

Assessment 3- Chinese to English

Christian Hayward

Emperor Taizhong's agreement in death.

During the Tang dynasty, China had a virtuous Emperor Taizhong. He is seen as the second most virtuous emperor in Chinese history. In the December of 633 he inspected a prison. 390 prisoners were condemned to the death sentence, 3 were awaiting approval (for the death penalty) and 4 were ready to be executed. The Tang emperor and always been cautious of the death penalty due to the persons life being important. He decreed that if one was to enact a death penalty then the case should be reviewed three times. (At least three times before reporting direct to himself, the emperor.) Later, he changed it from three to five times. Now these prisoners who had been judged 6 times had been subject to 5 government audits, (the people who committed capital offences) even then, Taizhong still made allowances for the remaining prisoners.

On average, Taizhong would personally question each verdict and if the prisoner had no objection to his sentence. He asked what their final wishes were all said that they were eager to go home and visit their loved ones. Taizhong lowered his head and announced a surprising decision, they could all go home and drink with their loved ones. Although this was under the condition that in two years on the 4th of September they must return to the prison and receive their death penalty.

The prisoners could not believe it and they all celebrated. Then an official came to Taizhong and said "but master, these are dead criminals. What if they don't come back on the day you said? Please think three times about this!" Taizhong replied harshly, "Integrity can be used in exchange for loyalty, and I believe they trust me. I do however understand everybody will question the suspects."

So in two years time (634AD) on the 4th of September people from all over came to Dali temple since it was the day the 390 prisoners had to come back. Everybody wanted to see the criminals and if they would hold up their side of the agreement and face death.

Everybody never saw it coming, one by one the prisoners did come back. Once the returnees were counted one man named Xu Fulin was missing. Everyones eyes looked at Taizhong, the 35 year old emperor calmed said "wait, wait."

Just then, people heard the sound of the wheels of an hurried oxcart. People went over to look and inside was a sick Xu Fulin, he had fallen gravely ill on the way back from the capital. Although the oxcart was in a hurry it had still been 1 hour late.

A smile broke across Taizhong's face, all 390 criminals came back! For their loyalty they received the highest reward, they were all pardoned! Nobody questioned this as these men used their lives to keep a promise and for that they were given a true reward.

From "China Youth Daily", Written by Qing Feng Mu Zhu.