

# *“Hamlet”’s Influence in China and Chinese Translation Studies*

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**Keywords:** “Hamlet”; China; Chinese translation; impact research

**Abstract:** “Hamlet” is a tragic work by Shakespeare, which has been the focus and research of many scholars. Chinese scholars have also translated “Hamlet” into Chinese and conducted research. Most of the scholars' research on “Hamlet” is analyzed on the literary and cultural level. There are few studies on the translation of “Hamlet”, and most of them are studied from the perspective of literature. The translation of a work not only can show the translator's subjective consciousness and ability level, but also fully demonstrate the language characteristics, social environment and cultural environment in the historical period of the work. This paper analyzes the history of “Hamlet” translation in China and studies the humanism in “Hamlet” works.

## **1. Introduction**

From 1599 to 1602, William Shakespeare created the work “Hamlet”, which is a tragic work and the longest play by Shakespeare. “Hamlet” not only fully demonstrates Shakespeare's artistic skills, but also fully demonstrates the characteristics of British literature in the Renaissance. Zhang Chong once said: "The Renaissance period in Britain can be said to be the prosperous period of the revenge tragedy." The main purpose of many scholars studying “Hamlet” is to analyze and study the characteristics and cultural characteristics of the British revenge tragedy in the Renaissance. When students from all over the world study Shakespeare's works, most of them will choose “Hamlet”. The survey found that from 2015 to 2018, China's research on "Shakespeare" was about 1,590, and the research on “Hamlet” was about 332. Therefore, this article is of great significance to the study of “Hamlet”’s influence and Chinese translation in China. With the support of many previous research literatures, the research in this paper will be more scientific.

## **2. The spread and influence of Shakespeare's classic tragedy “Hamlet” in China**

The Chinese people's research and understanding of William Shakespeare has gone through a long period of time. Most of the researches on Shakespeare's works by Chinese scholars began with “Hamlet”. In 1897, my country's Zeng Jize (a Qing Dynasty diplomat) watched “Hamlet” in London. He was the first person in China to watch and understand “Hamlet”, but his time was more than 200 years after the creation of “Hamlet”, this is also the regret of our people.

In 1903, Shanghai Dawen Publishing House rewrote the "Shakespeare's Handwriting" written by Charles Lamb (British literary writer) and his sister Mary Lamb into classical Chinese. This is the

first time that our nationals have contacted and understood a great book which names "Hamlet". This work is not translated into Chinese, but is presented to our people in a rewritten manner.

Lin Shu and Wei Yi cooperated to translate many stories of Shakespeare into classical Chinese (so that our people can read and understand Shakespeare's works) and define it as "The British poet Yinbianyanyu". In the process of translation, they changed "Hamlet" to "Ghost", and Lin Shu believed that "Hamlet" belongs to the novel of the gods. Their translated Shakespeare's works have been widely spread in China, which has a certain influence on Chinese culture.

Tian Han (playwright, drama writer, novelist) translated it into vernacular according to the Japanese version of "Hamlet" and named it "Hameng Leite". His translations were published in the magazine "Youth China" in 1921, and his translation was published in Shanghai Zhonghua Book Company in 1922. Since 1922, the people of our country have identified the identity of Shakespeare's dramatists, and their works have been loved by many scholars and dramatists.

In 1920, Hu Shi (the thinker, writer, philosopher) proposed to translate all of Shakespeare's works into Chinese for research. In 1921, Liang Shiqiu began to translate Shakespeare's works. In 1934, Lu Xun once said: "We need a translation of Shakespeare's works." During this period, Japan already has translations of "Mr. Ji Hede" and "One Thousand and One Nights", and all the works written by writers such as Shakespeare and Goethe translated into Japanese (for national studies, study); at the same time, Japan also translated the works of Tolstoy and Tostoevsky, although the works are not all translated, but still important for the development of Japanese literature. Under the initiative of Lu Xun, the translation of Shakespeare's works in China has gradually increased.

In 1921, China translated the first full translation of Shakespeare's works, which is the playwright Tian Han's translation of "Hameng Leite". After that, Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao, Cao Weifeng and many other translators translated Shakespeare's works. Most translators use essays to translate Shakespeare's works. In 1999, China published Fang Ping's translation works, which used poetic style for translation.

