From The Old Silk Road to The New Silk Road Era: Promoting of Chinese Culture in Republic of Macedonia

Frosina VITKOVSKA¹,a,* and Lai-jin SHEN²,b

¹²Wuhan University of Technology, Department of Humanities and Law, Wuhan, Hubei, China
¹1364031138@qq.com, ²1106548263@qq.com
*Corresponding author

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Abstract: Up today is not certainly known how deep in the history the roots of the Chinese and Macedonian cultures have met, but certainly is known their bindings have started prior the first century BC when the traders, pilgrims and warriors started their walking the greatest land route on earth, from the very far East of today China’s Xian, following the road that has been traced and walked by the greatest commander and conqueror in the world – Alexander the Great of Macedonia; all along to the Mediterranean region in the West. Based on the existing written, video, audio data found online, this work is giving a clear reflection of the culture walks of China in Macedonia, dating back from The Old Silk Road up to nowadays New Silk Road; is divided into four sections: the times from the beginning of The Silk Road to the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter SFRY) (130 BC to 1945 AD), the times during the SFRY (1945 - 1991), the times after Macedonia is becoming autonomous country to the New Silk Road era (1991 - 2013) and from the reactivating The Silk Road (2013) onwards; is making the picture of this China culture mosaic in Macedonia clearer by emphasizing the barriers that have come on the way, the solutions of their overcoming and is giving some more ideas of how this mosaic can be enriched and can make the walk of China culture in Macedonia has future firmer steps.

Introduction

Culture is the blood of a nation that keeps it alive, so Chinese culture for China. It is the culture of a civilization that is spreading long back in the history, like its Great Wall, for more than six thousand years. “There were four Great Inventions in ancient China, the compass, the paper making, the movable type printing and the gunpowder, which has made significant contribution for the development of the world civilization.” (Prof. Chen Xin, PhD)[1] prior and during the time of The Old Silk Road. It is the culture where can be located the roots of the first drop of ink, the first brush, the first piece of paper, the first compass, the first gunpowder, the first print, the first country that has existed longest in the world – the state of Chu (1042 - 223 BC), the first paper money, the first piece of silk and so many firsts more.

With the first walks of The New Silk Road “today, China has a new set of “Four Inventions”, which have been voted by foreign youngsters in Beijing at Belt and Road Summit held in May 2017. They are the high-speed train, Alipay, Bicycle Sharing, and Taobao.” (Prof. Chen Xin, PhD)[1] which are changing and influencing permanently the path of, not only the Chinese history, but the history of mankind in the entire world.

Being the best representative of China, Chinese culture only when is shared, compared with others, with the world, shows its uniqueness and its unique value.

Chinese Culture in Macedonia from the Beginning of The Silk Road to the Establishment of SFRY

Drowning deep back in the history, going through all the possible sources found online, finding the exact time of the first comings of Chinese in Macedonia was a quite difficult task. The possible conclusion can be, that was the time of “the first trans-continental trade and diplomatic road in the
history of mankind”[6] - *The Silk Road*. In fact, “the western end of The Silk Route appears to have
developed earlier than the eastern end. The Persian empire controlled a large swathe of the Middle
East, extending as far as the Indian kingdoms to the east. Trade between the different parts of the
empire was already starting to influence the cultures of these regions when Alexander the Great
conquered this area as far as Ferghana on the border of the modern-day Xinjiang region of China.
Here, in 329 BC, he founded the city of Alexandria...”. (Prof. Chen Xin, PhD)[1] *The Silk Road*
“was not only a route for caravans or trade, but it was a meeting point for cultural, religious, and
philosophical exchanges that served humanity for centuries”.[2] Right there on this road “cultures
spread through interaction among merchants, travellers and conquerors”.[2]

“Silk is the most fundamental elements of the tradition of Chinese civilization.” (Prof. Chen Xin,
PhD)[1] Chinese archeologist findings of silkworm cocoon prove the silk dates back from the
Neolithic age and words related to it, such as silkworm, mulberry, silk were used in ancient tents
and in some Chinese inscriptions.

Macedonia has had a long history of silkworming. According to a data that has been found in a
Turkish document, in the Macedonian city of Kichevo silkwarming have been well known since the
15th century. In the middle of the last century, the Macedonian cities Gevgelija and Valandovo were
the main centers for silkwarming and producing of a very high qualities of silk thread, that is the
reason why the rich merchants from Europe were paying very often visits to this cities in order to
buy the worm cocoons. The silk workshop “Noncha Kamishova” from Gevgelija to Veles in
 collaboration with the Italian silk workshop “Padova” was the main producer of silk thread on the
Balkans.

