

# Analysis of Paul U. Unschuld's Chinese Cultural Recognition in the English Translation of Ancient Chinese Medical Books

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**Abstract**—In the era of globalization, human beings are in the "cultural supermarket", from which people select the global culture concentrating there. The strategy of "going out" of Chinese culture is to place Chinese culture in this "cultural supermarket", reflecting the new development opportunities for Chinese cultural recognition in the era of globalization. Paul U. Unschuld, a German Sinologist and medical historian, discovered TCM culture in the "global cultural supermarket" and devoted himself to the translation of TCM classics, such as the English translation of "Nan Jing" ("难经"), "Huangdi Neijing" ("黄帝内经") and "Bencao Gangmu" ("本草纲目"). Based on the two aspects of selection of translation texts and translation strategies, this paper from the perspective of cultural recognition, discusses why Paul U. Unschuld recognize traditional Chinese medicine culture, what kind of Chinese cultural recognition is reflected in his translation of TCM classics and what impact do his translated works have on the "marketing" of "Chinese culture" in this "supermarket" in the dazzling "cultural supermarket" in the context of globalization. The goal of the paper is to provide a new research and practice dimension for the "going out" translation strategy of Chinese culture.

**Keywords**—selection of translation texts; translation strategy; cultural recognition; cultural supermarket

## I. INTRODUCTION

While promoting the integration of human culture, the process of globalization in today's world also creates the conflict of human cultures. The coexistence of cultural integration and cultural conflicts highlights the problem of cultural recognition, which is one of the global issues no less important than environmental issues facing contemporary mankind [1]. The issue of cultural recognition has aroused the attention of the academic circle in China, and has entered into the fields of psychology, politics, ethnology, intercultural communication and other disciplines. Based on the differences in the level of global recognition of TCM culture, TCM communication researchers explore the ideas of TCM culture communication in the new era. Translation researchers set about discussing cultural recognition's relation with translation and its influence on the translation practice, and construct the translation mode of for the Chinese Culture to "go out" on the basis on cultural recognition. Combing the cultural recognition, the spread of

TCM culture and the translation of TCM classics, this paper takes the German scholar, Paul U. Unschuld devoted to the translation of TCM classics, and his Chinese cultural recognition reflected in the selection of text and translation strategies. The aim is to provide new perspectives of study and practice for the dissemination of TCM culture of the world under the national strategy of "going out" of Chinese culture.

## II. CULTURAL RECOGNITION

Cultural recognition refers to human's dispositional consensus and recognition of culture. Since the 1990s, the rapid, multi-channel, free and legal dissemination of culture caused by technological globalization, cultural globalization and information globalization centered on economic globalization has made the contemporary era of globalization an era that has the most profound impact on the cultural recognition of human. As the space for cultural communication becomes larger and larger, it is increasingly difficult to control the cultural and information communication, and the role of traditional national and national ideological defense lines becomes smaller and smaller [2]. So, the world is facing more and more cultural choices. Just as the American anthropologist Gordon Mattwiss believes that human beings in the era of globalization are in the "cultural supermarket", and the global culture is concentrated in a "cultural supermarket" for people to choose from. The concept of human culture has shifted from "human lifestyle" to "information and identity that can be obtained from cultural supermarket". And in the culture supermarket, the culture of one's own is also a commodity that can be selected by others [3]. The national strategy of "going out" of Chinese culture is exactly in line with the background of this global era. It puts Chinese culture in the "cultural supermarket" and spreads its own culture and value through diversified cultural communication means, so that Chinese culture can be understood and recognized by the world.

## III. INTRODUCTION TO PAUL U. UNSCHULD

Paul U. Unschuld, 文树德 (wen shu de) in Chinese, is a German Sinologist and medical historian who discovered Chinese medicine culture in the "global culture supermarket"

and developed a strong interest in Chinese medicine. He received his doctorate in sinology in Germany with his dissertation on traditional Chinese medicine. And he wrote the first history of Chinese herbal medicine, the first history of traditional Chinese medicine ethics and the first history of traditional Chinese medicine ideology in English. The publication of these historical works of traditional Chinese medicine has opened the door for western readers to peep into traditional Chinese medicine in many ways and made the ancient Chinese medical ethics and ethics widely known. In particular, his study on the first ideological history of traditional Chinese medicine was 20 years earlier than that of Chinese scholars.

At the same time, Unschuld devoted himself to the translation of Chinese classics, such as the "Nan Jing". The English version of "Huangdi Neijing" was an English translation project held by him. And the three parts of the work was finally completed after more than 20 years. The first is, "HUANG DI NEI JING SU WEN: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text" (2003), namely, "黄帝内经素问——古代中国医经中的自然、知识与意向", the second, "A Dictionary of the Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen". And the third is "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di's Inner Classic-Basic Questions: 2 volumes" ("黄帝内经素问译注", published in the July of 2011). This English version of "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen" has become one of the most influential English translations in the world. Next, Mr. Unschuld will devote himself to the translation of the great Chinese medicine work "Bencao Gangmu" ("本草纲目", known as "Compendium of Materia Medica").

