

# Chinese Literature in Romania in the Context of Sino-Romanian Economic and Political Relations (1950-2018)

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**Abstract** The literary relations, publishing and translation activity between Romania and China have been heavily influenced by the international exchange between the countries. The overall objective of the present research is to analyse literary translations from China to Romania between 1950-2018 from the point of view of cultural reception and to explore what this strategy involves at a larger scale. The first section of the paper will present a concise mapping of the Romanian publishing activity related to China, highlighting the influence of socio-political-economic relations between the countries which emerges from both quantitative and qualitative research results. The second section will present the results of a series of interviews with intermediary agents focusing on the cultural reflections of Chinese literature in Romania.

**Keywords** Chinese literature. Translation. Publishing. Mediators. Transfer. Influence. Social agents.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Methodology and Respondents. – 3 Short Description of the Main Bilateral Relations Between Romania and China from 1950 to 2018 and their Influence and Implication on the Book Market. – 3.1 1950-1965. – 3.2 1965-1989. – 3.2 1990-2018. – 4 Cultural Reflections of Translated Chinese Literature in Romania. – 4.1 Interviews with Translators of Chinese Literature and Publishing Houses in Romania. – 5 Conclusion and Recommendations for the Development and Improvement of Romanian Chinese Intercultural and Literary Relations.



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## 1 Introduction

Literature and translation are understood, in this research, as social practices, being integrated in the specific cultural context from which they are born. Thus, we followed three dimensions in the research of Chinese literary translation and reception in Romania. Firstly, being a transfer between nations, translations imply the existence of reciprocal international relations. Secondly, at a more specific level, differences between political, economic and cultural dynamics should be made. Thirdly, the dynamics of translations depend on the structure of the target culture and on the manner the intermediary agents and relevant mediators (translators, editors, literary agents, critics, reviewers) form the horizon of reception.

The theory of reception, as developed by Jauss and Iser (Constance School), by Bourdieu (1977; 1989) and further advanced into the recent sociology of reception by Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) through a sociological approach, distinguishes itself from the previous interpretative and economic approaches to translation, overcoming both the inter-textual dilemma focused on the relation between the original and the translation and the identification of translations as sale products, distributed and consumed according to the demand of national and international markets. The sociology of reception focuses on the interest and functions of translation, on the role of mediating agents, the institutions involved, on the contribution of translator-training institutions, the influence of market, social, political and economic claims of the state.

Against this theoretical frame, in this paper we will focus on the literary transfer through translation from China to Romania, exploring what sociological reception involves in this circulation of books and translations. The first section will present a concise mapping of the Romanian publishing activity related to China, highlighting the influence of socio-political-economic relations between the countries which emerges both from the quantitative and qualitative results of the research. In the second section, we will present the results of a series of interviews with Romanian translators of Chinese literature and publishing houses in their capacity of intermediary agents and mediators focusing on the cultural reflections of Chinese literature in Romania.

## 2 Methodology and Respondents

The present study is structured on both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research consisted in archive and library research to create the mapping of books related to China published in Romania during 1950-2018.

The qualitative research was based on in-depth interviews with 11 Romanian translators of Chinese literature, 3 interviews with representatives of Romanian publishing houses which are active in Chinese literature publishing, an interview with a Chinese diplomat in charge with cultural activities from the Embassy of China in Romania (referred to in the text as agent 1), an interview with a Chinese director of the first Confucius Institute (CI) in Romania (referred to as agent 2), and an interview with a former Romanian diplomat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (RMFA) – division of culture, bilateral relations (referred to as agent 3).

The chosen method was structured interviews; therefore, we created two sets of questions, the first one designed for translators and editors and the second one for the rest of interviewees mentioned above. The same series of questions were addressed to all interviewees from each section. The questions were created prior to the interview and included several open-ended questions. Questioning was standardised, and the ordering and phrasing of the questions was kept consistent from interview to interview. The questions were formulated in a neutral tone, with several “test-retest” questions. The interviews were conducted in Romanian and Chinese languages, according to the individual respondent.

The general objective of the interviews was to investigate, through qualitative exploratory research, the chain of production of Chinese literature translations in Romania. The specific objectives were to determine the factors of ideological, economic, political influence and their implications in the translation of Chinese books in Romania. We also aimed to determine the tools, translation methods and, in particular, all factors of influence in the translation process, prior to the selection of the work to be translated, during the translation and after the translation has been completed.

