

The Historical Evolution and Contemporary Value of the Translation and Communication of Classical Masterpieces—Taking the Mongolian version of “Water Margin” as an Example

Wu Linhua

Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Northwest Minzu University, Lanzhou, Gansu, 730030, China

Keywords: “Water Margin”; Mongolian translation; Cultural exchange; Cross-cultural translation; Contemporary value

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to explore the historical evolution, spread influence and contemporary cultural value and enlightenment of Mongolian version of “Water Margin”, with a view to providing a new perspective for cultural exchange and cross-cultural translation practice between China and Mongolia. In order to achieve this goal, the Mongolian version of “Water Margin” is studied by means of historical analysis and cross-cultural comparison. In the process of research, by combing the literary status of the original “Water Margin” and the historical development of the Mongolian translation, the spread track and cultural adaptation process of the translation in Mongolia are revealed. At the same time, by analyzing the acceptance of Mongolian translation in Mongolia, the communication characteristics from the cross-cultural perspective and the new challenges in the digital age, the important position of Mongolian translation of “Water Margin” in contemporary cultural exchanges is further expounded. The research shows that the Mongolian version of “Water Margin” not only enriches the Mongolian literary treasure house, promotes the overseas spread of Chinese culture, but also becomes a model of cross-cultural translation. His successful translation strategies and cultural adaptation experience provide valuable enlightenment for the translation practice of literary works in the future.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of globalization today, the cross-border communication of literary works not only enriches the spiritual and cultural life of people all over the world, but also becomes an important bridge for cultural exchange and understanding [1]. “Water Margin” is one of the classical Four Great Classical Novels in China [2]. With its unique historical background, rich group portraits and profound social criticism, it not only occupies a decisive position in the history of China literature, but also attracts the attention of scholars all over the world [3]. In Mongolian areas, the Mongolian translation of “Water Margin” is of special significance for promoting mutual understanding and exchange between Chinese and Mongolian cultures [4]. The purpose of this study is to explore how the Mongolian version of “Water Margin” was translated, accepted and influenced in different historical periods through in-depth analysis of its historical evolution, so as to tap its cultural value and communication potential in contemporary society. This study not only helps to deepen our understanding of the international communication process of “Water Margin”, but also provides valuable experience for cross-cultural translation practice and promotes the overseas communication and exchange of Chinese culture.

Looking back on the past research, the research on “Water Margin” is fruitful, covering many aspects such as literary criticism, historical textual research and cultural interpretation [5]. However, there are relatively few studies on its translated versions, especially Mongolian versions, and most of them focus on a single dimension such as version introduction and translation strategies [6]. Based on the existing research, this study will integrate relevant materials and make a comprehensive analysis of the historical evolution, cultural adaptation, communication influence and contemporary value of the Mongolian version of “Water Margin” from an interdisciplinary

perspective. It is hoped that it can fill the research gap in this field and provide more comprehensive and in-depth reference for later researchers.

2. The historical evolution of “Water Margin” and its Mongolian version

2.1. Overview of the original work “Water Margin”

“Water Margin” is a masterpiece with profound historical background and folk wisdom. It was compiled by Shi Naian in the late Yuan Dynasty and early Ming Dynasty, and it is one of the ancient Four Great Classical Novels in China [7]. This work is based on the Sung River Uprising at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. By telling the magnificent epic of 108 heroes gathering in Liangshan Park to resist the corrupt court, it profoundly reveals the complex feelings of social injustice and people's resistance. Its ups and downs and distinctive characters not only show heroism and chivalry, but also contain deep thinking on social justice and good and evil of human nature. “Water Margin”, with its unique artistic charm, not only left a colorful stroke in the history of China literature, but also provided rich cultural materials and ideological enlightenment for later generations.

2.2. On the Version of Mongolian Translation of "Water Margin"

The course of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" is a vivid testimony of the blending of Chinese culture and Mongolian culture. Since the mid-19th century, with the deepening of cultural exchanges between China and Mongolia, this classic has been gradually introduced into Mongolia, and several Mongolian versions have appeared [8]. Most of the early Mongolian versions were circulated in the form of manuscripts, and the translation style and language use had distinct characteristics of the times and regions. After the founding of New China, the publication of Mongolian translation "Water Margin" has been formalized and systematized, and several versions have been carefully proofread by professional translators. On the basis of being faithful to the original works, these versions pay more attention to language fluency and cultural adaptability, which makes the story of "Water Margin" closer to the reading habits and aesthetic needs of Mongolian readers.

