

Research and Reflection on the Current Situation of the Translation and Dissemination of Shaanxi Folk Culture

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Abstract: Folk culture is the unique customs and practices that have developed in a region over the course of history, representing the traditional culture and spiritual pursuits of that area or even the nation. It serves as the cornerstone of culture. The translation and dissemination of folk culture can enhance a country's cultural soft power. This article studies the translation and dissemination of Shaanxi folk culture in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, proposing some thoughts on how to promote and optimize the current situation of translation and dissemination.

Keywords: Folk culture, Translation, Shaanxi Culture.

1. Introduction

Folk culture is the unique customs and practices that a country gradually forms over the years through its production and daily life. It is an important pathway to showcase a nation's traditional culture and spiritual outlook, and it is one of the essences of ethnic culture, representing an invaluable form of intangible wealth. Folk culture encompasses rich historical experiences while also exhibiting distinct features of the contemporary era. Language serves as the cornerstone of folk culture, reflecting the cultural identity and connotations of a nation in the context of globalization and initiatives like the Belt and Road. The current climate strongly encourages the international promotion of Chinese culture, the demand for the export of folk culture is increasingly expanding. Among these, the translation of folk culture plays a crucial role; effectively translating folk culture means successfully disseminating it, thereby facilitating the exchange and integration of local cultural systems with international cultural systems.

Shaanxi is one of the most important birthplaces of Chinese culture, boasting a splendid and long-standing historical and cultural foundation. The folk culture of Shaanxi holds significant positive implications for the international dissemination and exchange of Chinese culture. In the context of strengthening international communication capabilities in the new era, it is essential to enhance the translation and dissemination of Shaanxi culture, achieving effective mutual translation between Chinese and target languages. This will contribute to telling the story of Shaanxi well, spreading the voice of Shaanxi, and shaping a credible, lovable, and respectable image of China.

2. Analysis of the Basic Situation of Shaanxi Culture

Shaanxi not only possesses rich historical and cultural resources but also has a vibrant and rich revolutionary cultural background. The provincial capital, Xi'an, as the ancient capital of thirteen dynasties, has witnessed the brilliant history of Chinese culture. Yan'an, a significant revolutionary base, is the birthplace of the Yan'an spirit, which is one of the most

valuable spiritual treasures of our party and country. Protecting, disseminating, and promoting both red and historical culture is also an important part of our work. This is a crucial avenue for telling the Chinese story and spreading the Chinese voice.

Shaanxi's folk culture is equally rich and captivating. These cultural characteristics are distinct and exude strong local flavor and ecological atmosphere. For instance, Shaanxi's opera culture includes various forms such as Qin Opera and shadow puppetry. In terms of folk songs and dances, there are "Huayin Laoqiang", Shaanbei folk songs, and Ansai waist drums, among others. Additionally, unique festive customs like temple fairs and fireworks are also prevalent. These seemingly ordinary activities not only reflect the daily lives of the people of Shaanxi but also showcase their spirit and zest for life.

On this ancient and magical land of Shaanxi, folk activities are not merely forms of entertainment and celebration; they are vibrant manifestations of historical inheritance and cultural accumulation. For example, the "Shehuo" performances during the Spring Festival are not only a visual feast but also a modern presentation of ancient sacrificial activities, allowing people to feel the warmth of traditional culture amidst joy and laughter.

The folk handicrafts of Shaanxi are equally breathtaking. Skills such as paper-cutting, clay sculpture, and embroidery transform into exquisite artworks through the skilled hands of artisans. These creations not only adorn people's living spaces but also embody their aspirations and pursuits for a beautiful life.

Moreover, Shaanxi's culinary culture is an important component of its folk culture. Unique snacks such as Yangrou Paomo (lamb soup with bread), Liangpi (cold skin noodles), and Roujiamo (meat sandwich) attract countless diners with their distinct flavors and preparation techniques. These delicacies not only satisfy people's taste buds but also serve as a beautiful calling card for Shaanxi culture.

Additionally, Shaanxi is a land rich in literary talent and

cultural heritage. Many writers have vividly depicted the essence of the Sanqin region through their life-infused prose. The works of four Mao Dun Literature Prize winners—Lu Yao, Jia Pingwa, Chen Zhongshi, and Chen Yan—have had a significant impact nationwide. The "Shaanxi literary army" has played a crucial role in the Chinese literary scene in the last century. Many of their works hold substantial value for translation and promotion.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of the External Translation of Shaanxi Culture

As the capital of several historical dynasties, Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi Province, boasts a rich cultural heritage and historical background. Notable sites such as the Terracotta Army, the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, and Huaqing Palace, with their rich historical connotations, have attracted the attention of many foreign tourists. With the continuous rise in tourism popularity, Shaanxi's historical culture has gained a certain degree of attention abroad through various foreign language texts and video materials, promoting the further development of the external translation of Shaanxi's historical culture.

