

Research Progress and Review of the Cloud Messenger

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Abstract: In an era characterised by increasingly frequent global cultural exchanges and growing concern over ecological crises, the cross-cultural interpretation of classical literary works and the exploration of their contemporary relevance have emerged as significant directions in academic research. Kalidasa's Cloud Messenger is widely regarded as a seminal work in the realm of classical Sanskrit literature in India. This poem represents the pinnacle of Indian epic lyric poetry and is also imbued with rich cultural significance and ecological wisdom. To date, the academic research on The Cloud Messenger has been disseminated across a variety of disciplines, encompassing domains such as literature, culture, and translation. However, the work is not without its flaws; it still suffers from fragmentation and insufficient depth in certain areas. For instance, there remains room for improvement in systematically interpreting ecological concepts and comprehensively comparing different translations. Conducting a literature review on Yunshi has the potential to advance the refinement of classical literary studies theory in several ways. Firstly, it traces the evolution of research in this area, integrating fragmented scholarly perspectives to construct a more systematic research framework. Conversely, exploring its ecological concepts and cultural values can offer valuable insights for contemporary ecological literary creation and cross-cultural communication practices, holding significant theoretical and practical value.

1. Research on The Cloud Messenger conducted abroad

1.1 The Emergence Period (19th Century to Early 20th Century)

At this stage, conducted abroad research has primarily focused on the textual collation, translation, and basic literary valuation of The Cloud Messenger. European Sanskrit scholars began to focus on the Cloud Messenger in the 19th century. They undertook a collation of the original Sanskrit text and published multiple Sanskrit editions, including Morinath's annotated version. Concurrently, scholars initiated the translation of The Cloud Messenger into European languages, including English and German, with notable contributions from G. H. Rooke. E. Hultzsch^[1] (1912) published 'Supplementary Notes on the Meghadūta', in which he examined the ancient manuscripts and commentary traditions of the Cloud Messengers. This work established the textual foundation for subsequent research in this area. The research undertaken during this period concentrated on the introduction of Yunshi to European academia, the undertaking of preliminary explorations of its literary value, and the verification of its significant status within Indian classical literature.

1.2 Development Period (Mid-20th Century to Late 20th Century)

The advent of comparative literature and cultural studies has precipitated an expansion in foreign research, with a concomitant deepening of the cultural connotations and artistic techniques of *The Cloud Messenger*. In his 1976 publication *Kālidāsa and the Attitudes of the Golden Age*, D. H. H. Ingalls^[2] examined Kālidāsa's creative mindset and the aesthetic characteristics of *The Cloud Messenger* within the socio-cultural context of India's Gupta Dynasty. This seminal study offers a crucial perspective for understanding the work's cultural context. Sheldon Pollock and Leonard Nathan^[3] (1978) in *The Transport of Love: The Meghadūta of Kālidāsa* conducted an in-depth analysis of the expression and translation of the theme of love in *The Cloud Messengers*, discussing the differences in conveying the essence of love across various translations. Additionally, H. D. Velankar^[4] (1965) provided commentary on a new translation of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* in *A New Translation of Kālidāsa's Meghadūta*, thus advancing the development of translation theory and practice for this work. The research undertaken during this period was distinguished by a synthesis of theoretical analysis with textual examination, alongside the adoption of multi-perspective interpretations.

1.3 Breakthrough Period (21st Century to Present)

As the 21st century began, foreign research increasingly emphasised interdisciplinary integration and the exploration of modern values. It is evident that scholars have expanded the boundaries of study by establishing a connection between *The Cloud Messenger* and emerging fields such as ecological research and gender studies. In the field of literary studies, scholars have employed the theoretical framework of ecocriticism to analyse the portrayals of nature and ecological wisdom in *The Cloud Messenger*. This approach enables the exploration of the text's insights with regard to contemporary ecological concerns. Concurrently, as cultural studies have advanced, scholars have increasingly focused on the variations and reception of *The Cloud Messenger* in cross-cultural communication, analysing differences in readers' interpretations across diverse cultural contexts. For example, some studies have examined new interpretative approaches to *The Cloud Messenger*, influenced by Western ecological literary trends. These studies have also considered the text's significance in expressing cross-cultural love themes in a globalised context. Additionally, scholars have used modern technology to analyse the text of *The Cloud Messenger* digitally, investigating its linguistic style and narrative structure.

