

On the Sinicization of Criminal Profiling

LV Jinpeng^a, GAO Feng^a, ZHANG Xiuyin^a, PENG Min^a, BAI Shengxue^{*, a}

^a Institute of Forensic Science, Public Security Bureau of Chongqing, Chongqing 400021, China.

* Corresponding Author: Prof. BAI Shengxue, Senior Engineer. E-mail: 275538442@qq.com. Address: Institute of Forensic Science, Public Security Bureau of Chongqing, Xiahua Yuan No.101, Shimaha, Jiangbei District, Chongqing 400021, China.

Abstract Criminal profiling was introduced into China in the 1990s. It is a kind of criminal technological means focusing on the description of the psychological characteristics of criminal suspects based on case-related information obtained. At present, China is basically in the stage of comprehensive introduction for the purpose of learning, and has simultaneously carried out some preliminary exploratory research autonomously. The development of criminal profiling in our country will be a relatively long-term process, we should carry out in-depth the sinicization of criminal profiling by establishing China's criminal archive information system, structuring a domestically-originated theoretical system and training professional talents, based on China's social and cultural background.

Keywords: Forensic science; Criminal profiling; Sinicization; Criminal psychology.

1 A summary of criminal profiling

Criminal profiling has many designations in the west (mainly in America), resulting in many names accordingly when they are translated into Chinese, including among others, *criminal profiling*, *offender profiling*, *criminal personality assessment*, and *crime scene profiling*. The expression of **criminal profiling** is the most commonly used term in China, which is up to now basically a consensus, and other designations are rarely used. Since this conforms to the conception of mental image^[1] in psychology (i.e. *dynamic image*), simultaneously, it also "stresses the role of psychological analysis in profiling... and criminal profiling stresses psychology from the aspect of method, rather than from the aspect of content"^[2].

The term of criminal profiling is defined in several ways. Douglas, senior agent of the FBI of the U.S. and one of the representative personages of criminal profiling, thinks that it is an analysis of the primary personality and behavioral

characteristics of an individual on the basis of criminal analysis^[3]. This definition coincides with the criminal profiling method asserted by Douglas, i.e. the crime scene analysis approach, by which he stresses that investigators should infer the personality and behavioral features of the offender through crime scene analysis. David Canter from England defines criminal profiling as the acquisition of clues on the personality and lifestyle of the offender based on elaborative investigation and examination of the crime and the crime scene in terms of behavior, and accurate predication of the family, profession and personality of the offender^[4]. This definition complies with Canter's theory of investigative psychology, which focuses on predicting the personality and lifestyle of the unknown offender on the basis of the crime committed and the crime scene. American scholar Brent E. Turvey holds that, criminal profiling is the inference on special properties of the offender made in accordance with the material evidences and behaviors, and is based on the interpretation of all behaviors in

connection with the crime in order to describe the features of the offender^[5]. Turvey's definition embodies his thought of behavioral evidence. He considers that criminal profiling is a technology and process rather than a conclusion, and a presumption made by persons in possession of related knowledge background with professional training^[5]. Taiwan scholar YANG Shilong thinks that it is a criminal identification technology which applies information and tactics of social and behavioral sciences to do criminal psychological trace examination and anatomy in respect of certain category of violent crimes^[6]. LI Mei-jin, professor of Chinese People's Public Security University considers that criminal profiling is the description in writing of the personal image and psychological characteristics of the criminal suspect during the investigation stage through the analysis in terms of behavior, motivation, psychological process and characteristics of the unknown criminal suspect based on the circumstances in possession.^[1] In a word, criminal profiling is a criminal technological means with particular

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stress on describing the psychological characteristics of the criminal suspect in accordance with the case-related information obtained.