2.3. Cultural adaptation and change in Mongolian translation

Original Content (Chinese)		Adjusted Content in Mongolian Translation (Mongolian/Explanation)
Location: Liangshan Marsh	➡	Location: A lake or mountain name in Mongolia
Custom: Moon viewing during Mid-Autumn Festival	➡	Custom: Naadam Festival (or other Mongolian festivals)
Food: Dumplings	➡	Food: Mongolian Buuz (or Mongolian-style dumplings)
Religious descriptions related to Buddhism: Buddhist temples	➡	Religious descriptions: Prayer sites in Mongolian yurts or Mongolian Buddhist temples
Clothing descriptions: Robes, Magua (traditional Chinese clothing)	➡	Clothing descriptions: Mongolian Deel (traditional Mongolian clothing)
Etiquette: Bowing, kowtowing	➡	Etiquette: Traditional Mongolian greetings (such as handshakes, bowing)

Figure 1 Cultural adaptation and changes in the Mongolian translation of "Water Margin"

In the process of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin", the translator not only faces the challenge of language conversion, but also needs to deal with the problems of cultural adaptation and change. Due to the differences in historical background, social customs and religious beliefs between China and Mongolia, it is an arduous task to accurately convey the cultural connotation of the original text and resonate with Mongolian readers in the process of translation. On the premise of keeping the basic plot and character of the original work unchanged, translators have skillfully integrated elements of Mongolian culture, such as replacing some place names, customs and festivals with contents that Mongolian readers are more familiar with, making the translation closer to the local cultural context. An example of cultural adaptation and change in the Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" is shown in Figure 1.

Translators also explain the cultural background and allusions in the original work by means of annotations and appendices, helping readers to overcome cultural barriers and deeply understand the spiritual core of "Water Margin". This process of cultural adaptation and change has promoted the wide spread of "Water Margin" in Mongolia and deepened the cultural understanding between the Chinese and Mongolian people.

3. The spread and influence of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin"

3.1. Dissemination and acceptance in Mongolia

The spread of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" in Mongolia is a story of cultural exchange that spans time and space. Since the publication of the translation, it has aroused enthusiastic response among Mongolian readers with its unique charm. At first, most of these translations were circulated among the people in the form of oral communication and manuscripts, which became people's talk after dinner. With the development of printing technology, the Mongolian translation "Water Margin" began to be published in large quantities, entered more families and became a frequent visitor to Mongolian libraries and school shelves. It not only enriches the Mongolian people's literary reading choices, but also subtly shapes their values and cultural identity. Many Mongolian readers learned about China's ancient social features, heroic legends and moral concepts through "Water Margin", and became interested in Chinese culture. This wide spread and acceptance not only proves the artistic charm of the Mongolian version of "Water Margin", but also shows the infinite possibility of cross-cultural communication.

3.2. Comparison and Communication from the cross-cultural perspective

By comparing and spreading the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" from a cross-cultural perspective, we can find more interesting phenomena and profound enlightenment. Compared with the original, the Mongolian version not only retains the core of the story, but also incorporates the unique elements of Mongolian culture. This blending and collision of cultures adds a new dimension to the interpretation of "Water Margin". At the same time, compared with other language versions of "Water Margin", Mongolian versions also show unique features in translation strategies, language styles and cultural adaptation. These differences reflect the translation practice in different cultural backgrounds and provide rich materials for cross-cultural studies.

3.3. New path and challenge of contemporary communication

In the digital age, the transmission path of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" is also facing new changes and challenges. With the rapid development of Internet technology, e-books, online reading platforms, social media and other emerging media have become important channels for the dissemination of literary works. These new paths not only broaden the audience range of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin", but also provide more possibilities for its dissemination. At the same time, digital communication also brings a series of challenges, such as copyright protection, content quality control and cultural adaptation adjustment. The challenges and innovative strategies of the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" in the digital age are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Challenges and Innovative Strategies for the Mongolian Translation of “Water Margin” in the Digital Era

Challenge	Innovative Strategy
Copyright Protection Issue	1. Utilize Digital Rights Management (DRM) technology to protect e-book copyrights. 2. Strengthen cooperation with copyright protection agencies to combat piracy. 3. Enhance public awareness of copyright through legal education, guiding users to respect copyright.
Content Quality Control	1. Establish a strict content review mechanism to ensure translation quality. 2. Introduce a user feedback system to promptly correct errors and improve user experience. 3. Regularly update the translation to maintain accuracy and timeliness of the content.
Cultural Adaptation Adjustment	1. Leverage big data and AI technology to analyze reading habits of Mongolian readers for more precise cultural adaptation. 2. Invite Mongolian cultural experts to participate in translation revisions to ensure accurate transmission of cultural elements. 3. Develop interactive features such as annotations and cultural background introductions to help readers understand cultural differences.
Enhancement of Dissemination Effect	1. Utilize social media and online reading platforms for targeted marketing to expand the audience base. 2. Produce multimedia content, such as audiobooks and video explanations, to enrich dissemination forms. 3. Organize online interactive activities, such as book clubs and Q&A competitions, to enhance reader engagement and loyalty.
Maintenance of Authority and Cultural Value	1. Collaborate with authoritative academic institutions to provide academic support and certification for the translation. 2. Strengthen exchanges with Mongolian cultural institutions to promote cultural exchange and mutual learning. 3. Host offline cultural events, such as exhibitions and lectures, to enhance the social influence of the translation.