At this stage, China's research on "Hamlet" is also gradually deepening. Chinese readers can not only read a variety of versions of the translation, but also enjoy the use of traditional Chinese drama such as Kunqu Opera and Peking Opera to interpret "Hamlet", which will be impressed many audiences.

As early as 1986, Beijing and Shanghai both hosted the Shakespeare Festival. After 1986, China held the Shakespeare Festival regularly. The research and knowing of Shakespeare by our people is gradually increasing, and the understanding of "Hamlet" is gradually deepening. In 1994, China adapted "Hamlet" to Yue Opera and named it "The Prince's Revenge" performance. Qiu Ke'an pointed out: Xue Yongzhen's adaptation adopts the name of Chinese characters, clothing, etc., although it transforms the historical background of foreign countries into Chinese drama, but with the close connection of Chinese culture can give people a vivid and lively feeling. Although Xue Yongzhen deleted the large monologue of the prince in "Hamlet" during the adaptation process, the audience in China can easily understand the situation of Shakespeare's creation.

In 1984, China established the Shakespeare Research Society of China. Afterwards, many provinces and cities in China established the Shakespeare Society. The research on Shakespeare's works was gradually deepened, and many works of Shakespeare were presented to the Chinese people in various art forms (such as: "Hamlet"). China's research and analysis of important world literary works are gradually deepening, and the study of world cultural heritage is also catching up with other countries.

### 3. Chinese translation of “Hamlet” in China

#### 3.1. Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare's works and the significance of “Hamlet”'s characters

The first translator of the complete translation of Shakespeare's works in China was Tian Han. As early as 1921, he translated Shakespeare's work “Hamlet” as "Hamanrete", which translated “Hamlet” into vernacular, making China readers can learn to read Shakespeare's work. It can be seen that during this period, our readers truly knew Shakespeare and accepted his work. After that, there were 10 translations of Shakespeare's works published in China. However, these translations have not promoted the development of Chinese literature. In the 1930s, China began to fully accept Shakespeare's work. The translator of the first personal translation of Shakespeare in China was Liang Shiqiu, who translated Shakespeare's “Hamlet” in 1936. Liang Shiqiu appreciated the American literary critic Bai Bide, whose translation, the main purpose of studying Shakespeare's works is to analyze Bai Bi De's New humanistic thinking. Since then, the humanism in “Hamlet” has been valued by many scholars.

Zhu Shenghao translated the complete works of Shakespeare from 1935 to 1944. The social background and cultural background of Shakespeare's works are different from others. First, its translation period is just after the end of the new cultural movement. At this time, China's cultural literature has matured. Therefore, at this time, translating Shakespeare's works is in line with the cultural trend of our country. Readers are also more fond of reading such works, and there are more readers who choose to read their translations. This shows that the degree of openness in China's thinking has improved. At this stage, the traditional culture and the ideological status have declined. After the new cultural movement, Chinese nationals paid more attention to the integration with the international community, and their acceptance of other countries' cultures and literary works was significantly improved. Second, the 19th century European romanticism It has a certain impact on China, so Zhu Shenghao's understanding of Shakespeare is deeper and more comprehensive. The most popular work of Shakespeare's works is the “Hamlet”. Zhu Shenghao's accurate translation of Shakespeare's work “Hamlet” has fully demonstrated “Hamlet”'s image and has an important influence on the intellectuals' thinking in China. The study found that “Hamlet” held humanistic ideas, which were the same as all humanist thoughts at the time, and fully demonstrated the social thoughts of Britain at that time. During World War II, anti-war sentiment was more intense. “Hamlet” not only demonstrates the liberation of the individual, but also the liberation movement of human society. At this stage, all the literary works and cultures in the world have changed. The works of some Chinese writers also involve human nature. There have been other countries that China does not have a translation of Shakespeare, and China is a country without culture. Therefore, in order to change this situation, Zhu Shenghao is determined to translate the complete works of Shakespeare.

