Suojun ZHANG

Teacher, Doctoral Student, Hulunbuir University (Hulunbuir, PRC)

Email: generalzhangsj@163.com

Elena A. VASEEVA

Ph. D. (in Philology), Associate Professor, Transbaikial State University (Chita, Russia), Hulunbuir University (Hulunbuir, PRC)

Email: elena.vaseeva@rambler.ru

Translator's Notes from Paratextuality Perspective (as Exemplified in "The Secret History of the Mongols" Translated by Ardazhabu)

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The theory of intertextuality has proved to be very useful in translation studies, as it gives a more precise view of the translation process and its result. Paratexts include all the elements that surround the text – titles, prefaces, epilogue, and the like, and also include notes made by the translator. Translator's notes play an important role in translation work. They are an indispensable means for making the translated text comprehensible for the audience belonging to a different cultural environment. Notes fulfill various functions and have significant effects. The paper studies the notes made by Ardazhabu in his translation of *The Secret History of the Mongols* into Chinese. The function of elucidation seems to be one of the most significant in the translator's notes of the studied text. But the translator not only explains and clarifies some parts in the source text, but also endeavors to guide the readers' interpretation of the contents by presenting alternative points of view on some ideas. The analysis of representative examples shows that notes can fulfill more than one function and draw on various sources of information and reasoning.

Introduction

The first scientific research of the interrelations of a text with other texts was done by the Russian scholar M. Bakhtin. In his works he looked into polyphonic and dialogic character of the text. Later J. Kristeva, a French semiotician, while analyzing Bakhtin's ideas, proposed the concept of intertextuality. According to Kristeva, «Any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another» [6, p. 66]. She talks about two axes, a horizontal axis connecting the author and the reader, and a vertical axis connecting the text and other texts, to which the text can be related in a larger space.

G. Genette proposed a precise and accurate idea of intertextuality and defined a five-element schema in *Palimpsestes* (1982): intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality. Being one of the important components, paratextuality consists of peritext and epitext. «The criterion distinguishing the epitext from the peritext ... is in theory purely spatial. The epitext is any paratextual element not materially

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appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space» [4, p. 344].

One of the types of peritexts is translator's notes. «A note is a statement of variable length (one word is enough) connected to a more or less definite segment of text and either placed opposite or keyed to this segment» [4, p. 319]. The translator has to supply the readers with necessary comments, explanations and interpretations, because some parts of the text can be incomprehensible for the readers due to a number of factors, such as differences in culture, time distance, lack of specific knowledge, and so on. It is the translator's notes that make the contents of the text visible for the readers and help them to catch the underlying meanings. In creating these paratexts the translator has to consider a lot of various, and sometimes contradicting, factors. The author of the first English translation of *The Secret History* F. W. Cleaves described his story of adding footnotes to the translation. He wrote that at first «The translation ... was not provided with footnotes. Yet it was soon to become apparent ... that much was destined to be lost not only to the general reader, but also to the specialist, if certain remarks were not made for their immediate enlightenment. I then added the present footnotes which represent the compromise between each of the two extremes – that with none, and that with as many as, in the opinion of the specialist, the translation would appear to require» [3, p. XII – XIII]. Every translator faces similar problems and has to find solutions and compromises.

Genette characterizes notes as «a fairly elusive and receding element of the paratext» adding that «if the paratext is an often indefinite fringe between text and off-text, the note – which, depending on type, belongs to one or the other or lies between the two – perfectly illustrates this indefiniteness and this slipperiness» [4, p. 342–343]. This means that notes should be studied in close relation to a certain text, a certain discourse situation, and with considering the relevant factors affecting the notes' creation.

Paratextuality in translation

Intertextuality emphasizes communication among texts from different times and spaces. Any text synchronically and diachronically absorbs and/or quotes other texts from outer space. All of these texts make up a more complicated system, in which any new text has to communicate and interact with prior ones. It is the similarity that translation shares with intertextuality.

