

The Overseas Construction and Dissemination of the English Translation of *Chu-Fan-Chi* from the Perspective of Socio-Translation Studies

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Abstract

The Maritime Silk Road classic *Chu-fan-chi*, as the first chronicle of cultural exchanges between China and the West, records in detail the geography, transportation, products, customs, international trade, etc. of overseas countries, which vividly portrays the prosperity of the Maritime Silk Road during the Song Dynasty. However, the study of English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* has not gained the attention of scholars. Based on this, the study takes the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* translated by sinologists Friedrich Hirth and William W. Rockhill in 1911 as the research object, which integrates Bourdieu's field theory and Latour's actor-network theory in sociological translation studies to investigate, from both macro and micro perspectives, the positioning of the translation in the Western translation field, the role of actors in the production and dissemination process of the translation through capital and the influence of the translator's habitus on the translation. The study is conducive to enriching the scarcity of English translations of Maritime Silk Road classics and provides certain references for the study of Silk Road classics.

Keywords

Maritime Silk Road Classics, *Chu-Fan-Chi*, Socio-Translation Studies, Overseas Construction and Dissemination

1. Introduction

China's maritime civilization has a long history, and the Chinese nation created a glorious maritime history more than 7000 years ago, bringing ancient and splendid oriental civilization, science and technology, primarily including the

compass, porcelain and tea to Southeast Asia, Africa and other places. From slave society to contemporary China, maritime civilization has undergone various stages of Chinese social development. Through long historical changes and evolution, it has formed a relatively stable ecosystem that integrates land and sea, becoming a fertile ground for the continuous prosperity of the Chinese nation (Lin & Huang, 2016). Through long historical changes and evolution, it has formed a relatively stable ecosystem that integrates land and sea, becoming a fertile ground for the continuous prosperity of the Chinese nation. Since the rise of the Maritime Silk Road in the Han Dynasty, the theme of the classics is often the recording of the history, culture and customs of countries along the route (Chi & Xu, 2022). Compared with the overseas dissemination of Chinese classics, the Maritime Silk Road classics do not have systematic extraterritorial dissemination, and the translators are mainly sinologists, showing the characteristics of “foreigner-oriented, flowering inside the wall and incense outside the wall” (Yue & Chen, 2022).

As a representative work of Chinese Maritime Silk Road classics, the book *Chu-fan-chi* written by Zhao Rushi is mainly divided into two volumes: the first volume records the customs of overseas countries such as Tongking, Annam and Sunda, etc., while the second volume catalogs precious products such as aloe vera and rhino horn. As a compilation that integrates practicality, authority, information, systematicness and authenticity (Mo, 2017), scholars’ research on *Chu-fan-chi* has been limited to aspects such as maritime trade, ancient transportation history, and historical value, with a lack of translation perspectives and few studies on the English translation. During the nearly 170 years from 1857 to 2024, there were three English translations of *Chu-fan-chi*, among which, two were episodes translation or partial translation and only one was a complete version-full translation. Its full English translation was translated by sinologists Friedrich Hirth and William W. Rockhill in 1911, marking a significant breakthrough in the translation of Chinese Maritime Silk Road classics. Therefore, this paper takes the full English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* translated by two sinologists as the research object, places translation at the social level (Wang & Yang, 2012) and combines field theory with actor-network theory to explore the translation process of *Chu-fan-chi* from three aspects. On the macro level, the field of maritime classics and Sinology field that the position *Chu-fan-chi* is located is analyzed. On the meso level, the paper introduces the concept of capital proposed by Boudieur into Latour’s actor network theory and explores the capital construction of various actors in *Chu-fan-chi* from the internal network including authors, translators, source texts, etc., and the external network consisting of publishers and book reviewers. On the micro level, under the guidance of the translators’ habitus, the paper discusses the translation strategies and styles of sinologists Friedrich Hirth and William W. Rockhill in translating maritime Silk Road classics. The diachronic and synchronic perspectives, process-oriented and result-oriented methodologies are conducive to providing new research paradigms for the translation and dissemination of maritime Silk Road classics.

2. Literature Review

This chapter, as a literature review, encompasses two sections. Initially, it examines the current status and challenges of Maritime Silk Road classics within the realm of translation studies. Subsequently, delves into scholars' multidimensional research on *Chu-fan-chi* through visual analysis.

2.1. Previous Study on English Translation of Maritime Silk Road Classics

German geographer Ferdinand Richthofen first proposed the concept of the "Silk Road" in the 19th century, which was quickly accepted by the international sinological community. Subsequently, in 1913, Édouard Chavannes, known as the "giant of European sinology," proposed that the Silk Road could be divided into land and sea routes, and the Maritime Silk Road began to attract the interest of scholars from various countries (Zhou, 2014). As an important aspect of the "Chinese Culture Going Global" initiation, the study of maritime Silk Road classics mainly focuses on the formation and evolution of maritime trade, ship-building and navigation technology, trade conditions, and especially on the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures as well as historical materials on the various countries and ethnic groups encountered. In summary, maritime Silk Road classics can be generally described as books that record the geographical location, social system, folk customs, climate and produce, as well as the exchange situations among various countries along the ancient Maritime Silk Road in China from the Qin and Han dynasties to the late Qing dynasty (Chi & Xu, 2021). According to statistics by scholars such as Ma & Ren (1997) and Zhu (2023), many maritime Silk Road documents have full or partial English translations, and the number of English translations is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Statistics of foreign translations of maritime silk road classics.

