

China's National Image Communication by Means of Ceramic Poetry Translation

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Abstract: National image is the comprehensive image and influence of a country in the international community, and it is an important component of a country's soft power. National image reflects the comprehensive strength, international status, and international influence of a country, and is of great significance for enhancing the country's discourse power and competitiveness on the international stage. Ceramics, as a representative of China's unique craftsmanship and culture, can express and spread China's national image and ceramic culture. This paper studies how to spread China's national image by means of ceramic poetry translation, because translation is the important medium of communication, and ceramic poetry is a form of poetic rhyme, bearing rich connotation of Chinese culture. With the integration of translation and national image dissemination, the unique form and charm of ceramic poetry can be utilized to spread the national image of China as a ceramic power and an ancient civilization, and spread the national image of China with a sound system, a harmonious society.

1. Introduction

The term “image” has existed since ancient times in human civilization. *The Book of Changes*, in Chinese, writes: “In the natural world, images are formed, and changes are seen.” Here, the word “image” has the meaning of “form” and “appearance”. The definition of “image” in *The Modern Chinese Dictionary* is “The specific shape or posture that can arouse people's thoughts and emotional activities, as well as the vivid and concrete life scenes created in literary works that stimulate people's thoughts and emotions, usually referring to the spiritual outlook and personality traits of characters in literature.” [1] According to *Webster's Dictionary* on line, the word “image” means a visual representation of something, a mental picture or impression of something or a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation, a popular conception (as of a person, institution, or nation) projected especially through the mass media. [2] Western scholar Philip Kotler (1997) believes that image refers to the beliefs, concepts, and impressions people hold about a certain object [3].

It can be seen that image is people's perception and understanding of the overall characteristics of things, rather than a simple addition of individual features. The formation of an image is influenced by the subjective feelings of the observer, and different people may form different

images of the same thing. Image is not static, it will change with factors such as time, environment, and observer. In summary, image is a complex and multidimensional concept that encompasses multiple aspects from individuals to organizations, from concrete to abstract. In different fields and contexts, images have different meanings and characteristics, but they all reflect people's perception and understanding of the overall characteristics of things.

2. National Image

2.1. Definition of National Image

The definition of national image originated from the term “stereotype” proposed by Western countries in the 1920s, and strictly speaking, the definition of national image was proposed by the famous American economist Kenneth Ewart Boulding in his article “National Image and International System” in 1959. [4] Foreign scholars tend to interpret national image from the perspectives of cultural cognition, identity recognition, and information input and output. Boulding believes that national image is the combination of a country's perception of itself and the perception of other communities in the international system, and is the result of a series of information inputs and outputs.

2.2. Research on National Image

After Boulding proposed the term of national image, international political scholars such as Ole R. Holsti, Alpo Rusi, Uri Brofenbrenner, and Robert Jervis continued to conduct in-depth research on the issue of national image. Afterwards, the research on national image was widely applied to understanding the process of formulating foreign policy. However, these international political scholars did not strictly define national image, nor did they specify its exact meaning, resulting in the concept of national image being constantly open, wandering, and changing. [5] Nimmo and Savage defined national image as “the characteristics exhibited or perceived by a country.” [6] Alexander Wendt, founder of constructivism, studied the issue of national image from the perspectives of identity, recognition, and cultural cognition.

The research on national image in China's academic community roughly began after the end of the Cold War. But many people in China believe that the concept of national image was proposed by contemporary Chinese scholars, and the term “national image” is a contemporary discovery of the Chinese people. For example, some scholars have pointed out that “the concept of national image has not been clearly proposed in Western countries because in practice, they have long used their developed propaganda machines to promote the lifestyle and values of the bourgeoisie, and also they pay great attention to propaganda techniques, using more psychological tactics and negotiation methods to engage in peaceful revolution.” [7]

Since the mid-1990s, in order to overcome Western stereotypes and prejudices against China, and respond to Western society's negative images and speeches about China, a large number of political scholars, international relations scholars, diplomats and news communication scholars in China have proposed to attach importance to the construction of China's national image. The collective consciousness of national image demands is unprecedentedly high, so is the public enthusiasm for constructing a good national image. As a result, it leads to a wave of research on national image.

