

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Terroir, Wine Varieties, Brands and Their Translations into Chinese

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intricate relationship between *terroir* (a fundamental concept in viticulture that connects wines to a complex tapestry of factors encompassing place, culture, economy, and society), grape varieties, and wine branding in the Chinese cultural context. It examines how these elements are perceived in both Western and Chinese cultural domains. *Terroir* is a key element in Western viticulture and grape varieties define wines, thus influencing their identity. To foster familiarity and positive connections with Chinese consumers some Western wine brands have incorporated traditional Chinese cultural elements. Through a comprehensive review of literature, fieldwork and interviews, this study contends that in the Chinese language, viticultural terminology from Western languages can be translated, enriched, and elevated to offer a deeper comprehension of these terms. This research reinforces the idea that *terroir* can be eloquently conveyed in Chinese, preserving its connotations from the original language. It demonstrates how Chinese translations of wine varieties augment their intrinsic meaning, and how Western wine brands effectively resonate with the Chinese market through auspicious translations. Furthermore, this research argues for the efficacy of fieldwork and interviews as valuable tools for both translation practice and research in this context.

Keywords: *terroir*, *fengtu*, wine varieties, wine brands, fieldwork, interview

1. Introduction

China's wine market has emerged as a powerhouse on the global stage for imported wines, capturing the attention of international wine connoisseurs, industry authorities, and investors alike. A testament to its rapid ascent is the revelation by Treasury Wines Estates, the proprietor of the esteemed Penfolds brand, that Chinese consumers indulged in over one billion litres of wine in 2021. Such staggering consumption figures have ignited predictions that, by 2023, China is poised to claim the prestigious title of the world's second-largest wine market, trailing only the United States. As we dissect this captivating market landscape, it becomes evident that China's wine market is undergoing a remarkable transformation, fostering a community of an estimated 52 million regular wine enthusiasts (Tomevska, 2022). In the words of Guillaume Deglise (2018), the visionary leader at Bordeaux-based Vinexpo, this evolution is nothing short of extraordinary:

Wine culture on the [Chinese] mainland has undergone tremendous changes since 1998 when the French-born exhibition first landed in Hong Kong with an eye on the Asia-Pacific wine business. The most significant factor among Chinese customers is the 'purchasing power' of the bottle, but it has now given way to knowledge as the irreplaceable criterion in judging a true wine lover or collector. (China Daily, 2018)



Wine has emerged as a remarkable cultural commodity, carrying connotations of cultural prestige and economic significance, as highlighted by Demossier (2022). This beverage, ingrained in the fabric of Western society, owes much of its cultural value to the wealth of knowledge associated with it, encompassing aspects like *terroir*, grape varieties, and wine brands. This paper examines the intricate realm of wine knowledge through an extensive literature review, fieldwork in wine regions and insightful interviews with wine experts. Furthermore, it places a significant emphasis on the burgeoning Chinese wine market, the evolving preferences of Chinese consumers, and the pivotal role played by translation in bridging the gap between Western wine culture and the Chinese market.

Wang and Gu (2022) have aptly pointed out that the languages of the East and the West are markedly distinct, and this paper contends that translation serves as a vital catalyst in the global export of wine products and wine culture, fostering the convergence of diverse cultural elements. Chinese translations, as this paper will argue, do not merely convey the essence of viticultural terminology from Western linguistic contexts; they also enrich and embellish these concepts within the Chinese language milieu. Through a comprehensive exploration, this paper aims to illustrate the multifaceted nature of wine culture and demonstrate how adept translation can convey the intricacy and diversity of the original language into Chinese. Moreover, it seeks to shed light on how translation acts as a unifying force, facilitating the integration of Western and Chinese cultures, thereby enabling the Western wine sector to penetrate the Chinese wine market and entice wine enthusiasts and tourists.

In the pursuit of understanding the intricate dynamics of wine culture and translation, this project adopts a qualitative research approach, harnessing primary data gathered through fieldwork conducted in Australia's wine regions and in-depth interviews with wine experts. In the role of observer, recorder, and researcher, the author scrutinised dialogues with prominent figures from renowned wineries such as Penfolds and Sirromet. Beyond its contributions to the field of translation studies, this paper argues that this data-driven, culturally engaged approach of fieldwork and interviews also holds immense value for cultural and social science research.

2. Literature Review

This section explores the concept of *terroir*, tracing its origins in viticulture, winemaking, and its wider application with the aim to providing a comprehensive overview of the evolution and cross-cultural diffusion of *terroir*. This review also explores the translation and adaptation of the term in the Chinese context, shedding light on how it has been integrated into Chinese cultural practices, and setting the stage for the subsequent discussion of its relevance and application in the Chinese market.

2.1 Origin and attributes of *terroir*

Terroir is found in much academic literature and has come to be used to discuss the taste of various products in relation to place. Its first articulations centred on French wine, where traditionally *terroir* is understood as the holistic combination of soil, climate, topography, and the soul of the cultivator (Wilson, 1998; Trubek, Guy and Bowen, 2010). *Terroir* has come to play a critically important role in defining, qualifying, and classifying wine (Beckert, Rössel and Schenk, 2017; Demossier, 2010; Gade, 2004), and is regarded as central in the realm of wine (Barham, 2003; Paxson, 2010). Jones (2015) specified its origin:



Terroir is derived from the Latin ‘*terra*’ or ‘*territorium*’ and its first modern usage is as ‘a stretch of land limited by its agricultural capacity’ ... The landscapes grew out of the wine production traditions of the Cistercian monks in Burgundy. (p. 3)

Terroir originated in France, the Old World of wine, and originally represented only Burgundy, then, over time, the whole country. Trubek, Guy, and Bowen (2010) emphasised that the appreciation of the distinct natural and cultural characteristics influencing the flavour of wine can be traced back to dialogues initiated by French vigneronns over a hundred years ago. In addition to wine, food and other beverages were added into *terroir* which made it an agricultural production concept tied to specific regions covering wine, cheese, pâté, and other specialty crops in France (Jones, 2015). *Terroir* eventually led to the founding of key French agencies and actors in the early 20th century including the AOC (Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée) and the INAO (Institut National des Appellations d’Origine) which protect wines, foods, and beverages (Trubek, 2008).

