



Introduction and Dissemination Studies of Contemporary German Translations of Traditional Chinese Medicine Classics

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Abstract

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) stands as a cherished cornerstone of Chinese cultural heritage. The "One Belt, One Road" Development Plan for Traditional Chinese Medicine (2016-2020) heralds a novel and promising chapter in the globalization of this ancient medicinal tradition. In recent times, alongside a marked surge in the prevalence of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Germany, there has been a noticeable increase in the translation of classics of TCM into German. This trend includes not only direct translations of canonical TCM texts but also scholarly explanations and clarifications of TCM principles. Through the efforts of contemporary German scholars in translating TCM classics and producing informative literature on TCM, foundational theories, classical therapeutic modalities, and cultural traditions of TCM have found resonance in Germany. This has significantly advanced the dissemination of TCM in the Western sphere. Moreover, it has influenced research on Traditional Chinese Medicine and Sinology in Germany, contributing to their development.

Keywords

Germany, Chinese medicine classics, Western dissemination of TCM

1. Introduction

Since the mid-16th century, German scholars and physicians have demonstrated a keen interest in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), leading to the translation of select TCM classics into German. However, preceding the 19th century, these translations primarily relied on the works of missionaries and physicians from other European nations, rather than direct translations of TCM classics (Yuan, 2022). Following the aftermath of the Second World War, modalities such as acupuncture experienced a surge in popularity in the Western world, sparking widespread attention to Chinese traditional medicine among the German populace. Concurrently, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China and its subsequent policy of openness, TCM classics began to wield influence in Germany, attracting a growing cohort of German scholars to pursue studies in China and return with their research findings. Despite the gradual proliferation of TCM within Germany itself, scholarly inquiries into the impact of TCM classics in the German context remain relatively scarce within Chinese academic circles. Notably, scholar Yuan Weiman has undertaken the bulk of such investigations, delving into the ecological study of German scholars' engagements with TCM through the lens of Western medicine during the 16th to 18th centuries (Yuan, 2021), as well as conducting thorough examinations of the translation and academic ramifications of TCM classics by Germans who journeyed to China during the late Qing dynasty (Yuan, 2022). In contrast, contemporary investigations into the translation and dissemination of TCM classics in Germany, particularly post-World War II, represent an academic lacuna. This paper aims to

systematically compile authoritative translations of extant TCM classics in contemporary Germany, alongside pertinent popular science literature in German, as a methodological entry point, tracing the dissemination pathways of TCM within Germany.

2. Contemporary German Scholarly Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine Classics

The conclusion of World War II, the subsequent opening of China, and the stabilization of the international landscape have collectively expanded the opportunities for German scholars to engage with Traditional Chinese Medicine during their visits to China. Many German scholars, equipped with a substantial interest in and knowledge of TCM acquired through extensive immersion in China, have undertaken the task of translating TCM classics into German. In contrast to earlier translations by German missionaries or medical personnel affiliated with churches (Eckart, 1989), contemporary engagements with TCM by scholars and professional TCM practitioners from Germany exhibit a higher level of proficiency and authority. Collaboratively, these German scholars and physicians have endeavored to render Classical Chinese texts into German, thereby advancing the development and dissemination of TCM classics in Germany. Given the intricate nature of TCM classics, replete with specialized terminology and concepts, the majority of translation efforts have focused on abridgment or explanatory annotations regarding specific TCM notions, rather than complete translations of entire texts.

Contemporary German scholars have abandoned earlier biases and criticisms within the German academic community towards TCM, adopting an objective and scientific approach in their study of Chinese medical culture. Franz Hübötter stands out as one of the earliest scholars to introduce TCM into German universities. Since his initial encounter with TCM in 1907, he dedicated his life to translating TCM classics, composing relevant works, advocating for the legal recognition of TCM acupuncture in Germany, and primarily engaging in the study and teaching of TCM. Exemplifying a rigorous scholarly approach, Hübötter extensively studied Chinese literature and relevant European medical texts, often supplementing his translations with corresponding Chinese explanations and relevant Chinese bibliographies. His seminal work, "The Chinese Medicine at the Beginning of the 20th Century and Its Historical Development" encompasses a comprehensive overview of Chinese medicine from ancient classics such as the "Huangdi Neijing" and the "Shennong Bencao Jing" to Chinese writings of the 1920s, providing a thorough examination of the development of Chinese medicine (Hübötter, 1929).

