

# A Study of the Russian Translation and Outreach Paths of the Maritime Cultural Terms in Zhufanzhi under the Perspective of Corpus Translation

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**Abstract**—Chinese civilization is rich in maritime consciousness and has a long maritime tradition. As a book containing maritime culture, the study of Russian translations of maritime cultural terms in the Zhufanzhi helps to disseminate maritime culture to the outside world and to show the uniqueness of China’s maritime culture. This paper uses a corpus approach to classify and analyse in detail the translation methods used for the maritime cultural terms in the book. It is found that the translators mostly used direct translation, phonetic translation and annotation method for the Russian translation of marine culture terms in Zhufanzhi. By analysing the translation results and combining the background of the times and communication theories, four reasonable and feasible translation paths for foreign propaganda are proposed.

**Index Terms**—Maritime culture, outreach paths, Russian translation, corps, terminology

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Introduction to the Zhufanzhi and Maritime Culture

The Zhufanzhi is a famous work on overseas geography written by Zhao Rushi in the Song Dynasty, and is also the first important document in China that systematically recounts the Maritime Silk Road. It mainly focuses on overseas countries and regions, and basically reflects the prosperity of the maritime Silk Road during the Song Dynasty. The foreign translation of the Zhufanzhi began in 1911 with an English translation by Xia De and Ruo Keyi, and in 2018 the translation by Ulyanov and the publication by the Oriental Literature Publishing House, “Чжу фань чжи”, was published in Russian. A search of the translation of the Zhufanzhi reveals that there is a lag, or even a gap, in the study of translations of the Zhufanzhi, and that there is also a great deal of scope for linguistic research on texts.

The book was written during the Song dynasty, a time when the Maritime Silk Road was flourishing, and its contents are closely related to maritime culture. Generally speaking, maritime culture is the sum of the spiritual results and material outcomes of the social practices of mankind in exploiting the sea [1]. The book was written through visits to the merchants in various countries, and the maritime culture in the book was formed through the spread and influence of people, trade and commerce, and cultural interactions between countries [2].

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### B. Building a Corpus

Corpus translation science is a branch of translation science based on the corpus method, through the observation of a large number of translation facts or translation phenomena and the collection and collation of relevant data, a systematic study of the nature of translation and the translation process is conducted [3].

Based on this, this paper uses the alignment tool DejaVuX3 software to align the bilingual Chinese and Russian texts of Zhufanzhi at the sentence level for the construction of the corpus, with the original text selected from the Zhufanzhi Revue published by the Heritage Publishing House in 2022 and the Russian text selected from Чжу фань чжи (“Описание иноземии”) published by the Oriental Literature Publishing House in 2018. е иноземных стран”.

## II. TRANSLATIONS OF MARITIME CULTURAL TERMS

Based on the above, we will extract marine cultural terms from the corpus, classify them and analyse the translation methods used by the translators accordingly.

### A. Geographical Terms

As an exotic book, the first volume of Zhufanzhi focuses on overseas countries and regions, and contains a large number of geographic terms, specifically country names, tribal names, city names, mountain names, water names, geographical environments, etc. According to the statistics of the corpus, there are 208 geographic terms in Zhufanzhi: 131 names of countries, 31 names of tribes, 27 names of cities, 9 names of islands, 4 names of mountains, 3 names of water, 3 names of geographical environments and other names, translated as following Table I.

TABLE I: TRANSLATION METHODS FOR GEOLOGICAL TERMS

Translation methods	Transliteration	Transliteration + annotation	Literal translation	Liberal translation
Geological	39	162	4	3
Proportion	18%	77%	1.9%	1.5%

As can be seen from the above table, the translators have mainly used the transliteration and transliteration + notes methods to translate the geographical terms. The translation of the book, which begins with a description of the countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road, is mainly transliterated and annotated, with 131 country names: for example, “宾瞳龙国”, which was originally a southern port belonging to the ancient Kingdom of Cham, in the present-day province of Binh Thuan, Vietnam. The translation as “Страна Биньтунлун” uses “страна + transliteration”,

which includes the phonetic translation of the name of the country while indicating that the word refers to the name of the country. At the same time, the translator further explains in the commentary that the country belonged to Jataka, one of the ancient vassal states of what is now known as “Farangs” (i.e., Vietnam), making it easier for the reader to understand its geographical location and basic circumstances. Likewise, the translator has taken a direct approach to the names of individual countries, for example, the “女儿国”, which the translator translates as “Страна Женщин”.