Maritime Silk Road Classics	Time	Author	Full Translation	Abridged Translation
《法显传》	Eastern Jin Dynasty	Fa Xian	7	4
《大唐西域记》	Tang Dynasty	Xuan Zang	4	4
《南海寄归内法传》	Tang Dynasty	Yi Jing	1	0
《诸蕃志》	Song Dynasty	Zhao Rushi	1	13
《岭外代答》	Song Dynasty	Zhou Zhengfei	0	1
《真腊风土记》	Yuan Dynasty	Zhou Daguan	6	0
《长春真人西游记》	Yuan Dynasty	Li Zhichang	3	4
《岛夷志略》	Yuan Dynasty	Wang Dayuan	0	1
《瀛涯胜览》	Ming Dynasty	Ma Huan	1	3
《星槎胜览》	Ming Dynasty	Fei Xin	1	0
《海录》	Qing Dynasty	Xie Qinggao	0	1
《西洋朝贡典录》	Ming Dynasty	Huang Shengzeng	0	1
《海岛逸志》	Qing Dynasty	Wang Dahai	1	0
《海国图志》	Qing Dynasty	Wei Yuan	0	1

The Maritime Silk Road classics, due to the cultural, inclusive, and technical nature, meet the audience's expectations in the West, while also representing China's unique maritime civilization distinct from that of the West. Their historical and cultural context serves as an important carrier of China's original culture, economy, and trade, facilitating the Western world's understanding of the inherent logic and value consensus of exotic cultures (Lin, Wang, & Shao, 2020). So far, apart from a few reviews of English translations of individual texts or overall studies like *The Essential Literatures in Foreign Languages about the Maritime Silk Road* (Zhou & Lu, 2017), there is no dedicated article or monograph summarizing the English translation and research status of Chinese maritime ancient books (Zhu, 2023). According to the analysis of the keywords and annual publication volume of English translation of marine classics from 1984 to 2023 by Zhu (2023), the study can be roughly divided into three stages as shown in the following Table 2.

Compared with other translations of Chinese classics, the Maritime Silk Road classics cannot be compared with others in terms of the starting time of research, the number of publications and translations, or the dissemination overseas (Yue & Chen, 2022). Currently, there are issues such as the limited scope of research texts, relatively homogeneous identity of translators, slightly rigid research methods, and slightly limited research perspectives.

Table 2. English translation and characteristics of marine classics from 1984-2023.

Time	Stage	Characteristic	Achievements
1984-2005	Initial stage	Less number of article Focus on the Historical Value of Ancient Books and the Research Summary of Chinese and Foreign Scholars	Mu (1984), "On the Unification of Translated Names of World Nationalities in Dictionaries" (In Chinese)
2006-2017	Rapid development stage	Focus on the Study of English Translation of a Single Perspective The research perspectives are enlarged, such as relevance theory, translator subjectivity, paratext, etc	1) Gao & Yang (2016). On Birrell's thinking for translation: with the English rendition of <i>The Classic of Mountains and Seas</i> as a case study. 2) Wang (2012). The "Exotic Book in the World" <i>The Classic of Mountains and Seas</i> and Its English Translation—Written on the Occasion of the Publication of The English Version of <i>The Classic of Mountains and Seas</i> in The Library of Chinese Classics
2018-2023	Full-scale development stage	The number of articles has increased sharply Focusing on the English Translation of Maritime Silk Road Records The research perspective is further expanded, and the translation is placed on cultural and social level A Corpus-based Study of Quantitative Change in Translated Versions	1) Wang & Ji (2020) A Study on the English Translation of Geographic-al Names in Chinese Nautical <i>Ying-yai Sheng-lan</i> 2) Meng (2020). An Analysis of the Classical of <i>Mountains and Seas</i> from Three Dimensional Transplantation--Illustrated by the case of Birrell's English translation.

2.2. Previous Study on *Chu-Fan-Chi*

Chu-fan-chi, translated by Friedrich Hirth and William W. Rockhill, is a vital classic on the Maritime Silk Road in the West. A search on CNKI with the theme of “诸蕃志” yielded a total of 44 results, and the following **Figure 1** presents a visual analysis.

