

Comparing and Evaluating two English versions of Samguk Yusa

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I . Introduction

What are reliable texts for Korean history? In his postscript that was written in 1512, Gyebok Lee (李繼福) recommended two books that were written during Koryo dynasty (935-1392). One is *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記) and the other is *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事). The former book was written by Busik Kim (金富軾; 1075-1151), who was a high government official. The latter book was written by Ilyon (一然; 1206-1289), who was a Buddhist monk.

Between two books, this paper focuses on *Samguk Yusa* that was translated into English two times in Korea. One is *Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea* and the other is *Overlooked Historical Records of*

the Three Korean Kingdoms. At first glance, the reader might think that these are not the same books because the titles have different implications. This paper aims to compare and evaluate two English versions by asking two questions. First, what are the translators' purposes for translating *Samguk Yusa*? Second, how do the translators' purposes make impacts on the translation processes? In other words, what are the differences between two books? To answer these questions effectively, the original text and the translated texts will be compared and analyzed by using the concepts of Vermeer's translation model.

II . Vermeer's Translation Model

If each genre has its own merits, how can a historical text be translated? Historical texts are quite different from modern technical texts in that the former includes narrative events, but the latter lacks them. In addition, Juric (2010, p.32) defined "the translator of history texts as a real mediator between cultures." To analyze the translated historical texts, we need more specified translation model.

Pym (2014, p.174) drew a line between medieval and modern translators: "Whereas medieval protoscientific translators often paid homage to authoritative writers through various degrees of literalism, the modern translators were more wont to churn out texts that were often quickly produced." The freedom from the archaic translational norms have generated many creative translation models. One of them is Vermeer's model.

The basic assumption of Vermeer's model is illustrated as (1).

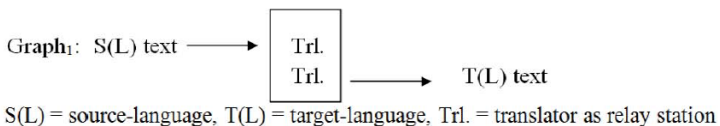


Figure 1. Vermeer's translation model (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014, p.39)

In this model, translators, as a relay station, play important roles of a mediator between S(L) text and T(L) text and offer information about source language. The first important factor of this model is the purpose of the translation: “translational action is governed by its purpose” (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014, p.85). Vermeer used a Greek word ‘spokos’ that means aim, purpose, or goal. This factor includes Translationsskopos (the translator’s intended purpose) and Translateskopos (the function of the translation as seen in the receiving culture). The second important factor is “intratextual coherence.” Snell-Hornby (2006) explains it: a message of the translated text is delivered when readers can understand it in itself and in relation to their given situation. The intratextual coherence is more important than intertextual coherence (or fidelity to the text), “which pertains if the function of source and target texts remain the same” (p.54). With Vermeer’s translation model, let us examine why the translators translated *Samguk Yusa*.

III. Translator’s Intended Purposes

The literal English title of *Samguk Yusa* could be *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*. Ha Tae-Hung and G. K. Mintz translated this book in 1972 with the title, *Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea*. After the first printing, this book was reprinted in 1997, 1980, 1986, 1997, 2000, and 2004 without any revisions. The subtitle of this book highlights legends more than history. Ha and Mintz (2004) mentioned that *Samguk Yusa* was a supplement to *Samguk Sagi* (p.10). Then, they pointed out that the title of this book was misused because this book did not include the histories of the three kingdoms. Rather, this book focuses only on Silla (p.10). Their argument is correct. The histories of other nations except Silla are described only in the first book of *Samguk Yusa*.

Ha and Mintz (2004) regarded *Samguk Yusa* as “extremely” important book because it “records many of the beliefs and practices of the people of thirteenth-century Korea” (p.19). However, they concluded that *Samguk Yusa* could be read simply for pleasure because the tales in *Samguk Yusa* are similar to the fairy tales of Europe (p.19). It is evident that Ha and Mintz (2004) ignored historical significance of *Samguk Yusa* and compared stories in *Samguk Yusa* to short novels or fictions.

