

A Study of the Translation and Influence of Tang Poetry in Nineteenth-Century France

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Abstract: This article provides an in-depth discussion of the translation of Tang poetry in France in the nineteenth century and the wide-ranging impact it had. The study first outlines the historical background of the spread of Tang poetry in France, and then analyses in detail the key players in the translation process, the translation strategies employed, and the reception and dissemination of the translations in France. In addition, the paper also focuses on the far-reaching impact of the translation of Tang poetry on French literature, culture and social trends, thus revealing the important role of cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding between China and France.

Keywords: French translation of Tang poetry, 19th century, France, translation and influence

Introduction

Tang poetry, the bright pearl of ancient Chinese literature, with its profound ideological connotation, exquisite artistic skills and unique cultural charms, is unique in the history of Chinese literature, but also in the vast river of world literature glittering. 19th century, along with the gradual construction of the bridge of cultural exchange between the East and the West, the beautiful chapters of Tang poetry began to cross the ocean, into the land of France, which is full of romantic and artistic atmosphere. In the process of spreading, French literary circles and readers showed great interest and concern for Tang poetry. They were deeply attracted by the profound mood, refined language and rich emotions in Tang poetry, and devoted themselves to the study and appreciation of Tang poetry. From a unique sociological perspective, this paper will explore the process of translating Tang poems into French during this period, and investigate the cultural motivations, translation strategies and social acceptance behind them. The paper will further analyse the far-reaching impact of the translation of Tang poetry on French society, such as the subtle influence on French literary creation, aesthetic concepts and social trends. Through these in-depth analyses, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of Tang poetry in the dissemination of world culture, and also provide valuable historical reference and inspiration for the current Sino-French cultural exchanges.

1. Background to the spread of Tang poetry in France

In the nineteenth century, Europe's passion for the exploration and study of oriental cultures was in full swing. France, the cultural and artistic capital of Europe, paid great attention to and was enthusiastic about oriental cultures, including China. At that time, with the gradual rise of oriental literature, the study of Chinese studies also ushered in its spring. A group of French sinologists, with the desire and curiosity for the Oriental civilization, embarked on a journey to study Chinese culture. It was through the unremitting efforts of these sinologists that Tang poetry, the treasure of ancient Chinese literature, began to be systematically introduced into France. Through translation, annotation and research, they presented the rhythm, mood and cultural connotation of Tang poems to French readers. These beautiful poems, like messengers of

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Eastern civilization, crossed the boundaries of time and space, and began to take root and sprout in the cultural soil of France. During this period, the dissemination and acceptance of Tang poetry in France promoted the exchange and collision of Chinese and French cultures, and brought new creative inspirations and aesthetic experiences to the French literary world. French poets and literary scholars have drawn sustenance from Tang poems and incorporated them into their own creations, adding a colourful touch to the history book of Sino-French cultural exchanges^[1].

2. The process of translating Tang Poetry in France

2.1 Major players

In the journey of translating and introducing Tang poems, French sinologists, translators and outstanding people in the cultural circle are pivotal roles. Some of these scholars and translators are proficient in Chinese language, and they also have a deep understanding and unique insights of Tang poems; some of them do not have a good foundation of Chinese language, but they bring their feelings of Chinese culture to France through their imagination. They have also deeply explored the cultural connotation and artistic value of Tang poetry by writing commentaries and research papers, providing French readers with a key to open the door of oriental culture. Their efforts have made Tang poetry shine in French literature and created a "Tang poetry fever" among French readers. The work of these French sinologists and translators is not only a conversion of language, but also a kind of cultural inheritance and exchange. The most famous representatives are Le Marquis d'Hervey de Saint Denys, the translator of Tang Poems, and Judith Gautier, the translator of The Jade Book. With their wisdom and talent, they have built a bridge between Chinese and French cultural exchanges, allowing the charm of Tang poetry to cross borders and blossom on French soil. Their contributions have promoted mutual understanding and appreciation of Chinese and French cultures, and added valuable colors to the diversity of world cultures.

2.2 Translation strategy

Faced with Tang poetry, a unique form of literature that unites the essence of ancient Chinese literature, French translators deeply feel the challenges and opportunities. They are well aware that Tang poetry is not just a collection of words, but also a perfect blend of emotion, mood and culture. In order to preserve the flavour and mood of the original poems as much as possible in the translation process, and to make them close to the aesthetic habits of French readers, the translators flexibly applied a variety of translation strategies. Direct translation, the most direct translation method, is used to convey the literal meaning of the Tang poems, preserving the linguistic style of the original poems as much as possible. Intentional translation focuses on conveying the emotion and mood of the original poem, so that French readers can feel the beauty of Tang poetry more deeply. Imitation translation, on the basis of respecting the original poem, incorporates the characteristics of French poetry and creates a unique cross-cultural way of expression. For example, Derivan adopts a combination of direct translation and Italian translation, while Judit is an imitation translation. The use of these translation strategies reflects the French translators' deep understanding of and respect for Tang poetry, and also demonstrates their great skill and wisdom in cross-cultural communication, and it is their efforts that have made Tang poetry, a gem of oriental literature, blossom into a new splendour in the French literary world^[2].

