

## Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels - The Reception Process in Vietnam

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**ABSTRACT:** Jin Yong is widely regarded as a master and leader of Chinese martial arts novels, and is one of the most influential writers in contemporary Chinese literature. Despite being written over half a century ago, Jin Yong's martial arts novels continue to captivate readers around the world, including in Vietnam. In Vietnam, Jin Yong's novels were translated and studied very early, possessing many unique features, but researchers have not mentioned much about the reception of Jin Yong's novel in Vietnam. Therefore, this article aims to explore the process of translating, disseminating, and researching Jin Yong's martial arts novels in Vietnam, with the intention of highlighting their appeal and influence in both Chinese popular literature and globally. The main research methods used in this article include sociological methods, data statistical analysis methods, and a combination of descriptive analysis and explanation. The sociological method is employed to examine the relationship between society and writers, translators, works, and translations. The article also analyzes Jin Yong's novels by considering the historical and social background of Vietnam in different eras, as well as the aesthetic preferences and requirements of Vietnamese readers. The data statistical analysis method is utilized to obtain a more scientific and reliable understanding of the entry of Chinese martial arts novels and Jin Yong's novels into Vietnam. Additionally, the method that combines descriptive analysis and explanation aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the dissemination, translation, and research of Chinese martial arts novels, specifically focusing on Jin Yong's works in Vietnam. From there, the article affirms, the Jin Yong phenomenon in Vietnam can be seen as a phenomenon that evolves with the times. In recent years, the literary, cultural, and historical value of Jin Yong's martial arts novels has been increasingly recognized by Vietnamese readers and researchers. As an important representative of contemporary Chinese literature, Jin Yong's work serves as a crucial foundation for both his own martial arts novels and for Chinese contemporary literature to maintain a significant presence in the world of Vietnamese translated literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Chinese contemporary literary, Martial arts novels, Jin Yong, Reception process, Vietnam

### I. INTRODUCTION

The martial arts novel is a unique genre in Chinese literature and an important part of Chinese popular literature worldwide. The use of martial arts in Chinese literature can be traced back 2,000 years to works such as *Han Fei Zi* and the *Historical Records of Sima Qian*. However, it was not until the Qing Dynasty that martial arts novels were officially recognized as a literary genre. *The Water Margin* is considered the first martial arts novel in China and served as a foundation for the development of martial arts literature in later periods. In the 20th century, modern martial arts novels gained prominence and became a beloved genre. These novels often express a spirit of rebellion against Confucian values, with knights serving as symbols of personal freedom and chivalry. Notable authors in this genre include Huanzhu Louzhu, Jin Yong, Yusheng Liang, and Gu Long. While martial arts novels were initially considered only popular literature, they have gained widespread attention and love from readers, including a warm reception from Vietnamese readers.

Jin Yong is widely regarded as a master and leader of Chinese martial arts novels, and is one of the most influential writers in contemporary Chinese literature. While Huanzhu Louzhu's imaginative works elevated martial arts novels to a new level, Jin Yong is credited with bringing them into the literary scene and establishing them as an important and outstanding phenomenon in contemporary Chinese literature. Jin Yong began writing in the 1950s and has since produced a massive body of work, comprising 15 novels totaling approximately 1,050,000 words. Despite being written over half a century ago, Jin Yong's martial arts novels continue to captivate readers around the world, including in Vietnam.

