

# Enlightenment of Early Translation of Pen Tsau Kang Mu on the International Dissemination of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) Treatment Protocols

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## ABSTRACT

To explore the activities and features of early English translation of TCM could enlighten the current translation of TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine). *The Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary* is a great work that comprehensively introduces China. It is known as "one of the three foundational works of French sinology". Until the end of the 19th century, it was an important source of knowledge for the west to know China, and also an important book for Europeans to understand TCM. *The Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary* has introduced Pen Tsau Kang Mu and collected its abridged translation. By analyzing texts of the Cave version, this paper sums up three remarkable features, such as employing some foreignization, translating TCM terms with traditional Western medicine terms, existing a large number of mistranslations and so on. From these features we can draw three inspirations for the translation of TCM. One is to adopt foreignizing method mainly. The second is to learn from traditional Western medicine. And the third is to improve the quality of works of translating and introducing TCM.

**Keywords:** *Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary, Pen Tsau Kang Mu, early translation, translation features, enlightenment*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic renders the whole world join hands to fight against it. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has played a critical role in the prevention and control of the epidemic in China, reflecting the unique advantages of TCM, and the attention and recognition of TCM at home and abroad have been significantly improved. How to promote the diffusion of TCM to the world, make Chinese medicine become the "international medicine", and make contributions to the health cause of the whole world? The work of TCM translation is indispensable. Due to the particularity of TCM, however, translation of TCM is difficult. How to do a good job in it and speed up the spread of TCM has become an important topic in promoting the internationalization of TCM. Medical exchange among countries has a long history. To explore the activities and features of early English translation of TCM may provide enlightenment for nowadays translation.

In the middle of the 17th century, with the arrival of Western missionaries in China, the cultural exchange

between China and the West formed a climax of the cultural exchange between China and the West in ancient times, and also opened the prelude of the spread of traditional Chinese medicine to Europe. *Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary* plays an important role in the Western world's understanding of China. And the translation of TCM contributed to the Western world a preliminary understanding of TCM. Studying the English translation and introduction of *Pen Tsau Kang Mu* in this book, and analyzing the characteristics of it, which was translated by Westerners, will help us to know the way and degree of Western people's understanding of TCM, as well as Western people's willingness to accept what kind of TCM translation methods, and enlighten the current TCM translation and introduction.

## II. PEN TSAU KANG MU IN CAVE-VERSION

*Pen Tsau Kang Mu* in *Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary* could be divided into three parts. The first part is an introduction of the book, including a preface containing a general view and division of the whole work, and an advertisement, introducing Li Shizhen, the reason of Li's efforts on the book and the classification of the book. The second part

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\*Fund: Project of Humanities and Social Sciences of Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2018 (18YJA740031).

is the Chinese Herbal, which collects extracts of *Historical Works on Pharmaceuticals*, Introduction to the *Sheng Nong Bencao Jing*, *Tao Hongjing's Mingyi Bielu (Records of Famous Doctors)* and *Seven Forms of Prescriptions Introduction (Qifang)*. The last part is Receipts, of which 16 Chinese medicines collected in *Ben Cao Kang Mu* were translated. Among the 16 kinds of drugs, the parts of Jinseng (ginseng), tea and gallnut are more detailed, and translations of other drugs are briefer.

### III. TRANSLATION FEATURES OF PEN TSAU KANG MU IN CAVE-VERSION

Both foreignization and domestication are adopted in the translation. The foreignization translation can better convey the TCM ideology and culture, and let readers form the traditional Chinese medicine thinking mode. In order to reduce readers' sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity to the source text and facilitate the understanding, the translator uses Western medical vocabulary to translate some TCM concepts, among which the traditional Western medical vocabularies are noticeable. Such translation might due to the translator deconstructed the theory of TCM from the perspective of Western culture and Western medicine, which may lead to misunderstanding and mistranslation. But these words do have something in common. And being inspired by these traditional Western medical terms and through verification, the hypothesis that there are commonalities between TCM and traditional Western medicine (TWM), which may provide some inspiration for TCM translation, has been proved. However, due to the limited understanding of TCM and Chinese culture, there are many omissions and mistranslations in the translation.