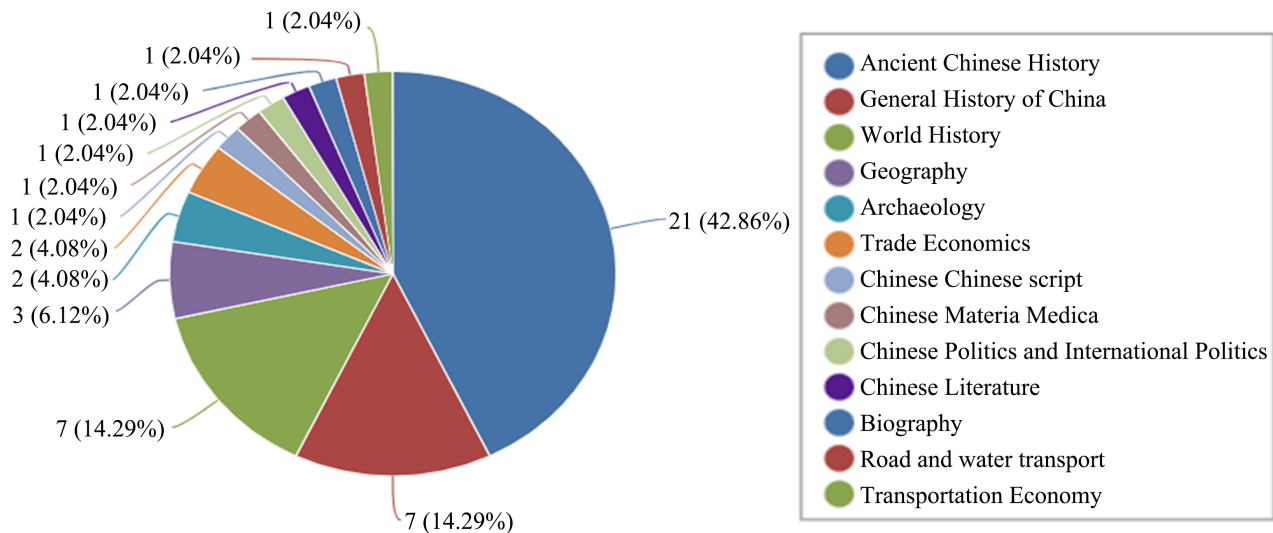


Figure 1. Distribution of the main disciplines of the research results of “*Chu-fan-chi*”.

Through visual analysis and interpretation shown in **Figure 1**, it is found that domestic and foreign scholars have conducted research on *Chu-fan-chi* in a wide range of fields, mainly focusing on maritime trade, ancient transportation history, annotations, translation studies, and significant historical value. However, there is limited on English translation, and the number of foreign research outcomes is even more limited. In terms of maritime trade, **Huang (2017)** points out the policy of marine trade and folk marine consciousness through examples, exploring the establishment of the era of Song and Yuan marine trade. **Wang (2017)** traced back the maritime exchanges between Samboja and China during the Song Dynasty by combining historical materials, revealing the important role in economic and trade relations between China and South Asia, the Middle East, and the West. In terms of ancient transportation, **Wan (2017)** pointed out that *Chu-fan-chi* belongs to ancient Chinese and foreign transportation historical works, which is an important work for Song Dynasty maritime transportation, **Wan (2017)** pointed out that *Chu-fan-chi* belongs to ancient Chinese and foreign transportation historical works, which is an important work for Song Dynasty maritime transportation and foreign relations. In terms of annotations, scholars such as **Chen (2011)**, **Xue (2020)** and **Yang (2020)** conducted academic textual research, error correction, and supplementary annotations on the countries mentioned in *Chu-fan-chi*, greatly facilitating readers’ understanding of the original work. In terms of historical value, **Mo (2017)** pointed out that the work systematic record of the Maritime Silk Road in China provides detailed accounts

of the geography, transportation, products, and customs of overseas countries and regions. Sun (2016) pointed out that *Chu-fan-chi* is not only a reference book used by merchants for trade but also an original material for scholars to study the ancient Maritime Silk Road. In terms of translation studies, Wang (2015) explored the unique charm of Sino-Western cultural exchanges by reviewing the development process of the translation and annotation of *Chu-fan-chi*, while Gu (2010) characterized the development of translation and annotation as “a transnational project”.

Generally speaking, the relevant research on *Chu-fan-chi* focuses on “history” and a wide distribution across various disciplines. However, compared to other classics on the Maritime Silk Road, research on its English translation and dissemination remains scarce. However, in the context of the country’s initiation to construct the Maritime Silk Road and the promotion of English translation of classics, the English translation of marine classics will inevitably shine with new brilliance.

3. The Field and Network Construction in the Translation of *Chu-Fan-Chi*

This study considers the Maritime Silk Road classic *Chu-fan-chi* as a translation product that integrates societal, cultural, and capital elements, presenting it as a case of foreign translation of classical literature. By delving into the field where translation activities occur and the formation of translation social networks, the study explores the production process, translation models, as well as the dissemination of English translations.

3.1. The Field Involved in English Translation of *Chu-Fan-Chi*

Under Bourdieu’s (1993) field theory, field refers to the network and configuration of objective relations between positions (Gong, 2009), and the members of a field engage in social practices according to the corresponding rules of the field (Xing & Chen, 2020). As a specific form of a field, the translation field is interconnected and mutually constrained with other fields such as politics, economy, and culture, ultimately leading to the formation of translation products (Xing, Li, & Zhang, 2019). This chapter focuses on the two fields of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi*: the field of maritime Silk Road classics and the field of sinology to explore the construction of translation products and translation activities within the cultural context.

3.1.1. The Field of Marine Classics

Marine civilization refers to a socio-cultural phenomenon that has facilitated human development in economic development, social systems, ideologies, spirits, and arts primarily due to its unique marine culture in human history. Western civilizations, have flourished by virtue of water and flourished by relying on the sea. Meanwhile, China’s marine culture originated in primitive society, flourished during the Sui and Tang periods, reached its peak during the Song

and Yuan dynasties, and culminated in the early Ming Dynasty when Zheng He's seven voyages to the Western Seas were conducted (Liu & Liu, 2015). During this period, brilliant marine classics were also cultivated. Traditional scholarship has not provided a clear definition of marine classics, and most related discussions refer to marine-related classics as marine classics, with travelogues and geographical works as the main categorized literature (Yue & Chen, 2022).

As a social and cultural activity, translation is inevitably influenced by the historical context of society (Chi & Xu, 2021). Since the 19th century, with the peak of colonial expansion activities of Western countries relying on geographical advantages and nautical technology, Western interest in Chinese social language and culture has been driven by colonial interests in China. Missionaries, Western diplomats, and sinologists have become the main group of translation, while institutions, churches, publishers, and newspapers founded by foreigners have evolved into entities for cultural exchange between China and the West. However, maritime classics are difficult to translate accurately due to their wide range of categories, numerous technical terms, and challenging source text. Additionally, some classics are ancient, making it challenging for translators to understand the classical Chinese of the source text and convey it to readers. These conditions have hindered the acquisition of more capital for Chinese maritime classics in the Western world. At the same time, the utilitarianism trend in the 19th century also influenced the translators' choice of source texts. Driven by the strategy of colonial expansion relying on navigation, Western scholars developed a strong interest in nautical classics (Chi & Xu, 2021), and many overseas sinologists and scholars began to translate Chinese maritime classics. In this context, *Chu-fan-chi* has attracted the attention of foreign scholars.

