



TANG POETRY ON HUBEI: PROBLEMS AND COUNTERMEASURES

Zhou Mingjing,

Ma Yanⁱ

School of Foreign Studies,
Yangtze University,
Hubei Province, 434023,
P. R. China

Abstract:

As the culmination of Chinese culture, Tang poetry is both the cultural cornerstone of the Chinese nation and the pearl of the world's cultural heritage. With its unique scenery, folklore, history and culture, Hubei provided rich writing materials and creative inspiration for poets in the Tang Dynasty, who wrote a large number of poems on Hubei. With Tang poetry as its research object, this paper tries to find out the problems in the previous studies of Tang poetry on Hubei and to explore the solutions. This study can contribute to promoting the transmission of Hubei regional culture to the West, and projecting Hubei multi-cultural images on the international stage.

Keywords: Tang poetry on Hubei; regional culture; problems; countermeasures

1. Introduction

With a long history and profound culture, Hubei is not only the cradle of Chu culture, but also a place of poetry and a brilliant pearl in China's cultural treasure house. Hubei in the Tang Dynasty once attracted many famous scholars and poets to linger about, who left a large number of immortal poems on Hubei to the world. Statistics show that the number of poems on Hubei included in the *Complete Poetry of the Tang* is more than 2000, which is comparable to that of poems on the capital city of Chang'an (Wang Huibin, 1985). Described in these poems are the spectacular natural sites and unique regional culture of Hubei in the Tang Dynasty which provide an important basis for future generations to study Hubei in the Tang Dynasty in terms of politics, economy, culture, history, scenery, etc.

Tang poems on Hubei are about the geography, scenic spots, customs, myths, legends, culture, and history of Hubei. They are valuable materials about Hubei in the Tang Dynasty and worthy of people's constant attention. At present, although there are

ⁱ Correspondence: email 630110270@qq.com

many studies on Hubei, most of them mainly focus on the economy, archaeology, history, tourism, Chu culture and the culture of the Three Kingdoms; only a few studies and achievements about Tang poetry on Hubei can be found (Zhang Lizi, 2018). In the context of “*Chinese culture going global*”, it is strategically necessary and significant to make an in-depth exploration in Hubei Tang poetry to promote Hubei regional culture and Chinese poetry culture going into the English world.

2. Tang Poets Writing about Hubei

During the Zhenguan period of the Tang Dynasty, the whole country was divided into 10 Dao, which then developed into 15 in the Kaiyuan period. Hubei in the Tang Dynasty covered four of them, including Shannan East Dao, Huainan Dao, Jiangnan West Dao, and Qianzhong Dao. Hubei in the Tang Dynasty, by virtue of its developed agriculture, convenient land and water transportation, prosperous trade and economy, increased population. In the Tang Dynasty, Hubei was once a place for a large number of local and non-local poets, and the most representative local poets include Du Shenyang, Zhang Jianzhi, Du Wei, Du Yijian, Meng Haoran, Meng Jian, Zhang Zirong, Xi Yu, Cen Shen, Zhang Ji, Zhu Fang, Bao Fang, Liu Hun, Liu Zhi, Rong Yu, Zhu Pu, Pi Rixiu, and Qi Wuqian. Du Fu is a great realistic poet in the Tang Dynasty and Du Shenyang, his grandfather, was the founder of Chinese five-character verse; Meng Haoran integrated into his poetry “*the scenery he met without deliberately using the unique and novel language*”. Known as “*Pi and Lu*”, Pi Rixiu has poems as famous as Lu Guimeng. Cen Shen, who got his fame for his frontier fortress poems, together with Gao Shi, are called “*Gao and Cen*”. His landscape poems are mostly characterized by being fresh and grotesque. As poetry friends, Bao Fang and Xie Liangfu are called “*Bao and Xie*”.

Meanwhile, there are also many poets coming in from outside of Hubei in the Tang Dynasty. Some are demoted officials such as Zhang Shuo, Liu Zongyuan, Wang Changling, Zhang Jiuling, Yuan Zhen, Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, and Liu Yuxi. Some are poets traveling around here, including Li Bai and Meng Jiao. They have visited most of Hubei, creating hundreds and thousands of poems relating to Hubei, with topics ranging from the natural scenery, cultural landscapes, local customs, history, farewell, and so on.

