

Spatial Visualization Study of the Global Dissemination of the English Translation of *The Book of Songs* based on QGIS

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Abstract: This study focuses on the global dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs*. Integrating Lasswell's 5W communication theory with the software advantages of the Geographic Information System (GIS) QGIS, it prioritizes the collection of geographic information data corresponding to translators, publishers, and library holdings, followed by spatial visualization. This approach examines the geographic distribution characteristics of the dissemination agents, channels, and scope of English translations of *The Book of Songs*. Findings reveal that among dissemination agents, Chinese translators have emerged as a new growth pole, with translators' geographic distribution exhibiting a "multi-centered" trend. Regarding dissemination channels, publishers and university institutions increasingly collaborate on English translations, while international academic presses demonstrate greater influence. In terms of reach, English translations of *The Book of Songs* have spread to at least 36 countries worldwide. The United States holds the largest share of library holdings, while Arthur Waley's translation demonstrates the greatest dissemination potential. This spatial visualization of the global dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs* represents a methodological breakthrough in the study of its translation and provides a spatial visualization reference for similar research on the international dissemination of Chinese classics.

Keywords: QGIS, English Translations of *The Book of Songs*, Translation and Dissemination, Spatial Visualization.

1. Introduction

In the discourse and practice of promoting Chinese culture and literature globally, the translation and dissemination of classical Chinese poetry to the English-speaking world undoubtedly constitutes a significant endeavor [1]. As a foundational cultural text of China, *The Book of Songs* holds a pivotal position in both Chinese and world cultural history [2]. According to searches in the CNKI and Web of Science databases, current research on the translation and dissemination of *The Book of Songs* into English can be broadly categorized into three types: (1) Studies examining the history of its translation and introduction [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]; (2) Case studies based on specific translations or translators [9, 10, 11, 12, etc.]; (3) Studies on the dissemination and reception of English translations of *The Book of Songs* [13, 14, 15, etc.]. A close reading of these articles reveals that while current research increasingly explores English translations of *The Book of Songs*, studies on dissemination tend to focus on individual translations, resulting in incomplete coverage. Research methods remain relatively limited to textual descriptions, with a notable absence of spatial visualization studies examining the dissemination trends, characteristics, and scope of these translations.

Visual data is more easily understood than textual information; a picture is worth a thousand words. Compared to text alone, visual data can more effectively tell stories and convey information [16]. The University of Manitoba Library categorizes data visualization tools into chart-based tools (e.g., Google Sheets, Tableau Public, PowerBI), infographic-based tools (e.g., Piktochart, Visme), and GIS mapping tools (e.g., ESRI software, QGIS) [17]. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) integrate and analyze vast amounts of information through positioning technology applications, rendering this data visually accessible [18]. QGIS GIS software stands as a

prominent representative among GIS mapping visualization tools, serving as an exceptional digital humanities resource for studying the global dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs*.

Communication studies pioneer Harold Lasswell proposed the 5W model of the communication process: communicator (who), message (what), channel (where), receiver (whom), and effect (what effect). In terms of operational feasibility for collecting geographic data, this study primarily examines the sender, medium, and effect within the communication 5W framework. These correspond respectively to the translator, the publication location of the translation, and the geographic spatial distribution of library holdings.

2. Advantages of QGIS Software in the Spatial Visualization Study of the Global Dissemination of English Translations of *The Book of Songs*

Currently, the most popular geographic information system software internationally are QGIS and ArcGIS [19]. QGIS (Quantum GIS), initially developed by Gary Sherman in 2002 and progressively evolved as an open-source project, is a cross-platform desktop GIS software [20], featuring a clean interface and user-friendly design. For interdisciplinary researchers outside geographic information disciplines, QGIS offers greater operational accessibility compared to the commercial ArcGIS software, making it more suitable for spatial visualization studies of the English translations of *The Book of Songs*.

On one hand, this software is available free of charge to all users, with straightforward download and installation procedures. The official QGIS website (<https://qgis.org/>) provides free downloadable installation packages accompanied by user manuals. After downloading and

installing, users can configure a Chinese language environment, making it highly accessible for researchers with no prior experience to learn and operate (this study utilized the stable, user-friendly QGIS 3.34 version, which supports Chinese language deployment).

On the other hand, QGIS supports multiple data formats, including shp, tif, img, csv, kml, geojson, txt, dwg, and more, facilitating basic operations such as attribute editing for GIS data. Its rich functionality includes real-time map loading and visualization, processing and analyzing geographic information data, creating thematic maps, and producing visually appealing, color-rich output. This effectively visualizes geographic data related to the dissemination of the English translations of the *Book of Songs*. Additionally, the software offers advantages such as being lightweight (low memory usage and smooth operation) and having minimal system requirements.

