

effectively convey its cultural meanings, and reasonably reconstruct its value systems in international communication has become a pressing issue for both academia and industry.

Within this cross-cultural exchange, translation is no longer limited to linguistic conversion; it functions as a key mechanism for cultural understanding, meaning construction, and value negotiation. On one hand, translation carries the dual tasks of knowledge transformation and cultural interpretation, requiring the creation of meaningful bridges across different symbolic systems, medical discourses, and historical narratives. For instance, translating the regenerative features of deer antler or the health benefits of ginseng involves multi-layered filtering through traditional medical theory, biomedical evidence, and health-related norms in the target language. Translators must not only convey scientific facts—such as the rapid tissue regeneration capability of deer antler (Wang et al., 2019; Qin et al., 2023) or ginseng’s positive effects on animal health (Wu et al., 2024), but also grapple with fundamental differences in medical epistemology across cultural systems. On the other hand, translation operates within power structures, regulatory frameworks, and cultural capital dynamics. Translation strategies, discursive choices, and cultural compromises can directly shape international audiences’ perceptions and acceptance of shenrong culture. The rapid growth of research and global trade surrounding shenrong products has further underscored the critical role of translation in constructing cultural narratives, mediating cultural differences, and establishing knowledge legitimacy (Yao et al., 2020; Guan et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the international dissemination of shenrong culture reveals a series of deep ethical challenges, including the authenticity of cultural representation, the semantic migration of traditional knowledge, the reconstruction of cultural meanings under commercialized narratives, the cross-contextual interpretation of medical attributes, and the negotiation of value systems across cultures. In international contexts, shenrong is often framed through the lens of health products, functional supplements, or alternative medicine. While such re-narration caters to market demand, it may inadvertently simplify or distort the original cultural knowledge system. As ginseng and deer antler increasingly enter the focus of scientific research (Qin et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024), translators face mounting ethical pressure regarding cultural choices: their decisions involve not only professional competence but also ethical judgment regarding cultural representation, scientific accuracy, and market compliance. For example, when translating traditional functions of shenrong, translators must balance the need to faithfully convey cultural complexity with the need to align with the cognitive frameworks of target readers. When addressing scientific findings, they must avoid overstating efficacy or misrepresenting empirical evidence (Wang et al., 2019; Yao et al., 2020). Therefore, systematically examining the ethical issues in translating shenrong culture within international communication is essential not only for improving the quality of cultural expression but also for fostering fairness and sustainability in cross-cultural exchanges of health-related knowledge.

2 Core Connotations of Shenrong Culture and the Context of Its International Communication

2.1 Shenrong culture embodies core TCM concepts such as the holistic life paradigm and Yin-Yang balance

The knowledge system of shenrong culture is rooted in the holistic life paradigm of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), whose underlying logic is built upon the philosophical principles of “correspondence between heaven and humanity” and “overall harmony”. As tonic medicinal materials, ginseng and deer antler carry cultural meanings far beyond mere physiological enhancement; they are closely associated with abstract life concepts such as the generation of qi, the preservation of essence, and the harmonization of Yin and Yang (Jia et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2024). For instance, ginseng has traditionally been regarded as the “King of Qi-supplementing herbs”, with core functions including tonifying qi, strengthening the spleen, nourishing the blood, and balancing Yin and Yang—used to help the body resist fatigue, illness, and aging (Jia et al., 2009; Potenza et al., 2022). Modern pharmacological research further reveals its adaptogenic properties as well as its immunomodulatory and neuroprotective effects, yet these findings do not replace its foundational role within the TCM life paradigm centered on the notion of qi (Shi et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2024). Deer antler has traditionally been associated with kidney nourishment, bone strengthening, and vitality enhancement, and is often used to support weak constitutions. Its annual regenerative