It is evident that the aim of protecting wine, food and drinks is to safeguard the economic profits, thus, *terroir* can be seen as economic capital. Erlanger (2013) argued that the essence of *terroir* meant paying more for quality, for freshness, for artisanal craft and for authenticity. Jones (2015) stated that the Burgundians harnessed the notion of “*terroir*” not only to promote their wines and boost tourism but also to reinforce their regional heritage and gain a competitive edge over other areas. This strategic utilization of *terroir* was perceived by some as a form of economic security.

Terroir, in its essence, represents a form of economic capital endowed by nature and the environment. In addition, numerous scholars have attributed cultural significance to the term (Tomasik, 2001; Cappeliez, 2017; Hill and Fountain, 2022; Unwin, 2022). Notably, Cappeliez (2017) highlighted the transformation of *terroir* from a simple one-dimensional reference to the land into a culturally recognised and institutionally established classification. This evolution underscores its adaptability and flexibility across temporal and spatial dimensions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that while *terroir* is famously regarded as ‘untranslatable,’ it has transcended geographical boundaries and remained intact in the English language, directly borrowed from its French origins. In contrast, it is noteworthy that in the Chinese language, the concept of *terroir* finds its counterpart in “*fengtu*” (风土), exemplifying a unique linguistic adaptation that adeptly encapsulates the intricate essence of this concept within the Chinese cultural context.

2.2 *Fengtu*: Chinese translation of *terroir*

Cheung (2009) emphasised that the original food and beverage offered at a destination served as a pivotal gateway through which individuals gleaned the most authentic insights into the culture and identity of a particular tourist destination.

People tend to think of destinations in which the original version of a particular kind of gourmet food or drink is produced, e.g., Italian pasta, Swiss chocolate, Australian seafood, French wine, Chinese tea. (p. 256)

To aid wine consumers and tourists in deriving maximum value from the wine culture, Mackenzie (2019) suggested that “truly understanding what makes a region’s *terroir* unique is the starting point” (p. 77). *Terroir*, in this context, constitutes a multifaceted amalgamation of elements such as the local milieu, economic factors, environmental conditions, and landscape characteristics. Thus, the concept of *terroir* assumes considerable significance as it weaves together these diverse elements into a rich



tapestry. This tapestry not only offers wine consumers and tourists the opportunity to enjoy a winery tour but also provides a deeper understanding of the essence of the region (Croce and Perri, 2010; Roy et al., 2019).

Trubek, Guy, and Bowen (2010) asserted that *terroir* represented a culturally rich concept that defied simple translation into the English language. In a similar vein, Cappeliez (2017) characterised *terroir* as a complex and untranslatable notion. Notably, the Chinese rendition of *terroir* impeccably preserves its original nuances and meanings. Within the Chinese linguistic context, *terroir* is rendered as “风土” (*fengtu*), a composite term comprising two characters: “风” (*feng*, signifying “wind”) and “土” (*tu*, connoting “soil” or “land”). The amalgamation of these characters encapsulates a multifaceted interpretation that encompasses a plethora of attributes specific to a given region, including its physical conditions, geographic environment, climate, local traditions, and customs. This holistic understanding is underpinned by the Chinese idiom: “风土人情” (*fengtu-renqing*), where the latter part, *renqing*, encompasses aspects such as lifestyle, a sense of obligation and reciprocity within social relationships within a particular locale. This aligns with Mackenzie’s (2019) assertion that “in many destinations, the *terroir* has contributed to a way of life that is long rooted in a culture’s traditions” (p. 76). *Terroir* thus emerges as the epitome of cultural heritage within a specific region. This evolving definition of *terroir* expands our comprehension of the concept from a mere geographical perspective to encompass considerations of economic, cultural, and societal dimensions. The Chinese interpretation of “风土” (*fengtu*) transcends ecological, cultural, and social boundaries, providing Chinese readers with a comprehensive and accurate representation of the concept.

It is noteworthy that this translation, employing only two simple Chinese characters, adeptly conveys the essence of the Latin term to Chinese readers, consumers, and tourists. This translation stands as a condensed representation of China’s profound history of agriculture and culture. It serves to introduce the Western concept of *terroir* to the Chinese market and consumers in a concise and elegant manner. In the context of cross-cultural exchange, language serves as a potent form of cultural capital, facilitating the discovery of common ground and bridging the divide between cultures. Moreover, it can mitigate the potential culture shock that often accompanies encounters with unfamiliar cultural settings when the West meets the East (Chinese).

In the realm of cultural exchange, language plays a key role by serving as a conduit through which disparities in customs and concepts can be conveyed, eventually leading to comprehension or equivalence when they are incorporated into divergent cultural environments. Language, in this context, extends beyond mere linguistic competency; its significance is deeply intertwined with the social, historical, and political milieus within which it operates (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As previously discussed, Cappeliez (2017) posited that the intricate essence of *terroir*, a concept seemingly resistant to direct translation, has proliferated within cultural contexts where strict adherence to its literal meaning fell short of capturing its multifaceted nuances. But if we look at the Chinese rendering of *terroir*, which consists of just two characters: *fengtu* (风土), a deep revelation emerges — it successfully encapsulates the expansive essence of the term, which permeates both culture and nature. This ideal translation empowers the Chinese imagination to grasp the depths of its meaning. For Chinese readers, consumers, and tourists alike, *terroir* becomes comprehensible through this translation. With the harmonious fusion of “风” (*feng*) and “土” (*tu*), the conditions are set for grapevines to flourish robustly, for the production of wines to reach elevated standards, and for the creation of an exemplary



natural ecosystem to stand as a symbol of a place, akin to the renowned Burgundy Valley in France, the illustrious Napa Valley in the United States, or the enchanting Barossa Valley in South Australia.

