



## A STUDY OF THE TAO TE CHING TRANSLATION FROM A CULTURAL SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The Tao Te Ching, a foundational text in Chinese philosophy, has undergone numerous English translations, each shaped by cultural and ideological influences. These translations reflect shifts in interpretation, from early Christianized versions to modern scholarly approaches. Cultural semiotics provides a framework for understanding how meanings are constructed and adapted across linguistic and cultural boundaries. **Objective:** This study examines the evolution of Tao Te Ching translations through the lens of cultural semiotics, analyzing how translators balance cultural specificity and universality. It categorizes translation history into four major phases: Christianization, adaptation and reinterpretation, textual research (influenced by the Mawangdui manuscripts), and modern diversified approaches. The research focuses on the transformation of imagery, symbolism, and stylistic elements in translation. **Methodology:** A qualitative research approach is employed, integrating literature review and textual analysis. The literature review traces the history of Tao Te Ching translations, cultural exchanges between China and the West, and key theories in cultural semiotics. Textual analysis examines selected chapters, applying symbolic domain theory to explore shifts in meaning and representation across

translations. **Findings reveal** that translation choices are influenced by dominant cultural and philosophical discourses of their time. Early translations were shaped by religious perspectives, while later versions incorporated literary and philosophical frameworks. The study highlights how cultural semiotics explains the adaptation of linguistic and symbolic elements, offering insights into translation strategies and cross-cultural communication.

**Keywords:** Tao Te Ching; Cultural Semiotics; Cross-Cultural Communication; Literary Adaptation

## Introduction

The Tao Te Ching is the first systematic philosophical work in China, exerting a profound impact on Chinese society, philosophy, and culture. As a significant source of traditional Chinese culture and a subject of study in Chinese classics, many Western scholars have translated the Tao Te Ching since the end of the 19th century, in terms of the quantity of translations, the Tao Te Ching “ranks second only to the Bible” (Goldin, 2002: 183). Giving that the Tao Te Ching was written in ancient China, one of the primary challenges Western translators faces are overcoming the temporal and spatial barriers presented by this classic text.

Cultural semiotics theory provides a clear direction for cross-cultural communication. Translators must not only engage in dialogue with the author of the original text to understand its literal meaning but also converse with the implied author to comprehend the latent meanings. Moreover, they need to interact with the target audience to produce an appropriate translation that achieves a cultural integration.

Through the study of English translations of the Tao Te Ching, this research explores the feasibility of applying cultural semiotics theory to the translation of classical works, aiming to help Chinese cultural classics overcome cultural differences to the maximum extent in English translation. This endeavor

seeks to inject more vitality into cross-cultural communication, as well as world literature and philosophy.

## Research Objectives

1. Provide a comprehensive analysis of how the Tao Te Ching is received in English-speaking cultures, considering the broader historical backdrop of East-West cultural interactions.

2. Analyze the phenomena of cultural filtering and cultural coloring in translations of the Tao Te Ching, using Lotman's theoretical tools to uncover misinterpretations and transformations in cross-cultural communication, as well as their implications.

## Literature Reviews

“Semiotics emerged as an independent discipline in the 1950s, combining structural linguistics, cybernetics, and information theory, striving to move away from the traditional subjective impressionistic methods in the study of humanities and instead employing systematic structural analysis to describe various symbolic systems” (Zhao, 2006: 22-26). After a period of vigorous development in the 1960s, cultural semiotics branched out from semiotics to become an independent theoretical system. The Moscow-Tartu School, arising from the merger of linguistic and poetic research, is the main representative of cultural semiotics. Lotman, as the most influential figure in the Moscow-Tartu School, his classic theories constitute the main content of cultural semiotics.

Lotman's cultural semiotics is a critical inheritance of Russian formalism, structuralism, and the Prague linguistic school theory. After undergoing different stages of development, it possesses unique and creative characteristics of its own theoretical development. In Lotman's view, “the study of cultural semiotics reveals the essence of cultural multilingualism, pointing out that no culture has only one symbolic system; multilingualism and heterogeneity are necessary prerequisites for the functioning of culture.” (Li, 2002: 38-42.) From focusing on the innovation of literary methodologies to the establishment of general theoretical literature, and then to the research in the field of cultural history, cultural semiotics acts like a powerful magnet, constantly absorbing the essence of excellent cultures in problem studies and continuously evolving the interpretive

function of cultural phenomena. This has nurtured the classic theories of 'text,' 'dialogue,' and 'semiosphere.' "Lotman's cultural semiotics aims to grasp the essence and commonality of culture through the complex and diverse cultural phenomena, constructing a structural model of human culture that has universality" (Kang, 2006: 162, 01, 07, 05, 117, 39). When it comes to 'text,' Lotman considers it the core of cultural semiotics theory. He believes that 'text' is the carrier of complete meaning and function, serving as the generator and storage of information. 'Text' possesses powerful functions similar to a 'black box,' including information transmission, generation, and memory, and is often used to explore the intrinsic meaning-generating mechanisms of culture.