Chinese scholars often define and study national image from the perspective of international relations, with the important goal of enhancing national image in the world. Guan Wenhui (1999) believed that “national image is a comprehensive entity, which is the overall evaluation and recognition given by the external and internal public about the country itself, its behavior, various

activities and achievements.” [8] Li Shouyuan (1999) believed that national image is the shape and appearance displayed by a sovereign country and nation on the world stage and the public opinion reflection in the international environment. Yang Weifen (2000) believed that national image is the overall evaluation of a country’s relative stability by the international public. Li Zhengguo (2006) believed that the national image consists of three basic aspects, namely “my image”, “his image”, and “misplaced image”. Shi Xinmin and Liang Yingjie (2021) believed that national image has great influence and cohesion, and it is a reflection of a country’s overall strength [9].

2.3. Characteristics of National Image

National image is the overall external presentation of a country in the international community, which integrates multiple aspects such as the nature, strength, status, and influence of the country. The characteristics of a country’s image can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, the foundation of a country’s image is its material origin, which refers to the objective material basis of a country’s economic strength, military strength, technological level, and so on. These material foundations are important supports for a country’s image, determining its position and influence on the international stage.

Secondly, the shaping and dissemination of a country’s image is a complex process that involves multiple fields such as politics, economy, culture, and society. The interaction and influence between different fields make the national image showcase multi-level and multi-dimensional characteristics. Meanwhile, the formation of a country’s image is also influenced by various factors both domestically and internationally, including international relations, media coverage, and public perception.

Thirdly, national image is not static and unchanging, but constantly changes with the development of the country and changes in the international situation. For example, an increase in a country’s economic strength, technological advancement, and cultural influence will all have a positive impact on its national image. On the contrary, if a country performs poorly or encounters crises in international affairs, it will also damage its national image.

Fourthly, although national image is dynamic, it will also maintain relative stability for a certain period of time. This is because the formation of a country’s image requires time and historical accumulation, and once formed, it has a certain inertia and stability. At the same time, the country will also use various means to maintain and shape its national image in order to maintain its stability and continuity.

Lastly, national image is not entirely determined by objective reality, it can also be shaped and changed through various means. The government can enhance the national image through foreign policy, cultural dissemination, economic assistance, and other means; The media can also influence the public’s perception and attitude towards the country through reporting and promotion. Therefore, national image has a certain degree of plasticity and can be shaped into a more positive and proactive image through active efforts.

2.4. National Image and Soft Power

National image is a significant part of a country’s national soft power. Professor Joseph Nye’s book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* officially introduces the concept of “soft power”. [10] Joseph Nye pointed out that the definition of strength after the Cold War no longer emphasizes military power and conquest, and factors such as technology, education, and economic growth are becoming increasingly important in international power discourse. He divided national strength into two kinds of powers, namely “hard power” and “soft power”. Hard power usually refers to coercive capabilities, mainly relying on a country’s military and economic strength.

Soft power is the process of influencing and persuading others to believe in and agree with certain behavioral norms, values, and systems through spiritual and moral appeals.

National image, like the national leaders [11], is not only an important component of a country's "soft power", but also an important manifestation of its comprehensive strength and influence. The relationship between national image and soft power is interdependent and mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, national image is an important manifestation and carrier of soft power, and a good national image helps to enhance a country's soft power and international influence; On the other hand, soft power is an important means and pathway for shaping and disseminating a country's image. By enhancing soft power, the attractiveness and appeal of a country's image can be further strengthened.

3. Ceramic Poetry

China has a "deficit" between information outflow and inflow internationally, a "contrast" between China's true image and Western subjective impressions, and a "gap" between hard power and soft power. China needs to accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system, tell Chinese stories globally, spread Chinese voices well, and showcase a trustworthy, lovely, and respectable image of China.

Poetry has literary, artistic, realistic, and unique characteristics, and ceramic poetry is a highly condensed representation of Chinese ceramic culture and social life. Ceramic poetry refers to poetic works with ceramics as the theme or subject matter, which showcase the beauty, production techniques, historical culture, and people's emotions and cognition towards ceramics through the artistic form of words.

