

The Overseas Translation And Dissemination Of Bai Juyi's Poems

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Abstract: Bai Juyi's poetry is widespread and well known at home and abroad. Its dissemination has a long history. Due to the superiority of geographical location, Southeast Asian countries have conducted extensive translation and in-depth studies on Bai Juyi's Poetry since Bai's times. Since the Late Qing period, Western scholars began to translate and introduce his poems to the west world. The translation and introduction of Bai Juyi's Poetry in foreign countries promote the spreading of China's excellent traditional culture and make Bai's poetry better understood by the world. Through using literature research method and case analysis method, this article explores the spread and influence of Bai Juyi's poetry in the world.

1. Introduction

Bai Juyi, one of the advocates of the New Yuefu Movement, is jointly known as "Yuan Bai" with Yuan Zhen and "Liu Bai" with Liu Yuxi. He was born in Xinzheng, Henan province. He had a bad luck of his political career which, however, could not hinder him from climbing to the peak of poetry. Bai Juyi's poetry collection "Bai's Changqing Collection", distinguished with a variety of poetry writing styles, both simple and precise writing language and wide-ranging themes, is highly respected by the public and has a far-reaching impact. Bai Juyi's poetry is very famous in China and has aroused great interest from scholars at home and abroad since Tang Dynasty. Researchers have conducted a comprehensive and in-depth study on Bai's poetry from different perspectives. For example, in his Overseas Dissemination of Bai Juyi's Poetry, Wu Junyi points out that the dissemination of Bai Juyi's poetry and the rediscovery of its value are inseparable. Professor Du Xiaoqin gave a profound introduction to Bai Juyi in his Twentieth Century Chinese Literature Research: Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties Literary Studies. He made comments on Bai Juyi's life story in detail. With the passage of time, there are more and more studies on Bai Juyi in later generations. Taiwan scholars have made great contributions to the research on Bai Juyi, such as Liu Weichong's Bai Juyi's Biography and Comments on His Poetry. A "flower blooming" scene has gradually appeared since 20th century.

The popularity of Bai Juyi's poems abroad is comparable to that in Bai's homeland China. Japanese scholar Kawai Kozo's Transfiguration of Zhongnan Mountain: An Anthology of Literary Works of the Mid-Tang Dynasty has given a quarter part of the contents to discuss Bai Juyi's poetry. He thinks that Bai Juyi's creation of "Xian Shi Poetry" (which means carefree poetry) has a little connection with his personal character. There are still many scholars in Japan devoting a lot of effort to the research on Bai Juyi, such as Hiraoka Takeo, Ota Mio and so on. South Korea began to study Bai Juyi's creations in the 1950s. Many well-known scholars have studied Bai Juyi's poetry, such as Jin Zaicheng's Examination of Bai Juyi's Poetry, Examination of the New Yuefu Movement in the Tang Dynasty and other papers. At the beginning of the germination period, Korean scholars' studies on Bai Juyi's poetry are comparatively shallow, but the influence of Bai's poetry on Korean literary ideas and values cannot be ignored. Besides, Bai Juyi's poems also walked into the west world since Late Qing period. British sinologist and translator Arthur Waley conducted a lot of research on Bai Juyi's poetry. The increase in foreign research on Bai Juyi has become an

irresistible trend, and its popularity is gradually increasing.

2. Brief Introduction of Bai Juyi's Literature Creation

The Tang Dynasty in which Bai Juyi lived can be described as an era in which the ideology and culture are very active, and the prosperous scenes can be seen everywhere. Bai Juyi personally experienced the change of the dynasty and witnessed the dynasty gradually declining towards extinction. The literature of the Tang Dynasty was very prosperous in the history of China's ancient time, and it was the climax of Chinese poetry development.

Bai Juyi wrote more than 3,000 poems in his life. His poetry creation can be divided into two periods. It has become a recognized viewpoint in the academic community that Bai's relegation to Jiangzhou in the Tenth Year of Yuanhe as the demarcation point of the two periods. Since his relegation, he mainly composed "Xian Shi Poetry" and "Satire Poems". The word "Xian Shi" appeared in Chinese poetry very early, but no one marked it clearly and gave a definition. It was Bai Juyi who clearly put forward this concept for the first time. Bai Juyi's leisure poems have been influenced by various ideas, such as Confucianism, Taoism, etc. "Xian Shi Poetry" referring to leisure poetry has become one of the types in his poetry system, and has influenced later poets to create this type of poems.