The 11 translators interviewed were selected because they are all active translators of Chinese literature in Romania, who have at least one translation published and available for purchase in a Romanian publishing house. The selected translators included in the interviews were categorised as follows:

- In terms of the duration of their translation activity:  
Two translators started their activity in 1990, 1 in 1993, 2 in 2004, the rest after 2010.
- In terms of literary genres:  
They are translators of contemporary and classic literature from many literary genres (novel, poetry, Chinese philosophical and religious classics of Confucius, Zhuangzi, Laozi, short stories, essays, history, mystery, thriller, avant-garde short stories).
- In terms of the language of translation:  
All translate directly from Chinese into Romanian.

For the quantitative research a database was created using different sources.

1. The two dictionaries published by Sextil Pușcariu Institute: *The Chronological Dictionary of the Novel Translated in Romania from Origins to 1989* (2005) and the *Chronological Dictionary of the Novel Translated in Romania 1990-2000* (2017) were reliable and invaluable resources for the sociological and quantitative study of Chinese novels translated into Romanian.
2. Through the virtual catalogue ROLINEST (Romanian Library Network Science & Technology) we were able to search and retrieve simultaneously the existing bibliographic information in 14 university and research libraries in Romania and 16 Romanian national libraries: National Library of Romania, Library of Romanian Academy in Bucharest, Library of the Romanian Academy in Iasi, Central University Library Carol I Bucharest, Central University Library Carol I Bucharest - Romania Catalog, Central University Library Eugen Todoran Timisoara, Central University Library Lucian Blaga Cluj - Napoca, Central University Library Mihai Eminescu Iasi, Library of Horia Hulubei National Institute of Nuclear Physics, Bucharest Polytechnic University Library, Timișoara Polytechnic University Library, Gheorghe Asachi Technical University Library Iași, Stefan cel Mare University Library Suceava, Library of Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Library of the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Bucharest Metropolitan Library, Digital Library of Bucharest, National Digital Library. The RoLiNeST catalogue is based on MetaLib, an application of ExLibris, which shares distributed databases on servers connected to the Internet via RoEduNet. Within this system, libraries update and maintain their own catalogues locally and the information is found by the user in the shared virtual catalogue RoLiNeST (<http://rolinest.edu.ro>) shows the initiators of this portal of major importance for the literary research in Romania.
3. Another source of information was the online catalogue of the National Library (<http://alephnew.bibnat.ro/>).
4. UNESCO Index Translationum database ([www.unesco.org/xtrans](http://www.unesco.org/xtrans)) was a good source for completing and cross-checking the mapping of the evolution of literature dedicated to China in the period 1950 to 2018.

All the information was cross-checked by secondary research sources such as specialised blogs, online articles, press-releases. Thus, through the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) a database was created on a series of variables, through which the mapping was aimed at calculating not only the number of works,

but also of the subjects and themes approached during three distinct periods in the political life of Romania.

### 3 Short Description of the Main Bilateral Relations Between Romania and China from 1950 to 2018 and Their Influence and Implication on the Book Market

#### 3.1 1950-1965

The first works dedicated to China, written by the great Romanian chroniclers (Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce, Costea, Amfilohie), appeared in Romania in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first official international relations between Romania and China were marked by the 1880 correspondence between Carol I, King of Romania, and Guang Xu, Emperor of China, during which, through a favourable and supportive response, China recognised the Romanian state as an independent state (Buzatu 2005). October 5, 1949 is considered a turning point in the official political relations between Romania and China because of the official recognition given by Romania to the People's Republic of China (PRC), letters between the Foreign Ministers Ana Pauker and Zhou Enlai, and the establishment of permanent ambassadors in both states. Romania thus became the third country to recognise the PRC, a political gesture that had a huge impact on the Sino-Romanian political and diplomatic relationship, and which marked the beginning of the friendship between the two states (Giță 2020, 161).

The beginning of the Sino-Romanian diplomatic exchanges is marked by cultural, artistic and academic cooperation, through which Romanian writers, scholars, students visit China and vice versa. A point of major importance is the almost simultaneous opening, in 1956, of the Romanian and Chinese language study departments in the prestigious universities of Beijing (Beijing University of Foreign Studies - over the last 60 years, the Romanian language department has had 18 promotions with over 250 graduates of Romanian language and literature)<sup>1</sup> and Bucharest (University of Bucharest) (164).

Our research results show that during Socialist Romania there were only 44 books published, including both originals and translations from Chinese: Chinese linguistics, translations of Chinese literature (mainly novels), books on Chinese politics, culture and civi-

<sup>1</sup> "Secția De Limba Română A Universității De Studii Străine Din Beijing 60 De Ani - Casa Româno-Chineză - Asociație De Prietenie". *Casaromanochineza.Ro*, 2021. <https://casaromanochineza.ro/sectia-de-limba-romana-a-universitatii-de-studii-straine-din-beijing-60-de-ani/>.

sation, history and Chinese philosophy. A maximum of 6 books were published per year, in 1952 and 1958 (see [fig. 1]). The very low number of publications was influenced, in our opinion, by the difficult political and financial circumstances of both Romania and China.

