



Trinity Saint David

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<i>Module title: Sinological English III</i>	
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	
<i>Marker's signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Provisional mark:</i> NB. <i>All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.</i>	

A Translation of Four Chinese Shi-Poems

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Date: 28 April 2022

Word count: 1867

(Can you see me Power Point slices?) Provost Shengmiao and Miss Deng good afternoon.

My name is Ye Yushi, today I'd like to share with you My Translation of Four Chinese Shi-Poems. The presentation includes translation and commentary.

1. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Chenyi chaoshiyuan*

duchanjing 晨詣超師院讀禪經

1.1 Original text

晨詣超師院讀禪經（柳宗元）	
汲井漱寒齒，清心拂塵服。	道人庭宇靜，苔色連深竹。
閒持貝葉書，步出東齋讀。	日出霧露餘，青松如膏沐。
真源了無取，妄跡世所逐。	澹然離言說，悟悅心自足。
遺言冀可冥，繕性何由熟。	

1.2 Translation

Visiting the Pure Land yard 淨土院 in Longxing temple 龍興寺 of
Mater Zhong Xun 僧重巽 and reading the Classics of Chan in the
morning (Zongyuan Liu)

To draw cold well water to rinse mouth, To brush dust off clothes with pure mind. In leisure time, holding the pattra- leaf sutra. And reading them after walking out Dong Room. The truth of Buddhism people no realise, The unreal thing they still chase. Hoping to conform to what the Buddha leaving, And nourishing the nature, yet when will ripping?	Silent the yard of the hermit, Green the lichen in the deep of Bamboo Forest. The Sun coming out, shining morning mist, left dew, And greenish pine which bright like jewel. Beyond words the simple and quiet, Realising the truth happy and content.
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2. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Xinglunan* 行路難

2.1 Original text

行路難（李白）	
金樽清酒斗十千， 玉盤珍羞直萬錢。 停杯投箸不能食，	閒來垂釣碧溪上， 忽復乘舟夢日邊。 行路難！行路難！

拔劍四顧心茫然。	多歧路，今安在？
欲渡黃河冰塞川，	長風破浪會有時，
將登太行雪滿山。	直掛雲帆濟滄海。

2.2 Translation

The difficulty on the road (Bai Li)	
The good rice wine in golden cup deserves thousands, The delicious food on exquisite utensils worth millions. Yet, I put down the chopsticks, stop drinking, unable to eat, And pull out my sword, looking around at a loss. Want to cross the Yellow River, yet ice filled. Hope to climb the Taihang Mountain, yet snow sealed.	Remember, Jiang Ziya fished beside the river at leisure. Remember, Yi Yin dreamed of taking boat passing by the sun. How difficult the road! How difficult the road! Too many forked roads, and which one is mine? Yet one day, to ride the wind, crest the waves, And to hoist the sail throughout the seas!

3. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Kurexing* 苦熱行

3.1 Original text

苦熱行（王維）	
赤日滿天地，火雲成山嶽。	思出宇宙外，曠然在寥廓。
草木盡焦卷，川澤皆竭涸。	長風萬里來，江海蕩煩濁。
輕紈覺衣重，密樹苦陰薄。	卻顧身爲患，始知心未覺。
莞簟不可近，絺綌再三濯。	忽入甘露門，宛然清涼樂。

3.2 Translation

The severe hot walking (Wei Wang)	
Under heaven, the scorching sun. Becoming mountains, the red clouds. All withered, Grass and trees. All dried, rivers and lakes. Thin silk still wears heavy, Dense woods still shade severe. Cannot go near the bamboo mat, Need to wash again the clothes yet.	So imaging going out of universe, And resting in tall and spacious heaven and earth. Thousands of miles away, far wind come. Wandering thoughts move away, vast seas wave. What a pity! The biggest trouble is my body. Starting to know, still not awakened. Suddenly entering the door of wisdom, Feeling tranquility and happiness.

4. Original text and translation of the *shi*-poem *Qiuxing bashou* 秋興八

首·其三

4.1 Original text

秋興八首·其三（杜甫）	
千家山郭靜朝暉， 日日江樓坐翠微。 信宿漁人還泛泛， 清秋燕子故飛飛。	匡衡抗疏功名薄， 劉向傳經心事違。 同學少年多不賤， 五陵衣馬自輕肥。

4.2 Translation

Recall with emotion in Autumn, the third one (Fu Du)	
Quietly under morning light, located in Baidi City thousands of houses. Sit in tower riverside, watching opposite verdant peaks days. The fishermen spent two nights in boat, still drifting around. The swallows flap wings in autumn, still flying around.	Kuang Heng bluntly advised the emperor, cared nothing about his fames. Liu Xiang put effort to teach the Classics, facing lots of difficulties. In early youth my classmates, all successful in business. In Wuling near Chang'an, wearing leathers, riding horses, and enjoying richness.