Due to the impact of the 1978 border war between China and Vietnam, most Chinese contemporary literary works were not translated and introduced to Vietnam until the 2000s. Jin Yong's martial arts novels were among those that were eventually translated and welcomed by Vietnamese readers. However, Jin Yong's novels present unique challenges in terms of reception in Vietnam compared to those of other Chinese writers. Currently, Chinese and international researchers primarily focus on the reception of Jin

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Yong's martial arts novels through English translation. Examples of such studies include Luo Yongzhou's *A Study on the English Translation of Jin Yong's Novels - On the Promotion of Chinese Literature Globalization* (2011) [18], Lu Jingjing's *A Study on the English Translation of Female Images in Jin Yong's Novels* (2013) [3], Zheng Qiong's *English Translation of Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels: Analysis of Problems and Causes* (2014) [9], and Li Quan's *Translation and Research on Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels in the English World* (2015) [8] etc. In Vietnam, the topic of the literary reception of contemporary Chinese literature has been extensively studied by numerous researchers. Examples include: Nguyen Van Hieu's *Relations and reception of Chinese literature in Vietnam in the Early 20th Century* (2000) [16], Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh's *First steps in understanding translation and the reception of Chinese novels in the New period in Vietnam* (2013) [13], Nguyen Minh Son's *Reception of contemporary Chinese feminine literature in Vietnam (from 2000 to present)* (2014) [7], Nguyen Thu Hien's *Contemporary Chinese Literature in Vietnam: A perspective on the face of translation in 30 years of innovation period 1986-2016* (2016) [14], Ngo Viet Hoan's *Research on Contemporary Chinese Literature : source circuits, motion trends and achievements* (2021) [17] etc. Researchers have not mentioned much about the reception of Jin Yong's novel in Vietnam. Therefore, this article aims to explore the process of translating, communicating, and researching Jin Yong's martial arts novels in Vietnam, in order to highlight their appeal and influence in popular literature in China and around the world.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The main research methods used in this article include sociological methods, data statistical analysis methods, and a combination of descriptive analysis and explanation. The sociological method is employed to examine the relationships between society and writers, translators, works, and translations. The article also analyzes Jin Yong's novels by considering the historical and social background of Vietnam in different eras, as well as the aesthetic preferences and requirements of Vietnamese readers. The method of statistical analysis is utilized to obtain a more scientific and reliable understanding of the entry of Chinese martial arts novels and Jin Yong's novels into Vietnam. Additionally, a method that combines descriptive analysis and explanation aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the dissemination, translation, and research of Chinese martial arts novels, with a focus on Jin Yong's works in Vietnam.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels In Vietnam - The Process Of Translation And Communication

While Jin Yong's novels may not be numerous compared to those of other contemporary writers, they have opened up a unique and captivating world of martial arts to readers. Despite experiencing many events of his era, Jin Yong is still considered the most talented and successful martial arts author. He is regarded as one of the most influential writers in Chinese contemporary literary history. In 2006, Jin Yong was voted the most well-received Chinese writer, especially in 2018, after his passing, when the phenomenon of rereading and researching his works continued to explode in China and around the world. Jin Yong's novels are not only popular in Hong Kong and China, but also in other Asian countries and Europe. His martial arts novels have been translated into various languages, including Korean, Japanese, Thailand, Malaysian, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and English. However, in Vietnam, due to socio-political characteristics, readers' tastes, and historical context, the process of translating Jin Yong's novels is relatively unique compared to other countries.

Jin Yong spent 17 years writing his 15 novels, but in Vietnam, the process of translating his works took more than half a century, from 1960 to 2012. During this time, although there were many interruptions, the translation process can generally be divided into two major stages:

- Before 1975: Jin Yong's popularity exploded in Southern Vietnam. His works first appeared in Vietnam with the translation of *The Heaven Sword And The Dragon Sabre* by Khanh Phung Tu. From 1960 to 1972, 15 sets of Jin Yong's novels were translated into Vietnamese. The translation process almost paralleled Jin Yong's writing process. This period can be referred to as the 'rush translation' process, as his works were quickly translated and published in many newspapers in Saigon shortly after being published in the Ming Pao newspaper. Most works had two or more translations. Some notable translators during this period include Khanh Phung Tu and Giang Nhan Han. Due to Jin Yong's popularity, there was also a phenomenon of fake works being published under his name, which were still enthusiastically received by readers. Our survey shows that there are 23 fake novels attributed to Jin Yong. This indicates that in Vietnam, Jin Yong was a valuable brand in the literary market at that time.

