

FINNISH KULLERVO AND CHINESE KUNGFU

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Abstract

Introduction: There are many important Finnish plays but, due to language barrier, Finnish drama is seldom exported, particularly to Hong Kong and China..

Objective: To find out differences in mentality between the Finnish and Chinese peoples by comparing the partially localized Chinese translation of Aleksis Kivi's tragedy, *Kullervo*, with genuine Chinese martial arts literature.

Methodology:

1. Chapman Chen has translated the Finnish classic, *Kullervo*, directly from Finnish into Chinese and published it in 2005.
2. In Chen's Chinese translation, cultural markers are domesticated. On the other hand, values, characterization, plot, and rhythm remain unchanged.
3. According to Gideon Tory, the translator has to strike a golden mean between the norms of the source language and the target language.
4. Lau Tingci lists and explicates the essential components of martial arts drama.
5. According to Ehrnrooth's "Mentality", equality is the most important value in Finnish culture.

Findings:

- i. Finland emphasizes independence while China emphasizes bilateral relationships.

- ii. The Finnish people loves freedom, but Gai Sizung argues that the Chinese people is slavish.
- iii. Finns are mature while many Chinese are, according to Sun Lung-kee (“The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture”; “The Deep Structure of Chinese Sexuality”), fixated at the oral and anal stages.
- iv. Finnish society highly values equality while Chinese interpersonal relationships are extremely complicated and hierachical. If *Kullervo* were a genuine Chinese kungfu story, the plot would be much more convoluted.

Conclusion:

The differences between Finnish and Chinese mentalities are so significant that partially localized or adapted Chinese translations of Finnish drama may still be able to introduce Finnish culture to the Chinese audience.

Key Words

Finnish Culture, Chinese Martial Arts Fiction, Aleksis Kivi, *Kullervo*, Drama Translation

Hakusanat

Suomalainen Kulttuuri, Kiinalainen Kungfu Kaunokirjallisuus, Aleksis Kivi, *Kullervo*, Näytelmän Käännös

Introduction: There are a lot of important Finnish plays but just as noted by Hanele Koivunen, due to language barrier, Finnish drama is seldom exported, in particular, to Hong Kong and China. Besides Aleksis Kivi’s¹ tragedy, *Kullervo*², only three

¹ Aleksis Kivi (1834-1872) is arguably the greatest Finnish national author. He was born into a humble tailor's family in 1834. His first play, *Kullervo* (1859) won a competition held by the Finnish Literature Society. During his short lifetime, Kivi published twelve plays, a collection of poems, and *Seitsemän Veljestä* (Seven Brothers), a novel which he wrote for ten years. Kivi died of sickness and poverty at the age of 38 on the last day of December in 1872. In much the same way as Shakespeare’s plays standardized the English language, Kivi’s body of work laid the foundation for standard Finnish

Finnish plays have been translated into Chinese, and no academic research has been done on Finnish-Chinese comparative drama.

Objective: To find out differences in mentality between the Finnish and Chinese peoples by comparing the partially localized Chinese translation of Aleksis Kivi's classic, *Kullervo*, with genuine Chinese martial arts literature.

Methodology:

1. Chapman Chen has translated *Kullervo* directly from Finnish into Chinese and published it in 2005. The Chinese title of the book is *Wuhoi Jansau Luk* [Love and hate around the lake and the sea]. This is the first time when Aleksis Kivi's drama has ever been translated into Chinese.
2. Because of huge differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures, cultural markers in Chen's translation are localized in order to make it acceptable to the Chinese audience. The world of *Kullervo* is partly relocated to the ancient world of Chinese martial arts fiction, where top swordsmen fight and love. Characters' names are sinologized so that they carry ancient Chinese kungfu associations.

and contributed to the creation of a national identity for the Finnish people.

2 *Kullervo* is about the extreme misfortune of its title character, a victim of the feud between his father, Kalervo and his uncle, Unto. At the beginning of the play, Unto has ravaged his brother's house and killed many people. Kullervo, the only son of Kalervo and a boy-servant known as Kimmo are the only survivors of the attack. Both of these young boys are taken as slaves by Unto. Kullervo's only joy in life is to think of revenge. When he grows up, Kullervo is sold as a slave to his friend Ilmarinen whose wife he subsequently kills for insulting him. Running away from the household into a forest, he finds out that his parents are still alive.

Failing to fit himself into this newly found family, he wanders around, and seduces a young virgin whom he meets in the woods. However, this girl turns out to be his sister, and when she realizes her shameful act, she commits suicide by throwing herself into a river. Joined by other enemies (Tiera, Käpsä, Wiksari, Tiimanen) of Unto, Kullervo burns down Unto's house and kills all the people there. He then runs back to his parents' place, only to find that they have already perished out of grief for their dead daughter, and that the only survivor, Kimmo, has become mad. At the end of the play, Kullervo kills himself with his own sword in front of Ilmarinen and the latter's two righteous and kind-hearted friends, Väinämöisen and Lemminkäinen, the three of whom are on their way to the Northland to snatch back a treasure known as Sampo. They bury Kullervo's body below a tree next to the rapids.