3. Hubei Poetry in the Tang Dynasty

The contents of Tang poems on Hubei can be generally categorized into the following four types: (1) poems about Hubei scenic spots. The people of Tang Dynasty are fond of traveling. The beautiful mountains and rivers and scenic spots in Hubei often stroke a chord in the hearts of the Tang poets, thus stimulating their creative inspiration and desire. From the vivid description of the mountains and waters in the “*Songs of Chu*” to the well-known rivers-and-mountains poetry of the Tang Dynasty, the mountains and waters of Hubei have always occupied an important position. The aesthetic tradition in the culture of Chu Ci has promoted the completion of the aesthetic construction of the ancient Chinese landscape literature (Zeng Yuxiao, 2015). In his poem— “*The Chu*

mountains stretch out above the ground; the Han river flows far to the horizon”, Du Shenyan depicted the magnificent momentum of Chu mountain and Han River. The famous lines by Zhang Jiuling—“The Yangtze River surges; the sky and earth merges”—shows the grand scene of the Yangtze River rolling eastward. Li Bai expressed his praise for the beauty and richness of ancient Suizhou in the lines of “Suizhou was long ago called Handong, beautiful and rich; Hidden in the river was the pearl, like the moon bright and shining”. (2) poems about folk customs. The culture of Jing and Chu gave birth to a rich folk culture. In Tang poetry, there is no lack of description of the charm of Chu culture, such as tug-of-war, boat race, Jiao Zong, Wicca, sacrifice activities, Chu songs and Chu dance, which show the unique regional culture of Hubei in the Tang Dynasty. (3) poems recalling the past and the historical sages. There are many historic sites where many Tang poets mediated the past and the present, and paid tribute to the sages. They showed their regret for the destruction of Chu Kingdom, their sympathy for the suffering of the ordinary people, and commemorated their ancestors and expressed their personal aspirations. (4) poems lamenting personal fate. There are many poets demoted to Jingzhou in the Tang Dynasty, which contributes to the prosperity of poetry on Hubei. The demoted poets often have the sad life experience of being exiled, which is an indispensable part in their poems. The tone of this kind of poems is full of melancholy, sadness, disconsolation and nostalgia for hometown because of relegation. In his “Random Thoughts” poems, Zhang Jiuling used “orchid leaves and beauties” to express his pain of relegation through rhetoric devices such as “Bi” and “Xing”. (5) Farewell poems. There are also many farewell poems relating to Hubei, in which the poets, by describing scenery, expressed their sadness for parting and concern for their relatives and friends, such as Li Bai’s “Farewell to Judge Zheng” and Qi Ji’s “Seeing off a Friend in Autumn at Jingmen”.

4. Research Review of Tang Poetry on Hubei

4.1 Research Status of Tang Poetry on Hubei

Currently, the domestic research of Tang poetry on Hubei, in general, is still insufficient and unsystematic. The earliest relevant compilation began with *Chu Tian Yin: Ode to Hubei by Poets of the Previous Dynasties* (Yan Dong, 1980), followed by *Selected Poems of the Yellow Crane Tower* (Zeng Zhaowen, Tu Daohuan, 1985), *Ode to Hubei by Poets of the Tang Dynasty* (Wang Huibin, 1987), *Selected Poems of Hubei in Previous Dynasties* (He Yaxian, 2006), *Research on Jingchu Local Poems and Exile Poems in Tang Dynasty* (Zhou Jianjun, 2006), *Celebrities of Previous Dynasties Chanting Hubei* (Liu Baochang, 2012), etc.

In addition, there are also poetry collections on cities of Hubei, such as *Ode to Jingzhou by Poets of the Dynasties* (1982), *Ode to Shizhou by Poets of All Dynasties* (Zhang Xingwen, Mou Lianjiu, 2001), *Three Hundred New Tang Poems: Ode to Xiangyang by Tang Poets* (Chang Xu, 2009), and *Ode to Jingmen by Poets of the Dynasties* (Li Baiwu, 2010).

In recent years, studies of Tang poems on Hubei are also being carried out from the perspective of literary geography. The relevant monographs include *Research On Local Poetry and Exile Poetry of Jingchu in Tang Dynasty* (Zhou Jianjun, 2006). There are also such relevant papers and articles as “Tang Dynasty’s Custom of Believing in Witches and Ghosts,

Practicing Sacrifice in Yangtze River Area" (Liu Litang, 2001), *"A Study of Jingchu Culture and Literature of the Tang Dynasty"* (Zeng Yuxia, 2015), and *"A Description of the Literary Creation of Jingchu Local Scholars in Tang Dynasty"* (Zeng Yuxia, 2015), *Regional Culture and Tang Poems* (Dai Weihua, 2006).