- After 1998, Jin Yong's novels once again became available in the Vietnamese translation market. However, due to political issues and changes in the times, these novels were previously blacklisted in Vietnam after the country's unification in 1975. This resulted in a 20-year hiatus in the publishing of Jin Yong's works in Vietnam. During this period, Jin Yong was criticized for being a writer who exploited low demand and perverted psychology for financial gain, a reality that many writers around the world face. It was only when 1992, when relations between Vietnam and China were normalized, that Chinese novels and Jin Yong's works were able to return to the Vietnamese literary world. Since then, the translation of Jin Yong's novels in Vietnam has once again gained popularity among Vietnamese readers. In 1998, translators Tu Chau Pham, Huu Nung, and Ngoc Thach officially published the translation of *Flying Fox of Snowy Mountain* in Foreign literary magazines, marking the beginning of a movement to re-translate

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Jin Yong's works. From 2001 to 2007, Jin Yong's works were translated by a new generation of translators, including Dong Hai, Khanh Truong Le, Tu Chau Pham, Duc Sao Bien Vu, Tu Thanh Cao, Duy Chinh Nguyen, Thi Bich Hai Nguyen, and Thi Anh Dao Le. These translations were based on Jin Yong's edited works, which were copyrighted by Phuong Nam Book Publishing Company.

The two periods of translation were characterized by two different generations of translators, each with their own cultural backgrounds, concepts of translation, and target audiences. However, all translators maintained a deep respect for the original text and the author, striving to make Jin Yong's works more accessible to Vietnamese readers.

These observations indicate that the translation process of Jin Yong's novels in Vietnam has been influenced by various factors, including political issues, changing times, and reader expectations. This is evident in the two generations of translators. The first generation, consisting mainly of Chinese scholars and individuals from the South or who had settled in the South, produced translations heavily influenced by the Southern dialect To cater to readers' entertainment needs and make translations suitable for publication in daily newspapers, these translators often worked quickly, resulting in some shortcomings in the text, such as omissions or additions. The second generation of translators, all working in the field of literary research, produced translations that were accurate and commendable in terms of content and style. As for readers, during the early period when Vietnam was at war, the level of education was relatively low, and people mainly read for entertainment purposes. Therefore, translators used simple and easy-to-understand language. However, in the second period, as the level of education in Vietnam improved, the aesthetic expectations for works also changed. In other words, the expectations and aesthetic abilities of different generations of readers have played a significant role in shaping the elements of translation.

In the process of translating Jin Yong's martial arts novel in Vietnam, media channels play a crucial role. The popularity of Jin Yong's novels in Vietnam is spread through various media, including books, movies, and the internet. These forms of communication have helped the novels maintain their unique features and receive warm reception from Vietnamese readers. For example, in the realm of books and newspapers, the number of publications featuring Jin Yong's novels has significantly increased over the years. In 1960, only one newspaper published his work, but by 1971, there were over 120 weekly newspapers and magazines featuring his novels. Likewise, the number of publishers competing to release his work has increased. In addition, his novels have also been adapted into comics, which are popular with young readers. From a cinematic perspective, most adaptations are shown on both central and local television channels. The internet has also been an effective platform for disseminating Jin Yong's work, with his novels and film adaptations being widely available on various websites. In particular, young people have shown a positive response to his work through online games. As a result, the number of readers continues to grow. However, there are still some challenges in translating Jin Yong's novels in Vietnam. The translation team is mostly non-professional, resulting in some shortcomings such as changes, additions, or omissions in the content, and overuse of Sino-Vietnamese words.