Bai Juyi's father Bai Jigeng, was born in the Tianbao period and well knew the Chinese classics. His grandfather had the title of "literary master", and his grandmother and mother were also cultural people. Good family literature background had nurtured and laid a solid foundation for Bai Juyi's literary path. Bai Juyi combined various thoughts and applied them to his poems to sublimate his poems to a higher level. Before Bai Juyi, Tao Yuanming was also a very important link in the creation of leisure poetry. Zhao Yi said: "Xiangshan's(referring to Bai Juyi) Poetry, full of quiet and leisurely fun, owes more thanks to Tao and Wei..." (1). Tao Yuanming's leisurely theme of life and the description of natural life provide great help to Bai's "Xianshi" poetry style.

Among his poems, Bai Juyi pays more attention to "leisure Poetry" and "Allegory Poetry". These two types of poems mainly exemplify his belief in Confucianism. Among Bai Juyi's allegory poems, "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" and "Pipa Xing" are two of his most popular poems in which Bai Juyi expresses his real emotions and true feelings.

3. The Translation and Study of Bai Juyi's Poems in Japan

The literature of the Tang Dynasty presents a more prosperous literary scene than other dynasties. The literary thoughts floods to the surrounding countries like Japan, deeply influencing the literary ideology and culture. The Japanese embassy to Tang had taken a lot of Bai's works back to Japan, which made Bai Juyi's poetry widely spread in Japan. Because Bai Juyi's poems conformed to the aesthetic viewpoints and the artistic mood of Japanese scholars, they were accepted and loved by the Japanese royal family and scholars. Actually, the aesthetic mood and the sadness and gentleness of the mood expressed in Bai's poems are in such a harmony with the traditional Japanese literary ideas that on the tombstone of Bai Juyi was written in July, 1988: "The great poet Mr. Bai Juyi, you are a benefactor of Japanese culture; you are a respected writer of Japan. Your contribution to Japanese culture is like a mountain forever. We never forget you" [2]. Most of the signatures are left by Japanese scholars who were deeply influenced by Bai Juyi's poetry.

In "Bai's Collection", it was mentioned that "there are five collections translated and introduced to Japan, Silla countries..." [3]. Bai Juyi mentioned this in his works, indicating that he himself knew that his collection of poems had been introduced to Japan, and caused a lot of responses. There was an official record that Bai Juyi's poems were first translated and introduced to Japan in 838 AD. According to the Records of the Wende of the Japanese Emperor, when Dazai Shao Fujiwara Yushou inspected the goods from Tang in the fifth year of Chenghe, he obtained the Yuan and Bai poetry and presented to the Japanese emperor. The Emperor was so pleased that he promoted him [4]. After that, a large number of Bai Juyi's poetry works from different collections such as "Bai's Anthology" and "Bai's Changqing Collection" were introduced to Japan.

Under the influence of Bai Juyi's poetry genre, creation skills, and Bai Juyi's literary ideas, Japan gradually developed a trend of writing poetry. Based on Bai Juyi's writing style, many Japanese scholars imitated him. For example, Japanese Prime Minister Fujiwara Tadamichi imitated Bai Juyi's poems and the Japanese royal family was no exception. The sixteenth son of Emperor Daigo, also called Prince Ming, once wrote poems that imitated Bai Juyi's poems. His Remembrance of Turtle Mountain has the same form and style as Bai Juyi's poem Recalling Jiangnan with marvelous imitation [5]. With the improvement of poetry imitation, Japanese scholars' imitation gradually became a fashion and became more and more adept. The long time imitation made Japanese literati's creation more agile, they finally got rid of imitation, developing their own poetic taste and artistic feature.

4. Translation and Study of Bai Juyi's Poems in Korea

Bai Juyi's poems spread to South Korea very early. Yuan Zhen once mentioned in the Preface to the Bai's Changqing Collection, "Jilin country's prime minister admired the Bai's poetry and spent much money to buy it. The prime minister of the country was even willing to buy a poem with gold. What's more, he can distinguish fake poems" [6]. The legend of "Bai's poetry flourishing in Jilin country" still exists in Korea. The Jilin country mentioned in this record is located in the Korean Peninsula, and it is within the geographic scope of South Korea.