Presently, there are three approaches of criminal profiling with greater influence: i.e. FBI's crime scene analysis approach, Canter's psychological investigation approach, and Turvey's behavioral analysis approach. In brief, there are two approaches of criminal profiling, i.e. the inductive criminal profiling and the deductive criminal profiling. The typical inductive criminal profiling may be expressed as the depiction of the behaviors of the offenders, the crime scenes and the characteristics of the victims of the current crime, by use of the already-known behavioral characteristics, mental/emotional characteristics and other personal characteristics as obtained from other crimes, scenes and victims in previous cases^[7]. Nevertheless, the deductive criminal profiling takes crime reconstruction as the basis of criminal profiling. Turvey defines the deductive criminal profiling as the accurate reconstruction of the behavioral traces of the offender on the crime scene by studying pictures of the crime scene, coroner's report, pictures of the corpse and forensic science evidences in relation to the conflict between the criminal and the victim, and the presumption of the personality, natural, mental/emotional and motivational characteristics of the criminal based on those specific and individualized behavioral traces.^[5]

2 Status-quo of sinicization of criminal profiling

Criminal profiling has a unique role to play in combining cases and reducing the scope of investigation, and is proven in practice to be an effective supplementary means to investigation. FBI's criminal profiling expert Douglas alleges that, around 92% of their analysis of cases per annum is correct during the period from 1978 to 1994. Therefore, Chinese researchers have also carried out certain study on criminal profiling, on the principles of "absorbing the essence" and "discarding the dregs", thus advancing

the progress of sinicization of criminal profiling.

2.1 Sinicization progress of criminal profiling

2.1.1 Comprehensive learning: introduction of criminal profiling

The term "Criminal Profiling Technology" was first introduced into China at the end of the 20th century. Domestic researchers comprehensively introduced the achievements of foreign criminal profiling study in terms of theoretical system and practical application into China through translating related foreign works and literature, and carried out criminal profiling study with a focus on "learning". The main translation works are: "Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives" (Robert K Ressler, Ann Wolber, John E Douglas, 1988) translated by LI Puliang (1998), "Mindhunter: Inside the FBI elite serial crime unit" (John E Douglas, Mark Olshaker, 1995) translated by YAN Weiping, et al. (1999), "The psychology of criminal conduct: theory, research and practice" (R Blackburn, 1993) translated by WU Zongxian, et al. (2000), "Criminal shadows: inside the mind of the serial killer" (David Canter, 1994) translated by WU Zongxian, et al. (2002), "Das Profil der Mörder: Die spektakuläre Erfolgsmethode des britischen Kriminalpsychologen" (Paul Britton, 1998) translated by LI Si (2004), "Criminal Profiling: An Introduction To Behavioral Evidence Analysis" (Brent E Turvey) translated by LI Mei-jin (2005), "Geographic profiling" (D Kim Rossmo, 1999) translated by LI Mei-jin (2007), "Offender Profiling and Crime" (Peter B Ainsworth, 2001) translated by ZHAO Guifen (2007), "In the Mind of Murderers" (Paul Roland, 2007) translated by WENG Li, et al. (2008).

The publication of those translation works provided sufficient sources for domestic understanding of criminal profiling and comprehensive learning by domestic researchers of criminal profiling, and also attracted more attention to criminal profiling. By learning knowledge relating to foreign criminal profiling, domestic researchers carefully

analyzed and compared the concepts, approaches and operating instructions of criminal profiling, and finally laid a firm foundation for the sinicization of criminal profiling.

2.1.2 Dialectical study: preliminary exploration of sinicization of criminal profiling

For the past few years, after going through the upsurge of translating tremendous foreign literature in criminal profiling and learning foreign criminal profiling knowledge, domestic researchers started to rethink and further explore the theories and approaches of criminal profiling comprehensively introduced from overseas. Many researchers started to make comparisons among all foreign criminal profiling approaches, in lieu of the comprehensive absorption of foreign criminal profiling, and started the critical learning processes of "rejecting the dross and keeping the fine part", "discarding the false and retaining the true" and "self-regardness" instead. From that time on, Chinese researchers started the preliminary exploration of sinicization of criminal profiling.

Related research literatures include: A Modest Proposal on the Scientificity and Applicability of Criminal Psychology (2005) by LI Mei-jin, Research on the Psychology and Behavioral Rule of Escape in Killing and Injury Crimes (2005) by LIU Jie, et al., Computer Evidence Taking Analysis Approach Based on Criminal Profiling (2006) by WEI Shijing et al., and Application of Criminal Profiling in Psychological Test (2006) by CHEN Chao. Some experts and scholars also conducted specific researches in criminal profiling, including among others, research by Li Mei-jin, et al, in the National Social Science Fund project named The Role of Criminal Psychological Analysis and Profiling in the Prevention and Control of Crimes (2004-2007), and the research by XIONG Lirong and WANG Guangjie in the project of the Public Security Bureau of Hunan Province named the Analysis and Application of Behaviors of Offenders After Crime, which are ground-breaking researches in China.