In the 1990s, Germany witnessed the emergence of numerous scholars dedicated to TCM research. Sinologist Erhard Rosner devoted himself to the study of TCM and Chinese culture and arts. In his work, "The Healing Art of Pien Lu: Physician and Illness in Pictorial Expressions of the Chinese Language" Rosner elucidated a plethora of TCM terminology in German (Rosner, 1991), showcasing his extensive knowledge of Chinese literature, medical history, and TCM. Scholar Jürgen Kovacs translated the "Yin-Hai Jing-Wei" and continued his research and academic exchanges related to TCM (Kovacs & Unschuld, 1999). Contemporary German scholars extensively reference Chinese literature in their research on TCM, drawing upon their practical observations and experiences of Chinese medical culture, thereby possessing a comprehensive cultural perspective and rich knowledge of TCM. They not only provide accurate and meticulous explanations of various TCM concepts but also engage in rational discussions and express personal insights.

Since the onset of the 21st century, a multitude of ancient and linguistically intricate Traditional Chinese Medicine classics have gradually found their way into German translations. Among these, the "Huangdi Neijing" has emerged as a cornerstone within the annals of TCM development, prompting its translation into German—a testament to its seminal status. Consequently, German renditions of the "Huangdi Neijing" are regarded as the pinnacle of reference in subsequent translation endeavors. Notably, the translation undertaken by Maoshing Ni has garnered widespread acclaim, undergoing multiple editions spanning from 1995 to 2022. This series of editions, introduced in 1995 with an English rendition followed by subsequent German editions, denotes a marked progression in the acknowledgment and embrace of TCM classics within the German academic sphere (Ni, 2022). Furthermore, the voluminous translation by Muhammad W. Schmidt encompasses the entirety of the three-volume original text, evolving through improvements and expansions into a comprehensive edition (Schmidt, 2004). Distinguished by its meticulous revisions, this rendition directly translates from the archaic Classical Chinese text, augmented by copious annotations, indexes, and a German-Chinese vocabulary comparison. Such enhancements serve to elucidate the text's intricacies, thus facilitating a deeper understanding for German readers entrenched in TCM scholarship.

Translations of the "Shanghan Lun" often focus on specific therapeutic approaches, with the earliest version appearing in 1997 as part of the series "Ein Klassiker der traditionellen chinesischen Medizin mit klassischen und

neuzeitlichen Fallstudien", translated by Xiwen Luo as "The Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders and Miscellaneous Illnesses", with 500 Case Studies" (Luo, 1997). Another notable rendition is "The Classical Formulas of Chinese Medicine: Huang Huang's Formulas from the Shang Han Lun" by Huang Huang and Andreas Kalg, which amalgamates classical medicinal formulas derived from the "Shanghan Lun" with constitutional theories, elucidating its pivotal role as the progenitor of numerous subsequent prescriptions and as a foundational cornerstone of Chinese herbal medicine (Huang & Kalg, 2016).

Translations of the "Nanjing" are relatively less frequent as standalone works, often integrated with the "Huangdi Neijing." Noteworthy translations include Muhammad W. Schmidt's "The Classic of the Yellow Emperor on Internal Medicine (Suwen & Lingshu) and The Classic of Difficult Issues (Nanjing): Fundamental Texts for or The Classic of Difficult Issues" which comprehensively translates the structural and functional aspects of the human body and its organs, the etiology of various diseases, diagnostic methods, and related therapeutic modalities (Schmidt, 2014). Paul U. Unschuld's translation, "Ancient Classics of Chinese Medicine: The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic, Plain Questions. The Classic of Difficulties. The text in its entirety, translated into German without commentary" offers a complete German rendition of both the "Huangdi Neijing" and the "Nanjing", enabling German readers to gain a comprehensive understanding of ancient Chinese medical thought and doctrinal systems (Unschuld, 2013). Unschuld advocates for a faithful translation of Chinese medicine, emphasizing linguistic and cultural principles unique to TCM, thereby preserving its distinctive cultural essence. He proposes an approach of "ancient for ancient", advocating for an understanding of the classics' language within their historical context to interpret traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, he advocates for "Chinese through Chinese", using Chinese classics to expound TCM theories, thereby providing a model for showcasing cultural confidence in TCM translations (Zhang, Wu, & Wang, 2018; Li, Kong, & Sun, 2021). Unschuld also champions the concept of "alienation translation", annotating the translated text to highlight Chinese culture and TCM characteristics, emphasizing the importance of tracing the origins and sources of core concepts such as the organs in TCM, and forming a unique terminology system that fully reflects the original concepts of the classics, thus maximizing the portrayal of Chinese culture in the translation without resorting to the forced application of modern medical terminology that may not align with the original metaphorical meanings. Chinese scholar Zheng Jinsheng, who has collaborated with Unschuld for many years, commends his commitment to faithfulness to the original texts, faithfully translating classical TCM works, allowing Western learners of TCM to appreciate its true essence (Zheng, 2013).