4. Contemporary value of Mongolian version of "Water Margin"

4.1. Literary value and cultural inheritance

At present, the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" is not only a literary work, but also an important bridge connecting Chinese and Mongolian cultures. Its literary value is reflected in the precise communication of the original spiritual core and the ingenious integration of Mongolian cultural elements. This cross-cultural artistic re-creation makes the Mongolian translation a literary work with unique charm. Through the Mongolian translation, the heroism, chivalry and the pursuit of social justice in "Water Margin" can take root in the hearts of Mongolian readers and promote the overseas spread of Chinese culture. Mongolian translation, as a carrier of cultural inheritance, not only makes Mongolian people know the history and culture of China, but also inspires them to think and identify with local culture.

4.2. Educational and academic research resources

In the field of education, the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" has become an important auxiliary material for Chinese teaching in Mongolian schools, helping students to improve their language ability and cultural literacy by studying classic literary works. It is not only a tool for language learning, but also a resource for cultural education, allowing students to appreciate the profoundness of Chinese culture in reading. In academic research, the Mongolian translation "Water Margin" provides a valuable corpus and research object for scholars in the fields of comparative literature, translation studies and cultural studies. Through in-depth analysis of the translated versions, scholars can discuss translation strategies, cultural adaptation, literary acceptance and other issues to promote the development of academic research.

4.3. Enlightenment to future translation practice

The successful experience of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" provides valuable enlightenment for the translation practice of literary works in the future. First of all, translation

should be faithful to the spirit of the original, and at the same time pay attention to the adaptability of the target language and culture, and strive to keep the essence of the original and make the translation closer to the readers' cultural background and reading habits. Secondly, in the process of translation, we should make full use of modern technical means to improve the efficiency and quality of translation, and at the same time pay attention to proofreading and revision of the translation. The success of the Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" is a vivid embodiment of these principles and ideas, which sets a model for future translation practice.

5. Conclusions

Through systematic research and discussion, it is found that the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" is not only an important achievement of cultural exchange between China and Mongolia, but also a model of cross-cultural translation practice. It has had a far-reaching influence in Mongolia, promoted the overseas spread of Chinese culture, enriched the literary treasure house of Mongolia and enhanced the understanding between the two peoples. Mongolian versions successfully integrate the essence of "Water Margin" with Mongolian culture through ingenious translation strategies and cultural adaptation, showing the unique charm of cross-cultural communication.

Under the background of increasingly frequent contemporary cultural exchanges, the significance of Mongolian translation of "Water Margin" has become increasingly prominent. It is not only a bridge of literary exchange, but also a link of cultural mutual learning, which has contributed to promoting the diversity and prosperity of world culture. Through Mongolian translation, Mongolian readers can deeply understand the history and culture of China, and China scholars can also learn valuable experience from cross-cultural translation to promote the internationalization of Chinese culture. This study is helpful to deepen our understanding of the Mongolian version of "Water Margin" and provide new ideas for cross-cultural translation practice and cultural exchange.

References

- [1] Zhang Ping. On the Influence of Translator's Background on Cultural Translation: A Case Study of the Translation of Water Margin [J]. Journal of Guangxi Science & Technology Normal University, 2019, 34(01): 126-129.
- [2] Fu Kaijing. The Buddhist Concept of Justice in Water Margin [J]. Journal of Xinyu University, 2020, 25(04): 69-73.
- [3] Tian Zhixiang. Critical Approaches and Cultural Value Orientation of Water Margin [J]. Journal of Ming-Qing Fiction Research, 2022(1): 19-31.
- [4] Su Xuwen. The Application of Fu-Style Prose in Water Margin [J]. Journal of Heze University, 2023, 45(1): 114-119.
- [5] Shen Qiancheng. The Teaching Value and Character Analysis of Water Margin [J]. Journal of Hubei Open Vocational College, 2020, 33(16): 192-194.
- [6] Wang Xin. On the Conflict of "Loyalty and Righteousness" in Water Margin and Its Modern Significance [J]. Journal of Renmin University of China, 2019, 33(02): 162-172.
- [7] Shen Qiancheng. The Teaching Value and Character Analysis of Water Margin [J]. Journal of Hubei Correspondence University, 2020, 33(16): 192-194.
- [8] Xiao Lanying. The Artistic Value of Hu Sanniang's Silent Image [J]. Journal of Heze University, 2022, 44(4): 116-119.