

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF CHINESE CULTUREMES – CARRIERS OF THE MOST SUBTLE CULTURAL ALLUSIONS – EXCERPTED FROM CHINESE CONTEMPORARY NOVELS IN ROMANIAN TRANSLATION

Iulia Elena CÎNDEA GÎȚĂ¹

Abstract

Culturemes are the markers of the source culture, which can reach the reader in the target language only through the ability of the translator, who must, in fact, be a great connoisseur of the most hidden cultural details. For the transposition of a foreign culture into a new culture, for a proper communication between them, a loan is needed, retrieval and processing of information so that it is accepted.

The motivation behind this study is to provide an overview of how to approach culturemes in the translation of works of contemporary Chinese literature in Romanian, works characterized by great linguistic and extra-linguistic generosity. In order to achieve this goal, we followed the stages of identifying the culturemes from thirty-one Chinese contemporary novels translated in Romanian; followed by creating a corpus based on fourteen categories and five equivalence methods to ensure the cultural equivalence, coherence and homogeneity of Chinese works recreated for the Romanian reader. Finally, we performed an in-depth study of a selection of culturemes from each category, with the aim of showing their distribution in the Romanian translation of Chinese fiction.

The study intends to provoke but also to help raise the awareness that translations are not only transpositions (by this we mean moving from one linguistic register to another without operating the text as part of a cultural whole, approaching it externally to all of its sources of influence from the culture in which it has been created) of a work in another language, but they have the primary role of enriching knowledge about one's culture, civilization, literature – i.e. China's cultural heritage for the present study. Culturally-aware literary translations are the most effective and most stable manner of intercultural exchange, of international prosperity of a culture, of understanding and acknowledging the cultural specifics of one nation. The intertextual references – the culturemes – studied, are part, as will be presented, of all cultural spheres, from those denoting the daily life of the Chinese, the food and basic needs, to those denoting holidays, toponymy, units of measurement, history, but also those that are politically motivated, while also spiritual, subtle, erudite, which only close study, extensive knowledge and diligent work can drive the translator to find and transfer them to the target reader.

Keywords: culturemes, contemporary Chinese literature, literary translation, literary reception, cultural transfer.

DOI: 10.24818/SIC/2021/04.01

¹ Lecturer at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Chinese Studies, email iulia.cindea@ulbsibiu.ro

1. *Genesis of the concept of cultureme*

The concept of cultureme is a relatively recent one, seldomly encountered even in translation studies, being almost unknown in the non-academic environment; added only in 2000 in the Great Dictionary of Neologisms of the Romanian language, as “the smallest unit of a phenomenon or fact of culture” (MDN '00, 2000), we can consider it as a unit bearing source culture, transferred through a literary translation to another target culture. As noted by Lungu-Badea (2004), a cultureme is not dependent on the translation process, nor on the translator, a cultureme lives in the original text, even better, taking into account the background of the receiver.

However, the term has acquired various meanings. There is a wide variety of interdisciplinary influences in the study and definition of the term cultureme, which led to the birth of a complex and ambivalent concept. We will focus, however, on its meanings in the field of translation studies, to exemplify later by addressing several culturemes in the translation of contemporary Chinese literature. In translation theory, cultureme was defined by H. Vermeer, H. Witte (1992) as follows: "by cultureme we mean a phenomenon of a society, considered by its exponents as a relevant cultural feature". Decrypting the culturemes found in Chinese literature is not an easy task, the linguistic knowledge of the Chinese language being only a small factor in the work of the Romanian translator. A serious preliminary training in Chinese culture and civilization, the baggage of the translator's general knowledge, his ability to observe, but also his attention, without which the subtleties transmitted by the author will not be recognized and thus will be lost for the reader of the target culture, are among the indispensable requirements to obtain a good translation in terms of cultural transfer.