For example, “Kullervo” is translated as Gu Gimhon, “gim” meaning sword and “hon” meaning cold. “Ajatar,” a forest evil spirit, is translated as Hungfa Gwaimou (red flower ghost mother), a bad character in Loeng Jyusang’s (1957) famous martial arts novel, *Baakfaat Moleoi Zyun* (The legend of the white-haired monstress). Finnish idioms and expressions are translated as their Chinese dynamic equivalents, for example, “*nopeasti, kuin pinokärppä pieni* [as quickly as an ermine]” is translated as “as quickly as an arrow” (Act 2, Sc. 3). Finnish religious and mythological allusions are translated as their dynamic equivalents. For example, the Finnish hell, *Tuonela*, is translated either as *Wongzyun* [yellow river] or *mingfu* [the dark mansion]. Finnish swearwords are also rendered as their Chinese dynamic equivalents. For example, “*havitys ja kuolema* [destruction and death]” is translated as *haamгаа caan* [eradicate the entire family with a spade]. On the other hand, values, characterization, plot, and rhythm in the original text remain unchanged. In this way, *Kullervo* is partially localized.

3. According to Gideon Toury, the translator has to strike a balance between the norms of the source language and the target language. Thus the Chinese translation of *Kullervo* sacrifices part of the original form in order to get across its contents.
4. Lau Tingci’s *Mouhap Pinkek Beikap* [An esoteric book on the writing of martial arts drama] lists and explicates the essential components of Chinese martial arts drama.
6. Sun Lung-Kee’s “The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture”, using Freudian theories, argues that the Chinese are fixated on the oral and anal phases of personality development and have not yet attained the phallic/Oedipal phase.
7. According to Zacharias Topelius, the Finnish people love freedom. According to Jari Ehrnrooth, equality is the most important Finnish cultural value

(208-210).

Findings

- i. Finland stresses individuality, self-sufficiency, and independence (cf. Salonen ja Lehtinen), while China stresses collectivity and bilateral relationships (cf. Sun Lung-kee, “The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture” 32). Chinese culture is so moralistic that the heroes of Chinese martial arts fiction are almost without exception benevolent, loyal, propriety, righteous, and filial (cf. Lau Tingci 46-50), for example, Gwok Jing in Gam Jung’s (Louis Cha) *Sediu Jinghung Zyun* [The legend of eagle-shooting heroes], and Syun Bouji in Gu Lung’s *Wunfaa Saaigim Luk* [Watering flowers and rinsing swords]. Contrastively, Kullervo is an impetuous and independent anti-hero, who kills the wife of his master, has sex with his own sister, fights with his father, and does not bother to bury his parent when they die.
- ii. The Finnish people love freedom, while the Chinese people, as argued by Gai Sizung, a high-ranking contemporary Chinese official and scholar, are slavish. For example, Kullervo kills his master’s wife because the woman calls him a slave, whereas the Chinese are accustomed to the master-slave relationship. In fact, during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Chinese officials actually called themselves slave in front of the emperor in both reality and fiction.
- iii. The Finns are mature, while many Chinese, according to Muensterbergin, Weaklandin, Solomonin³, and Sun Lung-keen (“The Deep Structure of

³ According to Solomonin (1971: 54, 125-126), the Chinese in general have not achieved the Oedipal stage. Whenever there is a conflict between the Chinese boy and his father, he always seeks refuge behind his mother. The typical Chinese father-son relationship is one of “master-slave.” And this is the prototype for every Chinese relationship. Equality is an underdeveloped area in Chinese culture.

Chinese Culture”; “The Deep Structure of Chinese Sexuality”), are fixated on the oral and anal stages. The Chinese eat any kind of animal. The breakout of SARS in 2003 was precisely due to Mainland Chinese killing and eating civet cats indiscriminately (cf. Hsiao). In one of the most important Chinese martial arts fiction writers, Gu Lung (1938-1985)’s martial arts novel, *Cytdoi Soenggiu* [The Talented Twins] (1967), there is a character known as Big Mouth Lee, who is addicted to eating human flesh. In Gu Lung’s *Tinngai Mingjyt Dou* [The Remotest Corner of the World, A Bright Moon, and A Knife] (1975), the chef Gwok is good at cooking human meat. The Chinese mother regards her children as small children, even when they are already grown-ups, always sticking food into their mouths. Chinese toilet-training is also too loose. Young children are always allowed to wear split-pants in rural areas (and even in cities before fifteen years ago) so that they may excrete any time and anywhere they like, with the help of the grandmother or the mother, though. As a result, Chinese children are over-dependent on their mother-environment, and many Mainland Chinese lavatories are terribly dirty and many Chinese often throw rubbish around without any sense of shame. Because the Chinese are fixated on the oral and anal stages, they have not yet attained the phallic stage psychologically. So the typical Chinese do not dare to rise against their father or the authority both spiritually and physically; instead, Chinese fathers often symbolically or even physically stifle and kill their sons. This kind of view is, however, controversial. Weston La Barre (375-379) and Julia Kristeva even admire the Chinese for their oral indulgence and lenient toilet-training as an alternative to Western monotheism in religion and genital primacy in sex.