### 3.2 1965-1989

The decade 1968-1978 is considered as the historical apogee of Sino-Romanian relations on several levels, including the cultural one; it is a period in which Romania occupied the fourth position in China's hierarchy of friendship (Buzatu 2005, 116).

In terms of the literary life, the good diplomatic and political relations translate into a higher number of original works debating various topics about China but also translations of Chinese literature. During 1965-1989 - the Communist period - the results of our study show a total of 81 titles, compared to the only 44 of the socialist period. However, in the first several years of the Ceausescu regime there are no major differences (see fig. 1), with Romania remaining at an average of 2-3 publications per year until 1975, when, probably as a consequence of the increasing economic and political relations, the average was of 5 books per year until 1989. In terms of genres, out of a total of 81, 58 are translations of Chinese literature. It should be also noted that only as late as 1966 did a Romanian translator publish a direct translation from Chinese to Romanian for the first time - Pu Songling's *Duhul crizantemei* 黄英 (The Golden Flower), translated by the sinologist Toni Radian.

Chinese literature in Romania is currently experiencing an increase, and this is due to several factors: on the one hand, the evolution of economic-political and ideological relations have encouraged the increased number of translated literature; on the other hand, the new specialists in Chinese language - graduates of the Chinese studies programme launched in 1956 at the University of Bucharest - are now able to translate works of classical literature directly from Chinese and to publish original works on Chinese language, literature or culture - necessary both to facilitate and deepen the studies in Bucharest, and to disseminate them among regular Romanian readers.

Figure 1 shows some of the highlights of the publication of works related to China, i.e. 1975, 1983, 1985, 1987, years marked by high-ranking official visits either by the Romanian presidency to China (1971, 1982, 1985) or by Chinese leaders in Romania (1986, 1987) (Cindea Giță 2021) [fig. 1]. Without claiming that these events had such a direct impact on the publishing and translation activity, we can, however, assume that the Romanian society of this period could not be indifferent to the directions drawn by the government, to affinities or relationships promoted, even if only superficially, by the Ceausescu regime.

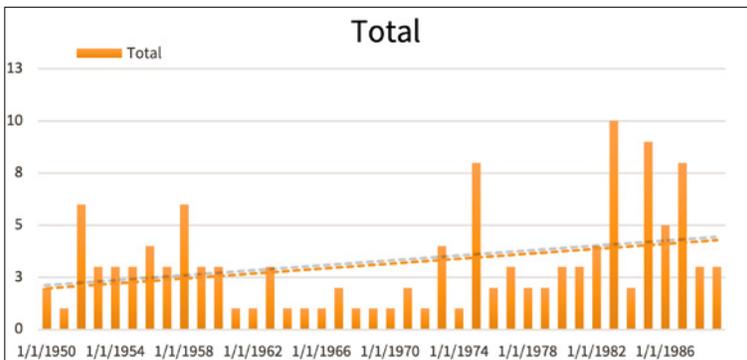


Figure 1 Graphic representation of the number of books related to China published in Romania between 1950 and 1989

### 3.3 1990-2018

1990-2007 represents a transition period for the Romanian people, a period marked by change, democratisation, but also by a certain chaos and insecurity: a turbulent period in which Romania sought its political orientation and economic allies. Romania tried to orient towards the West, towards a democratic world. For the first year after the Revolution of December 1989, the relationship with China was reluctant and marked by protests in front of the Chinese Embassy in Bucharest, which made the authorities fear to cultivate relations with China or respond positively to messages received from the Chinese authorities (Buzatu 2005, 129). After January 1991 the relations gradually restarted and were followed by official cooperation agreements, declarations of friendship and mutual collaboration in different fields – culture, education and science, economy, tourism (Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, File: Relații bilaterale România – China. (n.d.). Retrieved November 4, 2018, <https://www.mae.ro/>).