#### A. Foreignizing method

1) *Transliteration or combining with literal or free translation*: Traditional Chinese medicine terms are rich in cultural connotations and with few cultural equivalents in Western language. Transliteration and annotation are often used in translation. Using transliteration in the English translation of TCM terms can eliminate the loss or distortion of information in the source language, transform the target language into a unified symbol, represent the same connotation, and naturally form a standardized translation (Wang Hong, 2015: 147). In the process of translating and introducing TCM terms, the translators of Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary mostly choose the methods of transliteration and annotation or transliteration combined with literal or free translation, such as the translation of In and Yang, Qifang, Sanjiao, etc.

- 阴、阳: In; Yang

- 君、臣、佐、使: Kyun, or Sovereign; Chin, or domestick Servants; Tso, or general Officers; She, subaltern Officer
- 七方(大小缓急奇偶复): Ta fang, or great Receipt; Syau fang, or small Receipt; Whang fang, or flow Receipt; Kyi fang, or quick Receipt; Ki fang, or odd Receipt; Ngheu fang, or even Receipt; Fu fang, auxiliary or doubly even Receipt
- 三焦(上焦、中焦、下焦): Shang tsyau, or Breast; Chong tsyau, that is, in the superior or middle Cavity of the Body or upper Belly; Hya tsyau, or Inferior Cavity, which is the lower Belly.

2) *Literal translation*: In the notes of "Jinseng", the translator committed he had adopted literal translation method and clarified his reason: "It is difficult to understand thoroughly the names of distempors in China, and therefore we may perhaps be mistaken in the names of some of these diseases. We have given these receipts word for word, that the reader may form a notion of the way of thinking among the Chinese, and the manner of making up their medicines." (Du Halde, 1738: 220)

As the translator said, the literal translation of Chinese characters is basically used in the translation of terms of recipes, or prescriptions. For example, "四君子汤" is translated into "the Decoction of the four Wise Men". Medicines contained in formulas are also translated in the original order. In addition, literal translation or combination of transliteration and literal translation are also used in the translation of TCM medicines, materia medica and theoretical terms of prescriptions, such as the translation of "君、臣、佐、使" and "七方" (referring to the table above), while "四气" and "五味" are literal translation. "四气(寒、热、温、凉)" and "五味(酸、苦、甘、辛、咸)" are translated into "Four qualities of the air, cold, hot, temperate, cool" and "Five several tastes, sharp, sweet, sour, bitter, and salty" respectively.

#### B. Domesticating method

In the introduction and translation of *Pen Tsau Kang Mu*, it is obvious that the translator deconstructs TCM from the perspective of Western culture and Western medicine. In the 16th and 17th century, the transformation of European medicine has begun, and the scientific activities to explore the origin of life and body structure by human anatomy and measurement have achieved fruitful results. At that time, a large number of Western medical knowledge, especially about human anatomy, was introduced into China by missionaries. As missionaries were influenced by Western medical knowledge, it was not difficult to understand the translation of TCM terms with Western

anatomy terms. What's more, at that time, the world medicine, both in China and Europe, was still in the classical or traditional medical stage, with the same long history and the cognitive theory of the body and diseases based on the holistic view, as well as herbal medicine as the basic treatment means. Therefore, translators' cognition of traditional Western medicine also affected their translation of TCM terminology vocabulary.

Therefore, in addition to the translation of TCM with anatomy terms of modern Western medicine, there are also European traditional medical vocabulary in this text. Why use TWM vocabulary to translate TCM? In the writer's opinion, the first is that the translator wants to narrow the distance between Western readers and Chinese medicine culture and reduce the sense of strangeness. The other is that the translator knew some similarities between the two traditional medicine systems, for example, the four elements theory of TWM and the five elements theory of TCM.

