

On the Perception of the Poem “Almotanabi” by Adam Mickiewicz

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the translation of the poem “Almotanabi” (given in the author’s writing) by the famous European poet Adam Mickiewicz into Polish, made from the text of Granger de Lagrange’s translation of the French language. The very fact of translation from Arabic into French makes it possible to study this poem from various perspectives: a comparative analysis of the French translation and the original Arabic text, and an analysis of the text that clarifies the motives for referring to this work and the corresponding interpretations of the author. Our research focuses on the latter type, which aims to identify details of interpretation that clarify their similarity or difference with the original. Considering the fact that every translation is an inevitable transformation of the text on the part of the translator, Mickiewicz’s translation should be considered both a translation and a stylization of the source text. The analysis shows that, despite his sufficient knowledge of the Arabic author and his qasida, he could not avoid the perception of the text by the European reader, which allows us to regard his translation as a West-Eastern synthesis in the spirit of the famous German poet I.V. Goethe.

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1. Introduction

The work of the renowned Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz occupies a special place not only in Polish but also in world literature. Renowned international scholars have explored it. The multifaceted nature of Mickiewicz's work has allowed scholars to examine all aspects of his poetic legacy. Each scholar has attempted to uncover the breadth of the themes, motifs, and artistic, linguistic, and figurative means employed. Naturally, these fundamental studies reflected individual interpretations, sometimes reflecting conventional wisdom or differing perspectives. In any case, these works, large and small, characterized the scholars' special relationship to Adam Mickiewicz's unique poetry, which focused on a universal human perception of the world around us.

Among the works of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz on oriental themes, the poem “Almotanabi” attracts important research interest. Developing the poetic strategy of the “Crimean Sonnets,” Mickiewicz turns to examples of eastern poetry and, translating them, tries to understand and reveal for the reader the peculiar world of eastern man, h Let us add to what has been said that in this work the influence of the traditions of the greatest German poet Johann Goethe is clearly felt. So in his “West-

Eastern Divan" in the part "Zuleika-name" the name Mutanabbi is mentioned: is unique character, matching it with an equally unique description of eastern nature.

*"I don't want to be just a rabbi,
For the rest, follow your advice:
Ferdowsi and il Mutanabbi,
And the king - no doubt" (Gyote, 1988).*

The choice of this work for translation, like all works on oriental themes, was determined not only by the emotional and sensual needs of the poet, but also by the correspondence of the material to his social and personal mood. It should also be noted that there are special difficulties in translating the source text. As noted by N.D. Finkelberg: "The emotional-evaluative quality of an Arabic text is determined by the forms of evaluation recorded in the language, the methods of evaluation noted as preferable in speech, and the logic of evaluation associated with the worldview and behavioral (ethical) norms inherent in the author of the text as a representative of society... The first task is to grasp the fact of the presence of an assessment, the second task is to correctly interpret the nature of the assessment, taking into account the metaphorical density of the Arabic text known in science" (Finkelberg, 2018). The scientist's statements make one wonder how much greater this difficulty becomes when translating through an intermediary language. Looking ahead, we should note the poet's careful and scrupulous attitude to the details of the text.

For him, each element of the poem is of particular significance. At first glance, it may seem that the poet is deliberately enhancing the exoticism of a foreign concept of the world. However, a closer Reading changes our understanding. Mickiewicz sets himself the goal of understanding the foundations of Eastern man's perception of the surrounding reality, which manifests itself in feelings, emotions, and the lyrical characters' character. To do this, he resorts to explanations and notes that contribute to the correct assimilation of the text. For example, immediately after the title of the poem, Mickiewicz explains: "*z arabskiego, według tłumaczenia Laqraza*" (Poezje, 1929).

2. Materials and methods

The article's material is the text of A. Mickiewicz's poem "Almotanabi," which belongs to the oriental movement in the Polish poet's work. Given the poem's translation specificity, translation principles are applied accordingly, revealing its textual matrix. The chosen method of analysis is used to determine the correspondence with the plot and images of the original material. General scientific research methods (observation, comparative analysis, synthesis) and elements of discursive analysis.

