Vol.1 No.5 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.056 Communication & Education Review

Research on the Translation Development of Contemporary Chinese and Spanish Novels

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Abstract: *The commercial contact between China and Spain began in 16th century, however, their literary exchanges did not start until 20th century. In the exchange of literature between two countries, the fiction or the novel is the most prosperous pearl, becoming the most translation work in the two countries, inheriting the culture communication, thoughts and the people's lives of two countries. From Mingxin Baojian to Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out, from Don Quijote to the Infatuations, the development of literature translation between the two countries also reflects the tremendous social changes that took place in both two countries in the 20th century. This article aims to analyze the translation of Chinese and Spanish novels in the 20th century and their development characteristics, hoping to understand the factors that influence translation situation.*

Key words: *Literature; Chinese and Spanish translation; Novels*

For a long time for Spain far away in the Mediterranean, China at the beginning of the Silk Road is a distant and unfamiliar country. Since the Roman army ruled on the Iberian Peninsula, due to the construction of the Asia-Europe Silk Road, the culture and economy of the East and West began to blend, and the trade between the two sides reached a climax in the Western Han Dynasty. In 711 AD, the Iberian Peninsula was ruled by the Arabs with the decline of the Roman Empire. At this time, the Silk Road was also cut off. In 1492, the Italian Columbus embarked on a nautical journey with the support of the Spanish Catholic King in order to re-establish trade with the Eastern Powers to raise funds for the restoration of Spain. However, although he did not arrive in China, he completed a major geographical discovery in human history. So although Spain has always been willing to establish contact with China but failed to get what it wants. So far, in many Spanish proverbs, "sounds like Chinese"[1] is used to describe some rare and unfamiliar things.

In the long history of the past, it was not until after the economic reform and open up that Chinese culture slowly entered the Spanish vision through immigration and international cultural exchanges. At the beginning of the 20th century, not even any Chinese novels were translated to the West, and the upsurge of studying China and learning Chinese began to rise at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. In literature, novels are the closest to reality. Through novels, one can often understand the ideology and customs of a country. After Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, Chinese modern and contemporary literature quickly entered the literary field of Spain. The works of Chinese writers can be seen on the best-selling novel bookshelves of large national bookstores like Casa de Libro and Fnac. At the same time, once the classical literature was once again on the translator's desk, and the novels that were once

1 "Suena China" in Spanish means strange things.

Vol.1 No.5 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.056

translated from English are now translated and reprinted again. One of the interesting phenomena is that people who translate Spanish literary works are often not well-known to Chinese people, such as Chinese writers Yan Geling and Qiu Xiaolong who have moved to the United States all the year round, or literary works not written in Chinese but mainly written in English, and classic works translated from English. It can be seen from this that although Chinese literature and Spanish literature have a long history and splendid achievements, the literary exchanges between the two countries are not close, and it can even be said that there are few exchanges. To understand the current situation of translation of Chinese literature in Spain, it is a reference and reference for the foreign publishing industry and translators. More importantly, understanding the popular types of Chinese works in the West is very beneficial for shaping China's positive international image.

From the Belt and Road Initiative to the New Silk Road, China and Spain gradually began to deepen economic exchanges, and this often brings about a double communication between culture and ideology. This not only promotes the translation and dissemination of novels in the West and China, but also provides a new way of spreading Chinese novels that are not known by Spanish culture all the year round. The purpose of this paper is to explore the translation and development of Chinese Spanish novels in the 20th century, and to understand the factors that influence their spread.

Translation Studies of Non-Chinese Novels Depicting China in Spain

In the 20th century, some contemporary Chinese novelists translated their works into Spanish, including ethnic Chinese writers, such as Gao Xingjian, and native Chinese writers, such as Mo Yan, the Nobel Prize winner. Spanish translation often embodies success, sex, politics and other themes. The most familiar Chinese works for most Spanish literature lovers are *Gold Vase Plum* and *The Dream of Red Mansion*. These two works are regarded by Spanish as *Don Quixote* of China. In addition to classical literature, there are few Chinese works translated into Spanish. On the contrary, those works created by ethnic Chinese from all over the world in non-Chinese languages have become a window for Spain to understand Chinese society.

