

# The Translation Strategies of “Wrinkle” in Chinese Landscape Painting\*

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As one of China's outstanding traditional cultures, Chinese landscape paintings are not only loved and admired by Chinese people, but also won favors abroad. In the face of China's current international status, it is essential to carry forward its excellent things and increase cultural self-confidence. However, it is inseparable from translation, and through the translation of various languages, the world's excellent culture can be promoted and passed down. Based on his many years of practical experience, the author tries to explore the English translation method of the Chinese painting landscape “皴 (cūn)” from the two translation strategies of domestication and foreignization in order to provide reference for the spread of traditional culture.

*Keywords:* 皴 (cūn), landscape painting, translation

## Introduction

Chinese landscape paintings deeply influenced by the infiltration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, are brilliance and have been bred in the soil of the East for thousands of years, and thus have distinctive oriental characteristics. Different from the landscape paintings in Western paintings, Chinese landscape paintings have a unique aesthetic orientation and are one of the components of Chinese culture (Zhang, 2016, p. 116). And the unique difference between Chinese landscape paintings is its method of 皴 (cūn). There is an explanation of it in the *Xinhua Dictionary*: The skin is chapped due to freezing or being blown by the wind: chapped and smashed. The Chinese paintings appeared in the late Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty was the peak period of its development. It was painted with dry ink to express the texture of the rock, creases, and the veins and shapes of the trees. In the first half of the 20th century, many sinologists and overseas scholars written books of the Chinese paintings have had relevant discussions about 皴 (cūn). This is a good understanding for people in the circle of painting and calligraphy. But to people with different cultural backgrounds, especially foreigners whose native language is not Chinese, it marks definitely a question. Then, translation must add the necessary vocabulary to interpret. However, in the official website of the eight major art institutes in China and some domestic famous museum websites are rarely provided with English translation of Chinese traditional painting terms, let alone 皴 (cūn). The term as one main symbol of the oriental feature of Chinese painting, which does

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not have an accurate English translation to a certain extent, would affect the external communication of Chinese painting. The Chinese painting terminology bears the connotation of all aspects of Chinese painting, and its English translation can enable overseas people to gradually understand the depth and breadth of Chinese art works by understanding their artistic tools, painting styles, and cultural factors (Hui & Jia, 2019, p. 44).

### Introduction to Different Wrinkles: 皴 (cūn)

A man of the Qing Dynasty called Zheng Ji wrote a concise book *梦幻居画学简明*. In its first volume, he claimed that “there are sixteen wrinkles including 披麻, 云头, 芝麻, 乱麻, 折带, 马牙, 斧劈, 雨点, 弹涡, 骷髅, 矾头, 荷叶, 牛毛, 解索, 鬼皮, and 乱柴 (pī má, yúntóu, zhīma, luànmá, zhédài, mǎyá, fǔpī, yǔdiǎn, dànwō, kūlóu, fántóu, héyè, niúmáo, jiě suǒ, guǐ pí, and luàn chái). These 16 wrinkles are not fabricated; they are named by the shapes of various 16 mountains. Among these wrinkles, painter will offer different ways to show ink line: dry, half-dry, wet, half-wet, simple, accumulated, and scratched (Zheng, 1996). The development history of 皴 (cūn) is gradually enriched by the artist’s constant understanding of the natural objects and the continuous maturity of the brush and ink. It is a transformation of the physical form of the rock into the painting technique. By sorting out and referring to the materials, the author selects 11 kinds of representative and commonly used wrinkle methods from three aspects: dot, line, and plane—paving the way to their English translation.

**Dotting wrinkles.** 雨点皴 (yǔdiǎn cūn): Also known as 豆瓣披 (dòubàn pī) or 钉头皴 (dīng tóu cūn), it is a dense brushstroke of the long-shape dot. When it is used as a raindrop or a small nail, it gathers into a pattern of rock texture, just like sand gathering into mountain. Fan Kuan, a painter in the Northern Song Dynasty, used this wrinkle most successful in Chinese painting history.

米点皴 (mǐ diǎn cūn): Also known as 雨点破 (yǔdiǎn pò), it was created by the Northern Song Dynasty painter and calligrapher Mi Fu, and his son, Mi Youren. In order to express the rainy mountains and misty rivers after the rain in the south of the Yangtze River, Mi Fu was fond of larger rice-like dot while the son liked to use smaller one.

**Line wrinkle.** 卷云皴 (juǎn yún cūn): Also known as 云头皴 (yúntóu cūn), it is one of the commonly used methods of Chinese landscape painting, performs curved strokes, bucking, and returning to the center. The Northern Song Dynasty painter Guo Xi is the pioneer of this method.

披麻皴 (pī má cūn): It is divided into long 披麻皴 (pī má cūn) and short 披麻皴 (pī má cūn) (that is, strokes are long or short). It was created by the painter Dong Yuan of the Five Dynasties period, and the shape is like a hemp rope. This method is good at expressing the gentle and fine texture of mountain in the south of the Yangtze River.

折带皴 (zhé dài cūn): This method reflects the thin and square shape of the mountain stone, and the Yuan Dynasty painter Ni Zan created it.

