English Translation Methods for Ancient Chinese Cultural Artifacts Terminology

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The translation of ancient Chinese cultural artifacts terminology in museums plays a pivotal role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and preserving cultural heritage in the context of globalization. Through field research in over ten Chinese museums and analysis of more than 800 terms, this paper explores the most effective translation methods for such terminology, focusing on transliteration and literal translation under the strategy of foreignization as well as liberal translation and imitation under the domesticating strategy. Standardized terminology not only prevents ambiguities but also bridges cultural gaps by preserving phonetic authenticity while contextualizing functionality. By refining translation practices, museums can better fulfill their mission as bridges between cultures, promoting global appreciation of China's rich historical and artistic legacy.

Keywords: ancient Chinese cultural artifacts terminology, museums, translation strategies, translation methods, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

Due to the growing globalization and cross-cultural communication, museums have been receiving considerable attention as a significant channel for spreading regional and national cultures. Cultural artifacts in Chinese museums, especially ancient Chinese cultural artifacts, demonstrate more attractive charm and are more popular with tourists and cultural artifacts lovers at home and abroad, because of their differences with modern cultural artifacts in form, craft, symbolic meaning and historical background, as well as their profound historical connotation and cultural depth. Nowadays, an increasing number of Chinese museums attach more importance to international communication, offering English translation for the names and introductions of the cultural artifacts.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to translate Chinese cultural artifacts terminology into English. Liu Qingyuan (2005) has put forward that, because of the rich connotation in the names of cultural artifacts, it is difficult to dig out a perfect counterpart in English with every Chinese terminology, expressing the totally same surficial and symbolic meaning. Therefore, when translators choose the translation methods, they are expected to make sure the text conveys the special characteristics of Chinese culture and is concise and easy to understand. Luo Xinzhang (1984) noted that, the translation for cultural artifacts, which is a kind of informative text, should

focus on expressiveness, which means it is acceptable to miss a few words or even one or two sentences, or to adopt creative translation. Based on the former researches, this paper aims to explore the fittest translation methods for ancient Chinese cultural artifacts terminology.

In order to ensure the preciseness and practicability of the paper, we have visited several museums in different provinces to collect the translations of Chinese cultural artifacts terminology as much as possible. The analysis of the translation methods demonstrates that the English translation in many Chinese museums ought to be improved. First, owing to different understandings of the same terminology, and different choices of translation methods, sometimes there are more than one translation for a term, leading to ambiguity or misunderstanding of Chinese culture, and hindering its effective spread. The term "祭红釉," for instance, is translated into "Bright Red Glaze" by Jiangxi Provincial Museum, based on the characteristics of the color but too general to indicate its special part—specially for ritual use—or to take it apart from others, while "Sacrificial Red Glaze" by Qinhuangdao Museum, making it more recognizable by emphasizing the cultural feature. Second, the lack of knowledge of the cultural background behind the cultural artifacts results in the wrong translation. For example, the term "插屏" is translated into two different versions—"Table Screen" and "Wall Panel"—in Luoyang Museum. According to its function—a kind of decorative screen put on the table—the former translation is obviously more accurate and the latter may confuse the artifact with the screen hang on the wall. Third, a portion of translation texts miss the important information in the original texts, especially the unique crafts in ancient China, such as "Bronze Ring-base" for "透雕龙凤纹铜铺首" in Hebei Museum, missing the important craft "透雕." Lin Wentao (2013) has emphasized that, the effective transmission of culture depends on the translation of cultural artifacts, and the standardization level of translation plays an important role in the smooth transmission of culture. Therefore, it is crucial to improve the standardization of cultural artifacts terminology translation which is based on translation methods.

In reference to translation studies, the confusion among translation strategy, method and technique has been provoking debate in academia. According to Xiong Bing (2014), translation strategy is a set of principles and solutions adopted to achieve specific translation goals in translation activities, dividing into Foreignizing Strategy and Domesticating Strategy. And each of them includes some translation methods. Foreignizing Strategy includes Zero Translation, Transliteration, Word-for-word Translation and Literal Translation. Domesticating Strategy includes Liberal/Free Translation, Imitation, Variation Translation and Recreation. Compared to translation methods, translation techniques are partial and more concrete in translation activities, manifesting certain translation methods. This paper will be organized in accordance with the theory system above.