2.2 Shortcomings of sinicization of criminal profiling

2.2.1 Deficiency of sinicization in basic research

YANG Guoshu pointed out frankly and forthright that, in our scientific research field, it is a common situation which constantly occurs that “the objects of our discussion are China and Chinese, but the theories and approaches employed are nearly western or western-style. We intentionally and unintentionally hold down our Chinese way of perception and philosophical orientation. We only dance to others’ tune, and take pride in catching up with foreign academic trends. And eventually, we become inessential.”⁸ So is the research in criminal profiling in China at the present time. Presently, books of criminal profiling in China are mainly popular readings introducing cases, such as *Suspect Profiling* and *Shadows of Crimes*, lacking domestically-originated research works and summary monographs, and purely theoretical works are mainly translations. Therefore, criminal profiling research in China is basically in the learning stage, still moving ahead slowly holding others “walking stick”.

Despite that some domestic researchers have commenced exploring domestically-originated theories of criminal profiling, it only stays in the preliminary exploration stage, without going deep into the deepening and systematic basic research from the cultural background, historical development, humanistic amorous feelings and habits of thinking of China. The imitation of foreign theories divorced from Chinese background will make criminal profiling be short of Chinese imprint and symbol, resulting in not a few obstacles to the application of criminal profiling in China, which will definitely affect the exertion of its effectiveness.

2.2.2 No indicator system has been established

In the practice of criminal investigation in China, some investigators have consciously applied criminal profiling, and some experts and scholars

have made profound and fruitful exploration and study in criminal profiling, focusing on collecting some important criminal profiling-related indicators through individual criminal psychology interviews with sentenced offenders in typical cases. For example, LI Mei-jin have carried out in-depth work in such nationally-influential cases as abnormal homicide by HUANG Yong, homicide by MA Jiajue, series of abnormal homicide by YANG Shuming of Yangquan of Shanxi province, and series of homicide by YANG Xinhai. One of the important basis of establishing the indicators of criminal profiling is to do interviews with perpetrators, but it is very difficult for domestic researchers to acquire such opportunities. Furthermore, in addition to our insufficient attention and organizational efforts in criminal profiling, the accumulation of individual case materials of criminal profiling in China is far away from enough, such that support for the establishment of an indicator system of criminal profiling in China is insufficient.

2.2.3 Cognitive limitation of scope of application

As to the functional cognition of criminal profiling, domestic researchers mainly pay attention to its investigative function, such as the analysis of the psychological and behavioral characteristics of the criminal suspects, reducing the scope of investigation, so as to accelerate the process of confirming the criminal suspects. Since this function produces instant results, satisfying the urgent needs of clearing up cases, it receives tremendous attention and concern. Nevertheless, researchers ignore the preventive function of criminal profiling, in that through criminal profiling of convicted offenders we can fairly clearly outline the formation trace of the psychological characteristics of the offenders and analyze such reasons as the growth background of them, thus offering reference for the prevention of crimes. Most domestic researchers ignore this function, and only few of them including LI Mei-jin conduct researches in this respect.

2.2.4 Serious lagging behind of talent fostering

Criminal psychology is attracting ever-increasing attention from both the academic circle and practical sector of judiciary, bringing in a large number of talents and experts in criminal psychology. Criminal profiling is an important research field of applicability, but few persons devote to research in this respect, which can hardly meet the needs of theoretical research and practical work. This is partly due to the strict requirements of criminal profiling for practitioners, but more importantly, due to insufficient attention to the fostering of talents.

Many front line public security personnel in China have no idea of criminal profiling, let alone receiving professional training. They have long-term contact experience with criminal suspects, and to certain extent, they understand the psychology of the criminal suspects, possessing their own set of “theories”. However, due to a lack of professional trainings, their “theories” are but the product of accumulation of experience, without inheritance. This is a huge loss.