3. Commentary

When I translated the four Shi-poems, I tried to match the original poem. Firstly, I concentrated on the accuracy of meaning, which I think is the most important part. Trying to understand the poet's background in which poet lived, so that I can experience his feelings and aspirations. Then I could have a better understanding of the original poem, and translate it in English. I also consulted Chinese and English dictionary for certain words.

Secondly, like what Miss Deng said, I paid attention to the number of lines and length of each line. Because Chinese classical poems are strict in compositional rules and forms. When I translate, I should also try to make every line match the original. Thirdly, I paid attention to rhythm and conciseness. When I translated Chinese poem originally which more like prose, then I would modify it again and again and short the length of each line to feel the rhythm. Fourthly, I paid attention to rhyme. No matter ancient Chinese Shi-poems or traditional English poems, all of them are rhyming. Although I know that my translation has lots of shortcoming, I tried my best to do.

Let's look at the first poem 'Visiting the Pure Land yard in Longxing temple of Mater Zhong Xun and reading the Classics of Chan in the morning' 晨詣超師院讀禪經 of Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元. For the background of the poem, Liu Zongyuan (773—819CE) lived in Tang Dynasty. The poem was written when he was degraded to Yongzhou 永州 (Now in Hunan province 湖南省) where he experienced frustration and faced tests of difficulties in career. At that time, he lived in Longxing temple and learned from the Mater Zhong Xun. So Buddhism gave him strength and faith in mind. From this perspective, his attitude to Buddhism is optimistic, which is not escaping from the reality but gain wisdom and growth from Buddhism.

For the translation, 真源了無取，妄跡世所逐。 My original translation is ‘The truth of Buddhism no realises, The unreal things still chase.’ But I found that I ignore the character *shi* 世 which means ‘ordinary people’. If I did not translate it, readers may misunderstand it refers to Liu Zongyuan himself. So my final translation is ‘The truth of Buddhism people no realise, The unreal thing they still chase’.

For the sentence 遺言冀可冥，繕性何由熟。 The difficulty for me is figure out the meaning of *shanxing* 繕性. I also consulted *handian* dictionary 漢典. According to Zhuangzi 莊子, ‘Nourishing nature in the society.’(繕性于俗) Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 annotated that: ‘Character *shan* 繕 means govern. Character *xing* 性 means nature.’(繕，治也；性，生也。)¹ So *shanxing* means ‘nourish nature’.

For the sentence 日出霧露餘，青松如膏沐。 First of all, what does *gaomu* 膏沐 mean? According to *handian* dictionary, ‘*Gaomu* means an ointment used by women for washing and smoothing their hair.’² This sentence intends to express the shining of green pine. So I translate it into ‘jewel’ instead of ‘ointment’. If I directly translate it into the latter one, English speaker may be puzzled and cannot understand what the metaphorical meaning is. Meanwhile, my original translation of the sentence is ‘Sun coming out, shining morning mist, left dewdrop, And greenish pine which bright like gemstone.’ But it does not rhyme, so I modified it into ‘The Sun coming out, shining morning mist, left dew, And greenish pine which bright like jewel.’ Like ‘Dew’ and ‘jewel’.

¹ *Handian* 漢典, *shanxing de jieshi* 繕性的解釋, <https://www.zdic.net/hans/%E7%BC%AE%E6%80%A7>, accessed 27 April 2022.

² *Handian* 漢典, *gaomu de jieshi* 膏沐的解釋, <https://www.zdic.net/hans/%E8%86%8F%E6%B2%90>, accessed 27 April 2022.

The second poem is 'The difficulty on the road' 行路難 of Li Bai. Li Bai (701—762CE) also lived in Tang Dynasty. He was very talented in Shi-poems, but not success in political career. This poem which includes three poems in total expressed his aspiration for achieve the value of life and distress of failure.