### ***B. Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels In Vietnam - The Process Of Researching***

From a critical perspective, Jin Yong's novels serve as a valuable research subject, affected by the changing times in Vietnam. Vietnamese literary critics' views on the "Jin Yong fever" phenomenon are heavily influenced by theories of political criticism. Prior to 1975, when literature was primarily seen as a form of entertainment for readers in southern Vietnam, Jin Yong's martial arts novels were widely translated and circulated, but received little critical attention. Some notable exceptions include *Jin Yong's Concerns* by Mong Giac Nguyen (Literature Publishing House, Saigon, 1972) [5], and *Wu Ji is still a Jin Yong phenomenon in our hearts* by Long Van Do (Chen Shu Publishing House, Saigon, 1968) [4]. Additionally, Vietnam Literature Magazine, Issue 34 (March 15, 1965), featured a special volume on martial arts, with contributions from renowned critics such as Trung Khao Luu, Chanh Trung Ly, The Uyen, and Huu Dung Nguyen. These critics generally praised the cultural significance of Jin Yong's novels and lauded his skill in character development.

However, after the unification of Vietnam in 1975 and the subsequent establishment of socialism, Jin Yong's novels were reevaluated through the lens of Marxist literary criticism, and it was deemed to be degenerate cultural products. During this period, they were fiercely attacked and heavily criticized by Vietnamese critics. These critics, who were aligned with the revolution and materialism, rejected Jin Yong's novels, citing their supposed violations of materialism, promotion of skepticism, ambiguity regarding good and evil, and glorification of personal heroism, cruel violence, and unrealistic love. They believed that these elements had a negative impact on Vietnamese readers, particularly young people. As a result, from 1975 to the late 1980s, Jin Yong's novels were not only banned from distribution in Vietnam but also faced harsh criticism from literary critics. Despite the unwavering love of Jin Yong's fans, the negative views of critics had a significant impact on the public's reception of his novels.

It was only when in 2000 that the Vietnamese literary community began to reevaluate Jin Yong's novels through the lens of new era literary criticism, once again recognizing and appreciating their merits. This marked a significant shift in the literary community's views on martial arts novels and Jin Yong's works. During this period, Jin Yong's novels gained popularity among Vietnamese readers and critics, sparking widespread discussions and reigniting the "the Jin Yong phenomenon" in the Vietnamese literary world. While some critics still approached Jin Yong's novels with caution, the majority praised his works and some even gave high praise. Notable research projects during this period include *Jin Yong's Works and Public Opinion* collected and edited by Thuc Tran, published by Literature Publishing House in 2001 [15]; *Humanism in Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels* by Thanh Tri Dung Tu, published by Young Publishing House in 2002 [11]; *Understanding Chinese Culture through Reading Jin Yong's Novels* by Duy

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Chinh Nguyen, published by Young Publishing House in 2004 [2]; *Eternal Fragrance: The Buddhist Color of Jin Yong's Novels* by Thich Chon Thien, published by Hue Publishing House in 2009 [12]; *Jin Yong in My Life* (Complete Works) by Duc Sao Bien Vu, published by Young Publishing House in 2015 [1]; and *Jin Yong's Pen and Sword*, edited by Ngoc Chien Huynh, published by Time Publishing House in 2015 [6]. It is impossible to discuss research on Jin Yong without mentioning Duc Sao Bien Vu, who is affectionately known as the "Jin Yong researcher" by readers. Since 1996, Mr. Wu has published six research projects on Jin Yong.

1996, *Qiao Feng, the Desire for Freedom* (Jin Yong in My Life, Volume 1)

1997, *The Most Beautiful Woman in the World* (Jin Yong in My Life, Volume 2)

1999, *From AQ to Wei Xiaobao* (Jin Yong in My Life, Volume 3)

2000, *Sword and Guzheng* (Jin Yong in My Life, Volume 4)

2002, *Jin Yong's Characters in the Legal Prism*

2003, *Classic Cases in Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels*

In these works, Duc Sao Bien Vu presents his opinions and reflections on the various aspects of Jin Yong's novels, including character building, style, philosophy, martial arts, poetry, and music. He also analyzes those characters that he finds most interesting.