In addition to the names of countries, the translation also includes the names of tribes and cities, which are also rendered mainly phonetically, e.g.:

(1) 统有三十一个部落。其西十二，曰：只都尼、施亚卢尼、罗琶离罄琶移、布林琶布尼……（《注犍国》）

Translation: Под его управлением 31 город (пура). На западе 12 называются: Чжидони, Шиялуни, Лопалибепаи, Булиньпабуни…

The translation translates tribes such as the “只都尼” as “Чжидони”. In addition to this, the word “tribe” in Chinese culture refers to a collective of several clans and clans of similar blood, and in the previous text the translator translates “部落” as “город (пура)” “This can be understood by the target language readers, but it is a manifestation of a cultural imagery mismatch, missing the ancient Chinese cultural characteristics.

In addition to this, geological terms also include names of geographical environments, for which translators use paraphrases, such as the translation of “瘴疠”: in ancient times, “瘴疠” referred to the poisonous gas produced by the evaporation of heat and humidity in the mountains and forests, and “瘴疠之区” referred to In the translation, the translator translates it as “район с болотной лихорадкой”, which conveys the meaning of a swampy, hot and humid place, which, although conveying the meaning of heat and humidity, is equally misunderstood. The same misunderstanding applies to the word.

### B. Cultural and Institutional Terms

The author of the Zhufanzhi not only introduces the geographical location of the country, but also includes descriptions of the rituals, penalties and cultural customs of the overseas countries. As shown in Table II, there are 107 cultural terms in the text, including 42-year numbers, 23 official names, 11 religious names, 9 institutional names, 8 festivals and 14 other cultural terms.

TABLE II: TRANSLATION METHODS FOR CULTURAL TERMS

Method	Transliteration	Transliteration + annotation	Literal translation	Liberal translation	Liberal translation + annotation
Cultural	56	16	15	7	13
Proportion	52%	15%	14%	6.5%	12%

For the terminology of cultural institutions, the same phonetic approach is used, supplemented by direct and paraphrased translations. The history of tributary exchanges involves a large number of year numbers, a name used by China’s feudal dynasties to chronicle the years, which, as the exclusive product of Chinese emperors during the 5,000-year Chinese empire, is an indelible achievement and a spiritual

cultural heritage in Chinese history. In translations, the year name is mostly rendered phonetically, for example, “唐武德年间”, which is rendered as “эпоха Тан в период Удэ (618–627)”, i.e. it indicates the transliteration of this text as “эпоха Тан в период Удэ (618–627)”, which indicates the dynasty in which it was written, and the phonetic translation of the year and the specific time, respects the culture of the source language and facilitates the understanding of the time of the country’s tribute to China by the target language readers.

The Zhufanzhi contains the names of some of the official positions, and translators have mostly used phonetic and paraphrase translations, for example:

(2) 官有司马杰、落佶连，共治国事，如中国宰相。（《阇婆国》）

Translation: Из чиновников правителя назовем «Сымацзе» и «Лоцзилян», которые совместно управляют страной подобно первому министру (цзайсян) в Среднем государстве.

The transliteration of the official names “司马杰” and “落佶连” retains their cultural characteristics. At the same time, in the following, the word “宰相” is translated as “первый министр (цзайсян)”, which in ancient China could be summarized as a generic term for the highest official who assisted the emperor and was in charge of state affairs. The translator has translated it as the meaning of the first minister, and at the same time marked its phonetic translation, so that the reader can clearly understand the meaning of the official position of “Chinese Chancellor”, while fully respecting Chinese culture and achieving the purpose of cultural exchange between Russia and China.