However, translation for cultural artifacts has its particularity. Although cultural artifact translation also involves the steps of text translation, pure text translation mainly focuses on the correspondence and conversion between the two languages (including vocabulary, syntax, context and phrasing habits). On this basis, cultural artifacts translation also needs to be combined with the actual characteristics of cultural artifacts (such as shape, function, historical background, etc.) for comprehensive consideration. When tourists are viewing the cultural artifacts and reading the introduction, they obtain comprehensive information by integrating the translated descriptions with the physical artifacts. When it is difficult to find an appropriate counterpart between the target language and the source language, translators sometimes rename or create new terms in the target language

according to the specific characteristics of the cultural artifacts, so as to more accurately convey the uniqueness and cultural connotation of the cultural artifacts.

According to our experiences and analysis, we conclude four main translation methods for ancient Chinese cultural artifacts translation: transliteration, literal translation, liberal translation and imitation. In this paper, we will focus on these methods and analyze the concrete translation techniques and the situations to properly use them.

Reason for Choosing Cultural Artifacts Terminology over Names

Before further discussing translation methods, it is essential to pinpoint the objects of translation. Instead of the artifacts' names, this paper mainly focuses on the translation of terminology of cultural artifacts from periods predating the Qing Dynasty, displayed in the museums from south to north in China.

According to Zheng Shupu (2005), a Chinese terminologist, "Terminology serves as the keywords that encapsulate the systematic knowledge of some field" (p.14). It conveys the idea that terminology functions as the foundational language or keywords within a particular field of study or expertise. These terms encapsulate, or summarize, the systematic and specialized knowledge that defines that field. The translation of the terminology in cultural artifacts is not excepted. For instance, "adze" is the translation for the term "锛" (in Chinese), a tool for planning wood, while in the exhibition, there are stone adze, bronze adze, iron adze, and so on. These names are translated with the keyword "adze" and other modifiers to specify the material. Without "adze," the artifacts cannot be described accurately. However, the name "stone adze" cannot be applied in translating all kinds of adzes because not all adzes are made of stone. It is its universal applicability that puts terminology in an advantage for the translation of cultural artifacts over simply studying the names. Highly condensed terminology is the essence of a field, so a settled term can be used in the translation of various cultural artifacts with the same feature, serving as a tool for precise communication among translators, which is crucial for ensuring clarity and consistency in museums as well as academic discourse and professional practice.

Take a special artifact in West Lake Museum as an example. It is named "Dagger with a Hollowed-out Human-face-shaped Head, a Sawtooth-patterned Flat Handle, a Butterfly-wing-shaped Handguard, and a Column-shaped Ridge," and it includes nine terms in total. The first term, "Dagger", shows that it is a short knife with a pointed blade used for piercing or stabbing in ancient China. "Head," "Handle," "Handguard," and "Ridge" are terms of different parts of the dagger, followed by terms like "Human face shape," "Sawtooth pattern," "Butterfly-wing shape," and "Column shape," displaying the forms and patterns of each part of the dagger. It is terms that serve as the foundation of the final translation of the name for the cultural artifacts.

Terminology not only provides a common language for experts to communicate effectively for the study of cultural artifacts, but also serves as a gateway for tourists to understand and enjoy the exhibition well. It is through these terms that the nuanced concepts, theories, and practices are articulated and transmitted across generations and across borders. Furthermore, with time going by, terminology adapts, incorporating new terms to describe emerging concepts and discarding outdated ones, thereby reflecting the dynamic nature of knowledge and understanding. More studies on terminology are beneficial to both deepening understanding and facilitating effective collaboration with others in translating the names of cultural artifacts. Therefore, the

translation methods discussed below are also concentrated on the terminology instead of the names of cultural artifacts.

Translation Strategies and Corresponding Methods for Terminology

In the practice of translation, the two translation strategies—Foreignizing Strategy and Domesticating Strategy—respectively have their owns advantages. Foreignizing Strategy preserves the exotic features of the original language by breaking the linguistic norms of the target language to a certain extent (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997). Xiong Bing (2014) has suggested that it enables readers of the target language to fully appreciate exotic flavors and thus promote cultural communication between different nations. By contrast, Domesticating Strategy refers to a smooth style of writing to reduce the exotic color of the origin language for the target language readers (Shuttleworth, et al., 1997). It takes the translation texts' readability and acceptability into consideration, helping readers to better understand the cultural connotation of the origin language.