Translation and paratext

Translation, in fact, is a complicated activity, which has to cover several subjects and objects, such as the author, the source text, the readers, the context, the translator, the target text, etc. Thus, a translator is not only an intermediary between the source language and the target language. A translator has to take a lot of factors into consideration, especially cultural differences and expressional differences. If cultural differences cannot be transmitted accurately, that means the source text cannot be translated at all. This is where the paratext is used to solve the problem. The paratext can include titles, signs of authorship, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, notes, etc., which can give readers sufficient relevant knowledge the translator intends to express. «The paratext is neither on the interior nor on the exterior: it is both; it is on the threshold; and it is on this very site that we must study it, because essentially, perhaps, its being depends upon its site» [4, p. XVII].

Working on the source text, a translator has to adjust its contents to the target receivers of the translation who belong to a different cultural background and/or historic period. During the process of work, a translator changes identity: a reader, an elucidator, a creator. And a translator has to connect all of these identities together naturally. As a reader, the future author of the translated work should decode the source text originally plunging in the source culture, interpret it and clarify all the details having in mind the potential audience. Then as a translator the person tries to encode what has been interpreted with conventional expressions in the target text. And finally, as an elucidator, the translator supplies the translated text with the necessary notes, comments, and other paratexts with the guidance of the acquired knowledge and culture. During the procedures, a translator has to take anything relevant to the text into consideration, such as social background, habits of thinking, culture, and customs of the receiving audience. «To keep the cultural information of the source language is both to convey faithfully the information of the source language and to promote the cultural communication between nations» [11, p. 125].

Referring to paratexts, a translator can make good use of them and put relevant and important information and explanations, which the source text refers to or implies. While working on the source text, a translator has to think over every dynamic factor connected with language, culture, society, history, etc. These complicated factors can be included into paratexts in the form of titles, notes, summaries, etc. In most cases a translator just cannot do without paratexts, as translation transfers the source text into a different linguistic, cultural and social environment where the notions and concepts of the original text are unknown and obscure. In creating paratexts, a translator makes use of various other sources – books, reference materials, researches, etc.; besides that, different viewpoints can also be presented. All these diverse approaches make the final work easier to perceive for the people of another culture.

According to K. Batchelor, «Genette contrasts the immutability of the text with the mutability of paratext» [2, p. 29]. Decoding source texts, a translator has to encode them into target texts. It is impossible to translate this information in target texts directly, which might break the beauty and originality of source texts. In this situation, a translator has to introduce some important information in paratexts in the form of notes, prefaces and the like, especially referring to figures' names, places' names, or some other cultural information. They should, therefore, be introduced in paratexts. «The paratext, then, is empirically made up of a heterogenous group of practices and discourses of all kinds and dating from all periods» [4, p. 2].

At first glance the translator's notes seem an extra burden for readers, as they add more pages to the translation work. However, without paratexts the source text will remain a "locked treasury" for the readers, as many notions and concepts will be covert. Besides, there will be definitely some important and relevant knowledge referring to different fields, and sometimes readers are directed to other books or journals for more information.

Translator's notes and their functions

Paratexts perform diverse functions. According to Batchelor, paratexts are regarded «as any material additional to, appended to or external to the core text which has functions of explaining, defining, instructing, or supporting, adding background information, or the relevant opinions and attitudes of

scholars, translators and reviewers» [2, p. 27].

As V. Pelatt rightly notes, the functions of paratext may be serious: the introduction and footnotes in a volume provide all-important academic background information. Paratext primes, explains, contextualises, justifies and through beautification, tempts [7, p. 2–3].

In translation works many various kinds of notes can be found – some of them provide factual information, some make references to documents or other sources, they can explain some things, give additional data, or interpret, or present some opinion, they can also be communicating with the source text or with other translations, expressing support, additional proof, or contradicting, arguing, and correcting. «The variety of practices and messages that can be included in notes is as broad as the relationships that they can establish with the text they accompany» [8, p. 151]. Besides, two or more functions are often combined or interwoven in one note.

Elucidation is probably the most prominent function of a paratext in translation. Serving as an instruction, or a summary, or an explanation to a particular word or a part, a note in nature provides help to a reader in understanding the text better and more profoundly. In any case, they surround a text and extend it. «The paratextual element is always subordinate to 'its' text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence» [4, p. 12]. A paratext shows clearly what great work the translator has done during the translating, how deeply the translator understands the source text, and what are the translator's interpretations considering reader factors. Some scholars even treat translations as paratexts to the original texts. «It is about scrutinizing them for the ways in which they (translations) may comment on or (make) present the original text» [2, p. 29].