Shaanxi Province has been committed to promoting the external translation and international communication of its regional culture, achieving substantial results. Literature is an important component of culture, and Shaanxi is known as a "literary stronghold" and a "literary province." In recent years, with the efforts of institutions such as the Shaanxi Writers Association, the Shaanxi Translators Association, and the School of Foreign Languages at Northwest University, there has been significant progress in the external translation of Shaanxi literature, particularly in English translation. As a leading figure among Shaanxi writers, Jia Pingwa's works have been translated into over 30 languages for distribution abroad. The English series includes "Turbulence," translated by noted American translator Howard Goldblatt, "The Lantern Bearer," also translated by Goldblatt, and "Happy Dreams," "The Sojourn Teashop," and "Broken Wings," translated by British translator Nicky Harman. There are also examples of collaboration between foreign and local translators; for instance, the English version of "故土 (The Earthen Gate)" was completed by Shaanxi translator Professor Hu Zongfeng and British translator Robin. Additionally, other works such as Chen Zhongshi's "White Deer Plain" and Lu Yao's "Ordinary World" have also been translated into foreign languages and disseminated abroad. The quantity and quality of these literary translations are continually improving, providing significant support for the dissemination of Shaanxi's local culture and folk traditions.

The traditional art form of Shaanxi, Qin opera, has also seen a revival in the new era, with classic operatic pieces such as "The Female Generals of the Yang Family," "The Case of the Beautiful Woman," and "Three Drops of Blood" being made available in English versions, offering foreign audiences and opera enthusiasts an opportunity to understand Shaanxi's traditional customs. Similarly, the traditional folk songs of northern Shaanxi, originally created and sung by the laboring masses during their leisure time, represent the material life and spiritual culture of the people in northern Shaanxi. In the book "Northwest Recollections" compiled by Wang Hongyin,

105 northern Shaanxi folk songs are included, along with English translations, serving as a window for the international dissemination of northern Shaanxi folk music. Cultural villages in Shaanxi, rich in regional characteristics, such as Bailuyuan and Yuanjiacun, have also launched English translations introducing local customs. Meanwhile, the Shaanxi Provincial Radio and Television Bureau has actively promoted the dissemination of local folk culture through the release of English documentaries.

Furthermore, Shaanxi Province has not overlooked its red resources. Regarding the dissemination of red culture and the red spirit, President once stated: "The red bloodline is a concentrated embodiment of the political essence of our Party and a source of spiritual strength for the Party members in the new era." The red spirit has profoundly changed the historical process and spiritual outlook of the Chinese nation. The appearance of the English version of "Liangjiahe" provides people both domestically and internationally with an opportunity to understand the essence of Shaanxi's red culture, deepening their comprehension of Shaanxi culture and promoting its communication and dissemination on international platforms.

Currently, Shaanxi folk culture, and indeed Shaanxi culture as a whole, has made certain advancements in external translation, laying a solid groundwork for dissemination and achieving a reasonable degree of cultural exchange. However, several issues still warrant significant attention, such as the inaccuracies in translating some local expressions in Shaanxi literary works, the precision of translations concerning Shaanxi folk cultural activities, and potential misunderstandings arising from ideological differences during the translation of local red culture, which could lead to misconceptions among foreign readers.

4. Analysis of the Current Status of the External Translation of Shaanxi Folk Culture

Right now, our country is vigorously promoting the dissemination and promotion of Chinese culture, telling compelling stories about China, and allowing the world to hear the voice of China. Shaanxi is one of the important birthplaces of the Chinese nation and Huaxia civilization, with a long history and rich folk culture. Therefore, in the external dissemination of folk culture, Shaanxi should play a significant role. Additionally, Shaanxi's unique geographical environment and its diverse and complex historical culture have created a unique and unparalleled folk culture. Utilizing its advantageous conditions, Shaanxi Province has established many folk culture museums, published books and audio-visual materials introducing Shaanxi's folk culture, and even produced television programs and documentaries to promote Shaanxi's folk culture abroad. However, in the course of this research, the author believes that there are still some issues that need to be addressed.