Starting from Vermeer's *Skopos* (1978), we can think of a theory of the purpose of culturemes in translated work and find them to be the most important promoters of the transfer of culture through literature, a "soft power" of literary work, which through reading becomes a primary source of knowledge of the original cultural specificity, of favouring the construction of an intercultural discourse. In this sense, their marking and explanation (by footnotes) is a duty of the translator, their loss, even deliberately, for fear of making it difficult to read, by replacing it in translation with local terms, would be a major disservice to the purpose of universal literature to educate, to arouse cultural interest, to open minds and hearts, to eliminate preconceptions and to make us more tolerant.

2. *Research methodology*

The motivation behind this study is to provide an overview of how to approach culturemes in the translation of Chinese literature in Romanian, works characterized by great linguistic and extra-linguistic generosity.

In order to achieve this goal, we followed the stages of identifying the culturemes from 31 Chinese contemporary novels translated through direct translation in Romanian between 2000-2018; followed by creating a corpus based on 14 categories and 5 equivalence methods to ensure the cultural equivalence, coherence and homogeneity of Chinese works recreated for the Romanian reader.

Finally, we performed an in-depth study of a selection of culturemes from each category, with the aim of showing their distribution in the Romanian translation of Chinese fiction. The paper represents a practical application of the theoretical aspects of cultural translation studies, dedicating itself to the relationship between texts in their complex, linguistic and cultural expression.

It goes without saying that one of the biggest losses of a translation through an intermediate language is the cultureme, which would be the factor of the preliminary knowledge, attention and observational power of several translators, each one with their own cultural background. We also focused on the study of footnotes, because practice shows us that in the case of literary texts, culturemes are treated by footnotes, comments, glossaries. Culturemes are inserted by the author for those who meet the indispensable requirements mentioned above. Used voluntarily or involuntarily, due to its relativity and

monoculturality, the culturemes are sometimes difficult to spot even by the target audience of the original text, who belong to the same linguistic and cultural background.

In addition to the competencies of the translator, on which the fate of the cultureme depends, culturemes are also open to the social and emotional factors, being at the discretion of the social and emotional feelings of the translator at that time - they are relative - they may differ from one translation to another even by the same translator. This is also noticeable in the present study, where the explanations and annotations given by the same translator, for the same cultureme differ slightly from one work to another. Thus, there are internal and external translation factors that make it difficult to perceive, receive and transfer culturemes into the target language. What is of a particular difficulty in transferring cultureme is therefore not given by the translation of the linguistic meaning of the word or linguistic units that make up culturemes, but by the difficulty and sometimes impossibility of translating the meaning of cultureme as it is understood in the source culture and society – its monocultural and relativity characteristics being some of its essential features.

3. *Strategies of Translation - classification of equivalence methods*

Among the translation strategies suitable for culturemes, we identified five translation strategies, starting from the cultural translation evaluation model synthesized by Lungu-Badea (2004):

1. **Zero translation.** This method uses the term in *Pinyin*, in which case the translator assumes that the reader is familiar with the term, without the need for further explanation. In this case the cultureme is preserved and the cultural transfer is made, the author's intention, however, is not guaranteed to reach the target reader, this being conditioned by the knowledge of the latter.

2. **Zero translation + direct explanation in the text.** This method introduces a short explanation, even a single word, which draws the reader's attention to the presence of a cultureme, explains or clarifies to a greater or lesser extent its meaning, so that the reader does not lose its totally extralinguistic meaning or the allusion intended by the author. Through this choice, however, there is a gap between the author's voice and that of the translator, the target reader not being able to differentiate between the two. Also, this situation presents difficulties in the process of receiving the author's intention by the target reader.

3. **Cultural adaptation**, by finding a correspondent in the target language, is the naturalized method, centred on the target language and reader, by which the translator tries to convey the meaning of the cultureme by an equivalent word, which in the target language has an effect similar to that produced in the source language. Through this method, the translator will no longer transfer to the target reader the extratextual content intended by the author, thus depriving him of the chance to learn something new about the source culture, through the reading process.