Another classic theory in Lotman's cultural semiotics is the 'dialogue' theory, which was formed by fully absorbing the essence of Bakhtin's dialogue thought and the reasonable components of Jakobson's linguistic communication structure function model. Lotman subdivides the dialogue theory into two modes: 'I-S/HE' (I-She/He), which focuses on the information transmission function, and 'I-I' (I-I), which highlights the information creation function. This dialogue mechanism is not static and closed but dynamic and open, and both can be used to analyze information exchange activities in culture.

In addition, the most well-known theory in Lotman's cultural semiotics is the 'semiosphere' theory. Based on the concept of 'biosphere' proposed by the Soviet geochemist Vernadsky, Lotman defines the space where culture and symbols survive as the 'semiosphere' and first mentioned it in his 1984 article 'On the Semiosphere.' In his later research, Lotman also introduced the characteristics of the 'semiosphere' such as heterogeneity, asymmetry, and boundedness, and their impact on culture, especially explaining the reasons for the formation of dominant and subordinate cultures.

Just as Saussure predicted for semiotics, cultural semiotics should also have its legitimate right to exist, as its inclusiveness is not limited to any humanities discipline. The mature development history of cultural semiotics has created the theories of 'text,' 'dialogue,' and 'semiosphere,' which have both macro and micro theoretical interpretive functions, and this naturally includes the

interpretive effect on cultural activities. Translation, as a cultural exchange activity mediated by text, 'reflects the social mainstream ideology and poetics of the source language culture due to its export-oriented nature' (Hu & Jia, 2010: 23-28). It encompasses both the macro-level cultural relations in national development and the micro-level cultural exchange in text form. Thus, the logic of the fit between Lotman's cultural semiotics and translation is clear; the cultural interpretive function of cultural semiotics has universality in translation research, which is not only reflected in the homology of 'metalanguage' and the 'text' carrier but also in the interpretation of 'dialogue' and the extension of the 'semiosphere'.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, integrating literature review and textual analysis as the primary methods to examine the translation of the Tao Te Ching and its cross-cultural implications. The research scope encompasses the historical development, imagery, stylistic features, and the application of cultural semiotics in translation studies.

## **Literature Reviews**

The literature review serves as a foundation for this study, exploring the history of textual interpretation, cultural exchanges between China and the West, and the evolution of Tao Te Ching translations. The research draws from three key sources: (1) introductions in various translated versions of Tao Te Ching, (2) book reviews and academic articles related to the study of Tao Te Ching translation, particularly those published in journals focusing on Chinese philosophy and religion, and (3) supplementary materials such as prefaces, introductions, commentaries, notes, and appendices, which provide essential insights into translation strategies and interpretative frameworks. Through this review, the study identifies key trends, influences, and scholarly perspectives on the translation of Tao Te Ching. Furthermore, the study analyzes the historical development of Tao Te Ching translations by dividing it into four key phases: the Christianization phase of the 18th and 19th centuries, the period of adaptation and reinterpretation in the Western world, the textual research phase influenced by the



discovery of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, and the modern era of diverse interpretations. Each phase is examined for its unique characteristics and impact on translation approaches.

**Textual Analysis:** The textual analysis focuses on selected chapters of the Tao Te Ching, applying symbolic domain theory to examine how different translators interpret and convey key concepts across cultural contexts. By comparing translations, the study identifies variations in the choice of symbols and how these choices affect the meaning, intention, and philosophical impact of the original text. Additionally, cultural semiotics theory is employed to explore how concepts traverse cultural boundaries, highlighting the tension between cultural specificity and universality. A particular focus is placed on the imagery and stylistic features of Tao Te Ching translations, including how the text is presented as a religious analogy, a source of philosophical wisdom, and a philosophical-poetic discourse. The study examines whether translators retain or alter the original text's imagery and style and how these choices influence readers' interpretations.