When translating cultural terminology, it is important to ensure the expressiveness, which pushes Domesticating Strategy to a major position. However, in the process of cultural development, Chinese culture maintains its own cores and features, and at the same time, communicates and exchanges with others actively. In addition, people around the world have certain commonalities in their production and life. Therefore, among the ancient Chinese cultural artifacts, in addition to the cultural products unique to China, there are also some products shared with other cultures. In that case, both strategies play a significant role in translation for cultural artifacts.

Translation Methods under Domesticating Strategy

Domesticating Strategy includes four translation methods—Liberal/Free Translation, Imitation, Variation Translation and Recreation. However, Variation Translation and Recreation are not often fit or used in cultural artifacts terminology translation. On the one hand, Variation Translation is always used to achieve a certain goal or to meet readers' requirements, on the contrary to the original meaning of the texts. For example, among the translator Gu Zhongyi's adaptation writings, *The Bullion World* (《金银世界》in Chinese) published in 1938 is the adaption from *Topaz* by Marcel Pagnol, in which Gu transferred the main idea from disclosing the French local governments' corruption to the adherence to personal ideals without being seduced to indulge in money, in order to remind the Chinese people during the war of how to change their life. On the other hand, Recreation texts differ greatly from the original in both meaning and form. It is typical in business English translation, such as Nokia's slogan "Connecting people" translated into "科技以人为本" in Chinese which means Technology is people-oriented. These two methods make the translation too far away from the original, not suitable for cultural artifacts translation, which requires a strong correlation with the original. Therefore, this part will only analyze the use of Liberal/Free Translation and Imitation in cultural artifacts terminology translation.

Liberal/Free Translation

Liberal translation, or free translation, is one of the most important methods for applying domestication to translation. The primary characteristic of liberal translation lies in its approach to lexical meaning and rhetorical devices through ingenious semantic transformation, aiming to render the original meaning more fluently and idiomatically in the target language.

When it comes to cultural artifacts, liberal translation becomes more essential when some special rhetorical devices are used in terminology, such as metaphor and synecdoche. The most common use of metaphor in the terminology of cultural artifacts lies in handles of pots and jars, translated as "ears" in many museums like Qinhuangdao Museum, Luoyang Museum and Datong Museum. This kind of handles are often placed on both sides of the pot, resembling ears. With the use of metaphor, the translated terminology becomes vivid and lifelike. As for synecdoche, in *Collins Dictionary*, it is a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for a whole or a whole for a part, as in 50 head of cattle for 50 cows, or the army for a soldier, which also appears in the translation of terminology related to cultural artifacts. "流" of "带流执壶" (a pouring teapot with a handle, featuring a spout for controlled flow) employs the rhetorical device of synecdoche. To make its translation intelligible, it is crucial to identify what it represents and restore the original intention of the reference. The term "流" substitutes spout with the concept of the water current associated with pouring, so the translation uses "spout" to complete the meaning, making it more accessible than "current" or "pouring water" for the tourists.

By employing ingenious semantic transformations and respecting the idiomatic expressions of the target language, liberal translation ensures that the translated terms resonate with the intended audience, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural artifacts. To be more exact, liberal translation can be classified into "paraphrase" and "idiomatic translation."

Paraphrase. Translating a culturally specific metaphor by explaining its meaning rather than finding a direct equivalent in the target language is paraphrasing. This method is a kind of explanation, where the translator interprets the source text without replacing its expressions with idiomatic equivalents in the target language.

It is common to introduce traditional Chinese crafts that are hard to find in other cultures by paraphrasing. For example, the term "芒口" in Jiangxi Provincial Museum is translated as "Unglazed rim," applying the method of paraphrasing. "Unglazed rim," specific to porcelain production, refers to a firing process where the rim of the porcelain vessel is left without glaze, exposing the bare body. By paraphrasing, the essence of the term "芒口" emerges more clearly for an international audience, bridging the cultural gap and conveying the unique aspect of this traditional Chinese craft.

