

ORIGINAL

Negotiating cultural salience: a Bourdieusian-Adaptation analysis of state-sponsored ethnic minority poem Zhao Shutun translation

Negociando la prominencia cultural: un análisis de la adaptación bourdieusiana del poema de la minoría étnica patrocinada por el estado Zhao Shutun translation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the negotiation of cultural salience in China's state-sponsored translation of the Dai ethnic poem *Zhao Shutun* through a Bourdieusian-Adaptation framework. Post-2000, China's translation policies shifted from a state- undifferentiated patronage to a state-differentiated model, institutionalizing ethnic texts like *Zhao Shutun* as instruments of cultural diplomacy. By synthesizing Bourdieu's field theory—analyzing field constraints, capital conversion and institutional habitus—with Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, the analysis uncovers how cultural salience is negotiated across four dimensions: (1) Contextual Adaptation: Field-specific salience dictates strategies through a tripartite filter—policy-driven prioritization, cultural valuation, and global readability adjustments; (2) Structural Adaptation: Linguistic and paratextual strategies systematically convert Dai cultural capital into symbolic capital; (3) Dynamic Adaptation: Institutional habitus governs translators' real-time decisions, balancing phonetic fidelity with semantic domestication; (4) Salience Hierarchization: Translators habitually amplify high-salience rituals, negotiate moderate-salience symbols and erase low-salience terms. The findings reveal translation as a contested field where cultural authenticity is both valorized and systematically adapted to align with state-endorsed narratives of "multicultural unity." Theoretically, this study bridges sociological and pragmatic approaches, challenging Eurocentric World Literature paradigms by centering marginalized Chinese minority voices. Empirically, it demonstrates how authoritarian actors leverage institutionalized translation mechanisms to transform cultural diversity into soft power currency, proposing a multidimensional analytical model for state-mediated literary exchanges.

Keywords: Cultural Salience Negotiation; Bourdieusian-Adaptation Analysis; State-Sponsored Translation; Symbolic Capital; Ethnic Minority Literature.

RESUMEN

Después del año 2000, las políticas de traducción de China pasaron de un patrocinio estatal indiferenciado a un modelo diferenciado por el estado, institucionalizando textos étnicos como Zhao Shutun como instrumentos de diplomacia cultural. Mediante la síntesis de la teoría del campo de Bourdieu — analizando las restricciones del campo, la conversión de capital y el hábitat institucional — con la teoría de adaptación de Verschueren, el análisis descubre cómo se negocia la relevancia cultural a través de cuatro dimensiones: (1) adaptación Contextual: la relevancia específica del campo dicta estrategias a través de un filtro triparti, prioride políticas, valoración cultural y ajustes de legibilidad global; (2) adaptación estructural: las estrategias lingüísticas y culturales convierten sistemáticamente el capital cultural en capital simbólico; (3) adaptación dinámica: el habitus institucional gobierna las decisiones en tiempo real de los traductores, equilibra la fidelidad fonética

con la domesticsemántica; (4) jerarquide sali: los traductores habitualmente amplifican rituales de alta saliencia, negocisímbolos de moderada saliencia y borbortérminos de baja saliencia. Los resultados revelan que la traducción es un campo en disputa en el que la autenticidad cultural se valora y se adapta sistemáticamente para alinearse con las narrativas de “unidad multicultural” respaldadas por el estado. Teóricamente, este estudio vincula enfoques sociológicos y prag, desafios paradigmas de la literatura mundial eurocéntrica al centrar las voces de las minorías chinas marginadas. Empíricamente, demuestra cómo los actores autoritarios apalcan los mecanismos institucionalizados de traducción para transformar la diversidad cultural en moneda de poder blando, proponiendo un modelo analítico multidimensional para los intercambios literarios mediados por el estado.

Palabras clave: Negociación de la Relevancia Cultural; Análisis de Bourdieusian-Adaptation; La Traducción Patrocinada por el Estado; Capital Simbólico; Literatura Sobre Minorías Étnicas.

INTRODUCTION

Minority literature translation constitutes a critical yet underexplored area in translation studies, particularly within state-mediated contexts where institutional power structures shape cultural production. In China, post-2000 translation policies transitioned from a state-undifferentiated patronage to a state-differentiated model. This shift institutionalized ethnic texts like the Dai poem Zhao Shutun as instruments of cultural diplomacy under initiatives such as Chinese Culture Going Global. This study examines the state-sponsored English translation of Zhao Shutun through an integrated Bourdieusian-Adaptation framework, interrogating how cultural salience is negotiated between ethnic authenticity and state ideological imperatives.

Recent studies on translation as a tool of soft power concentrate on national translation programs and their political ramifications, the utility of translation to build collective identities and shape cultural perceptions, the analysis of specific literary works and their translation histories as instances of soft power strategies, demonstrating a multidisciplinary approach, such as quantitative analysis, fieldwork and archival research and case studies, few studies systematically dissect the interplay of macro-level sociological structures and micro-level linguistic strategies in China’s state-sponsored field of ethnic minority literature translation. Zhao Shutun, a text central to Dai oral traditions and ecological cosmologies, provides a critical case to address this gap. Its translation mediates between ethnopoetic specificity and narratives of “multicultural unity,” reflecting broader mechanisms of state cultural governance.

Three questions guide this analysis:

How do state policies delimit the boundaries of cultural adaptation?

Through what mechanisms is ethnic cultural capital reconfigured into symbolic capital?

How do institutionalized translators negotiate competing demands of fidelity and compliance?

By synthesizing Bourdieu’s sociology—focusing on field constraints, capital conversion, and institutional habitus—with Verschuere’s Adaptation Theory, this study reveals a multidimensional negotiation process. Key findings demonstrate how cultural salience is negotiated across four interconnected dimensions in China’s state-sponsored translation of Zhao Shutun: contextual correlates of adaptability: field-specific salience; structural objects of adaptability: constructing symbolic capital; dynamics of adaptation and salience of adaptation: institutional habitus.

These findings underscore translation as a negotiated field where cultural salience is strategically modulated to serve state agendas, simultaneously valorizing and disciplining ethnic alterity.

Theoretically, this research bridges sociological and pragmatic approaches, offering a model to analyze how institutional power structures mediate textual practices. Empirically, it contributes to debates on cultural representation in state-sponsored translation, emphasizing the interplay of policy directives, institutional habitus, and linguistic adaptation in authoritarian systems.

Theoretical framework: an integrated Bourdieusian-Adaptation approach to state-sponsored translation

This study proposes an integrated Bourdieusian-Adaptation framework to analyze how state-sponsored translation negotiates cultural salience in ethnic minority literature. By synthesizing Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of cultural production with Jef Verschuere’s Adaptation Theory, the framework interrogates the interplay of macro-level power structures and micro-level linguistic agency in China’s institutional translation regime. This synthesis addresses a critical gap in Translation Studies, demonstrating how structural constraints and agentive choices co-constitute the politics of cultural representation, as exemplified by the Dai poem Zhao Shutun.