#### IV. CHINESE CULTURAL RECOGNITION IN UNSCHULD'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION

It can be seen from the above that Mr. Unschuld has made great contributions to the spread of traditional Chinese medicine culture in the world. Therefore, the author selects his translation work "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen" as the main research object. In the perspective of cultural recognition, the paper starts from the two aspects of Mr. Unschuld's selection of translation texts and his translation strategies. It discusses in a wide variety of "cultural supermarket" in the context of globalization today, why does Paul U. Unschuld recognize the traditional Chinese medicine culture, what kind of Chinese cultural recognition is reflected in his translation of TCM classics, and what effect his translation will have on the "marketing" of "Chinese culture" in "supermarkets". The expectation of this study is to find new ideas and inspiration for Chinese culture to "go out" from his translation of ancient Chinese medicine books.

##### A. Cultural Recognition Reflected in the Selection of Translation Texts

As a medical historian, Unschuld is good at studying the history of medical thoughts and ethics. He chose the comparative history of medicine and life sciences in China and Europe as his major field of study. In addition to numerous works on Chinese medicine, he has translated a series of ancient Chinese medical books, such as "Nan-

ching ·The Classic of Difficult Issues", "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen", "An Annotated Translation, and Forgotten Traditions of Ancient Chinese Medicine", which is the translation and annotation of "Yixue Yuanliu Lun" by Xu Dachun in 1754, and the famous TCM ophthalmology work "Subtleties On The Silver Sea". Among them, "Nan-ching ·The Classic of Difficult Issues" is the first translation in the Western world. Why did he choose to translate these ancient Chinese medicine books? The author selects the translation of "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen" to analyze the Chinese cultural recognition reflected by his selection of translation texts.

It took Unschuld more than 20 years to complete the English translation of "Huangdi Neijing". This includes the "HUANG DI NEI JING SU WEN: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text" and the "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di's Inner Classic-Basic Questions: 2 volumes". When asked why he selected "Huangdi Neijing" as translation texts, Mr. Unschuld pointed out that "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen" was the most preliminary and important work for the understanding of the historical development of traditional Chinese medicine [4]. The book "HUANG DI NEI JING SU WEN: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text" was a preparation for a cover-to-cover translation, in which Unschuld systematically introduced the literature history of "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen", as well as the terms of Yin, Yang, five elements, viscera, qi and blood and meridians in "Su Wen". In the preface of this work, he mentioned that the status of "Huangdi Neijing" in the history of Chinese medicine is equal to that of Hippocrates in the history of western medicine [5]. In the epilogue of this work, Mr. Unschuld emphasizes that "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen" represents a new way of thinking of Chinese people. For the first time, man understood that "nature is a continuous, objective, rule-guided existence". It was completely separated from the old ideas of ghosts and gods, demons and salvation associated with diseases, and people began to use natural laws to explain diseases and treatments to deal with any situation threatening health or even life. Like, they began to pay attention to the environmental state of human existence, the change of climate, to people's daily behavior, mental state, diet, and the law of nature. He believed that the Chinese people's abandon of the old theory of ghosts and gods and turn to the images of Yin and Yang, five internal organs and qi and blood reflected the values of the mainstream social ideas that constituted the ruling class and the national economy of the emerging unified imperial ruling class and national economy at that time, and reflected the reason and emotion of ancient Chinese people on the basis of rationality and foresight. The reason of the Chinese thousands of years ago was exactly the same as that of the naturalists and physicists in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. So, according to Unschuld, "Huangdi Neijing" guided people to science from ignorance and made them understand and respect the laws of nature. It opened up a new era of pioneering thinking, which was the origin of the enduring Chinese cultural tradition. According to the analysis of Mr. Unschuld, "Huangdi Neijing" reflects the simple view of

nature in ancient China, and the philosophical thought of dialectical unity and ancient Chinese people's understanding and care for life combined with the society and living environment at that time. Its development history of several thousand years reflects the dynamic process of ancient Chinese medicine and perception of nature, and is the most basic and completely indispensable part of Chinese civilization [6].

"Bencao Gangmu" is another shining ancient book in the treasure house of traditional Chinese medicine. At present, the most authoritative English translation by Unschuld of "Bencao Gangmu" is about to be published.

It is not difficult to see why Mr. Unshude chose to these works as his translation texts. Mr. Zheng Jinsheng, in his introduction to Mr. Unschuld, once mentioned that the origin of Unschuld's commitment to Chinese medicine literature translation was that he found the "muddling-through" "fake products", that is, "books on Chinese Medicine" written by Westerners who couldn't even understand Chinese or had ever read any relative books and they just took things for granted and wrote Western-style "books on Chinese medicine". So he decided to clean up the original source and choose the most influential works of traditional Chinese medicine for translation. In his quest for funding, Unschuld faced unprecedented difficulties. "Research funders tend to think that we should explore our own medical history, and China's medical history should be studied by Chinese," he said in an interview, and "Some western funders would rather sponsor the 500th project to study the number of commas in Galenus' book than the first to study the basic characteristics of China's life sciences" [7]. For this, Mr. Unschuld felt aggrieved. Why would a westerner feel this is unfair to Chinese culture? This is precisely because the culture of traditional Chinese medicine includes the view of nature, the view of human body, the view of disease and the thought of health preservation, which he recognizes.