About thirty years later, Dal-Young Kim translated *Samguk Yusa* in 2006 with the title, *Overlooked Historical Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms*. The title of this book is reminiscent of the English title of *Samguk Sagi: The Historical Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms*. Kim (2006) defined the purpose of *Samguk Sagi* as “the officially sanctioned chronicles of ancient Korean monarchs” (p.xi). Kim’s translated title of *Samguk Yusa* implies that Ilyon wrote *Samguk Yusa* to supplement historical facts that *Samguk Sagi* had left or overlooked.

Kim (2006) also considered *Samguk Yusa* as an important book. In this book, Ilyon emphasized “roots and quality of the Korean race, as distinguished from those of the Chinese people” (p.xiii). Furthermore, Ilyon attempted to demonstrate how Buddhism was introduced into Korean through China and how Korean people practiced Buddhism as a lifestyle (p.xv).

The different titles of *Samguk Yusa* in English demonstrated the translators’ different purposes and intentions. Ha and Mintz (2004) assumed that *Samguk Yusa* collected orally delivered stories or legends, so they wanted to spotlight the narrative aspects of *Samguk Yusa*. However, Kim (2006) assumed that *Samguk Yusa* included valuable historical facts, so Kim tried to accentuate the historical aspects of *Samguk Yusa*.

IV. Differences between Two Versions

Samguk Yusa consists of two parts. The first part is *Chronology of the Three Kingdoms and Karak, with Contemporary Sovereigns of China* (cf. Ha and Mintz, 2006, pp.390-415). There were 56 monarchs in Silla from Hyeokgeose to Kim Mu. Ilyon did not offer any evaluation criteria between ordinary and great monarchs, but he referred to only four kings as great kings: Wonseong (the 38th king), Sinmu (the 45th king), Gyeongmun (the 48th king), and Kim Mu (the 56th king). With regard to queens, Seondeok (the 27th queen) and Jindeok (the 28th queen) were rated as ordinary queens, but Jinseong (the 51st queen) was rated as a great queen (Kim, 2006, pp.iii-v; Ha and Mintz, 2004, pp.400-415).

The second part of *Samguk Yusa* is about founding stories of the kingdoms, Buddhism, Buddhist icons, Buddhist monks, and some miracles. Ha and Mintz' book included both parts, but Kim's did not include the chronology.

Ha and Mintz did not mention their translation method. In contrast, Kim (2006) mentioned that he employed "sense-for-sense translation" to keep "the middle ground between faithful literalism and free imitation" (p. xviii).

1. Notations

How are Korean words spelled? Ha and Mintz (2004) employed McCune-Reischauer system, but Kim followed "Romanization of the Korean Language" published in 2000. Which system is easier to read and to match English words with Korean ones? The Romanization of the Korean language is much easier than McCune-Reischauer system. The former represents the real sounds and tells the differences between the voiced and voiceless sounds, the aspirated and non-aspirated sounds, and the assimilations in the first and middle sounds. However, the latter represents only pure phonetic sounds, so some efforts are needed to track original Korean words.

In comparing two books, Kim's book is more organized than Ha and

Mintz's. Kim italicized the names of books and put Korean or Chinese names in parentheses. However, Ha and Mintz did not underline the names of books nor italicize them. For example, in a section about 魚山佛影, Kim (2006) introduced 觀音三昧境 as follows: “the seventh volume of the *Sutra on the Ecstatic Meditation on Buddha* (觀音三昧境, Buddhadyahasamadhisagara Sutra) put in the “Ke” (可) - lettered storage box, reports the following story” (p.257). However, Ha and Mintz (2004) introduced 觀音三昧境 as follows: “The passage quoted is found in Volume VII of the “Kaham” Kwanbul (sic) Sammae-gyong” (p. 252). Kim provided correct information with additional explanations, but Ha and Mintz made the reader confused. While the reader was reading this section, he or she might consider Sammae-gyong a book and “Kaham” a chapter in Sammae-gyong. However, “Kaham” is not a chapter in a book, but it is “letter storage box.” Ha and Mintz break the intracontextual coherence by translating two different entities arbitrarily .