Bourdieusian field dynamics: power structures in state-mediated translation

Bourdieu’s triad of field, capital, and habitus provides the macro-level apparatus to dissect hierarchical power relations in state-sponsored translation.^(1,2) The field of ethnic minority literature translation in China operates

under the doxa of “multicultural unity,” a state-sanctioned ideology that legitimizes selective appropriation of ethnic traditions into narratives of “socialist modernity.” Three interrelated dimensions structure this field:

Field Constraints: state policies (e.g., the “Chinese Culture Going Global” initiative, 13th Five-Year Plan directives) demarcate permissible boundaries for translation.

Capital Conversion: the translation process enacts an alchemy of cultural capital, transforming ethnic cultural capital into national symbolic capital.

Habitus Formation: institutional actors—state-affiliated scholar-translators at Yunnan Normal University, publishers and cultural bureaucrats—internalize a translation habitus shaped by political socialization.

Adaptation theory in practice: linguistic negotiation of cultural salience

Verschueren’s Adaptation Theory provides the micro-level apparatus to analyze how translators negotiate field constraints through linguistic choices.⁽³⁾ This layer operates through four adaptive dimensions:

Contextual Correlates of Adaptability: the institutional context (state directives) and cultural context (Dai cosmology, English readership) define the boundaries of adaptation.

Structural Objects of Adaptability: linguistic and paratextual strategies systematically convert cultural specificity into symbolic capital.

Dynamics of Adaptation: institutional habitus governs translators’ real-time decisions.

Salience of Adaptation: institutionalized translators hierarchize cultural visibility.

The adaptive dimensions (CSDS model) are applied to analyze the English translation of Zhaoshutun, adapted from Ai Die *et al.*⁽⁴⁾ Chinese version. The source text, rooted in Dai Zan Ha oral traditions, retains verse form with loose rhymes, while the English rendition employs natural rhythms and consistent lineation—strategically balancing source-text poetics with target-reader accessibility. This duality exemplifies the CSDS model’s capacity to dissect how state-mediated translation negotiates cultural salience.

Translation field: Zhao Shutun and its institutionalization as a state translation project

The Dai narrative poem Zhao Shutun: cultural significance and ethnopoeitic traditions

Zhao Shutun, a cornerstone of Dai cultural heritage, embodies the ethnic group’s syncretic spiritual traditions, blending Hinayana Buddhist teachings with indigenous animist beliefs. Originating from palm-leaf Buddhist scriptures, the poem evolved through oral-performative practices by Zan Ha (folk artists) and Buddhist monks, who transmitted its narratives through ritual chants, dance, and improvised storytelling. This dual religious identity—Buddhist moral parables interwoven with reverence for natural deities—positions the poem as a unique artifact of Dai spiritual hybridity.

As a “living text,” Zhao Shutun thrives through dynamic oral transmission. Over 30 regional variants exist across Xishuangbanna, Dehong, and Southeast Asian Dai communities, adapted to local dialects and social contexts. Performances merge rhythmic recitations, melodic interludes, and audience interaction, sustaining communal identity through participatory cultural practice rather than static literature.

The poem’s structure and symbolism reflect the Dai’s deep connection to nature and spiritual cosmology. Its twelve-chapter arc—spanning from courtship to reunion—employs repetitive parallelism, allegorical motifs, and ecological metaphors. The iconic “peacock” symbolizes both divine beauty (embodied by Princess Nannuona) and the Dai’s harmonious relationship with nature, while motifs like the “golden deer” and “sacred lake” encode animist reverence for life and purity. The oral-textual interplay is further enriched by performative elements: rhythmic patterns mimic monsoon cycles, and alliterative phrases evoke the rustling of tropical forests. These features exemplify what scholars term “ethnopoetics”—a fusion of linguistic artistry and cultural memory.

Since its first Chinese translation in 1956, Zhao Shutun has undergone extensive institutionalization as a state-sponsored cultural project. Its adaptation into operas, films (e.g., *Princess Peacock* 1963), and multilingual translations (English, French, Esperanto, etc) reflects strategic efforts to align Dai heritage with national narratives of multicultural unity. However, this process has also sparked debates about cultural authenticity. As Sean Macdonald⁽⁵⁾ notes, adaptations like *Princess Peacock* often exoticize Dai traditions while selectively emphasizing themes of “ethnic unity” and “socialist modernity.” The poem’s recognized status as an intangible cultural heritage in the provincial and national rank and its inclusion in China’s “Dynamic Database of International Communication” attest to its enduring role as a bridge between ethnic specificity and global literary exchange.

Zhao Shutun stands as a paradigmatic example of ethnopoeitic resilience, encapsulating the Dai’s spiritual ethos, ecological wisdom, and adaptive creativity. Its survival through oral-performative traditions and state-mediated translation underscores the interplay between cultural preservation and ideological negotiation—a tension that will be further explored in subsequent analyses of its adaptive mechanisms.

From minority heritage to state project: the PRC’s institutionalization of translation

The transformation of Zhao Shutun from a piece of ethnic minority cultural heritage to a state-sponsored

translation project epitomizes the broader trajectory of how ethnic minority literature has been institutionalized within the People's Republic of China (PRC). This section examines the institutional mechanisms and socio-political contexts that have facilitated the translation and dissemination of Zhao Shutun, highlighting the role of state apparatuses and cultural policies in shaping the adaptation and reception of ethnic minority literature.

Field constraints: state policies as adaptation boundaries

The institutionalization of Zhao Shutun's English translation operated within a structured field defined by China's cultural diplomacy strategies. Since the 2000s, China's translation policies have undergone a strategic shift from a state-undifferentiated patronage to a state-differentiated patronage integrating state sponsorship, academic expertise, and market mechanisms.