A retrospective examination of the developmental trajectory of German translations of ancient Chinese medical texts provides insights into several salient evolutionary patterns. At the level of translators, there has been a discernible transition from German missionaries and medical personnel associated with religious institutions to German scholars and specialized medical practitioners. Concerning the content of translations, there has been a progressive shift from works primarily focused on Chinese materia medica, pathology, and pulse studies to encompassing classical Chinese medical texts and pharmacological treatises, and further expanding to include a broader spectrum of classical medical literature. With regards to the objectives underlying translation endeavors, there has been a developmental progression from the mere popularization and introduction of Chinese medicine to more sophisticated aims, such as elucidating medical history and advancing pharmaceutical research, culminating in a comprehensive representation of the intricate medical and cultural values embedded within ancient texts. In terms of translation methodologies, the evolution is characterized by a transition from a period marked by a lack of established translation theories to a phase of rigorous exploration and formulation of translation principles. This evolutionary journey has witnessed a progression from an emphasis on abridged translations and compilations towards prioritizing complete translations, reflecting a forward-moving developmental trajectory.

3. Contemporary German Scholarly Treatises on Traditional Chinese Medicine

In the current academic milieu, there is a burgeoning interest among contemporary German scholars regarding traditional Chinese medicine. Their endeavors extend beyond mere translation of TCM classics to encompass rigorous exploration of the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of TCM in the contemporary global context. Against this backdrop, a corpus of scholarly treatises on TCM has emerged, aimed at acquainting German readers with foundational concepts, principles, and therapeutic efficacies of TCM, thereby facilitating intercultural exchange and comprehension. Through meticulous scrutiny and analysis of these treatises, a profound insight into the perceptions, interpretations, contributions, and impact of contemporary German scholars in the realm of cross-cultural medicine and TCM scholarship can be gleaned.

3.1 Acupuncture

According to the available data, the prevailing theme in German-language popular science publications concerning Traditional Chinese Medicine centers largely on the exposition and guidance of acupuncture. Among the pioneers in this field is George Soulié de Morant, recognized as one of Europe's earliest scholars to explore acupuncture. Commencing in 1929, he authored numerous seminal works on acupuncture, notably "Echte Chinesische Akupunktur: Doktrin - Diagnose - Therapie", a tome derived from the Ming Dynasty's venerable "The Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion". Widely acclaimed as a quintessential masterpiece in the acupuncture domain, this publication has witnessed multiple editions and translations (Morant & Angelis, 2022). Post-1945, his disciple Roger De La Fuye facilitated the introduction of acupuncture to Germany, thereby amplifying its influence.

In the 1970s, James Reston, a correspondent for *The New York Times*, chronicled his personal experience of successful pain management through acupuncture subsequent to an appendectomy during his sojourn in China (Li, 2011). This narrative precipitated a notable surge in the literature pertaining to the "acupuncture phenomenon", featuring noteworthy contributions such as Heribert Schmidt's "The Modern Acupuncture: Theory and Practice" (Schmidt, 1975), Gerhard Bachmann's "The Acupuncture: A Regulatory Therapy" (Bachmann, 1976) and August Brodde's "Advice for the Acupuncturist" (Brodde, 1976). Of particular significance, "Systematische Akupunktur", jointly authored by German sinologist Manfred Porkert and internist Carl-Hermann Hempen in 1985, marked the inaugural comprehensive systematic exposition of TCM theory and practice (Porkert, 1985). Encompassing meridians, acupuncture points, diagnostic methodologies, needling techniques, and clinical insights, this seminal work established a novel lexicon and assigned Latin equivalents to elucidate TCM terminology. Additionally, it meticulously referenced original Chinese acupuncture literature, furnishing elaborate descriptions and copious clinical illustrations of acupuncture points.

The compendiums on acupuncture during this epoch primarily targeted specialized acupuncturists or medical practitioners exploring alternative therapeutic modalities. Predominantly sourced from limited Chinese references, these treatises expounded on fundamental concepts and practical applications of acupuncture in an aesthetically appealing format, while adopting a Western medical paradigm for elucidation. Frequently, Western medical jargon was enlisted to explicate TCM precepts, albeit with instances of omitting or "rephrasing" intricate concepts, thus lacking a structured exposition of foundational acupuncture tenets. Nonetheless, these publications played an instrumental role in propagating the ubiquity and cognizance of acupuncture therapy.