Therefore, Mr. Unshuld's text selection reflects his translation purpose, which is to provide a cultural background for westerners to understand TCM not only on the surface, but also from the depth of history and culture. These text selections are based on his identification with Chinese culture. He said, "I may have been Chinese in a previous life", which is the best proof of his Chinese cultural recognition.

### *B. The Cultural Recognition Reflected in Translation Strategies*

Based on his purpose of translation, that is, to provide a cultural background for western readers to understand TCM from the depth of history and culture, Mr. Unschuld believes that his translation principle is to be faithful to the original from a historical perspective. That is to say, the thoughts should be perceived with the understanding of that time, and the translation of works on Chinese medicine must reflect the living state of people in that era and the degree of understanding of life phenomena and refer to the grammar, sentence patterns and ancient Chinese knowledge of that era. It is necessary to translate a noun, term, or theory according

to the understanding of the time. To understand "Su Wen", one must first read "Zhuangzi", "Xunzi" and other Legalist and Confucian works. In the preface of the "Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen: An Annotated Translation of Huang Di's Inner Classic-Basic Questions: 2 volumes" ("黄帝内经素问译注"), Mr. Unschuld elaborated on his translation principles.

Firstly, for the translation of ancient medical books, context reconstruction is a completely appropriate translation method. Reconstructing how people felt about health and disease thousands of years ago allows translators to understand their systems of thought and knowledge. Second, says Mr Unschuld, translation is about preserving the form and content of the original text as much as possible, without omissions or additions. This translation principle is particularly appropriate for "Su Wen", because it is a rare book dating back more than 2,000 years, and it is the greatest fidelity to the content and structure of the original text that arouses the reader's interest. It is the task of the reader to interpret the concept theory of the original text, while the translator can only interpret the original text through footnotes, annotations and other ways independent of translation [9].

Under the guidance of these translation purposes and translation principles, Mr. Unshuld pays attention to expressing the historical and cultural background of traditional Chinese medicine in his translation, and tries to reflect the original appearance of traditional Chinese medicine. In his translation of "Su Wen", Mr. Unshuld tried his best to show the unique interpretation perspective of "Su Wen" by western scholars. He collected more than 600 Chinese and Japanese monographs over the past 1600 years, and nearly 3,000 papers written by Chinese authors in the 20th century, such as the "Supplement Notes on Huangdi Neijing Su Wen" by Wang Bing, to give readers a comprehensive historical interpretation. He adopted a distinctive translation method, like the method of transliteration plus footnotes. His footnotes are quite different from those of other translators. He enumerates in detail the research achievements and different opinions of "Su Wen", both ancient and modern, both from China and abroad, and narrates the translation and viewpoints of others separately. The footnotes do not follow the historical order of the author, but rather put together similar understandings and then add different notes, in order to give the readers a relatively comprehensive historical interpretation [10]. For example, Mr. Unshuld translates "天葵" as "heaven kui", combined with very complex and comprehensive comments, and the different understanding of scholars from Wang Bing, Zhang Jiebin, Ma Shi to Yang Shangshan from the perspectives of "qi", "blood", "tiangui", "rengui", "Yin", "Yang", etc. In addition, the retention of neat sentence patterns in Chinese is also a feature of his translation. For example, Mr. Wen has adopted a relatively neat English sentence pattern in his translation of "志闲而少欲,心安而不惧,形疲而不倦", as "The mind is relaxed and one has few desires. The heart is at peace and one is not fear. The physical appearance is taxed but is not tired", which fully preserves the characteristics of Chinese sentence patterns. He also tries to preserve the original metaphors, euphemism and other

rhetorical colors in Chinese. For example, he translates the "醉以入房" as "they enter the women's chamber".

It can be seen from the above that Mr. Unschuld tries his best to keep the form and content of Chinese in translation, because "Huangdi Neijing" is the guiding work of traditional Chinese medicine, and traditional Chinese medicine culture is the foundation of Chinese culture. The original translation of Huangdi Neijing is his respect and recognition of Chinese culture. A comprehensive annotated interpretation is also his best hope for readers to better interpret Chinese culture.

## V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Chinese medicine understands man from a wide perspective of the earth and the universe. "Huangdi Neijing" and other traditional Chinese medicine classics are a pioneering new trend of thought in human history, and the most basic part of Chinese civilization and Chinese culture. Mr. Unschuld discovered Chinese culture in the "culture supermarket" under the background of globalization and chose to tell the world about Chinese culture. From his choice of translating Chinese medical classics to the specific translation principles and translation strategies, his appreciation and recognition of Chinese culture such as the unity of heaven and man and the balance of Yin and Yang are all reflected. Such recognition undoubtedly brings new enlightenment to the national strategy of "Chinese culture going out".

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