4. **Cultural translation** is the method by which the translator uses a Romanian correspondent, of the term in the target language, to which he adds a footnote, which comes to save the loss of extratextual baggage intended by the author, which becomes invisible when choosing a correspondent in the target language. Even if the footnote is a strategy blamed as causing the interruption of the narrative thread, it is the clearest method by which the translator can convey the author's intention, to make his obvious intervention (as opposed to direct explanation in the text, when there is a high risk of not being able to distinguish between the words of the author and the translator), but also to educate, a role that translators should not be afraid of.

5. **Zero translation + direct explanation in the text + footnote.** The method of combining cultural translation and cultural adaptation, in which the translator makes his presence felt most in the text, but which, as we will explain in the following analyses, is an appropriate method for the Chinese text, as it allows clarification and provision of important information regarding the extratextual content of the cultureme, in addition to the brief explanation in the text. This method comes as a clear source of enriching the Romanian reader's knowledge about the target culture and is even more important in a developing stage of direct translations from Chinese into the Romanian cultural space.

A previous study (Cîndea & Riccardo, 2019) which consisted of several interviews with translators whose works are included in this study showed that there is no real consensus among translators when it comes to translating difficult terms or culturemes. A *consensus doctorum* was formed, rather spontaneously, between the translators who form the group of academic and university translators, who share their experience, check each other's options. It can also happen that the publishing house imposes the translation of a certain term, based on already existing translations, in order to ensure a consistency in the image offered to the reader. This is proven and illustrated by works translated by various Romanian translators-sinologists, and professors of Chinese Language and Literature, among whom there is a consensus in identifying, receiving, explaining and translating culturemes. Relevant in this respect are the examples:

- *Qipao* - Su Tong / Voicu, *Soții și concubine*, 2015: translation note (TN): “Traditional Chinese dress, made of woven silk of brocade type, with large or small collar, usually tight at the waist”; *În Viață*, Yu Hua / Zlotea, 2016: TN: “Qipao (cheongsam) is a typical Chinese dress, elegant, long and tight on the body”; *Cronica unui negustor de sânge*, Yu Hua / Bălan 2017: TN: “Traditional Chinese dress, with high collar, long up to the ankles and deeply split at the sides”.
- *Kang* - Jiang Rong / Rîbu, *Totemul lupului*, vol I, 2011: TN: “Brick bed under which there is a heat source”; Mo Yan / Bălan, *Baladele usturoiului din Paradis*, 2013: TN: “Brick bed that heats like a stove, existing in all houses in North China, where it is very cold in winter”; Mo Yan / Bălan, *Țara vinului*, 2014: TN: “Kang is a brick bed, used in North China, which also serves as a heating stove”; Mo Yan, / Vișan, *Broaște*, 2014: TN: “Traditional brick bed, built in the extension of the oven; Mo Yan / Bălan, *Femeia cu buchetul de flori*, 2016: TN: “Brick bed built in the extension of the oven, which heats up in winter, present in old houses in northern China, where it is particularly cold in winter”.
- *Jiefang, Eliberarea* - Mo Yan / Bălan, *Baladele usturoiului din Paradis*, 2013: TN: “This is the Liberation of 1949, followed by the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, when the Communists took power”; Mo Yan / Bălan, *Țara vinului*, 2014: TN: “It is about the Liberation of 1949, followed by the founding, on October 1, of the People's Republic of China, when the Communists took power”; Yu Hua / Zlotea, *În viață*, 2016: TN: “*Eliberarea* refers to the day of October 1, 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded”.
- *Nume de lapte* - Mo Yan / Vișan, *Broaște*, 2014: TN: “Name given to the baby in infancy, during breastfeeding”; Mo Yan / Bălan, *Femeia cu buchetul de flori*, 2016: TN: “In China, it is customary for a person to receive, throughout life, more names - at birth, in childhood, at school, in society - so the names were changed, each being considered appropriate only for that period”.