According to the theory of intertextuality, any text communicates with other texts. In this interaction they can influence, modify, and absorb each other. A paratext definitely has a strong effect on a reader's understanding and interpretation. Paratexts are aimed at clarifying the parts of the source text, which are difficult or even impossible for the reader's comprehension due to different cultural environments, historic periods, and so on.

Very often the information in the source text is meant for the people of a certain cultural group; that is why much is implied as the supposed readers are well aware of the details, facts and practices described by the author. When the text is translated, it is transferred to a different environment, and all these details become like locked doors, as they prevent the readers from acquiring the inner sense. Improving readability and comprehensibility of the source text with the help of paratexts, a translator opens the original work for the readers' perception, interpretation and appreciation.

Features and functions of paratexts in Ardazhabu's *The Secret History of Mongols*

This study is based upon one of the numerous translations of *The Secret History of the Mongols* – a great literary monument of the 13th century reporting the events of the Genghis Khan epoch. *The Secret History of the Mongols* is regarded as one of the greatest works in the history of the Mongolian nation and an encyclopedia including the narration of Mongolian life for more than 500 years, such as etiquette, ethics, diets, and martial strategies, etc. So far, it has nearly 500 different versions. «The Genghis Khan Documentary Museum now has 375 versions of *The Secret History of Mongols*, covering more than 30 countries and regions» [9, p. 9].

It is presumed to have been originally written in the Uighur language, and then translated into Chinese in the 14th century.

This ancient text was first introduced to the European world in the Russian translation made by Palladii in 1866. Translation into the Japanese language by N. Michiyo appeared in 1907. In 1940s the work was translated into German by Haenisch, into French – by Pelliot, into Turkish – by A. Temir. The first English translation was made in 1956 by Cleaves but published only in 1982. I. de Rachewiltz translated the work into English in 2004.

As for Chinese translations, Gu Guangqi's edition collating Zhang Xiangyun's is one of the representatives. And it is generally believed as an ideal version so far, in addition to Qian Daxin's edition found in *The Yongle Encyclopedia* and Ye Dehui's edition. Modern academic circles about *The Secret History of the Mongols* also have several versions of Chinese translation, some representatives are: *The Secret History of the Mongols* translated by Yu Dajun, *The Secret History of the Mongols* translated by Xie Zaishan, Asigang and Te Guanbuzhabu's *The Secret History of the Mongols (Modern Chinese Edition)*, etc. There are differences on processing in the language and literary quotations in these editions. The biggest difference in Asigang and Te Guanbuzhabu's work is adding important notes or sufficient knowledge about Mongolian traditional customs, cultures and legends with the purpose of facilitating readers' understanding with the help of colorful illustrations. Such knowledge does not appear in the original text, but readers can also extend the relevant knowledge to deepen their understanding of it. For instance, they introduce many customs and taboos of Mongolian people, such as Mongolian birthday customs and Genghis Khan's death anniversary, etc. Later on, in order to have a better appreciation to the original text and to avoid loss of information during translation process, many authors make notes on Mongolian translation and form a special translation full of notes. The most representative one is Daoruntibu's *A New Translation to 'The Secret History of the Mongols' with Simplified Notes*, which is a simplified version, only for explaining those vocabularies and sentences which may affect reading comprehension, without any further extending. It is relatively simple to read and saves a lot of time spent on the text exploration itself.

The translation under study is made by Ardazhabu and it is one of the most popular versions of this great work in modern China. Published in Inner Mongolia University Press in 2005, his work got the official name: *A New Translation to 'The Secret History of the Mongols' with Intensive Notes*. This book is composed of a preface, text (including translation and notes), original text (a collation of the secret history of Mongolia), original Latin transcriptions, indexes and a bibliography. In order to faithfully preserve the pronunciation of the Mongolian language more than 700 years ago, the author translated *The Secret History of the Mongols* into Latin for the first time by referring to the pronunciation of Chinese characters in the middle ages. Every entry (including the index) in the commentary to the new translation of *The Secret History* is written in three languages: Chinese, Latin and modern Mongolian. The most important is that the author forms a new translation in Modern Chinese compared with the translation in the Ming dynasty, and his greatest contribution is to explain some Mongolian arcane vocabulary and cultural background in the notes in detail. In addition, he also clears up and copies the original collated text of *The Secret*

History of the Mongols, and introduces a names index, a tribes index and places indexes in the appendixes at the end of his translation. Compared with other versions, his translation is more comprehensive and meticulous.