Moreover, the research incorporates the application of cultural semiotics in translation studies, emphasizing how semiotic theory enriches the understanding of translating Eastern philosophical texts into Western cultural and linguistic contexts. Through the lens of Lotman's semiotics, this study investigates the processes of meaning generation, cross-cultural transmission, and how translation serves as a mediator between different cultural spheres. Through this combined methodology, the study not only uncovers the philosophical depth of the Tao Te Ching but also contributes to broader discussions on cultural dissemination, translation strategies, and intercultural communication. By incorporating Lotman's perspective on semiotics and meaning generation, the study offers new insights into how symbols function in translation and how classical texts are reinterpreted across linguistic and cultural divides.

## Results

**The Cultural Semiotic Interpretation Phase of the Tao Te Ching Translation:** The first period of translation of the Tao Te Ching, which is the earliest cultural semiotic interpretation, encompasses the Christianization phase of the 18th and 19th centuries. Influenced by the dominant Western ideas, philosophies, and religious beliefs of the time, the translation of the Tao Te Ching was primarily comparative with Christian doctrine. As an ancient Chinese classic, the earliest version of the Tao Te Ching was a Latin translation by missionaries in China, presented to the Royal Society of England in 1788. The translators explicitly stated their purpose was to demonstrate that 'as early as ancient times, the holy God was already known to the Chinese people' (Legge, 1962). Some speculated that the Tao Te Ching concealed certain Christian doctrines and tenets, which was a quite popular topic among missionaries at that time.

**From the perspective of cultural semiotics,** the second phase of the translation of the Tao Te Ching was a period of adaptation and reinterpretation in the Western world. As the text of the Tao Te Ching was further understood, it was often used during this period as a tool for critiquing Western thoughts and values. It is thus not surprising that translations of the Tao Te Ching appeared at this time, revised by scholars to serve Western interests. As more Chinese literature and philosophical works were translated into English, Western scholars began to recognize the value of traditional Chinese culture. We can see that during that phase, whenever scholars tried to break free from the constraints of European culture, they sought guidance and strength from other cultures, including the Tao Te Ching of China. The Chinese scholar Lin Yutang believed that "if there is any Chinese philosophical work that can solve the ills of modern Western society, which only believes in power, conflict, and the struggle for power, I would definitely recommend this book." (Kohn & LaFargue, 1998: 172). During this period, most translators adopted a reader-oriented translation strategy, which means that for the implied meanings in the Tao Te Ching, they basically used translations familiar to the target language readers.

**The third period of translations** (1972-2004) was significantly influenced by the 1973 discovery of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts of the Lao Tzu in Changsha. The emergence of the Mawangdui and bamboo slip versions

spurred a significant advancement in the textual research of the Tao Te Ching, which in turn greatly stimulated its English translation efforts. Some translations of the Tao Te Ching from this period were the result of decades of meticulous scholarly endeavors by the translators.

The English translations in this period were almost exclusively standalone books, placing higher emphasis on the artistry and rhythmic beauty of the language compared to the previous two waves. The literary quality and unique aesthetic appeal of the Tao Te Ching received more attention, with translators striving to transplant the original text's beauty into their translations.

**The fourth translation period**, spanning from 2008 to 2018, marked a significant evolution in the modern interpretation of Tao Te Ching. Since 2004, the proliferation of English translations has enriched the text's accessibility and understanding, reflecting the diverse perspectives and methodologies of various translators. This period showcases a dynamic interplay of scholarly rigor and creative expression, offering contemporary readers a multifaceted view of this ancient work. Another notable feature of this period was the emergence of translations by Chinese scholars themselves. Many Chinese scholars immersed in their cultural traditions joined the ranks of translating the "Dao De Jing" into English, thus breaking the Western monopoly on translating the text. These translators often adopted a comparative cultural approach, refraining from significant alterations to the "Dao De Jing" text, yet also not venerating it uncritically as an absolute classic. Their primary goal was to achieve an effect of equivalence with the original text.

**The image and style features of Tao Te Ching translation:** Although translation often manifests as an individual practice behavior of the translator, it is an activity constrained by society, culture, history, ideology, ethics, values. As a cross-cultural communication activity, translation has never been and cannot be separated from the socio-cultural environment it depends on for survival. Translation is a social act of "comparison" constructed between two languages, and its essence is a social behavior for others (Xiao & Yang, 2004). Through the



translator's manipulation of the text, readers, and the language of the text, they are printed in the translation and guide readers' imagination of the translated text.

