

# A Study on English Translation of Chinese Folk Songs in the Context of Cultural Going Out

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**Abstract:** Chinese folk songs are collective oral poetic creations of working people that belong to folk literature. In the context of cultural outreach, we consider and analyze the reasons for the disparity in the popularity of Chinese and foreign folk songs, as well as how to better promote the English translation and dissemination of Chinese folk songs, thereby assisting Chinese culture to reach a wider audience.

**Keywords:** Chinese folk songs; English translation of songs; Cultural communication

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## 1. Introduction

Promoting Chinese culture to go global and realize the jump from a cultural power to a cultural power is a major issue facing modern China as its influence grows. The Chinese culture has a vast history that seeps into our lives like a trickle, nurturing the hearts of every Chinese son and daughter. Since the emergence of a prehistoric culture, Chinese folk songs have grown in complexity and variety. This study explores how to more effectively translate Chinese folk songs into English in order to better disseminate and promote Chinese culture. It does this through the review of data, surveys, interviews, and other methods. It also aims to understand how the public understands and perceives Chinese and foreign folk songs.

## 2. Background of Chinese folk songs

Folk songs are a form of music that originated or spread in a region and are popular among locals. It is usually created and transmitted orally and is constantly processed and formed in the process.<sup>[1]</sup> Chinese folk songs have a long tradition, from the daily life of primitive society to the Book of Poetry, which reflects the social life of the Zhou Dynasty; From the "Chu Ci" in the fourth century BC to the novel musical styles of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties; From the prosperous and complex creation of the Tang Dynasty to the contradictory and humanized Ming and Qing Dynasties; Finally, the birth of the People's Republic of China gave new life to folk songs, and people sang their songs about the birth of the People's Republic of China, finally gave new life to folk songs, and people sang the infinite yearning for a new life. People convey their history, civilization, and love of life through their songs.

Ethnic folk music is mainly the collective creation of the masses and relies on oral transmission, so it varies greatly in content and form. Different folk songs have different characteristics: folk songs in the mountains are high-pitched and bright, the tunes are lively and free, light and bright; The folk songs of the plains are calm and smooth, gentle and beautiful; The labor horn of the Central Plains, the tune is rough and simple, and the voice is loud and thick. In addition, folk songs are characterized by regional, improvisational singing, people's participation, and versatility.

Folk songs use plenty of rhetorical techniques such as puns, expositions, comparisons, affective images, and cultural imagery. These colorful techniques bring Chinese folk songs to life and are vivid and interesting. In addition, folk songs contain many customs, literature, and cultural imagery, which can reflect the rich and colorful cultures of different places and the joys, sorrows, and sorrows of different ethnic groups.

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Folk songs are closely related to the lives of our people and are an indispensable part of life. Studies have found that many folk songs with the themes of fishing, farming, and sacrifice were born from peasant labor or folk activities; Folk songs with the theme of love are mostly born in the lives of men and women who cultivate and weave; Folk songs with storyline content are born in the streets of towns or teahouses and markets. At this stage of life, it records the joy of the birth of a child to Sang Yu's later years. In everyday life, it motivates people to work hard and inspires love in their hearts. It also has many other functions in society and life: entertainment function; History transfer function; Teaching ritual functions; ritual and exorcism functions; social features, etc.

In short, Chinese folk songs are long-standing, profound, and multi-changing, and they not only reflect people's lives but also satisfy their beautiful pursuits. "It plays an inestimable role in promoting the exchange between cultures and the development of society, and is an inexhaustible artistic treasure house of the Chinese nation and a fine art in the world's national culture. "

### **3. Research Process**

#### **3.1 Survey on the current situation of the English translation of folk songs**

Folk songs are songs composed by various ethnic groups in ancient and modern times with their national style characteristics and are the traditional songs of the working people of all ethnic groups. <sup>[2]</sup> At present, there are many studies on the translation of folk songs and their dissemination abroad. For example, the popular "Alder Ron Sean", "Подмосковные Вечера" and "O sole Mio". . . Modern society is deeply influenced by Western culture, China's modern history is in the stormy century, the 19th and 20th centuries are a dark period for China, but it is also the stage of Western countries, a large amount of advanced knowledge flows to the world, various values are introduced to China, and European music spreads all over the world. Folk songs were recorded on gramophones, collected and collated by Western collectors, and began to be widely disseminated through the folk music movement.