3.1.2. The Field of Sinology

In the tradition of European Sinology, German Sinology, with its late start, significant fluctuations, and rapid development, stands out due to its large scale and strength (Zhang, 1994). Due to the vital transformation of Europe in the 19th century, there was an urgent need to cultivate talents who understood China's political, geographical and cultural information. Therefore, scholars, diplomats, merchants, and others flocked to China, promoting the development of Sinology. In this period, European Sinology was no longer the missionary era, but evolved from it. Consequently, the Sinology field was, to a certain extent, dependent on the political field or the power field, and diplomats and scholars engaged in Sinological research and translation of Chinese classics primarily aimed to accumulate "cultural capital" and "social capital" to serve their country (Wang, 2020). During this period, German Sinology transformed being dominated by amateur Sinologists to Sinology within Orientalism, and then to academic Sinology represented by Kubler and Hirth. Meanwhile, the number of Sinology-related literature, primarily in English, increased significantly, highlighting the academic function of translated Sinological classics in native countries. The scope of Sinological research gradually expanded, and German Sinol-

ogy achieved remarkable achievements in philology and the study of Chinese history (Li, 2017), particularly in the history of science and technology, covering astronomy, geography, and traditional Chinese medicine.

The American Studies of China originated from missionaries coming to China. The missionaries interpreted modern Chinese history from the opposite perspective between Chinese and Western civilizations, believing that the Eastern civilization was stagnant before the arrival of the West and was awakened by Westerners (Wu & Yu, 2023). If European Sinology embodied a longing for Chinese culture and exchanges between the different nations, then the practicality-oriented American Sinology took its interests and needs into consideration (Hou, 2021). From the 19th to the 20th century, due to the historical background, American Sinology was closely related to the expansion and plunder of capitalism, policies and international initiations, ushering in the transition from “traditional Sinology” to “Chinese Studies”.

To sum up, European and American Sinology have different starting points, budding reasons, and research characteristics. However, it is undeniable that both Europe and the United States have developed a profound interest in the ancient country, and the maritime classic *Chu-fan-chi* is precisely a product of the Sinology field.

3.2. The Actor-Network Construction in English Translation of *Chu-Fan-Chi*

This section provides a detailed analysis of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* from both internal and external perspectives, exploring how human agents such as authors and translators acquire capital and construct the network for the translation and dissemination of the work. It also discusses the roles played by publishers, readers, and other actors involved in the translation process.

3.2.1. The Construction of the Internal Actor's Network

The construction of internal actors primarily comprises human agents, particularly the author and translator, as well as non-human actors represented by the source text and the translated version. These actors become significant factors in enabling translation products to acquire capital within the field, shape their translation network and thereby lay the foundation for the English translation of the Maritime Silk Road classic *Chu-fan-chi*.

1) The writer of the source text and the capital

Chu-fan-chi was written by Zhao Rushi (1170-1231), who was the eighth-generation descendant of Emperor Taizong of the Song Dynasty. The Song Dynasty, as the golden age of the Maritime Silk Road, attached importance to maritime trade and provided Zhao Rushi with the historical background for his creation, then his role as the Chief of the Maritime Trade Bureau directly facilitated his access to foreign maps, consultation with foreign merchants, and study of relevant literature.

The number of overseas countries, types of products, and exotic folk customs

recorded in the book complement the lack of historical records and elaborate on the concise details, serving as a key for both Chinese and foreign merchants and scholars to understand different cultures. Due to its extremely high value, the author of *Chu-fan-chi* has gained symbolic capital, and his work has also been valued for its cultural capital.

2) The source text and the capital

During the Southern Song Dynasty, when the author Zhao Rushi lived, overseas merchants gathered in ports such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou in large numbers and in an endless stream to expand financial resources (Yang, 2007). Overseas trade flourished unprecedentedly, and cultural exchanges between China and the West flourished, which formed the background for the creation of the source text.

The source text is divided into two volumes. The first volume records the customs of various countries from Japan in the east to Somalia in East Africa, Morocco in North Africa, and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, which also records the distances and durations from Quanzhou to overseas countries, showcasing the colorful exotic customs for readers. The second volume describes the resources of overseas countries, including flowers, spices, jewelry from their origins, appearances, uses, and effects in detail. It is rich and specific in content, becoming a reference work for later generations. The cultural capital of this marine classic is reflected in its unique geographical value, economic history and cultural value.

3) The translators and their capital

The English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* was translated by the German sinologist Friedrich Hirth and American sinologist Rockhill, both of whom are renowned figures in sinology. Friedrich Hirth was responsible for translating the main part of the source text from 1885 to 1898, while William W. Rockhill revised and examined the translation.

Friedrich Hirth (1845-1927), a famous German sinologist, was praised as “a pioneer in the establishment of academic sinology at the end of the 19th century” (Zhang, 1994). He arrived in China in 1870 and served at the Chinese Customs and then as the President of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1885 to 1887 and returned to Germany in 1895, spending a total of approximately 21 years in China (Cheng, 2011). As a scholar, Hirth was proficient in German, English, French, Chinese, Greek, Latin, Turkic, and other languages. He conducted in-depth research in areas such as the history of Sino-Western relations, the history of the Xiongnu and art (Wang, 2015). His multiple interests laid the foundation for his translation activities.