4.1 The Quality of External Translation of Shaanxi Folk Culture Needs Improvement

There are significant differences between Chinese and foreign languages and cultures, making many elements of Shaanxi

culture obscure and difficult to translate appropriately. This often results in unclear expressions and miscommunications in translated texts. Such issues have been observed in the Shaanxi Yisushe Folk Culture Museum. These translation problems can lead to misunderstandings among foreign audiences and tourists when they try to comprehend Shaanxi's folk culture, potentially leaving them with a poor impression.

4.2 Shortage of Professional Translators and Dissemination Talent

Not only in Shaanxi Province but also across the entire country, there is a common problem of a lack of professional talent who are well-versed in folk culture, leading to a severe scarcity of translated works related to Shaanxi folk culture. Additionally, due to the lack of professional dissemination talents and effective communication channels, many folk artworks from northern Shaanxi have not gained wide recognition globally. These factors severely restrict the external dissemination and development of Shaanxi's folk culture. Furthermore, despite being a significant literary province, Shaanxi cannot be considered a major player in literary translation. Much of the translation work for Shaanxi literature is conducted by foreign translators. While these translated works have achieved considerable influence, even reaching the prestigious Blackwell's Bookshop in the UK, the absence of local translators remains a significant issue. Currently, the literary translation team in Shaanxi Province comprises only a few hundred people, indicating that there is a long way to go.

4.3 Difficulties in Uncovering and Accurately Translating the Profound Connotations of Shaanxi Folk Culture

As is well-known, folk culture faces many challenges in the process of external dissemination and translation, and effectively excavating its profound connotations for translation is even more complex. The diversity and long history of Shaanxi folk culture inherently add to the difficulty of translation. Combined with its rich cultural connotations and unique cultural characteristics, Shaanxi's regional culture presents a colorful array. In the translation process, employing a foreignization strategy can skillfully connect different cultures, help overcome cultural differences, and facilitate effective cultural exchange. Therefore, when translating Shaanxi folk culture, it is essential to closely integrate it with its cultural context. However, many translations related to Shaanxi folk culture often detach from their cultural environment, resorting to vague English terminology that replaces the original cultural connotations. In summary, the translation and dissemination of Shaanxi's folk culture still face a long and arduous task, requiring continuous efforts to overcome existing difficulties and to advance actively.

5. Case Analysis of the External Translation of Shaanxi Folk Culture

Shaanxi Province, as one of the important birthplaces of Chinese culture, is geographically advantageous and has nurtured numerous outstanding civilizations. To enable people around the world to understand and appreciate these culturally rich folk traditions and to take them to the international stage, showcasing the charm of the Chinese

nation, the folk culture of Shaanxi urgently needs to be translated and disseminated. However, in the translation process, attention should not only be given to literal conversions but also to the expression of cultural connotations; otherwise, the desired dissemination effect will be difficult to achieve. This is what we call "free translation." Yet, translation errors frequently occur in existing materials and various academic reports, as well as in many platforms and public spaces that involve communication with foreign friends, with issues like mistranslations and omissions being common. By combining literal translations with appropriate explanations, the information conveyed through translation will be clearer and more precise.

For instance, when translating "关中八大怪" (Eight Wonders of Guanzhong), both translation methods need to be used. The term refers to eight unique customs and habits that emerged in the Guanzhong region of Shaanxi Province. In translating the phrase "房子半边盖" (half-roofed house), it should not simply be interpreted as the house being only half-built. Instead, it should be understood that the roof features one sloping side, which was a response to the disparity between the availability of tree resources and the population in Guanzhong at that time. This design saves resources and allows rainwater to flow down the slope into a storage well for future use. Therefore, it cannot be translated as "The house is only half done," but rather as "The roof of a house has only one sloping plane."

On the other hand, phrases like "姑娘不对外" (Girls never marry out of their local districts) and "油泼辣子" (Chili oil) can be translated directly according to their original meanings as "Girls never go and marry out of their local districts" and "Chili oil itself can be a dish," respectively.

Yet, care must be taken with certain folk cultural elements that are not suitable for free or literal translation. For example, "二月二龙抬头" (February 2, Dragon Raises Its Head) cannot be simply translated as "Dragon raises its head," as the concept of a dragon in the English context often refers to an evil creature, contrasting with the auspicious connotation of dragons in Chinese culture. In such cases, it is better to use "zero translation" and directly translate it as "longtaitou" to avoid ambiguity.