The "13th Five-Year National Key Publications Program" (2016-2020) played a pivotal role in institutionalizing Zhao Shutun as a flagship text in Classics of Yunnan Ethnic Groups in English Translation. The state-sponsored translation mechanism, as institutionalized under the 13th Five-Year National Key Publications Plan (2016-2020), operates through a hierarchical, five-tiered system designed to align cultural production with national strategic objectives. At the top tier, state launches the "Chinese Culture Going Global" initiative in the early 2000s to enhance China's international cultural influence, which positioned ethnic minority literature as a medium to project China's multicultural socialist modernity, aligning with broader narratives of national unity and soft power enhancement. The second tier, the National Press and Publication Administration and affiliated ministries establish policy frameworks through national plans such as the National Key Publications Publishing Program, prioritizing translation funding for ethnic minority literature, classical texts and etc. These plans are reinforced by binding policy instruments (e.g., Notice on implementing national publication fund projects [2016]) that define funding scope, project selection criteria, and ideological mandates, including pre-publication reviews for politically sensitive topics (e.g., ethnicity, religion). The third tier, managed by the National Publication Foundation and subsidy agencies, allocates financial resources through a centralized-decentralized model: nationally listed projects (e.g., "outward-oriented ethnic minority publications") receive prioritized central funding, while provincial authorities design complementary measures to foster central-local synergy. Concurrently, incentive systems link translation outcomes to awards (e.g., China Publishing Government Award) and institutional performance evaluations, ensuring compliance with state agendas. The fourth tier, involving publishing institutions and project teams, enforces stringent quality control through the tripartite coordination mechanism (personnel-budget-schedule) (National Publication Foundation 2021) and the Three-Tier Review & Three-Round Proofreading System (NPPA 2020), which mandates political-ideological content review to standardize translations as vehicles for the international dissemination of Chinese culture. ^(6,7) At the fifth tier, international platforms and third-party evaluators expand dissemination through Belt and Road co-publishing, digital channels (e.g., China Book International Program), and global reception metrics (e.g., sales, citations), feeding evaluation results into a dynamic optimization loop to refine funding priorities.

This closed-loop hierarchy (policy-funding-production-dissemination) centralizes resources around soft power narratives (e.g., "telling China's stories well"), embedding ideological control while projecting multicultural unity.

Capital mapping: converting ethnic cultural capital into symbolic capital

The state-sponsored translation of ethnic minority literature in post-2000 China exemplifies Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion, wherein localized cultural capital—rooted in oral traditions, ethnopoeitic symbolism, and syncretic religious practices—is systematically transformed into symbolic and soft power capital through a hierarchical, state-mediated mechanism involving multiple institutional actors. Under the 13th Five-Year National Key Publications Plan, this process operates through a structured chain of capital exchange.

At the apex of this system, the state exercises symbolic power by launching the "Chinese Culture Going Global" initiative to start state-sponsored translation of ethnic minority literature. The National Press and Publication Administration and affiliated ministries allocates political capital (formulating policies, e.g., the National Key Publications Publishing Program, that prioritize translations of ethnic minority literature as tools for cultural diplomacy) and economic capital (the National Publication Foundation) to publishers and translators to convert ethnic cultural capital into state-aligned symbolic capital, while international circulation platforms amplify this capital as soft power. These policies translate into economic capital through the National Publication Foundation, which allocated 580,75 million RMB by 2016 to projects like the Classics of Yunnan Ethnic Groups in English Translation (National Publication Foundation 2016). The Foundation's financial support binds publishers (e.g., Yunnan People's Publishing House) and translators (e.g., scholar-translators at Yunnan Normal University) to state mandates, requiring them to curate texts such as the Dai poem Zhao Shutun for themes of "ecological harmony" and "national unity" while suppressing politically sensitive content. Here, the cultural capital of Dai oral traditions is filtered through state ideological frameworks, transforming it into symbolic capital—academically authenticated texts that embody China's "multicultural socialist modernity."

Translators, operating under institutionalized habitus, mediate this conversion. Scholar-translators like

Professor Li Changyin's team apply methodologies such as "verse-to-verse fidelity" to retain ethnopoetic structures while adding paratextual Footnotes that reframe Dai symbols (e.g., the peacock as a metaphor for harmony) for global audiences. Their work, funded by the National Publication Foundation and overseen by publishers, exemplifies the academic capital-to-symbolic capital conversion. Publishers then collaborate with international circulation platforms (e.g., China Book International Program, Belt and Road co-publishing initiatives) to disseminate these texts, leveraging digital and diplomatic channels to convert symbolic capital into soft power capital. For instance, Zhao Shutun's facilitated its circulation as a "cultural ambassador," reinforcing China's image as a harmonious, multicultural nation.

This chain of conversions—state and government policies → economic capital → cultural production → symbolic capital → soft power—reveals how China's authoritarian governance instrumentalizes translation. The NPPA's ideological directives, materialized through the National Publication Foundation's financial leverage, ensure that publishers and translators align ethnic heritage with state narratives. Meanwhile, international platforms amplify these narratives, transforming localized cultural capital into geopolitical influence. Bourdieu's framework thus illuminates a closed-loop system where ethnic minority literature is both preserved and politicized, serving as both cultural treasure and geopolitical currency.

Habitus tracking: institutional socialization of translators

The concept of habitus, as theorized by Pierre Bourdieu, offers a critical lens to analyze how translators in China's state-sponsored ethnic minority literature field negotiate institutional norms, ideological mandates, and cross-cultural expectations. Post-2000, scholar-translators—who expertise in translation with rich knowledge of ethnic groups—exemplifies a hybrid habitus shaped by state policies, institutional socialization, and transnational collaboration. Under frameworks like the 13th Five-Year National Key Publications Plan, these translators mediate between cultural authenticity and geopolitical utility, transforming ethnic heritage into soft power capital. The National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA) and affiliated ministries institutionalize this process through policies prioritizing "academic excellence" and ideological alignment, directing the National Publication Foundation to allocate resources to projects such as the Classics of Yunnan Ethnic Groups in English Translation. Scholar-translators, like Professor Li Changyin's team at Yunnan Normal University, internalize state priorities through prolonged engagement with national agendas, blending academic rigor (e.g., verse-to-verse fidelity, cultural schema retention) with ideological compliance (e.g., amplifying "ethnic unity" themes). Codified rules, such as the Six Translation Principles, constrain creative agency—retaining the content, idea, image, figures of speech, footnotes of the Chinese source text which omitted some syncretic Buddhist-animist rituals—to ensure adherence to socialist modernity.⁽⁴⁾ Moreover, collaborations with international actors, such as American reviser Joan Bulerice, introduce a transnational dimension: translators balance state mandates with Western readability standards. Paratextual strategies further reframe texts as "cultural ambassadors," emphasizing Zhao Shutun's status as "National Intangible Cultural Heritage" while minimizing religious complexity. The state reinforces this habitus through material incentives (e.g., career advancement linked to the National Key Publications Publishing Program) and symbolic rewards (e.g., eligibility for the China Publishing Government Award), validating translators' dual role as cultural custodians and state agents. However, this hybrid habitus perpetuates tensions: while safeguarding minority cultures within state-approved frameworks, it risks reducing them to aestheticized symbols of "harmonious multiculturalism," erasing political dissent. Bourdieu's theory thus illuminates how China's authoritarian regime co-opts academic capital to legitimize ideological projects, transforming translators into mediators of both cultural preservation and nationalist storytelling. By systematizing habitus formation across policy, funding, and production tiers, the state ensures ethnic minority literature serves as both a cultural treasure and a geopolitical instrument, reinforcing narratives of unity while advancing global influence.