**Chinese Culture in Macedonia during SFRY**

In this period the promoting of Chinese culture and “the Sinology in Macedonia mainly is
expressed in the translation of the Chinese works in Macedonian and the Macedonian works in
Chinese.”[5], mostly focusing on the contemporary classical literature works, ancient Chinese
literature, philosophy and so on.

“Because of not having as yet opened an Institute for Chinese studies in Macedonia, in the time
of SFRY the Macedonian students have opportunities to study Chinese language in Belgrade,
Zagreb and some other places in SFRY. These opportunities for the development of Sinology in
Macedonia and promoting of Chinese culture with no doubts have provided good conditions”[5]
and pleasant climate for growing the roots of Sinology in Macedonia and for building the
foundation for expanding the Chinese culture.

In 1979 the Macedonian forerunner in studying Chinese contemporary novels, mainly by Lu Xin
(鲁迅), the Macedonian sinologist Vera Jovanova Modanu has translated Lu Xun’s novel *Collection
of Short Stories*(《短篇小说集》). This is the first Chinese novel that has been translated into
Macedonian and is the start point of the roots growing of Sinology in Macedonia. 1983 has been
published another one of Miss Modanu’s translated works, a collection of Chinese essays of ten
eminent Chinese writers *Chinese Short Novels* (《中国短篇小说集》); 1984 has come to surface one
more of her works, the novel *Polnokj* (《子夜》).

In this period the Sinology in Macedonia reflects as well Chinese translations from a third
language into Macedonian. 1985 the most famous Macedonian translator and excellent writer -
Dragi Mihajlovski, proffessor at the Department of Translation in the National University “ Sts.
Cyril and Methodius ” has translated from English *Nova Kineska poezija* (《新中国诗歌》).

Beside the books translations, there were some Chinese translations published in some journals and
magazines; 1990 in *Drugarche* ( magazine for kids) *Chinese Folktales* (《中国民间故事》), 1991 in
*Razvigor* ( another kid’s magazine) were published *Kineski pogovorki* (《中国俗话成语》) etc.

From this period data findings online about the spreading of Chinese language and culture is the
short introduction in the journal *Social Sciences Abroad* (《国外社会科学》12) from 1980, written by
Zhang Mingqing (张明清), about the most the most distinguished Macedonian poets, writers,
literary translators, and linguistic scholars - Prof. Blazhe Koneski, PhD, the person that was the main reason for the standardization of the Macedonian language, which is proving that even that time in the Chinese linguistics world Makedonistika (term used for Macedonian studies) was well know part of their research interests.

After on during the SFRY time, Macedonia has been one of the destination for advanced studies of the Chinese scholars. In the article In the Days in Macedonia(《在马其顿的日子里》) from 1985, the writer Luo Guomin(罗国民) wrote “Right in such moment I came from the Yugoslavian capital Belgrade train station to the capital of Republic of Macedonia Skopje, leaving alone the embassy arrived to an unfamiliar place of mine. Reaching the train station I couldn’t bear the feeling of excitement and nervousness, putting my head out of the window wanted sooner to see the person that has come to pick me up. Between the white skin people, with red hairs and high noses I saw a short yellow skin man walking towards me through the crowd of people, by getting close to the windows he said: “You just came from China?”, “Yes!”- I said, “I’m Liu, I came before a half an year.”- he said. By seeing my countrymate in this new place for me, I felt happy and the feeling of having a relative nearby...”; is giving us a clear picture of Mr. Zhang’s going for advanced studies in Skopje where he met Mr. Liu Qingshan that was sent by Guangzhou Jinan University to Skopje for advanced studies in Marketing, where he has mastered the Macedonian language.

Chinese Culture in Macedonia after Macedonia Got its Independence from SFRY

Since April 7, 1993, after signing The Joint Declaration for Establishing Diplomatic Relationships between People’s Republic of China and Republic of Macedonia, the two countries have made great steps in improving the cooperation on the level of politics, economy, science, technology, education, cultural exchange, tourism etc. With this arose the necessity of counterpart talents in the both country which brought the Sinology blossoming and the Chinese culture in Macedonia to a higher state of development.

The development of Sinology in Macedonia has unseparated connections with the oldest National University “ Sts. Cyril and Methodius ”, where 2002 initially have started the Chinese classes. Since then The Office of International Chinese Language Council with the assistance of the Chinese embassy in Macedonia every year has been sending a professor at this University for teaching, which has brought the great opportunities for promoting of Chinese culture and has brought great chances for the Macedonian students for coming in China for further studies.