3. Spatial Visualization and Analysis of the Global Dissemination of the English Translation of *The Book of Songs* Based on QGIS

Since the first English translation of *The Book of Songs* emerged, its English renditions have exhibited a rich and diverse trajectory of development. Translators from different eras and cultural backgrounds have offered varied interpretations and disseminated this Chinese classic. Through searches of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Google Scholar, the WorldCat Online Union Catalog database, Goodreads, Bing, and WeChat Official Accounts, at least 27 English translations of *The Book of Songs* (including complete and selected editions) have been compiled as of December 31, 2024.

Among these, both selected translations and complete translations of *The Book of Songs* coexist. The collected translations include 14 selected translations and 13 complete translations, which have laid a solid foundation for the overseas dissemination of *The Book of Songs*. Applying Harold Lasswell's 5W communication theory and analyzing geographic data required for QGIS visualization reveals that in the dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs*: "A key indicator for measuring a work's overseas dissemination is the number of foreign libraries holding its collection" [21]. Therefore, examining the spatial distribution characteristics of the *Book of Songs*' dissemination can begin with analyzing the collection data of its English translations. Given the difficulty in georeferencing dissemination content and audience data, this study primarily collects geographic data on translator locations, publication sites, and library holdings distribution for English translations of *The Book of Songs*. Visualization is achieved using QGIS 3.34 to analyze the spatial distribution characteristics of dissemination agents, dissemination channels, and dissemination scope for these English translations.

3.1. Geographic Distribution Characteristics of Communication Entities

In the translation and dissemination of *The Book of Songs*, translators serve as the primary agents of transmission. The geographical distribution patterns of translators encompass both static and dynamic distribution characteristics [22]. Static distribution is closely tied to translators' places of origin, based on where they were born and raised. Dynamic

distribution, however, pertains to the locations where translators conduct their translation activities, which are subject to change over time. Due to limited data collection, this study provisionally utilizes translator nationality data to broadly illustrate their geographical distribution. The translator nationality chart in Table 1 was converted into geographical distribution data by country, imported into QGIS, and color-graded according to the number of translators per country to visualize the overall geographical distribution of *Book of Songs* translators.

The visualization of translators' geographical distribution for the *Book of Songs* reveals a pattern of extensive internationality and diversity. Prior to the mid-20th century, translators from Western countries such as Britain and the United States played pivotal roles in the history of its English translations. Notable figures include James Legge, L. Cranmer Byng, Helen Waddell, and Arthur David Waley from Britain, alongside Ezra Pound and Burton Watson from the United States. Their early translations played a pivotal role in disseminating *The Book of Songs* throughout the Western world. Since the mid-to-late 20th century, the involvement of Chinese translators has steadily increased, exemplified by figures such as Xu Yuanzhong, Wang Rongpei, and Wang Fanglu. Committed to disseminating Chinese culture, their translations prioritize linguistic elegance and rhythmic harmony while remaining faithful to the original text, significantly enhancing *The Book of Songs*' international influence. Beyond China and the West, translators like Sweden's Bernhard Karlgren and South Korea's Ha Poong Kim have also contributed to English translations, further diversifying the translator landscape.

Globally, translators are distributed across multiple countries including China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and South Korea, exhibiting a "multipolar distribution" characteristic. This demonstrates the international nature of translation activities, with translators from different nations contributing to the cultural dissemination of *The Book of Songs*. The shaded map in Figure 2 uses gradient filling, where darker shaded areas indicate a higher number of translators. Among these, China has the darkest shaded area. This corroborates earlier scholarly findings: "Within the dual trajectories of 'Westward transmission' and 'reverse influence' in the dissemination of *The Book of Songs*, Chinese translators have achieved the remarkable shift from 'passive' mediation to 'active' dissemination"[23]. Considering the publication dates of these translations, Chinese-based translators of *The Book of Songs* into English are emerging as a new growth pole.