Kim differentiated the text from the notes, but Ha and Mintz combined the notes into the text without any principles or they deleted the text or the notes without any explanations. In the original Chinese text, the difference between the text and the notes was easily recognizable. The text was written from top to bottom in a column without any pauses, but the notes are written in two rows in one column. For example, in a section about 新羅始祖 赫居世王, it says that 赫居世王 … 位號曰居瑟邯 (或作居西干, 初開口之時, 自稱云, 闕智居西干一起, 因基言稱之, 自後爲王者之尊稱) (고전연구실, 2006, pp.74; 이가원과 허경진, 2006, p.476). In this passage, the Chinese phrases without parentheses are the text, but the Chinese phrases within the parentheses are the notes. Kim (2006, p.33) translated these phrases as follows: “King Hyeokgeose’s throne was named ‘Geoseulgam’ (거슬 감). (The throne was also named ‘Geoseogan’ [거서간] because he broke the silence for the first time, saying to himself “Geoseogan Alji[알지] rose up at once.” Hereafter all the princes were titled ‘Geoseogan.’)” In a word, Kim clearly separated the text and the note by using parentheses. Ha and Mintz (2004, p.50) translated this passage as follows: “They

offered the wonderful boy the royal title “Kosulgam” or “Kosogan” because when he first spoke he declared “Alji-Kosogan (baby-king) is rising.” For this reason succeeding Silla sovereigns all bore the title Kosogan.” The sentence, “They offered the wonderful boy the royal title “Kosulgam”” is the text, but the sentence, “or Kosogan because when he first spoke he declared “Alji-Kosogan (baby-king) is rising,” is the note. At this point, Ha and Mintz violate the intertextual coherence because they do not express senses of two similar words used as the royal titles.

2. Sections

With regard to the titles of each section, Kim tried to retain the original titles without any omissions or additions, but Ha and Mintz reduced two titles to one or divided one title into two. For example, in the first book, there were two sections about founding stories of Northern Daebang (北帶方) and Southern Daebang (南帶方). Ha and Mintz (2004) combined two sections into one section and named this new section “Taebang” (p.23).

The section of 辰韓 consists of two parts. The first half of this story is about Jinhan and the second half is about Silla. Kim translated the section of 辰韓 without any changes. The second half of 辰韓 said that there were thirty-five large residences. Yusin Kim’s house was named Jaemaejeon’s (財買井宅) (Kim, 2006, p.30). However, Ha and Mintz (2004) divided the section of 辰韓 into two sections. One is Chinhan and the other is a newly created section, “Kyungju.” In the section of Chinhan, Ha and Mintz included only the quotations from 後漢書, but they omitted the quotation from 崔致遠 (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.48). The new section of Kyungju described how prosperous Kyungju was, but did not enumerate thirty-five large residence. Then, the section of Kyungju mentioned ‘a villa and ground for four seasons,’ which meant 四節遊宅 (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.49). In other words, in the original text, 辰韓 and 四節遊宅 were separate sections, but in Ha and Mintz’s book,

Jinhan and Kyungju were separate sections. Kim translated the section of 四節遊宅 as “Entertainment Houses of the Four Seasons,” but Ha and Mintz combined 四節遊宅 into the section of Kyongju as follows: “Kyungju (Pleasure Ground for each of the Four Seasons)” (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.48). Furthermore, Ha and Mintz added a note under the section of Kyungju as follows: “This section is somewhat out of place chronologically but is left in its original place” (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.48). At first sight, the section of 四節遊宅 that comes after the section of 辰韓 might be out of place, but Ha and Mintz’s note could not be true. Ilyon might emphasize the climax of Silla before he introduced the founding story of Silla.

In a section about 皇龍寺鍾, 芬皇寺藥師, 奉德寺鐘, Kim (2006) stuck to the original text, so Kim translated them as one section: “The Bell of Hwangnyong Temple, the Image of Bhaisajyaguru Buddha (藥師如來佛) at Bunhwang Temple, and the Bell of Bongdeok Temple” (pp. 213-217), but Ha and Mintz (2006) divided them into two topics. One is “The Bell of Hwangnyong Temple” (p.211) and the other is “the Image of Bhechadjagura in Punhwang Temple and the Bell of Pongdok Temple” (pp.211-212).