Tao Te Ching as a religious analogy: In the history of the westward transmission of the Tao Te Ching as a religious analogy, missionaries from various European and American countries played a pioneering role. Since the 16th century, missionaries have come to the East with the dual mission of evangelism and diplomacy. Due to their political mission, Jesuit missionaries paid great attention to Confucian teachings, while their interest in the Tao Te Ching ranged from indifference to arbitrary disparagement, as they believed that Laozi's philosophy offered little benefit to their evangelistic endeavors. The purpose of missionaries translating Chinese classical literature was solely to assist their evangelistic activities in China.

For example, George Gardiner Alexander published an English translation of the Tao Te Ching in 1895, titled *Lao-Tsze, The Great Thinker with a Translation of His Thoughts on the Nature and Manifestation of God*. From a literal perspective, as a missionary, Alexander, driven by faith and a sense of ethnic superiority, did not restrain his preconceptions in the interpretation of the text. Without hesitation, he replaced "Dao" with God. Consequently, the essence of the Daoist philosophical system, which is rich in refined wit and overflowing with care for life and the universe, was transformed into a religious philosophy concerning God. In all instances, Alexander substituted "Dao" with God or Creator and used the personal pronoun "He" to refer semantically. The "Dao" symbolized by Laozi as the innate moral principle in all things reflects the non-personified deity in the Chinese concept of the Tao, rather than the supreme ruler of the heavens and earth as perceived by the chosen people in the Old Testament. However, Alexander, through his choice of words, transitioned this concept into a Westernized notion of a creator with will and personhood. In Alexander's translation, the 23rd chapter of the Tao Te Ching reads as follows:

Remember however that the man who regulates all his actions by a belief in God, will become like unto God; just as he who walks in the path of virtue will become virtuous; and he who pursues a course of vice will become vicious, But new no has become like unto God will be a servant of God, whilst he who has

become virtuous will obey the dictates of virtue, and he who has become vicious will continue to be a slave to vice.

**To have a weak faith is to have no faith. (P.68):** Many chapters in Alexander translation such as "the man who regulates all his actions by a belief in God", "he...will be a servant of God," and "To have a weak faith is to have no faith." The frequent appearance of words like God, faith, servant, etc., gives readers a sense of reading the New Testament. Due to the intervention of Alexander's missionary perspective, his translation turned Laozi's profound sayings into teachings of the Lord familiar to the Christian world. His straightforward language, departing from the original cryptic charm of Tao Te Ching, made his version highly welcomed by general readers, becoming the most esteemed translation in the English-speaking world at that time. The popularity of this English translation undoubtedly influenced the perception of Tao Te Ching among Western readers who did not understand the original text, leading to a misleading dissemination of this Chinese classic text.

Western civilization is primarily a fusion of Greek and Hebrew cultures, which, after centuries of interaction and sometimes conflict, have merged into one. The Hebrew culture leans towards religion and morality, a legacy continued in Christianity. Today, Christianity is the belief cornerstone that runs and unfolds the moral and religious life of Westerners, with its core values enshrined in the highest classic of Christianity, the Bible, occupying a central position in the religious and moral world of the Western people. The majority of people in English-speaking countries are Christians or have been influenced by the Christian tradition for a long time. It can be said that throughout the three stages of English translation of Tao Te Ching in the English-speaking world, the text has always been colored by the Christian background of the translators.

**The Source of Philosophy and Wisdom:** The transmission of Chinese classic texts such as Tao Te Ching to the West did not initially capture the attention of Europeans for their literary significance, but rather for the philosophical, religious, ethical, and historical ideas they carried. For Westerners, the discovery of China was more of a spiritual significance rather than material,

with the exploration and imagination of the unique Chinese spirit even becoming a catalyst and a banner for the enlightenment of Western capitalist thought. Voltaire once said that philosophers discovered a new spiritual and material world in the East. When missionaries turned their attention to the philosophy of Laozi, numerous scholars sought solutions to the crisis in European philosophy from Laozi's thoughts, believing that Laozi's philosophy would be the philosophy of the future world. Western philosophers reading Laozi's thoughts discovered the harmonious relationship between people and nature, the moderate attitude towards life, and the methods of cultivating virtue depicted in Tao Te Ching, all of which play a very positive role in compensating for the spiritual loss and authoritarian will in Western civilization.

For Western modern readers accustomed to linear coherence in expression, they may perceive Tao Te Ching as lacking overall consistency, appearing as mere fragments of wisdom. However, from a poetic perspective, it represents the epitome of uncontrollable genius wisdom. The recurring syllables and metaphors in the poetry form an ever-expanding network of phonetic and semantic associations in the reader's mind, possessing revelatory significance and undeniable concentration in projection.