3.2. Geographical Distribution Characteristics of Communication Channels

As a significant classical literary work in China, *The Book of Songs* relies primarily on publishers for its English translations. Integrating and processing the geographical data of publishers worldwide that have produced translations of *The Book of Songs* can reveal the spatial distribution characteristics of its dissemination channels to a certain extent. The geographical locations of translation publications enable visualization analysis of dissemination channels [24]. Beyond creating gradient maps for classification, QGIS also supports heatmap visualization. Heatmaps concentrate the display of research subject clusters [25], facilitating analysis of distribution patterns. Creating heatmaps requires organizing geographic data into an "XY" coordinate system. This study

utilized the Amap Coordinate Picker on the Amap official website to convert relevant data into the WGS84 (EPSG:4326) coordinate system compatible with QGIS vector data, yielding the corresponding dataset.

From the perspective of publisher categories, commercial publishers such as John Murray and Houghton Mifflin Company are predominantly concentrated in economically and culturally prosperous metropolises like London and Boston. This indicates that these regions possess mature publishing markets and extensive readerships, providing a solid foundation for disseminating *The Book of Songs*. Academic publishers like Cambridge University Press and Columbia University Press, meanwhile, are concentrated in cities rich in educational and scholarly resources, such as Cambridge and New York. These publishers emphasize *The Book of Songs*' academic value and cultural heritage. University presses like George Allen & Unwin Ltd. and Duke University Press leverage academic resources from higher education institutions to advance scholarly research and cultural dissemination of *The Book of Songs*. Government publishers such as Foreign Languages Press, situated in

Beijing—the nation's political and cultural center—play a crucial role in both domestic research and international promotion of *The Book of Songs*.

From a national perspective, China, as the birthplace of *The Book of Songs*, possesses unique advantages in its publication and research. Domestic publishers like Foreign Languages Press and Peking University Press not only dedicate themselves to disseminating *The Book of Songs* within China but also actively promote its global reach. Publishers in the United States and the United Kingdom have also made significant contributions to the translation and dissemination of *The Book of Songs*, enabling its broader circulation and study within the English-speaking world. Publishers in other countries, such as France and Sweden, have also played an active role in promoting the dissemination and study of *The Book of Songs*, facilitating its global reach.

After converting the above table into a heatmap using QGIS, a more intuitive geographic analysis of densely populated areas can be conducted. Importing the table into QGIS and overlaying it with a world map base layer produces Figure 1.

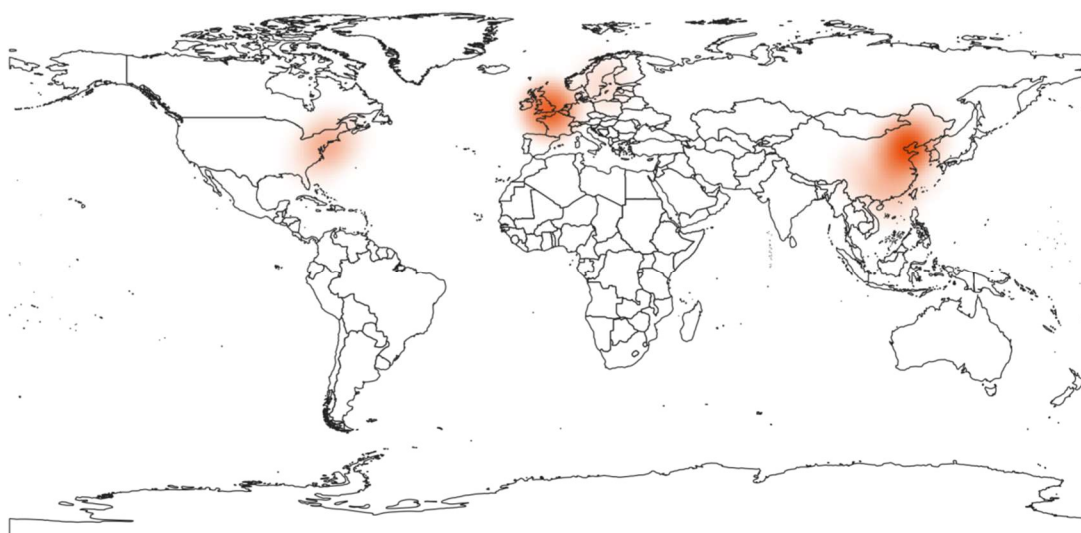


Figure 1. Heatmap of Publisher Distribution for English Translations of *The Book of Songs*