3. Results and discussion

Thus, the poet openly declares that his text is a translation of a translation from Arabic into French by Granger de Lagrange. By the way, the text from Lagrange's "Arabic Anthology", published in 1828, was taken as a basis. This explanation is intended to emphasize that the translation was made from the French text, not from Arabic. On the other hand, the Polish poet understands perfectly well that translation through an intermediary language can necessarily lead to certain discrepancies with the original. At the same time, he is convinced that a translated text is necessary to expand readers' understanding of Arabic poetry. Mickiewicz does not limit himself to a brief explanation and adds information about the Arab poet: "*Almotenabbi - sławny rycerz i poeta arabski*,

wygnany ze swej ojczyzny, udał się do Egiptu, do przyjaciela swego, sułtana Abu-Chodża-Fatik, którego gdy już przy życiu nie znalazł, opuścił Egipt i w podróży tę kasydę ułożył” (Poezje, 1929). Let's pay attention to some details of the note. Firstly, the Polish poet tells us that the lyrical hero of the work is an Arab poet who gained fame not only as a poet, but also as a brave warrior. The indicated remarkable qualities in the process of describing events are dominant.

Further, the time (*udał się do Egiptu*), the name of the character (sułtan Abu-Chodża-Fatik) to whom the qasida is dedicated (*tę kasydę ułożył*) are specified (Poezje, 1929). With these explanations, Mickiewicz gives the reader short information, which, in the author's opinion, precedes the conscious perception of further text. Moreover, the genre of Arabic versification (kasydę) is clarified, which we will dwell on in more detail in the process of analyzing the poem.

Before moving on to the consideration of Mickiewicz's poem, we consider it appropriate to clarify the text's title, which reflects the personality of the famous Arab poet. An excursion into the distant historical chronicle of Arab reality helps us understand the essence of the Polish poet's motivation in appealing to the image of a very famous person. We are talking about the classics of Arabic poetry written in the 10th century.

Abu-t-Tayyib ibn al-Hussein al-Jufi (915-965), nicknamed “al-Mutanabbi” (“likening himself to a prophet”), is one of the founders of classical Arabic literature. According to scientists, Al-Mutanabbi began writing poetry from childhood (from the age of nine) (Ibraqimov, 2010). Most of his poems have retained their relevance in the modern Arab world. The fact is that Al-Mutanabbi belonged to the galaxy of those poets who worked in the palaces of various rulers, nobles, and kings of their time.

The future Arab poet received fundamental training at the literary school in the southern Iranian city of Kufa, where he studied Arabic grammar. Further, he enriches his knowledge of Arabic literary language among nomads, improving the Bedouin dialect. All the circumstances of life, the loss of contact with his tribe, allowed the future poet to become a herald of the word, whose power could lead people, strengthen faith in national identity, and in the ethnic community of the Arab people. Therefore, he considered it his mission to devote himself to the service of preserving national traditions and values. He was especially attracted to the philosophy of tribal life, episodes of the most significant battles, and the exploits of heroic warriors.

He himself was a warrior, a knight, and a leader: in 932, he led the Qarmatian uprising and was imprisoned for two years. After his release from prison (935), he began wandering as a poet, serving in 945 at the court of the emir of Aleppo, Sayf ud-Daula. It was during this period that Al-Mutanabbi created magnificent odes in honor of his ruler. However, court intrigues force him to leave the palace and find refuge in the court of Abul-Misk Kafur in Egypt. After his dream of becoming the governor of Sidon fails, the poet writes critical poems against Kafur and leaves him. Subsequently, he is invited to the Buyid Sultan in Shiraz, Azud ad-Dowle, who also becomes the object of his panegyrics. It should be noted that all the events of Dole's reign, down to the most minor details, are described by the poet using sophisticated metaphors, epithets, and hyperboles, which sometimes bordered on a violation of Islamic piety.

Frequent wanderings around the countryside formed a poet with a contradictory nature. On the one hand, he elevated some of the rulers to heights beyond the usual, only to bring them down with humiliating criticism. Therefore, it is no coincidence that this duality served as the reason for his characterization: “His self-esteem easily turned into arrogance, his thirst for independence into quarrelsomeness, and his ambitious

aspirations became the reason for his obsequiousness and servility" (Arabic poetry, 1975). But all this did not in any way detract from his poetic talent.