In the 21st century, research endeavors pertaining to acupuncture within Germany have intensified notably. Renowned German anesthesiologist Claudia Focks, specializing in acupuncture and extensively educated in Sinology, has authored several seminal works, including "Atlas Acupuncture" (Focks, März, & Hosbach, 2021), "Guide to Acupuncture: Point Localization and Needling Technique" (Focks & März, 2021) and "Body Acupuncture Flashcards: Mastering Acupuncture with Ease" (Focks & März, 2021). Focks' writings are characterized by a clear structure, featuring illustrated depictions of pivotal acupuncture points accompanied by anatomical diagrams, facilitating rapid information acquisition for readers. As German scholars' comprehension of Chinese acupuncture gradually matures, there is an observable trend in acupuncture popular science literature towards more detailed treatises within specific domains. This trend reflects the contemporary acupuncture research landscape's emphasis on scientific rigor and specificity.

Simon Becker's "Acupuncture in Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Postpartum: A Textbook for Practice" (Becker, Aubert, & Ackermann, 2017) primarily targets midwives undergoing specialized obstetric acupuncture training. Comprising three sections—fundamental theory, practical application of acupuncture in obstetrics, and numerous case studies—this book serves as a comprehensive guide. Hamid Montakab's recent publication, "Acupuncture for the Hidden Roots of Diseases: The Mind and Emotions in Chinese Medicine" (Montakab, 2023) ingeniously integrates acupuncture with psychology into TCM practice, elucidating ancient Chinese concepts regarding psychology and emotions while exploring the role of psychology in disease development. Given the substantial proportion of patients presenting with psychological issues in their complaints, this book furnishes valuable strategies for acupuncturists to address such concerns, rendering it highly pertinent to the contemporary milieu.

Contemporary German-language popular science treatises on acupuncture not only elucidate fundamental acupuncture principles but also underscore practical guidance and clinical application, accentuating the precision and rigor of academic research. These works incorporate the latest acupuncture research findings, clinical trial data, and treatment efficacy evaluations, positioning acupuncture as a comprehensive therapeutic modality that integrates knowledge from diverse disciplines, such as traditional Chinese medicine and psychology. Consequently,

contemporary German-language popular science treatises on acupuncture embody heightened professionalism, scientific rigor, and comprehensiveness, enabling readers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of acupuncture principles and applications.

3.2 Traditional Chinese Medicinal Material

In the mid-20th century, scholarly inquiry into traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) burgeoned in Germany, leading to the consolidation of research findings into specialized treatises and fostering the emergence of accessible literature on TCM in the German language. Manfred Porkert, a distinguished German Sinologist and luminary in the realm of traditional Chinese medicine debuted "Clinical Chinese Pharmacology" in 1978, marking the inaugural comprehensive exposition of Chinese herbal pharmacology in Germanic discourse (Porkert, 1978). This seminal work encapsulates over 600 medicinal herbs and draws upon an extensive array of references, ranging from venerable texts such as the "Shennong Ben Cao Jing" and "Shanghan Zabing Lun" to contemporary research literature. Noteworthy for its voluminous content, exhaustive citations, historical veracity, and judicious appraisal, Porkert's opus is deemed of considerable practical and scholarly import.

As the trajectory of Chinese herbal medicine research evolved, German-language popular science literature began to transcend mere exposition of TCM theories and applications, integrating practical case studies and clinical research to facilitate enhanced comprehension and utilization of Chinese herbal medicine. "Pharmacopoeia of Chinese Medicine: Monographs of the Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China 2005, 2010, and 2015" curated by Erich Stöger (Stöger, 2019), assumes a pivotal role as a seminal German-language compendium on Chinese herbal medicine. This meticulously curated work systematically distills essential information on diverse botanicals, minerals, zoological derivatives, and other therapeutic agents. Each monograph offers an exhaustive delineation of specific remedies, encompassing nomenclature, botanical provenance, processing methodologies, pharmacological attributes, clinical indications, dosages, and contraindications. Catering to medical practitioners and allied professionals engaged in the practice of herbal medicine, Stöger's tome stands as an indispensable reference tool for safeguarding the efficacy, safety, and quality standards of Chinese herbal interventions.

