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# Survey and Research on English Translation of Names and Introductory Texts of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Xi'an

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**Abstract:** This research takes the intangible cultural heritage(ICH) of Xi'an as object. According to ICH concept, field, literature research are adopted to classify and sort out Xi'an ICH translation. This paper analyzes ICH development status, summarize problems of ICH publicity, discusses translation principles and methods of ICH names and introduction text in Xi'an, which has a certain reference value for ICH protection work in the future.

**Keywords:** Intangible cultural heritage; Translation principles; Protection work

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## 1. Study Purpose

Xi'an is an important gathering place for intangible cultural heritage(ICH). The ICH translation can bring excellent traditions to the world and promote the development of cultural diversity. <sup>[1]</sup>

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1 Field research

Visiting ICH exhibition and Yongxingfang to learn about the inheritance and propagation of ICH.

### 2.2 Literature research

Search for ICH literature on websites, check the books and collate the parallel texts. Collect ICH translations from media.

## 3. Research process

### 3.1 Data collection

Collect translation through exhibition, media. The collected ICH names translation are classified according to China's standards for the protection of ICH(national, provincial, municipal, and county), followed by grades.

### 3.2 Strategic Research

The ICH names are mostly project phrases and translated in cultural context. The ICH introductory texts use four-word phrases and colloquialisms. Analyse the cultural context and synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge to ensure that translated text presents style and cultural characteristics of source language to a great extent and maximize publicity effect.

## 4. Research results analysis

### 4.1 Inconsistencies in ICH names translation

Some ICH names with cultural characteristics are inconsistently translated on publicity window. Multiple ICH names translations make readers unsure whether the translated counterparts are the same thing or not. The Huffington think that the burger's predecessor was “肉夹馍”, as follows:

The roujiamo originated in Shaanxi province, is now eaten all over the country. It's typically prepared and eaten on the street.

肉夹馍的发源地位于陕西省，如今全世界都可以吃到。它是极具代表性的街头小吃之一。The pinyin spelling can be used when translating food originated in the country. Translation of “肉夹馍”in Yongxingfang is “Tongguan Chinese burger”. Media translate “肉夹馍”as “meat burger” and “meat sandwich”. In “City One on One”, “秦腔”is translated as “Shaanxi opera”, borrowing “Beijing Opera” translation, which is translated as “Qinqiang Opera” by China Culture Network. Some websites use phonetic translation to translate “秦腔”as “Qingqiang”.

## 4.2 Incomplete information in ICH names and introductory texts translation

The ICH translation is on a small scale and lack a unified standard. "China Xi'an" has only a simple introduction to ICH, but translation quality needs to be improved. Terminology translation is inconsistent with official one. At present, ICH English materials are translated by companies and proofread by experts, and there are still problems such as mistranslation and translation omission. "坐乐" is a traditional music circulating in Xi'an. However, the translation of "坐乐" is poorly readable. In ICH in China, "坐乐" is translated as follows:

坐乐有严格固定的曲式结构，全曲由头（又称为帽）、正身、尾（又称为靴）三部分组成，民间艺人称呼这种结构形式为“穿靴戴帽”。

It has strict and fixed musical structure, with whole melody consisting of head (also called cap), body and tail (also called shoe). This musical structure is called "stereotype" by the folk performers.

“穿靴戴帽” is translated as "stereotype". It refers to applying routine and empty political teachings in speech or writing. The meaning of "stereotype" is "陈规；老套；铅版". The lack of supplement makes it difficult for readers to understand.

## 4.3 Excessive literal and phonetic translation of ICH names

On food window of "袁家村", "蘸水面" are translated as "dip surface", and founder doesn't understand production process of this noodles, blindly translating literally, misleading consumers. If ICH names carrying local characteristics are translated phonetically by literal meaning without conveying information implied in the original text, it's easy to result in information mismatch.

## 5. Characteristics ICH Translation in Xi'an

### 5.1 Characteristics of ICH Names

Xi'an's ICH names has following characteristics: First, combining genus and place name, such as "西安鼓乐", "长安泥塑". Secondly, the characteristic words that highlight Chinese culture or local characteristics, such as "鱼化泥叫叫", "锦灰堆".

### 5.2 Characteristics of ICH Texts

Xi'an's ICH is characterized by its regional and living nature. ICH texts contain words with cultural characteristics. "锦" in "锦灰堆" means beautiful and prosperous, and "灰" means dilapidated and ashes, which shows our ancestors' concern for grassroots' life. Liveliness is a feature that distinguishes ICH from other culture. It's difficult to determine the content of text when translating words "长安道情" and "花莽饴络".