Overall, the researchers praise Jin Yong's novels and advocate for a re-examination of his works with a new, more open, scientific, and democratic perspective. They recognize Jin Yong as a writer with a rich understanding of history, who places great importance on the development of characters. His stories promote individuality and independence of personality, ideal and homogeneous love. They also skillfully combine elegance and mass appeal. The plot of his novels is also praised for its flexibility and transformation. In short, Jin Yong's martial arts novels have captured the attention of readers in Vietnam and have become a popular research subject in the Vietnamese literary community. Despite facing challenges and being banned for a period of time, Jin Yong's works continue to significantly influence the foreign literature research community in Vietnam. With Jin Yong's novels, Vietnamese literary criticism has the opportunity to incorporate a unique literary theory and enrich the library of Chinese literature research.

### C. *Jin Yong's Martial Arts Novels In Vietnam - Reasons For The Reception Process*

The reasons why Jin Yong has become a special translation phenomenon in Vietnam can be understood from the following aspects:

- Firstly, it is due to the intrinsic appeal of Jin Yong's martial arts novels. For Chinese people and readers around the world, these novels are considered "fairies for adults" due to their thrilling plots, lively and attractive characters, and unforgettable romances and life-and-death love affairs.. They satisfy readers' desire for attractive artistic aesthetics.

From a content perspective, Jin Yong's martial arts novels also have profound historical and cultural connotations. They are often set against the backdrop of the Song, Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, and the author skillfully weaves together stories of gangsters, the royal court, swordsmen, and emperors. For example, such as the relationship between Chen Jia Luo and Qianlong in *The Book and the Sword*, and Wei Xiaobao and King Kangxi in *The Deer and the Cauldron*. Jin Yong's use of the comparative method to write history is a unique aspect of his writing, reflecting national consciousness, the spirit of patriotism, and traditional Chinese philosophy. His works also contain a wealth of traditional cultural knowledge. This allows readers to broaden their horizons and gain a deeper understanding of ancient Chinese history, literature, landscapes, customs, religions, and beliefs. In particular, Jin Yong seamlessly incorporates Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism into his works, which resonates with Vietnamese readers who are already familiar with these religions in their own culture and customs. This is one of the reasons why Jin Yong's novels are so well-received in Vietnam.

The characters in Jin Yong's martial arts novels are vivid and leave a deep impression on readers. Jin Yong places great importance on character development and is creative in using characters to drive the story. The central characters in Jin Yong's novels are knights, admirable heroes. For example, Guo Jing in *The Legends of the Condor Heroes* embodies perfection, purity, honesty, respect for promises, integrity, understanding of parents, and deep patriotism, making him a perfect heroic figure admired by many. Similarly, in *The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils*, Qiao Feng is portrayed as a tragic hero with great wisdom and courage, exuding both majesty and compassion. Ling Hu Chong in *The Legendary Swordsman* is known for his intelligence, honesty, and sincerity, while Hu Fei in *Flying Fox of Snowy Mountain* is a heroic character with a strong personality that appeals to readers. Despite their different backgrounds and destinies, each character possesses unique strengths and personalities, united by the spirit of chivalry. They are all heroes who inspire admiration. Vietnamese readers also find in these characters the ideals and aspirations of being human.

The love portrayed in Jin Yong's martial arts novels evokes a range of emotions in readers with its romance, diversity, and depth. From deep, passionate, and faithful love like that between Yang Guo and Xiao Long Nv in *The Legends of the Condor Heroes*, to contrasting relationships like Yang Xiao and Ji Xiao Fu in *The Legendary Swordsman*..., readers can see reflections of their own emotions in the characters. This is a key factor contributing to Jin Yong's creative success and his ability to captivate readers, including Vietnamese readers.