Figure 1 provides a partial reflection of the geographical distribution of English translations of *The Book of Songs*. The publication activities surrounding *The Book of Songs* exhibit both diversity and concentration in their geographic patterns. The distribution of publishers for English translations of *The Book of Songs* exhibits distinct geographical concentration, primarily in East Asia, North America, and Western Europe. East Asia, particularly China, stands as the region with the densest publication activity for *The Book of Songs*. This concentration stems from China's status as the origin of the text, supported by its rich cultural resources and robust academic research foundation. The United States in North America also exhibits significant publishing activity. Cities like Boston and New York, leveraging their advanced cultural education and publishing industries, have played a pivotal role in disseminating and studying *The Book of Songs*. Western Europe, particularly London in the United Kingdom, stands as another major publishing hub. Numerous London-based publishers have contributed substantially to translating and spreading *The Book of Songs*, facilitating its broader dissemination within the English-speaking world. Additionally, cities like Stockholm in Sweden have also

engaged in publishing activities, with local presses actively contributing to the dissemination and study of *The Book of Songs*. In contrast, publishing activities in regions such as Africa and South America have been relatively limited. However, with the deepening of global cultural exchange, the dissemination and study of the Book of Songs in these areas may gradually increase in the future.

Historical records indicate that since the 1990s, China has emerged as a major publishing hub for English translations of *The Book of Songs*. Starting in 1993, multiple Chinese cities including Changsha, Shenyang, Jinan, Chengdu, and Beijing began publishing translations, with publishers such as Hunan People's Publishing House, Liaoning Education Press, Shandong Friendship Publishing House, Sichuan University Press, and Higher Education Press leading the effort. This demonstrates that with China's economic development and growing cultural confidence, domestic attention to traditional cultural classics like *The Book of Songs* has steadily increased. This has fueled a publishing boom for the work within China, establishing it as a new hub for intensive English translations of *The Book of Songs*.

3.3. Geographic Distribution Characteristics of Transmission Range

The number of Chinese literary translations held in overseas libraries serves as a key indicator of their dissemination abroad [26]. Collecting and processing data on the holdings of English translations of *The Book of Songs*, followed by its visualization, enables an intuitive understanding and analysis of the dissemination patterns of this classic text. The primary task in visualizing the spatial distribution of library holdings is to gather relevant geographic data. WorldCat, the world's largest union catalog and database maintained by the nonprofit organization OCLC (Online Computer Library Center), is hailed as the "United Nations" of the global library community. It enables searching of book catalogs worldwide, thereby determining the number of libraries holding a particular translation-i.e., the collection size of that translation [26]. Complete translations of *The Book of Songs* are the most representative. Given the limited data available for selected translations, this section integrates collection data from 12 translations to create a spatial distribution map of holdings for these 12 complete English translations of *The Book of Songs*. This visually illustrates their spatial distribution patterns, indirectly reflecting the overall dissemination range and density of *The Book of Songs*.

After retrieving the corresponding library holdings data for the 12 versions of *The Book of Songs translations*, we categorized and counted them by country and quantity to prepare for creating pie-map visualizations. Chart maps use bar charts, pie charts, or other diagrams to represent the distribution of variables within geographic areas [25]. Based on data visualization functions, Borkin [27] and others classify "bar charts", "stacked bar charts", "grouped bar charts" and "100% stacked bar charts" under the "bar chart category", while grouping "pie charts" and "donut charts" under the "pie chart category". "Colored maps", "bubble maps", and "flow maps" are grouped under the map category. QGIS offers more powerful geographic visualization capabilities, allowing these chart types to be overlaid-for example, integrating pie charts onto a map for presentation. Visualizing collection size data requires specific operational steps. First, download the global vector base map from the National Geographic Information Public Service Platform (Tianditu) (official link: <https://www.tianditu.gov.cn/>) and save it in shp format. Simultaneously, create a new Excel spreadsheet to categorize collection data based on country names from the base map's attribute table, then save it as a csv file. Next, import the base map and processed CSV file into QGIS. In the base map's "Attributes" menu, select "Join" to link the processed collection data CSV with the base map as two associated layers. Then, select the pie chart mode under "Attributes-Visualization" to visualize the data. In the settings interface, use different color palettes to represent distinct translations of *The Book of Songs*. The larger the color segment in the pie chart, the greater the proportion of that translation. The size of each pie slice represents the total number of *The Book of Songs* translations held in each country's collections. Set the "Scale Ratio", and the system will automatically adjust slice sizes based on each country's total collection count-larger collections yield larger slices. The final visualization result is shown.

Upon completion of the analysis, the results indicate that in terms of dissemination scope, the complete English

translations of *The Book of Songs* have reached at least 36 countries worldwide. Among these, the United States holds the largest share of library holdings, demonstrating a broad market for reading and researching *The Book of Songs* in America. Regarding the dissemination of translations, the top five translations by library holdings are Arthur Waley's translation, Ezra Pound's translation, James Legge's 1871 translation, Jennings' translation, and Karlgren's translation. Among these, Arthur Waley's translation has held the top position in library holdings since the 20th century.