### C. The Terminology of Artifacts

The Zhufanzhi is not only an introduction to the countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road, it is also a book of objects. This involves the existence of a large number of terms for artifacts in the text, including 77 for ornaments and fabrics, 60 for minerals, 39 for utensils and 49 for medicinal herbs, making a total of 225, the specific translation methods of which are counted in Table III.

TABLE III: TRANSLATION METHODS FOR TERMS IN THE ARTEFACT CATEGORY

Method	Literal translation	Transliteration+ annotation	Liberal translation	Liberal translation + annotation
Artefact category	102	39	60	24
Proportion	46%	17%	26%	11%

Table III shows that since most of the terms in the category of objects can be found in their equivalents in the target language, translators mostly use liberal translation and liberal translation with annotations, accounting for 63% of the total, and in the translation of some terms they adopt a paraphrase approach, accounting for 37%. The most common terminology in the text is that of ornaments and fabrics, mainly introducing the fabrics produced in each country and the ornaments favoured by kings and their subjects, for example: ‘翠羽’, referring to the bright blue feathers on the back of the kingfisher, is related to the traditional Chinese craft of ‘点翠’, which was loved by the ancients. It was a favourite of the ancients. The translation translates it as

“перьев зимородков” because the object exists today.

There are also Chinese medicinal herbs in the Zhufanzhi, for which the translators have used phonetic translations, direct translations and notes of meaning, for example.

(3) 地出人參、石决明、松塔子、防风……(《新罗国》)

Translation: В этой земле производят: [корень] жэньшэнь, моллюски шицзюэмин («морские ушки»), сосновые шишки, траву фанфэн (корень сапожниковии растопыренной), ...

This example reflects the translator’s approach to Chinese herbal medicine in a more focused manner. In the example, “人參” is translated as “[корень] жэньшэнь”; “防风” translates as “трав (корень сапожниковии растопыренной)”, etc. The translators use phonetic and direct translation methods to translate them accurately while respecting the culture of the source language, so that the readers of the target language can accurately understand the imagery and convey the culture.

#### D. Biological Terms

In addition to the cultural and artefact terms summarized above, the book also contains a large number of biological terms, including flora and fauna, with 109 entries.

TABLE IV: TRANSLATION METHODS FOR BIOLOGICAL TERMS

Method	Transliteration	Transliteration + annotation	Literal translation
Biological	37	14	58
Proportion	34%	13%	53%

Based on the data in Table IV, it can be seen that since most of these plants and animals exist in real life, translators prefer the direct translation method, accounting for 53%, while some plants and animals with exotic features have no equivalent imagery in reality, so translators likewise adopt the phonetic translation with notes method, accounting for a total of 47%, e.g.:

(4) 常有大鹏飞, 蔽日移晷。有野骆驼, 大鹏遇则吞之。(《晏陀蛮国》)

Translation: [Там] обитает большая птица Пэн. Летит — заслоняет солнце; движется подобно тени солнечных часов.

In the translation, “大鹏” is originally the largest bird in Chinese mythology and legend, which is transformed from a kun, a cultural image with Chinese cultural characteristics, while the bird does not have an equivalent in Russian perception. “which retains the name “鹏” while emphasizing that it is characterized by its ‘large’ size, a combination of phonetic and direct translations that reasonably conveys The combination of phonetic and direct transliteration reasonably conveys its cultural identity. In the following, “骆驼” is directly translated as “верблюды”.

#### E. Other Terms

In addition to the above terms, the Zhufanzhi also includes a number of other types of terms, such as musical names and weights and measures, which are translated in different ways depending on the specific context. “丈” for “чжан”, “里” for “ли” and “斗” for “доу”. This is a phonetic translation of a unit of measurement rich in Chinese cultural characteristics, fully preserving its cultural colour; while the translation of

the unit of measurement “缗”, i.e., strings of coins, as “связок”, is more convenient for readers to the translation of the unit of measurement “coins”, i.e., strings of coins, as “связок” is easier to understand. In addition, the translator does not translate the word “程” as “чэн”, but rather as “переход”, and adds that it mainly means a journey, emphasizing the fact that it describes a distance. The translator has not rendered it as “чэн”, but as “переход”, adding that it means mainly a journey, emphasizing that it describes an “agenda”, fully preserving its cultural connotations.