William W. Rockhill (1854-1914) was born in Philadelphia. He served as a second-class clerk at the American Legation in 1884, explored Tibet from 1887 to 1891, served as the U.S. Minister to China from 1905 to 1909, and as the U.S. Minister to Russia from 1909 to 1911. Rockhill was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society and the American Geographical Society, and was a renowned scholar-diplomat (Wang 2015). He spent a total of 15 years in China, proficient in

English, French, Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and other languages. His research mainly focused on the history of Sino-foreign relations, the studies of Mongolia and Tibet, and the study of national policy.

Western sinologists generally tend to favor academic translation, which is faithful, fluent and full of annotations many annotations (Wang, 2019), the same as translators Hirth and Rockhill. The profound knowledge, rigorous academic attitude, and excellent language skills of the two translators are the fundamental guarantee of the academic value of the English translation. Their educational experiences and multilingual abilities formed the foundation for their translation activities and accumulated cultural capital. The diverse experiences of diplomats in China accumulated social and cultural capital for their translation.

4) The English translation and the capital

The English translation of *Chu-fan-chi*, which combines translation and research, took 26 years to be fully published in 1911. The translation, totaling 288 pages, not only includes the translation of the source text but also provides various information beyond the text, especially the translator's preface, introduction, annotations, etc. Apart from the source text translation, the English version is mainly divided into four parts: the first part is the translator's preface, introducing the background of the work and the author's information; the second part is introduction, mainly explaining the social background, cultural connotations, and the origin of book editions involved in the translation, totaling 39 pages; the third part is the translation of the source text, totaling 194 pages; and the fourth part is the appendix, totaling 45 pages. This English translation, characterized by its significant academic, textual, and readability, is not only translating the source text but also providing supplementary explanations through annotations and other paratextual information.

The symbolic capital of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* mainly relies on three aspects: 1) the transformation between the capital of the source text and the author; 2) the sinologist identities of the two translators in their collaborative mode of communication and interaction with publishers; 3) the academic nature of the translation itself and its content of Sino-Western exchanges, which enhance its appeal through the important concept "maritime" in Western culture. From this perspective, the translation capital primarily manifests as a discourse symbolic capital in the field of foreign literary translation. The formation and accumulation of this capital can promote the identity of classical texts and simultaneously react to the translator's symbolic capital (Liu, 2021).

3.2.2. The Construction of the External Actor's Network

The external network mainly consists of publishers and readers. Unlike the internal network, although the external network does not directly participate in translation activities, it injects vitality into them and affects the construction and dissemination of translated works.

1) The publisher network construction

In 1911, Rockhill utilized his position in St. Petersburg to negotiate with the

Imperial Academy of Sciences regarding publication, and in September, the translation was published by the Imperial Academy of Sciences, thus facilitating the complete publication of the translation (Wang, 2015). As the highest scientific and academic institution in Russia, the Imperial Academy of Sciences has a long history and the status of a national institution, with supporting institutions such as libraries, museums and laboratories. The publisher, which specializes in printing the monographs, textbooks, academic journals, newspapers, and novels of academicians, is one of the few publishers that could print Chinese characters.

It is evident that publishers play a crucial role in the translation and publication process of this translation, not only determining the format of publication but also restricting the final product in terms of content, structure, and typesetting (Ji & Liu, 2021). The sinologist Rockhill utilized his social capital accumulated through his official status and academic reputation to attract the symbolic capital of publishers. In turn, the publishers converted their economic capital and symbolic capital into translation capital through their role in the translation world (Liu, 2021). Therefore, the Imperial Academy of Sciences, as the publisher of *Chu-fan-chi*, accumulated substantial social capital, symbolic capital, and economic capital in the translation field due to its academic rigor and inclusiveness, promoting the overseas translation and dissemination of the translation.

2) Book reviews and the capital

Scholar Xie (1999) explained literary translation by stating that “translations help readers recognize the value of the original work, and only through the acceptance of readers can literary translation achieve its purpose of communication.” Therefore, reviews from readers are crucial factors in measuring the translation and dissemination effect of translation products. Due to the professionalism, authority, and research nature of *Chu-fan-chi*, the reader is primarily composed of scholars with professional qualifications. After the publication of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* in 1911, it attracted the attention of scholars from various countries, and a total of seven book reviews were produced in the following nine years, from London to New York, Paris to Shanghai (Table 3).

Table 3. Book reviews of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi*.

Reviewer	Status	Country	Journal	Time
P. Pelliot	Sinologist	France	T'ong pao	1912.06
L. C. Hopkins	Sinologist	United Kingdom	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society	1912.10
C. O. Blagden	Sinologist	United Kingdom	Journal of the Royal Geographical Asiatic Society	1913.01
E. H. P.	Sinologist	United States	American Geographical Journal	1913.04
William Churchill	Scholar	United States	Bulletin of the American Geographical Society	1913.04

Continued

George F. Kunz	mineralogist	United States	American Association for the Advancement of Science	1913.11
Kenneth Scott Latourette	Scholar	United States	The American History Review	1921.07

The book reviews of the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi* by well-known newspapers, magazines, and scholars from various countries have played a significant role in promoting its overseas dissemination, potentially influencing readers' reading and purchasing decisions (Wang, 2017). As shown in **Table 3**, the reviewers are dominated by professional scholars, especially sinologists. The symbolic capital of the reviewers is interconnected with readers, translators, newspapers, and magazines, forming a closed loop of reader acceptance and feedback, laying a solid foundation for the dissemination of the translation.