Collection data also partially reflects the characteristics and preferences of target countries. In the international dissemination market, besides the United States having the highest holdings, the chart shows Canada ranks second. Geographical analysis reveals that Pound's translation dominates Canadian collections with 146 copies, followed by Waley's and Karlgren's translations. Regarding Chinese translations, comparative geographic data as of December 31, 2024, indicates an increase in holdings of translations by Chinese translators. These translations are primarily distributed in China and the United States, with scattered holdings in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries. Therefore, it can be inferred that translations by Chinese translators are gradually gaining international traction. However, compared to translations by foreign translators, there remains significant room for improvement.

4. Insights from Visualizing the Dissemination Space of English Translations of the Book of Songs

Professional translators and renowned publishing houses have delivered high-quality translations and publishing support, making significant contributions to the global dissemination and reception of the Book of Songs. However, considerable room for development remains. Future dissemination efforts could focus on areas such as creating selected translations, collaborating with international publishers, producing multimodal works, and fostering interactions with international universities.

4.1. Value the Creation of Selected Translations of The Book of Songs

Research data indicates that the number of anthologized translations of the Book of Songs in English has steadily increased, garnering a dedicated readership abroad. This underscores the significant role anthologized translations play in the overseas dissemination of *The Book of Songs*. Overseas translators tend to select representative chapters from *The Book of Songs* for translation. For instance, Ezra Pound's Cathay presents the work's charm to readers through concise and refined selections of classic chapters, making it suitable for general readers seeking a quick introduction to this Chinese classic.

A closer examination of the common selections reveals that foreign translators often prioritize literary merit, cultural representativeness, and accessibility. Widely recognized and poetic pieces like "The Odes of the Southern Capital" and "Reeds and Rushes" are frequently chosen. These works not only feature elegant language but also possess distinct themes that resonate easily with international readers. Additionally, pieces expressing universal human emotions and values-such as themes of love, friendship, familial affection, and praise for

nature-are favored. These themes transcend cultural differences, fostering emotional resonance with readers from diverse backgrounds.

Therefore, future efforts to disseminate *The Book of Songs* through English translations should prioritize the creation of anthologies. Translators can carefully select representative and appealing passages tailored to the interests and needs of international readers. Through refined and vivid translations, more foreign readers can come to understand and appreciate *The Book of Songs*. Simultaneously, research on anthologies should be strengthened, analyzing their reception and dissemination effectiveness in overseas markets. This will provide valuable reference and guidance for creating anthologies, further enhancing their quality and impact.

4.2. Prioritize Collaboration with Internationally Renowned Publishers

Research reveals that the translators of English translations of *The Book of Songs* do not entirely coincide with the geographical locations of their publishing houses. This indicates that translators often prioritize a publisher's international influence and expertise when selecting a publishing partner. For instance, several significant English translations of *The Book of Songs* were not published by presses in the translators' home countries or regions, but rather by internationally renowned publishers such as John Murray in the UK and Columbia University Press in the US. These internationally renowned publishers possess extensive distribution networks, professional editorial teams, and strong academic reputations, providing robust support and assurance for the dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs*.

Therefore, to further enhance the dissemination effectiveness of English translations of *The Book of Songs*, collaboration with internationally renowned publishers should be prioritized. Domestic translators and publishing institutions can actively seek cooperation opportunities with globally recognized publishers, establishing sound partnerships to jointly advance the publication and dissemination of these translations. Simultaneously, strengthening communication with international publishers to understand global market demands and trends will provide more targeted guidance and suggestions for the creation and publication of English translations of *The Book of Songs*. This ensures the translations better align with international readers' reading habits and aesthetic preferences.

For instance, through its "Going Global" model, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press has successfully exported copyrights for over 200 titles, facilitating the publication of works by authors such as Mo Yan and Yu Hua in Central and Eastern European countries. This collaborative model not only enhances the international influence of literary works but also offers valuable insights for disseminating English translations of the Book of Songs. Furthermore, 21st Century Publishing House has successfully exported multilingual rights for Summer through international book fairs and exchange activities, including Korean, Arabic, and French editions. These success stories demonstrate that partnering with renowned international publishers effectively expands global distribution channels for literary works and elevates their impact in international markets.