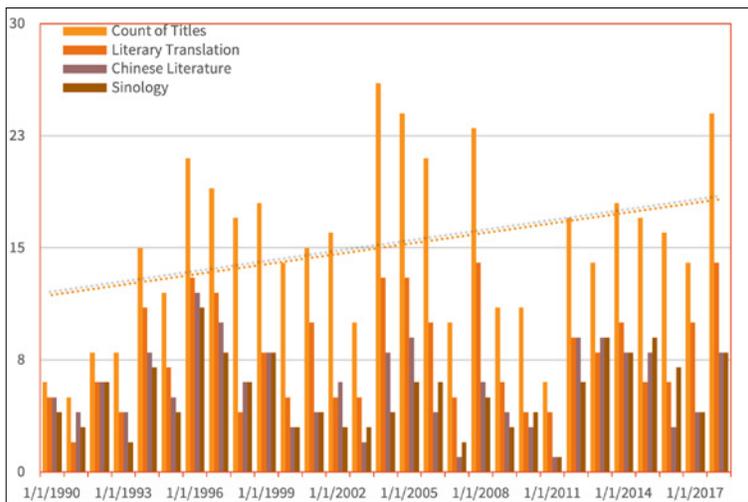
After 2007, Romania – now a member of NATO and European Union – continued the mild ascending trend of the cooperation with China backed also by the EU-China Strategic Partnership on the basis of which the two countries signed several collaboration agreements. One of the most impacting agreement on the publishing activity is the *Cultural Cooperation Programme for 2013-2016*, extended afterwards until 2022, which explicitly supports the cooperation between national libraries, exchange of books and publications, direct contacts between major publishers from Romania and China and mutual translation (cf. <https://beijing.mae.ro/>).

These social changes had visibly a great impact upon the book market. The publishing industry underwent considerable changes,

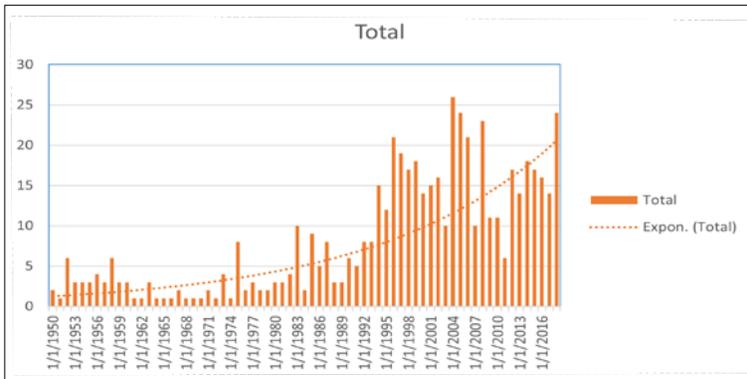
being able to get rid of state propaganda and censorship and to explore a larger diversity of books.

The replacement of state departments with free market demand has led to a significant growth not only in domestic book production but also in foreign book translation, which increased in number but especially in the diversity of topics addressed: there are new publications about tourism and travel in China, traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese zodiac, Fengshui and Zen practices. The Romanian reader, free of the censorship and confinement of Communism, is now more open to self-elevation and spiritual knowledge of Asian culture – a trend that has grown considerably in recent years and is expected to continue in the following years. A significant importance should be given also to publications on the economy of China, especially after 2011, when Romanian people became interested in the secret of the Chinese economy, in the context of the global economic crisis.

During the analysed period of 29 years, the results of our study show a total of 436 publications, out of which 229 translations, 168 Chinese literature and 154 sinology books [fig. 2]. We may conclude that, on the one hand, the Romanian publishing activity is now more focused on the pedagogical and cultural role of translation, and, on the other hand, a significant factor in the evolution of the book market was the increased number of Romanian sinologists and Chinese language experts.



**Figure 2** Graphic representation of the number of books related to China published in Romania between 1990 and 2018



**Figure 3** Graphic representation of the publishing activity related to China published in Romania between 1950 and 2018

As shown above, the evolution of publishing activity related to China [fig. 3] followed the course of several impact factors, corresponding to the theory of sociology of translation: the political, diplomatic, economic and social development of the country was reflected on the book market. This proved that translation as a connector of cultures is open to influences, such as national interest, exchange of power and dogmatic domination, economic development, and social evolution.

These conclusions were also verified through the second collection of interviews with the agents 1, 2 and 3 as mentioned above in the methodology. They are considered agents and mediators in the publishing market with influence on the cultural, political and economic relations between the two countries.

Through the interviews, we found out that the cultural cooperation between Romania and China is second in rank, immediately after the economic cooperation, in the interests of the RMFA. Culture is of interest mainly because it helps to create the preconditions for a better economic cooperation with China. This can be achieved, in RMFA's opinion, by developing language skills, cultural fluency and good relations at the level of civil society, municipalities, and in the academic world.<sup>2</sup>

Agents 1, 2 and 3 from Embassy, CI and RMFA noticed an intensification of relations with China in the period between 2012-2015, when the Romanian Government prioritised relations with China in the hope that good cultural relations will have tangible results in economic terms. Repeated high-level visits of large delegations to China

<sup>2</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 3, June 2020.