4. Translators' Habitus Reflected in the Translation Process of *Chu-Fan-Chi*

A translator's habitus is a system of disposition tendency formed through education and training in previous social practices, which is the structuring of an individual's early social experience on one's personality (Liu & Zhang, 2020). The source text of *Chu-fan-chi* has profound cultural connotations, involving a wide range of knowledge systems such as customs, trade knowledge, and natural resources, with concise and profound. The translator's sinological background provides enough knowledge for translation activities and shapes the translator's habitus.

4.1. Reconstructing Historical Background with a Focus on Subjective Visibility

The complexity and specificity of the translation process directly lead to the reconstruction and interaction of multiple subjects in historical contexts. As a typical Silk Road classic, *Chu-fan-chi* has a unique historical context for its creation and interpretation. In the process of translating the work into English, translators Hirth and Rockhill aimed to provide readers with an immersive reading experience. They constructed the background knowledge and structural context of the source text through a detailed introduction, providing possibilities for the interaction and communication among multiple subjects including translators, readers, publishers, and the original author, which highlights the subjectivity of the translator in the translation process, the visibility of the original author, the role of the publisher and the acceptability of the readers.

Through information supplementation and contextual construction, an introduction written by translators provides readers with an important "pre-comprehension experience" (Ji & Liu, 2021) for reading and accepting the

main text. In a 39-page introduction (Figure 2), Rockhill reviewed the history of Sino-foreign relations from ancient times to the 20th century in chronological order. He devoted a significant portion (pages 1-35) to citing Western works to illustrate Europe's understanding of the East during the ancient Greek and Roman periods, and then used Chinese historical materials to explore the exchanges between China and various overseas countries before the creation of *Chu-fan-chi*, reaching from South Asia to East Africa in the west, Japan in the east, and Europe in the north. Among them, there are many records of place names of various countries with fluent translations and detailed annotations (Wang, 2015). However, such a classic chronicle (Mo, 2017) has long been neglected by the world, with only a little attention in the Song dynasty. Rockhill believes that the reason why geographical works are neglected, fail to satisfy popular tastes, or are marginalized is the prevalence of Confucianism from the 12th to 13th centuries. The Confucian sages described understanding foreign countries as an "obscure and unprofitable hobby." Additionally, the translator also discussed the origin and development of the book's editions, which reflect the importance attached to it by scholars of various dynasties. At the end of the introduction, Rockhill praised the invaluable nature of the book, considering the original work as the most crucial source regarding the situation of countries and tribes on the maritime trade route between China and Arabia (Wang, 2015).

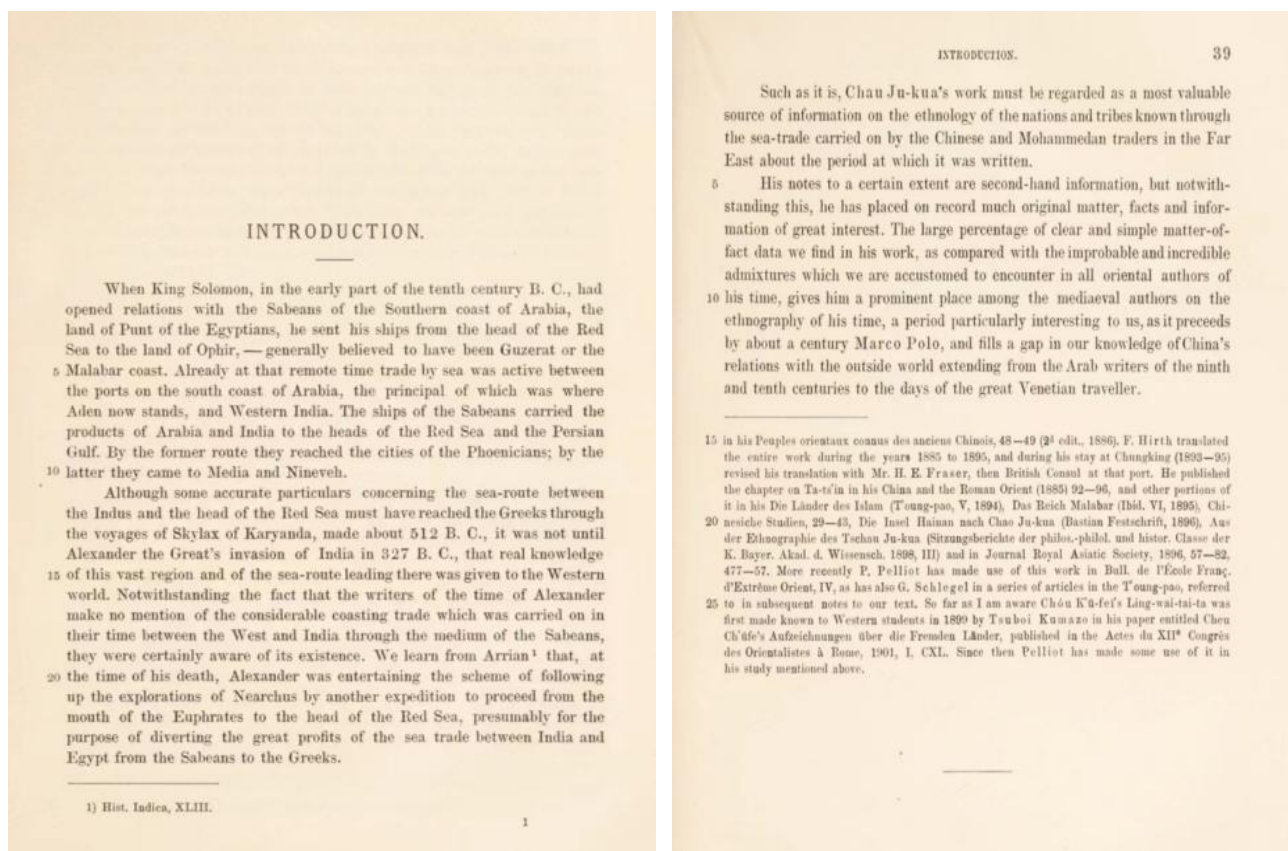


Figure 2. Introduction in *Chu-fan-chi*.