In order to provide tourists with a more authentic experience, paraphrasing should be accurate and unambiguous with the description as close to the original artifacts as possible. For instance, the Luoyang Museum holds an ancient pot called "酱釉网络纹四系瓷罐," glazed with the color of dark reddish brown. However, the museum simply translated "酱釉" as "brown glaze," which may lead to confusion with the true "Brown glaze" (褐釉) for tourists. A minor detail as it is, it cannot be neglected in external publicity for cultural artifacts. Therefore, "dark reddish brown glaze" is more suitable for "酱釉," paralleling the same term in the Hebei Museum.

In the case of traditional Chinese crafts, paraphrasing allows the translators to share the rich history and cultural heritage of these crafts with people from different backgrounds and cultures. It encourages cross-cultural exchange and dialogue, promoting mutual respect and understanding among diverse communities, as well as helping to preserve the authenticity of the original term while making it accessible to a wider audience.

Idiomatic translation. Although idiomatic translation also involves interpretation, it differs from paraphrasing in that it replaces the expressions of the source text with idiomatic equivalents in the target language. Translators use this method to replace the original metaphorical object with a target-language proverb carrying a similar meaning, even if the wording differs.

For the translation of cultural artifacts terminology, idiomatic translation is a good way to shift the unfamiliar patterns or symbols to more familiar ones. The most typical example is the "之字纹" in the Liaoning Provincial Museum. The image of the Chinese character "之" is analogous to a zigzag in Western cultures, which is a line characterized by a series of angles forming a continuous pattern resembling a series of "W"s. The similarity in form between them is what enables the successful application of idiomatic translation. There are numerous other instances where similar patterns can be observed. In Jiangxi Provincial Museum, the Chinese decorative motif "米字纹" is translated as "Cross Patterns" and "谷纹" is rendered as "C-shape Patterns," where comparable imagery and expressions connect disparate cultural contexts, thereby enabling tourists to grasp the significance of cultural artifacts across cultural divides.

In the realm of cultural artifact terminology translation, idiomatic translation stands as a powerful tool for transforming unfamiliar patterns and symbols into familiar, easily understandable forms, thereby enriching cultural exchange and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

Imitation

Xiong Bing (2014) has put forward that imitation translation means that the translator does not adhere to the meaning details of the original text, let alone its vocabulary and sentence structure, but takes the original text as a reference mode, either by reducing and concentrating, only translating its general meaning or key information (or only selectively translating some of its information) or by addition and extension to translate more information than the original text. When using this method, addition and omission are the two major techniques.

Addition technique can display more information in the terminology and help the readers better understand the terms. First, it effectively brings more information of the cultural artifacts. There is a "黑陶鼎" (a ritual cooking utensil made by black pottery in ancient China) being translated into "Black Pottery Tripod" rather than "Black Pottery *Ding*" (if completely in accordance with the Chinese term). The term "tripod" specially refers to the stool, table or cauldron resting on three legs, while "*Ding*" does not denote the concrete shape or structure of the artifact. "Tripod" adds extra information without increasing the number of words, and is undoubtedly an effective translation technique. Second, addition technique can help to disambiguate. In Jiangxi Provincial Museum, "镇" (something heavy to keep things from blowing away) is translated into "Paper Weight" instead of "Weight" (if completely in accordance with the Chinese term). In ancient China, Weights are invented to hold down light things such as paper, mat and bed-curtain. It is not clear to judge the artifact's function just by a general term "Weight" and the artifact itself, which is perfectly solved by the additional information. Third, sometimes it is necessary to add more information to explain the cultural elements. For example, "梅妻鹤子" (a Chinese classical story, as well as a typical picture drawn on Chinese ancient artifacts) is translated into "Lin Bu's Hermit Life of Having Plum Blossoms as Wife and Cranes as Sons," offering a brief overview of the story contained in this term and conveying the style of the hermit spirit prevalent in ancient China.

Omission is also an important technique to improve the efficiency of information delivery, always embodied in the translations for some structures and patterns. For instance, Jiangxi Provincial Museum translates "立鸟盖" (the lids in the shape of a standing bird) into "Bird-shaped lids," omitting the bird's posture. Similarly, "喜鹊闹梅纹" (a pattern showing a magpie playing with the plum blossom) is translated into "Design of Magpie and Plum Blossom" in this museum, omitting the act of the bird. In these situations, the terms tend to be translated briefly because people can observe the details from the physical artifacts, and the tedious terms will cause people's reading fatigue, affecting people's appreciation of cultural artifacts themselves.