1) *Borrowing terms of the theory of the four elements*: Example 1: The 5th, 6th and 7th treat of three Elements, viz. Water, of which there are 43 Sorts; Fire, of 11 Sorts; and Earth of 60 (Du Halde, 1738: 207).

Example 2: And because Fire and Water are the two chief Elements, and as it were the two first Principles of all other Productions, this Work begins with these two Elements (Du Halde, 1738: 208).

Under the influence and enlightenment of the "五行" theory, Li Shizhen applied it to medicine classification and became its main framework system, setting up chapters of Water, Fire, Soil, Gold and Wood. Translating "五行" into "five elements" is based on the theory of four elements in ancient and medieval medicine. The theory holds that earth, fire, water and air are the four elements that make up the body, and the imbalance caused by excessive or insufficient elements will lead to diseases, which is very close to the law of subjugating and counterrestricting in the five-element theory of TCM. Therefore, translating "五行" into "Five Elements" can convey the source text information with the help of the existing Western cultural images, which is helpful for the audience to understand and accept (Zhao Xia, 2019: 3).

2) *Borrowing terms of the theory of the four humours*: The theory of the four humours, also named humourism, emphasizes the importance of the balance of bodily fluids. One of the treatises attributed to Hippocrates, *On the Nature of Man* (Hippocrates, 1983: 262), pointed out that health mainly refers to the state that these components, that is, four humours, are in the right proportion to each other in strength and quantity and fully mixed. When one of the humours is insufficient or excessive, or separated in the body

without mixing with other substances, the disease will occur.

Example 3: In a word, if you would expel a Cold, unnatural Heat, bad Air, or a certain Malignity that may affect the Spirits, or if you would open Obstructions, disperse Humours, and heal Diseases, have recourse to the Remedies of the third Book. (Du Halde, 1738:210)

欲除寒热邪气，破积聚愈疾者本下经 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 26).

Example 4: If the Medicines are not designed to penetrate to the Vessels, but to evacuate Humours contained in the Stomach and Bowels, they must be reduced to fine Powder, and made up with Honey (Du Halde, 1738: 211).

细末者，不循经络，止去胃中及脏腑之积 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 31).

Example 5: To disperse or evacuate viscous Humours from the lower Belly, Pills are used, but they ought to be large, round and smooth (Du Halde, 1738: 211).

去下部之疾，其丸极大而光且圆 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 31).

In the above examples, "积聚(积聚肿块)", "胃中及脏腑之'积(郁积之病)'" , "下部之'疾(疾病)'" are translated as "humours" or "viscous humours". In the translator's view, these diseases are illnesses or pathogenic factors that affect the health of the body. In the source text, they only refer to diseases of the body, and there is no clear indication of what kind of specific diseases are. Therefore, translating these diseases as humours is beneficial for Western readers to understand that these concepts refer to diseases or pathogenic factors that affect the health of the body. Humours is closely related to human health in Western traditional medicine, and changes of various diseases can be attributed to changes in bodily fluids.

### C. *Mistranslations*

Due to language and cultural barriers, there are many deviations in the translator's understanding of the original text, resulting in many mistranslations.

Example 6: Remedies of great Malignity, if the Disease has ten Degrees of Enormity, may diminish six. Medicines of a moderate Malignity will diminish Seven, and those which have very little Malignity will diminish eight; but Medicines of no malignant Quality will diminish nine (Du Halde, 1738: 210-211).

大毒治病，十去其六；常毒治病，十去其七；小毒治病，十去其八；无毒治病，十去其九 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 29).