The Bourdieusian analysis reveals how Zhao Shutun's translation navigated the interplay of field constraints, capital conversion, and institutional habitus. State policies delineated adaptation boundaries, ethnic cultural capital was instrumentalized for soft power, and translators' habitus mediated between ideological mandates and cross-cultural legibility. This tripartite framework underscores the strategic negotiation inherent in state-sponsored literary translation, positioning ethnic minority literature, such as Zhao Shutun, as both a cultural treasure and a geopolitical instrument.

Adaptation strategies in translating Zhao Shutun

This section, by synthesizing Bourdieu's field theory with Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, analyzes how the English translation of Zhao Shutun negotiates the tripartite tensions of cultural specificity, ideological constraints, and cross-cultural readability, focusing on culture-specific terms—defined as linguistic units encoding culture-specific sociohistorical values lacking direct TL equivalents.⁽⁸⁾ First, we conduct systematic classification of cultural-specific terms, then make the analysis of adaptive strategies from the four dimensions: contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaption and salience of adaption.

Classification and translation methods of cultural-specific terms

The cultural-specific terms in Zhao Shutun are inextricably intertwined with the Dai people's spiritual beliefs, social hierarchies, and ecological symbolism. A comparative paratextual analysis reveals significant expansion in the English translation's explanatory apparatus: while the source text contains 30 footnotes, the target text incorporates 33, including two translator-added annotations. These footnotes are the explanation of the unique cosmology, religion, rituals, social practices, territorial identity and historical memory of the Dai people, thereby functioning as crucial epistemic bridges for target readers.

Of particular analytic interest is the discursive stratification within these annotations: 32 footnotes decode culture-bound concepts, whereas a singular instance (annotating "Once I had saved your life") provides narrative backstory concerning the protagonist's rescue of the Dragon. This simultaneously explicates cultural alterity and maintaining narrative coherence.

The following will conduct a taxonomic analysis of the 32 culture-specific terms, categorizing them into five categories: religious and mythological term, social roles and titles, rituals and customs, flora and fauna terms, geographic and historical terms. Each category is defined and exemplified. In each example, the terms and footnotes in the Chinese version are presented and the translation methods of terms and footnotes in the English version are analyzed.

Religious and mythological terms and translation methods

Religious and mythological terms refer to lexical items related to belief systems, deities, sacred narratives, or supernatural phenomena unique to a culture. These terms reflect a syncretic tradition blending Buddhist practices with indigenous animism, as seen in the coexistence of temple rituals and nature deity worship.⁽⁹⁾ Such syncretism shapes the Dai cosmological worldview and collective memory.⁽¹⁰⁾

Table 1. Religious and Mythological Terms and Translation Methods

Term	Term Translation	Term Translation Methods	Footnote	Footnote Translation	Footnote Translation Methods
赅佛 P10	Danfo ceremony P11	Transliteration +Addition	赅佛:即献佛、敬佛之意。 P10	Danfo: a religious practice, a way of worshipping or showing respect to God. P11	Semantic Translation
灭巴拉 P10	Miebala P11	Transliteration	“灭巴拉”，是管理雨水的神。 P10	Miebala: a god in the heaven, who was in charge of the rainfall. P11	Semantic Translation

Note: P indicates the page number of the example in the book. Zhaoshutun. Yunnan Ethnic Publishing House.

The term “赅佛”(Danfo ceremony) is a religious practice of worshipping deities, transliterated as “Danfo” with addition of category word ceremony and semantic translation of a footnote, explaining its ritual purpose. The term “灭巴拉”(Miebala) is a rain-controlling deity, transliterated as “Miebala” and semantic translation of footnoted as “a god in the heaven, who was in charge of the rainfall” .

Social roles and titles

Table 2. Social Roles and Titles and Translation Methods

Term	Term Translation	Term Translation Methods	Footnote	Footnote Translation	Footnote Translation Methods
摩古拉 P8	Mogula P9	Tran	“摩古拉”是傣族卜卦算命的人。 P8	Mogula, as an augur, who could interpret omens according to an almanac in the Dai culture. P9	Addition
召树屯 P8	Zhaoshutun P9	Transliteration	召树屯：意即坚强勇敢的王子。 P8	Zhaoshutun: the prince in Mengbanjia, a man of strong will. P9	Addition
叭团 P14	Batuan P15	Transliteration	叭团：直译为魔鬼的头人，在此当“孔雀国王”解释。	(No Footnote)	Omission

Social roles and titles refer to the terms denoting hierarchical positions, kinship systems, or community-

specific roles. Social roles and titles denote hierarchical positions and kinship systems, embodying power dynamics through symbolic capital—a form of authority naturalized by cultural norms.⁽¹¹⁾

The terms “摩古拉”(Mogula), “召树屯”(Zhaoshutun) and “叭团”(Batuan) reflect social roles and titles of the Dai community. The term “摩古拉”(Mogula) is a Dai augur. The transliteration of tern term (Mogula) retains cultural specificity while clarifying the augur’s role and distinct fortune-telling way through translating footnote (Mogula, as an augur) and adding the attributive clause “who could interpret omens according to an almanac in the Dai culture”. The term “召树屯”(Zhaoshutun) is a heroic prince, transliterated as “Zhaoshutun” and contextualized as “the prince in Mengbanjia, a man of strong will” through addition of territorial word and personality description. The term “叭团”(Batuan) is a title reinterpreted as “Peacock King”, transliterated as Batuan through omission of footnote, which refers to its original demonic connotation.

Rituals and customs

Rituals and customs refer to lexicalized descriptions of ceremonial practices, taboos, or traditional behaviors. Rituals embody cultural identity and performative traditions.