Fengtu (风土) adeptly preserves the intrinsic essence of *terroir*, encapsulating the imperative symbiosis between humanity and the natural environment, tourists and their chosen destinations. It harmoniously melds the pivotal elements of environment, and cultural and economic viability, exemplifying the capacity for shared tastes, values, and ethos to transcend geographical boundaries. Wines are denominated based on grape varieties and categorised into red and white varieties. The former category encompasses esteemed cultivars such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz, Pinot Noir, and Petit Verdot, among others, while the latter encompasses Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, and more. Furthermore, different wine brands have their own distinctive array of varieties¹. This paper studies the intricacies of translating these varieties and brands into the Chinese language. To accomplish this task, fieldwork and in-depth interviews will be adopted as the methodology for this study.

3. Research Methodology

Silverman (2000) explained that qualitative research comprised a diverse array of data collection techniques, including observations, textual or visual analysis, and individual/group interviews. In the realm of social sciences research, Driessen (1998) astutely remarked that “most of the fieldwork practices seem utterly disparate in aims, human relationships, research techniques, physical and social proximity, commitment, immersion, and mastery of the local vernacular” (p. 45). For this study, an assortment of methodologies, including immersive fieldwork and in-depth interviews, were judiciously employed across prominent Australia’s wine regions, primarily in South Australia and Queensland, to generate primary data. This research staunchly advocates for the indispensability of fieldwork and interviews as paramount tools in both the practice of translation and academic inquiry within this context. Leveraging these methodologies enables the attainment of a multifaceted comprehension of the intricate cultural subtleties underpinning wine translation and branding within the discerning Chinese market, thus furnishing invaluable insights that benefit both practitioners and scholars alike.

3.1 Fieldwork design

The fieldwork undertaken for this research was carefully designed. As suggested by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1998) and Opie (1992), this broader, less rigid conceptualization of research methods afforded the latitude necessary to navigate the myriad challenges encountered during fieldwork.

Building on Probyn’s (2016) pioneering work in ‘wet ethnography’ within the context of ocean sustainable development research, this paper introduces the novel concept of ‘*terroir* fieldwork’ as a methodological framework for extracting valuable insights from interviews conducted in Australia’s wine regions. The ‘*terroir* fieldwork’ approach offers a robust foundation rooted in data and cultural engagement. The narratives gleaned from interviews conducted at wineries, cellar doors, and vineyards provide a nuanced perspective on the perceptions of Australian wine and tourism within the Chinese market, shedding light on Chinese individuals’ experiences with Australian wines and wine-centric

¹ Varietals refer to different varieties of a particular crop or plant, especially in agriculture and horticulture.



tours. These narratives collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how elements of cross-cultural interaction, including translation, exert their influence on both individuals (Chinese wine consumers/tourists) and nations at large.

Challenging the notion of detached objectivity, England (1994) asserted that genuine objectivity in social science research can only be achieved through a process that acknowledges the researcher's engagement and reflexivity. She viewed fieldwork as a deeply personal endeavour, emphasising the need for self-awareness and critical self-examination throughout the research process. From her perspective, research unfolds as an ongoing and intersubjective dialogue, fostering a dynamic and reflexive relationship between the researcher and the subject matter.

Indeed [,] reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork; it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions. A more reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that fieldwork almost inevitably raises. Certainly[,], a more reflexive geography must require careful consideration of the consequences of the interactions with those being investigated. (p. 84)

Building on England's valuable insights, this paper undertakes the task of weaving reflexivity into its methodology, fostering a deliberate and analytical introspection essential for any dedicated researcher. By embracing this approach, the author was able to adeptly navigate the intricate and ever-evolving landscape of fieldwork, all the while upholding an unwavering dedication to the highest standard of rigorous and objective scholarship. Consequently, the thread of reflexivity, embodied through the "I," runs throughout the active immersion within the fieldwork, interviews, and the writing process itself, enabling me to diligently assess how my personal positionality exerts its influence on every facet of this research.

3.2 Interviews

Bennett (2001) underscored the significance of flexibility in conducting interviews, advocating for an approach that empowers informants to actively participate in shaping the research process. Perakyla (2005) emphasised the importance of face-to-face social interaction, noting it as the most immediate and pervasive form of social reality experienced by individuals. Echoing this sentiment, Bell and Valentine (2013) aptly concurred:

Interviews, in contrast to questionnaires, are generally unstructured or semi-structured. In other words, they take a conversational, fluid form, each interview varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees. They are a dialogue rather than an interrogation. (p. 111)

In qualitative research, the individual interview stands as the cornerstone and most extensively utilised approach for gathering invaluable data (Sandelowski, 2002; Nunkoosing, 2005; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). This method is the preferred choice of scholars seeking to delve deep into the realms of informants' thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and knowledge related to a specific phenomenon (Fielding, 1994; Speziale & Carpenter, 2003; Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). Central to this approach is the belief that, with precisely formulated questions, informants' expressions of their experiences will serve as authentic reflections of their reality (Morse, 2002; Sandelowski, 2002; Macdonald, 2006). Thus,



interviewing emerges as a pivotal strategy in establishing a strong connection with the individuals under study, enabling researchers to gain wide-ranging access to their innermost thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

3.3 Fieldwork sites and interviewees in this research

In the pursuit of my research objectives concerning the translation of Western wine culture into the Chinese context, a comprehensive investigation was undertaken, involving fieldwork and interviews conducted at two prominent Australian wineries. As per the findings reported by Wine Australia (2019), the Chinese mainland emerged as the preeminent destination for Australian wine exports in terms of value. The progression was remarkable, with the figures escalating from a modest \$73 million in 2008 to a substantial \$846 million (FOB) in 2017. Distinctively, while Australia ranked second in market share, trailing behind France, it attained the paramount position in terms of the average price of bottled wine among the five major importing nations.

