

Chinese literature goes global in inheritance and innovation

EDITOR'S NOTE

Chinese literature serves as a bridge for inter-civilizational exchanges as it goes global, promoting mutual understanding and trust.

By YAO JIALING
and WANG JIA

The international communication of culture and art is closely related to the composite national strength. Since reform and opening up, the translation of Chinese literature has accelerated along with the improvement in the composite national strength. The uniqueness of the Chinese language, and the distinctive development model of Chinese civilization determines a unique path with Chinese characteristics should be followed for the translation and communication of Chinese literature.

Booming development

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the translation of Chinese literature into foreign languages entered a new phase dominated by national-level institutions. In the early stages of the dissemination of Chinese literature, in order to promote Chinese culture, the government designated the translation and introduction of Chinese literature as a key publicity focus, establishing the China Inter-



Research on Chinese literature is thriving. Photo: Zhao Yuan/CSST

national Communications Group (China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration) as a professional organization for external communication. In 1951, *Chinese Literature* was founded through the initiative and efforts of Hong Shen, Zhou Yang, Ye Junjian, Yang Xianyi, and others. Over the next 50 years, 3,200 literary works were translated and published. This allowed Chinese literature to truly go global, leading to the widespread overseas dissemination of Chinese literature to more than 100 countries and regions.

In the 1980s, to further expand the international influence of Chinese literature, the *Panda Books* were born. This series primarily aimed to introduce excellent literary works from ancient and modern China in English and in French.

The focus of translation shifted to contemporary Chinese literature that reflects the living conditions and intellectual changes of the Chinese people in the new stage.

Since the start of the 21st century, the "going global" strategy has accelerated the pace of Chinese literature's global outreach. The participation of internationally renowned publishing institutions in the translation and dissemination of Chinese literature, as well as the collaborative model between Chinese and foreign publishing institutions, has become a new hallmark of the international dissemination of Chinese literature.

As the times evolve, the channels for the international dissemination of Chinese literature have become increasingly diverse. In addition to traditional media such as newspa-

pers, magazines, and books, emerging media such as film, television, and the internet have also become effective ways to help Chinese literature spread abroad. Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum* and Yu Hua's *To Live* have won international awards after being adapted into films, arousing strong interest in Chinese literature by foreign audiences and thus promoting the spread of Chinese literature abroad.

In addition, the rapid development and dissemination of internet literature has further expanded the international influence of Chinese literature.

Overall, the translation of Chinese literature in the new era has exhibited trends of multilingual translation, expanded dissemination scope, and diversification of media.

AI-empowered communication

Constantly evolving information technology and increasingly mature artificial intelligence are profoundly changing the way Chinese literature is translated and disseminated abroad, bringing new opportunities and challenges. Both in theory and in practice, China has attached great importance to the AI-facilitated international communication.

In recent years, AI has been applied in the international dissemination of Chinese literature, especially internet literature, and is beginning to show results. AI not only improves translation efficien-

cy and quality, but also plays an important role in internet literature intellectual property (IP) incubation. In 2019, The China Literature Limited announced its cooperation with Microsoft (Asia) Internet Engineering Institute to launch the AI-enabled network literature IP wake-up plan, which uses voice dialogue, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), holographic projection and other technologies to allow users to interact with IP characters and make IP truly come to life.

Literary translation is an important means to promote exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations. As a window for the Western world to understand China, many translated works have exerted a certain influence overseas.

In the epochal context of the "going global" of Chinese culture, the significance of translation of Chinese literature lies not only in the translation of and attention garnered by specific works, authors, or literary genres in academic circles abroad, but also more in the systematic and comprehensive presentation of China's fine culture, ideas and values to the world. This, in turn, promotes the international spread of Chinese culture.

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Promoting the international communication of Chinese literature

By JI JIN

In general, research on the overseas dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature encompasses both the translation and study of contemporary Chinese literature overseas, as well as research on the overseas dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature by local Chinese scholars.

The former mainly refers to the historical evolution and specific achievements of the overseas translation and research of contemporary Chinese literature, while the latter refers more to the re-examination by domestic scholars of the translation and study of contemporary Chinese literature abroad, focusing on the qualitative assessment and reflection of the overseas dissemination of contemporary literature. This is what is referred to in this article as "research on the communication of contemporary Chinese literature."

Status quo

The research and development history of the overseas dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature over the past seventy years (1949-2019) can be broadly divided into three categories: historical observation (including

overall descriptions and partial in-depth descriptions), quantitative analysis (including data, statistics, index compilation and impact assessment), and qualitative research (including model research, intellectual research, value research and institutional research).

Local research on the communication of contemporary Chinese literature can not only summarize the experience of overseas dissemination of contemporary literature, but also further reflect on the underlying issues behind it.

The common problems of the research on the overseas dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature are mainly reflected in two aspects. On the one hand, the "breadth" of research is insufficiently comprehensive, in that its scope is incomplete.

Furthermore, the level of research is not yet rich enough, lacking in-depth and delicate inquiry. On the other hand, the "depth" of research is also insufficient. The first is its temporal scope. The second is its research depth. The last is its relevance.

Future pathways

Given these common issues in research on the communication of contemporary literature, it may be pos-

sible to further expand the research space in the following four aspects.

Firstly, it is suggested to establish a dynamic and hierarchical holistic observation perspective to enrich the current perspectives of the research on the communication of contemporary literature. It is advised to track the different aspects involved in contemporary literature overseas dissemination and its diverse connotations at different levels to analyze and reflect on a wide range of phenomena with a more complete, coherent, and three-dimensional perspective. Specifically, the research focus should center on the perspectives of readers, markets, unofficial recipients, and the world literature.

Secondly, it is advised to strengthen the reflection on contemporary literature research overseas, with the aim of expanding the scope of research, bridging the gap between local and global observations, changing the dominant position of translation research, and paying particular attention to the mutual coordination between overseas translation research and academic research. It is important to clarify that the meaning of communication extends beyond mere language information transformation, and aims to achieve deep

understanding, interpretation, and exchanges.

Specifically, there are three key areas for exploration: first, we should comprehensively outline the overall pattern, historical evolution, and contemporary characteristics of overseas contemporary literature research, in order to deepen our understanding of it as a whole. Second, it is suggested to consciously distinguish its dialogical relationship with relevant domestic research to explore the issue of disciplinary establishment based on the awareness of academic community more deeply. Third, we should regard the study of overseas communication of contemporary literature as an effective extension of contemporary Chinese literature.

Thirdly, it is essential to explore and promote bilateral dialogue within the global pattern, with the aim of enriching the content of the research on the communication of contemporary literature. This involves expanding from specific translation research or contemporary literature research into the fields of world literature, cross-cultural research, and comparative cultural research. Not only should more diverse research programs be introduced, but the research framework should be actively improved,

taking advantage of the opportunities presented by research on the overseas dissemination of contemporary literature. In this regard, we can focus on observing two sets of dialogical relationships: firstly, the bilateral dialogue between national literature and world literature at the theoretical level; secondly, the relationship between proactive translation from overseas and proactive translation from China at the practical level.

The fourth aspect involves tracing the deep institutional roots underlying the overseas communication of contemporary literature, aiming to deepen the current level of research, from surface phenomenon sorting, problem presentation, and experience summary to reflections on the cultural unconsciousness.

The richness, diversity, and complexity of the overseas dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature precisely demonstrate the increasing vitality of Chinese literature within the dynamic global literary system. It has become an important medium for the Western world to imagine, understand, and comprehend China.

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