poetry translation theory is somewhat like the Free Verse School's, but they are not exactly the same because Waley's free verse is not presented randomly. He cares about the music mode and creates a new way to reproduce the metrical pattern of the original, which is called the Sprung Rhythm (Li Bingmei 2009). Waley believes that in this way, even without using rhyme, the flame of the original poetry can still be exhibited in his translation.

Although Waley is a great sinologist and poet, he seldom writes about himself. His thoughts and views on translation, especially on poetry translation, are scattered mostly in the prefaces or appendixes of his works. However, these scattered and unsystematic views have a great influence on poetry translation. Not until in the year 1958, Waley wrote an article named "Note on Translation" was the complete exposition of Waley's scattered views on translation gathered together. These notes on translation deal principally with orientalism, based on Waley's own experience in this field.

It is known that Waley has translated a lot of classic Chinese poems, and many of them have been canonized in the western world. It is worth mentioning that some of Waley's poetry translations have been collected in the English poetry anthology, together with poems of some famous poets, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth and Eliot. Why Waley become such a hit in the field of Chinese classic poetry translation? Of course, his hard work contributes a lot, but his profound understanding of Chinese poetry is also very vital. In the ancient Chinese book called *Shangshu*, there is a famous saying, "詩言志", which means that poetry is used to express people's feelings and it is the presentation of the inward world. Chinese poetry is very implicit because the poets don't express their feelings directly but often resort to objective things. There is no doubt that every Chinese poem will express the certain feeling of the poet, for example, homesick, sad and confused. Poet would like to release his or her opinions on society, life as well as human beings. Anyway, feeling ranks top in Chinese poetry, and Waley realized this point. He once said in *Far East*, there exceedingly rare exist texts in which only logical meaning but not feeling and the appeal, even in philosophical texts, has always been to emotion rather than logic. As he has this view in mind, at the beginning of the article "Notes on Translation", Waley says, "Different kinds of translation are needed for different purposes. If one is translating a legal document, all one needs to do is to convey the meaning, but if one is translating literature, one has to convey feeling as well as grammatical sense." (Morris 1970). In other words, Waley thinks the author puts his or her feelings such as pit-

y, delight, ecstasy into the original and that these feelings must be expressed by way of using rhythm and emphasis or choosing the exact words by the author. Therefore, the translator must feel what the author feels rather than simply give a series of dictionary meanings which is not being faithful. The emphasis on feelings in Chinese poetry translation has become Waley's guiding principle, therefore what he cares most about in translating is how to catch the essence of a poem and to turn it into an English one.

Besides feeling, one of the vital elements in ancient Chinese poetry is imagery. It can be said that the most conspicuous feature of European poetry is its preoccupation with love. This is apparent not only in the actual "love poem", but also in all kinds of poetry (Morris 1970). However, Chinese poetry mainly deals with concrete and particular things which one can touch and see but not abstract conceptions such as beauty and love. When someone translates Chinese poetry, it is not proper for them to ignore the imagery, which plays a crucial part in the original. Realizing this point, Waley attaches great importance to dealing with images in Chinese poetry. In the introduction to *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, Waley says, "Above all, considering imagery to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original." (Waley 1941).

In addition, the sense of music is also important in Waley's poetry translation. After a comparative study of the Chinese and English systems of versification, Waley realizes that the tonal system of Chinese, especially the flat and deflected tones, can hardly be transplanted into English (Morris 1970). He admits that rhyme is used frequently in Chinese poetry, and sometimes even the same rhyme runs through the whole poetry, but it is impossible to reconstruct the same rhyming effect in English, for the English language has much less rhyme. Even though Waley knows the above differences between the Chinese and English, he still attempts to reproduce the metrical pattern of the original poetry. He applies a rhythm pattern called Sprung Rhythm to his Chinese poetry translation but does not commit himself to replicate Chinese verse forms. This unusual way brings him great success. In the next part, the author would like to illustrate Waley's creation in Chinese poetry translation.