In the Preface II, Ha and Mintz (2004) defines “sa” as a temple and “san” as a mountain,”(p.7), but they preferred using “temple” and “mountain” to “sa” and “san.” In the table of contents, there are about 16 temples, but only 3 temples are translated with “sa”: Youngta’p-sa, Chungsaeng-sa, and Paengnyul-sa. There are about 7 mountains in the table of contents, but “san” was used only in Namwol-san. If Ha and Mintz did not use their definitions of “sa” and “san,” why did they make these definitions? In Ha and Mintz’ book, Section 42 is about 景德王, 忠談師, 表訓大德, but Ha and Mintz (2004, pp. 241) translated them as “King Kyongdok, Ch’ungdam-sa and P’yohun-taedeok.” According to Mintz’s definitions in Preface II, Ch’ungdam-sa must be a temple, but it actually refers to a person. Kim translated 忠談師 into Monk Chungdam. Even when Ha and Mintz (2004) translate the proper noun, they translated it arbitrarily. For example, when they translate 指掌圖, they translate it into “an

old map drawn by Tungp'o" or "Chijan-to" (p.41-42). Thus, Ha and Mintz break both intertextual and intertextual coherences by translating proper nouns into common nouns.

In a section about 新羅始祖 赫居世王, six villages (六村) in Jinhan were mentioned. They were 閔川 楊山村, 突山 高墟村, 茂山 大樹村, 淸山 珍支村, 金山 加利村, 明淸山 高耶村 (고전연구실, 2006, pp. 71-73; 이가원과 허경진, 2006, p. 475). Kim (2006) translated them one by one. For example, "The first was the village of Yangan (양산) near the Al (알) Stream, which reached the present Dameom (담엄) Temple (pp.30-31)." In the following one and half pages, the information about the villages was given. However, Ha and Mintz (2004) translated them shortly: "In ancient times there were six districts in Chinhan, each belonging to a separate clan. They were the Yi, Chong, Son, Ch'oe, Pae and Sol clans, each of which claimed to have a divine progenitor" (pp.49). Then, they described that the people in the six districts congregated and discussed their need to build a kingdom. Unlike Kim, Ha and Mintz omitted the original text arbitrarily.

3. Stories

In the Preface I, Tae-Hung Ha mentioned his purpose of translating *Samguk Yusa* into English. Ha hoped that the translated book could be read by Western scholars and general readers who were interested in Korea and Korean culture (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.6). It is evident that his hope cannot be accomplished completely. This book can not be used as a good book for the Western scholars. Ha and Mintz ignored generally accepted academic system, such as underlining the names of books, putting quotation marks, and distinguishing the text from the notes. Thus, Western scholars might be confused, but Western readers, who read this book for their pleasure, might be happy with this book.

Ha and Mintz sometimes created some words to attract the general readers. In Section 85, there were two stories about two Buddhas and about Chosin.

According to the original text, the title of this story was 洛山二大聖 觀音 正趣 調信. The original text just enumerated three entities. In other words, the original text referred as 觀音 and 正趣 to great monks, but it did not call 調信 a great monk. Kim translated this title as “Avalokitesvara and Jeongchwi (정취), Two Bodhisattvas of Naksan Temple, and Josin (조신).” In a footnote, Kim explained Avalokitesvara as a bodhisattva who “wears white clothes and sits on a white lotus” (Kim, 2006, p.249). Kim’s translation is a little confusing because Kim’s title seems to enumerate five people. In fact, this story deals with three people. First, 法師 met 觀音 near a small creek. Second, 梵日 found the statue of a 正趣 bodhisattva and brought it to 洛山寺. Third, 調信 loved a girl and prayed to Buddha who could help 調信 marry her. In his dream, 調信 married her and raised five children. In the beginning, they were very happy, but in time they were frustrated due to extreme poverty. The first child died because of starvation. 調信 and his wife became old and sick. Their second child went to village to get some food, but she was bitten by a dog. This couple decided to get divorced. At this moment, 調信 woke up. Ha and Mintz translated the title of this section as follows: “The two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk.” They added a phrase, “the lovesick monk” to Chosin. Ha and Mintz simply translated 觀音 as “the goddess of mercy (Kwanum)” (Ha and Mintz, 2004, p.244). In Ha and Mintz’s title, “The two Buddhas of Naksan,” they identified bodhisattvas with Buddhas. However, in the text, they distinguished bodhisattvas from Buddha. Here Ha and Mintz break both intratextual and intertextual coherences.