Secondly, the translation and research of Jin Yong's martial arts novels in Vietnam are closely intertwined with the socio-political landscape of the country. During the early period, Vietnam was under a puppet government. The country was actively developing

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trade and urbanization in South Vietnam, making Saigon one of the leading and advanced cities in Asia. In terms of culture, the Ngo Dinh Diem Government opened its doors to foreign culture, resulting in a strong development of market literature in the South.. This also led to the translation of literature from Taiwan and Hong Kong to satisfy the entertainment needs of the mass readers. During the period of Vietnam's opening up and building a new society, the country's literature expanded and actively absorbed the essence of world literature. Before 1986, Vietnamese theoretical literature operated within a closed and unitary system, mainly tolerating only Soviet and Chinese works based on Marxist ideology. However, after 1986, there was a significant increase in the import of works that were previously restricted. This was further accelerated by the improved relationship between Vietnam and China in 1992, resulting in a large number of Chinese literary works being translated and introduced in Vietnam. Jin Yong's novels are a prime example of this phenomenon.

Thirdly, from ancient times to the present, Vietnamese literature has a unique characteristic of constantly interacting with the cultures of invaders, from China to Western countries, . This has resulted in the development of a literature that is not only influenced by internal factors, but also by major cultures from around the world. China represents Asian culture and literature, while France and America represent Western culture and literature, shaping the sensitivity and unrestrained nature of Vietnamese literature. Vietnamese translated literature is highly developed, sensitive, and holds an important position within the literary landscape. Most of the world's famous works, Nobel Prize winning works, and foreign literary phenomena are quickly translated and introduced in Vietnam. This is also the foundation for Jin Yong's novels to become a special phenomenon of world literature that is translated and spread in Vietnam.

Fourthly, the acceptance psychology of Vietnamese readers towards Jin Yong's novels can be attributed to various reasons. In the first stage, when Vietnam was under oppression and urgency, Jin Yong's novels served as a form of spiritual salvation for readers. His martial arts novels depict a unique world that allows readers to find themselves and be released in it, making them read his novels in depth. While Qiong Yao's love novels may fascinate female readers, Jin Yong's martial arts novels attract male readers by offering them insights into the psychology of heroes, boldness, and talent within the stories. Later on, the demand for reading Jin Yong's novels stems from the desire of the older generation to revisit the phenomenon of his works and the curiosity of young readers. After being restricted for decades, people want to re-understand the previous mainstream phenomenon and also want to read again to see how Jin Yong changes and corrects his works. All these mentalities have created a demand for reading Jin Yong's martial arts novels, which has also attracted a new generation of translators to work on his novels.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Translation and literary research currently dominate the reception of literature. They serve as a bridge between diverse cultures, allowing for the global spread of cultural values. Although significant research has been conducted on the translation and reception of Chinese literature, including Jin Yong's martial arts novels in Vietnam, there is still much to understand and appreciate about this process. As we know, literary works are not static, self-contained products. They exist in an open and dynamic world. As Polish philosopher R. Ingarden once stated, all literary works are unfinished and constantly require additions, never reaching a final limit [10]. Although considered the final product of the writer's artistic creativity, the text itself does not have complete meaning as a literary work. For a composition to become a literary work, it must possess literary value, which is formed through the interaction between the reader and the work. The writer's creative process is truly complete only when the work reaches readers, is researched, and is received. However, all values are historical and influenced by the ideology of the times and trends in research innovation. Therefore, the reception of each literary phenomenon has its own unique characteristics. The process of translating and researching Jin Yong's martial arts novels in Vietnam has many distinctive features, differing significantly from those in other countries, especially in Europe. The Jin Yong phenomenon in Vietnam can be seen as a phenomenon that evolves with the times. In recent years, the literary, cultural, and historical value of Jin Yong's martial arts novels has been increasingly recognized by Vietnamese readers and researchers. As an important representative of contemporary Chinese literature, Jin Yong's work serves as a crucial foundation for both his martial arts novels and contemporary Chinese literature to maintain a presence in the realm of Vietnamese translated literature.

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