

A Study of Robert Morrison's Translation of Chinese Poetry

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The translation activities of Robert Morrison, the first protestant missionary to China, exert a profound impact on the following missionaries of their missionary efforts and Chinese Studies. Morrison's translations of Chinese poetry, mainly cited as examples of certain cultural context, are scattered in various publications, and are not yet systematically studied. This paper aims to integrate and analyze Morrison's translations of Chinese poetry, summarize their linguistic features, thereby providing insight into the studies on translation of the early missionary sinologues in China.

Keywords: Robert Morrison, translation of Chinese poetry, translation activities

As the first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison (1782-1834) regarded the mastery of the Chinese language and the translation of Holy Bible as the first and foremost step in his missionary work in China. Chinese poems, which reflect the social customs, manners and culture of the Chinese people, were naturally cited by Morrison in his publications of Chinese studies to help with the learning of the Chinese language. Morrison made translation an important part of his missionary work, but he did not undertake a systematic translation of Chinese poetry. As a means for introducing certain cultural traditions or historical events, his translations of Chinese poems were not systematically compiled into a book, but were scattered in various publications. Through a systematic examination of Morrison's translations of Chinese poems, we can gain a glimpse into the early sinologues' understanding of the essence of Chinese culture, and explain the reasons for this perception from the perspective of cultural exchange.

1. Introduction of Robert Morrison's Translation Activities in China

Upon his arrival in Guangzhou in 1807, Morrison immediately dedicated himself to the translation of the Sacred Scriptures. The entire *New Testament* was translated into Chinese in 1813. At the end of 1814, he finished the translation of the *Old Testament* with the assistance of William Milne (1785-1822), the second protestant

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missionary to China. The Chinese translation of the Bible marked the beginning of protestant missionary work in China.

In their early missionary work, Morrison and Milne were committed to the printing and publishing of modern periodicals. In 1815, *Cha-shi-su mei-yue tong-ji-zhuan* 察世俗每月统记传 (*Chinese Monthly Magazine*) was established, "The essays and papers were chiefly of a religious and moral kind, although interspersed with a few simple essays on astronomy, instructive anecdotes" (Morrison, 1839, pp. 499-500). This work is acknowledged as the first Chinese-language newspaper of modern era. In 1817, *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, a quarterly English periodical, was launched in Malacca. According to the *Introduction* in the first issue, this periodical is comprised of three main categories: first, accounts from the missions, mainly consisting of missionary reports and letters; second, general intelligence, including brief relations of the state of worldwide Christianity; third, miscellaneous notices about literature, philosophy, history, etc. of the Ultra-Ganges nations, as well as translations from the native languages (Milne, 1817, pp. 9-10).

Since the early 18th century, European Jesuits in China had realized the value of the *Peking Gazette* for understanding China's national condition, and begun to selectively translate its texts. In order to provide a better coverage of China, Morrison routinely gathered and interspersed the translated articles from the *Peking Gazette* into the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, thereby forming the column of *Extract from Peking Gazette*. His effort ushered in a common practice in modern Chinese history of organized translation and analysis of the *Peking Gazette* by foreigners, thus helping the Westerners get a better understanding of the status quo of Chinese society.

In addition, Morrison had written for some quasi-religious or non-religious periodicals, such as *The Singapore Chronicle and Commercial Register* (1824-1837), *The Canton Register* (1827-1843) and *The Chinese Repository* (1832-1851). He was one of the main contributors to *The Chinese Repository* until his death in August, 1834. Due to his admirable proficiency of the Chinese language, Morrison's articles mainly cover such subjects as Qing government policies, Chinese language and culture, and current events.

Throughout his living days, Morrison had published numerous works concerned with translation and Chinese language, covering "a large and extensive range of subjects" (Deng, 2019, pp. 92-97). These works include *Horae Sinicae: Translations from the Popular Literature of the Chinese* (1812), *Translations from the original Chinese, with Notes* (1815), *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (1815), *A Grammar of the Chinese Language* (1815), *Dialogues and Detached Sentences in the Chinese Language* (1816), *Vocabulary of the Canton Dialect* (1828), etc.