The influence of Chinese ceramics on Western countries can be traced back to a very early period, but the specific deepening and widespread dissemination to Western countries mainly began in the 15th century, especially with the coming of The Age of Exploration and with the promoting of trade exchanges along the Silk Road. As a result, some Western writers wrote ceramic poems to admire Chinese ceramics and Chinese ceramic art and culture as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Ceramic Poems Created by Poets beyond China

Poets	Titles	Year
Victor Hugo	<i>Vase de Chine</i>	1851
	<i>Le Pot Cass é</i>	1851
Henry Longfellow	<i>K éramos</i>	1877
Rewi Alley	<i>Some Pottery Kilns, Old and New</i>	1985

In 1851, French writer Victor Hugo created two poems about Chinese ceramics respectively entitled *Vase de Chine* and *Le Pot Cass é*, which confirmed the existence and influence of Chinese ceramic cultural atmosphere in France, and played a certain promoting role in the dissemination of China's national image. In 1877, American poet Longfellow published a long poem entitled *K éramos* in *The Harper's Monthly* magazine, introducing Jingdezhen to the world and making great contributions to promoting the history and culture of Jingdezhen ceramics, and helping enhance and shape China's national image. In 1985, New Zealand poet Rewi Alley published a poetry collection called *Some Pottery Kilns, Old and New*, which told the story of Chinese ceramics to the world from a unique perspective, making contributions to the dissemination of Chinese ceramic culture and national image.

Ceramics are a symbol of China, and ceramic culture is a typical representative of Chinese culture. In recent years, with the steady progress of "Chinese Culture Going Global", "The Belt and Road", "Cultural Confidence" and "Telling Chinese Stories", the research on ceramics and Chinese

culture communication, ceramics and China's national image building has gradually increased. Researchers have mainly studied how to spread China's national image from the perspective of ceramic publicity translation, ceramic classics translation, ceramic terminology translation, ceramic literature, and export porcelain.

However, Chinese scholars' research on ceramic poetry is currently in the development stage. Please refer to Table 2 for their ceramic poetry research.

Table 2: Chinese Scholar's Research on Ceramic Poetry

Fields of Study	Authors	Year
Ceramic Poetry and Chinese Ceramic Culture	Xie Zhiming	2019
	Hou Yangxiang	2021
Ceramic Poetry and Chinese Painting Art	Tong Guangxia	1999
	Xu Shaobo & Tu Haibo	2002
	Guo Youlin & Wang Xuchu	2011
	Zheng Xiuying	2012
	Lu Xuxia	2016
	Huang Zhong	2017
Ceramic Poetry and Chinese History	Tong Guanxia	2000
	Yuan Anqi	2013
	Hou Yangxiang	2020
Ceramic Poetry and Its Translation	Xie Zhiming	2019
	Chen Lei	2021

Overall, there is relatively not so much research on the translation of ceramic poetry by Chinese scholars, and their study on the translation of ceramic poetry mainly centers on the perspectives of translation methods and strategies, without elevating their research to the level of spreading Chinese ceramic culture and shaping China's national image.

4. National Image Communication in Ceramic Poetry Translation

Translation is the significant means to spread a country's culture to the target readers. [12] The study of translation and national image is a new trend in the field of translation research in recent years. [13-14] The research of national image can be roughly divided into two categories: the first category is to draw on the research results of comparative literary image studies and study the image of a country constructed by the target language country, that is, to study the national image shaped by other countries. The second type is to place translation studies in the perspective of national image theory, exploring how translation shapes a country's image, mainly focusing on the self-shaping of national image.

The main research content of this essay is how to disseminate Chinese national image through ceramic poetry translation. Ceramic poetry contains information about Chinese ceramic culture, Chinese institutional culture, Chinese history, Chinese society, etc. Through the medium of ceramic poetry and translation, the goal of spreading China's national image can be achieved.

4.1. The Chinese Image of a Ceramic Power in the Translation of Ceramic Poetry

By studying Chinese ceramic culture and its translation, Chinese artifact culture and its translation, and Chinese folk culture and its translation, the information about China's unique ceramic culture in ceramic poetry will be introduced to the foreign readers and thus the national image of China as a ceramic power will be spread to the world.

For example, in Miao Zongzhou's ceramic poem created in the Ming Dynasty, *Ode to the Wuran Pavilion in Jingdezhen*, it reads:

*Along the bank lie rows of potter's huts,
From the river swarm bangs of trader's boats.*

The translation vividly expresses the prosperous landscape of China's porcelain industry through words such as "rows of huts", "bangs of boats", and "swarm", and China's image as a ceramic power is expressed through the poem.

Another example, in Li Jie's ceramic poem *Ode to Jingdezhen Porcelain*, it reads:

*As thin as cicada wings the paste looks,
As resound'ng as the chime stone it echoes.*

The translation vividly expresses Chinese ceramic art by "as thin as cicada wings" and describes the sound of Chinese porcelain by "the chime stone" in the poem, spreading the national image of China as a ceramic power.