Through objective interpretation and reconstruction of historical backgrounds, this long introduction not only demonstrates the sinologist Rockhill's familiarity with Far Eastern affairs, rigorous academic attitude, and superb literary skills, but also serves as a cultural window for readers to understand the historical facts of Song dynasty, promoting positive communication and interaction between readers, authors, and translators.

4.2. Supplementing Annotated Information to Fulfill Reader Expectations

“Annotations”, especially those of classic works, provide the most comprehensive materials (Jin, 2014). Through annotations, translators Hirth and Rockhill have culturally interpreted and contextually enriched the source text of *Chu-fan-chi* (Que & Liu, 2023), achieving the interaction between multiple subjects, texts, as well as diverse cultures (Ji & Liu, 2021). In the translation of *Chu-fan-chi*, annotations (primarily footnotes) account for more than one-third of the content, with “abundant and diverse footnotes” being a distinctive feature of the version.

As shown in **Table 4**, the translator has used numerous footnotes to provide detailed supplements to the main text. These annotations serve several functions: First, they conduct intertextual textual research on the original text by referencing relevant works. For example, “王侯唐姓” is translated as “The King bears a Chinese surname,” and the annotation cites *Sung-shi* to explain the expression (**Table 4**), pointing out famous surnames in *Kiau-chi* during the Song Dynasty, which not only verifies the authenticity of the original work but also enhances the reader's reading experience and understanding of the exotic culture. Secondly, they supplement relevant background information about the text. Sinologists Friedrich Hirth and William Rockhill use footnotes to help readers build a knowledge network. For example, for the place name “占城”, the translator translates it as “Chan-ch'öng” and adds an annotation explaining its geographical location and historical origin. This approach satisfies the interactive requirements between the source and the target culture in the translation of classics (Wang, 2012). Furthermore, as a work integrating translation and research (Gu, 2010), the translator also evaluates the original work to reflect the translator's subjectivity and highlight the role of the translator in the translation process, bringing readers and translators in “synchronicity.”

Table 4. Annotations employed in the English Translation of *Chu-fan-chi*.

Source Text	Target Text	Annotation	Function of Annotation
王侯唐姓	The King bears a Chinese surname.	Sung-Shi, 488, supplies some of the Chinese surnames of the kings of <i>kiau-chi</i> . We find among them the well-known family name of Ting (丁), Li (黎), Li (李) and ch'on (陈).	Intertextual function

Continued

欽州	K'in-chóu	K'in-chóu in Lién-chóu-fu in the extreme west of Kuang-tung province. It was the nearest Chinese port to Kiau-chī territory and the center of trade with the country. See supra pp.6 and 22.	Complementary Function
有山曰無弄， 釋迦涅槃示化 銅像在焉。	There is a mountain called Wu-nung (where) Shi-kia (i.e., Sakya-muni Buddha) (after this) nie-pan manifested himself (示化), the event being commemorated by a bronze elephant (at this place).	This paragraph is very obscure, and seems to contain a strange jumble of misstatements for a writer who must have somewhat familiar with Buddhist history. The buddha Gautama is said to have entered the womb of his mother under the shape of the elephant. I do not understand how we can have shown himself after his death under this shape. The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra manifested himself riding an elephant on O-mi-shan in Ssī-ch'uan, and a great bronze elephant commemorates the event. Some such manifestation by a P'u-sa may have taken place at T'ōng-liu-mei.	Evaluative Function
國人多姓蒲	A large proportion of the people of this country are surnamed P'u.	P'u stands for Bū, an abbreviation of Abū (father), which proceeds so many Arabic names.	Discriminative Function

4.3. Spreading Exotic Culture and Interpreting the Value of the Silk Road

The maritime Silk Road classic *Chu-fan-chi*, as an encyclopedia of overseas countries, possesses unique cultural, historical, and exotic features that require annotations in its English translation to enhance the historical depth, semantic layers and interpretive authority of the translation (Zhu & Liu, 2019). Under the influence of pragmatism in the 19th century, sinologists Hirth and Rockhill chose the detailed maritime classic *Chu-fan-chi* as their research text, aiming to materialize the thought of Chinese foreign relations and trade. In the translation process, translator placed readers in a cultural context to explore the profound meaning. In the English translation of *Chu-fan-chi*, translators Friedrich Hirth and William Rockhill authentically and vividly conveyed cultural information about overseas countries to Western readers, primarily through explaining source language cultural phenomena, providing collateral evidence for the described culture and compensating for cultural deficits to promote the integration of diverse cultures, interpreting the value of the Silk Road (Ji & Liu, 2021).

When the source culture clashes with the target culture's connotations and the implicit cultural background information hinders the reading experience of the target readers, the translators will construct the cultural phenomena of the source language through interpretation (Ji & Liu, 2021).

Example 1:

ST: 服饰飲食略与中國同

TT: The clothing and food of the people are practically the same as in the Middle Kingdom.

