

## **An Analysis of the Translation of Zen Poetry in Wang Wei's Poems**

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**Abstract:** This paper makes an analysis of the translation of Zen culture in Wang Wei's poems and demonstrates the translation strategies of Zen culture by giving some examples, in hope of providing a useful reference for poetry translation.

### **1. Introduction**

Wang Wei is one of the most outstanding poets in the prosperous Tang Dynasty. Zen is one of the most prominent characteristics of Wang Wei's poems. His poems are pure and fresh, natural and free from vulgarity style, creating a kind of artistic conception of "painting in poetry and poetry in painting". Zen poetry refers to poetry works that promote Buddhism or have Zen meaning and interest. Wang Wei's Zen poetry created a state of harmony full of Zen enlightenment and reached the peak of classical Chinese Zen poetry. This paper attempts to analyze the translation of the Zen poetry in Wang Wei's Zen poems and illustrates the strategies of dealing with the translation of Zen poetry.

### **2. An Analysis of the Translation of Zen Culture in Wang Wei's Poems**

Wang Wei's landscape poetry contains rich Zen culture, which is mainly embodied in three aspects: emptiness, quietness and elegance. The following will analyze the translation of Zen poetry in Wang Wei's Zen poems from these three aspects.

#### **2.1. The Beauty of Emptiness**

##### **Mountain Eternal South**

The highest peak scrapes the sky blue ;  
It extends from hills to the sea.  
When I look back , clouds shut the view ;  
When I come near , no mist I see.  
Peaks vary in north and south side ;  
Vales differ in sunshine or shade.  
Seeking a lodge where to abide ,  
I ask a woodman when I wade.

Zhongnan Mountain, also named Taiyi Mountain, is well-known as the "fairy capital" and one of the birthplace of Taoism. In Xu Yuanchong's English translation, foreign readers can know that Zhongnan Mountain is not an ordinary mountain but an immortal mountain through the word "Eternal". Although the translation of the title does not realize the literal equivalence, the translation equivalence is the cultural equivalence between the source language and the target language. The term "extends" is used to describe the width of a mountain. The whole poem contains rich Zen culture. In order to make foreign readers understand and appreciate the Chinese Zen culture, it is necessary to add or subtract the translation. The cervical association expresses the changeable artistic conception of Zhongnan Mountain, and emphasizes "change" and "special". Xu uses the verbs "vary" and "differ" to present the two images artfully, which is similar to the Zen of the

original poem.

## 2.2. The Beauty of Quietness

Wang Wei described quiet and serene landscape pastoral. Zen enlightenment is revealed between the lines.

### **The Deer Enclosure**

In pathless hills no man's in sight .  
But I still hear echoing sound.  
In gloomy forest peeps no light,  
But sunbeams slant on mossy ground.

The poem describes the quiet scene of the empty mountain and deep forest near Luzhai in the late afternoon. The beauty of poetry lies in its freshness and naturalness.

There was no sign of man, no voice, no sunlight, only the radiance of the reflection, which represented the emptiness of the forest at dusk. The poem is written as an empty, gloomy landscape. The second sentence, the intermittent voice, as translated by Xu, is more capable of communicating a peaceful state. The static effect of "returning to the scenery and entering the deep forest" can be seen in the word "peeps".

This poem creates a deep and bright symbolic realm, showing the author's enlightenment in the deep meditation process. Although there is Zen in the poem, it does not resort to argumentation, but permeates with the vivid description of the natural scenery.

## 2.3. The Beauty of Elegance

### **Autumn Evening in the Mountains**

After fresh rain in mountains bare  
Autumn permeates evening air.  
Among pine-trees bright moonbeams peer;  
O'er crystal stones flows water clear.  
Bamboos whisper of washer-maids;  
Lotus stirs when fishing boat wades.  
Though fragrant spring may pass away,  
Still here's the place for you to stay.

"Empty" mountain is not empty, but colorful and vibrant. "Empty mountain" is not "empty mountain". There is the moon, pine trees, spring, white stones, bamboo, silk washing, lotus leaf, fishing boat and other things and scenes. Mountains are ethereal transparent; rain is fresh and pleasant. The moon was shining brightly through the pine forest, the mottled still shadows, and the clear spring was tinkling on the rocks. In the poem, "emptiness" does not arouse a dead emotion, but contains a variety of colors and vigorous vitality, causing the author's incomparable love for life. Wang Wei wrote "empty" mountains from the sound and color, vividly creating a Zen state. This poem lets a person taste detached secular heart and return to the state of nature.

The first "empty" character can most foil that kind of quiet emptiness. Bare means "without the usual cover protection", giving the impression that the mountain is bare and has no trees. Although a little different from the original meaning, the translation is very good in terms of cultural heritage and the form. In the further description of the mountain after the shower, "moonbeams" and "peer" were aptly used in the translation. The translator didn't translate "Quan" directly, but he expressed it with the Crystal Stones and Water Clear. In the original poem, the stone is not as clear as crystal, but the use of "Crystal" enables the reader to see a clearer picture and set off the bright moonlight.

## 3. Conclusion

This article discusses the translation of Zen poetry in Wang Wei's poems. Zen poetry is concise in language, rich in connotation and quiet in artistic conception. With more and more frequent international communication and cultural exchanges, the Translation of Zen poetry into English can not only spread Chinese culture better, but also enlighten Western culture more deeply and play an

important role in the exchange of Chinese and Western culture and thoughts.

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