Finally, after long wanderings, the Arab poet decides to return to his hometown of Kufa, where, as fate would have it, he was never able to reach. This event should be discussed in more detail, as it reflects Al-Mutanabbi's poetic credo. The fact is that in one of the poems, "hija" (the genre of vilifying enemies with rude, abusive words), he insulted a certain "Shabba al-Asadi" Dabba. The latter, having learned about the return of the poet, together with his uncle Fatik al-Asadi, intercepted him near Kufa and reminded him of his own poem, speaking of courage, bravery, and valor, which prevented the poet's possible escape (Ibraqimov, 2010). Thus, remaining true to his convictions, the poet enters into battle with his enemies and dies as a warrior (965). These are brief accounts of the main milestones of Al-Mutanabbi's life and work, which shed light on the understanding of Mickiewicz's translation, as we will see in the course of the research.

The poem's form deserves special attention. As noted above, Mickiewicz reveals in a note to the poem that Abotanami dedicates the qasida to his friend, Sultan Abu-Khoja-Fatik. In other words, it is necessary to clarify the understanding of the poetic form of "qasida". The Arabic metric "arud" ("aruz") is an alternation of syllables of unequal length. "A certain combination of short and long syllables makes up a foot, a combination of two to four feet makes up a hemistich, and two hemistiches with an obligatory caesura make up a verse (beit). Depending on the alternation of long and short syllables, Arabic poetry knows 16 poetic meters" (Ibraqimov, 2010).

"Qasyda" is considered by specialists to be the main poetic form. Its structure consists of ordered parts that follow one another and cover certain events of Bedouin life. In Arabic poetics, it follows a clear pattern: a sequential depiction of pictures of the past and present, accompanied by a description of the racer and his horse or camel, and ending with praise for one's own courage or the valiant battles of one's tribe. The indicated poetic change in the paintings is achieved through linguistic stylistic means. Moreover, a strictly developed scheme does not prevent poets from showing their originality.

In a poetic text, conveying realities alongside other challenges plays a significant role. Considering that this type of vocabulary not only requires the preservation of meaning but also presupposes its connection to national and historical flavor.

The beginning ("nasib") of the poem (qasida) begins with a description of the picture of nature. The lyrical hero tries to compare celestial phenomena with earthly elements:

*Pókiż przez głuche piaski i przez dzikie lądy
Mam lecieć, za gwiazdami wypuściwszy wodze?
Gwiazdy, nóg nie mające, nie ustaną w drodze,
Jak ustają znużeni ludzie i wielbłądy* (Poezje, 1929).

(How long must I fly across the desolate sands and across the wild lands,
Having let loose my reins after the stars?
The stars, having no legs, will not cease on their journey,
As weary men and camels cease)

The traveler compares the rider, called to overcome the difficulties of the earth's sandy expanses, with the heavenly stars, which are not hindered by legs and fatigue on the way. The phrases "głuche piaski", "dzikie lądy", "mam lecieć, za gwiazdami", "gwiazdy, nóg nie mające", "ustają znużeni ludzie i wielbłądy" attract attention (Poezje,

1929). Naturally, these constructions are unusual for the Polish reader and do not fit into the figurative system of the Polish poetic language. At the same time, as further observations will show, they are an integral part of the Arab worldview.

The reader may be amazed by the color palette, which takes on whimsical contrasting shades:

*Słońce nam poczerńiło oblicza i czoła,
Siwym włosom czarności przywrócić nie zdoła.
Czyliż sędzia niebieski sroższym dla nas będzie,
Niżli ziemscy, litości nie mający sędzie? (Poezje, 1929).
(The sun has blackened our faces and foreheads,
It cannot restore the blackness of our gray hair.
Will the heavenly judge be more severe towards us
Than the merciless earthly judges?)*