In summary, addressing the unique elements of folk culture requires translators to have a deep understanding of the inherent meanings behind these elements and maintain high sensitivity to parts that may cause ambiguity in foreign and Chinese contexts. By selecting different treatment methods based on varying situations, we can truly achieve the external translation and dissemination of folk culture.

6. Analysis of the Current Status of Shaanxi Folk Culture

Folk culture is the collective creation of people living together in a region and represents the cultural style formed by the long-term development of regional culture accepted by the majority. There is an ancient saying in China: "Five li differ in wind, ten li differ in customs," meaning that cultural characteristics and styles vary significantly due to different

regional environments. The formation of any folk culture is deeply rooted in its historical, geographical, and social contexts, and it creates a distinctive symbol to represent its region. For instance, in China, when we mention stilted buildings, we think of the scenic areas of Huaihua Phoenix Ancient Town; when we say "Shanbei Xintianyou," we envision the Loess Plateau; and when we mention "Shikumen," we recall old Shanghai.

Shaanxi is one of the cradles of the splendid culture of the Chinese nation and a major branch of traditional Huaxia culture. Xi'an, as the ancient capital of thirteen dynasties, carries the historical and cultural wealth from the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties. Moreover, Shaanxi is also one of the important revolutionary bases of modern China, which has produced a unique revolutionary culture. Based on its rich historical and cultural background, this land has given birth to many splendid and diverse folk cultures. Currently, more than 90 items from Shaanxi have been included in the national intangible cultural heritage representative project list, demonstrating the abundance of Shaanxi's folk culture.

Shaanxi can be roughly divided into three regions based on geographical conditions: northern Shaanxi, Guanzhong, and southern Shaanxi. Northern Shaanxi is predominantly plateau, Guanzhong is characterized by plains, while southern Shaanxi features beautiful mountains.

However, in today's era, many folk cultures are facing a situation of having no successors. For example, the status of "Shanbei storytelling" and "Yulin xiaoqu" is quite grim. The elderly in this industry are slowly stepping off the stage, but finding newcomers willing to pass on these skills is challenging. Similarly, the "Handiao Erhuang" in southern Shaanxi is also encountering severe difficulties, with the only remaining troupe located in Ankang City facing the risk of dissolution due to a continuous decline in audience numbers. Even folk activities like paper-cutting and shadow play, which have a solid grassroots foundation, are experiencing a downward trend in influence.

The author believes that the reasons for this predicament mainly stem from the rapid development of society, which is altering the way people communicate and live in various aspects. The traditional spaces where folk cultures thrive are constantly being squeezed by the conveniences and technologies brought about by modern society. Furthermore, in the context of a highly integrated global economy, the extent of cultural integration and homogenization is deepening, leading to increasingly pronounced cultural homogenization phenomena. Additionally, some scholars argue that with the rapid urbanization and integration of urban and rural areas in recent years, the differences between rural and urban areas are narrowing, thereby reducing the space for the development of folk cultures.

Located in northwestern China, Shaanxi has effectively preserved the folk cultural forms in their original state due to its relatively isolated geographical position. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The protection and inheritance of regional folk cultures cannot rely solely on closed-off preservation; instead, they need to combine new methods for dynamic transmission in the new era. This means that at all

times, folk cultures must actively adjust their forms to adapt to changes.

7. Analysis of Methods for the External Dissemination of Shaanxi Folk Culture

7.1 Utilizing New Digital Media Platforms for Dissemination and Promotion

Digital media significantly enriches the forms of cultural dissemination. With the rapid advancement of new generation information technologies such as 5G, big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, blockchain, and artificial intelligence, the innovative development of media convergence is continuously being promoted. These technologies are constantly injecting new vitality into the transformation of dissemination platforms, content, and methods, providing fresh momentum for online media.

In the process of disseminating Shaanxi folk culture to the outside world, we should view new media platforms as key battlegrounds for cultural transmission in the new era. By analyzing and utilizing the unique characteristics of various new media platforms, we can create diverse media products and effectively disseminate them by leveraging our strengths. For instance, on short video platforms like Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok), we can establish an official account dedicated to popularizing and promoting Shaanxi's folk culture. On this account, we can regularly post short videos introducing folk culture, especially popular folk activities such as shadow play and folk songs, using engaging creative techniques to expand their influence. Additionally, we can perform secondary creative production based on trending social topics on the platform to attract more traffic, thereby promoting folk culture.