Translation Methods under Foreignizing Strategy

Foreignizing Strategy also includes four translation methods—Zero Translation, Transliteration, Word-for-word Translation and Literal Translation. Zero Translation means directly using the elements of original language, such as "LV" for "Louis Vuitton" in Chinese advertisement. However, Zhang Fengzhen (2017) has suggested that for this method, it is a must that the original language is widely used, or at least widely used in the industry. Nowadays, Chinese has not become the international lingua franca as English, so it is inappropriate to introduce Zero Translation into Chinese cultural artifacts translation. Moreover, Word-for-word Translation is not suitable as well. To use this method, "the differences in morphology, syntax and semantics between the two languages are not considered, and the original sentences are translated word-by-word" (Xiong, 2014, p. 85). It may destroy the integrity of the meaning. For example, if the term "石榴尊" (an ancient Chinese ritual vessel in the shape of pomegranate) is translated with Word-for-word Translation, the translation will be "Pomegranate Zun," which may confuse the readers about whether it is made from pomegranates. Therefore, this part will only focus on Literal Translation and Transliteration in cultural artifacts terminology translation.

Literal Translation

According to Xiong Bing (2014), literal translation has two major features. One is not to transfer the meaning or change the rhetorical structure, and another is to allow proper change in the syntactic structure to adapt to the target language.

Literal translation is a simple and convenient method, and a large number of cultural artifacts terms are translated with it, ranging from crafts to utensils. For example, "白釉" (a kind of glaze, whose color is white) is translated into "White Glaze," "梅纹" (a kind of pattern in shape of plum blossom) into "Plum Blossom Pattern", and "瓷碗" (a bowl made of porcelain) into "Porcelain Bowl."

Generally speaking, literal translation is the best method when there is a counterpart in English, for the meaning can be fully expressed and understood without any complex meaning-transfer or form-change. However, sometimes it is not easy to find out the perfect counterpart for the unique Chinese elements, and the translators need to do some research on the terms. First, the translation is expected to convey unabridged information to present distinctive Chinese culture. Jiangxi Provincial Museum provides two translation versions for the term "螭龙," "Dragon" and "Hornless Loong." In the aspect of cultural distinction, "Loong" is better, for it differentiates Chinese Loong (an auspicious symbol in Chinese tradition) from Western Dragon (originating from Western mythology and usually an evil character). In addition, there are four kinds of Loong

in Chinese legends, "蛟龙" for scaly Loong, "应龙" for winged Loong, "虬龙" for horned Loong and "螭龙" for hornless Loong. Therefore, the translation should be in accordance with the original, using "Hornless Loong" instead of "Loong" to ensure the information integrity. Second, translators ought to know that some terms have obtained their counterparts during cross-cultural communication and diplomatic activities, and they have been widely spread and accepted. For example, "青瓷" (a kind of porcelain whose color is cyan) has been named as "Celadon" since its first appearing in the sight of French in Tang Dynasty, for the color is similar to that of the costume of an opera protagonist called Celadon. Thus, "青瓷" is translated into "Celadon" rather than "Cyan Porcelain." Third, when handling the terms involving metaphor, some translators chose to use literal translation instead of liberal translation, keeping the metaphorical objects. Chinese people tend to use metaphor when naming cultural artifacts. For instance, for a pottery jar, the body part is called "belly" and the handles are called "ears." Qinhuangdao Museum chooses "Ear" for "耳" (literally meaning ear, symbolizing handle on utensils) when translating "双耳灰陶壶" (gray pottery pot with double handles). In that case, combining with the physical cultural artifacts, the readers can not only understand the symbolic meaning of "Ears," but also feel the metaphorical beauty of Chinese culture.