Thus, the sun, which is familiar to us, which is designed to sow a range of light tones, acts on human skin and colors it black. However, it, that is, the sun, is powerless against the change in color of human hair (gray hair) (*Słońce nam poczerńiło oblicza i czoła, / Siwym włosom czarności przywrócić nie zdoła*) (Poezje, 1929). In other words, the metaphorical imagery that conveys the originality of Arabic poetry draws the reader's close attention. Immediately after the indicated contrast, the poet turns to heaven, to the creator, in order to receive an answer to the revealed paradox of the universe: "*Czyliż sędzia niebieski sroższym dla nas będzie, / Niżli ziemscy, litości nie mający sędzie?*" (Poezje, 1929). Here, it is appropriate to refer to the thoughts of B. Ya. Shidfar: "This poetry depicts not so much the human personality as such, but the entire surrounding reality, of which man is only a part, that this poetry is always based on a specific visual image; it is characterized by a certain circle of constant epithets with a specific (not metaphorical!) meaning, and any object or natural phenomenon can be used as an object of comparison, because in the consciousness of the ancient poet they have the same aesthetic value, although from our point of view these images may turn out to be absolutely unaesthetic" (Shidfar, 1974).

Let's begin by clarifying the meaning of the term "realia." Many scholarly interpretations of this term are known, but the most accepted, in our opinion, is the definition given by S. Vlahov and S. Florin: realia are "words (and phrases) naming objects characteristic of the life (everyday life, culture, social and historical development) of one people and alien to another; being carriers of national and/or historical color, they, as a rule, do not have exact correspondences (equivalents) in other languages, and, therefore, cannot be translated "on a general basis," requiring a special approach" (Vlahov, Florin, 1986). Scholars have proposed various techniques for conveying realia. Among them, M. A. Alekseev's characterization of techniques is attractive in terms of comprehensiveness: 1. Techniques of mechanical transmission: transcription, transliteration, direct transfer without any changes. 2. Techniques for creating a new word: complete calque, partial calque, author's neologism. 3. Explanatory techniques: description, explanations. 4. Assimilating techniques: replacement with one's own analogue, replacement with someone else's analogue, generic substitutions, contextual analogue. 5. Omission (Alekseeva, 2007).). During the research, we will try to identify the techniques used by the Polish poet.

This series of paintings (vasf), which has aroused interest, can be continued. However, we want to focus on the key fragments of the qasida.

*Wyjeżdżając z Egiptu, do wielbłądów rzekłem:
«Bieżcie i przednie nogi popędźcie tylnymi»,
I opuściwszy Egipt, jak strzała uciekłem,
Przez sąsiedzkie krainy Dżars i Alalemi (Poezje, 1929).
(As I was leaving Egypt, I said to the camels:
"Run and drive your front legs with your hind legs."
And leaving Egypt, I fled like an arrow,
Through the neighboring lands of Jars and Alalemi.)*

The rider hurries his camels so that they, like arrows (jak strzała), quickly pass Dzhars and Alalemi. The translator could bypass these toponyms, in which case not only would the entire text not be transmitted, but the information layer would also be depleted. It is also interesting that, during transmission, the realities underwent phonetic transformations. The fact is that Al-Alam and Jaush are impressive mountains in Northern Arabia. Thus, the original author emphasizes the real obstacles camels face. By the way, in the subsequent part of the qasida, remaining true to the translation principle, Mickiewicz notes other geographical realities:

*Nieme dzidy, z ich ręki wypuszczone w pole,
Nauczyły się świstać, jak skrzydła sokole.
Nie staną wielbłądy, chociaż się zapienią,
I depcąc Regl i Ganem, nogi uzielenią (Poezje, 1929).
(And the silent spears, released from their hands into the field,
Learned to whistle like falcons' wings.
The camels will not stop, even if they foam,
And trampling Regl and Ganem, their feet will turn green.)*

"Regla" and "Galema", names of cities that were probably already transliterated during the original translation. As a result, it is not easy to establish the original names of toponyms. Based on the text, it remains to be assumed that in the original, we are talking about areas in medieval Arabia where the desert resembled a green savannah. We are led to this conclusion by the expression "nogi uzielenią", which metaphorically means the passage of camels through the oasis. Usually, a camel's path leads through sand, through the desert. Here, however, the poet transforms our imagination with a single phrase.

There are many symbols in Arabic poetry. For their adequate translation into other languages, notes are needed to promote equivalent understanding, because this is not possible in the presentation of the text. Here's an example:

*Młody mój orszak zna się dobrze ze strzałami,
Jak guślarz, co je miesza, gdy lud wrózbą mami.*

*Ilekoć turban zdejmą, włos czarny i długi
Wije się po ich głowach, jakby turban drugi (Poezje, 1929).
(My young retinue knows arrows well,
Like a sorcerer who mixes them up when he deceives the people with a
fortune.
Whenever they take off their turbans, long, black hair*

Wiggles on their heads, like a second turban).

