

On the Dissemination and Acceptance of Dongpo Culture in the UK and the US

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This study delves into the intricate dissemination and acceptance of Dongpo Culture, epitomized by Su Shi, in the UK and the US, aiming to bolster the global recognition of Chinese literary and cultural values and advance the national strategy of “Going Out”. Su Shi’s multifaceted contributions—spanning literature, philosophy, calligraphy, and art—serve as a pinnacle of Northern Song Dynasty culture. This research evaluates the varied translations, monographs, biographies, journal articles, and doctoral dissertations about Su Shi in these Western nations, using literature analysis, typical analysis, and comparative methods. The findings reveal a robust interest in Su Shi studies in the US, marked by a proliferation of scholarly works and translations across diverse disciplines, such as literature, art, and aesthetics, establishing the US as a leading center for Dongpo Culture studies. Conversely, the UK, despite its early engagement, shows limited scholarly outputs and significant research papers on the subject. By examining Dongpo Culture’s overseas communication path and influence paradigm, this paper seeks to enhance China’s cultural soft power and self-confidence. It underscores the vital role of international cultural exchange in constructing a positive image of China’s national identity, facilitating its peaceful rise, and providing strategic insights for the global promotion of Chinese culture.

Keywords: Dongpo Culture, dissemination and acceptance, national image, cultural soft power

Introduction

How the Chinese excellent traditional culture can go deeper and more practical overseas has always been an important issue in promoting the national strategy of “Going Out” of Chinese culture. Dongpo Culture, represented by Su Shi, is a monument of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Su Shi’s poems and writings are all great, which is the pinnacle of literature in Northern Song Dynasty; Su Shi’s thoughts include Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, which are all profound; Su Shi’s calligraphy and painting theory are all self-contained; and Su Shi’s charisma is also glamorous. Dongpo Culture advocates the harmony between man and nature, and emphasizes a free, optimistic, and transcendent attitude towards life. In-depth study of overseas dissemination and acceptance of Dongpo Culture is an important way to enhance the recognition of Chinese literary and cultural

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values, deepen civilization exchanges and mutual understanding, and promote Chinese culture to the world. As the UK and the US are the major towns for overseas research on Su Shi, with many translations and a large number of monographs, biographies, journal articles, and doctoral dissertations, it is timely to comprehensively sort out, review, and then summarize the current situation of the dissemination and acceptance of Dongpo Culture in the UK and the US as well as its successes and failures.

Main Objectives and Specific Research Methods

On the basis of comprehensively combing the English translation of Su Shi's literature, biographies, academic papers, and monographs in the UK and the US, the main goals of this article are to examine the modeling of Su Shi's image and its demonstration effect on the international dissemination of the image of the Chinese nation in the field of Dongpo Culture, to outline the path of the dissemination of the traditional Chinese culture represented by Dongpo Culture and its influence on the paradigm, and to promote the national strategy of "Going Out" of Chinese culture, so as to enhance the Chinese culture and to promote the development of Chinese culture. It will outline the path and influence paradigm of overseas communication of Chinese traditional culture represented by Dongpo Culture, help promote the national strategy of "Going Out" of Chinese culture, and provide reference suggestions for enhancing China's cultural soft power and cultural confidence.

The study is based on three specific research methods. The first one is literature analysis method, which is to comprehensively collect data related to the translation, dissemination, and acceptance of Su Shi's literature in the UK and the US, and use scientific methods to sort out and analyze the literature in depth and objectively. The second one is typical analysis method, focusing on the typical translations and academic monographs of major sinologists in the UK and the US, summarizing their unique translation skills and styles, conducting case studies on Su Shi's image shaping, and examining its demonstration effect on the international dissemination of the image of the Chinese nation. The last one is comparative research method, that is to compare the differences between the research results of Su Shi in Britain and the United States and the reasons for them, the similarities and differences in translation skills and styles between different translators, and the influence of the cultural traditions of the East and the West on the translation concepts of the translators.

Chinese Research on Overseas Dissemination and Acceptance of Dongpo Culture

In this section, the authors make a brief review of the research published in China on the dissemination and acceptance of Dongpo Culture in UK and US, which can be roughly divided into three categories: overseas research review, research on Su Shi's overseas dissemination and acceptance, and translation of Su Shi's writing.

The first category is overseas research review of Su Shi's overseas dissemination and acceptance in the UK and US. Katherine Tang, a famous American expert on Su Shi, has published in China the paper "Introduction to Overseas Research on Su Shi" (1986), which has been a pioneering work in terms of the synthesis of the research on Su Shi in the UK and the US. In addition, the monograph *Su Shi Studies in American Sinology* (Wan, 2018), as well as papers, such as "Su Dongpo Abroad" (Rao, 2005), "An Overview of Su Shi Studies in the English-Speaking World" (Wan, 2014), and "A Century of Song Poetry Studies in North American Sinology" (Wan, 2020), has also dealt with the overview of Anglo-American Su studies in detail.