2.3 Acceptance of translations

The acceptance and dissemination of translations of Tang poems in France has not been smooth, and their popularity has been influenced and constrained by many factors. The quality of the translation is the key to determining whether they can be accepted by French readers. A translation that accurately conveys the original meaning and has a fluent and beautiful language is naturally easy to be accepted and loved by readers. The popularity of the translator also plays an important role. If the translator himself enjoys a good reputation in the French literary world, his translation can usually receive more attention and respect. The cultural atmosphere and social background at that time are also not to be ignored. In the 19th century, when cultural exchanges became more and more frequent, the curiosity and desire of French society for oriental culture provided favourable soil for the dissemination of the translations of Tang poems, and although the

dissemination process encountered all kinds of challenges, such as cultural differences and language barriers, the translations of Tang poems still won certain recognition and praise in France. These translations have conquered the hearts of French readers with their unique artistic charms and cultural values, and have established an important bridge for cultural exchanges between China and France.

3. The impact of Tang Poetry translations on French society

3.1 Influence on French literature

The translation of Tang poems was like a fresh east wind, which brought unprecedented aesthetic experience and creative inspiration to the French literary circle. These poems translated from the distant East deeply touched the hearts of French poets with their profound meaning, refined language and rich emotions. They marvelled at the artistic charm of Tang poetry and found new creative possibilities in it. Inspired by Tang poetry, many French poets, especially those of the Gauguin school, began to try to incorporate oriental elements into their works, creating a series of poems with oriental flavour. These works not only retained the elegance and romance of French poetry, but also added the depth and subtlety of Tang poetry, forming a unique cross-cultural style, and this fusion enriched the expression of French poetry and injected new vitality into French literature.

3.2 Influence on French culture

Tang poetry, a literary treasure of ancient Chinese wisdom and art, has had a particularly profound impact on French culture through its profound philosophical ideas, unique aesthetic concepts and poetic lifestyle, which are not only imitated or borrowed on the surface, but also through cultural and ideological collisions that go deep into the marrow of the bones. The philosophical ideas of Tang poetry, such as Confucianism's benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, and Taoism's nature and inaction, have injected new dimensions of thinking into French culture. In the process of absorbing these ideas, French culture constantly reflects on itself and realizes the self-renewal and sublimation of culture. The far-reaching mood and sincere emotion of Tang poetry inspired the French literary and artistic circles to pursue and explore beauty. The way of life depicted in Tang poetry, the kind of harmonious coexistence with nature and the human attitude focusing on the pursuit of spirituality, also deeply impressed the French people, which enriched the connotation of French culture and allowed French culture to be more diversified and tolerant while maintaining its own characteristics.

3.3 Impact on social thinking

The widespread dissemination of Tang poetry in France was like a spring of fresh water injected into the ocean of thought. These poems from the far East, with its profound, introspective and wisdom-filled style, aroused widespread concern and discussion in French society, and the concepts of harmony and nature they advocated fitted in with the rising trend of thought in the French society at that time, and produced a strong resonance. In 19th century France, with the advancement of the Industrial Revolution and the intensification of social changes, people's desire for a harmonious society gradually became stronger, and the idea of harmony embedded in Tang poems provided useful reference and inspiration for the French society. The love and reverence for nature in Tang poetry also echoed the concern of French society for environmental protection and sustainable development at that time. Such cross-cultural exchanges and collisions enriched the ideological connotation of French society and injected new vigour into the progress and development of French society. The dissemination and acceptance of Tang poetry became an important opportunity for French society to begin self-reflection and self-improvement, which promoted the innovation and development of France in many fields such as literature, art and philosophy.

4. Reach a verdict

This paper presents a systematic study of the translation and influence of Tang poetry in France in the 19th century. The results show that the translation and introduction of Tang poetry promoted the exchange and integration of Chinese and French cultures, and also had a far-reaching influence on French literature, culture and social trends. With the

increasing frequency of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, and the rising international status of China, international Sinological studies are ushering in another climax, and the phenomenon of the graduation of secondary schools to the West has once again quietly appeared on the international stage^[3]. In this context, this study is of great significance in deepening our understanding of the history of cultural exchange between China and France.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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