By "Młody mój orszak" ("My young retinue"), we mean the rider's retinue, that is, the camels accompanying him. Meanwhile, the arrows that sorcerers shuffle are puzzling. We do not find any explanation of this matter in Mickiewicz. But a note from Russian translator Arseny Tarkovsky comes to our aid: "The ancient Arabs, before Mohammed, kept sacred arrows in their temple in Mecca. The bow of these arrows, in the hand of the priest, was set in motion so that the arrows moved among themselves, shuffled, and the sounds made when they collided were interpreted by augurs, sorcerers or fortune-tellers to predict the future" (Tarkovskiy, 1982). In this way, the true meaning of the veiled symbol is revealed. However, in the next stanza, the poet plays with the words "turban" and "hair," which, after removing the headdress, reveals long, black hair. In other words, even without the headdress, the hair looks like a log. It's noteworthy that the poet retains the name of the headdress, which was common among the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, thereby complementing the reader's background knowledge.

The poem gradually introduces us to the main character and the idea of dedication - Sultan Abu Shoja Fatik. This part of the qasida is called "qasd" (goal):

*«Dziś Pers i Arab będzie pastwiska nam skąpił,
Bo Abu Szodża Fatik do mogiły zstąpił.*

*Lud egipski drugiego Fatika nie liczy,
Jego miejsca na świecie nikt nie odziedziczy.*

*Abu Fatik za życia nie miał równych sobie,
Dzisiaj wszyscy umarli równi jemu w grobie.*

*Jegom szukał mem okiem; wołał memi usta,
Cóż znalazłem dokoła? Świat głuchy i pusty.*

*Tam wróciłem, skąd niegdyś byłem wędrownikiem,
I znowu chcę z piórami odnowić zabawę,
Ale mię pióro czarnym ostrzegło językiem:
«Nie piórem, ale mieczem zarabiał na sławę,*

*«Weźmiesz pióro, gdy rękę zmordujesz żelazem,
Pióro pracuje tylko za miecza rozkazem».*
*Tak mię pióra uczyły w przyjaznej rozmowie, —
Trzeba było posłuchać, z głupstwa się uleczyć,
Nie słuchałem; i teraz nie mogę zaprzeczyć,
Żem sam sobie zaszkodził, że mi braknie w głowie.*

*Mieczem można się tylko celu życzeń dobić;
Spytaj, czy kto na życie mógł piórem zarobić» (Poezje, 1929).*
*("Today, Persians and Arabs will spare us pastures,
For Abu Shoja Fatik has descended to the grave.
The Egyptian people do not count a second Fatik,
His place in the world no one will inherit.*

Abu Fatik had no equals during his life,
Today all who have died are equal to him in the grave.
I sought him with my eyes; my lips cried,
What did I find around me? A world dull and empty.
There I returned, from whence I was once a wanderer,
And once again I want to renew my play with pens,
But the pen warned me with its black tongue:
"Earn fame not with the pen, but with the sword,"
"You will take up the pen when you have worn out your hand with iron,
The pen only works at the sword's command."
Thus pens taught me in friendly conversation—
"I should have listened, cured myself of my folly,"
"I did not listen; and now I cannot deny,
That I have harmed myself, that I am now deprived of my mind."
One can only achieve the goal of one's wishes with a sword;
"Ask if anyone could earn a living with a pen.")

The Arab poet deeply mourns the death of his friend. He and the entire world around him call on you to follow his example. He addresses the Egyptian people, who must mourn their ruler, for no one else who inherits his place can be his replacement. And during his lifetime, Abu-Shoja-Fatiku had no equal, and after his death, according to the poet's conviction, everything around him loses its meaning. In the poet's addresses, one can feel emotional tension and a search for words and expressions that can adequately convey the severity of loss. The futility of searching to see your idol with your own eyes; the cry of loss finds no answer in the world around you. He came to his friend, but instead he met emptiness and silence. He mentally returns to the past, when he sang the praises of his friend - I znowu chcę z piórami odnowić zabawę - but in the present, the creative pen becomes powerless and loses its function. It is in this emotional and sensual context that the poet becomes disillusioned with his calling and comes to the conclusion that the pen can work exclusively under the control of the sword. This is the conclusion of the Arab poet, who devoted himself to the poetic praise of people close to him in spirit, but was disappointed in the futility of his craft, which could not organize his life and save him from worries and adversity. Although earlier in his poetry he asserted the equivalence of these concepts: "The horse, the night, the desert know me, Sword, spear, paper and pen" (Al-heyly va-l-leyly va-l-baydau ta'ifuni / Va-s-seyfu va-r-rumhu va-l-kurtasu va-l-kalyamu) (Ibraqimov, 2010).