Stephen Mitchell is an American bestselling author and translator. His translation of Tao Te Ching stems from his 14 years of Zen practice, where he views this masterpiece as a manual on the art of living. Mitchell believes that the text is concise, filled with humor, elegance, tolerance, and wisdom, making it a great wonder in the world. As a literary figure and bestselling author, Mitchell recognizes the linguistic charm of this text of wisdom. Hence, in his translation, he fully utilizes his Zen practice and literary background to convey the wisdom of Tao Te Ching through poetic language. In order to make the wisdom discourse understandable and acceptable to modern readers, the translator does not hesitate to make significant changes to the original text's imagery, transforming certain terms related to ancient Chinese social and production life, which may be difficult for modern Western readers to grasp, into objects commonly seen in their daily lives, with the aim of communicating more effectively with modern readers.

**Mitchell translates the 46th chapter of Tao Te Ching as:** When a country is in harmony with the Tao, factories make trucks and tractors, and when a country goes counter to the Tao, warheads are stock-piled outside the cities. (P.121)

In the original text, the imagery has been altered to familiar objects like factories, trucks, tractors, warheads, etc., known to modern Western readers. A book reviewer believes, "This translation may seem somewhat modernized in places, but if these ideas are to effectively communicate with modern readers, this is the only correct approach. If Laozi lived in the present day, his language would also change in this way." Mitchell's Zen practice foresight made him realize that people are always experiencing the "Way" in the most specific, ordinary things. Therefore, he transforms the unfamiliar imagery in the text into everyday objects that the general public can easily grasp. The wisdom of the "Way" does not lead to truth but must ensure that wisdom can "congruently adapt to the times."

**The Discourse of Philosophy and Poetry:** During the early stages of translating Tao Te Ching, the attitudes of colonialism and pragmatism determined translators' disdain and neglect towards the stylistic images of the text. It wasn't until 1963 that the translation by D.C. Lau allowed English-speaking readers in the West to appreciate the stylistic beauty of Chinese classics. Despite there being over 30 English translations of Tao Te Ching available, D.C. Lau undertook the translation of this ancient cultural classic. As he himself stated, "Undoubtedly, the Lao Tzu is one of the most frequently translated Chinese classics. Unfortunately, many translators have failed to make readers aware of the breadth of Chinese thought and the beauty of the language, merely satisfying some people's curiosity about Eastern mysterious thoughts." (Lau, 1963: P.7.)

When translating the text, Mr. Lau realized that a large portion of the text was in rhyme, so he set these rhymed parts as separate lines and formatted them in a condensed manner. While he modestly claimed that he did not intentionally translate it in a poetic form, the Penguin company highly praised his translation. Based on a sampling analysis of the translations by Weili, D.C. Lau, Wang Rongpei, and others, Li Yiyin and Jin Bailin noted that the most distinctive feature

of Lau's translation was "beauty." They believed that Lau's translation, to a certain extent, compensated for the shortcomings of the Weili version, capturing the phonetic beauty of the original work, "both faithful and beautiful, with coherence amidst dispersal" (Li, 2018), which aligns with domestic scholars' evaluations of the stylistic characteristics of Tao Te Ching. For Example:

#### Chapter 45

Great perfection seems chipped,  
Yet use will not wear it out;  
Great fullness seems empty,  
Yet use will not drain it;  
Great straightness seems bent;  
Great skill seems awkward;  
Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.  
Restless overcomes cold;

Stillness overcomes heat.  
Limpid and still,  
One can be a leader in the empire. (P93)

This chapter vividly embodies the poetic characteristics of Tao Te Ching: with a total of 200 four-character lines throughout the entire text, interspersed with neatly arranged three-character lines, creating a lively and easy-to-read flow. This particular chapter consists of 10 lines (7 four-character lines and 2 three-character lines), totaling 40 characters, yet D.C. Lau translated it into 50 words. With meticulous symmetry in the original text, structured sentences, he attempted to translate with neat end rhymes, using a softer and more relaxed /s/ sound. The rich poetic essence of the Tao Te Ching is strikingly evident in his translation.