Ideally, the existence of a broad consensus between translators would make it easier for the Romanian reader to understand Chinese text, culture and literature, but would also make the work of translators easier, who often encounter difficult Chinese terminology and when dictionaries do not help and references are infinitely more obscure. The translation, especially the Chinese one, requires a solid research work, of *interrogations*, as they are called by Vișan talking about the translation of the first Romanian Chinese language teacher - Toni Radian - “the interrogations to which she subjected the Chinese lecturers when she encountered something difficult to translate, because the short stories were full of literary allusions, with verses whose author was difficult to identify, an appeal to that collective *savoir*, which did not need quotations or explanations. It was often a matter of looking for ingenious solutions, in the operation of transferring from one cultural code to another” (Revista de Traduceri Literare, no. 16, February 28, 2017).

4. Classification of Culturemes

In the attempt to form and organize the corpus of culturemes found in the studied works, they were researched as part of some categories, starting from the classification given by Lungu-Badea (2011, pp. 373-374) - simple and compound – in terms of form; historical and current - from a functional point of view. To these we have added the category of individual culturemes - belonging to an individual, either author or translator, and collectives - which are known to members of the source culture; the category

of those denoting elements of cultural studies (culture, history, literature, arts, etc.) and those technical; culturemes that denote toponymy, administrative-territorial structure; cultural heritage culturemes; culturemes of social culture, conventions, customs; culturemes that denote linguistic culture; culturemes- literary allusions - *diangu*; and the category of cultureme entered into the collective *Sapienza* of Romanians.

4.1. *The category of simple – compound, individual - collective culturemes*

The research results show that out of the total number of thirty-one works included in the study, 179 compound cultures and one hundred and eighty-two simple culturemes were found, such as:

- *Plutind pe valuri in mijlocul râului* - TN: "The beginning of the phrase floating on the waves in the middle of the river is taken from a rhapsody preserved in the manuscripts discovered at Dunhuang from Tang times (618-906), the proposed sequels being made as to echo the original context"- Mo Yan / Luca, *Obosit de viața, obosit de moarte*, 2012;
- *Cele doua bastoane ale puterii* - text excerpt: On each side of the stage are two yamen servants on guard, holding the two sticks of power in their hands (own translation)- TN: "Sticks called also water and fire, painted half black, half red, according to the symbols of the two elements"- Mo Yan / Vișan, Broaște, 2014.

Simple culturemes: *Eliberarea* - Yu Hua / Zlotea, 2016, *În Viață*, & Mo Yan / Bălan, *Baladele usturoiului din paradis*, 2013 & Mo Yan / Bălan, *Țara vinului*, 2014; *Erhu* - in Mo Yan / Bălan, *Baladele usturoiului din paradis*, 2013 & Mo Yan / Bălan, *Femeia cu buchetul de flori*, 2016; *Juren* in A Cheng / Vișan and Bălan, *Cei trei regi*, 2018.

Therefore, from the point of view of their form, one cannot speak of any preponderance of simple or compound culturemes, neither in the original texts, nor in the preoccupation of Romanian translators. The same is true for the category of collective cultures, all culturemes found in the works studied are collective cultures, i.e. are part of the collective culture of the Chinese, are things known to them, but are monocultural, so the translator rightly considered that they are not notions familiar to the Romanian reader.

4.2 *The category of historical and current culturemes*

From a functional point of view, however, it is easy to notice a higher share of historical culturemes, namely a number of three hundred and twenty-five compared to thirty-nine current culturemes, which refer to contemporary or synchronous situations with the author and reader. It should be noted that all the works included in the study are works of contemporary literature.