In summary, partnering with internationally renowned publishers is a crucial pathway to enhance the dissemination effectiveness of the English translation of *The Book of Songs*.

Through such collaborations, one can fully leverage the resources and strengths of international publishers to promote the circulation of *The Book of Songs* English translation in the global market and advance the international influence of Chinese culture.

4.3. Pay Attention to the Dissemination of Multimodal Works

Through visualizing the dissemination map of *The Book of Songs*, this study broadly outlines the distribution pattern of its English translations. The current dissemination map indicates substantial room for growth in the international outreach of *The Book of Songs*. In the information age, internet dissemination far surpasses traditional print media in speed. Therefore, beyond existing English translations, creating more accessible derivative works-such as videos and animations-and exploring multimodal dissemination methods could significantly expand *The Book of Songs*' reach in both domestic and international markets.

Multimodal communication refers to conveying information through the synergistic use of multiple modalities (such as text, images, audio, and video). This approach comprehensively engages the audience's senses, enhancing both the effectiveness of information delivery and the emotional involvement of the audience. In cultural dissemination, multimodal communication offers distinct advantages, better adapting to the diverse needs and preferences of different audiences while increasing the reach and influence of cultural transmission.

For instance, in advertising and marketing, multimodal communication integrates text, images, video, and voice to optimize content expression and distribution strategies. This enhances AI's ability to recognize and recommend content, thereby improving marketing effectiveness. Similarly, in cultural dissemination, multimodal communication plays a vital role. Through formats like video and animation, the content of *The Book of Songs* can be presented to audiences in a more vivid and intuitive manner, making it easier for them to understand and accept.

Furthermore, multimodal communication enhances semantic consistency and user experience. In text-image dissemination, consistency between visuals and captions significantly impacts communication effectiveness. Ensuring semantic alignment between textual content and images better guides audience attention and improves information transmission efficiency. In disseminating *The Book of Songs*, carefully designed text-image content allows readers to appreciate the cultural essence of the text while enjoying the visuals.

In summary, multimodal communication offers novel approaches and methods for disseminating *The Book of Songs* internationally. By creating more accessible multimodal works such as videos and animations, we can better adapt to the demands of the information age, expand the reach of the Book of Songs, and enhance its influence both domestically and abroad.

4.4. Strengthen Creative Collaboration among International Universities

As evidenced by the data above, the publication and collection of translations are primarily concentrated within universities, research institutes, and other institutions of higher learning. University campuses represent highly promising venues for disseminating *The Book of Songs*, with

their vibrant student bodies and distinguished professors constituting an ideal audience for its propagation. Should more themed cultural exchange activities emerge internationally, the flourishing prospects for spreading Chinese cultural treasures like *The Book of Songs* would be within reach.

Creative collaborations between universities serve as vital channels for advancing the dissemination of *The Book of Songs*. For instance, Tongji University and Fudan University signed a strategic cooperation agreement to jointly host summer international schools, share high-quality undergraduate courses, and promote the exchange of graduate course resources, training expertise, and course development evaluation specialists. This collaborative model not only fosters academic exchange but also provides new platforms and opportunities for spreading Chinese cultural treasures like *The Book of Songs*.

Furthermore, the China-Central and Eastern Europe Youth Cultural Exchange organized jointly by Tsinghua University and Hungary's Eötvös Loránd University fosters mutual understanding among young people through humanities and arts exchanges, bridging hearts and minds. Such international cultural activities provide a broader global stage for disseminating Chinese cultural treasures like *The Book of Songs*, thereby enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture.

Through creative collaboration among universities, resources can be better integrated to advance the academic research and dissemination of *The Book of Songs*, thereby fostering the flourishing development of Chinese culture.

5. Summary

This study employs QGIS software to conduct a spatial visualization analysis of the global dissemination of English translations of *The Book of Songs*. Integrating communication theory, it examines the translations with translators as the primary disseminators, publishers as the distribution channels, and library holdings as the scope of dissemination. This approach offers insights for formulating international dissemination strategies for *The Book of Songs* and provides methodological references for research on the global transmission of Chinese classics.

However, the study has certain limitations. For instance, translators' geographic locations may have changed over time, yet the analysis relies solely on existing geographic data. Future research could further explore translators' geographical data-such as their locations and migratory patterns-to uncover dynamic distribution patterns. Moreover, in the digital age, the journey from translation to publication and dissemination involves complex social factors. Subsequent studies may employ social network analysis methods, combined with digital humanities tools, to conduct deeper investigations into *The Book of Songs*' production, publication, and dissemination processes.

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