My fieldwork was meticulously scheduled in December 2018 and March 2019, coinciding with a period marked by burgeoning optimism in the wine trade relationship between China and Australia. During this time, I embarked on an extensive examination of several Australian wine regions, with a particular focus on Sirromet in Queensland and Penfolds Magill Estates in South Australia. The outlook for Sino-Australian relations in the wine sector appeared inexorably ascendant, as both countries enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership. However, the paradigm underwent a seismic shift in January 2020 with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The subsequent, unforeseen uncertainties brought about by this global health crisis, coupled with evolving diplomatic dynamics, dramatically affected the longstanding wine trade relationship between China and Australia.

The choice to commence my investigation with Sirromet was driven by several compelling factors. Sirromet enjoys an advantageous geographical location, positioned as the closest winery destination for Chinese tourists arriving directly from both Brisbane and Gold Coast airports. It has garnered acclaim as Brisbane's premier cellar door experience, earning a coveted Gold-5 Star Rating for its distinguished wine collection, comprising Sparkling wines, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Shiraz Viognier, and Cabernet Sauvignon. This award was bestowed upon Sirromet by Gourmet Traveller Wine and there was a further acknowledgement in 2016 by Wine Showcase Magazine (Food & Beverage Industry News, 2016). Paul Morris, the son of Sirromet owner Terry Morris, participated in the 2005 V8 Supercar race in China to promote their wines in the Chinese market (McCullough, 2005). This strategic initiative proved highly successful, leading to the emergence of Chinese wine enthusiasts as the largest demographic within Sirromet's global customer base.

The interviewee for my research, Mr E, a Chinese immigrant with a residency spanning two decades in Australia, currently occupies the role of Business Development Manager at Sirromet. His knowledge on the convergence of Chinese translations of wine varietals, brand management, the intricate nuances of the Australian wine sector, and strategic business development are of paramount significance within the context of this research. Recognizing the important role of linguistic and cultural translations in shaping consumer preferences, Mr E extended a gracious invitation for me to partake in a winery tour. On this tour an erudite Chinese sommelier expounded on the intricacies of Western winemaking techniques and the diverse spectrum of wine varietals to a captive audience of Chinese wine enthusiasts and tourists. This immersive experience served as a vivid illustration of the impact wielded by the



accuracy and resonance of Chinese translations of wine terminology on the discerning purchasing behaviours exhibited by Chinese consumers.

Similarly, my selection of Penfolds as a focal point for my research delivered significant results. Penfolds, an illustrious name in the world of wine, has steadfastly maintained its status as an esteemed Australian wine brand with an extraordinary presence within the Chinese market. A striking testament to its enduring influence emerged in 2015, as Robert Foye, the Managing Director of the Asia division at Treasury Wine Estates, unveiled Penfolds' storied history of wine exports to China spanning over five decades. This historical journey stands as a testament to the brand's unwavering dedication to satisfying the evolving demands of the flourishing Chinese red wine market, a market boasting the largest middle-class populace on a global scale (Liu, 2015). Before the Chinese government imposed high tariffs on Australian wines in 2021, Penfolds had always secured its top position as a perennial best-seller in the Chinese market.

During the interview conducted at Penfolds, it was Ms R, the manager overseeing operations at Penfolds Magill Estate, who emerged as a noteworthy figure, demonstrating generosity in disseminating a wealth of enlightening information and engaging narratives throughout the interview session. Additionally, her invitation for a Mandarin (*Putonghua*)-speaking winery tour added an invaluable dimension to the research endeavour.

In short, my choice of these two exemplary wineries, Sirromet and Penfolds, served as a strategic gateway to comprehensively analyse the intricate dynamics of the Australian wine sector's engagement with the ever-evolving Chinese market. Their unique attributes, strategic positioning, and historical significance in the context of the Chinese wine market made them compelling subjects for my academic inquiry.

4. Chinese Translations of Western Wine Varieties

This section discusses the transformative potential of Chinese translations in imbuing wine varieties with enhanced meaning and cultural resonance. Within the Chinese market, Cabernet Sauvignon, hailing from Bordeaux, France, stands as the most renowned wine. It holds the distinction of being the inaugural Western red wine embraced by Chinese consumers and has since achieved global cultivation, including within China (Tan et al., 2016). As economic conditions have flourished and wine knowledge proliferated, an array of wine varieties has garnered recognition among Chinese drinkers, with Shiraz, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Petit Verdot emerging as iconic red wine options. Meanwhile, Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Semillon have carved out their niche as exceptional white wine choices.

While the original Western appellations primarily denote grape varieties, their translation into Chinese has led to the enrichment of their connotations and implications, interwoven with the nuances of the Chinese language and culture. As Ochs (1996) astutely observed, "every sociolinguistic interaction has the potential for both cultural reinforcement or cultural change" (p. 416). Table 1 below provides a comprehensive listing of wines in English and their corresponding Chinese translations, complete with Chinese characters and *Pinyin*. These



translations are not only melodious to the ear and visually appealing but also convey the auspicious, potent, and elegant essence rooted in Chinese culture.