The historical cultureme that mentions the moment of the Chinese revolution - *Jiefang Jun – Armata de Eliberare*: TN: "Jiefang Jun is the name of the armed forces of the Chinese Communist Party and of the Chinese People's Revolution" is found in *China în Zece Cuvinte*, Yu Hua / Zlotea, 2018, *În Viață*, Yu Hua / Zlotea, 2016, *Femeia cu buchetul de flori*, Mo Yan / Bălan, 2016, *Cei trei regi*, A Cheng / Vișan și Bălan, 2018. Along with the historical cultureme *Armata de Eliberare*, we often find mentions of *Eliberare* (Liberation) - excerpt text: *Mr. Rong waited patiently until they won the war and then until Liberation or Only after Liberation did I find out that those who won had always cheated the games, or As my father told us before Liberation in our small village...?'*. Note a clear consensus in the way of rendering this cultureme, always written in capital letters thus denoting a proper name of historical event. A translation aimed at the source culture, without any addition or an explanation to precede it. However, the clarification comes as a footnote informing the reader that this is a specific event in the recent history of China, more precisely on October 1, 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded.

The translation and translatability of the term therefore requires a change in what was previously known to the Romanian reader through the common noun *liberation* that now becomes a proper noun with the

function of accurately identifying a day in Chinese history. Just as for the Romanian reader the *Revolution* or the *Revolution of 89* are intertextual terms that immediately refer to the connotation that the author intends, so it is required of the target reader of the translated Chinese text. For this, a change of one's own concepts is assumed, an acceptance of the Other, in order to achieve an integration and naturalization in one's own culture. An alternative to translation could have been the introduction of a short explanation directly in the text, such as the Liberation from '49 or the Liberation of October 1st, which would have been welcome to facilitate understanding of the terms, but which has a drawback, that of losing the author's exclusive voice, and inability to distinguish between his voice and that of the translator.

Marele salt înainte (The Great Leap Forward) is another historical cultureme that is present in several works: *China în zece cuvinte*, *Cronica unui negustor de sânge*, Yu Hua / Bălan, 2017, *În viață*, *Obosit de viață*, *obosit de moarte*, Mo Yan / Luca, 2012. A cultureme translated literally, from the Chinese term 大跃进 - big jump - known to a more erudite reader, with knowledge about the universal history or that of China. Translators, however, rightly choose to provide the general public with access to the understanding of the extratextual context through the footnotes that provide the necessary information.

4.3 Category of cultural and technical culturemes

Analysing the domains of which the culturemes are part, we find, not surprisingly, that the vast majority of them (294) are *culturemes* from the sphere of cultural studies, and 126 are considered technical culturemes. The latter are those that require certain specific, technical knowledge in a narrow, niche field, whether it is the military, political field, e.g. *Armata a opta de drum* - Mo Yan / Bălan, *Femeia cu buchetul de flori*, 2016, or the astrologic domains, eg. *anul jichou*, *anul dingmao*, *anul gengwu* - Yan Lianke / Rîbu, *Bucurați-vă de viață*, 2013.

Culturemes denoting traditional units of measurement are also included in this technical category: *cun* (traditional unit of measurement, equivalent to 3.2 m), *mu* (traditional unit of measurement for areas, equivalent to 0.066 ha); *li* (traditional unit of measure for length, equivalent to 500 meters), *zhang* (traditional unit of measure, equivalent to 3.3 m), *sheng* (unit of measure of capacity for grain, equal to one liter). The culturemes that denote the Chinese currency and its subdivisions: *yuan*, *fen*, *mao*. All these culturemes are by zero + footnote translation method, surprisingly, none of the translators equated the traditional unit of measurement to the European measurement system, thus preserving the extratextual value of these technical culturemes.

The category of cultural culturemes, which falls mainly in the group of historical cultureme, are those referring to classical Chinese philosophy, Buddhist religion, Chinese mythology, literature, folk traditions, and customs.