Table 3. Rituals and Customs and Translation Methods

Term	Term Translation	Term Translation Methods	Footnote	Footnote Translation	Footnote Translation Methods
四十六个格子 P8	46 checks P9	Literal Translation	四十六个格子：是傣族卜卦算命的根据，在傣族经书中相传有四十六种野兽，前一种野兽管辖后一种。 P8	In the legend, Mogula cast someone’s fortune on the basis of the 46 checks. There were forty-six kinds of animals in the almanac. Each animal controls the one that follows it. P9	Semantic Translation
拴线礼 P55	The Rite of Tying a Thread P55	Literal Translation	拴线礼是傣族一种仪式，在祝贺婚礼或为新生儿免除灾难的时候，都举行拴线礼，通常是由年长的人将一根红线拴在被祝贺人的手上，表示吉祥。 P55	Tying a thread is a traditional rite of the Dai people. The adults usually perform a rite to celebrate the wedding, or sometimes they do it for their newborn babies to avoid their misfortunes and evils. In general, the person who is given best wishes will have a red thread on his wrist by an esteemed elder, which means praying for good fortune. P55	Literal Translation
喃菩他 P58	Nanputa P59	Transliteration	“喃菩他”圣水：是七种金属粉混起来的溶液，传说用来洗澡，可以得到吉祥。 P58	Nan Puta, a kind of holy water in the legend, was a mixture of seven metal powders. It was said that if a man took a bath in it, he would have a good fortune. P59	Literal Translation
玎 P66	ding instrument P67	Transliteration + Addition	“玎”是傣族的一种乐器，类似二胡。傣族青年男女常常用玎传达感情。	The ding is a single-string instrument which is similar to Erhu. The young people of the Dai ethnic group often play it to express their affection.	Literal Translation
铓锣 P58	Gong P59	Literal Translation	铓锣：云南少数民族的一种打击乐器。——译者注 P58	The gong is a percussion instrument in Yunnan. --Translator’s note P59	Addition (Footnote)

The ritual terms “四十六个格子”(46 checks), “拴线礼”(The Rite of Tying a Thread), “喃菩他”(Nanputa), “玎”(ding instrument) and “铓锣”(gong) reflect performative traditions and ceremonial practices of the Dai community. Literal Translation of terms (e.g., 46 checks, The Rite of Tying a Thread) with semantic or literal translation of footnote preserves the ritual’s physicality while decoding its symbolism. Transliteration of term (e.g., Nanputa) with literal translation of footnote details its auspicious role and adapts symbolic objects to target-language semantics. Transliteration supplemented by addition of category word (e.g., ding instrument) with literal translation of footnote, clarifying functional roles (e.g., express affection) to bridge cultural gaps. Literal Translation (e.g., gong) with addition of Translator’s note contextualized its uniqueness as an instrument in Yunnan Province.

Flora and fauna terms

Flora and fauna terms refer to biotic entities with culture-specific symbolic meanings (e.g., totemic plants and animals).

Table 4. Flora and Fauna Terms and Translation Methods

Term	Term Translation	Term Translation Methods	Footnote	Footnote Translation	Footnote Translation Methods
槟榔 P34	areca nut P35	Literal Translation	傣族青年男女在互相恋爱时，常用槟榔来款待情人。傣族人认为吃了槟郎的人不能变心。 P34	It was an old tradition of the Dai people. When the young man and woman fell in love with each other, they'd entertain his/her partner with this areca nut. They believed that the lovers who ate areca nut would not change their minds, so they could have an eternal love. P35	Literal Translation
锦那丽、 锦那暖 P26	Jinnali, Jinnanuan P27	Transliteration	“锦那丽”、“锦那暖”：是两种飞得最快的鸟，传说每天飞绕大地七十七转。 P26	Jinnali, Jinnanuan: In the legend, both Jinnali and Jinnanuan were the fastest birds in that place, and they circled around the earth 77 times each day. P27	Literal Translation
娑哈里林 P124	ruohalilin birds P125	Transliteration + Addition	娑哈里林：傣族传说是一种最大的鸟。	In Dai legend, ruohalilin is the biggest bird. P125	Literal Translation

The flora, fauna and symbolic objects “槟榔”(areca nut), “锦那丽、锦那暖” (Jinnali, Jinnanuan), “娑哈里林”(ruohalilin birds) highlight the interplay between ecological symbolism and cultural memory. The term “槟榔” is an old tradition of the Dai people, literally translated as “areca nut” with literal Translation of footnote, clarifying functional roles (e.g., have an eternal love) to target-language readers. The terms “锦那丽、锦那暖” and “娑哈里林” are mythical birds, transliterated (Jinnali, Jinnanuan) or transliterated supplemented by addition of category word (ruohalilin birds), plus literal Translation of footnotes, declaring indigenous biodiversity.

Geographic and historical terms

Geographic and historical terms refer to toponyms, historical events, or landmarks tied to a community's collective memory.

Table 5. Geographic and Historical Terms and Translation Methods

Term	Term Translation	Term Translation Methods	Footnote	Footnote Translation	Footnote Translation Methods
勐董板 P14	Mengdongban P15	Transliteration	(No Footnote)	Mengdongban: the story began over nine thousand years ago. There were 101 states along the Lancang River. Mengdongban was the richest and the most beautiful state among them. People often called it Peacock Kingdom.-- Translator's note P15	Addition (Footnote)

Geographic terms encode territorial identity and historical memory. The term “勐董板” (Mengdongban) is a historical state, transliterated as “Mengdongban” with addition of translator's note as “the Peacock Kingdom along the Lancang River”.

The classification reveals that cultural-specific terms in Zhaoshutun are deeply rooted in the Dai ethnic group's spiritual, social, and ecological systems. Translators employ context-dependent strategies—transliteration, literal translation, semantic translation, addition and omission—to balance cultural authenticity and readability.

Statistical analysis of translation methods of cultural-specific terms

A quantitative survey of the translation methods of cultural-specific terms in the English translation version reveals the following distribution:

Table 6. Translation Methods of Culture-specific Terms in Zhaoshutun

Category Translation Methods	Religious/ Mythological Terms	Social Roles/ Titles	Rituals / Customs	Flora/ Fauna Terms	Geographic/ Historical Terms	Total	%
Transliteration + Footnote	5	2	3	4	0	14	43,8
Literal Translation + Footnote	0	0	5	3	0	8	25,0
Semantic Translation + Footnote	0	0	3	0	0	3	9,4
Transliteration + Addition of Footnote	0	0	1	0	1	2	6,3
Transliteration+ Addition +Footnote	2	0	0	0	0	2	6,3
Literal Translation+ Addition of Footnote	0	0	2	0	0	2	6,3
Transliteration+ Omission of Footnote	0	1	0	0	0	1	3,0
Total	7	3	14	7	1	32	100
Percentage	21,9 %	9,4 %	43,8 %	21,9 %	3,1 %		100

Table 6 quantifies the distribution of 5 categories of culture-specific words and seven translation methods applied to these terms in Zhaoshutun. The quantitative distribution across categories was as follows: Rituals and customs constituted the most prevalent category, accounting for 43,8 % of the total. This was followed by religious and mythological terms and flora and fauna terms, each of which comprised 21,9 % respectively. Social roles and titles occupied the fourth position with 9,4 %, while geographic and historical terms formed the smallest category, constituting merely 3,1 % of the total sample.