There are also special studies on poets and their poems on Hubei, including *"On the Regional Cultural Characteristics of Jingchu in Yuan Zhen's Jiangling Poems"* (Zhou Jianjun, Wang Dan, 2006), *"Relationship Between Jingchu Culture and Grotesquely Styled Poetry by Han Yu"* (Li Wei, 2006), *"The Characteristics of Chu Culture in Qi Ji's Poetry"* (Yan Chunhua, 2006), *"Liu Zongyuan and Jingchu Culture"*, and *Zhang Jiuling and His Poems* (Zeng Yuxia, 2013).

As far as poetry translation is concerned, the English versions of Tang poetry on Hubei are scattered in anthologies or compilations of the English translation of Chinese poetry. From 1980 to 2017, about 40 English translation works of Chinese poetry have been published successively, such as Xu Yuanchong (1984, 2000), Liu Junping (2002), and Liu Guoshan et al. (2009). Besides those Chinese translators, there are also western translators who have made joint efforts with Chinese translators in poetry translation, such as Tony Barnstone and Chou Ping, Zhang Tingchen and Bruce Wilson. Relevant systematic monographs include David Hinton's translation of *Meng Haoran's Landscape Poetry* (Hinton, 2004), but on the whole, special research in this area is still very scarce and unfruitful. At the same time, poetry translation standards are not unified, and the quality of translated poetry is unsatisfactory, which needs to be further improved.

4.2 Problems of the Present Research on Tang Poetry on Hubei

A. Immaturity and scarcity in relevant research

As far as the current research on Hubei culture is concerned, the research on Jingchu culture, Qu Yuan culture and the culture of the Three Kingdoms are large in scale, with fruitful results in diverse forms such as monographs, translations, papers, research reports, and series of cultural tourism products; the research content is extensive, involving archaeology, religion, tourism, art, folklore, history, literature, philosophy, translation, communication and other aspects. The research perspective has also developed from a single discipline to interdisciplinary research, and the research system is relatively mature. However, the research on Hubei poetry in the Tang Dynasty has achieved very limited results in terms of literature collation, text analysis, translation research, interdisciplinary research, and so on, thus in lack of a complete research system. Under the strategic background of *"Chinese culture going global"*, the study of Tang poetry on Hubei can promote the regional culture and poetry culture of Hubei in the Tang Dynasty to the world.

B. Imbalance in the selection of poems

The translator's selection of poems to be translated into English is often determined by his selection mechanism to the original text, the popularity of the poem, the poet's influence and other factors. Some well-known poets and their masterpieces have been translated many times by different translators, and usually have different translations,

for example, Li Bai, Du Fu, Meng Haoran, Zhang Jiuling, Yan Zhen as well as some other outstanding poets are favored most by translators, and their poetry enjoys more diverse translation versions. As for the themes, poems about the Yellow Crane Tower, the Yangtze River and the Three Gorges are what translators mostly tend to choose, such as “the Yellow Crane Tower”, “Sending Meng Haoran to Guangling”, “Looking at Tianmen Mountain”, and “Sending to the North in the Night Rain”. Among the poems on Hubei, still many excellent ones have no English translations. The imbalance in poetry selection will fail to highlight the regional characteristics of Hubei in Tang poems, which is not conducive to the spread of Hubei regional culture and customs in the Tang Dynasty to different cultures.

C. Difficulty in spreading Tang poetry on Hubei to the west

Intercultural communication is the bridge connecting the world. The ideal world cultural exchange should be a two-way interaction between input and output (Wang Hong, 2012). Translation activities are a way to promote and spread culture to the world. Promoting the international dissemination of Tang poetry on Hubei through translation is not only a way to make the world know the regional culture of Hubei and Chinese poetry, but also a method to publicize Chinese culture and prosper world culture. However, in terms of the current situation of transmitting Tang poetry on Hubei, there are still some problems, such as insufficient government investment, insufficient publicity, single way of publicity, and lack of translation talents, which need to be solved urgently.