4.4 The category of culturemes that denominate cultural heritage

This category includes, in addition to the culturemes that define historical events, the ones that denote popular beliefs, festivities, games, musical instruments. The works of contemporary literature are not at all poor in such culturemes, in the present corpus there are 110 such units. For example:

- *Banhu* (musical instrument) - *Lumea de orez*, Su Tong/ Luca, 2015; *Xiao* - *Soții și concubine*, Su Tong / Voicu, 2015 (TN: „In Chinese, bambus flute”); *Huqin* (musical instrument) - *Obosit de viață*, *obosit de moarte*, Mo Yan / Luca, 2012.
- *Gua Sha* - *Soții și concubine*, Su Tong / Voicu, 2015 - text excerpt: My head hurts terribly, as if it caught on fire, Shaofen, come and make me *gua sha*, TN: “In Chinese, remove the fever. In free translation to remove the evil, allowing the disease to escape through the skin taking the form of grains of sand. It is an old Chinese medical treatment”.

4.5 The category of culturemes that denote social culture

In this category we include culturemes that present conventions, customs, etiquette and politeness, trades, currency, calendar, social life of the Chinese. A number of 94 social culturemes have been marked in works of contemporary literature, including culturemes that present the traditional Chinese calendar: *bingwu year, dingmao year, gengchen year, gengwu year, gengzi year, jiazi year, jichou year, jiyou year, year renshen, wuyin year, xinchou year, yisi year* - in the work *Bucurați-vă de viață*, Yan Lianke / Rîbu, 2013.

The presence of culturemes regarding the customs of the Chinese and their various social conventions are also indicators of the cultural richness of translated works: *A-și lua rămas bun de la vatra - Obosit de viață, obosit de moarte*, Mo Yan/ Luca, 2012 - TN: "The habit of saying goodbye to the hearth (cǐ zao) is an ancient custom, part of the Spring Festival. Generous offerings are made to the God of Hearth, which will make it present to the supreme deity a favourable relation for the respective family.

4.6 Toponyms, administrative-territorial structures

Toponyms represent a special feature of Chinese texts, the territorial administrative structure of China, especially the ancient one, being much different from the Romanian one. The way in which they were translated is consensual in all works, there is a translation through foreignization, of cultural adaptation by finding a correspondent in the administrative structure of Romania, without explaining the initial meaning in footnotes, this type of footnotes being very limited in the works studied.

4.7 Culturemes denoting linguistic culture

One of the most difficult categories to translate into another language is represented by culturemes that denote linguistic culture, proverbs, and sayings. Being compound culturemes, they cannot be translated by *pinyin* and explanation, they must be treated as translation units, they must be culturally adapted, through correspondents or a group of words that is close to the meaning that cultureme has for the Chinese reader. In the work *Cei trei regi*, by A Cheng, the translators Vișan and Bălan mark the compound cultureme *Omul trebuie să știe când să fie mulțumit. Dacă are de mâncare pe săturate, să fie fericit* (People must know when to be satisfied. If they have enough food, they should be happy), about which they inform the reader through TN that "Dictions often appear, commonplaces of collective wisdom, which sometimes seem invented ad-hoc, as a preference of some characters for the pretentious, cult register".

In *Țara vinului*, the translator marks the cultureme - the proverb *Fără aur și diamante nu-ți e cu puțință să dai viață porțelanului* (Without gold and diamonds it is not possible to give life to porcelain) - as a "pun based on the fact that the component morphemes of the name Jin Gangzuan can be translated as common nouns, respectively, jin- aur, guangzuan - diamond".

The acknowledgement of such linguistic culturemes is subject to the knowledge background of the Chinese reader and even more of the translator, whose understanding and assimilation of such a reference deeply rooted in Chinese folklore is tested. For prose writers, the recourse to this category of culturemes, without signalling or warning the reader, can be motivated by a rhetorical accent, an indirect, allusive style, a complicity between the reader, author and the cultural tradition from which the work is born. Also, the emotional and aesthetic baggage that a text loaded with culturemes has is timeless, deeper and stronger than a text without such references. The translator's intervention, however, is fundamental because the author has the privilege of addressing an audience with similar encyclopaedic knowledge, especially about linguistic folklore, but for the translator's target audience it is unlikely to be as meaningful and evocative. The probability that the reader in the target language, Romanian in this case, will have the same baggage of knowledge as the reader in the source language, is very low, if not impossible. In order not to create a rupture and a distance feeling between the reader and the translated work, the translator should not assume and wait for the reader to have his knowledge. Using footnotes to address the reader's shortcomings, the translator can manage to diachronically revive (often these