## 6. Principles for ICH names and introductory texts translation

ICH is a living gem of city, and ICH inheritance can give insight into living folk history and feel the spirit of city's folk life over the centuries. Translators should follow correct translation principles, taking into account the characteristics of ICH names and introductory texts.

### 6.1 Objectivity and logic of language

ICH texts are "informational texts", emphasizing the importance of content and objective language according to Reiss's text classification. A good translation is "plain and simple, and some techniques can be used to make translation clearer". Attention should be paid to readers' comprehension and reaction, ensure format, language and other aspects are consistent with target language to greatest extent.

### 6.2 Simplicity

The ICH translation is an applied translation. The regional culture and Chinese language is origin of its information, and English and other languages are its information medium, aiming at letting readers know the latest development of ICH. [2] Translations using the annotation will reduce the readability of the text because the content is too detailed. Translators shouldn't rely too much on annotations, and the purpose of communication can be achieved by conveying the information of the original text in simple expression.

### 6.3 Effectiveness first

The purpose of ICH translation is to bring culture to the world and let all mankind appreciate the charm of culture and protect the spiritual wealth of mankind. American researchers regard communication effects as key area. The 5W model proposed by Lasswell emphasizes five key elements of the communication process. In fact the study revolves around the communication effect-the most crucial element, and other four elements have a certain influence on the communication effect, which are interrelated and constrained each other. [3]

## 7. Methods of translating ICH names and texts and translators requirements

### 7.1 Translation Method

#### 7.1.1 Phonetic annotations

Phonetic is used when there is no corresponding expression in translated text, especially translating proper nouns-the names of places, traditional ICH items. [4] For names of historical and cultural monuments translation, in addition to those that satisfy the norms and appear in

dictionary, as well as those that have corresponding expressions with translated language culture, other names of places, people or those that don't have a counterpart in translated language can be translated by phonetic annotation. Besides the forms of folk dwellings, traditional hand-icrafts also use phonetic annotations. “龙泉青瓷” and “南京云锦” have been used throughout the lives of generations, highlighting diligence and bravery of craftsmen. However, connotations associated with these skills aren't perceived by foreign readers, nor can they find a substitute for these skills in Western. Therefore, phonetic annotations can ensure the translation quality.

### 7.1.2 Annotation of literal translations

Literal translation can keep the original ideas, retain its formal characteristics and exotic flavour, and balance the form and content.<sup>[5]</sup> But translator will be exposed to cultural differences between source and target language, lack of cultural concepts, etc., so it's necessary to use literal translation with annotation.<sup>[6]</sup> “坐乐” is translated as “sitting music, a refined performance style typically conducted within a hall. In the text of “安塞腰鼓”, the literal translation with annotation is also used, translating “安塞腰鼓” as: waist drum, a musical instrument worn around the waist and popular in the world.

### 7.1.3 Phonetic plus transliteration

Geographical and personal names are linguistic symbols that convey information, but it's difficult to find cultural connotations. Some cultural concepts may not be accessible to foreign readers as meaningful information if they are translated in pinyin. It's necessary to attach an transliteration to convey information. Peking Opera is described in ICH in China as follows:

Original: 京剧把生活中各种角色概括为生、旦、净、丑、末几种特定的形象，观众可直接从演员的外形为他们的作艺术的定位。

Translation: In Beijing opera, roles are divided into five different groups: sheng (the male role), dan (the female role), jing (the painted-face), mo (the role of middle-aged man), and chou (the comic role), all of which can be easily recognized from their make-up and appearances.

## 7.2 Translator requirements

A good translation concerns the future of China, which provides a possibility for cultural exchange and mutual civilizations appreciation. Only a good translation can serve as bridge for cultural exchange, requiring translator to have a high cultural literacy and strong sense of responsibility. Translators should investigate the cultural origins and development trends of ICH with a spirit of inquisitiveness, verify the information in a prudent manner, and act as a civilization disseminator.

## 8. Summary

Xi'an has a rich ICH, half of China's history is in Xi'an. How to live heritage, adaptive use is scholars' focus to study the mechanism of ICH inheritance.<sup>[7]</sup> The problems of ICH translation mainly stem from the fact that translators don't fully consider target language readers' habits, information needs and differences between Chinese and Western traditions. Therefore, it's necessary to focus on target readers' understanding that they can appreciate Chinese profound heritage.

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