Chinese scholars have paid much attention to the study of Chinese folk songs. The Ballad of Metaphor adopts an introductory narrative in its form; explores the vernacular of Chinese folk songs in its innovation to intersect with the sentiments of daily life; finds that regional differences bring about certain differences in thinking through a comparative study with Western songs, and argues that metaphor is the most common narrative style of the ballad. <sup>[3]</sup> However, domestic research on folk songs mainly focuses on the artistic characteristics of folk song singing, the unique style and culture of the language, the unique background from which the songs are taken, and the importance of song transmission. There are few theories on the study of Chinese folk song translation.

#### **3.2 Innovation and shortage of English translation of folk songs**

Songs are a part of a culture, and Chinese songs are indispensable to the "going out" of Chinese culture. However, for a long time, most of the research on song translation in China has been focused on the study of the Chinese translation of Western songs, but less on the study of the English translation of Chinese songs, especially Chinese folk songs. <sup>[4]</sup> Although there have been scholars who have studied Chinese folk songs in depth, the extent is not enough. People also choose to communicate in an overly westernized way, rather than going deeper into the songs themselves for the most essential communication. Therefore, this project is dedicated to the study of an English translation of Chinese folk songs, so that Chinese folk songs can "go out" better in the context of cultural outreach.

#### **3.3 Analysis of the reasons why the English translation of folk songs is limited**

The English translation of folk songs has a negative transmission environment. With modernization, urbanization and internationalization, people's traditional aesthetics are changing, and the pursuit of a better life is becoming stronger and stronger. Under the influence of popular culture, people have gradually forgotten the artistic charm and cultural origin of folk songs, and the development of Chinese folk songs has been difficult. In addition, most folk songs are not easy to learn to sing because of language problems, which makes them more and more niche and the market smaller and smaller.

The loss of traditional elements of folk songs is serious. While Chinese folk songs are largely passed down orally, music education in Europe has developed in a quantitative and numerical context. Although oral education methods can make the transmission of music more vivid, they have also led to a serious loss of folk songs, which is far less than the preservation of Western written books.

Insufficient research on song translation theory. By checking the knowledge network, this study finds that there are fewer monographs and papers studying the translation of Chinese folk songs, and more on song transmission techniques, song background studies, and meaning. Without scientific song translation theories, then it will be more difficult to practice.

There is a lack of talent in folk song translation. When translating songs, the translation of lyrics should not only accu-

rately convey the meaning, but also conform to the melodic characteristics of the original song. Therefore, song translation not only requires translators to have a high level of language but also, more importantly, good musical and literary cultivation. At present, there is a relative lack of comprehensive talent in China.

There is a lack of overall heritage planning guidance. The teaching theory in schools, the use of teaching materials, and other aspects are not based on traditional Chinese music. For example, at the compulsory education level, music learning is biased toward Western music. The Western model of music education focuses more on the construction of a theoretical system, but Chinese music cannot be learned without practice, especially the grasp and shaping of the music by folk song singers.

Insufficient understanding of audience needs. Despite the rapid and prosperous development of China's economy and the frequent exchange of information in the Internet era, China has less understanding of the needs of overseas audiences, no precise positioning of overseas markets, and less publicity for culturally importing countries.

### **3.4 Countermeasures to promote Chinese folk songs to go abroad**

Create a positive environment that inspires the will to translate folk songs into English. With the development of the economy, the guidance of national policies, and the deepening of foreign exchange exchanges, the people's pursuit of a better life is increasing day by day. In the context of the vigorous development of the Internet world, the state should carry out creative changes and innovative development of folk songs, make full use of the Internet for publicity, create a positive cultural atmosphere, and stimulate the willingness to translate into English. Some folk songs, such as "Wang Daniang Nails the Jar" and "Going Up to the Mountain and Looking at the Ping River", have a simple national flavor and seem to be out of place in modern society. However, "Little River Dripping Water" and "Pair of Mandarin Ducks Floating on Water" are composed on the basis of the original folk songs, adapted from local songs, or accompanied by modern musical instruments, which seem to have been simply modified, and are naturally extraordinarily moving, naturally appealing to the public, and naturally inspire the will.