were followed by Chinese funding opportunities offered for cultural and academic activities.<sup>3</sup> All these official visits had a clear and visible impact on the fluctuations of the publication of Chinese books as the figures presented above also show. The interviewees also pointed out that in terms of diplomatic relations, there was a visible effect at the consulates, where the number of Romanians applying for visas for tourism, but also for academic and business purposes, had increased greatly. More importantly, since 2013 Chinese language courses were introduced in Romania in pre-university schools, at the level of upper secondary education.<sup>4</sup> Respondents believe that this period laid the foundations for wider cultural cooperation, which has been continuing despite the lack of consistency caused by political instability in Romania and lack of bilaterality in efforts. Among the successful methods to enhance cultural relations with China, the activity of Romania within the 16 + 1 programme proved very useful, but this programme was established by China, not Romania, which dedicates fewer resources to diplomacy with China than neighbouring countries such as Poland and Hungary.<sup>5</sup> The initiatives of Chinese authorities, who support the translation of Chinese literature through strong and well-developed projects, need to be well observed, as the recent theories of reception (Heilbron 2008, 187-97) tend to prove that lately the economic influences on the translation process are much stronger than the political ones.

Asked if they consider that the bilateral relations between China and Romania can be influenced by cultural and academic exchanges, mainly through literature translation, the Chinese interviewees generally responded that literature is a bridge between two nations, and that translation demand and the dynamism of China-Romania relations are mutually reinforcing. "Good diplomatic relations promote translation request while the increasing translations will encourage the relations between Chinese and Romanian people".<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the influence of literature and translation on the expansion of Sino-Romanian relations, agents 3 believes that relations can be influenced by such exchanges, but the main form of literature that would improve these exchanges would be scientific and academic literature, joint publications in various fields and edited volumes resulting from Sino-Romanian or Sino-European conferences. Romania is not a country with high consumption of literature, therefore the influence of Chinese literature is also limited. A boost of appetite for Chinese literature can be reached by offering a good selection

<sup>3</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 3, June 2020.

<sup>4</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 1, June 2020.

<sup>5</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 3, June 2020.

<sup>6</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 2, April 2020.

of books from different fields. He also thinks that, along with literature, movies, TV series, animations and computer games based on Chinese culture and Chinese music are cultural products often consumed by Romanians and have a great cultural impact on the awareness of Chinese culture and civilisation in Romania.<sup>7</sup>

The interviews with the three agents presented above confirmed the results drawn from the mapping of Chinese-related literature published in Romania, proving that political trends, power relations, diplomatic actions, economic mechanisms and academic measures are factors that play an important role in the field of publishing, in general and the flows of translation from one culture to another, in particular.

## **4 Cultural Reflections of Translated Chinese Literature in Romania**

### **4.1 Interviews with Translators of Chinese Literature and Publishing Houses in Romania**

To further demonstrate how the transfer of Chinese literature in Romania was influenced by the economic, diplomatic and political factors that govern the transfer of culture, this section is intended to closely analyse literary translations from Chinese into Romanian from the point of view of the cultural reception and to reflect and investigate what this strategy involves prior to and after the translation. We propose, thus, an extended approach to cultural translations, an approach to the sociology of translations, to their cultural, linguistic, literary reception. To that aim, we conducted and analysed a series of interviews with Romanian translators of Chinese literature and with representatives of publishing houses, investigating their role in the cultural exchange between China and Romania.

The interviews were designed to analyse the following specific aspects:

- manner of translation of cultural references (culturemes) and identification of the solutions for equivalence;
- cultural impact of Chinese literature in Romania.

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<sup>7</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with agent 3, June 2020.

#### 4.1.1 Manner of Approach of Chinese Literature by Romanian Translators

In consolidating a foreign literature reception in a target country, the human factor, i.e., the translators' approach both individually and collectively, is vital. Chinese literature cannot be understood and popularised unless there is a tradition of Chinese translation and a consensus among translators, whose role is also that of educators - their work needs to help the target reader better understand the cultural references found in the text, which need to be translated in the same manner so as to be perpetuated throughout the translations.

The responds of translators show that there is such a tradition (not strong enough over time, except in recent years): it started with the first book translated by Toni Radian, and continued with the fundamental texts translated by sinologist: Myths, Lao Zi, Confucius, Xunzi (from this list Mencius and the direct translation of Yi Jing are lacking); classical poetry (Shi jing, Qu Yuan with Li Sao, poetry in regular meter-shi and Ci poetry from Song Dynasty), medieval short stories, great classic novels and the first wave of modern writers Lu Xun, Lao She, Mao Dun and, currently, the contemporary writers Mo Yan, Yu Hua, Su Tong, A Cheng. There are also translations from modern poetry, modern theatre.<sup>8</sup> Romanian translators have therefore translated the texts of the canon, as a kind of diagram of Chinese literature and are currently involved in the translation of contemporary literature, which is of a greater interest for publishing houses, due to the international recognition and awards of the writers.