The predominant translation methods are identified as Transliteration Plus Footnote (43,8 %) and Literal Translation Plus Footnote (25,0 %), collectively accounting for 68,8 % of all translations. Less frequent methods, such as Semantic Translation Plus Footnote, Transliteration Plus Addition of Footnote, Transliteration Plus Addition Plus Footnote and Literal Translation Plus Addition of Footnote, exhibits lower prevalence, each representing 9,4 % to 6,3 % of the total. The least used method is Transliteration Plus Omission (Footnote), constituted merely 3,0 % (1 out of 32 instances).

The quantitative analysis of culture-specific terms and their corresponding translation methods in Zhao Shutun reveals distinct patterns in both cultural representation and translation strategies, as outlined below:

Cultural hierarchy in terminology

Rituals and customs emerge as the most frequent category (43,8 %), reflecting their foundational role in the narrative's cultural framework. This dominance suggests an emphasis on communal practices or traditions critical to the Dai culture. Religious and mythological terms and flora and fauna terms rank equal second place. Religious and mythological underscore the narrative's engagement with spiritual or traditional belief systems while flora and fauna terms function as key identifiers of cultural or ecological distinctiveness. In contrast, social roles and titles (9,4 %) and geographic and historical terms (3,1 %) appear minimally, potentially indicating their limited narrative relevance or a deliberate focus on more universally relatable cultural elements.

This hierarchy aligns with established translation norms, where rituals and symbolic objects are prioritized for their intercultural communicative value, while specialized terms (e.g., historical references) may be minimized to reduce reader disorientation.

Transliteration and explicitation: dominant strategies

The translational approach in Zhaoshutun predominantly employs hybrid strategies that balance fidelity and accessibility:

The primary methods, such as Transliteration Plus Footnote and Literal Translation Plus Footnote prioritize phonetic or formal retention of source-cultural terms while using footnotes to bridge contextual gaps for target readers. Less frequent methods, such as Semantic Translation Plus Footnote, Transliteration Plus Addition of Footnote, Transliteration Plus Addition Plus Footnote and Literal Translation Plus Addition of Footnote exhibit moderate usage (6,3 %-9,4 %), typically deployed when cultural nuances require supplementary clarification. The least used method, such as Transliteration Plus Omission of Footnote, reserved for contexts where excessive cultural specificity might hinder comprehension or narrative flow.

The prevalent deployment of transliteration as a defamiliarizing marker, supported by paratextual framing devices materializes the irreducible alterity of source-cultural signifiers—an approach that complicates Venuti's binary conceptualization of foreignization.

Interdependence of cultural categories and translation choices

The translation of culture-specific terms in Zhaoshutun reflects a systematic interplay between cultural salience and method choices, structured hierarchically by category prominence. High-frequency cultural elements, such as rituals and customs, prioritize transliteration or literal translation paired with footnotes to preserve phonetic authenticity while decoding cultural semantics. Conversely, low-frequency categories like geographic and historical terms employ transliteration augmented with contextual additions in paratexts, where minimal fidelity is enriched through historical or mytho-cultural annotations. Meanwhile, moderately frequent religious and mythological terms balance phonetic retention with functional footnotes to maintain doctrinal resonance. This salience-driven hierarchy underscores translation as a dynamic negotiation of fidelity and adaptability, where cultural centrality dictates the degree of explicitation or domestication.

Negotiating cultural salience: adaptive strategies in translating Zhaoshutun's culture-specific terms

The translation of culture-specific terms in Zhaoshutun exemplifies a dynamic negotiation between linguistic adaptation and sociocultural constraints. The following subsections dissect how translators strategically prioritize specific strategies to mediate cultural authenticity and accessibility while navigating power hierarchies and symbolic capital within the ethnic minority literary translation field from four adaptive dimensions: contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptation and salience of adaptation.

Contextual correlates of adaptability: field-specific salience

The translation of Zhaoshutun illustrates how field-specific salience—the hierarchical valuation of textual elements within China's state-mediated translation field—shapes adaptive strategies. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, this process reflects the dialectic between the autonomous logic of cultural preservation and the heteronomous forces of state ideological imperatives. Field-specific salience operates as a tripartite filter: policy-driven prioritization of elements aligned with state agendas, cultural valuation of ethnographically significant terms and global readability adjustments dictated by transnational reception norms.

State policy as field-structural determinant

China's 13th Five-Year National Key Publications Plan (2016-2020) reconfigured the translation field by positioning ethnic minority literature as instruments of the "Chinese Culture Going Global" initiative.⁽¹²⁾ This policy imposed a salience hierarchy within the field. High-salience cultural subsystems—such as rituals and customs were structurally prioritized for foreignizing strategies to project China's "multicultural socialist modernity." For instance, the Dai ritual Danfo (贔佛) was transliterated and annotated as "a religious practice of worshipping deities" (table 1), preserving ethnographic authenticity while adapting its cultural context to field-sanctioned narratives.

Conversely, low-salience elements underwent mytho-historical reframing. The toponym Mengdongban (勐董板) was footnoted as "the Peacock Kingdom along the Lancang River (table 5), aligning it with the field's territorial harmony discourse (NPPA 2016).⁽¹²⁾ This selective adaptation aligns with Spivak's critique of translation as 'an act of violence that erases alterity' (188), wherein ideological negotiation becomes a necessary yet fraught compromise.⁽¹³⁾

Field-structured negotiation: cultural authenticity and ideological alignment

The translation field's structural constraints necessitated strategies balancing cultural fidelity and ideological compliance. High-salience identity markers, such as The Rite of Tying a Thread (拴线礼), were preserved through literal translation and annotations emphasizing their role in harmony a core soft power theme.⁽⁴⁾ Conversely, religious terms like Miebala (灭巴拉), a rain deity, were transliterated but footnoted with ideologically neutral descriptors (e.g., "god in charge of rainfall"), moderating animist connotations to align with field-dominant secular norms (table 1).

This dual approach—phonetic or formal retention and semantic adaptation—reflects the field's structuring structures, wherein salience calibration emerges from the interplay of cultural capital and state symbolic power. By retaining source-language phonemes or forms while reframing semantics, translations, aligning with Chesterman's salience-motivated shifts—defined as strategic adjustments prioritizing perceptually or functionally prominent textual elements—and field-specific capital distribution.⁽¹⁴⁾

Transnational legibility as field extension

The translation field's salience hierarchy extended to global readability, necessitating paratextual interventions for cross-cultural resonance. The mythical birds Jinnali and Jinnaun (锦那丽/锦那暖), transliterated to preserve ecological symbolism, were annotated as "the fastest birds circling the earth 77 times daily." (Table 4) This strategy, guided by the field's Six Translation Principles⁽⁴⁾, leveraged universal mythological motifs (e.g., supernatural speed) to amplify transnational appeal while retaining state-endorsed themes like "ecological harmony."