On platforms like Weibo and Little Red Book, which are primarily text and image-based, we can focus on promoting folk culture museums and attractions that are suitable for tourists to photograph and check in, thereby attracting visitors while simultaneously publicizing and promoting our traditional folk culture. Of course, beyond the platforms and strategies mentioned above, we should actively explore other emerging media channels such as live streaming, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) to enrich and deepen the dissemination of folk culture.

In the field of live streaming, we can invite folk culture experts or artists for real-time interaction, allowing the audience to experience the charm of folk culture up close. By using live streaming, we can not only answer the audience's questions instantly but also increase their sense of participation and immersion, making cultural transmission more vivid and effective.

At the same time, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies provide new possibilities for the dissemination of folk culture. We can use these technologies to create virtual folk culture scenes, allowing viewers to feel as if they are in a real cultural environment. This immersive experience can not only stimulate the audience's interest in folk culture but also deepen their understanding and recognition of traditional culture.

7.2 Utilizing Cultural Activities to Enhance Recognition of Folk Culture

The best way to disseminate culture is through personal experience. To this end, we can plan a series of folk culture festivals, gathering local characteristics and hosting a variety of exhibitions and performances. These activities not only showcase traditional customs, music, dance, and handicrafts but also allow people to deeply appreciate the profound connotation and diverse charm of folk culture. Through on-site interaction and participation, the audience will feel the infectious power of folk culture, experiencing its unique cultural impact and emotional resonance, thus enhancing their recognition and sense of belonging to local culture.

Additionally, community-level diverse folk culture activities, such as cultural lectures, workshops, and interactive experience projects, should also be actively organized. These activities can invite folk culture experts, artists, and inheritors to share their knowledge and experiences. By personally participating in handicraft production, traditional games, and learning about folk customs, residents can deepen their understanding of traditional culture and profoundly experience its connotation and value. This sense of participation will attract more people to join the ranks of protecting and disseminating traditional folk culture, creating a positive interactive atmosphere.

On this basis, we can further expand the influence of the activities by collaborating with volunteers and communities, encouraging residents to actively participate in the inheritance and exchange of folk culture. Through these measures, we can not only enrich the cultural life of the community but also lay a solid foundation for the long-term dissemination of folk culture.

7.3 Strengthening Cultural Cooperation and Exchange

The essence of cultural exchange and cooperation is cultural dissemination. In this process, we need to innovate the ways of exchange and cooperation and establish diverse platforms. We should make full use of transnational cultural exchange platforms such as the "Asian Civilization Dialogue Conference" and the "China-Africa Cooperation Forum" to actively carry out cultural activities and enhance cultural interaction with countries around the world. At cultural exchange conferences with other countries, representatives from Shaanxi can invite foreign friends to personally experience folk cultural activities like paper-cutting and dough figurine making, thereby attracting their interest and attention to Shaanxi's folk culture.

7.4 Developing Folk Culture Products

In today's digital information age, we should not limit our focus to traditional media channels for the dissemination and promotion of folk culture. Instead, we should develop folk culture derivative products with unique Shaanxi characteristics based on market trends, such as notebooks themed around paper-cutting and doll keychains designed in the style of dough figurines. These products not only embody unique regional cultural flavors but also attract the attention of younger generations in novel and interesting ways, thus

promoting the inheritance and development of folk culture.

8. Conclusion

Folk customs are manifestations of the ways of life created and accumulated by people over long periods of time. The inheritance of Chinese culture, at its core, is an extension of the folk culture that has been formed through the trials and tribulations of this land throughout history. Due to the diverse living environments across different regions, a rich variety of folk cultures has emerged. As an important component of Chinese traditional culture, folk customs not only symbolize the culture of a nation or ethnic group but also profoundly reflect its spiritual essence.

Therefore, the translation and dissemination of folk culture to the outside world are crucial for enhancing national soft power and providing a Chinese voice on the global stage. However, due to its uniqueness, this process inevitably encounters various challenges. Supported by the broader context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the external translation and dissemination of folk culture are experiencing a "spring," as more people become aware of these issues and begin to address them, engaging in the study and research of folk culture. This creates a solid foundation for further promoting folk culture.

In today's era of advanced information technology, we need to make the most of the dividends of this age, using new media and technologies to explore and update methods of translation and dissemination, continuously discovering, analyzing, and resolving problems. This will help propel Shaanxi's folk culture, a shining gem, onto the world stage.

"The outstanding traditional Chinese culture is our most profound cultural soft power and the cultural soil in which socialism with Chinese characteristics is rooted." As a significant part of traditional culture in China, the external translation and dissemination of Shaanxi's traditional folk culture carry profound significance.

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