Factory Girl, a reportage written in English by Chinese American Zhang Tonghe, which reflects the real life of Chinese migrant workers, has been translated and published in Spain. The book describes the work and life of two female workers in Dongguan for two years. Around the protagonist's working environment, it focuses on their changes from poor to rich, which often shows the problem of urbanization in China, which is mixed with the author's personal immigration experience. Although this kind of work has not been published in China, it has a solid readership in Spain. There are also many Chinese writers who have left China to write in the languages of their current countries, such as Lin Yutang and Gao Xingjian. Gao Xingjian's novel *Ling Mountain* published in Spain is written in French and then translated into Spanish.

In recent years, Chinese writers who were once popular in the 1980s began to occupy an important position in the Spanish publishing industry. Chi Li is one of them. Her *Troubled Life* began to be published after the economic reform and open up. After the cultural turmoil, the cultural undertakings of Chinese mainland is booming, and many of its works take the author's own experience in the cultural catastrophe as the writing background.

Apart from Gao Xingjian, the most prominent person in Spanish-speaking countries is Dai Sijie, who also lives in France. His *Balzac and the Little Tailor* was published by Salamandra Press. *Le Complexe de Di*, which he wrote in French, won the Prix Femina in 2003, and his French version of *Par une nuit où la lune ne s'est pas levée* was also published in Spain. Many of the works of contemporary detective novelist Qiu Xiaolong are also published by Tusquets Press in Spain, six of which have been translated into Spanish[2] and three have been republished, including his first work, *Red Cheongsam*. Another Chinese writer who is as influential in Spanish detective fiction as Qiu Xiaolong is Beijing-born Diane Wei Liang, who has published a total of four novels since her autobiographical novel *Nameless Lake* was published in Spain in 2003 to *House of the Golden Spirit*, published by Siruela Press in 2011. Chinese American writer, Ha Jin's[3] six novels, also translated into Spanish, are also published by the Siruela Press, the latest of which is *War Trash* published in Spain in 2007. Kuang Lisha, an American novelist of Chinese descent, whose *Shanghai Girl*[4] is set in old Shanghai and narrates from a female perspective, makes Spanish literature lovers realize the thoughts of Chinese women in the early years, which has caused great repercussions in both Spain and China.

The Development of Chinese Novels in Spain

Due to ideological differences, Spain's understanding of Chinese literature is still at the stage of *The Dream of Red Mansion* and *Gold Vase Plum*. Even after the 1990s, Spanish began to realize the new changes in China. From 2001 to 2009, a total of 8 works have been translated into Spanish, which shows that cultural exchanges between the two countries have reached a new high in the 21st century.

Don't Treat Me as a Human by mainland writer Wang Shuo was published in 2002 and 2008 by Rag Language Press[5] and Santa Ana Publishing Group respectively. However, Wang Shuo's other works well known in the mainland have not been translated.

It was during the reform and opening up that many erotic novels were translated into Spain. Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* was published by Spanish Star Media Group in 2002, and her works such as *Marrying Buddha* was published in 2007.

In 2003, *Beijing Doll*, translated by Avery Press[6], was published in Barcelona. *Black Cloth* by Bi Feiyu, a famous Jiangsu writer in France who won the people's literature award, was also translated into Spanish by Paula Ehrenhaus in 2007. *Dad* written by Han Shaogong was translated and published by Kelly Translation Press in Madrid in 2008.