4.2. The Chinese Image of a Sound System in the Translation of Ceramic Poetry

By studying the institutional culture of Chinese official kilns, imperial kilns, and folk kilns in ceramic poetry and their translation in ceramic poetry, China's institutional culture can be introduced to the foreign readers and the image of China as a country with a sound system can be spread to the world.

For example, in the Qing Dynasty, in Emperor Qianlong's ceramic poem *Pink and Green Square Pot with Wide Ears*, it reads:

*Yue wares of Tang have for long disappeared,
Imperial wares of Song are rare 'nd valued.*

The translated version of "imperial wares" adopts the easily accepted word of "imperial" for Western readers, without using the Chinese pinyin of "*Guan*" (meaning "official"), making it easier for Western readers to understand and accept, thus accurately telling the Western readers the history of imperial kiln and China's sound system for making ceramics in the Qing Dynasty.

4.3. The Chinese Image of an Ancient Civilization in the Translation of Ceramic Poetry

By studying the history of the origin, rise and fall, and changes of Chinese porcelain in ceramic poetry, as well as its translation, the knowledge of Chinese history can be introduced to the foreign readers and the national image of China with an ancient civilization can be spread to the world.

For example, in Tian Han's ceramic poem *Porcelain Capital*, it reads:

*Pottery from Han to Tang made 'n Xiping,
Porcelain rival'd jewels in Song 'nd Ming.*

The translation expresses the long history of pottery making in Xiping (ancient name of Jingdezhen) during the Song and Ming dynasties in refined terms through "pot" and "porcelain" with alliteration. It not only depicts China as a porcelain-making country, but also highlights the image of China as an ancient civilization.

4.4. The Chinese Image of a Harmonious Society in the Translation of Ceramic Poetry

By studying the development of China's porcelain industry, porcelain trade, and the lives of porcelain workers in ceramic poetry and their translation, the social status of China's porcelain industry can be introduced to foreign readers and the national image of China with a harmonious society can be spread to the world.

For example, in Shen Jiazheng's *Jingdezhen's Potters* during the Qing Dynasty, it reads:

*From all over the country comes craftsman,
To all over the world goes porcelain.*

The translation expresses the prosperous scene of porcelain production in Jingdezhen at that time through “all over the country”, depicts the prosperous ceramic trade in Jingdezhen through “all over the world”, and conveys the national image of China’s harmonious coexistence within the country and with the world.

Through the translation of the characteristic elements of Chinese ceramic poetry, China’s images of a ceramic power, a sound system, an ancient civilization, a harmonious society will be spread to the foreign readers, as illustrated in Figure 1.

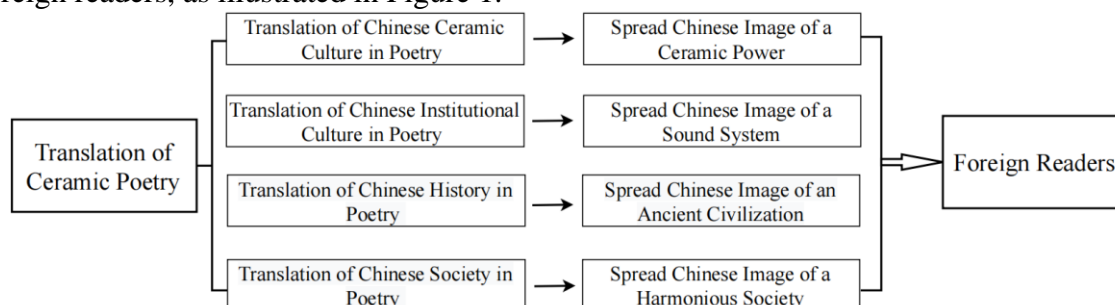


Figure 1: Process of Spreading China’s Images in poetry translation to Foreign Readers

5. Conclusion

National image plays an extremely important role to a country’s development. It not only reflects the comprehensive strength of the country, but also directly affects its status, role and influence in the international community and stage. The dissemination and enhancement of a country’s image are closely related to the improvement of its soft power. Ceramics, as a typical representative of Chinese culture, are an important component of traditional Chinese culture. Ceramics not only carry rich historical heritage and artistic charm, but also become an important carrier for enhancing China’s cultural soft power and spreading China’s national image. Ceramic poetry uses the beautiful rhyme form to condense Chinese ceramic culture, ceramic system, ceramic history, ceramic society, etc. Therefore, poetry translation is an important way to spread Chinese ceramic culture and traditional Chinese culture to the world, as well as an important medium for spreading the national image of China.

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