The vigorous growing of Sinology in Macedonia has closest connection with Qin Xinying, PhD (秦锡英), coming from Shanghai Foreign Languages University. 1983 Miss Qin Xinying was one of the firsts groups of foreigner teachers sent for advanced studies in Yugoslavia for studying Russian language. Miss Qin Xinying not only got her PhD but she also became a master in Macedonian language. After her graduation she was working as a professor in Shanghai Foreign Languages University, and also during the same time was teaching Chinese in Macedonia. After the 90s Miss Qin Xinying has stayed permanently to live in Macedonia and was working from home teaching Chinese language, promoting Chinese culture, sowing the seeds of Sinology in Macedonia. The Macedonian sinologist Igor Radev, PhD (冯海城), Sara Cvetanovska, MA (席晓兰) and Elena Damjanoska, MA (爱莲娜) were the first students of Miss Qin Xinying.

In this period the Sinology in Macedonia mainly includes the Macedonian translations of Chinese literature and philosophy works and the Chinese translation of Macedonian literature works. 1992 Irena Kepevska has translated Zlatnata Kobila (《金母马》) into Macedonian. 1997 Dr. Qin Xinying with the Macedonian scholars Ljerka Tot - Naumova, Biljana Gruneska and some others has translated the poetry book Collection of Chinese poems 《中国诗歌》by Gao Bang (高平). 1998 the article Macedonia Journey(《马其顿之行》), published in the journal The Soviet East Europe Issues (《苏联东欧问题》) has demonstrated the participation of the famous contemporary Chinese poet Lu Yuan (绿原) in The Struga International Poetry Evenings Festival and the first winner of The Golden Wreath of Poetry of Chinese nationality. Dr. Qin Xinying and her students Igor Radev and
Sara Cvetanovska have translated into Macedonian his poetry collection *Poezija* (《诗集》). This is the first Chinese poetry collection that has directly been translated from Chinese into Macedonian.

Published from a second language translations are: 2001 Katica translated *Ribarska Trska za Dedo mi* (《给我爷爷买鱼竿》) by Gao Xingjian (高行健), 2004 Velika Shirilova translated *Shanghai Bejbi* (《上海宝贝》) by Wei Hui (卫慧). 2006 Miss Shirilova translated as well *Carica* (《女皇》) by Shan Sa (山飒), Vasilska Pemova translated from French *Balzak i Malata Kineska Shivachka* (《巴尔扎克与小裁缝》) by Dai Sijie (戴思杰). 2007 Miss Shirilova translated *Venchavka so Buda* (《我的禅》) by Wei Hui (卫慧), the same year Dushanka Kezharoska translated *Poslednata Kineska Carica* (《末代太后》) by Min Anqi (闵安琪).

Published in some magazines are: 1998 published in *Razgledi* translated by Katica Garoska Acevska from English *20th Century Chinese Poetry* (《二十世纪中国诗歌》) by Zhang Tongwu (张同吾). 1988/1999 in *Drugarche* and *Razvigor* has been published, translated from German *Chinese Folktales* (《中国民间故事》), 1999 in *Nashe Pismo* published and translated by Bogomil Gjuzel from English, *Poetry Anthology* (《诗集》) by Ca Tianxin 蔡天新.

Philosophical translated works are: 2003 in the magazine *Philosophia* has been published, translated by Aleksandar Stamatov The Short *History of Chinese Philosophy* (《中国哲学简史》) by Feng Youlan (冯友兰).

In this period, beside the development of Sinology, 2010 after signing *The Memorandum of Understanding Between the National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Republic of Macedonia on the Tourism Implementation Plan of the Chinese Tourism Team to Republic of Macedonia*, Macedonia as well has become one of the main tourist destination for the Chinese people and tourism has become one of the direct ways for bilateral cultural exchange.

### New Silk Road Time Chinese Culture in Macedonia

2013 after the Chinese president Xi Jinping (习近平) has declared the beginning of *The One Belt One Road Initiative* and after on the “16+1” *Cooperation Platform* between China and the sixteen Central and Eastern Europe countries (hereinafter CEEs), *The Silk Road* after three thousand years has continued to be the main medium for communication between these nation and countries, as well has become the main path for cultural promotion by keeping the ongoing dialogue between China and Republic of Macedonia, which after 2013 has met new opportunities and has grown a new flourishing tendency.