After reading the bibliography of Waley, it is known that he didn't get a formal college education, and his Chinese was self-taught. This legendary man had never been to China before, but he was titled "China Hand". However, Waley was doubted by some people in whether he could handle the metrical pattern of Chinese poetry, for he had no experience in studying or living in China. But to someone's surprise, this "dumb sinologist" gained a high reputation in studying Chinese poetry phonology. He once wrote an article titled "Notes on Chinese Prosody", which specialized in discussing the phonological problems of Chinese poetry. In this article, he systematically introduced the tonal patterns in classical tones and the development of meter in verse. He also divided Chinese poetry into Modern Style and Old Style. According to Waley, the importance in "Modern Style" is the arrangement of tones, while the "Old Style" usually disregards the tones. However, the distinction is not absolute (Morris 1970). In a word, Waley got abundant knowledge of Chinese poetry and the Chinese language. As Alexander Fraser Tytler said, in view that a translator may be enabled to give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work, it is indispensably necessary that he should have a perfect knowledge of the language of the original and a competent acquaintance with the subject of which it treats (Lefevere 2004). Waley is precisely the one.

There are two principal approaches to the translation of poetry: the imitative and the re-creative (Zhao Xiner 1981). Of these approaches, the first is more exacting and restrictive since it sets itself the task of transferring the foreign original into English with the least possible alteration of metre, rhyme scheme, general balance and order of phrase. But this approach also has a limitation—it's only suitable for rendering two similar languages.



Since Chinese and English belong to different language families, it is impossible to use this approach effectively. According to his abundant knowledge of the differences between the Chinese and English languages, Waley knows the verse-forms in Chinese poetry are somewhat inimitable. Therefore, in Chinese poetry translation, Waley prefers the second approach that is the re-creative approach.

Waley's poetry translation can be called a kind of free verse. But the free verse is not free. To those who want to write a good poem, any form is not free. In other words, the free verse should be created based on certain un-traditional rhythm pattern. Moreover, Waley's free-verse translation is exactly the one because it is based on the rhythm pattern called Sprung Rhythm. But what is Sprung Rhythm? It is a kind of rhythm pattern firstly created by the famous English poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, and it does not follow the foot of an English poem but centers on the stressed syllables, before or after which the unstressed syllables are attached. To be brief, poems with Sprung Rhythm have almost the same or corresponding stressed syllables in each line, and sometimes cesura will be used to gain the correspondence. This slack rhythm pattern is adopted by many modern poets like E.S. Elliot. Although Sprung Rhythm has been widely used, Waley is the first one who applies the Sprung Rhythm in translating Chinese poetry. As early as in 1918, in the preface to *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, Waley explained the principle he basically followed in translating Chinese poetry was making one stress to correspond one Chinese character, and this method is evolved from Sprung Rhythm (Zhao Yiheng 2003). In the course of Waley's academic life, he carries out an experiment in Chinese poetry translation based on the Sprung Rhythm.