Moreover, collaborations with international editors further illustrate the field's transnational extension. The English edition's "natural and idiomatic" fluency⁽⁴⁾ adhered to Western readability norms while preserving high-salience elements (e.g., "harmony" rhetoric). This policy-to-production continuum underscores how the field's internal logic (state mandates) and external demands (global reception) co-constitute translational outcomes.

Structural objects of adaptability: constructing symbolic capital

The structural dimension of translation adaptation operates "all possible levels of linguistic structure involved, from sound feature and phoneme to discourse and beyond". The translation of Zhaoshutun operates across a spectrum of structural adaptations—from phonemic-paratextual to lexical-paratextual to paratextual—each enacts a symbolic capital production chain through its structural configuration. This process, framed by Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital conversion, systematically transforms Dai cultural specificity into state-endorsed symbolic capital—a form of cultural currency that enhances national prestige and soft power.⁽¹⁴⁾

Phonemic-paratextual reframing

The strategic use of phonemic retention in Zhaoshutun's translation exemplifies Bourdieu's production of symbolic capital, wherein the acoustic fidelity of culturally irreplaceable terms serves to anchor Dai ethnic identity within China's state-sanitized multicultural narratives.⁽¹⁵⁾ As a core mechanism in the capital conversion chain—transforming ethnic cultural capital into state-aligned symbolic capital—phonemic retention operates not merely as a linguistic choice but as an ideological act. The high transliteration rate of 43.8 % for culture-specific terms (table 6) underscores this prioritization: by preserving the phonetic texture of terms like Nanputa (喃菩他), a sacred water ceremony, translators signal fidelity to Dai spiritual heritage, thereby converting its cultural authenticity into a form of symbolic capital valorized under state policies.

However, this preservation is inherently politicized. Under the 13th Five-Year National Key Publications Plan (2016-2020), transliterations like Nanputa are engineered to project China's "multicultural socialist modernity." While the term's phonetic form remains intact—retaining its acoustic link to Dai cosmology—its semantic decoding is redirected through state-mediated paratexts. The appended footnote, "a mixture of seven metal powders believed to confer good fortune," sanitizes the ritual's syncretic Buddhist-animist roots, aligning it with universalized notions of "happiness and auspice" central to China's soft power agendas (table 3). Thus, phonemic retention in Zhaoshutun transcends mere linguistic fidelity, and it becomes a performative act of symbolic capital production. By preserving the acoustic markers of Dai identity with explication of paratext, the state positions itself as a custodian of ethnic heritage, even as it reframes that heritage to serve nationalist storytelling.

Lexical-paratextual configuration

The translation of Zhaoshutun employs literal translation supplemented by paratext(footnotes). Literal translation retains denotative fidelity to Dai lexical items, maintaining the appearance of cultural authenticity—a prerequisite for claiming multicultural legitimacy and paratexts ideologically reorient these terms toward state narratives, completing the alchemy of symbolic capital production.

For example, the term "四十六个格子" (46 checks) is literally translated yet footnoted as "a divinatory almanac for interpreting omens" (table 3). The literal translation salvages Dai cultural capital (animist divination practices) as raw material to preserve ethnographic capital while the footnote curates the term into an exoticized "cultural artifact," divorcing it from living spirituality and repackaging it as evidence of China's "harmonious diversity". Similarly, 多兰嘎 (Duolan'ga), transliterated as the "Dai god of love," undergoes symbolic distillation. While the lexical choice retains ethnic branding, the paratext reduces it to a universalized "love legend".

Paratextual amplification

Paratextual amplification in Zhaoshutun operates as a mythopoetic engine for symbolic capital accumulation, transforming marginalia into state-endorsed cultural currency. This process illustrates Bourdieu's conceptualization of symbolic power as the capacity to impose the legitimate vision of the social world through discursive acts—a power rooted not in linguistic creativity per se.⁽¹¹⁾ Here, to remake ethnic heritage into nationalist myth. For example, the Dai toponym Mengdongban (勐董板), transliterated in the main text, is recontextualized in a footnote as "the Peacock Kingdom along the Lancang River" (table 5). Transliteration preserves the term's ethnic distinctiveness, maintaining its value as cultural capital. This paratextual intervention, mandated by the National Key Publications Publishing Program, recasts it as a romanticized spatial metaphor, aligning with state narratives of territorial harmony.

This dual operation reflects Bourdieu's analysis of symbolic capital as a constructed resource that derives its legitimacy from institutional recognition. The state appropriates Dai cultural capital while obscuring its historical conditions of production. The paratext becomes a myth-making loom, weaving ethnic fragments into

the grand tapestry of “Chinese multicultural socialism”—a narrative that itself constitutes symbolic capital in global soft power competitions.

Dynamics and salience of adaptation: institutional habitus

The translation of Zhaoshutun exemplifies how institutional habitus—the internalized dispositions shaped by state-mediated translation practices—orchestrates adaptive strategies through dynamic negotiations of cultural salience and ideological compliance. Grounded in Bourdieu’s theory, institutional habitus operates as a structural mechanism that aligns translators’ agency with the field’s political and cultural imperatives, mediating between ethnic authenticity and state-sanctioned narratives. This subsection analyzes how institutional habitus governs the dynamics of real-time decision-making and the salience of adaptive prioritization.

Dynamics of adaptation: institutional habitus as a cultural mediator

The translation of Zhaoshutun is a dynamic, context-sensitive process where adaptive strategies continuously evolve in response to competing priorities of cultural fidelity, ideological compliance, and transnational legibility. China’s state-sponsored translation field imposes a dual imperative on translators: to preserve ethnic minority cultures as “intangible heritage” while reframing them as instruments of soft power. This duality is institutionalized through mechanisms like the Three-Tier Review & Three-Round Proofreading System, which enforces linguistic, cultural, and political-ideological content review. The structural adaptations—from phonemic-paratextual to lexical-paratextual to paratextual—each embodies translators’ institutional habitus. For instance, the Dai term Mogula (摩古拉), denoting an augur, was transliterated but footnoted as “an interpreter of omens via an almanac” (table 2). While the phonetic retention (Mogula) signals cultural specificity, the footnote’s functional descriptor (interpreter of omens) suppresses the term’s animist roots, reflecting translators’ habitual compliance with secular norms. Such adaptations illustrate Bourdieu’s dialectic of structured and structuring structures—wherein institutional fields (as structured spaces) both constrain and enable agents’ habitus-driven practices.⁽¹⁶⁾ This interplay generates pre-reflexive dispositions through the internalization of field-specific capital logics.