In terms of translation of cultural references (culturemes), even if they may be considered an aspect of intra-textual analysis, they are however influential on the broader picture of Chinese literature reception. Through a consensus on the translation of these terms, Romanian readers will be able to assimilate terms specific to Chinese culture more easily and include them more naturally in their everyday life and language. From the interviews with translators, we found out that a *consensus doctorum* was formed, rather spontaneously, by those translators who form the group of university translators and who share their experiences and check each other's works. In addition, the Asian translation studies specialised master programme from the University of Bucharest was mentioned as a real laboratory, proposing a propaedeutics of translation from Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

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<sup>8</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication with translators, July 2019.

#### 4.1.2 Cultural Impact of Chinese Literature in Romania

Three of the interviewed translators consider that the impact of translated literature is hard to be quantified because the target public is still small and represented by the people already interested in Chinese culture and civilization, thus not reaching above the specialized target. However, the majority of both translators and editors think that literature translation has a long-term impact on future generations, being a way of making China and the Chinese people better known from their humanist nature, with the struggles and feelings of ordinary life, detaching from the impressions left on the global stage by the manner of ruling of the Communist regime or by the ever-present commercial activity. Romanian's perception of Chinese is often clouded by clichés, and these, in the opinion of the respondents, can only be resolved by increased intercultural dialogue and enriched knowledge – both facilitated by the publication of translated literature.

The current translation activity – a first-hand translation from Chinese of mostly Chinese contemporary literature by well-known and acclaimed authors – is considered, in the general opinion, to be able to improve the understanding of Chinese culture and people and to broaden the knowledge about China.

Two important factors were mentioned throughout the interviews both with the translators and the editors: one is the direct involvement of mediating agencies such as university and the academic community, publishing houses, Chinese cultural institutes (mainly Confucius Institute). The second one is the increased number of speakers of Chinese, of sinologists and therefore the increased number of direct translations and the larger target group formed of the people knowledgeable about and interested in Chinese culture.

##### 4.1.2.1 Involvement of Mediating Agencies

Universities with Chinese studies programmes are generally considered essential in the chain of import of Chinese literature in Romania. Firstly, the role of the academic community is to form translators with comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture and China as a whole, who can, through their activity, present a correct and balanced image of the source culture for the Romanian reader. The general opinion is that the life of the translated work, its capacity to transfer and communicate the cultural background of the Chinese is fully dependant on the translator's linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, competencies and professional training. This idea is also backed by the quantitative results presented in fig. 3, where the number of translated literature and original works on different as-

pects of Chinese language and culture increased significantly after the development of Chinese language studies in Romania and the initiation of exchange mobilities and scholarships offered through the bilateral agreements signed by the two states. Nevertheless, universities, with both professors and students, are the prime consumer and promoter of translated literature, through participation and organisation of dissemination events, through academic reviews and articles aimed to explain and present the Chinese authors, the socio-political background, the characteristics of Chinese literature and the overall message transferred by books.

Publishing houses represent another critical part of the support background for the dissemination and reception of translated literature - selection of the texts to be translated, employment of translators, dissemination events all depend on their strategy and intentions. From the interviews with three representatives of the Romanian publishing houses which edited and promoted Chinese literature, we found out that the main motivation for selecting books from China is, for the most part, a qualitative one - the literary value of the book and the prediction in terms of the way the Romanian reader would resonate with the book. Therein, the selection relies heavily on the proposals coming from international literary agencies - this is a matter criticised by the interviewed translators who argue that Romanian editors don't support their selection with clear studies, but based on the value system of the western literary agencies. Recently, the available Chinese funding opportunities for translation and publication have encouraged the publishing houses and translators to balance a mix of canonical literature and debut literature<sup>9</sup> as the financial burden (including sales, copyrights, translation, look release events, promotion activity etc.) is not fully on the publishing house, which otherwise cannot risk the publication of a book that might be a commercial failure.

In terms of literary genres, according to both series of interviews - agents and translators - most of the Chinese translated literature is occupied by prose, and this is backed by the quantitative results too. Most recently the translation trend is being represented by contemporary novel, considered by the respondents "as the most powerful literary genre that can transfer Chinese culture to Romania".<sup>10</sup> As previously seen, due to the influence of international literary agencies in the selection of books, there naturally is an increased presence, on the Romanian book market, of Chinese authors who are more present on the international stages of literary awards, including the Nobel Prize.

<sup>9</sup> I.E. Cindea, personal communication, September 2019.