The Finnish people have attained the phallic stage. In order to become

independent, human beings need to fight with the father symbolically (cf. Sun Lung-kee, *The Chinese National Character* 209), just like Kullervo. Although according to Jari Ehrnrooth ("*Heijastuksia Kansallisesta Minästä* [Reflections upon the national ego]" ; "Mentality"), the Finnish superego is over strong⁴, the Finnish mentality values individuality and independence most and Finnish children are encouraged to be independent starting from early childhood, according to Salosen ja Lehtisen.

- iv. The Finns are in general honest and straightforward (cf. Swallow), whereas the Chinese mentality is convoluted and indirect. (For instance, before Kullervo attacks Unto's house, he says to his allies, "Wake them up first; we are not coming to slaughter swines".) Finnish society highly values equality while Chinese interpersonal relationships are extremely complicated and hierarchical. Finnish society is straightforward and simple while, according to the prominent Taiwanese essayist, Paak Joeng (25-28), the Chinese are keen on internal strifes.

If Chen's Chinese translation of *Kullervo* were a genuine Chinese martial arts story, then the plot would be infinitely more complicated. In other words, Kalevala would be territory of Sung (960-1279)- or Ming (1368-1644)-dynasty; the Northern country Pohja would be Tartar territory⁵; Ilmari's wife would be a Tartar princess; Unto would be a running dog of the Chinese dynasty; Kalervo would be Unto's kungfu schoolmate; Sampo would be a secret book of martial arts or a precious sword, for which all kungfu heroes yearn and strive; Sinipiika and Ajatar would be top kungfu masters, who struggle for the love of Ilmari; Unto would frame up Kalervo and Kimmu with

⁴ Actually, Ehrnrooth is talking about Finland after 1918

⁵ In Chinese history, Tartar tribes often attacked the Han empire from the North.

the accusation of treason before the Sung or Ming government. Väinämöinen would be a Han-Tartar hybrid, who suffers due to the conflict between the Han and Tartar races, just like Kiu Fung in Gam Jung's (Louis Cha) *Tinglung Baatbou* [Demigods and semidevils]; Lemminkäinen would be a monk falling in love with a Tartar princess, just like the monk Hoei Zuk in *Demigods and Semidevils*. Tiera, Käpsä, Wiksari, Tiimanen, and Nyyrikki would be kungfumen from different schools and each and every one of them covets Sampo. They struggle among themselves either covertly or overtly, just like characters in Gam Jung's *Smiling Proudly among Lakes and Rivers*. Chinese conspiracies and plots are darksome or full of darkness, darkness as mystery, darkness as confusion; darkness as evil. Gu Lung often writes in his works, "The most dangerous enemy is the friends closest to you."

- v. According to Lau Tingcin (118-145), in the ancient world of martial arts, there are really many different kungfu schools and gangs, and the boundaries among them are strict and clear-cut. In addition, in the world of ancient martial arts, kungfu teachers are as despotic as Chinese fathers. No wonder throughout Chinese history, there have been countless civil wars and internal massacres, while in Finnish history there has only been one major civil war⁶ (National War, 1918).

In contrast to what would happen in Chinese culture, Kullervo and his allies

⁶ Although the National War is not the only war in Finnish war, the other major wars were not among Finns themselves. For instance, the Club War (Finnish *Nuijasota*) was a 1596 Finnish peasant uprising against the exploitation by the Swedish nobility and military. The War of Great Hate (*Isoviha*) (1713-1721) took place when the Russians invaded Finland, which was then ruled by Sweden. Local government officials fled from Finland to Sweden and the Russian soldiers were extremely violent. The Finnish War (*Suomen sota*) (1808-1809) was again a war between Sweden and Russia.

do not quarrel and fight with each other until they have killed their common enemy, Unto. And then only due to drunkenness, not for profits. Although Kullervo is a marvelous fighter, he does not have a kungfu master, nor does he belong to any kungfu school. Väinämöinen and Lemminkäinen have not attended any kungfu school either. Everyone of them is a free person.

Significance

The mentality differences between Finland and China are so significant that plays like *Kullervo* had better be domesticated rather than translated straightforward. Partially adapted and localized Finnish drama can still introduce Finnish audience to the Chinese audience.

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