### The First Generation of Macedonian Sinologists and Their Works

“The Belt and Road Initiative and the 16+1 Mechanism are platforms for even closer cooperation and a key to successful cooperation for mutual understanding and knowledge of one another.” - said Prof. Elena Damjanoska, MA on the 3rd China - CEE Conference held in the city of Ohrid in Macedonia, October 2017.

In this period another key stakeholder in the process of the Chinese culture spreading in Macedonia was the Confucius Institute, which was established in Macedonia for the first time in 2013 “and once again has injected a new impetus in the Sinology in Macedonia that after it has presented new tendency”.[7]

“Until recently in Macedonian society the notions and representations of Chinese culture have too often been mediated by Western literature and media which has led to the adoption of certain stereotypes about China and Chinese culture.” (Prof. Elena Damjanoska, MA)[1]

Before the establishment and implementation of the Confucius Institute, “there was very limited access to Chinese language classes and to Chinese culture in general. This was marked by the fact that the availability for studying Chinese was limited to university students, while cultural events promoting Chinese culture were incidental and sporadic”. (Prof. Elena Damjanovska, MA)[1]
Talking about Sinology in Macedonia cannot be not mentioned the person that has sown the firsts seeds of Chinese culture and language in Macedonia - Miss Vera Jovanova Modanu. Even after *The Silk Road* reactivating, she has continued her devotion on spreading the Chinese culture in Macedonia. In this period is worth mentioning her translation of *Dnevnikot na Ludiot i Drugi Raskazi* (*狂人日记及其他短篇小说*).

Qin Xinying, PhD is Chinese sinologist residing in Macedonia and one of the earliest translator of Chinese literature works into Macedonian. Her main interest of translating and study is the Lu Yuan’s poetry. In promoting the Chinese culture and the cultivation of the first generation of Macedonian sinologists she has made a great contribution.

Sara Cvetanovska, MA from Skopje after getting her bachelor degree at “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” University has continued her studies at Taiwan Normal University majoring Chinese language, after that she has obtained her Master degree at Huadong Normal University. 2012 she has translated the novel *Zlaten okov* (*金锁记*) by Zhang Ailing (张爱玲) and she become one of the first generation Macedonian sinologist that has translated a Chinese novel into Macedonian. 2014 translated by her were published *Poezija* (*李白、杜甫诗集*), the novel *Promena* (*《变》*) by Mo Yan(莫言) and *Drami* (*关汉卿杂剧*). Her translations mainly include Chinese contemporary and ancient literature works, novels, poems and dramas.

Igor Radev, PhD from Skopje mainly is engaged in translations of ancient Chinese literature and philosophical works. After his graduation in Classical studies in the National University in Macedonia he has got China Government Scholarship and has continued his studies at Central China Normal University where 2010 has obtained his Master degree in Chinese literature, afterwards he has continued his PhD studies at Beijing Normal University. 2012 he has translated from Old Chinese *Lao Zi* (*《老子》*) into Macedonian. With this book he has made magnificent impressions in Macedonia and he has won the Macedonian National Library Award. 2013 he has published his translation of *Izrechenija so Golemoto Uchenje I Uchenjeto za Sredishnosta* (*《论语、大学、中庸》*). With this book he has helped the Macedonians for better understanding of The ancient Chinese spiritual pillars Confucius and Daoism philosophical thoughts. 2014 his translation *Vrutok na Praskovite Cvetovi* (*《中国古典诗词选集》*) has been published and has introduced to the Macedonians the excellency of Chinese old poetry.

Elena Damjanoska, MA from Skopje has been studying at Beijing Language University and Beijing Normal University in the Chinese department majoring Chinese language and philosophy, afterwards she has been working for so many years in Beijing, currently she is working at Confucius Institute in Macedonia. 2013 she has translated *Crven sirak* (*《红高粱》*) by Mo Yan(莫言), this is the first Chinese work that has got Nobel Price translated into Macedonian.

2013 Sara Cvetanovska, Igor Radev and in that time working in Macedonia the Chinese scholars Cui Jungong (崔军红) and Ma Yuan(马媛) have applied for a project in the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Macedonia for translating the first Collection of 130 Macedonian Literature Works into Chinese. This is the first time of Chinese Macedonian scholars cooperation and this project has an epochal meaning for the cultural exchange between China and Macedonia.