Using stress rhythm instead of rhyme and regular foot, Waley succeeds in Chinese poetry translation. But why does Waley choose this way to translate Chinese poetry? There are some reasons. One reason is the enormous differences between the Chinese and English systems of versification. Compared with Chinese, rhymes in English are so scarce. Each language has its inherent mode of expression (Pym 2007). Sometimes the same rhyme runs through a whole Chinese poem, but it is impossible to find the rhymes in English and produce similar rhyme effects. Another reason is that in Waley's opinion, the translation of rhythm necessarily weakens the conveyance of meaning. If one uses rhyme, he or she can hardly make sure not to sacrifice sense to sound, and the result is that their translation may go far away from the original. In the introduction to *Translations from the Chinese*, Waley says, "I have not used rhyme, because what is really, in the long run, of most interest to American readers is what the poems say." (Waley 1941). From the above words, it is clearly known that Waley thinks the essence of poetry is content rather than the form, such as rhyme. The last reason for Waley's free-verse translation is the influence of poetics at that time. From the beginning of the 20th century, the western world began a historical trend that worshipped individualism and took the rebel in art. In this circumstance, an inspiring event called New Poetry Movement took place in a literary circle. The most obvious influence of this movement is that free verse gets its position in a literary circle (Zhao Yiheng 2003). Ezra Pound is the representative of the New Poetry Movement, and he is also considered as the "Father of English Free Verse". At that time, Waley had a close relationship with Pound. In a BBC interview in 1963, Waley said he had dinner with Pound and Elliot on Monday evening every week, and during the dinner, poetry and technique of poetry were the main topics (Morris 1970). Influenced by Pound's translation practice, Waley figured out his own way to translate Chinese poetry. His invention of the unique free verse is just the likely result of the dominant poetics of his times. As New Poetry Movement developed, the traditional poetry form was despised. At one time, Waley pointed out that it was peculiar to read Wordsworth's iambic pentameter poetry, and he tried to rewrite it into free verse. From this point, we can get how keen Waley was on free verse.

Although Waley's free-verse translation based on Sprung Rhythm has been widely accepted in the west, it is controversial. At that time, the poet and critic Edward Shanks criticized Waley "That man (Waley) has done more harm to English poetry than anyone else" (Morris 1970). He meant that Waley had encouraged poets to abandon traditional metres and not to use rhyme. However, Shanks' criticism is not reasonable because Waley doesn't advocate giving up certain rules for poetizing and what he really wants to do is to free people's thoughts from the restricted rhyme scheme. Waley's Chinese poetry translation promoted the development of the New Poetry Movement. But the most significant influence of Waley's specific translation is making Chinese poetry widely spread in the western world. Before Waley's translation, many people had translated Chinese poetry, but most of them are professors of oriental studies, and their translations are for academic research, so the general readers may not interest in these versions (Zhong Ling 2003). While Waley's translation without the dreary rhyme scheme is historical and brings vigor to poetry translation, his free-verse translation appeals to people who do not ordinarily read poetry, and it is the main reason for maintaining his translation in fairly steady demand for almost a century.

### *2.3 Translator's subjectivity manifested in Waley's translation strategies*

Translation is more than a linguistic behavior. It is also cross-cultural communication. So, the translator's task is not only to convey the literal meaning but also to deliver the cultural information. The famous translation theorist Susan Bassnet says one of the functions of translation is to influence the acceptance and absorption of the norms of the source culture by the target culture (Bassnett 2004). *Jiuge* is the root of ancient Chinese shamanism, and it is full of cultural elements, which is a challenge for translators. Waley uses translation strategy of domestication to deal with the cultural elements in *Jiuge*, which is proved to be a big success.

The translation strategy is somewhat determined by the translator's purpose and the potential readers' expectation horizon, and so on. The final consumer of the translation is the readers, so their aesthetic appreciation and receptivity are the primary elements that the translator should take into account. Waley takes the common people as the potential readers. Thus, he would not advocate the word-to-word translation, which may damage the artistry of the original. Waley's thorough understanding of the original and his confidence to reconstruct it in the target language impel him to adopt a domestication strategy. He once said that after he had thoroughly understood a Chinese or Japanese text, he recast it entirely in supple, idiomatic, vibrant English rather than stick to a phrase-by-phrase or sentence-by-sentence rendering (Morris 1972). Besides that, Lawrence Venuti once said, in view of the cultural trends, it seems inevitable that transparency would become the authoritative discourse for translating, whether the foreign text was literary or scientific-technical (Venuti 2004). Therefore, confronting the cultural elements such as the Xi pattern and the plant name in *Jiuge*, Waley tries his best to make western readers understood. In this case, domestication is a good choice.