Transliteration

Transliteration refers to the method of representing the written symbols of one language using phonetically corresponding or analogous symbols from another language. Xiong (2014) suggests that in cross-cultural contexts where source-language terms lack semantic counterparts in the target language and conventional translation methods (lexical, grammatical, or semantic) fail, transliteration emerges as a strategic solution to preserve phonetic authenticity. This suggestion holds true for translating the terminology of cultural artifacts with vibrant traditional Chinese culture and profound cultural background. Unique in Chinese, some terms, standing for special crafts and skills, ancient utensils, names of people and places, are challenging to find the very words or phrases to express in English, so transliteration becomes a viable approach to simultaneously retain the characteristics of traditional Chinese culture while conveying the intended meaning. However, due to the complexity of the terminology in cultural artifacts, transliteration is usually applied together with other translation methods, among which paraphrasing and literal translation are most commonly integrated, contributing to a better translation of cultural artifacts terminology.

First, the inscriptions and names of people and places on the artifacts are generally transliterated to preserve the linguistic heterogeneity and cultural specificity embedded in the original context. A case in point is the artifact displayed in Jiangxi Provincial Museum bearing the inscription "Lian Zhong San Yuan" (连中三元)—a phrase historically denoting the rare achievement of ranking first in tri-level imperial examinations (provincial, national, and palace levels) during ancient China. While the transliteration retains the phonetic authenticity and exoticism of the term, critics argue that such a method risks obscuring semantic meaning for people unfamiliar with the cultural referent. Indeed, in domains like literary or technical translation, transliteration is often not adequate enough because it prioritizes phonetic fidelity over functional equivalence, leaving target audiences quite baffled. Luckily, the unique nature of cultural artifacts translation alters this argument. Unlike texts isolated from their material context, museum artifacts are accompanied by visual engagement. The physical object—whether a bronze vessel or inscribed tablet—serves as a carrier, allowing transliterated terms like "Lian Zhong San Yuan" (连中三元) to function not merely as linguistic units but as

the entrance to cross-cultural dialogue. Viewers simultaneously encounter the artifact's form and contextual display as well as detailed information introduced by the guides in the museum, collectively compensating for what is lacking in semantics. This way, transliteration preserves the source culture's otherness while inviting interpretive exploration.

Second, ancient Chinese utensils and weapons are usually translated according to their Chinese pronunciation, followed by the corresponding paraphrasing phrases or sentences enclosed in parentheses, which used the method of transliteration and paraphrasing in liberal translation. For example, Qinhuangdao Museum translated the term "戚" as "Qi (ancient axe-shaped weapon)." "Qi" is the Chinese pronunciation, and "ancient axe-shaped weapon" is a brief introduction to "Qi," clearly telling the viewers what "Qi" is as well as keeping the phonetic authenticity of the term "戚." However, some museums translate similar terms without paraphrasing them. Take the term "鬲" in Jiangxi Provincial Museum as an example, which is simply translated as "Li." Although the artifact is displayed together with the translation cards reading "Li," tourists tend to get confused by the ambiguous combination of "L" and "i." Compared with the first kind—the inscriptions above, utensils pose greater challenges for tourists to distinguish, for a great variety of pots, jars, and vessels bear close resemblance. In such cases, adding an explanation for their forms and functions in brackets will put the viewers at ease when visiting. Therefore, it is better to translate "鬲" as "Li (ancient cooking utensil)."

Third, the combination of transliteration and literal translation is frequently employed in translating the terminology of cultural artifacts. This approach, widely recognized in the rendering of geographical names like Huangshan Mountains (黄山) and Yangtze River (长江), serves as a model for preserving cultural identity while ensuring functional clarity. Similarly, in the domain of cultural artifacts, the term "东珠" (a type of freshwater pearl historically reserved for the Qing nobility) in the Palace Museum is translated with a combination of transliteration and literal translation, called "Dongzhu Pearl," where transliteration is applied to retain phonetic authenticity, paired with literal translation for materiality and purpose. Similar cases should follow the same route to keep the cultural artifacts terminology consistent. In the Datong Museum and Jiangxi Provincial Museum, the term "辟雍砚" is simply translated as "Inkstone," whose significance of unique form is silenced in the omitted words. This kind of inkstone is a traditional Chinese handicraft with its name dating back to the "Biyong," a circular university surrounded by a pool of water established by the emperor of the Zhou Dynasty within the Imperial College. To be more accurate, the term "辟雍砚" ought to be translated as "Biyong Inkstone," for the transliteration "Biyong" pointed out its origin and the culture behind the artifact, making it stand out among all kinds of inkstone. Just as "Huangshan Mountains" immediately evokes both the phonetic essence and geological reality of the site, so "Biyong Inkstone" anchors the artifact within its cultural framework, allowing global audiences to grasp its significance without erasing its linguistic roots.