In Bangu's Han Shu, it is mentioned that Jizi went to North Korea and taught his people courtesy and how to raise silkworms"[7]. This description also refers to the fact that young Chinese men moved to South Korea and took part in the establishment of a new country. Hence, Chinese culture deeply influenced Korea from that time on, which planted budding seeds for the development of Korean literature. Later on, due to the war, many Chinese farmers moved to the Korean peninsula. They brought Chinese local culture to Korea and promoted cultural exchange. The cultural communication and exchanges have given Korean people a preliminary understanding of Chinese culture. When South Korea entered the "Three Kingdoms era", Korea sent a large number of envoys to China to study the experience of governing the country. Of course, there are also Bai's descendants in South Korea who visit Bai Juyi's former residence every year to commemorate him. Bai Juyi is deeply loved by scholars and literati of South Korea, and his poems have exerted ever-lasting influence on the people of South Korea. Korean scholars appreciate Bai Juyi's attitude conveyed in his poetry, attaching great importance to his leisurely works and idyllic mood. Korean essayist Cui Zi once commented on Bai Juyi's poetry, "If new scholars wanted to live a leisurely life and forgetting worries, they must read Bai's poetry"[8].

Influenced by Bai Juyi's poetical thoughts, Korean scholars take Bai as model to express their thoughts and emotions when they went through similar experience like Bai Juyi's. Lin Chun, who had the title of "One of the Seven Sages of the Hai Zuo", once wrote in his poem, "Who understands the passionate Bai Sima who wanders about the remotest corner of the world"?[9] He wrote Bai Juyi in his works to express his emotions. Lin Chun was deported and away from the court at that time. He couldn't go back to his hometown even though missing it very much. His thoughts and emotions were similar to Bai Juyi's when Bai was demoted to Jiangzhou. So Lin Chun borrowed Bai Juyi's own experience as an allusion to express his feelings that he had never encountered before. It is a feeling of love for Bai Juyi that Korean literati alludes to Bai Juyi's poems to express their emotions, which in turn reflects the profound influence of Bai Juyi's poetry on Korean literati.

5. The Translation and Introduction of Bai Juyi's Poetry to the West

There are lots of west scholars who have translated Bai Juyi's poetry. Among them, Arthur Waley is one of the most famous translators who have made great contributions to the spreading of Bai Juyi's poetry to the west. Arthur Waley (1889-1966) is a famous British sinologist and translator who have translated and conducted a lot of research on Bai Juyi's poetry. His translations dedicated a great deal of efforts on Bai Juyi's poems and showed how obsessed he was with Bai Juyi's works.

For instance, Waley's "A Chinese Poetry Anthology" contains 3 pieces of Bai Juyi's works and his "170 Chinese Poems" has collected 52 Bai's poems. His translations of Bai Juyi's poems were very popular among the people in the UK, so Waley himself was also highly praised and adored by them. Waley's worship and respect for Bai Juyi exceeded that for Li Bai and Du Fu. The reason why Waley loved Bai Juyi's poetry so much was that they shared something common. For example, Waley and Bai Juyi shared the similar aesthetic values of poetry. Bai Juyi was the one who could strike a chord in Waley's hearts.

Waley's translations of Bai Juyi's poetry spread Bai's influence from eastern countries to western countries. Bai Juyi's poetry were gradually accepted and understood by western scholars. It was Waley's translations that recreated Bai's artistic concept of Chinese literati's poems, showing the broadness and profoundness of Chinese culture. The spreading of Bai's poetry to the west shows that Chinese literary ideas are deeply loved by scholars from various countries.

6. Conclusion

As one of the influential poets in China, Bai Juyi's poems are diverse in theme, rich in emotion, concise and easy to understand. They are memorable and eloquent, being loved by researchers at home and abroad. His writing style and skills have developed ancient Chinese poetry to a new stage, and laid the foundation for the later Chinese generations of literati and scholars. Bai's poetry has been translated, disseminated and accepted by East Asian countries since his times. From ancient times to the present, scholars of South Korea and Japan have translated almost all of Bai's poems and made profound research on his works. Bai Juyi's poetry also arouses extensive interests in the west countries through the translations of Arthur Waley, H. A. Giles and so on. Bai Juyi's poetry has a far-reaching influence on foreign literature and is deeply loved by people of all classes from various countries.

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