The second category is overseas dissemination of Su Shi. *Dissemination of Chinese Classical Literature in the English-speaking World* (Huang, 1997) and *Dissemination and Research of Chinese Ancient Literature Abroad in the 20th Century* (Gu, 2003) are monographs which deal with the specific bibliographies on the

translation and dissemination of Su Shi's literature in the UK and the US. *Translation, Dissemination and Extraterritorial Influence: A Study on the Relationship Between Translation of Chinese Canonical Books and National Cultural Soft Power* (Li, 2015) also contains a large number of clues on the translation and dissemination of Su Shi's literature in the UK and the US, while the book argues that the dissemination of Chinese literature overseas has helped to enhance the country's cultural soft power from the perspective of communication, which is of great significance in inspiring the present topic.

The last one is about translators and translations, which mainly examines the major sinologists of Su Shi and their translations from a micro perspective. In terms of monographs, *Studies on Tang and Song Lyrics in the English-Speaking World* (Huang, 2008) and *How to Translate, How to Study: Chinese Classical Lyrics in the English-Speaking World* (Tu, 2014) focus on the translation and influence of Su lyrics in the UK and the US. *North American Scholars' Study of Ancient Chinese Poetry* (Xu, 2011) discusses Liu Ruoyu's and Sun Kangyi's interpretations of and recognition of Su Shi's poetry; *A Comparative Study of the English Translations of Su Shi's Poetry* (Dai, 2016) compares and contrasts various English translations of Su Shi's poems with "English Translations of Su Shi's Poetry in Foreign Countries"; *A Journey to Britain in Classical Chinese Literature—A Chronology of Three Major British Sinologists: Giles, Waley, Hawkes* (Ge, 2017) involves an overview of the three British sinologists' research on Su Shi. In terms of dissertations, seven of Wan's dissertations have thematically examined the research of Su Shi of British and American sinologists, such as Egan, three of Lin Jiaxin's dissertations focus on the study of Watson's English translations of Su Shi's poems, and Yin Xiaoyan, Wang Zhuo, Xue Chaorui, He Miao, Yang Yuying, and Yan Xiaojiang have examined the practice of translating and interpreting the Su Shi studies of British and American sinologists; The doctoral dissertation "Study on the English Translation and Dissemination of Su Shi's Literary Works" (Xu, 2021) has a detailed examination of Su Shi's translation and dissemination in the English-speaking world, which is of great significance.

On the whole, these Chinese publications about Su Shi pay more attention to the famous masterpieces in the English and American Sinological world, pay more attention to his poetry, and prose poetry than to his prose, painting, and calligraphy theories. It is very scarce to examine the characteristics of the translation and dissemination of Su Shi from the perspective of readers' acceptance. It is also very seldom to combine the translation and dissemination of Dongpo Culture with the overseas publication, dissemination, and acceptance, so as to examine Dongpo Culture in a holistic manner. Hence, the research horizons have to be expanded, and the depth of the research has to be urgently strengthened.

Dissemination and Acceptance of Dongpo Culture in UK and US

In terms of overseas research of Dongpo Culture, the British missionary Guo Shilah had the pioneering work, for he published the English translation of Su Shi's poem "Gift to the Eye Doctor Wang Yanruo" as early as 1838, and then published a long commentary under the title of "Brief Commentary on the Complete Works of Su Dongpo" (Xu, 2021). Vertically speaking, before 1927, the main position of Su Shi's translation was in Britain, and overseas studies of Dongpo Culture had just begun. Subsequently, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, the Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Studies, and the Harvard Center for East Asian Studies were established one after another, and the center of research gradually shifted to the United States. Especially after the 1960s, the study of Su Shi in the United States was particularly prosperous, the number of papers and monographs proliferated, and doctoral dissertations on Su Shi also appeared in a concentrated manner.

Specifically, in the UK, there are about 20 translations related to Su Shi, mainly *Gems of Chinese Literature* (Giles, 1884; 10 proses), *Selections From the Works of Su Tung-P'o* (Clark, 1931; 18 proses and prose poems), *The Prose Poetry of Su Tung-P'o* (Clark, 1935; 23 prose poems), *The White Pony: An Anthology of Chinese Poetry From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Payne, 1947; 18 poems and Tz'upeoms), *A Further Collection of Chinese Lyrics* (Ayling & Mackintosh, 1969; containing 14 of Su Shi's Tz'upeoms). Then, the main scholarly works that mention Su Shi are *A History of Chinese Literature* (Giles, 1901) and *The Cambridge History of China (Vol.5: Part1, The Song Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907-1279)* (Twitchett & Smith, 2009). It can be seen that the translation and study of Su Shi in Britain started early but lacked strength, and there is a lack of important research papers and monographs.