culturemes are historical, not current) the context of origin and the cultural baggage of the reference and give it enough vitality to survive the current context (as time and space) in which the work is recreated through translation. It turns out, once again, that translation is not limited to the text, but is deeply influenced by the extralinguistic, cultural but also personal context - initially the personal context of the author, then the translator and simultaneously with the translator must follow that of the target reader. All these are essential in the reception and assimilation of culturemes.

The target cultureme must be able to live outside the original context, and in this way, its assimilation and its possible reformulation in a context different from that of the source language, gives the translation the attribute of force of enrichment of both the source language, as well as the target. By assimilating in the Romanian discourse some Chinese culturemes, they revive and are developed, ensuring their continuity in an enlarged area.

4.8 Culturemes- diangu 典故 - literary allusions

The category of culturemes- literary allusions is the most common in this study, a total of 125 references were extracted from the studied works.

The concept of *diangu* - roughly translated as a literary allusion is cultureme par excellence, a figure of intertextuality specific to Chinese poetry. In Chinese, *diangu* refers to ancient events or stories quoted in other literary works (Modern Chinese Dictionary 2012: 290). Taken out of the original linguistic space, *diangu* can no longer be understood or perceived as intended. First of all, from the perspective of semantics, the words that make up a *diangu* must share the meaning in their original language environment, these being in turn summaries of the cultural context from which they were born. If the cultural and linguistic environment of origin is not understood, then the metaphorical meanings - which differ from the literary meaning - of the words that make up *diangu* will not be understood (Jianghua, 2018).

The contemporary Chinese novels studied abound in the presence of *diangu* cultureme, their authors, but also translators, through the vast baggage of knowledge, construct intertextual figures that combine in a very condensed way, historical events or stories from other literary works - prose or poetry - with their emotional experience, creating a bridge between literary works, which reminds the informed reader of the full meaning of that event. This type of cultureme is the one that requires, perhaps, the most diligent reading, which appeals to extensive literary knowledge.

In this sense, we further exemplify some of the *diangu* culturemes marked in the works translated into Romanian. We will notice that they have different lengths, some being simple, in a word, others being whole verses or phrases. *Maimuța de aur* (The Golden Monkey) TN: "The Golden Monkey designates the character from the well-known novel Journey to the West, but the immediate reference is to a verse from a 1961 poem by Mao Zedong: *Maimuța-de-aur ridică viguros bata-l de-o mie de-ocale, și cu ea de praf șterge văzduhul de jad pe-o cale de-o mie de*).

Another example is the *diangu* cultureme: *Beijingul din acele zile era într-adevăr un oraș în care toți erau frați* (Beijing in those days was indeed a city where they were all brothers). *Toți erau frați* (they were all brothers) - a *diangu*, translated by the method of domestication, in which the reference to an extratextual content is apparently eliminated. However, this is solved by the footnote: the phrase "si hai zhi nei jie xiongdi" - the four big seas brothers will be, "君子敬而无失，与人恭而有礼，四海之内，皆兄弟也" is an excerpt from the Analects of Confucius. The very subtle literary allusion creates a distinct note to the work, difficult to spot by a novice translator. Its identification and restitution and its literary and cultural significance is possible due to a personal sub-context of the translator, which is essential in establishing the translatability of the extratextual context of the cultureme. For this, in addition to the necessary knowledge, the translator must always remain circumspect and fully implement the ethics of his profession. Additional work is needed to consult encyclopedias, monolingual, bilingual, explanatory dictionaries, but also to appeal to the collective wisdom of the

Chinese natives, who could clarify and explain those difficulties that not are of the language, but of the extralinguistic context.