As we all know, "Xi" is the symbol of *Chuci*. The position of this character in the sentence is not the same. Some are in the middle and some at the end of each sentence. As the positions are various, their meanings are differing. Wen Yiduo thinks from the perspective of grammar, "Xi" equals the mood word "oh". This is the general meaning of "Xi" in *Chuci*. However, in *Jiuge* "Xi" is in the middle of the sentence, so it is not a word that has the sound but no meaning. On the contrary, "Xi" could replace all kinds of functional word, and it has different meanings in the context. Wen's opinion on the character Xi is accepted by many people, and Waley is one of them. In the appendix of his translation *The Nine Songs*, Waley pointed it out clearly "I have also taken into consideration the principal modern Chinese studies of *The Nine Songs*, such as those of Wen I-to (Wen



Yiduo), Chiang Liang-fu (Jiang Liangfu)……” (Waley 1955) .

Undoubtedly, Waley has inherited Wen's opinion on the meaning of “Xi”. “Xi” has different meanings in *Jiuge*. Someone may argue that in Waley's translation, there is no corresponding word used to translate “Xi”. Not like Xu Yuanchong, he translates “Xi” in the poem into the mood word “oh”. For example, Xu translated “吉日兮辰良, 穆將愉兮上皇” into “Auspicious hour, oh! Of the lucky day! With deep respect, oh! We worship our lord” (Xu Yuanchong 2009). Waley figured out his own way to translate the character “Xi” which in his opinion has different meanings in each sentence. That is to internalize the meaning of “Xi” and reproduce it in the context.

The first sentence from *The Lord of The East* translated by Waley is “There is a glow in the sky; soon he will be rising in the east”. This sentence is the translation of “暎將出兮東方”. Wen Yiduo thinks that “Xi” in this sentence means “from”, which is a functional word to indicate the direction where the sun rises (Wu Guanping 2008). As Waley gets this meaning, he tries to reproduce it in English. However, in the western world, “the sun rises in the east” is a set collection. So Waley translates “出(於)東方” into “be rising in the east” which fits the idiomatic expression in English instead of “from the east”. Although this sentence seems very simple, it is obvious evidence to prove Waley's effort to leave the reader in peace and move the author towards him. This domestication strategy Waley adopted to deal with the cultural elements “Xi” leads him to achieve his translation purpose, which he explained in the introduction of *The Nine Songs*: “my aim here has been to translate and comment upon them in a way that would be useful to students of the history of religion and interesting to the general reader” (Waley 1955). And we can see Waley had basically achieved his goal.

Speaking of *Chuci*, it is inevitable to talk about the plenty of plants, for they are the symbols in this work. Indeed, plants are the main oblation in the sacrifice ceremony and in *Jiuge* there are more than sixteen plants. Waley has already realized the importance of these plants. Meanwhile, he thinks the names of these plants constitute an incredible challenge for the translator, because there was no systematic nomenclature based on structural difference. It happens that one name often covered plants which we should put in quite different categories, and the same name had different meanings in different places and at different times. David Hawkes is considered to be the successor of Waley, who also admits that it is difficult to translate the plants in *Chuci*. He insists that every translator of this book is bound to devote a large part of his time to rendering flower names into English. The problem is twofold. In the first place, many ancient Chinese flower names are no longer identifiable with any certainty. In the second place, even when they are identifiable, the only available equivalent is often a jaw-cracking botanical name which no translator of any literary pretensions whatever could for a moment consider using” (David Hawkes 1959).

However, a great translator should always figure out the proper way to overcome all the difficulties in translation, so does Waley. He does not agree to leave the plant names untranslated, for it is a kind of making scholastic crib. The aim of Waley's translation is to give as far as possible an impression of the literary quality of the original, so he tries to use English words, even if they are only makeshifts. Taking lan (蘭) as an example, Waley translates it into “orchid”. In *The Great Unique*, the sentence “Meats I offer, flavored with basil, on strewn orchids laid” is the translation of “蕙肴蒸兮蘭藉” made by Waley. However, someone discovered that lan was really thoroughwort and it has nothing to do with the orchid family. But lan is the name that modern Chinese botanists used to call orchidaceae, so Waley translates lan into orchid. He said what he pursued is not the scientific equivalence of the names, for the literary translation, unlike the translation of the history of natural science, has to bear artistry (Li Bingmei 2009). “Thoroughwort” is awkward to handle metrically and is not a

word that would convey anything to most readers (Waley 1955). Anyhow, according to plant name translation Waley holds to choose the common word which is easy to understand by the readers instead of those rare terms used in the field of science.