Replacing Britain, the United States has become the major town of overseas research of Dongpo Culture, involving 34 translations of Su Shi, 34 monographs, 4 biographies, 19 doctoral dissertations, and 36 journal articles, with diversified research categories and outstanding cross-disciplinary trends, involving literature, art, aesthetics, religion, and other fields, which show the highest level of overseas Su Shi studies. Among them, the three translations with the largest number of selected articles are *Selected Poems of Su Tung-p'o* (Watson, 1994; 105 poems, 8 Tz'upeoms, and 3 prose poems), *Su Tung-p'o: Selection From a Sung Dynasty Poet* (Watson, 1965; 76 poems, 7 Tz'u poems, and 3 prose poems), and *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (Owen, 1996; 16 poems, 7 Tz'u poems, and 10 prose poems).

Then, American monographs on Su Shi are roughly divided into two categories: The first is a monograph that examines Su Shi alone, such as *The Road to East Slope: The Development of Su Shi's Poetic Voice* (Fuller, 1990), which combines the socio-historical context with a close reading of the text to excavate the "poet's voice" contained in Su Shi's poems; and *Word, Image and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Egan, 1994) focuses on the innovative value of Su Shi's words. The second category is monographs that take Su studies as an important chapter, such as *Major Lyricist of the Northern Sung* (Liu, 1974), *The Evolution of Chinese Tz'u Poetry: From Late Tang to Northern Sung* (Chang, 1980), and *Just a Song: Chinese Lyrics From the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries* (Owen, 2019), all of which have dedicated chapters to explore the artistic characteristics of Su Shi's lyrics and their contributions; *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (Mair, 2000) and *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools: The History of Travel Literature in Imperial China* (Hargett, 2018) and other historical works have discussed Su Shi and his literary achievements; *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih to Tung Ch'ich'ang* (Bush, 1971) and *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Murck, 2000) have insightful insights into the relationship between Su Shi's paintings and poetry.

As to papers on American Su Shi Studies, some studies, such as "Self and Landscape in Su Shih" (March, 1966), "Time, Space, and Self in Chinese Poetry" (Liu, 1979), explore the theme of the "self" in the writings of Su Shi. Some studies like "Poetry and Politics in 1079: The Crow Terrace Poetry Case of Su Shih" (Hartman, 1990) and "The Inquisition Against Su Shih: His Sentence as an Example of Sung Legal Practice" (Hartman, 1993) analyze Su Shi's image as a loyal minister and admonisher, who practiced the Confucian concept of "poetry as a test" and swore to defend his ideals, in light of a specific political event. Some other studies like "Change and Continuation in Su Shih's Theory of Literature: A Note on His Ch'ih-pi-fu" (Chen, 1974) and "The Sights and Sounds of Red Cliffs, On Reading Su Shi" (Hegel, 1998) start from the natural scenery, exploring Su Shi's natural themes of introspection and searching for the realm of life. Lastly, the papers like "Poems on Paintings: Su Shih and Huang T'ing-chien" (Egan, 1983), "Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih on Calligraphy" (Egan, 1989), and

“Colophons in Countermotion: Poems by Su Shih and Huang T’ing-chien on Paintings” (Sargent, 1992) have analyzed the close connection between Su Shi’s poems and his paintings and calligraphy.

It is worth mentioning doctoral dissertations on Su Shi. Since March’s doctoral dissertation, “Su Dongpo’s View of Landscape” (1964), at least 15 doctoral dissertations have been written on the subject of Su Shi, and another four have been closely related to Su Shi. These dissertations show that high-level research on Su Shi has never been interrupted in the US since the 1960s, with the most concentrated results in the 1980s-1990s, with a rich selection of dissertations and a diversity of directions. A number of the dissertations have been revised into books and become masterpieces of overseas research on Su studies. For example, Grant’s monograph *Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih* (1990) was revised from her doctoral dissertation “Buddhism and Taoism in the Poetry of Su Shih” (1987).

Conclusion

Dongpo Culture is a treasure of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and its spiritual heritage has long benefited the whole world, with great influence on Anglo-American literature and culture. An in-depth study of the dissemination and acceptance of Dongpo Culture in Anglo-America is an important way to enhance the recognition of the value of Chinese literature and culture, to deepen the exchanges and mutual understanding of civilizations, and to promote Chinese culture to the world in a better way.

Based on the perspective of cultural communication, examining the image of Su Shi in Britain and the United States and its demonstration effect on the international communication of the image of the Chinese nation, we can outline the overseas communication path and influence paradigm of Chinese traditional culture represented by Dongpo Culture, so as to promote the national strategy of “Going Out” of Chinese culture, enhance the soft power of China’s culture, and strengthen the cultural self-confidence.

Cultural soft power can help China gain more discourse power in the international arena, and then strive for a more favorable external environment for China’s peaceful rise. Dongpo Culture is an important symbol of China’s national soft power. Studying the history and progress of its translation, dissemination, and acceptance in the UK and the US can deepen the international community’s understanding and recognition of China’s peaceful rise and Chinese culture, and help to establish and disseminate a good image of China’s national identity.

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