Non-unicity of Translation for Cultural Artifacts Terminology

In some cases, we may find some terms translated differently. For those terms having different translations, the discussion should be divided into two distinct cases. One is the situation that one of the different translations is superior to others, and we are expected to standardize the translation. Taking "酱釉" (a kind of glaze whose color is similar to that of sesame paste) as an example, Hebei Museum translates it into "Dark Reddish Brown Glaze" while Luoyang Museum uses "Brown Glaze." Both versions provide a general

description of the color, but the latter one may confuse "酱釉" with "褐釉" (a kind of glaze whose color is brown). Thus, "Dark Reddish Brown Glaze" is the better choice.

Another case is that the different translations result from translators' different habits on word use and method use, all of which are acceptable and can be retained. The most common example is about patterns. "莲花纹" is translated into "Lotus Pattern" by Jiangxi Provincial Museum and "Lotus Design" by Datong Museum. Both "pattern" and "design" can properly express the meaning, so it is unnecessary to standardize the term translation. Jiangxi Provincial Museum also offers two translations for "褐彩"—"Brown Coloring" and "Brown Spots." The former is general while the latter is combined with the physical cultural artifact, "褐彩青白釉瓷瓶" (Bluish-white Porcelain Bottle with Brown Spots), on which there are several brown spots and only the spots are brown. In addition, "耳" (handles on utensils) is translated into "Handles" by National Marine Museum of China with liberal translation, while "Ears" by Qinhuangdao Museum with literal translation. The two versions are distinct in translation methods, but will not cause any ambiguity or misunderstanding. Therefore, in these situations, translation can be flexible for the concrete analysis of concrete cases.

Suggestions to the Museum

After visiting more than 10 museums and collecting over 800 terms from these museums, we would like to put forward some suggestions to museums for better cultural communication and export. First and foremost, it is a good idea to attach great importance to the translation of cultural artifacts in attitude. Some translations in the museum, while perhaps well-intentioned, can sometimes evoke a sense of amusement, such as "Get in the Hands of Jade Pig" for "玉握猪" (a funerary jade hand grip in the form of pig) and what was mentioned above about "网坠." With enough attention and carefulness, such kind of mistakes will not appear in the big museums. Second, the cooperation between translators and experts in cultural artifacts is bound to achieve grand success in translation. With the professional knowledge of the experts and the suitable translation methods, the final translation is hard to be ambiguous and misleading, so it is better to double-check. Last but not least, the consistency of the terminology of cultural artifacts is vital. Upon seeing different terms for similar artifacts, visitors will undoubtedly be confused and have lower engagement. If possible, museums can hold seminars to share the translation cases and terminology database for national consistency in this field, which later will provide a meaningful experience for visitors, facilitate accurate cross-cultural communication, and preserve the integrity of cultural narratives. The authors hope that museums will continue to refine their artifact translations, fostering greater accessibility and appreciation of cultural artifacts for audiences worldwide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the translation of ancient Chinese cultural artifacts terminology presents a complex interplay between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring cross-cultural accessibility. Through the exploration of domesticating and foreignizing strategies, this study underscores the importance of employing literal translation, liberal translation, imitation, and transliteration to balance fidelity to source culture with target-language readability. The analysis of real-world examples from multiple museums highlights the challenges posed by inconsistent translations, cultural ambiguities, and information omission, while also demonstrating how strategic translation choices can enhance clarity and engagement.

To advance the standardization of cultural artifact translations, collaboration between translators, cultural experts, and museums is imperative. Establishing unified terminology databases and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue will mitigate inconsistencies and enrich global audience's understanding of China's cultural heritage. Future research could further explore dynamic translation frameworks that adapt to evolving linguistic and cultural contexts, ensuring that ancient artifacts continue to serve as bridges for cross-cultural appreciation. By prioritizing precision, creativity, and collaboration, museums can amplify the global resonance of China's historical legacy, fostering deeper connections between past and present, East and West.

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