### III. THE CHOICE OF PATHS FOR THE OUTREACH OF MARITIME CULTURAL TERMS IN THE ZHUFANZHI

Based on the previous analysis, considering the special characteristics of marine culture and the characteristics of texts and terms, the 5W communication model is used to analyse the communication subject, channel, content, object and effect of the outreach of marine culture terms in the new era, and to launch a study on the outreach path of marine culture, in order to improve the effectiveness and strength of the cultivation and communication of marine culture.

#### A. Highlighting the Subjectivity of Translators

Translation activities need to highlight the subjectivity of the subject of communication [4], then the primary task of communication is for the subject of communication to consider choosing the appropriate translation method and give explanations, such as why this translation method and imagery is used. Through appropriate annotated explanations, the social and cultural rationale behind the translator can be reflected, allowing the audience to understand the content of the communication more clearly and realize the correct and effective translation of the translated text. In the case of the translation of Zhufanzhi, for example, the foreign translator puts himself in the position of the audience, aligning his background, personality and views with those of the target audience, and includes sufficient explanations and explanations for the maritime cultural terms in the book.

#### B. Promoting Translation Standardization

In the context of China’s cultural outreach, the translation community needs to study the standardization and standardization of translations of maritime culture. Take the translation of marine culture terms in Zhufanzhi as an example, most of them are translated by direct translation method, phonetic translation with notes, etc. For example, in the translation, for different official titles in Chinese, such as “servant”, “minister”, “clerk”, etc., the term “чиновник” is used uniformly, which seems to be easy for readers to accept, may lead to readers interpreting them as the same cultural imagery and failing to recognize the differences between the functions of different official positions. The relevant research institutions should make strict quality control of translated materials and published books [5]. Standardization and standardization should be achieved in the translation of national names, official titles and local institutional names.

#### C. Insisting on Audience-Centredness

The translation process of maritime cultural terms is also a

process of cultural transmission, and there are many typical Chinese elements in maritime cultural terms, so the translation must take into account the cultural differences between the two countries [6]. In such a translation approach to cultural reception and exchange, it is important to stand in the shoes of the communication audience, to pay attention to reader care, to adopt the ‘translation with commentary’ method of translation for outreach, to avoid confusing readers and to act as a bridge between the two cultures. From the perspective of the audience, the translation of the text of Zhufanzhi, for example, which aims to convey information, should be simple and clear, with accurate information conveyed.

#### *D. Diversifying Communication Channels*

The value of this maritime text lies in its irreplaceability. The translation and dissemination of this text abroad has also witnessed the long-lasting trade between China and the countries along the maritime silk road, and has conveyed and preserved information about the ancient civilization of the maritime countries and Song Dynasty China [7]. In the era of new media, if foreign translators want to achieve good communication effects, they have to conform to the current situation and seize and use the new media as the mainstream contemporary communication method [8]. We should also open up diversified media channels, such as the establishment of a museum of maritime culture or a database and a special website, stored in the Internet, for readers to access and understand on their own. Foreign translators can also be established to work with Chinese and foreign publishers to promote Chinese maritime culture.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

By building a bilingual corpus and extracting and comparing the maritime cultural terms in the Russian and Chinese translations of Zhufanzhi, it can be seen that the translators have used a variety of methods to translate the maritime cultural terms, more often using phonetic translations, direct translations and the addition of notes.

In the context of the current “One Belt, One Road” initiative, the organic combination of marine texts and linguistics, through the study of translation methods and dissemination paths of terms, is conducive to promoting the international dissemination of Chinese marine culture, and the successful dissemination of Chinese marine culture will help to enhance China’s soft power, influence and China’s voice in the international arena. discourse, and has a revealing effect on the construction of a sound and systematic system for the dissemination of Chinese maritime culture.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Hanwen Zhang conducted the research, analyzed the data and wrote the paper. Yiling Cao assisted in data collection and analysis in the corpus. Xiaomei Ding revised the paper. All authors had approved the final version.

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