Table 1. Chinese Translation of Western Wines

English name	Chinese name	Chinese Pinyin	Meaning of the Chinese name
Cabernet Sauvignon	赤霞珠	<i>chi xia zhu</i>	the grape berries look like pearls with the colour of red clouds
Petit Verdot	味而多	<i>wei er duo</i>	pronunciation-based translation, with meanings that include delicious (味 <i>wei</i>) and (而 <i>er</i>) sufficient (多 <i>duo</i>)
Merlot	美乐	<i>mei le</i>	beautiful and joyous
	梅洛	<i>mei luo</i>	pronunciation-based translation without a specific meaning
Syrah	西拉	<i>xi la</i>	pronunciation-based translation without a specific meaning
Shiraz	色拉子	<i>se la zi</i>	pronunciation-based translation without a specific meaning
Pinot Noir	黑皮诺	<i>hei pi nuo</i>	<i>hei</i> means the colour black in Chinese as <i>Noir</i> is the colour of black in French; <i>pi nuo</i> is the pronunciation translation of <i>Pinot</i>
Chardonnay	霞多丽	<i>xia duo li</i>	how beautiful the clouds are
Riesling	雷司令	<i>lei si ling</i>	'Commander Thunder', 'Rie' sounds like <i>lei</i> in Mandarin, meaning thunder; 'sling' is pronounced like <i>si ling</i> in Mandarin, meaning commander
Sauvignon Blanc	长相思	<i>chang xiang si</i>	miss each other always
Semillon	赛美容	<i>sai mei rong</i>	most beautiful amongst the prettiest

Although the records regarding the individuals responsible for translating Western wine varieties into Chinese, as presented in Table 1, remain elusive, these translations undeniably constitute a significant success in the realm of cultural exchange. These renderings have captured the curiosity and interest of both Chinese consumers and tourists. In tackling translations involving intricate cultural concepts, Tomasik (2001) astutely observed that "language is laden with cultural allusions, idiosyncratic expressions, and wordplay, which, when separated from their cultural-linguistic context, present formidable challenges for translators" (p. 520). Consider Petit Verdot as an illustrative case in point. The term "petit" originates from the French language and conveys the notion of smallness. In the process of transliteration into Chinese, this semantic nuance is omitted, resulting in the rendition of "Verdot" as "味而多" (*wei er duo*), aligning with its Western phonetic representation. However, in the Chinese language, this rendering carries connotations of deliciousness and sufficiency, diverging from the original French intent. These translations serve as bridges across cultural divides, preserving the graceful and harmonious essence of wines while seamlessly adapting Western wine names into auspicious Chinese terms. Thus, these translations arguably facilitate the successful dissemination of cultural ideas and practices, enabling them to establish a foothold in a new cultural market.



Masson, Sánchez, and Celhay (2017) undertook an in-depth analysis of the Chinese wine market and their research brought to light an important demographic trend in this market, namely that wine enthusiasts were not exclusively affluent males; in fact, women comprised a substantial 40.3% of the 208 wine connoisseurs surveyed in their study. This demographic shift was corroborated by Jain's 2020 report, which revealed that China boasted a staggering 52 million consumers of imported wines in 2019, with an increasingly significant proportion being female, experiencing a steady annual growth rate of 5%. Building upon the academic discourse and the findings presented in Table 1, this research paper posits that a gender-focused approach to the translation of wine varieties into Chinese nomenclature, exemplified by labels such as “赛美容” (most beautiful amongst the prettiest), “霞多丽” (how beautiful the clouds are), and “长相思” (miss each other always), has the potential to resonate with and attract female consumers. Furthermore, it is postulated that the incorporation of female perspectives and tastes in the production and selection of wines can enhance the overall palatability and appeal of wines to a broader consumer base.

Tiefenbacher and Townsend (2019) pointed out that wine names had different tendencies in different regions, for example, wine names in the US, Canada and Australia tend to be more creative. During my fieldwork in the Queensland wine region in December 2018, I interviewed Mr E, Sirromet's business development manager, at the cellar door. We discussed the Chinese translation of a creative wine that melded gender roles and Chinese cultural perspectives in a fascinating way. One such instance pertains to “Marriage,” a wine variant conceived by Sirromet expressly for wedding banquets. Mr E elucidated this concept:

“Marriage” is the result of a meticulous amalgamation of two distinct grape varieties, each chosen to symbolise and embody specific gender-associated characteristics. The choice of Merlot, known for its soft and gentle attributes, represents the feminine essence, while Petit Verdot, celebrated for its robust and masculine qualities, symbolises the male aspect. The deliberate blending of these two grape varieties serves as a poignant metaphor for the harmonious union of wife and husband, transcending the mere amalgamation of flavours and encapsulating the essence of marital unity.

This wine variety has been rendered into Chinese as “金玉良缘” (pronounced as *jinyu-liangyuan*), deviating from its literal translation as “*hunyun*” (婚姻) or “*jiehun*” (结婚). The chosen translation, *Jinyu-liangyuan* conveys the nuanced and culturally imbued meaning of a “beautiful marriage of gold and jade” within the traditional Chinese cultural framework. In this cultural context, an ideal marriage, referred to as “良缘” (*liangyuan*), is likened to the enduring and precious qualities associated with gold (金 *jin*) and jade (玉 *yu*). By adopting the term “*jinyu-liangyuan*,” the Chinese translation not only encapsulates the inherent aspirations for a lasting and cherished union but also extends best wishes and commendations to the couple. This essence of the interconnectedness of Western wine culture and Chinese tradition is evident as Western winemakers and Chinese wine consumers forge a common bond rooted in shared meanings and empathetic understanding.