Analysis: In Example 1, translators translated “中國” into “the middle kingdom” through free translation. During the Song Dynasty, the concept “中國” was not the same as “中国” today. The former’s meaning dates back to the Western Zhou Dynasty, referring to “a country that occupies the center of the earth.” After the unification of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, it was endowed with the meaning of the central dynasty, emphasizing its unity and regionality. Generally speaking, it refers to the most civilized, prosperous, and flourishing place. The underlined part, on a deeper level, has accumulated extensive, profound and inclusive historical and cultural values (Wang & Ji, 2020). In contrast, the latter “中国” now refers to the abbreviation of “the People’s Republic of China,” emphasizing sovereignty and nationality. Since place names are technical terms, translators must ensure accurate translation while considering the needs of readers. In the example, on the one hand, translators should retain the geographical meaning of “中國” as “the kingdom,” on the other hand, they should convey its unique cultural information of “central” to allow readers to appreciate the charm of foreign cultures.

Furthermore, the cultural imagery contained in the source text lacks equivalents in Western culture, which can directly affect the reading experience of the target readers (Ji & Liu, 2021). To address this issue, translators employ translation methods such as “transliteration with annotations” or “free translation with annotations,” which not only preserve the cultural characteristics of the source text but also enhance the reading experience of readers with culturally compensatory explanations. For example, when translating the term “相公”, the translators rendered it as “Siang-Kung.” In order to compensate cultural gap in the West, they added the annotations “minister of state” and “denomination of the first class of the nobility in Malay governments”, bridging the communication between Western readers and unique Eastern cultures.

4.4. Employing Diverse Text for an Intertextual Approach

In the process of translating *Chu-fan-chi*, translators extensively quoted relevant Chinese and Western literature, providing a multi-dimensional and detailed interpretation of the work. As shown in **Table 5** below, the translators cited a total of 263 Western literature, primarily from countries like France, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, and Sweden with 57 Chinese literature, primarily official histories of the Ming Dynasty and geographic biographies, as well as a map related to the geography of overseas countries. These references span from the Tang Dynasty to the late Qing Dynasty (**Table 5**), demonstrating the profound academic attainments of the two sinologists. The English version has also become a vital work for historical research of the Maritime Silk Road, which can be said that Hirth and Rockhill almost gathered all the authoritative Western works that were available and convincing at that time (Wang, 2015).

Table 5. The relevant work cited in *Chu-fan-chi*.

	Category	Example	Number
Annotated Reference	The Travel Notes in Middle Ages	<i>The Travels of Marco Polo, Bo Wu Zhi, etc.</i>	263
	Western Work	<i>History of Sumatra, History of the Malay Archipelago, etc.</i>	
	Modern Westerners' works	<i>Yingya Shenglan, The Customs of Cambodida, etc.</i>	
	Modern Western Sinologists' Works		
Chinese Work	Official History	<i>The History of Song Dynasty, Tongdian, etc.</i>	57
	Geographical Biography	<i>Lingwai Daida, Atlas and Description of the Countries beyond the Seas, etc.</i>	

In the introduction, the translator cited 80 Western literature and 31 Chinese literature, tracing back the development process of Chinese and foreign exchange history, demonstrating their rigorous scholarly attitude as sinologists. Meanwhile, translators integrated the translation process of *Chu-fan-chi* into the study of sinology, taking historical fact restoration, supplementary annotations, and textual research as entry points, deeply interpreting background information such as the history of exchanges between China and overseas countries, the author's identity, relationships with other maritime classics, and the origin of editions. This comprehensively shows the conditions for the creation of the source text and translators' motivation, effectively broadening readers' cognitive dimension and knowledge acceptability of the translation.

In the main text, translators presented the interconnectedness of multiple texts by showing other relevant classics. They explained the origin of *Chu-fan-chi* and various classics to reduce the barriers between the source language and the target language context. Therefore, scholars believe that *Chu-fan-chi*, whether in terms of the number of overseas countries recorded, the abundance of products, or the detailed content, is undoubtedly a significant material for cultural exchanges.

5. Conclusion

The Chinese classics not only carry the cultural genes of the Chinese nation but also serve as a historical mirror with a shared future for mankind (Zhong & Yang, 2019). The birth and English translation of maritime classics have their own specific contexts and only by placing the translation and dissemination in society can we better promote cross-cultural integration. This study, based on the perspective of socio-translation studies, takes the three core concepts in Bourdieu's field theory and combines them with Latour's actor-network theory, aims to systematically describe the translation process of the maritime classic *Chu-fan-chi* from both macro and micro levels. After in-depth research into the cultural connotations of the maritime Silk Road classic *Chu-fan-chi*, the sinologists Friedrich Hirth and William Woodville Rockhill deepen the readers' understanding of the source text through reconstructing historical backgrounds,

supplementing annotated information, disseminating foreign cultures and co-presenting texts. The habitus employed by the two sinologists with academic approach has achieved interactions among multiple subjects and diverse cultures, which helps target readers gain a deeper understanding of Silk Road classics (Jin & Xu, 2023). In the process of translating maritime Silk Road classics, translators should not only emphasize “translation” but also “interpretation.” “Translation” refers to the process where translators complete excellent translations with professional academic attainments, rich disciplinary knowledge and rigorous academic attitudes. While “interpretation” refers to recognizing the significant value of maritime Silk Road classics, fully exploring the charm of Silk Road culture through English translations and dissemination, and actively promoting the internationalization of outstanding Chinese culture (Que & Liu, 2023).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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