The original meaning of this passage is to take the medicine with great toxicity, if you can remove six tenths of the disease, you should stop it. If taking the medicine with ordinary toxicity, you can stop it after

removing seven tenths of the disease. If using the medicine with small toxicity, you can stop it if you remove eight tenths of the medicine. If you using the medicine with no toxicity, you can stop after removing nine tenths of the medicine. This is to emphasize the need for careful medication. But the meaning of the translation is that taking drugs with different toxicity can reduce the degree of the disease, which does not reflect the principle that the medicine should be stopped after certain degree of disease being removed. The translator's translation error here is due to the strong connection between the ancient Chinese and the context. The same sentence will have totally different meanings in different contexts.

Example 7: Hong king says, That according to the Variety of Distempers, Medicines must be administered either in Pills, Powder, or Potion, or mixed with Wine, or in the Form of an Electuary, that is, prepared and boiled, or fried with Fat (Du Halde, 1738:211).

(弘景曰) 又按病有宜服丸、服散、服汤、服酒、服膏煎者, 亦兼参用, 察病之源, 以为其制 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 31).

In this sentence, the translator tried to explain the way of "煎". However, the translator didn't realize that the "煎" in medicine preparation is different from the traditional Chinese cuisine.

Example 8: Medicines prepared by Mastication were formerly in vogue, before proper Instruments were invented to cut them small: They then chewed the Simples they designed to use, squeezed out the Juice, and gave it to the Patient. This sort of Preparation served to facilitate the Motion of the Humours upward, and to distribute them more easily throughout all the Vessels (Du Halde, 1738:211).

咬咀者, 古制也。古无铁刀, 以口咬细, 煎汁饮之, 则易升易散而行经络也 (Li Shizhen, 1999: 31).

The translator misunderstood that the ancients chewed the medicinal materials was to squeeze out juice with their teeth. The real intention of chewing drugs small was to make it easy for boiling. It reflected the translator did not know that there was a step of boiling medicine to produce juice, rather than chewing to produce juice.

#### **IV. ENLIGHTENMENT FROM THE EARLY TRANSLATIONS OF *PEN TSAU KANG MU***

Through the analysis of this text, three points can be concluded: first, the missionaries adopted both the foreignization and domestication in translating TCM works, and believed that literal translation in receipts can better convey TCM thinking mode to Western readers; second, TCM and TWM have something in common, and taking advantage of that can help Western readers understand and accept TCM; third, due to limitation of the times and translators, there are many

mistranslations. Based on these three findings and established research achievements, we can offer some suggestions for the TCM English translation.

##### *A. Emphasizing foreignization in TCM translation*

In the process of TCM translation, foreignization should be the main method and domestication should be the auxiliary. Compared with the domestication translation, the foreignization translation can better convey the TCM ideology and culture, and let the readers form the TCM thinking mode. As Wiseman (2000: 207) said, the successful dissemination of TCM in Japan and South Korea rests on the source-oriented translation, which generally adopting Chinese knowledge and extensively adopting other facets of Chinese culture. Besides, it is not only doctors who are interested in TCM, but also sinologists who are interested in the history and culture behind TCM. It is particularly important to spread the culture of TCM while translating the medical knowledge of Chinese medicine. Therefore, in the translation of TCM, we should mainly adopt the method of foreignization to present the Chinese medical knowledge and Chinese culture to the readers.

##### *B. Learning from Western traditional medicine theory*

The similarities between Chinese and Western traditional medicines have been confirmed by many studies. Nowadays, furthermore, more and more attention has been paid to traditional medicines worldwide. Because of the frequent exchanges between countries since ancient times, traditional medicines in various countries have interacted with each other and there are many things in common among them. In the course of developing the English translation of TCM, many insightful people have put efforts into the comparison of TCM and Western medicine in order to better translate and introduce TCM. But because of the popularity of modern Western medicine (MWM), most of them pay more attention to the comparison between MWM and TCM, concluding that there are great differences between the two medicine systems. Hence, the purpose of comparing TCM and Western medicine to translate and introduce TCM better didn't reach satisfying achievement. Fortunately, traditional medicine systems have gradually attracted more attention in the world recently, and the TWM has been making a comeback. The discovery of similarity between different traditional medicines, especially the Chinese and the Western, may advance the process of translating and introducing TCM to the world.