### 3. Conclusion

As is discussed above, the analysis of Waley's *The Nine Songs* from the perspective of the translator's subjectivity reveals Waley's unique translation style that could enlighten future translators. Waley's translation has greatly promoted Chinese culture in the world, especially Shamanism in ancient China. In the preface of *The Nine Songs*, Waley claims that this book can arouse the interest of students in Shamanism and similar religions. And it is also well worth reading simply as poetry. From these words, we can see that Waley's main purpose is to introduce *Jiuge* to the general readers in the Western world. Due to Waley's efforts, *The Nine Songs* has been widely accepted and praised, and this translation will attract more and more people's attention.

### References

- Basnett, S. (2004). *Translation studies*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- CHENG, Fukang. (1992). *A history of translation theory in China*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- FANG, Mengzhi. (2003). *A dictionary of translation studies*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Francis, J.(1968). *A bibliography of Arthur Waley*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- GAO, Ning. (1997). On the translator's subjective position; Also on the principles of the establishment of translation standards. *Shanghai Journal of Translators for Science and Technology*, 1, 6-9.
- Hawkes, D.(1959). *Ch'u Tz'u: The songs of the south*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HUAN, Shouqi and MEI Tongsheng. (1984). *Interpretation of Chuci*. Guiyang: Guizhou People's Publishing House.
- Lefevere, A. (2004). *Translation/History/Culture: A sourcebook*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- LI, Bingmei. (2009). The influence of Arthur Waley's creative translation of Chinese poetry into English on today's English poetry: take a hundred and seventy Chinese poems translated by Arthur Waley as an Example. *Comparative Literature in China*, 3, 106-115.
- Morris, I.(1970). *Madly singing in the mountains; An appreciation and anthology of Arthur Waley*. New York: Harper Touchbooks.
- Pym, A.(2007). *Method in translation history*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Venuti, L.(2004). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Waley, A. (1941). *Translation from the Chinese*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Waley, A. (1955). *The Nine Songs; A study of Shamanism in Ancient China*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- WEI, Xiaoping. (1998). Critical analysis of the meaning of subjectivity. *Philosophical Research*, 2, 22-28.
- WU, Guangping. (2008). *The interpretation of Chuci*. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House.
- XU, Jun. (2002). The choice in translation. *Journal of Foreign Languages*. 1, 62-69.
- XU, Jun. (2003). Creative treason and the establishment of translation subjectivity. *Chinese Translators Journal*. 1, 6-11.
- XU, Yuanchong. (1984). *The art of translation*. Beijing: China Translation and Publishing Corporation.
- XU, Zhixiao. (1991). "Nine Songs" should be nine. *Journal of Yunmeng*, 1, 7-10.
- YAN, Xuejun. (2005). Poetic and prosaic versions of Chinese ancient poetry in English. *Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University*, 2, 22-24.
- ZHANG, Minhui. (2007). *A study of Arthur Waley and the Nine Songs; A study of Shamanism in Ancient China*. Taipei: National Yunlin University of Science and Technology.
- ZHAO, Xiner. (1981). A generation of sinology authority and excellent translation master—a record of British sinologist Arthur Waley.

*The Global Observer*, 8, 89–91.

ZHAO, Yiheng. (2003). *Poetry travel: How China changed American modern poetry*. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.

ZHONG, Ling. (2003). *American poetry and Chinese dream: Chinese cultural patterns in modern American poetry*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.

(Editor: SHENG Hao)