For the sentence 金樽清酒斗十千，玉盤珍羞直萬錢。 *Shiqian* 十千 and *wanqian* 萬錢 both means ten thousand. But it not emphasis on the specific amount of money but to indicate the valuable of rice wine and food. So my final translation is 'The good rice wine in golden cup deserves thousands, The delicious food on exquisite utensils worth millions.' The two sentences have the same length and the last word are rhyme, 'thousands' and 'millions'.

Besides, for the sentence 閒來垂釣碧溪上，忽復乘舟夢日邊。 These two sentences do not have subject, but implicit use Jiang Ziya and Yi Yin allusion. Li Bai expressed his aspiration for political career by citing allusions. He hoped that he could also be rely on heavily by wise national leader. So my final translation is 'Remember, Jiang Ziya fished beside the river at leisure. Remember, Yi Yin dreamed of taking boat passing by the sun.'

The third poem is 'The severe hot walking' 苦熱行 of Wang Wei. Wang Wei (692-761CE) also lived in Tang Dynasty. He was expert in Buddhism and greatly influenced by Chan. So most of his Shi-poems related to the wisdom of Buddhism. This poem describes a journey on a very hot day. The former part of the poem describes the severe hot situation, and the latter part shows that he realised more of Buddhism and forgot the harsh environment.

In order to rhyme, I modified sentence 'Thin silk still dresses heavy, Dense woods still shade little.' 輕紈覺衣重，密樹苦陰薄 into 'Thin silk still wears heavy, Dense woods still shade severe.' So 'heavy' and 'severe' could rhyme. Also I modified sentence 'So imaging going out of world , And resting in tall and spacious sky.' 思出宇宙外，曠然在寥廓 into

‘So imaging going out of universe, And resting in tall and spacious heaven and earth.’ So ‘universe’ and ‘earth’ could rhyme.

Meanwhile, for the sentence 長風萬里來，江海蕩煩濁。 My original translation is ‘Far wind from thousands of miles away, Vast seas remove troubles and wandering thoughts.’ But it did not rhythm. So I modified it into ‘Thousands of miles away, far wind come. Wandering thoughts move away, vast seas wave.’ You see, ‘come’ and ‘wave’ are rhyme, and the entire rhythm also shows.

The last poem is ‘Recall with emotion in Autumn’ 秋興八首 of Du Fu. Du Fu (712—770CE) was a great poet in Tang Dynasty. His whole life was full of distress, but he still kept the sincerity to his country and the people. He experienced the changes of Tang Dynasty from rise to decline and witness lots of sufferings of ordinary people under wars.

This poem ‘Recall with emotion in Autumn’ includes eight poems. The poems was written by Du Fu in *kuizhou* 夔州 (Now *fengjie* county 奉節縣, Chongqing 重慶) when most people of Tang Dynasty had escaped from Chang’an 長安 (Now Xi’an Province 西安省) to *shu* 蜀 (Now Sichuan Province 四川省) after An-shi Rebellion 安史之亂. So in the poems, Du Fu looked Chang’an from a distance to express his worry and love for the country. This poem is the third one of eight, indicating his aspiration by describing the scenery in *kuizhou*.

For the sentence 信宿漁人還泛泛，清秋燕子故飛飛。 My original translation is ‘Fisherman spent two nights in boat, was still drifting in the river. The swallows still flap wings to fly to and fro in the clear and bright autumn.’ It accords with the content, but more like a prose. Besides, the original Chinese Shi-poem use reduplicated words ‘泛泛’ and ‘飛飛’, so rhyming is also important. For the word ‘the clear and bright autumn’ 清秋, I only translated ‘autumn’, or the rhythm may be destroyed. Then I modified it into ‘The fishermen

spent two nights in boat, still drifting around. The swallows in autumn flap wings, still flying around.’ The two sentences have same length of line, and ‘still drifting around’ ‘still flying around’ could show the rhythm of reduplicated words.

For the sentence 同學少年多不賤，五陵衣馬自輕肥。Firstly, the word *feima* 肥馬 not means to the horse is fat, but refers a fine horse. My original translation is ‘My classmates in early youth, all success in career. In Wuling near Chang'an, wearing costly leathers, riding fine horses, and enjoying rich life’. But ‘career’ and ‘life’ are not rhyme. So my translation is ‘My classmates in early youth, all successful in business. In Wuling near Chang’an, wearing leathers, riding horses, and enjoying richness.’ That may be concise, rhythm and rhyme.

This is all for my presentation. Any feedback and suggestion would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

4. Bibliography

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