

Translating Western Medical References in Detective Stories in China: A Case Study of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1916)

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Abstract

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work was regularly translated into Chinese despite the complexity of the medical terminology that permeates his work. This article considers how references in the Sherlock Holmes stories were rendered in translations published in 1916, thereby bridging the gap between Western and Chinese medical traditions. In particular, it considers how Western medical diagnoses and procedures were grafted onto existing concepts in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) through analysis of the translation methods used. It reflects on the need to make such medical references accessible to non-specialist readers in order to not impede their reading experience. By comparing early and later translations, the article assesses the extent to which Western medicine (WM) permeates Chinese culture at different points in twentieth century history.

Keywords

medical references, Sherlock Holmes, Western medicine,
traditional Chinese medicine, translation

摘要

儘管柯南·道爾的作品中滲透著複雜的醫學術語，其著作在二十世紀之間被續譯介至中文世界中。本文通過考察1916年中華書局出版的《福爾摩斯偵探案全集》譯本中醫學指涉的轉化方式，揭示這些翻譯如何成為中西醫學傳統的溝通橋梁。研究特別聚焦於譯者如何通過翻譯策略，將西方醫學診斷與治療手段，嫁接到傳統中醫的既有概念之中。文章深入探討了譯本在保持文學可讀性與傳遞專業醫學知識之間的平衡：為避免影響普通讀者的閱讀體驗，譯者需對專業內容進行通俗化處理。通過對比早期與後期譯本，本研究評估了西方醫學在二十世紀不同歷史節點對中國文化產生的滲透程度，勾勒出跨文化醫學知識遷移的歷時性圖景。

關鍵詞

醫學內容、福爾摩斯、西方醫學、傳統中醫、翻譯

1. Introduction

In the early years of the twentieth century, translation was a significant cultural practice in China, ushering in new ideas and shaping intellectual traditions. In the literary field, more translations were produced than original creative writing in Chinese (A Ying 1980, 1). In “A Statistical Survey of Translated Fiction, 1840–1920,” Teruo Tarumoto (1998) argues that translated fiction significantly outnumbered original Chinese fiction during this period, highlighting the substantial influence of Western literature on modern Chinese literary creation. The most popular genre was detective fiction, which accounted for around a third of the 1,100 novels published during the late Qing dynasty, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was chief among the authors favored by readers, translators, and publishers (Chen 1989, 99). The first Chinese translation of the four novels of his Sherlock Holmes series appeared in 1896 in the periodical *Shiwu bao* 時務報 (Current Affairs). Other Sherlock Holmes stories were then translated until the complete collection of his detective works was published in Shanghai by the Chung Hwa Book Company 中華書局 in 1916. Indeed, Conan Doyle was the only Western writer, at the start of the twentieth century, whose major writings were entirely