This strategic choice of translating “Marriage” into “金玉良缘” (*jinyu-liangyuan*) not only reflects the sensitivity to gender roles and cultural values but also serves as an effective tool for enhancing sales. Mr E, an observer of consumer preferences, noted that Chinese consumers exhibited a heightened level of interest in the “Marriage” wine range, despite its relatively higher price in comparison to other



available options. This preference can be attributed to the resonance of the translation with the cultural ideals and expectations surrounding marriage in the Chinese context, reinforcing the notion that successful cultural and linguistic adaptations can significantly impact consumer choices and preferences. This strategic deployment of “*jinyu-liangyuan*” carries the potential for substantial economic gains, effectively exemplifying how language, in its capacity to facilitate cultural dissemination, can yield tangible benefits for the wine industry. As Tiefenbacher and Townsend (2019) contended, this linguistic innovation “promotes the wine industry by disseminating wine culture. It enhances the mundane consumption of wine” (p. 4106).

When conducting my fieldwork in South Australia in March 2019, I engaged in a conversation with Ms R, who held the position of manager at Penfolds Magill Estate. Our discourse revolved around the intriguing topic of the Chinese translation of Penfolds' preeminent wine, Grange, which represents the pinnacle of oenological craftsmanship within the Penfolds portfolio and enjoys remarkable popularity among the affluent echelons of the Chinese wine market. The act of drinking Grange is symbolic of an individual's economic prowess, granting them access to the exclusive realm of epicurean opulence, as Bourdieu has elucidated — ‘a taste of luxury’ (1984[1979]). This enigmatic consumption pattern confers upon the imbiber a conspicuous social standing, obviating the need for ostentatious displays of wealth.

In the English lexicon, however, the term “grange” typically conjures up images of a rural estate with agricultural buildings, or a secluded agricultural enclave, historically associated with monastic orders or feudal lords. When translated literally into the Chinese language, the essence of opulence inherent in this premier winemaker's offering is somewhat diminished. Consequently, an astute linguistic adaptation was necessitated, resulting in the adoption of the Mandarin expression 葛兰许 (*ge lan xu*), mirroring the phonetic aspects of its English counterpart. This neologism possesses an aesthetically pleasing sonority within the Chinese phonetic realm while simultaneously evoking its foreign and luxurious provenance.

Ms R further apprised me of a noteworthy belief prevalent within the Western wine sector, wherein it is postulated that the imposition of Chinese translations exceeding four Chinese characters upon Western wine varieties may prove detrimental to the retention of Chinese consumer interest. This is also evident in Table 1, where it is observed that Chinese translations of wine varieties typically comprise a maximum of three Chinese characters, regardless of whether they are derived from phonetic, semantic, or combinatory principles. This succinct nomenclature facilitates enhanced memorability within the Chinese market. In my personal estimation, the nomenclature 葛兰许 (*ge lan xu*) represents a judiciously executed translational endeavour. While it eschews a direct transference of the original English connotation, it exudes an inherent elegance that harmonises seamlessly with its Western lineage for wealthy Chinese consumers.

In the realm of socio-cultural studies concerning alcohol consumption, Redden and Brown (2010) presented a compelling argument. They assert that alcohol functions as an integral component of a broader lifestyle code, intricately defining specific behaviours and practices that facilitate the accumulation of culturally esteemed capital. Consequently, the incorporation of Chinese cultural elements into the translation of Western wines, aimed at appealing to potential consumers, serves as a strategic approach to converting consumers' cultural capital into economic capital for winemakers. This practice also entails an exchange of consumers' economic capital for cultural capital, specifically the



cultural capital associated with wine appreciation. It can be considered a mutual accumulation of cultural capital benefiting both parties involved.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Western wine brands consistently emphasise the significance of employing appropriate translations within the Chinese cultural context when presenting their wine varieties. This assertion finds support in the series of in-depth interviews conducted by the author with prominent business executives affiliated with renowned Australian wine companies, namely, Penfolds and Sirromet.

5. Chinese Translations of Western Wine Brands

This section elucidates the strategic approach adopted by Western wine brands in fostering a resonant rapport with the discerning Chinese consumer base, primarily by means of auspicious translations. As Western wine labels endeavour to forge substantial and culturally resonant connections with their Chinese patrons, they have adroitly embarked on a journey of incorporating traditional Chinese cultural motifs and sensibilities into the very fabric of their brand identity. Through the nuanced implementation of the Chinese translations of European wine appellations and the judicious solicitation of insightful perspectives from influential figures within the Australian wine industry, this study posits that within the intricate realm of the Chinese language, the lexicon associated with viticulture originating from Western linguistic origins can be adroitly transmuted, enriched with newfound layers of semantic nuance, and elevated to a profound stratum of comprehension. This transformative process, marked by the infusion of indigenous cultural elements and linguistic finesse, manifests as an exemplar of cross-cultural brand adaptation, and is poised to facilitate a heightened level of resonance and receptivity among Chinese wine enthusiasts.

Chateau Chasse-Spleen, the renowned French winery whose name is translated to mean “alleviate melancholy” in Chinese, has a fascinating presence in the Chinese wine landscape. Expressed in its transliteration into Chinese as “忘忧堡” (9winetour 2021), which is pronounced in *Pinyin* as “*wang you bao*”, where the term connotes a fortress (堡 “*bao*”) capable of dispelling sorrow (忘忧 “*wang you*”). This estate has attained a position of eminence, distinguished by its strong market performance and escalating market valuations within the realm of Chinese viticulture. Marchesi de’ Frescobaldi, the distinguished Italian purveyor of premium wines, boasts a venerable lineage spanning over seven centuries. The nomenclature associated with this illustrious establishment, though extensive, assumes a notable Chinese rendition in the form of “花思蝶” (Wineita, 2016), articulated as “*hua si die*” in the *Pinyin* system. This rendering bears a figurative connotation signifying “flowers yearning for butterflies”. Adopting such a translation approach effectively mitigates the challenge encountered by Chinese consumers when confronted with the length of the original appellation, rendered phonetically in translation. This strategic translation synthesis seamlessly amalgamates phonetic adaptation with a nuanced Italian interpretation, thereby bestowing upon the brand an air of cultivated refinement. Furthermore, it artfully encapsulates the reverence held by connoisseurs of the wine, akin to the yearning of a flower for the companionship of a butterfly.