2. Domestic Research on the Cloud Message

2.1 Introduction Period (Mid-20th Century to the 1970s)

The focus of domestic research has been primarily on the introduction and preliminary study of *The Cloud Messenger* through its translation. In 1956, Mr. Jin Kemu translated *The Cloud Messenger* from Sanskrit into Chinese, thus enabling a greater number of Chinese readers to engage with this classic work. Subsequently, domestic academic circles began to introduce *The Cloud Messenger*^[5], briefly mentioning its content and literary significance in several works and journal articles on Indian literature, thereby laying the groundwork for domestic research on the novel. During this period, research focused primarily on introducing Yunshi to domestic scholars and readers, with translation efforts becoming the core task. Consequently, in-depth analysis of the work was relatively scarce.

2.2 The Period of Sinicization (1980s–late 20th century)

Recent advancements in the fields of comparative literature and Indian literary studies in China have prompted researchers to incorporate the Chinese cultural context into their studies, thereby facilitating the production of localized interpretations and comparative analyses of *The Cloud Messenger*. In order to achieve a more profound understanding of the subject, scholars have contrasted this work with classical Chinese literary texts, exploring both the commonalities and differences with Chinese literature. This has enabled a more effective integration of the subject into the Chinese literary research framework. For instance, some studies have explored the thematic and artistic similarities between *The Cloud Messenger* and ancient Chinese lyric poetry, though the extent of these similarities remains limited. Concurrently, scholars have initiated an examination of the cultural implications of *The Cloud Messenger*, proffering preliminary interpretations of the Indian mythological and religious elements within the work, thereby establishing the foundation for subsequent in-depth research.

2.3 Innovation Period (21st Century to Present)

Domestic research has entered a phase of diversified and in-depth innovation, yielding significant achievements across multiple fields.

Ecological Concept Research: In their 2011 study *Ecocritical Interpretation of The Cloud Messenger*, Wang Yongxia and Cao Weijun systematically applied ecocritical theory to analyse the natural descriptions within the novel. It was demonstrated that nature possesses independent aesthetic value within the work, embodying the concept of harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world. This research has the potential to raise awareness of ecological issues and to further the study of the ecological dimensions of *The Cloud Messenger*.

Comparative Literary Studies: In his work *The Cloud Messenger and The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (2001), Liu Anwu^[6] conducted a detailed comparison of the similarities and differences between *The Cloud Messenger* and *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* in terms of themes (separation in life and death), mythical elements, concepts of love and marriage, and artistic techniques. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis was provided, elucidating the disparities in the social backgrounds and emotional underpinnings that gave rise to the two works. Dai Shaomin^[7] (2001) in "The Cloud Messenger and The Lament" explores the similarities between the two works in terms of romantic techniques, lyrical themes, the poets' life experiences, and emotional expression. This finding reveals the parallels between ancient Chinese and Indian cultures and aesthetic concepts, thereby enriching the content of comparative literary studies.

Translation Studies: Peng Mao Cuo's (2020) comparative study of old and new Bod (Tib) translations of *The Cloud Messenger* examines the new and old Bod (Tib) translations of *The Cloud Messenger* from three levels—lexical, syntactic, and stylistic—to conduct a comparative analysis. The study explores differences in translation approaches (domestication and foreignization) and discourse levels. The analysis examines the disparities in translation methodologies (domestication and foreignization) and grammatical characteristics between the two versions. Additionally, it explores the impact of Bod (Tib) Buddhist scripture translation traditions on the older translation and examines how the newer translation evolves and progresses from the older one. Sun Quanshou (1996) in "An Introduction to the Bod (Tib) Translation of the Literary Work *The Cloud Messenger*" introduced the translator of the Bod (Tib) version of *The Cloud Messenger*, its editions, and the differences between the Bod (Tib) and Chinese translations, providing important materials for research on the translation versions of *The Cloud Messenger* (Sun, 1996).