Contemporary German-language popular science literature on Chinese herbal medicine adopts a holistic approach, presenting a comprehensive overview of diverse medicinal herbs, augmented by illustrative depictions to elucidate their salient characteristics. Embracing scientific rigor, these publications delve into botanical taxonomy, cultivation methodologies, harvest practices, and processing techniques with meticulous detail. Moreover, they expound upon conventional herb compatibility paradigms and synergy principles to optimize therapeutic outcomes and mitigate potential adversities, all the while delineating cautionary advisories and contraindications. Consequently, contemporary German-language treatises on Chinese herbal medicine epitomize encyclopedic compendia, synthesized from a multifaceted perspective by conscientious authors attuned to the exigencies of modern medical discourse.

3.3 History of TCM Concept

Although the therapeutic practices of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) exhibit diversity, their foundational theories and treatment principles share common ground. In this context, the significance of scholarly works elucidating the historical development of TCM thought cannot be overstated. Through meticulous historical inquiries and comparative analyses with Western medicine, the profound historical lineage of TCM can be comprehensively apprehended. To achieve a more objective and exhaustive exposition, such comprehensive treatises place substantial demands on authors, requiring proficiency in the Chinese language, a deep understanding of TCM principles, and a solid grounding in sinological scholarship.

Volker Scheid, formerly presiding over the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (IASTAM), argues that TCM, as a traditional therapeutic art globally entrenched in contemporary discourse, transcends categorical boundaries. In his seminal work "Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China: Plurality and Synthesis," Scheid pioneers the field of TCM ethnography (Scheid, 2002), dissecting the reasons underlying the persistence of traditional Chinese medicine amidst modern societal transformations and elucidating its robust adaptability. Scheid advocates for interdisciplinary methodologies integrating technological advancements, social psychology, and philosophical frameworks to illuminate the functional mechanisms of Chinese medicine, thereby offering novel research perspectives to Western academic readers and TCM practitioners alike.

Another luminary in the realm of TCM is Professor Paul U. Unschuld, whose scholarly focus lies in the comparative history of Chinese and Western medicine, as well as life sciences. Diverging from conventional Chinese

scholarship, Unschuld's research methodology and analytical framework encompass not only the scrutiny of TCM literary sources but also comparative investigations into the intellectual and ethical trajectories of Chinese and Western medical traditions. In his seminal work "What is Medicine? Western and Eastern Paths of Healing" published in 2003 (Unschuld, 2003), Unschuld undertakes a comparative exposition of fundamental medical ideologies spanning from antiquity to contemporary times in both European and Chinese contexts. He propounds an insightful thesis positing that the evolution of core medical theories is not solely predicated upon empirical observations of the human body but is also profoundly influenced by external stimuli such as environmental contexts and societal experiences. Consequently, the veracity of medical theories is intimately entwined with the societal milieu in which they manifest. Unschuld's scholarly contributions have engendered critical discussions surrounding the underlying determinants of medical ideation, encompassing issues of healthcare policy formulation, the enduring significance of TCM, and the ramifications of globalization on medical epistemology. In essence, Unschuld's research endeavors not only enrich the comprehension of the evolutionary trajectories of medical theories but also underscore the symbiotic intersections between ancient Eastern and Western medical traditions within the broader canvas of societal evolution.

4. Conclusion

Within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative" development plan for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) spanning from 2016 to 2020, the influence of "TCM's Transmission to the West" has progressively broadened. German scholars' endeavors in translating TCM classics have continuously evolved and refined: the breadth of translation has expanded, encompassing pivotal works across diverse domains, while the fidelity and intelligibility of translations have been prioritized. Drawing from foundational TCM literature, German scholars have undertaken a comprehensive examination of TCM's historical evolution, therapeutic modalities, and cultural underpinnings from a humanistic vantage point, thereby constituting a significant exploration within the German Sinological landscape regarding the study of TCM.

Simultaneously, German scholars have utilized popular science publications to acquaint German readers with TCM culture and medical paradigms. Through the meticulous organization and scientific categorization of TCM popular science literature, there emerges a conscious effort to reassess and synthesize TCM's cultural fabric, consequently fostering deeper dissemination and comprehension of TCM within the German milieu.

In summary, the present state of Sino-German exchange in TCM exhibits a positive trajectory. The endorsement and integration of TCM within Germany are steadily gaining ground, offering a viable conduit for Germany to enhance its understanding of China and catalyzing the formation of a native "professional TCM" discipline. Nonetheless, the process of "TCM's Transmission to the West" is not without its challenges, including cultural disparities and linguistic hurdles in translation, alongside the inherent limitations in the reception of TCM concepts within the German context. Hence, a concerted effort to augment scholarly discourse and collaborative engagement between Chinese and German academics is imperative to advance the comprehensive propagation and perpetuation of TCM culture within Germany.

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