After Moyan won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2012, a large number of his works began to appear on the shelves of bookstores in Spain. But just a year ago, Mo Yan was still a strange name in Spain. Only his *Red Sorghum* was brought to the Spanish speaking country in the form of a movie by Zhang Yimou. Another famous Chinese writer of French origin, Aden, also published another *Red Sorghum*[7] in Spain, which focuses on the relationship between father and son. It has not only sold more than 500,000 copies in France, but has

2 Spanish for "Castellano".
3 Ha Jin's real name is Jin Feixue, English pen name is Ha Jin.
4 Spanish for "Dos chicas en Shanghai".
5 Spanish for "Edición Lengua de Trapo".
6 Spanish for "El Aleph".
7 Both books in Spanish are titled *Sorgo rojo*

Vol.1 No.5 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.056

also been reprinted twice in Spain. *The Land of Body*, written by Ma Jian, a British writer, was published in 2008, followed by *The Way of Yin* in 2014.

Aden, another famous French Chinese writer, also published another book *Sorghum is Red* in Spain. This book takes the feeling of father and son as the main line. It not only sold more than 500000 copies in France, but also reprinted twice in Spain. In 2008, the land of flesh, written by Ma Jian, a British writer, was published, and then the way of Yin was published in 2014.

Throughout the translation of Chinese novels in Spain, from 1978 to 2000, many works were translated into Spanish by other languages, including 17 literal translation works and 31 retranslation works. Literal translation works has been increasing since 2000, because since the beginning of the 21st century, most of the books have been directly translated by Spanish publishers, and before that, literary works have been translated based on the interests of translators. Publishers often decide whether to buy copyright from Chinese publishers based on the sales of their English or French versions. Thus it can be seen that the main driving force of the spread of Chinese literature in Spain is its influence in French-speaking and English-speaking countries. Excluding Mo Yan, China that is really familiar to Spanish literature lovers is not the real China at present, and most writers are not writers living in New China. The translation of Chinese literature works in Spain is mainly based on classical literature, such as the *Four Great Classical Novels* and the *Analects of Confucius*, and the authors are mainly Hu Shi, Lu Xun and Chinese writers living abroad all the year round during the New Culture Movement.

In 1988, Barcelona Autonomous University established the Spanish-Chinese translation major, and then Spanish universities began to establish the "Chinese Culture Research Center". In China, in 1954, only one university of Beijing Foreign Studies University had a major in Spanish language and literature and by 2014, there were 51 colleges and universities with this major. With the continuous development of translation science in the two countries, more and more Chinese contemporary literature will be brought to Spain and even the whole Spanish speaking country.

Translation of Spanish Novels Before the Founding of New China

The translation of Spanish novels in China can be traced as far back as *Interesting Stories of Spanish Palace* published by the Commercial Press in 1915. The New Culture Movement promoted democracy and science, which allowed citizens to learn advanced Western thought and culture. During this period, Spanish novels were often translated from English or Japanese. At the time, the first authors to introduce Spanish literature to China were Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun, and Mao Dun. Since the early 1920s, they have begun to translate the works of Spanish "98 Generation"[8] writers and publish them in magazines such as *Novel Monthly* and *New Youth*. Among the most famous Spanish writers in China are Azorín, Pío Baroja, Miguel de Unamunoo and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

In the 1920s, various Chinese literary magazines successively established Spanish literature columns, which also played a role in promoting the translation of novels by Spanish authors. The first is Azorín and his work

8 The "98 Generation", named Generación 98 in Spanish, refers to the writers in 1898. It is an important school in the history of Spanish literature. They are pessimistic and depressed about the future of the country, so they have a clear sense of suffering in their works.