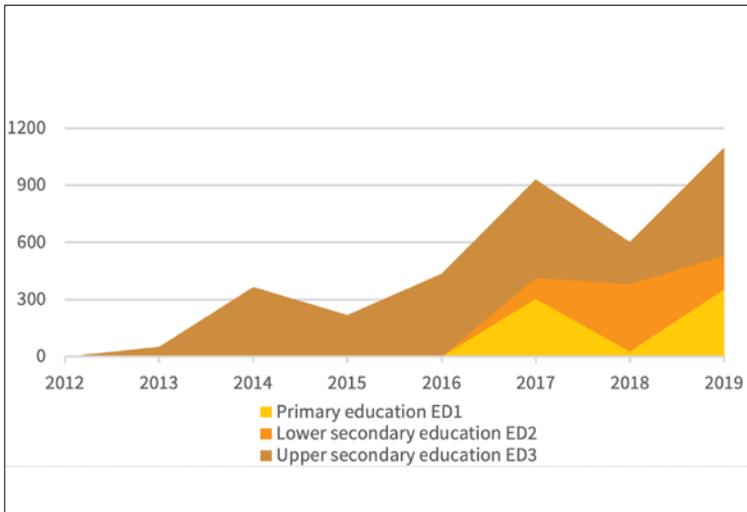
<sup>10</sup> I.E. Gita, personal communication, September 2019.

Among the recently translated Chinese authors worth mentioning there are:

- Xunzi, *Calea guvernării ideale*, tr. Luminita Balan, Polirom, 2004;
- Lao She, *Ceainăria* (Teahouse), tr. Ding Chao, Mirasova Emil: Ghepardul, 2004;
- Liao Yimei, *Rinocerul indragostit* (Rhinoceros in Love), tr. Ding Chao, Mirasova Emil: Ghepardul, 2005;
- Lu Xun, *Adevarata istorie a lui AQ*, tr. Dorobanțu Eufrosina, Dorobanțu Ion: Universal Dalsi, 2005;
- Mo Yan, *Sorgul Roșu* (Red Sorghum), tr. Dinu Luca: Humanitas, 2012; *Schimbară* (Change), tr. Bogdan Perdivară and Visan, Florentina: Trei, 2012; *Baladele Usturoiului din Paradis* (The Garlic Ballads), tr. Luminita Balan, Humanitas, 2013; *Tara vinului* (The Republic of Wine), tr. Luminita Balan, Humanitas, 2014; *Broaste* (Frogs), tr. Florentina Visan, Humanitas, 2014; *Femeia cu buchetul de flori si alte povestiri* (Big Breasts and Wide Hips), tr. Luminita Balan, Humanitas, 2016; *Obosit de viata, obosit de moarte* (Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out), tr. Dinu Luca, Humanitas, 2017;
- Su Tong, *Lumea de orez* (Rice), tr. Dinu Luca, Humanitas, 2015;
- Mai Jia, *Criptograful* (Decoded), tr. Paula Pascaru, Trei, 2015;
- Yu Hua, *In viata* (To Live), tr. Mugur Zlotea, Humanitas, 2016; *Cronica unui negustor de sange* (Blood Merchant), tr. Luminita Balan, Humanitas, 2017; *China în zece cuvinte* (China in Ten Words), tr. Mugur Zlotea, Humanitas, 2018;
- Gao Xingjian, *O undita pentru bunicul meu* (Gei Wo Laoye Mai Yugan), tr. Irina Ivascu, Polirom, 2017;
- Yan Lianke, *Zile, luni, ani* (Days, months, years), tr. Irina Ivascu, Polirom, 2018;
- A Cheng, *Cei trei regi* (Three Kings), tr. Florentina Visan, Luminita Balan, Humanitas, 2018.

#### 4.1.2.2 Increased Number of Speakers and Specialists in Chinese

The human factor in the evolution of publishing activity related to China is of great importance, both in terms of translators, sinologists, academics but also in terms of the general public as target group readers of translations. One of the most directly influencing factors in the number of readers should be the number of speakers of Chinese. To further understand this, we consulted the only available databas on learners of Chinese from Romania – Eurostat database for *Pupils by Education Level and Modern Foreign Language Studied* (2022).



**Figure 4** Pupils by education level and modern foreign language studied (online data code: EDUC\_UOE\_LANG01). Source of data: Eurostat

From the data provided by Eurostat regarding the study of the Chinese language at the primary and high school level between 2012-2018, we discover a very small number of students studying the Chinese language in Romania. However, we cannot ignore the growth of the last 10 years.

From the interviews presented in the first part of the study, we found out that in the period 2012-15 important meetings took place at the highest level between the Romanian and the Chinese governments, and this was the period with the most initiated cooperation partnerships.