5. Countermeasures for the External Dissemination of Tang Poetry on Hubei

5.1 Constructing the Chinese-English Parallel Corpus of Tang Poems on Hubei

Corpus is a large database that applies computer technology to process and store massive natural language materials for automatic retrieval, indexing and statistical analysis (Li Wenzhong, 1999). With the help of computer data-processing technology, a Chinese-English Parallel Corpus of Tang Poems on Hubei (CEPCTPHB) will be constructed, which includes landscape poems, historic sites poems, local customs poems, nostalgic poems, and farewell poems. All the poems will be selected from the *Whole Tang Poems* and *300 Tang Poems*, network resources as well as various Tang poetry translations published at home and abroad. Meanwhile, professional poetry translators need to be organized to translate untranslated poems into English. The corpus after completion is open and dynamic, which can be deeply processed and can also be expanded to a multilingual parallel corpus in the future. The corpus can be linked online with the official website of Hubei provincial government to provide online parallel queries for people. As an important window for the introduction of Hubei culture, this corpus can share information with local research institutions in Hubei, providing a digital platform for the English translation of Hubei poetry. Through the corpus, we can realize the multi-dimensional discussion of poetry translation research, and provide technical support and guarantee for the translation research of Tang poetry on Hubei in the aspects of data collection and collation, vocabulary research, translation research, rhetoric research,

cultural allusions research, etc. It is, as a result, of great practical significance to promote the research of Tang poetry.

5.2 Carrying out Academic Research on Tang Poems

A. Setting up a high-level team for translating Tang poetry

It is difficult and heavy work to collate and translate Tang poems on Hubei. At present, the number of professional talents in poetry translation is insufficient; therefore, it is necessary to attract translation talents, sinologists and experts on poetry at home and abroad to study the Tang poets and their works, and explore the methods and principles for poetry translation, making a series of academic achievements such as books, papers and articles, which can be used for reference by colleges and universities, scientific research institutions, and English lovers.

B. Strengthening international academic exchanges

In order to establish the international status of Tang poetry and prompt the acceptability of Chinese poetry, it is necessary for the authorities to hold poetry seminars or conferences as platforms for international academic communication on poetry studies. Meanwhile, experts and scholars should be encouraged to participate in international cooperation in poetry translation to increase the influence of Tang poetry on Hubei at home and abroad.

C. Improving international cultural cooperation and exchanges

International exchange and cooperation play a vitally important role in promoting culture, encouraging the internationalization of Hubei's regional culture in Tang poetry as well as the communication and development of all cultures. Together with Hubei's Qu Yuan culture, the Three Kingdoms culture, the Three Gorges culture, and the Yangtze River culture, Tang poetry culture of Hubei will be built into one of the featured cultures of Hubei, creating a diversified cultural publicity model of Hubei.

It is also a necessity to have constant communication and cooperation with the overseas sister cities of Hubei to publicize Hubei poetry culture and regional culture, and promote cultural prosperity in a mutual way as well. In this respect, some activities can be carried out such as "*Overseas Tour Exhibition of Hubei Culture*", which aims to start overseas communication, promote the cultural interaction of Hubei poetry culture in different regions of the world, and better serve the national strategy of "*Chinese culture going global*".

D. Expanding the cultural influence of Chinese poetry

Just as culture is the root of a nation, so is Tang poetry the gem of the Chinese excellent traditional culture. In the development of Chinese civilization, Tang poetry has always been the spiritual support for Chinese people, enriching their souls and comforting their hearts. As a symbol of Chinese culture, Tang poetry is also playing a role in forming a nation's cultural identity. The ways to expand the cultural influence of Tang poetry include: 1) Promoting learning through competition. It is necessary to hold a series of

international Chinese poetry competitions, including Chinese poetry translation competitions, Chinese and English poetry recitation and singing competition, and competitions of poetry calligraphy and painting, photography, so as to improve the cultural influence of Hubei poetry, and realize the goal of promoting learning through competition. 2) Promoting learning through research. It is advocated to carry out Hubei Bilingual Summer Poetry Camp where foreign teachers, and overseas students from colleges and universities both inside and outside Hubei are invited to participate in to strengthen international cultural exchanges and promote mutual learning among civilizations. 3) Introducing poems to school. Compiling a textbook *Poetry on Hubei in the Tang Dynasty* (English-Chinese Bilingual) into the localized textbook catalogue of universities, middle schools and primary schools. It's also necessary to set up elective courses on Tang poetry in Confucius Institutes abroad, or among foreign students in Chinese universities to speed up the dissemination and promotion of Chinese Tang poetry culture. 4) Media interaction. With the help of modern internet technology, Tang poetry on Hubei can be used to interact with readers at home and abroad in the bilingual form of words, sounds, pictures and video transmitted through diverse social media, websites, apps and other convenient platforms. In this way, the publicity of Hubei poetry culture in the west can be achieved, and the influence of Hubei regional culture on the world will be underway.