Bullfighting, which was translated by Xu Xiacun, a famous Chinese translator, in 1929, and published by Shanghai Chunchao Book Company. Since then, Dai Wangshu, Mao Dun and others have also translated. Up to 1936, a total of 10 works of Asolin were translated and published. In 1923 Mao Dun published an article called "Modern Spanish Novel—Baroja" in the *Novel Monthly* and gave a brief introduction to his life. After that, most of Baroja's works were translated by Lu Xun and published in the magazines *Morning Flower* and *Translation*. Until 1948, a total of 12 Baroja works were translated and published. As the representative of the "98 Generation", Miguel de Unamuno was first known by the Chinese public as an essayist, and it was not until his death that the value of his novels began to be discovered. By 1948, the translator Zhuang Zhong had translated and published a number of Unamuno's novels in *Translation* magazine. In addition, among the Spanish writers introduced to China, Ibanez is the most famous and the most translated, and many of his works have been reprinted more than twice. In 1921, Mao Dun first introduced his article in the *Novel Monthly*. In the same year, Zhou Zuoren also published Ibanez's *Epileptic Dog Disease* in *New Youth*. Until the 1940s, Ibanez's works have been translated a dozen times and have been reprinted many times.

After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, in order to show their support for the Republicans, Chinese translators began to introduce a large number of war literature, and the translation of Spanish literature reached a climax. For this reason, *Translation* magazine has set up a special column on civil war literature. During this period, documentary literature on the theme of the civil war was mainly introduced, such as the *Journey to Spain* translated by Zhou Libo published in *Bright* magazine in 1936.

Don Quixote, a masterpiece of Spanish novels, was introduced to China in the 1920s. First of all, in 1918, Zhou Zuoren made a brief introduction to *Don Quixote* in his articles about the history of European literature. Then, in 1922, the Shanghai Commercial Press published the *Legend of the Devil*, translated by Lin Shu and Chen Jialin, which started the translation of *Don Quixote* for a century. In 1930s, various book companies in Shanghai launched their own translated versions of *Don Quixote*. Until the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949, a total of eight different translations were published.

Both the "98 Generation" novels and *Don Quixote* ushered in the peak of translation in the 1930s. However, in the late 1930s, with the outbreak of War of Invading China and Spanish Civil War, the exchange and development of literature were hindered. After the 1940s, the translation of Spanish novels in China gradually declined.

The Development of Spanish Novels after the Founding of People's Republic of China.

The translation of Cervantes' novels.

In 1955, the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the publication of *Don Quixote* was solemnly held in Beijing. Nevertheless, in the nearly 30 years since the founding of People's Republic of China, only one edition of *Biography of Mr. Don Quixote* translated by Fu Donghua was published by the People's Literature Publishing House in 1959. In the special period at that time, this is the first time that *Don Quixote* has been published in the form of above and below. In the following two decades, due to a variety of complex reasons, the translation of Spanish literature was basically at a standstill.

Vol.1 No.5 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.056

After the reform and opening up, China already has many professional Spanish translators, so it has once again turned its attention to the translation and introduction of Spanish novels. In 1978, *Don Quixote*, translated by Yang Jiang and published by People's Literature Publishing House, became the first classic translated directly from Spanish. In the 1980s, *Don Quixote* was republished three times, and after re-editing, a variety of versions suitable for different ages were released. In 1990, more than a dozen different versions of *Don Quixote* appeared, and most of the translators were university Spanish teachers. In 1995 and 1999 alone, eight different editions were published at the same time, which shows the popularity of this classic at that time.

Compared with *Don Quixote*, Cervantes' other works were introduced into China later. In 1958, the New Literature and Art Publishing House published Cervantes' novel *Novelas ejemplares*, and his novels began to be translated and introduced, which means that the translation of Cervantes' works has entered a new stage of development.

Boom in translation after the reform and opening up

After the reform and opening up in 1978, China began to change from a planned economy to a market economy, and the cultural field began to change under the influence of this trend. The first is the reconstruction of the foundation in the social and political field. The China Translation Association, which was established in 1982, is the product of this environment. Secondly, after the resumption of National Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges in 1977, Spanish majors also returned to the university classroom, and trained a group of young Spanish translators. Last but not least, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Spain in 1973, the exchanges between the two countries became closer, which greatly promoted the spread of Spanish novels in China.