Penfolds, with a headline like “Australian Red Makes French Turn Green”, stands as an illustrious exemplar within the pantheon of vinous excellence. Its origins trace back to the venerable Dr Christopher Rawson Penfold, who inaugurated his viticultural enterprise in 1844. The Penfolds



nomenclature, devoid of any overt familial connotation, has intriguingly undergone a transformation within the Chinese lexicon, manifesting itself as “奔富” (pronounced “*ben fu*”), which means “奔向富裕/快速实现财富自由”, signifying a distinct conceptual shift towards the pursuit of wealth at a breakneck pace or the rapid attainment of financial freedom. The term “*ben fu*” (奔富) lacks linguistic continuity with its English counterpart but carries an enriched semantic connotation in Chinese. This practice aligns with a prominent trend observed in Hong Kong's urban landscape, particularly evident in the nomenclatural conventions applied to various street names. A case in point is Fife Street and its corresponding Chinese name “快富街”. The phonetic resemblance between “Fife” and the Cantonese pronunciation “快富” is striking, with the latter meaning “swift attainment of wealth”. Consequently, the designation “快富街” (Swift Attainment of Wealth Street) imbues the toponymic landscape with an enhanced semantic depth, reflecting the expeditious accumulation of prosperity.

During my fieldwork in the South Australian wine region in March 2019, my primary informant, Ms R, a manager at Penfolds Magill Estate, shared valuable insights. She highlighted a notable observation: the popularity of the Chinese translation “*ben fu*” (奔富) appeared to be closely linked to notions of economic prosperity. She suggested that it may have been driven primarily by Chinese consumers' affinity for luxury items, manifested as a distinct preference for the “taste of the dollar”.

The auspicious significance embedded in the term “奔富” (*ben fu*) conveys a fervent aspiration for rapid wealth accumulation and the realisation of prosperity, establishing itself as a formidable shield under which ambitions flourish. Moreover, the exalted price tag associated with Penfold's wines engenders a secondary narrative, wherein discerning consumers wield their consumption choices as markers of societal status. The products one selects, the sustenance one indulges in, and the libations one partakes of all serve as indicators through which one's social standing, prestige, and economic affluence are discerned. This invites a closer examination of the intricate symbolic language within a stratified society. In this context, the act of consuming “*ben fu*” (奔富) can be regarded as an exercise in discerning “a sense of taste”, and “a set of dispositions and tastes that embody social and cultural distinction” (Bourdieu, 2017[1977], p. 45).

In his seminal work, Bourdieu (1984[1979]) delineated a clear dichotomy within the realm of taste: the taste of necessity and the taste of luxury. The former is associated with individuals possessing limited economic capital, while the latter is a hallmark of those enjoying a higher financial standing. This classification has significance for Chinese wine enthusiasts who have the means to indulge in expensive imported wines, as it underscores their proclivity for satisfying their taste for opulence.

To illustrate, the consumption of an exclusive range of Australian wines serves as a conspicuous symbol of one's social status and financial affluence. The act of wine consumption itself transcends mere indulgence; it is a channel for socialisation and a means by which individuals construct their *mianzi*, a concept encapsulating the public self-image, capability, dignity, and reputation as integral components of internal value constructs (Zhou and Zhang, 2017, p. 152). By choosing to partake in “*ben fu*” (奔富), a premium wine brand with an auspicious translation, Chinese wine connoisseurs effectively cultivate and bolster their *mianzi*. This public persona, underscored by financial prowess and a discerning appreciation of Western culture and lifestyle, often projects an image characterised by economic and cultural capital. Consequently, such individuals are more likely to be positively evaluated, accepted, and appreciated in their social interactions.



Following the conclusion of the interview, Ms R extended an invitation for me to join in a guided winery tour under the auspices of Mr T, the appointed Mandarin-speaking guide. She apprised me of an intriguing aspect of the Magill Estate's operational ethos, specifically their strategic use of Chinese personnel, as opposed to mere interpreters, within their staff complement. These personnel are not merely selected due to their Chinese ethnicity or *Putonghua*-speaking proficiency, but rather, are rigorously groomed and trained to an exceedingly high standard. This training regime encompasses a comprehensive understanding of oenology and viticulture, a prerequisite prior to any engagement with consumers. The underlying motivation behind this meticulous selection and training process is Penfolds' commitment to ensuring that the narrative of their wines emanates from individuals who possess the requisite expertise, thereby imbuing it with an aura of opulence and authenticity. The tour itself was conducted by Mr T, whose demeanour and knowledge of the estate's operations greatly enhanced the comprehensiveness of my fieldwork at Magill Estate. For me, this experience underscored the imperative for interpreters to be imbued with a profound level of professional expertise and highlights the necessity for staff in such a luxurious industry, catering to discerning Chinese clientele, to be equipped with multilingual proficiency and a deep-seated understanding of the finer nuances of the high-end wine market.

Another participant in my research, Sirromet, stands out as a notable wine brand with a distinct narrative, particularly in the context of its Chinese translations. This narrative, shared with me by Mr E, Sirromet's manager, during an illuminating conversation at the Queensland cellar door in December 2018, sheds light on the fascinating intersection of branding, linguistic adaptation, and cultural resonance. Established in 2000, the brand owes its name to its founder, Terry Morris, through a clever linguistic inversion of his surname and the first two letters of his first name. This linguistic play resulted in the nickname "Sirromet", a unique identifier that seamlessly blends elements of the owner's identity.