6. Conclusion

Tang poetry is the greatest glory of classical Chinese poetry and the pearl of world cultural heritage. Tang poetry on Hubei in its poetic language describes the humanities, history, relics, scenic spots, allusions, and customs of Hubei in the Tang dynasty, which provides important reference value and significance for future generations. Under the national strategy of "*Chinese culture going global*", the study of Hubei poetry in the Tang Dynasty is definitely an important part of classic Chinese culture and local culture going global, improving the international image of Hubei and enriching the diversified construction of Hubei culture and image.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding Statement

This work was supported by Hubei Provincial Institutions of Higher Education Philosophy and Social Sciences Research under Grant [21Y057].

About the Authors

Zhou Mingjing is a postgraduate of QZ211 in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, P. R. of China.

Ma Yan (corresponding author) is an Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, P. R. of China. Her research interests include translation studies and language teaching.

References

- Chang, X. (2010). *Three Hundred New Tang Poems: Odes to Xiangyang by Tang Poets*. Beijing: China Literature and History Press.
- Dai, W. H. (2006). *Regional Culture and Tang Poems*. Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Company.
- He, Y. X. et al. (2006). *Selected Poems of the Previous Dynasties on Hubei*. Wuhan: Wuhan Publishing House
- Hinton, D. (2004). *The Mountain Poems of Meng Hao-jan*. New York: Archipelago Books.
- Li, B. W. (2010). *Odes to Jingmen by Poets of Previous Dynasties*. Beijing: China Three Gorges Publishing House.
- Li, W. (2006). The Relationship Between Jingchu Culture and the Grotesquely Styled Poems by Han Yu. *Journal of Xianyang Normal University*, Vol.(21), No.1:83-85.
- Liu, B. C. (2012). *Ode to Hubei by Celebrities of Previous Dynasties*. Wuhan: Hubei People's Publishing House.
- Liu, G. S. (2009). *Appreciation of the English Translation of Ancient Poems and Songs*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Liu, J. P. (2002). *New Translations of 100 Tang Poetry in English Rhyme*. Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Company.
- Liu, L. T. (2001). Tang Dynasty's Custom of Believing in Witches and Ghosts, Practicing Sacrifice in Yangtze River Area. *Wuhan University Journal (Humanity Sciences)*, Vol. (54), No. 5: 566-573.
- Li, W. Z. (1999). Corpora, Learners' Corpora and Foreign Language Teaching. *Foreign Language World*, No.1: 51-55+63.
- Publicity Ministry of Jingzhou Municipal Committee of CPC. (1982). *Odes to Jingzhou by Poets of Previous Dynasties*. Jingzhou: Publicity Ministry of Jingzhou Municipal Committee of CPC.
- Wang, B. H. (1987). *Ode to Hubei by Poets of the Tang Dynasty*. Wuhan: Hubei People's Publishing House.
- Wang, H. (2012). English Translation of Chinese Classics: Achievements, Problems and Solutions. *Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice*, No. 3: 9-14.
- Xu, Y. C. (2000). *300 Tang Poems*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- Xu, Y. C. (2004). *300 Gems of Classical Chinese Poetry*. Beijing: Beijing University Press.
- Yan, C. H. (2006). Characteristics of Chu Culture in Qi Ji's Poems. *Masterpieces Review*, No. 20: 4-6.
- Yan, D. (1980). *Chu Tian Yin: Ode to Hubei by Poets of the Previous Dynasties*. Wuhan: Hubei People's Publishing House.
- Zeng, Y. X. (2013). Liu Zongyuan and Jingchu Culture. *Journal of Hubei Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science)*, Vol.(33), No.6:11-16.

- Zeng, Y. X. (2015). *Jingchu Culture and Literature of Tang Dynasty*. Xi'an: Shaanxi Normal University.
- Zeng, Y. X. (2015). On the Literal Creation of Jingchu Native Literati in Tang Dynasty. *Literature and Criticism*. No. 12: 76-80.
- Zeng, Z. W. & Tu, D. H. (1985). *Selected Poems of Yellow Crane Tower: Ode to Hubei by Poets of the Previous Dynasties*. Wuhan: Hubei People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, L. Z. (2018). *The Research of Jingzhou Poems in Tang Dynasty*. Hanzhong: Shaanxi University of Technology.
- Zhang, X. W. & Mou, L. J. (2001). *Odes to Shizhou by Poets of Previous Dynasties*. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House.
- Zhou, J. J. (2006). *On Local Poetry and Exile Poetry of Jingchu in Tang Dynasty*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Zhou, J. J. & Wang, D. (2006). Cultural Characteristics of Jingchu Region in Yuan Zhen's Poems. *Journal of the Central University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, Vol. (33), 3: 117-123.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Literary Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).