The story in Section 24 is about 奈勿王(一作那密王) 金堤上. In this story, 奈勿王 was unhappy because his son, 美海, was sent to Japan as a pawn in 390. What was worse, the king’s younger brother, 寶海, was sent to Koguryeo as a pawn in 419. Thus, 奈勿王 missed them badly. 金堤上 went to Koguryeo to save 寶海. When 寶海 returned to Silla, 奈勿王 was very pleased to see his brother, but the king became more frustrated because of his son in Japan. Thus, 金堤上 went to Japan again and saved 美海, but 金堤上 could not return to

Silla. He was tortured and was killed in Japan. Ha and Mintz (2004) translated the title of this story as follows: King Naemul and Park Che-sang (p.61). Ha and Mintz's endnote said that *Samguk Sagi* referred to Che-sang as a descendant of Hyokkose Park, so the family name of Che-sang was not Kim, but Park. (p.94). Kim (2006) translated this title as follows: "King Naemul (내물) (also know as King Namil[나밀] and Kim Jesang (김제상)." Kim's footnote said that Jesang was "a son of Mulpum (물품) and a descent of the founder king, Hyeokgeose" (p.44). Here are two different interpretations about 金堤上. Ha and Mintz (2004) changed Jesang's family name into Park and explained it with the endnote. However, Kim (2006) took the opposite way. Kim tried to stick to the original text, so Kim translated the family name of Jesang into Kim as it was written in the original text. Which attitude is proper as a translator? If a translator translates a given text arbitrarily, how can the reader find what the original author intends? The translators translate the original text to deliver its message to the reader clearly by keeping both intratextual and intertextual coherences.

IV. Conclusion

This paper began with the question, "why different titles?" The translators used different titles because their purposes to translate *Samguk Yusa* into Korean were contrasting. Ha and Mintz translated *Samguk Yusa* into English in the 1970s and reprinted it several time. They assumed that *Samguk Yusa* was a valuable book because it delivered us ancient legends, stories, miracles, and lyrics. They compared the narratives of *Samguk Yusa* as the fairy tales in Europe. Thus, they did not pay enough respect to the original text and modified the original text as they intended. They ignored the interacontextual and intertextual coherences often. Unlike Ha and Mintz, Kim assumed that *Samguk Yusa* was a precious book because it transmitted us historical facts that had been

overlooked by *Samguk Sagi*. Kim always tried to keep both coherences and made the reader understand the historical situations when the original text had written.

The significance of this paper is to analyze two translated books in English by consulting the original text in Chinese and using Vermeer's model. This analysis demonstrates that translators' purposes determine their dependency on the original text.

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[Abstract]

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The purpose of this paper is to compare and evaluate two English versions of Samguk Yusa. One is translated as Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea in 1972 by Ha and Mintz. The other is Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea in 2006 by Kim.

Comparing and evaluating two versions, Vermeer's translation model is employed. Three important factors in this model are translators' purposes, intratextual coherence, and intertextual coherence. Ha and Mintz regarded Samguk Yusa as a collection of legends and stories and ignored historical facts. Kim, however, thought that Samguk Yusa was a precious book because it transmitted us historical facts that had been overlooked by Samguk Sagi.

Ha and Mintz did not mention their translational principles, but Kim used sense for sense translational principles. Ha and Mintz broke the intratextual and intertextual coherences by translating the original text arbitrarily. In contrast, Kim always tried to keep both coherences and delivered its message clearly.

>> Key Words

Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea(『삼국유사: 고대 삼국의 전설과 역사』), *Overlooked Historical Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms*(『한국 고대 삼국의 빠져버린 역사』), translators' purposes (번역자의 목적), intratextual coherence(텍스트 안에서의 일관성), intertextual coherence(상호 텍스트 간의 일관성)

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