Institutional habitus extends to transnational practice, where translators negotiate state mandates with global readability standards. For instance, the translation of the Dai term “槟榔” (areca nut) exemplifies the dynamics of transnational legibility, where institutional habitus mediates between cultural specificity and global readability. The term “槟榔” is rendered literally as “areca nut,” retaining its denotative meaning while omitting its culturally embedded connotations. To bridge this gap, a footnote explicates its symbolic role “It was an old tradition of the Dai people. When a young man and woman fell in love, they would exchange areca nuts as a pledge of eternal love” (table 4). This strategy reflects two adaptive dynamics: phonetic fidelity preserves the term’s linguistic identity, anchoring it within Dai cultural memory and the footnote reframes the ritual as a universal “eternal love,” aligning it with globally recognizable romantic tropes while erasing its localized spiritual significance (e.g., the belief that areca nuts bind souls). The decision to prioritize paratextual amplification over semantic domestication stems from institutional habitus shaped by state mandates. The National Publication Foundation Guidelines emphasize “cultural distinctiveness” as a soft power asset, incentivizing translators to retain ethnographically resonant terms. However, the same policies demand annotations that “enhance global resonance” by universalizing culturally dense practices. This dual imperative—aestheticize the exotic, rationalize the familiar—reflects what Bourdieu terms the alchemy of symbolic consecration, wherein cultural artifacts attain semiotic significance through institutional mediation of their critical elements, wherein non-conforming aspects are systematically reconfigured into culturally sanctioned forms.

Salience of adaptation: strategic prioritization in choice-making

The translation of Zhaoshutun exemplifies a hierarchical framework of adaptive salience, where institutional habitus—the internalized norms and dispositions shaped by China’s state-mediated translation infrastructure—dictates strategic prioritization of cultural elements. This salience hierarchy operates as a tripartite system, systematically amplifying or suppressing textual components based on their symbolic weight, ideological alignment, and narrative utility. By aligning translational choices with state agendas, the translators’ institutional habitus transforms ethnic authenticity into a controlled resource for geopolitical ends.

High salience: rituals as cultural anchors

High-salience elements, such as rituals central to Dai cosmology, are foregrounded through phonetic fidelity and paratextual amplification, reflecting their symbolic role in legitimizing state narratives of multicultural harmony. The term Xifu (洗福), a purification ritual involving ceremonial baths, is transliterated as Xifu and footnoted as “a Dai custom to wash away misfortune.” While the transliteration preserves the term’s acoustic identity, the footnote universalizes its meaning into a benign symbol of “good luck,” erasing its

syncretic animist roots (e.g., connections to ancestral worship). Translators' adherence to this strategy stems from institutional mechanisms like the National Publication Foundation Guidelines, which incentivize the retention of ethnographically resonant terms while mandating ideological alignment.⁽¹²⁾ By internalizing these norms, translators habitually prioritize rituals as cultural anchors, reinforcing state-sanctioned narratives of "harmonious diversity" without challenging secularist doctrines.

Moderate salience: negotiated signifiers of ecology and myth

Terms with moderate narrative prominence, such as ecological and mythological symbols, undergo negotiated adaptation to balance cultural specificity and global readability. The Dai term Ruohalilin (婁哈里林), a colossal bird central to cosmogonic myths, is transliterated and annotated as "the biggest bird in Dai legend." While the transliteration (Ruohalilin) signals cultural uniqueness, the footnote reduces the bird's symbolic role—such as its association with celestial creation—to a mere descriptor of physical size. The Six Translation Principles institutionalize this negotiation, mandating phonetic fidelity to source texts while adapting for cross-cultural resonance. Translators, socialized within state-affiliated institutions like Yunnan Normal University, internalize these rules as professional norms, habitually filtering moderate-salience terms through a dual lens of preservation and pragmatism.

Low salience: mythologizing marginalia

Peripheral terms, such as geographic and historical terms (e.g., Mengdongban), are reconfigured through paratextual mythologization to align with nationalist narratives. A subtler example is the treatment of social titles Batuan (叭团), originally denoting a "devil's headman." The main text reinterprets it as Peacock King, while omitting Chinese footnotes that acknowledge its sinister connotations. This omission reflects institutional habitus's role in suppressing elements deemed ideologically incongruent with state secularism. Such strategic ensures the term's transnational legibility while reinforcing narratives of ethnic minority cultures as apolitical, aestheticized heritage.

State policies incentivize the mythologization of low-salience terms, framing them as cultural ambassadors of China's "civilizational harmony." Translators, conditioned by material rewards (e.g., eligibility for the China Publishing Government Award), habitually subordinate ethnographic complexity to geopolitical imperatives.

The salience-driven adaptation in Zhaoshutun illustrates translation as a technology of cultural governance. High-salience terms anchor ethnic identity as state-sanctioned heritage, moderate-salience terms mediate between specificity and universality, and low-salience terms are mythologized to reinforce territorial narratives. This hierarchy, operationalized through institutional habitus, engages with Bhabha's conceptualisation of hybridity as a contested space of power negotiation, while also aligning with critiques that cultural difference may be strategically celebrated yet politically contained within state frameworks.^(17,18) By systematising adaptive strategies across policy, funding, and production tiers, the state mobilises ethnic literature as both a cultural repository and a geopolitical asset.

This analysis demonstrates how institutional habitus operationalizes salience hierarchies, transforming translation into a strategic act of cultural governance that balances ethnic authenticity with state imperatives.

(19,20,21)

CONCLUSIONS

This study elucidates the intricate mechanisms through which state-sponsored translation negotiates cultural salience in China's ethnic minority literature, as exemplified by the Dai poem Zhao Shutun. By synthesizing Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production with Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, the analysis reveals how institutional power structures mediate the interplay of cultural authenticity and ideological imperatives.

The findings demonstrate state policies establish adaptation boundaries via regulatory frameworks, and ethnic cultural capital is transformed into symbolic capital through structural adaptation strategies, such as phonemic-paratextual retention, lexical domestication and paratextual mythologization. Moreover, institutionalized translators navigate competing demands via dynamic adaptation and salience hierarchization.

Theoretically, this study bridges sociological and pragmatic approaches, offering a model to analyze how field constraints, capital conversion, and institutional habitus co-constitute cultural salience in state-mediated translation. By centering marginalized Chinese minority voices, it challenges Eurocentric World Literature paradigms that often overlook non-Western textual politics. Empirically, it demonstrates how state actors strategically mobilise cultural diversity, constructing a governance paradigm that curates ethnic distinctiveness while reinforcing national cohesion - a duality observable in China's minority language preservation initiatives and state-sanctioned multiculturalism models.

Future research could extend this framework to other state-sponsored projects, exploring variations across genres, ethnic groups, and geopolitical contexts. Such inquiries would deepen our understanding of translation's dual role as both a cultural preservative and an ideological apparatus in global literary exchanges.

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