Establish cultural confidence and cultivate a sense of cultural identity. The "Opinions on the Implementation of the Project of the Inheritance and Development of the Excellent Chinese Traditional Culture" proposes that "the excellent Chinese traditional culture has accumulated diverse and precious spiritual wealth, such as the approach to the world of seeking common ground while reserving differences and being different, the ideology of teaching and educating people by means of literature, the pursuit of aesthetics of both the form and the spirit, and the philosophy of life of frugality and self-control and harmony. It is a concentrated expression of the Chinese people's ideology, customs, way of life, and emotional style, and has nourished a unique and rich literature and art, science and technology, and humanistic scholarship, which still has profound influence today."<sup>[5]</sup> Translators should establish cultural self-confidence, fully respect and identify with the excellent culture of their country, cultivate a sense of cultural identity, construct the basic theory of song translation in a world-oriented and future-oriented way, fully understand the value of folk songs, and spread them to the world, so as to realize the real cultural export. Folk music is the root of Chinese music and the basis of its development. If folk songs are not recognized and passed down, then Chinese music will lose its foundation, not to mention its development. Only by understanding, recognizing, and learning the culture of Chinese folk music can we develop Chinese music, which is a kind of "inheritance".<sup>3</sup> 4 Countermeasures to promote Chinese folk songs to go abroad.

To improve the English translation of folk songs and promote the comprehensive and effective development of folk songs. The most important thing in translation is to clearly understand the purpose of translation, and choose the translation method according to the purpose in order to be more focused. The direct purpose of song translation is to enable overseas audiences to understand the characteristics and meanings of Chinese folk songs and gain similar feelings and experiences as Chinese readers; the ultimate purpose is to better communicate and exchange cultures. Therefore, the translated lyrics should not only focus on fidelity and rhyme; what is more important is the singing ability and rhythm of the songs. In this regard translation scholar, Fransson has summarized the five choices faced when translating songs, retaining no translation, disregarding the tune, rewriting the words, rewriting the music, staying true to the lyrics, and staying true to the music.<sup>[4]</sup> English, as an accented language, is different from the Chinese tonal language. When making an English translation, we should pay attention to the strong and light syllables of the music to achieve the exact correspondence between Chinese and English syllables. In addition, we should consider the harmony between the lyrics and the tune, and avoid the situation of "inverted words".<sup>[6]</sup> Some regional dialects with special meanings can be modified according to the background of the song and the tune. At present, there are few theories of song translation in China, so we hope that researchers can improve them in the process and promote the comprehensive and effective development of folk songs.

Carry out folk song promotion activities to promote the comprehensive development of folk songs. Nowadays, the Internet is developing rapidly and new media are also popular, therefore, relevant departments should integrate organically with new media and use various communication methods. The Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on Prosperity and Development

of Socialist Literature and Arts state, "Further strengthen leadership, enhance planning, increase investment, give full play to the active role of newspapers, periodicals, radio stations, television stations, Internet media, books, audio, and video electronic publications, build and use theaters, cinemas, cultural centers (stations), group art galleries, art museums, workers' cultural palaces, cultural squares, grass-roots comprehensive cultural service centers and other types of cultural and artistic positions. "[7] The development of technology has made it possible for people around the world to communicate without hindrance and share their hobbies at any time. This opportunity can be used to break the stereotypes of the overseas public and make them reacquaint with and appreciate Chinese culture, and even love Chinese culture.

Give full play to the guiding role of cultural development planning to guide the development of folk songs. Traditional Chinese music focuses on melody, unlike the Western classical music system which is concerned with harmony and richness of weaving levels, so most Chinese folk songs are highly singable. The authorities should invest more financial, material, and human resources to increase the curriculum of folk songs in schools so that children can fully understand the knowledge of Chinese folk songs and learn to sing them for better dissemination.

Fully understand the needs of the audience and promote the development of folk songs. In order for musical works to go global, it is important to identify the audience, let them understand Chinese folk songs, understand their actual needs for folk songs, and make better changes and innovations on this basis to establish their respect and even recognition of folk songs. Students who study Chinese folk music should dive into learning and taste, taste the rhythm of Chinese folk music, and keep it in mind. If you can become a teacher in your later career path, you should pass on this valuable cultural treasure to your students.

Through the investigation, this study understands the definition, characteristics, and importance of folk songs to Chinese culture, the reasons for the gap between Chinese and foreign folk songs, the innovations and shortcomings that should be paid attention to in the development of Chinese folk song communication, and the willingness to stimulate the public's willingness to translate and promote English songs, and improve the English translation methods of folk songs, so that they can better spread and promote Chinese culture.

## 4. Conclusion

In the context of culture going out, English translation of folk songs is undoubtedly a way to spread the excellent Chinese traditional culture. Although there are some shortcomings in the current English translation of folk songs, such as the methods of the English translation of folk songs, the willingness of the masses to translate and propagate, and the planning of folk song development, through the analysis and research, we understand and study the connotation of culture going out, the differences between the dissemination of Chinese and Western folk songs, and the countermeasures for Chinese folk songs going out, which can strengthen the research on the results of the English translation of folk songs, so as to better promote Chinese folk songs going out.

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