A very important step was taken by the Ministry of Education in 2014, by officially introducing Chinese into the school curriculum and the possibility of studying it as any other foreign language. Thus, before the 2010s there were no schools or high schools where Chinese could be learned, but in 2014 there were 364 students of the Chinese language among high school pupils, 434 in 2016 and 567 in 2019 (last reported year). This increase among high schools shows that Chinese is bound to become a second or third foreign language taught at the pre-university level. At the level of high-schools, Chinese competes with German, French and Spanish.

The data is even more interesting if we look at the primary school level, where we have the highest proportion of students studying Chinese in grades 1-4. This shows that in the near future, the number will increase in grades 5-8, showing a clearly progressive trend of studying Chinese in Romania.

In 2017 there were 304 students in grades 1-4 and 108 students in grades 5-8. And in 2019 352 students in grades 1-4, and 178 in grades 5-8 (Eurostat, EDUC\_UOE\_LANG01, March 2022). The growth in the coming years among primary school pupils is certain, as it is a natural continuation of their previous years.

At the higher education level, the first Chinese language teaching department in the country was launched, as previously mentioned, at the University of Bucharest in 1956. But after the 1990s new Chinese language and literature departments were set up in other important universities in the country: Cluj, Brasov, Sibiu. This evolution has a great significance in the promotion of the Chinese language, because bachelor and master students will become promoters of the Chinese language and culture in society.

Undoubtedly, along with the national measures of teaching Chinese, both at pre-university and higher education level, the Confucius Institutes of Sibiu, Bucharest, Cluj, and Brasov, established in Romania since 2007, have a massive importance in promoting the Chinese language and culture among Romanians.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations for the Development and Improvement of Romanian Chinese Intercultural and Literary Relations

The literary relations between Romania and China have been much influenced by the international exchange between the countries, publishing activity and translation, as emerges from the interpretation given by social agents in different spatial and temporal contexts. Culture plays an overriding role in the Chinese discourse. While Western scholars describe soft power as a culture, a system of values, institutions, policies, and the ability to master international discourse, Chinese scholars regard culture as “a special irreplaceable place” (*Bùkě tìdài de tèshū dìwèi* 不可替代的特殊地位) in soft power: culture is the “soul, longitude and latitude of soft power” and it “must not be juxtaposed to other factors”.<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese cultural confidence comes from the national strength and national unity of the motherland, and more importantly, the profound cultural heritage. The most important feature of the Chinese culture is that it is tolerant and allows harmony while accepting difference. Different geographical and cultural features have shaped

<sup>11</sup> *Zhong Guozuo: Zhongguo ruan shili juyou “yi wenhua tianxia de tese”* (Zhang Guozuo: Chinese Soft Power Has the Characteristic of “Ruling the World with Culture”). *Renmin Wang*, March 16, 2015. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2015/0316/c40531-26698144.html>>.

different cultural forms, minor or major cultures, but each cultural form is the common cultural wealth of mankind. Therefore, in the face of a multicultural world, we need to expand our travel experience, increase our international reading volume and scope in a limited space, and maintain a learning attitude so that we can freely interact with others and understand each other. Different cultures are not only the spiritual crystallisation of people in another living environment, but also another way of living and thinking. Through authentic cultural experiences, not only can we harvest another cultural life, but also examine our own cultural life from a different perspective.

When faced with different cultures, one cannot always see the good side of it, nor can one always accept it. But we should avoid turning negative experiences that we might encounter into cultural stereotypes. In the present study, literature and literary translation were used as indicators of cultural diversity in the book market. The empirical case study provides some answers to the question concerning the global circulation of books and the role of different mediators in the cultural exchange between China and Romania and their influence on the cultural, political and economic relations between the two countries. Some of the theories of the sociology of translation were confirmed throughout the interviews with the Romanian translators of Chinese literary works. One conclusion drawn from the interviews is that a more active involvement of the state through funding opportunities, new initiation of international exchange agreements to support and encourage translations will lead to a better representation on the Romanian market of foreign cultures, in general, and of Chinese culture in particular, thus leading to a better understanding of the global community by Romanians. The correct appreciation and understanding of the wider phenomenon of reception of a literature in another country must include both major and minor literatures, both from neighbouring cultures and far-away countries. The reception of Chinese literature in Romania appears to be an indispensable element in this process. The role, importance and value of translations proved to be under no circumstances denied, neglected or ignored, as they represent the most effective way of coming in contact with the work of foreign writers.

It is important to notice the difference in the mediation of translation between the same countries in different stages of their development. In the segments of time presented (between 1950-2018) we see Romania being subjected to different sources of influence, with different historical regimes, in which the importance of political and economic factors varies depending on the cultural requirements, the national market and the level of involvement of culture in ideological purposes. Among all these influences, especially in the democratic period, there is still a large proportion of works whose publication was motivated by the pedagogical and cultural function and by the

ability to inform a broader readership about the culture and civilization of another country.

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