Taking notes made by Ardazhabu as an example, the purpose of this research is to analyze the functions of paratextuality, so as to study the translation strategies. «Translation studies should not only concentrate on texts in society and history, but also on the interrelation between literary texts and other texts, and analyze these texts with a system of openness, dynamics and diversity» [10, p. 30].

There are four main types of paratext in Ardazhabu's translation of *The Secret History of the Mongols*: preface, synopsis, notes, and indexes. Because of its paratexts, the work is worth reading and easier to understand for a contemporary Chinese reader unfamiliar with the Mongolian language, culture and traditions. The translator's notes are put into the centre of this study because this type of paratexts is specific for the translation work and can be viewed as a good source of information about translation strategies and techniques. Notes can provide data about the translator's personal position concerning the translation process. Besides, the notes occupy the greatest part in the whole work and bear the main semantic charge among all the paratexts.

Features of Ardazhabu's notes in The Secret History of the Mongols

The work under study not only translates the source texts faithfully, but also compiles more than 1,160 word-notes with section synopsis, as well as chapter synopsis made by Erdengtai and Wuyundalai. In terms of the number of pages, there are 522 pages for the whole book, in which notes take up more or less 80 percent. And the longest note itself is around 7 pages, while the shortest one might be one or two lines. Most of the notes are mainly to focus on explaining the meaning(s), formation, and origin of a word or a phrase with the help of stating other historical works, dictionaries or scholars' perspectives. In this situation, these notes could be very long for introducing and extending relevant ideas when referring to Mongolian conventional words. And very few of them are not only to explain, but also to express translator's own views or opinions by summing up and criticizing different ideas and researches. This type of notes is meant to find out a more reasonable or conventional translation or explanation.

No matter how long the note is, we can never neglect the fact which shows the importance of paratexts in his translation. Besides, the translator makes a 32-page index on people's names, a 8-page index on tribes' names and a 11-page index on places' names at the end of the translation. These indexes are convenient for readers to check any person, place and tribe in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Most of the notes made by the translator are to introduce Mongolian culture, customs, records in other important Mongolian books, and some related research works. Many of the notes are added to explain a particular word in Mongolian history and culture or show some scholars' research findings in a specific field or introduce functions of a word or a phrase in *The Secret History of the Mongols*.

Logically speaking, the notes can cover any field, thus acquiring the ability to communicate with any text in any time and space. There can be different genres in the notes – historical, economic and scientific genre. Although «the most widely studied type of paratext is the translator's preface» [2, p. 26], the most obvious one appears to be the notes taking up a

high percentage of the work under study, which shows the sufficient energy the translator has spent and the degree of understanding and interpretation of the source texts in terms of intertextuality on the part of the translator. However, up to now, there are few research papers paying attention to its paratexts, although there are some Chinese versions of *The Secret History of the Mongols* focusing on the functions of notes in detail.

Functions of the notes in Ardazhabu's translation

In Ardazhabu's *The Secret History of the Mongols* the notes take up almost 80 percent of the book, which is the most obvious feature. It is not difficult to imagine there are a lot of cultural introductions that other minorities at home and abroad or the Han nationality in China cannot understand easily in the great work. Therefore, there are strong demands for notes in translation, which can serve to elucidating the translation work. Most of the notes in it share the quality. Below is a representative example to be analyzed in details.