Frosina Vitkovska, PhD from Psacha, Kriva Palanka was one of the first students attending the first Chinese classes in 2002. After her graduation from “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” University, 2008 she got China Government Scholarship and has continued her studies at Central China Normal University where 2012 she obtained her Master degree and 2017 her PhD in Chinese Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. Her main research interests are Macedonian and Chinese Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Macedonian and Chinese Culture, Jingchu Culture.


Currently Frosina Vitkovska is a Postdoctoral fellow, at the same time the first coming from Macedonia, at Wuhan University of Technology at the Department of Humanities and Law, where she is working on the project “Promoting of Jingchu Culture in the Frame of The Silk Road with the Focus in Europe”, supervised by Prof. Shen Laijin, PhD (申来津) and is continuing her devotion for spreading the cultures of the two countries that she loves the most, China and Macedonia.

In this period come some works worth of mentioning; 2013 has been translated from English by Ljupche Zahariev and Vladimir Mihajlovski Antologija na Deset Vrvi Poeti vo Sovremena Kina (《十位中国代著名诗人诗集》), 2014 has been translated from English by Tamara Jovanovik - Neshovska Slivov Cvet vo Vazna od Zlato (《金瓶梅》), 2014 has been translated from Russian by Lenche Toseva Zhuang Zi (《庄子》).

Other Doors for Cultural Exchange

Mentioned above, Sinology has been the main door for spreading and promoting of the culture in Macedonia and China and the key for enhancing the friendship between the two countries. Nowadays, The Silk Road has opened some more new doors for the cultures of those two unique countries, such as: “Year of China”, “Year of Chinese Language”, “Year of Tourism” etc. have become important ways for China to expand cultural exchanges with other countries, including Macedonia, which has led to great achievements in so many fields of their collaboration.

China and Macedonia have long history and profound cultural background. In this period the both countries have carried out various kinds of cultural exchange activities in order to promote the excellent cultures of the two countries after 2013; “Macedonia Cultural Day ” holding every year in Beijing, the “Chinese Culture Day” holding in Skopje, The “Confucius Institute Day” holding in the University “ Sts. Cyril and Methodius “; 2014 August, musicians from the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra performed at the closing ceremony of the Ohrid Music Festival and has achieved great success. In September, the Bitola National Theatre went to Beijing to stage a successful Shakespearean play Henry VI. In October, the Macedonian Orchestra performed at The Shanghai International Arts Festival. On December 12, 2014, the first batch of works published in the translation project of "Macedonian Classical Literature Works" was published in six foreign languages, including Chinese. These activities also provide opportunities for better communication and understanding between the two countries and doors where are welcoming each other the cultures of these two countries.

2016, May 17th in Skopje, the Macedonian audience could get a glimpse of Chinese cinematography under the program “Review of the World Cinematography - China”, the Chinese films: “Breaking the Silence”, “2 become”, “Little Big Soldier”, “My Own Swordsman” and “Lotus Lantern” were shown at the country's National Cinema Institute. This was one of the programs that has aimed to open the window toward the Chinese cultural values with the purpose of building a bridge between Macedonia and China and at the same time has increased the Macedonian public's understanding and love for Chinese culture.

At the Third Ministerial Forum on Cultural Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEs) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Sept 21, 2017 the Minister of Culture
of China and Minister of Culture of Macedonia sign an executive program of cultural cooperation. In the frame of this program 2018, March 3th in Skopje, Macedonia, under the “16+1” platform in the National Library was held the opening ceremony of the establishment of The Chinese Cultural Cooperation and Coordination Center which is expected to be the main door to more and better cooperation between China and those 16 countries of Europe.

**Conclusion**

On the path of The Silk Road Sinology has played the most important role in the spreading of the Chinese culture and language in Macedonia and in broadening the views in reflecting of one another’s cultures. The Sinology in Macedonia has deepened the roots of the Chinese culture and language and has been the main nutritive source for growing the Chinese culture tree in Macedonia, which resulted to the establishment of the Confucius Institute and the birth of the first generation of Macedonian Sinologists and their works.

The One Belt One Road Initiative and the “16+1” Cooperation platform also has become the main force for Macedonia and China for promoting of the cultures in one another.

As the most direct and most important tool for accepting foreign culture, language plays an important role in external communication. In the future is expected to be carried out more cooperation between China and Macedonia in film productions, exhibition performances, literary translations etc. and keep on being the doors where the cultures of China and Macedonia will be timeless welcoming each other.

With the establishing of The Chinese Culture Cooperation and Coordination Center in Macedonia, we believe the China culture mosaic in Macedonia will set in all of its unique pieces and make its picture be shown in its real light.

**References**