Mr E told me that when Sirromet began its foray into the Chinese market in 2013 by establishing a presence on WeChat, a popular social media platform in China, it undertook a delicate process of translating and adapting its brand name. The resultant Chinese characters, "希路美" (pronounced as "xi lu mei"), were chosen to mirror the Mandarin pronunciation of "Sirromet". However, this translation unveiled a semantic layer that transcended the mere phonetic resemblance. In the Chinese language, "希路美" symbolises "hope, path, and beauty," encapsulating a profound message that resonates with both the essence of the brand and the aspirations of its Chinese audience. This translation, while conceptually rich and evocative, diverges notably from the source material. The essence of the founder's name, Terry Morris, is conspicuously absent in the Chinese rendition of Sirromet. Instead, the translated name transcends the confines of mere phonetic equivalence, embracing a more expansive and symbolic connotation.

In these captivating instances of brand adaptation across cultural boundaries, the Chinese translations of Penfolds and Sirromet serve as compelling illustrations of the intricate interplay between linguistic resonance and semantic depth. Instead of merely transplanting the founder's identity verbatim, they craft a fresh narrative that aligns seamlessly with the brand's core values while also resonating with the nuanced cultural sensibilities of their Chinese audience. These two examples offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of brand localisation and its profound impact on how a product or entity is perceived and received in a foreign market. This strategic manoeuvre was designed



to introduce the brand's distinctive narratives, wines, and wine tours to the burgeoning Chinese consumer demographic.

My immersive fieldwork experience within the backdrop of Australia's wine regions, coupled with enlightening conversations with wine experts, has expanded the horizons of my academic pursuits beyond the confines of translation studies. The insights gained from these interactions have cast light upon the intricate dynamics inherent in the researcher-interviewee relationship, echoing Smith's (1988) assertion of a broad spectrum of potential interactions, ranging from reciprocal engagements to nuanced asymmetries. In the pursuit of knowledge, researchers find themselves at a crossroads where the choice to either assert their presence and influence or embrace humility and vulnerability becomes pivotal. Furthermore, the subtle art of ingratiation, delicately woven into the fabric of rapport-building and trust-fostering, emerges as a vital thread in the intricate tapestry of the research encounter. As I reflect upon this enriching journey, it is evident that these multifaceted experiences have not only deepened my understanding of translation studies but have also broadened my appreciation for the complexities of human interaction in the pursuit of knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Within the context of transcultural communication, it is intriguing to observe the profound capacity of language to bridge the chasm of cultural divergence between the West and the East (in this case China), exemplified in the intricate lexicon and culture of wine. The transmission of concepts such as *terroir*, grape varieties, and wine brands from Western domains to their Chinese counterparts defies the conventional pitfalls of translation, for language, as a repository of culture, has remarkably preserved, elevated, and assimilated their original meanings into the tapestry of Chinese culture. *Terroir*, aptly rendered as “*fengtu*” (风土) in Chinese, not only encapsulates the physical attributes but also weaves in cultural nuances, customs, and sustainability considerations, epitomising the harmonious interplay between nature and humanity. The nomenclature of Western wines, when transposed into Chinese, transcends mere translation by conjuring vivid imagery of picturesque landscapes, precious treasures, and cheerful sentiments. These Chinese renditions surpass their Western counterparts by imparting additional layers of meaning, symbolising the Chinese penchant for Western wine culture.

The symbiotic relationship between Australian wine, winery tours and the burgeoning Chinese market provides further evidence of this cross-cultural fusion. Wine brands such as Penfolds and Sirromet have judiciously eschewed direct translation of owner names in their English brands, instead adopting auspicious Chinese appellations. This strategic adaptation has been handsomely rewarded with acceptance and preference among Chinese consumers. These translation endeavours are not confined to mere acts of linguistic conversion but are, in essence, conduits for the transmission of the ethos of *terroir*, the diversity of wine varieties, and the allure of wine brands from their Western origins, with the added embellishments of Chinese culture. In this intricate dance of linguistic adaptation, the overarching objective remains the harmonisation of cultures, the discovery of commonalities between the West and China, and the discernment of Chinese market preferences — all in pursuit of maximising economic returns. In short, these Chinese translations transcend the boundaries of language, serving as vessels that not only convey but also enhance and enrich the multifaceted world of wine culture.



My relatively comprehensive exploration of translation practices within the wine sector and its associated tour experience goes beyond a mere literature review. I have researched the heart of this subject by conducting extensive fieldwork within various wine regions and engaging in illuminating interviews with wine experts. This multifaceted approach not only provided a robust foundation for my research but also offered a valuable platform for both the researcher and the research subjects to collaboratively examine the challenges, encounters, and solutions encountered within the realm of translation studies and practices.

In line with Stanley and Wise's insightful perspective (1993), I recognise the significance of treating research participants as fellow human beings rather than mere sources of data. This viewpoint challenges the notion of coldly collecting objective facts, underscoring the paramount importance of acknowledging the humanity within our research subjects. In essence, this paper weaves together the intricate tapestry of human connection that underpins the research endeavour. It serves as a reminder of the graceful dance that occurs between the researcher and the interviewee as they jointly craft meaning and understanding in their quest for knowledge.

I aspire for this research methodology to serve as a valuable resource for a diverse audience, encompassing academics, educators, practitioners, consumers, tourists, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations alike. By shedding light on the intersections of translation, viticulture, tourism, social society, and more, this work hopefully will interest and encourage those interested in deepening their understanding of these fields and fostering meaningful connections within them.

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