The study of traditional medicines can not only find the similarities between TCM and other traditional medicine, promote the progress of TCM English translation, but also advance the mutual learning of medical achievements, and boost the development of Chinese medicine and even prompt the development of

world medicine. At present, with the development of globalization, countries are more and more closely connected, and are moving towards a "community of shared future for mankind". The progress of one country's medicine is the progress of the world's medicine. The international cooperation to fight against the pandemic of coronavirus is the best proof of close linkage of countries all around the world.

### C. Ensuring the accuracy of TCM translation

It is an indisputable fact that there are reams of mistranslation in existed works of TCM translation and introduction, which is also proved by the study of the translation and introduction of *Pen Tsau Kang Mu* in *Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary*. Since the 18th century, many domestic and foreign supporters of TCM have tried to make the ancient and mysterious medicine known to the world, hoping that it can be understood and applied by the whole world. Many English translators have also devoted their whole lives to promoting the development of translation of TCM, but there are still lots of difficulties after hundreds of years. Nowadays, it is an irresistible historical trend for TCM to go to the world. The successful spread of Chinese medicine can not only enhance the influence of Chinese culture and China's international status, but also will contribute to the advancement of global medical and health undertakings. But how to realize the internationalization of TCM and make it spread successfully like the modern Western medicine? There is no doubt that translation plays an important role in it. Therefore, the cultivation of TCM English translation talents is very important. Based on the analysis of the translation and introduction of *Pen Tsau Kang Mu* in *Description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary*, to foster TCM English translation talents should at least involve the following two aspects: The first is to attach importance to the study of theories of TCM; The second is to learn the Chinese traditional culture well. TCM is the combination of Chinese medical knowledge and Chinese culture, and the communication of TCM is one of the important parts of the cultural communication of China. Translation of TCM involves not only language but also cultural factors. For such cultures as philosophy, history and classical literature of TCM, translators should learn them systematically. Moreover, if possible, the translator should have some knowledge of Western traditional medicine and even the world traditional medicines.

## V. CONCLUSION

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the arrival of Western missionaries to China has promoted the cultural exchange between China and the West. As the epitome of the introduction of Chinese culture into Europe in this period, *Description of the Empire of*

*China and Chinese Tartary* played an important role in introducing China at that time. The translation and introduction of *Pen Tsau Kang Mu* in Cave-version had introduced *Pen Tsau Kang Mu*, the theory of TCM and some Chinese medicine in detail in English for the first time. The translation of the book, which was completed in the embryonic stage of the history of Chinese-English translation of TCM, has three distinctive features. First, due to the general balance between Chinese and Western cultures at that time, as well as translators' relevantly correct understanding and objective view on Chinese culture and TCM, when translating and introducing works of TCM, the translator often adopted the foreignizing method to try to make Western readers form the thinking mode of TCM. Second, the translator realized that the similarity between TWM theory and TCM. Some terms were directly translated with vocabularies of TWM theory, such as the translation of "five elements", which is still in use now. Third, because of the uniqueness of TCM and the language or culture barrier, there are many mistranslations.

According to these three features, enlightenment on the international dissemination of TCM treatment protocols could be concluded. One is that with the objective understanding of TCM and its efficacy by more and more countries, adopting foreignization translation will be likely to be accepted by Western readers. Second, there are many similarities between TWM and TCM. Learning from TWM to explore TCM translation may help Westerners better understand TCM. Third, we must strictly ensure the quality of translated works of TCM, so that we can spread the real TCM to the world, rather than the "pseudo-TCM", which distorts and mistranslates it. Only in this way can the Western countries understand the real TCM and objectively evaluate its value.

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