3 Countermeasures for sinicization of criminal profiling

3.1 Perspective: based on the Chinese social and cultural background

It is a difficult process for imported things to take root in China, which will not reach its aim in one move and will encounter many obstacles. To base itself on Chinese society and culture is the only way to surmount these obstacles and integrate criminal profiling into China and be used by us. Sinicization is to put criminal profiling in the social and cultural background of China, examine it with Chinese insight and remodel it with Chinese ways. Otherwise, criminal profiling will be water without a source, unable to take root and germinate in China, thus hard to play its proper role.

Particularly, in order to base itself on Chinese social and cultural background, we should study the Chinese people and Chinese criminal suspects from the

aspects of the cultural value systems and social structure systems of China. That is to say, we should combine China's traditional culture and western criminal profiling in order to establish our own criminal profiling theories and methods, and better application in practice.

3.2 Foundation: establishing China's criminal archive information system

The most important thing is to establish China's criminal archive information system, for the purpose of practical effectiveness of criminal profiling, more precisely, the sinicized criminal profiling. In more than thirty years from the establishment of the department of behavioral science in the 1970s up to now, the U.S. applied modern computer technology to the field of criminal profiling, and completed the accumulation of nationally-uniform criminal archives, laying a firm foundation for the research and application of America's criminal profiling technology. Whereas, the work and investment of China in this respect is almost none, where research in criminal profiling receives no strong support, and the disciplinary development faces bottleneck. Therefore, it is particularly important for us to establish the mechanism of psychological interview with convicted offenders during the process of sinicization of criminal profiling. We should establish mechanisms in order to guarantee professionals to do interviews with and record in detail and accurately relevant archival information of offenders, which will eventually form China's criminal archive information system through accumulation over a long period of time. In this way, the sinicization of criminal profiling will have a firm foundation.

Consequently, in the process of sinicizing criminal profiling, it is particularly significant to establish a national criminal archive information system under the leadership and organization of relevant government authorities.

3.3 Pivotal: structuring a domestically-originated theoretical system

3.3.1 Devotion to basic theory exploration

Criminal profiling takes its source at the western culture. To fit into the "water and soil" of China, the pivotal is to structure a domestically-originated theoretical system based on the cultural background of China. We must explore the domestically-originated theoretical system of criminal profiling on the principle of "adapting foreign things for Chinese use". First of all, we should devote to the research and discussion of basic theories to avoid the research and application of criminal profiling going in the wrong direction; only with scientific and systematic basic theories, can it receive recognition of the academic circle and practical departments. Secondly, we should devote to creating a complete and united methodology. In the process of localization research, on the one hand, we should pay attention to the new development of criminal profiling methods in foreign countries, on the other hand, we should also on the basis of China's situations probe criminal profiling methods in compliance with our national psychological characteristics and our practical rule of criminal investigation.

3.3.2 Focusing on establishing an indicator system

In the process of sinicizing criminal profiling, we should focus on establishing an indicator system of criminal profiling on the basis of exploration in basic theories. The indicator system is the compass and navigator guiding the practical application of criminal profiling. Without indicators, the applicability of criminal profiling will be reduced greatly, and hard to be effectively applied in clearing up cases and preventing crimes in China. Therefore, we should attach importance to the research in the sinicized indicator system of criminal profiling; carry out project development and provide guarantee in funds, manpower and material resources; and conduct trainings enabling criminal profiling to become the conscious action of the criminal investigators, and explore step by step an indicator system of criminal

profiling fitting in with China's actual situations on the road combining learning and application.

3.4 Focal point: fostering professionals

Criminal profiling is an interdisciplinary technique highly demanding on various qualities of the professionals. An expert of criminal profiling should possess not only multi-disciplinary knowledge structure but also practical experience. As a result, fostering professionals is the focal point of realizing the sinicization of criminal profiling. We should focus on structuring the multi-disciplinary competency structure of professionals of criminal profiling enabling them to possess the professional competency of criminal psychology, criminal investigation and practical competency, and professional competency of psychological consulting. There should be a clear planning of fostering periods, and this should be carried out in the human resource training mechanism of public security authorities.

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