

Study of Rewi Alley's Translation of Chinese Poetry into English: a complexity theory approach

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Mossop (1988) points out that “[t]here is an important participant missing in existing models of translation: the translating institutions (corporations, churches, governments, newspapers) which directly or indirectly use the services of translators”. Though institutional translation is an ignored topic in Translation Studies, it has played a central role throughout history (Koskinen 2008: 3-4). In recent years, apart from Mossop's contributions (2000, 2006), Koskinen (2008), using the Finnish translation unit at the European Commission as a case study, explores the life and the work of the translators in an institutional setting; Mcdougall (2011) describes and analyzes two translation zones of modern China as she elaborates her translation experiences as an employee working in China's Foreign Languages Bureau. In 2014, the journal *Perspectives* published a special issue on institutional translation. Scholars from different countries have examined the practices of institutional translation in various contexts and their studies provide fresh insights to the once ignored topic of institutional translation.

Given the complexity of translation activity within different institutions and different cultural backgrounds and identities of individual translators who are involved in the different institutional translations, their findings only reveal part of the whole picture. In order to have a better understanding of institutional translations, more local explanations and detailed case studies of different institutional contexts are required (Koskinen 2008).

This study adopts a complexity theory approach to examine Rewi Alley's translation of Chinese poetry from 1950s to 1980s, which took place in an institutional setting. The paper examines the complex relationship between Alley's translation activity and translation policies regulated by the Chinese state institution, exploring factors which have affected the translator's choice of texts, translation strategies and the distorted image of the original poet.

Key words: institutional translation, complexity theory, Rewi Alley's translation of Chinese poetry