荷叶皴 (hé yè cūn): The technique evolved from 披麻皴 (pī má cūn); the ink strokes were bent down from the peak spreading like a lotus leaf vein. The Yuan Dynasty calligrapher Zhao Mengfu used it.

解索皴 (jiě suǒ cūn): This Chinese landscape painting technique is like a tangled rope head, which is disintegrated and scattered at the lower end. This method should show the complex and lush earthy rock and stone. The famous painter Wang Meng of the Yuan Dynasty used this method to achieve outstanding achievements.

牛毛皴 (niúmáo cūn): It is invented by Wang Mang who combined his experiences with the two wrinkles of 披麻皴 (pī má cūn) and 解索皴 (jiě suǒ cūn). It resembles as tenuous as a silk while arranging in stacks like the hair of ox.

乱柴皴 (luàn chái cūn): Some people also call it a broken net, which is shaped like a chaotic wood. It is seemingly chaotic but essentially well-regulated, and it can vividly bring the painter's temperament and emotions to the paper. Shen Zhou, a representative painter in the Ming Dynasty, and Fu Baoshi, a modern painter, both used it.

**Plane Wrinkles.** 斧劈皴 (fǔ pī cūn): This method created by Li Sixun of the Tang Dynasty. When painting the side of the ink pen is quickly swept out to marking triangular or trapezoidal rock texture that looks like a knife and axe.

骷髅皴 (kūlóu cūn): Chinese people often mix it with the ghost face. It draws strokes similar to man's skull, and should be used for small-scale painting with a delicate variety of mixed trees, curved porch lining.

### Translation Strategies

**Literal translation.** The diagonally jutting crags, the road precariously propped out from a sheer cliff, and the dark and mysterious clefts in the rocks, are intended to impart a sense of harshness and danger (Cahill, 1977, p. 26). The benefits of literal translation of these terms are simple and beautiful, but their connotations are inevitably lost. Some Chinese painting terms are often used in foreign language paintings in the 1980s and 1990s and modern web pages, like figure painting (指画), flower-and-bird painting (花鸟画), painting of the literati (文人画), etc. It is a good idea to translate the method in this way to achieve an easy-to-understand purpose. We can see examples below.

卷云皴: curled-cloud texture strokes; 雨点皴: raindrops texture strokes; 披麻皴: hemp-fiber texture strokes; 斧劈皴: axe-cut texture strokes; 折带皴: folded-straps texture strokes; 荷叶皴: lotus leaf texture strokes; 解索皴: raveled-rope texture strokes; 骷髅皴: skull texture strokes; 牛毛皴: ox hair texture strokes; 米点皴: rice dots texture strokes; and 乱柴皴: firewood-cluttered texture strokes.

**Chinese pinyin.** The author refers to the transliteration of Chinese characters, such as “baozi”, “hukou”, and “yuan”, and attempts to transliterate the 11 kinds of wrinkles. And “皴 (cūn)”, we can find, was translated as “cunfa” or “ts'un” in some existing English books written by foreigners themselves. It is worth noting that the author does not emphasize that all Chinese vocabulary must use Chinese pinyin to spread abroad but some special vocabulary that carries Chinese culture. See the wrinkles in Chinese pinyin below.

卷云皴: Juanyun cun; 雨点皴: Yudian cun; 披麻皴: Pi'ma cun; 斧劈皴: Fupi cun; 折带皴: Zhedai cun; 荷叶皴: Heye cun; 解索皴: Jiesuo cun; 骷髅皴: Kulou cun; 牛毛皴: Niumao cun; 米点皴: Mi'dian cun; and 乱柴皴: Luanchai cun.

### Domestication

**Liberal translation.** The wrinkle method is a “program” obtained from the morphological appearance of true mountains and rivers in nature through high-level artistic summarization and refinement. Different methods of wrinkle shape come from different geological periods and geological features of different regions, which are unique to Western landscape paintings. The language of the line is a personality issue that must be adhered to in the existence of a Chinese landscape painting (Zhang, 2016, p. 117). Through liberal translation, the ink strokes resembling original object can be more clearly expressed.

卷云皴: cloud-like or billowed strokes used in Chinese landscape paintings; 雨点皴: brush strokes resembling raindrops; 披麻皴: brush strokes resulting in hemp ropes; 斧劈皴: brush strokes presenting an axe-cut marks; 折带皴: brush strokes resembling squarely turned straps; 荷叶皴: brush strokes rendering herbaceous ribs like lotus leaf; 解索皴: brush strokes similar to worn-out mesh-work; 骷髅皴: brush strokes looking like human's skull but resembling Buddhas' head; 牛毛皴: brush strokes bearing a resemblance to slender ox hair; 米点皴: brush strokes similar to the crosswise grains of rice; and 乱柴皴: transformed from hemp-fiber texture strokes and then showing themselves in a disordered firewood.

In studying these translations, the reader will immediately notice that the concept of “beauty” does not figure in Chinese aesthetic concerns. Instead, what underlies all discussions about painters and painting is a vocabulary reflecting a Chinese system of natural philosophy (Susan, 2012, p. 2).

### Conclusion

Chinese calligraphy and painting culture is profound. Chinese readers enjoy the artistic beauty of pen-tip lines, but it is difficult to introduce this spiritual enjoyment to foreign friends. This article is an attempt to explore this 皴 (cūn).

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