Reflection promotes deep introspection and reassessment of life priorities. In return, the innate poetic creed is offered the mission of a warrior who wields a sword and defends not only his own, but also the honor and dignity of the tribe. Here it would be appropriate to recall his catchphrase, which is often quoted by connoisseurs of the work of the Arab poet: "I am the one whose literature (even) the blind can see ('Anā l-ladhī Nazara l-'a'mā'ilā'adab-l)" (Ibraqimov, 2010).

No less attractive is the peculiar conclusion to the poem, in which pessimistic notes are felt:

*«Chwała Bogu wielkiemu! stwórcy mojej duszy!
Z jego łaski i trudy i nieszczęścia znoszę;
I na długim wygnaniu znajduję rozkosze,
Kiedy inni w najsroższej dręczą się katuszy»* (Poezje, 1929).

(Glory to the great God! Creator of my soul!
By His grace I endure both hardships and misfortunes;
And in long exile I find delight,
While others suffer the harshest torments)

Yes, he blesses God, of which his soul is a part. Thanks to the Creator, unlike others, he endures hardships and misfortunes and finds pleasure in his long exile.

His own praise (faxr) begins with the indicated line:

*Nad cierpliwością moją dziwiły się losy,
Bo twardsze ciało moje, niżeli ich ciosy.
Śród terażniejszych ludzi smutne płyną chwile,
Wolałbym żyć przed wieki, a dziś być w mogile* (Poezje, 1929).
*Czas ojciec, będąc młodym, naszych przodków stwarzał,
A nas nikczemnych spłodził, gdy się już zestarzał.*
(Fate marveled at my patience,
For my body is stronger than their blows.
Among the people of today, sad moments pass,
I would rather live forever and be in a grave today
Father Time, when he was young, created our ancestors,
And when he was old, he begat us wicked ones).

The poet is courageous because he endured all the hardships and trials fate bestowed upon him. The core of this courage is patience (*cierpliwością*). Here, in our opinion, Mickiewicz implicitly expresses solidarity with the thought of the lyrical hero. The philosophy of this thought is that any person who has lived their life, passed through the millstones of fate, through good and evil, good and bad, must accept them as their chosen path. At the same time, believing in the eternity of the soul, they are ready to go to the grave and bid farewell to their physical shell. And one more detail, the final detail, the poem's conclusion. Times change, and so do people. If goodness was the fundamental rule of life for our ancestors, the new generation gravitates more toward evil. This ending, a kind of edification, concludes the poem and forces the reader to reflect on their own lives.

4. Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of the poem "Almotanabi" by Adam Mickiewicz shows that the translation of the Al-Mutanabbi qasida from French into Polish generally adheres to the principles of equivalent translation. Firstly, the Polish poet considered the text's functional and pragmatic parameters. This applies not only to the associative (tropical), but also to the prosodic (rhythmic) characteristics of the poetic text. In other words, the Polish poet, mastering the basics of Arabic poetry, tries to preserve the sounds of speech, word stress, word length, intonation, rhythm, and pauses, as well as rhymes, while solving the problems of associative modeling of structures reflecting different pictures of the world. It is the careful choice of linguistic means that allows Mickiewicz to adapt the text to the extent possible for the reader's understanding. Moreover, the Polish poet, following the source text, in depicting the human personality, creates, through epithets and metaphors, a specific visual image that reflects the human personality in the bright colors of the surrounding nature, orienting the reader toward an appropriate aesthetic value. Naturally, with indirect translation, as with direct

translation, it is impossible to preserve all the nuances of the original. This thesis also applies to Adam Mickiewicz's translation.

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