4.9 *The culturemes from collective Sapienza (culturemes already in use by Romanians)*

One of the roles of marking and explaining culturemes is to enrich the knowledge but also of the reader's vocabulary, which can adopt new concepts and notions in its discourse. However, this can only happen through the wider recognition and knowledge of Chinese cultures by a larger number of Romanians, which requires both a wider range of translations and a larger audience of works translated from Chinese. Due to this, the situation of the culturemes entered in the Romanian collective sapienza is still numerically reduced, but surely the future will transform more and more of the culturemes included in the present corpus into culturemes used by the Romanians. These currently include culturemes such as: *Fengshui, Qi, Zen, Yin -Yang, Kongfu, Maimuța de aur, Marele salt înainte, Qipao, Bao zi, Jiaozi* - all into the use of Romanians, not through literature, but through specialized practices.

5. Conclusions

The presence of Chinese culturemes in such a large number denotes the humanism and vitality of translated contemporary Chinese literature, which abounds in references to the way of life, thinking and beliefs of ordinary Chinese, all being revalued for the Romanian reader, who can better understand the entire cultural tradition of China.

The proper treatment of culturemes contributes to the literary work's ability to educate. Chinese cultural heritage must be known to the general public, and one of the best ways is through translated literature. Analyzing the above examples and the conditions for restoring the significance of culturemes shows once again that we could discuss about a shift of perspectives. It also demonstrates the importance of the translator's responsibility and his / her baggage of linguistic, extralinguistic knowledge, text comprehension and translation competence, on which the fate of the cultureme and the education capacity of the work translated and transposed into the target culture depend.

The cultureme is a phenomenon in a society, a phenomenon that for the members of that society has a specific cultural relevance (Vermeer, 1992), but which will be reborn and it will enrich itself and the culture from which it comes, only if it is extracted and processed with an adequate baggage of knowledge.

References and bibliography

- Cîndea Giță I.E. & Riccardo M.** (2019). *Chinese Literature in Romania. A Qualitative Study based on In-Depth Interviews with the Agents Involved in Sino-Romanian Transfer of Culture*. The European Journal of Chinese Studies, vol. 2.
- Lefevre, A. and S. Bassnett.** (1998) *Where Are We in Translation Studies?* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Lungu-Badea, G.** (2004). *Teoria culturemelor, teoria traducerii*. Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest.
- Lungu-Badea, G.** (2011) "Argument." *Translationes*, vol. 3, no. 1, Jan. 2011, doi:10.2478/tran-2014-0043.
- Olk, H. M.** (2013). *Cultural references in translation: a framework for quantitative translation analysis*. *Perspectives*, 21(3), 344–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2011.646279>
- Vermeer, H.** (1992). *Is Translation a Linguistic or a Cultural Process?* *Periodicos*, 37–49. Retrieved from periodicos.ufsc.br
- Vișan F.** (2017) *Întîlnirea mea cu profesoarea și traducătoarea Toni Radian*, *Revista de Traduceri Literare*, nr. 16, 28 februarie 2017, Retrived from <https://www.fitralit.ro/28-02-2017-intilnirea-mea-cu-profesoarea-si-traducatoarea-toni-radian/>

The author

Dr. Iulia Elena CÎNDEA GÎȚĂ is Lecturer of Chinese Language, Translation and Cultural studies at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Chinese department. She has obtained her Ph.D. from University of Bucharest, Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, under the supervision of renowned Romanian sinologist prof. Florentina Visan. She has published in the fields of cultural studies, translation studies, cultural sociology, cross-cultural communication. Her most recent work focuses on the sociological theory of translation, mainly the Romanian translation of Chinese literature, but also, she is currently involved in a neurolinguistics study of language learning in infants and early-age children exposed to monolingual or bilingual social environments.