There was a saying that the Mongolians are offspring of a greyish white wolf and a white doe. It seems incredible from the point of view of common sense. However, there are some similar sayings even nowadays. The original saying is from the first section of *The Secret History of the Mongols*. “孛儿帖·赤那奉上天之命而生。他的妻子是豁埃·马阑勒。” [1, p. 1]. It means that Chinggis Qahan was descended from Borte Chino, whose name means ‘greyish white wolf’, and Qo'ai-maral, whose name means ‘white doe’. In the old times, this sentence was translated as “The ancestors of the Mongols are a greyish white wolf and a white doe”. And because of it, some people treat the two animals as their faith or even totems. On page 15, the 7th note, the translator explains clearly the meanings of the two names and also the Mongolian traditions for naming people. According to his studies, the Mongols had the custom of naming people after animals. Therefore, there is no need to translate the two names literally into Chinese. It is more correct to transliterate the names and apply a commentary for them. He also shows readers some other records on it to prove the nonsense that Borte Chino and Qo'ai-maral are totems. Moreover, the translator read a lot of other historical books and quoted other sayings on the origins of Mongols in order to give readers different ideas on it and help them to form critical thinking by themselves. The note itself is one page, much longer than the source text. It is so important that readers can have a general view and better understanding of the topic. This note is multifunctional – it provides cultural information, but also it comments on the translation techniques; besides, Ardazhabu disputes with the author(s) of previous translation about the meaning of the Mongolian names; moreover, he instructs the readers in correct perception of the names and beliefs bound to them. Such notes «make the translator's voice heard as he or she speaks directly to the reader, making the invisible translator visible to reader whilst interrupting the flow of reading» [8, p. 150].

Ardazhabu interprets the Mongolian version of *The Secret History of the Mongols* with his own knowledge system. He has to take many factors into consideration when translating the great work, such as – who the readers will be, how much they can know of the Mongolian culture, in what ways to explain the details for the readers to perceive and understand them, etc. As M. Kazmierczak points out, «it is the projection of the reader, of his/her cultural competence and needs, that shapes the translation strategy,

even more so with respect to intertextual elements» [5, p. 373]. Actually, making notes explains the cultural differences and shows elucidation to the translation work.

The notes Ardazhabu made in the book show that he adds something not expressed in the source text, but relevant for the potential readers of the translation. Therefore, it is not only showing creativity, but also diversity of translation.

In section 33 there is one plot translated as “孛端察儿跟在他哥哥不忽•合塔吉的后边，颠步驰走中说道：‘哥哥！哥哥！身体有头，衣服有领，那才好啊！’”，which means “Bodonchar, trotting along behind his older brother, said to him: ‘My brother, my brother, a body needs a head, a garment needs a collar’”. It seems a little confused to read the sentence at a glance. The context is as follows: Bodonchar was driven out of his family and lived with strangers far from his relatives. Several years later, his family wanted him to be back, so he was very excited and told his brother the sentence. What does the phrase «身体有头，衣服有领» mean?

In order to give readers more explanations, the translator makes two notes at the part. The first one is to give explanation in detail to the word ‘jaqa’ or ‘jag’ according to some dictionary and old books. Readers, even without any knowledge about Mongolian dressing, can get to know the differences between collars and ‘jaqa’ or ‘jag’ in Mongolian, especially on their different functions and styles for men and women. Then, he uses the second note to show that “身体有头，衣服有领” is an idiom in which the speaker tries to express his excitement to be back to his family, because his family is like the head to his body and the collar to his coat. In the meanwhile, he wants to rob and seize the people living with him for they do not have heads in their bodies and collars in their coats.

Therefore, the translator decodes the source text and encodes it into the target text – Chinese version with two notes. Formally, these notes are informative in function, but the information they present is complex – the translator conveys not only cultural and linguistic knowledge but also conceptual, as he describes the concepts peculiar to the life of Mongolian people. With the help of the notes, readers can easily get the general idea of this section, and at the same time they can form deeper understanding of Mongolian conventional sayings in a concrete context.

Finally, some notes have to absorb other texts to create a new one to serve or achieve the translator's intention.

In section 57 the original author describes a ceremony in which people dance around trees: “推举忽图勒为合罕之后，环绕着豁儿豁纳黑的枝叶蓬松繁茂的大树舞蹈。蹂踏成的壕沟没肋骨，蹂踏出的尘土没膝盖。” – “Qutula was raised up as Qahan and they danced around the Many-Leaved Tree of Qorqonaq until they stood in furrows up to their ribs and made wounds up to their knees”.