#### 3.2. Fang Ping's "New Shakespeare Collection" and “Hamlet”'s new image

After Zhu Shenghao, there are many translators who translate Shakespeare's works, but Fang Ping is an important translator who translated the complete works of Shakespeare. Unlike other translators, Fang Ping began translating Shakespeare's works in the early years and completed the translation work within 4 years. Unlike Zhu Shenghao, Fang Ping is committed to researching Shakespeare, the president of the Chinese Shakespeare Research Association, and he also studied Shakespeare as a guest translator of the World Book Company. This has an important impact on the development of China's translation industry. His translation of “Hamlet”'s works and other Shakespeare works is more rational, which is more in line with the aesthetics and requirements of

Chinese people's literary works in the new era.

In the translation of “Hamlet”, translators pay more attention to the identity of Shakespeare's dramatists, and through the study of British and American studies on Shakespeare's works, the understanding and understanding of Shakespeare is deeper. Shakespeare's works are all plays, and their main function is to play the script, and can't be studied as a desk. Shakespeare belonged to Britain's most loved dramatist at the time, but his work did not receive the attention of many writers. Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu mostly regard Shakespeare's works as literary works. In the late 20th century, the study of Shakespeare in the world was more in-depth and comprehensive, and began to attach importance to the identity of Shakespeare's dramatists. In this context, the study of Shakespeare was more accurate and reasonable. When Fang Ping translated Shakespeare's works, he paid more attention to the identity of his dramatist and restored the context of his work. Shakespeare's works mostly use the poetic style to create (the poetry belongs to a unique art form, and there is no art form in China). Therefore, Mr. Zhu Shenghao used the prose style to translate Shakespeare's works. However, the poetry of the poems attaches great importance to the law of the sentence. Mr. Fang Ping pays more attention to his artistic form in the translation process and uses the poetic way to translate. The translation translated in this way is more similar to the original text. The main reason for this situation is that in the process of the continuous development of world literature, people pay more and more attention to the expression of literary expression.

#### 4. Humanism in “Hamlet”

The study found that the most important thought in the Renaissance was humanism, which was also an important idea of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare was born in 1564 and died in 1616. His period was in the embryonic period of British capitalism. The improvement of productivity promoted the development of culture and the liberation of the people's thoughts, which led to the emergence of humanistic ideas. This period also belongs to the primitive accumulation stage of capitalism, and humanistic thinking will be influenced by social reality. Shakespeare's works not only show his cultural level, creative skills, but also show the current social status and social contradictions.

“Hamlet” tells the story: The father of the Danish prince was murdered. When he found his uncle to succeed and marry his mother, “Hamlet” began to doubt the death of his father and swears revenge, but he killed his sweetheart's father in revenge. In the process of “Hamlet”'s duel with his sweetheart's brother, Leo Titus, both of them died by poisoned swords, and “Hamlet” killed his uncle to avenge his father before he died. In this work, Shakespeare shows the readers and spectators the process of the Danish prince's transition from innocence to melancholy, revenge, and death, and shows the problems that may be encountered in human development. Although the Danish prince killed the enemy in his work, merely killing the bad guys does not reveal humanistic ideas. Therefore, Shakespeare said in his creation that “Hamlet” told his friends to tell their stories to the world before they died, which has an important impact on our understanding of the real environment of British society at that time. In the late period of Queen Elizabeth's reign, although the feudal king developed toward decay, it was still in a dominant position. Feudal society and sinful forces were much higher than humanistic forces. It is because of his time that “Hamlet” could not mobilize the power of the masses to resist his uncle. People who adhere to humanism in the same way as “Hamlet” have pinned their expectations on the monarch, and their actions have not been supported by other people or the people, and will eventually be hit by feudal society and evil forces. “Hamlet”'s fate is closely related to social reality, and its fate is similar to the fate of humanism. However, it still has certain social significance. “Hamlet” shows the distance between social reality, ideal and reality to readers and audiences, and raises the problems that need to be

solved. In addition, through the study of “Hamlet”, we can study and understand the cultural characteristics of the Renaissance and the status quo of social development.

## 5. Conclusion

All in all, the translation of “Hamlet” in China will directly affect the acceptance of the culture of other countries. China's acceptance and integration of British culture is rather tortuous. With the continuous development of education, the level of translation in China is gradually improving, and the research on “Hamlet” is also increasing (mostly related to its cultural and literary aspects). When studying the culture of other countries, China needs to analyze its advantages and disadvantages in detail, and learn and draw on its advantages, which is of great significance to promote China's cultural construction.

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