

外语语言文学系列教材

西方文化引论

彭家海 著

 华中师范大学出版社



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前 言

我们生活在一个物质生活非常丰富的时代,文化氛围却不尽如人意,加上应试教育的冲击,除了通俗文化,我们对文化的理解和认识还比较有限。对外语工作者和学习者来说,除了东方文化,我们也需要了解甚至体验来自西方的精神文化生活,这就是笔者撰写《西方文化引论》的初衷。

作为一个在大学里从事外语教学的语言工作者,我经常听到这样的抱怨:学外语真头疼,总也学不好。我想,这不是因为学习者外语语言功底差,相反,我们在句法和词汇方面超过了“老外”,主要原因是缺乏文化底蕴。其结果是,我们很多人在反复学了十几年外语之后和西方人沟通时,往往也只能停留在寒暄层次,很难深入。在阅读的时候,有许多材料难以理解。对外语专业的学生来说,学文学也是一件难事,因为他们在希腊罗马神话、欧美历史框架、宗教和艺术等方面知识相对薄弱。

这些现象充分说明:语言只是文化的载体,离开文化,语言不易掌握。对外语学习者如此,对教外语的老师来说,也需要提高西方文化修养。因为单纯的语言点讲解,不管你处理得多么精彩,如果缺乏人文知识的辅助,就不会引起学生的共鸣。

解决以上问题的办法就是让学习者尽可能多地接触西方文化,可以将大学英语部分课时用于介绍西方历史、宗教、文学艺术等,在外语专业二年级下学期或三年级上学期增加西方文化课时。

《西方文化引论》是基于数年教学和研究的体会,其目的是服务广大外语学人。

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Chapter One The Ancient Greeks

I .History

1. The Minoans

The earliest inhabitants of what is now Greece are the Indo-European people. They were originally some nomadic tribes who moved from place to place and some of the tribes merged into one social group in the process of trading. By 3,000 BC they had built a well-organized society on the island of Crete, where the Minoan (derived from the Cretan King Minos) Civilization started. The forests on the island



The island of Crete

provided timber for building ships. Because of its favorable geographic location, trade developed quickly between Crete and the rest of the Mediterranean world, for example, the buying and selling of foodstuffs, ivory, and glass of Egypt, the silver, pottery and marble of the Aegean Isles, the copper of Cyprus, and their own wine, olive oil, fleece, and pottery. From 2,200 BC to the mid-fifteenth century BC, Crete became the centre of trade in the Mediterranean.

The Cretans had bronze and around 1,500 BC they learned to melt iron. They were famous for the building of palaces. The royal palace at Knossos is a good example of their achievements in architecture.



The palace of Knossos

2. The Mycenaeans

Around 2,200 BC the Achaeans, some other Indo-European people, crossed the Balkans and settled on the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Several centuries later, they established several small kingdoms from Thessaly down to the southern tip of the Peloponnesus and began to trade with the Minoans. Mycenae, the most prosperous city, became a center of all the settlements.

In the 17th century BC the Cretans suffered a series of natural disasters. In 1628 BC a volcanic eruption almost destroyed the island of Santorini (Thera), which is located to the north of Crete.

In the fifteenth century BC, the Mycenaeans, as the Achaeans were later called, began to raid the Cretans. After 1,200 BC the Mycenaeans again got involved in the Trojan War, which is reflected in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Homer. As a result of the invasions by Mycenaeans, and natural disasters like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Minoan civilization came to an end around 1,150 BC. Meanwhile the Mycenaeans themselves were attacked by the Dorians in the same century. Their citadels and cities were destroyed, and Greece entered a dark age.

Around 800 BC, poleis appeared in Greece, and over the following years some developed into city-states, which were separated from each other by mountains. Being isolated and independent, the city-states had little contact with and influence on each other. Each town or city dominated the area around it. Among them Sparta, which is located in the southern Peloponnesus, developed into a military power, because the Spartans had to rule the far outnumbered helots or serfs conquered by their Spartan ancestors. Boys of seven began a life of military training and service which ended when they reached 30.



Sparta and Athens

Athens, another city-state, developed in a different direction. The Athenians originally had a monarchy which was replaced by an oligarchy of nine archons who were the chief executive officers. The archons were members of the aristocratic

class. The newly-appeared middle class were not happy with the situation and reform was carried out in the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Solon, an aristocrat, was made chief magistrate in 594 BC, and he admitted propertyless citizens to the Assembly which possessed little power at that time; Pisistratus, who made himself the first tyrant of Athens about 560 BC, changed the economic condition of propertyless peasants and the city poor with public works; Cleisthenes, who came into power about 506 BC, established ten tribes on the basis of territorial divisions after abolishing the old tribes; and Pericles (461-429 BC), an aristocrat who later became a democrat, made the Assembly powerful. Consequently Athens became a democratic state. What Pericles said in a speech in honor of the war dead can furnish us with some information about Athens:

Our government is not copied from our neighbors. We are an example to them. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of the few but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law. No talented man is kept out of public service because he is poor or from the wrong class. We have no dark words or angry looks for our neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way. We are open and friendly in our private, day-to-day relations with each other.

As early as the 8th century BC, because of overpopulation, some Greeks began to move to other places around the Mediterranean, including Sicily and southern Italy, which came to be called Magna Graecia, or Greater Greece. They built their colonies in northeastern Spain and southern France, where their chief colony was Marseilles. By the fifth century BC the Greek colonies also scattered throughout the entire Black Sea Basin.

3. Classical Greece

3.1 The war with the Persians

In the mid-sixth century BC, the Persian Empire began to invade the Greek city-states in Asia Minor, and having conquered them, the Persian Emperor Darius I (in reign from 521-486 BC) sent out an expedition that landed at Marathon in 490 BC. The Athenians, with the help of rivalries among the Greek cities, defeated the Persians. Ten years later the Persians returned with larger forces: ten thousand