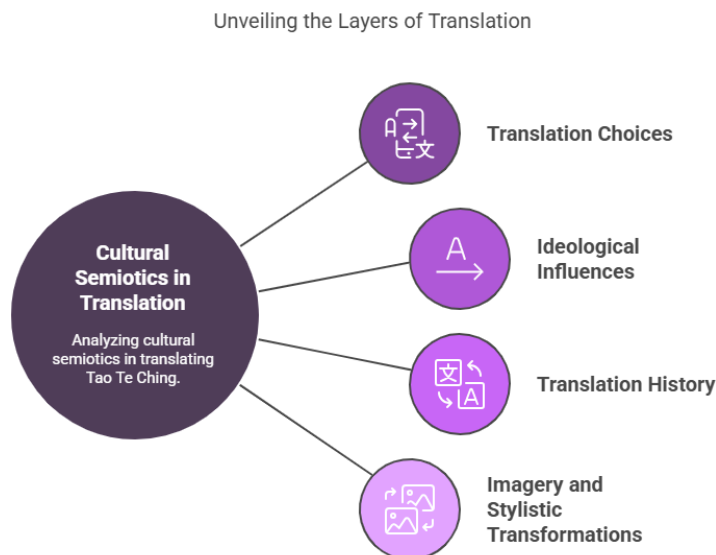
## Discussions

Cultural semiotics, as an important theory, has become a focal point since its introduction into the Chinese philosophical community. From the perspective of cultural semiotics, translation is essentially a constrained interpretive act. The process of translation involves the fusion of two horizons: the horizon of the



source language and the horizon of the translator and the target language. Based on the theory of cultural semiotics, different translators from the same era and cultural background, or the same translator from different eras, will produce different translations due to varying horizon fusions. This paper analyzes different translations of the Tao Te Ching and finds that the translation is primarily influenced by the translator's understanding of the source language, while the translator's horizon is in turn shaped by the era and society. Therefore, we can conclude that while there is no perfect translation of the Tao Te Ching, there can be relatively perfect translations in specific periods. Additionally, no single translation of the Tao Te Ching can satisfy everyone in all times. However, the Tao Te Ching is like an inexhaustible philosophical treasure, and no single translation can fully elucidate its profound connotations. Only through the comparison of multiple translations can we come closer to the true meaning of the Tao Te Ching.

## New Knowledges



**Figure 1:** Diagram show the This study contributes to the understanding of Tao Te Ching translations.

This study contributes to the understanding of Tao Te Ching translations by applying cultural semiotics to reveal how symbolic meanings evolve across different historical and cultural contexts. It highlights the dynamic interplay between translation choices and ideological influences, demonstrating how translators navigate cultural specificity and universality. By categorizing translation history into four phases, this research provides a structured perspective on the adaptation of Chinese philosophical texts in the West. Additionally, it underscores the role of imagery and stylistic transformations in shaping cross-cultural reception, offering new insights into translation strategies for classical texts.

## **Conclusions**

Tao Te Ching is the crystallization of ancient Chinese civilization, containing profound linguistic, philosophical, and cultural treasures. The translation process of Tao Te Ching presents numerous difficulties and challenges, leading to significant variations among different versions. The various strategies chosen by translators during the translation process determine the form of the translated text within the target language system. These differences arise from translators' overall understanding of the original text and their personalized interpretations of individual passages.

From a cultural semiotic perspective, the process of translation is a process of reading, and reading is a process of interpretation. Translation is a practice that involves both revealing and creating, uncovering in the act of creation and creating in the act of revelation. The journey of Tao Te Ching in the English-speaking world represents a passage between the native and the foreign, a mutual examination and validation of self and others, a co-presence in mutual scrutiny and mutual affirmation.

## **Suggestions**

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis of Tao Te Ching translations through the lens of cultural semiotics, several areas require further exploration to deepen our understanding of its cross-cultural transmission.

**Expanding Textual Analysis:** Future research should examine a broader range of Tao Te Ching translations, including lesser-known or non-English versions, to provide a more comprehensive view of how cultural and linguistic differences influence interpretation.

**Reception Studies:** Investigating how different audiences perceive and engage with various translations can offer valuable insights into the impact of translation choices. This could include analyzing reader reviews, academic critiques, and public discourse to assess how different versions shape Western understandings of Tao Te Ching.

**Comparative Cultural Studies:** Further research could compare Tao Te Ching translations with those of other classical Chinese texts, such as The Analects or Zhuangzi, to identify common patterns and challenges in translating Chinese philosophical works.

**Application of Digital Humanities:** Employing digital tools, such as corpus analysis and machine learning, could help track linguistic patterns and stylistic shifts in translations over time, providing a data-driven approach to studying translation trends.

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