During this period, the works of the Spanish realistic novelist Benito Pérez Galdós have been translated a lot. In 1982, his second translated novel, *Marianela*, which describes the lives of workers was published. By the end of the 20th century, 20 of his works had been translated into China, an average of one a year. In addition, more than 20 works of Ibáñez, which were introduced into China before 1949, have also been translated during this period, including some excellent works written in his second creative stage. Unamuno's novels *Niebla* and *La tía Tula* were also published in 1988 and 1992 respectively. After Camilo José Cela won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1989, Chinese publishers began to introduce his novels and essays. In the 21 century, due to the increasingly close exchanges between China and Spain, the translation of Spanish novels in China has also shown a trend of prosperity. According to UNESCO (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization) statistics, China translated and published 157 Spanish works from 2000 to 2009, which is more than the the sum of the 20th century. But even so, Spanish literature has never been as prosperous as Japanese literature or English literature in China.

Factors Affecting the Translation of Chinese and Spanish Novels

From the perspective of the translation of Spanish novels in China since the 20th century, the choice of translation is not only influenced by the translator's subjective preferences, but also the overall reflection of the objective social environment at that time. These social factors affect and even determine the introduction

and translation of novels to a great extent.

Economic development has laid the foundation for the translation and distribution of Spanish novels in China. From the two climaxes of translation in the 20th century, we can see that economic progress has promoted the expansion of translation publishing industry. In 1930's, Shanghai, as the most developed area in China, became the center of Spanish novel translation. Many local publishers began to publish Spanish novels translated into Chinese. And another climax is after the reform and opening up. Under the market economy model, the national economy began to improve, and at the same time the people's need for spiritual culture was further strengthened, which drove the translation and introduction of foreign literature.

The political changes in China and Spain have a direct impact on the translation of literary works. There are great similarities between the two countries in key time nodes, such as the war in the late 1930s and the reform in the late 1970s. These two important events have an important impact on the cultural exchanges between the two countries. During the Spanish Civil War, Shanghai became the center of the introduction of Spanish novels, as well as the "power gap" formed by the weak dictatorial party and the special concession system objectively created a relatively loose and free management environment for private publishing enterprises. However, after Shanghai was occupied, the translation of Spanish novels in China almost stagnated, and there were few new translations influenced by the war. Compared with the development of Chinese novels in Spain, it can be seen that before the founding of New China, Chinese classical works dominated the Spanish market, such as Libai's poems and quotations from Confucius. After the founding of New China, influenced by ideology, the ideological environment is relatively closed and single. During the same period, Spain was also under Franco's dictatorship, and cultural undertakings developed slowly because of the ideological control of parties and religions. This closed state was not broken until China's reform and opening up and Spain's democratic reform, and the literary translation of the two countries entered a new climax. After entering the 21st century, China has accelerated the spread of Chinese culture overseas, and a large number of Chinese literary works have entered the Spanish book market.

The development of Spanish education has provided sufficient talent support for the translation of Spanish novels. The Confucius Institutes established in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville have provided a solid foundation for cultural exchange and literary translation between the two countries. In the past, Spanish novels were introduced to China through the second translation of English or Japanese. However, most of the translators are Chinese literary writers and few are Spanish translators. This phenomenon was changed after the National College Entrance Examnation was resumed in 1977. In the 1980s, China trained a large number of Spanish talents, some of whom later became specialized translators of Spanish literature. Most of the Chinese novels translated to Spain, such as Mo Yan's novels, are promoted by the cooperation of Chinese translators and Spanish translators.

Generally speaking, in the era of globalization, the cultural exchange and interaction between China and Spain are becoming more and more active, which is best proved by the wide variety of Spanish translations in the 21st century. With the implementation of the policy of "cultural self-confidence" and Chinese culture "going out", the situation of literary translation between the two countries will be further developed, and cultural cooperation will continue to deepen.

Vol.1 No.5 2020
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2020.056

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