As for the sentence, the translator makes an important note, which covers more than one page to introduce Mongolian dancing “debsen”. As far as we know, dance is only a tiny part of Mongolian's life, so its record here also proves that the great work is an encyclopedia of the ancient Mongolian culture. At the beginning part of the note, he explains different connotations of the word “debsen” according to different dictionaries, such as *Mongolian Dictionary*, *Mongolian and Chinese Dictionary*, etc. Here, the translator quotes terms and explanations from outer texts – dictionaries. Actually, the word “debsen” means “stamp” or “jump” in modern language.

This kind of dancing has close relation to Russian dancing and that of the Buryats in China, as well as in the country of Mongolia, named as “yoohur”. The dancers are hand in hand to make a circle with dancing and singing together. Stamping should be the main movement to perform.

Then, the translator introduces the origination and development for the dance. In this part of the note, he comments on the plot in this section. The dance should be an ancient one, because the Buryats think an old man or woman should be the first one to start the dance rather than youngsters for showing their respect to seniors. In ancient times, the leaders were seniors in both Matriarchal Clan Society and later in Patrilineal Clan Society. So if a reader treats the expression «they stood in furrows up to their ribs and made wounds up to their knees» as a kind of exaggeration or hyperbole, there will be no reason, for a few people cannot achieve the effects in a short time. It must be all members in Mongolian tribes who dance together for a long time.

Therefore, readers can notice that this note has to absorb a lot of other texts related to dances and history. Finally, the translator comes to a conclusion that “debsen” and “yoohur” or even some similar names for the dance are variants in different times and for different peoples. The texts from outer space are very helpful to know history and culture to improve understanding of the translation.

With the hope that readers can have thorough understanding of source texts as much as possible, the translator encodes not only the original meanings, but also other important information in the notes. Ardazhabu tries his best to keep the beauty of the source text helping the readers understand it deeper. His notes fulfill various functions – informing, elucidating, expressing his point of view, arguing with some other opinions, instructing and persuading the reader.

Conclusion

The translator’s notes play a prominent and significant part in translation work. It is in the notes where the translator can provide relevant information for the readers to achieve deeper understanding of the translated text. The notes are especially important in the translation of an ancient and valuable text.

As the present study shows, Ardazhabu did a great deal of work apart from the translation proper. He supplied his version of *The Secret History of the Mongols* with a lot of notes trying to give readers the opportunity to extract the rich contents of the source text as fully as possible. Most of his notes are short and serve the function of providing information and explanation. But some parts of the translated text are accompanied with long and detailed commentaries. We have studied three of such notes to show that they reflect the translator’s deep penetration into the source text bound with his understanding of a prospective reader’s needs and demands. The notes of this type fulfill various functions – elucidation, critical discussion of some opinions, argumentation of the translator’s point of view, instruction and persuasion of the readers. Some of these functions are combined in one note and make a significant effect on the reader. They enable readers to appreciate the source text and facilitate the readers’ own thinking.

In his translation work Ardazhabu makes great use of paratextuality giving a special form of *The Secret History of the Mongols* intended for his

contemporaries and fellow countrymen. That is why his version of *The Secret History of the Mongols* is so popular in modern China.

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ДЖАН Содзюн

преподаватель, аспирант Хулунбуирского университета (г. Хулунбуир, КНР)
Электронная почта: generalzhangsj@163.com

ВАСЕЕВА Елена Александровна

канд. филол. наук, доцент Забайкальского государственного университета (г. Чита), Хулунбуирский университет (г. Хулунбуир, КНР)
Электронная почта: elena.vaseeva@rambler.ru

Переводческие примечания с позиций паратекстуальности (на материале перевода «Тайной истории монголов» Ардажабу)

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Переводческие примечания как один из видов паратекстов играют важную роль в переводческой работе. Примечания выполняют разнообразные функции и оказывают значительное воздействие. В данной работе исследованы примечания Ардажабу к его переводу на китайский язык эпического произведения XIII века «Тайная история монголов». Одной из основных функций примечаний в исследуемом интертекстуальность, паратекст, перевод, исходный текст, переводной текст, переводческие примечания,

функции,
Ардажабу,
«Тайная история
монголов»

тексте перевода является разъяснительная функция. Но переводчик не только объясняет и уточняет, он стремится направлять понимание читателями содержания, представляя альтернативные точки зрения. Анализ показывает, что примечания могут одновременно выполнять несколько функций и привлекать различные источники информации и аргументации.

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