Cultural Element Analysis: In Decker's (2017) "Decoding Indian Cultural Elements in *The Cloud Messenger*," the author comprehensively examines the Indian cultural elements within the novel. The

analysis encompasses a range of aspects, including India's climatic conditions, regional cultural distinctives, practices of deity veneration, customary traditions, the country's flora and fauna, and the aesthetic qualities of its landscapes. The study facilitates readers in comprehending the work's cultural significance and contributes to the advancement of research on Indian culture.

3. Review of Domestic and International Research

3.1 Study the Similarities

The literary value of *The Cloud Messenger* has been recognised by both domestic and international academic circles, affirming its significant status within Indian classical literature and the realm of world lyric poetry. Research efforts have encompassed a range of methodologies, including textual collation, translation, thematic analysis, exploration of artistic techniques, and interpretation of cultural connotations. This comprehensive approach has established a fundamental research framework. In the application of theory, various theoretical tools such as comparative literature, ecocriticism and translation theory have been employed to enrich the research perspectives. Concurrently, both domestic and international research has concentrated on exploring the modern relevance of *The Cloud Messenger*. This includes the insights its ecological concepts offer to contemporary society and the significance of cross-cultural communication for cultural exchange. Consequently, this endows studies of *The Cloud Messenger* with contemporary relevance.

3.2 Common Problems

Research Fragmentation: In theoretical research, findings from different theoretical perspectives remain scattered, lacking systematic integration into a unified theoretical framework for studying *The Cloud Messenger*. This hinders the establishment of a comprehensive analytical framework. In the domain of applied research, studies examining reception cases across diverse cultural contexts, and the actual dissemination effects of different translations, remain fragmented, thus hindering the establishment of a comprehensive applied ecological research system.

Monolithic Methodology: Despite the employment of interdisciplinary theories in a number of studies, the overall research approach remains largely traditional, with an overreliance on textual analysis and literature review, whilst modern technological tools such as big data analysis and digital humanities techniques are underutilised. This limitation hinders the deep exploration of underlying patterns and connections within the Yunshi text, such as the relationship between lexical frequency and thematic expression, or trends in linguistic style across different translation periods.

The following discussion is subject to the following caveat: Cross-cultural studies have historically concentrated on Sino-Indian and Indo-European cultural comparisons, with limited research conducted on *The Cloud Messenger* within other cultural contexts. Ecological studies frequently emphasise the direct connection between nature descriptions and ecological concepts, while insufficient attention is given to exploring the deeper relationships between ecological ideas, social structures, and human development within the work. In the context of emerging fields, such as gender studies, research findings remain relatively scarce, failing to fully explore the multifaceted value of *The Cloud Messenger*.

3.3 Differences in Domestic and International Research

A comparison of research foci is warranted. It is evident that overseas studies place a greater emphasis on theoretical breakthroughs and interdisciplinary innovation. For instance, there has been an integration of *The Cloud Messenger* with emerging fields such as modern ecological thought and

gender studies, thereby exploring new research directions. However, there remains a paucity of research on the local adaptability of The Cloud Messenger within non-Western cultural contexts. The majority of findings are grounded in Western cultural frameworks, resulting in a comparatively slower response to the cultural needs of developing nations. Domestic research has been found to excel in the domain of contextual adaptation and comparative studies, with a focus on integrating The Cloud Messenger with Chinese cultural and literary works to develop localized interpretations and adaptations. This approach addresses the challenges of understanding and disseminating The Cloud Messenger within the Chinese cultural context. Nevertheless, the institution has not produced a significant number of original theories, with the majority of its core research frameworks being derived from foreign sources. Consequently, scholarship produced within national academic systems exerts a limited influence on the international stage. Research outcomes are primarily focused on the application and adaptation of foreign theories rather than on the generation of pioneering original work.

4. Conclusion

The Cloud Messenger is regarded as a classic literary work of ancient India, and it is held in high artistic and cultural esteem. Its enduring legacy and widespread acclaim stem not only from its elegant language, extraordinary imagination, and sincere emotions, but also from the profound worldview of ancient Indians and the deep-rooted cultural heritage embedded within these elements. The appreciation of The Cloud Messenger engenders two notable benefits. Firstly, it provides aesthetic pleasure, and secondly, it serves as a source of reflection on life and the relationship between humanity and nature.

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