2. Robert Morrison's Translation of Chinese Poetry

There are ten translations of Chinese poetry published by Robert Morrison, scattered in four publications. Translations from the original Chinese, with Notes contains Jiu-ri Qi-shan Deng-gao 九日齐山登高 Tang-Kaou or Ascending the Hills on the ninth Day of the 9th Moon and Cun-she 村舍 The Country Cottage; A Grammar of the Chinese Language contains Ji You-ren 寄友人 To A Friend, Yi-fu 忆父 On Remembering My Father, Song-chun-ci 送春辞 An Adieu to Spring, and Jiang-nan Qu 江南曲 A Keang Nan Keõ; The Indo-Chinese Gleaner contains Si-shi Yong-huai 四十咏怀 On Attaining My 40th Year and

Zao-xing 早行 On Setting out Early in the Morning; The Chinese Repository contains translations of two nameless folk poems¹.

2.1 Tang-Kaou and *The Country Cottage*

In 1815, *Translations from the original Chinese, with Notes* was published by the East India Company's Press, the authors of which are Robert Morrison and John Francis Davis (1795-1890), both "known as the most learned sinologues in the company's employ" (Mokros, 2016, p. 218). The title page of the book is printed with the Chinese phrase 入竟而问禁入国而问俗 (Entering A Territory Enquire What Are Its Laws; Entering A Nation Enquire What Are Its Customs) from *The Book of Rites*, reflecting their appreciation of the Confucian classics. The book consists of three parts: the first part is translations from the *Peking Gazette* by Morrison, including a *Proclamation* by the Jiaqing (Kea-king) Emperor (1799-1820), seven orders issued by the Imperial Authority, and two official reports; the second part is an English translation of two Tang poems, *Jiu-ri Qi-shan Deng-gao* 九日齐山登高 *Ascending the Hills on the ninth Day of the 9th Moon* by Du Mu 杜牧 (Too-Mo) and *Cun-she* 村舍 *The Country Cottage* by Xu Hun 许浑 (He-Hwan); The third part is a translation of the first three sections of the Chinese tale *San-yu-lou* 三与楼 (San-Yu-Low) *The Three Dedicated Rooms* by Davis.

In the section of poem translation, Morrison begins with an introduction of the origin of *Deng-gao* 登高 (Tang-Kaou), a Chinese custom of ascending the hill on the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar (Double Ninth Festival), and associates it to a current event of that time. "It was affirmed, last year, that the Emperor's return to his Palace, was delayed by his observing this holiday; and, that he, thereby escaped the immediate consequences of the rebellion which broke out on the fifteenth of the ninth moon" (Morrison et al., 1815, p. 39). What Morrison referred to is the attack on the imperial palace by the military force of the *Tian-li* 天理 (Teen-Le) rebellion on September 15th, 1813. At that time, the *Jia-qing* 嘉庆 (Kea-king) Emperor was hunting in the Mulan Paddock, a royal hunting area of Qing Dynasty, and thus escaped the insurrection. Then the Emperor issued a *Proclamation* to take blame to himself, which is exactly the original text of the first article in this book. Hence, it is clear that Morrison did not translate Tang-Kaou for the purpose of translation itself, but to relate it to the current events, thereby introducing the relevant cultural context. "The following lines by Too-Mo have an allusion to the Tang-Kaou" (Morrison et al., 1815, p. 40). The original poem and Morrison's translation are as follows:

九日齐山登高

杜牧

江涵秋影雁初飞，与客携壶上翠微。
尘世难逢开口笑，菊花须插满头归。
但将酩酊酬佳节，不用登临恨落晖。
古往今来只如此，牛山何必独霏衣。

¹ According to the General Index of Subjects Contained in the Twenty Volumes of the Chinese Repository compiled by Samuel Wells Williams (1812-1884), the author of the article Newspapers and Gazettes published in The Chinese Repository, Vol. I, No. 12, April, 1833 is Robert Morrison.

Tang-Kaou; Or Ascending the Hills on the ninth Day of the 9th Moon

By Too-Mo

When the autumnal rivers receive the shadow of the first flying swallow;
 Let us, companions, take the bottle and ascend the lofty mountain.
 In this impure world, it's difficult to meet with a mouth open laughing;
 Let us (today) with the Keü flower, decorate our heads and return.
 We'll get merrily drunk, and keep up this happy season;
 It's in vain to ascend the hill, and sigh about the sun setting.
 Old times have passed away, the present come, and still it is thus;
 What's the use of (like the man of Cow-hill) staining our garments with tears.

Since this poem was simply cited to introduce the Chinese custom of 登高, Morrison chose a literal way of translation by retaining the original word order as far as possible. Accordingly, not only does he fail to render the original into a similar form of English poetry, there is also some deviations in his understanding of individual words and phrases. In the first line, 江涵秋影雁初飞 literally means that the shadow of autumn is reflected in the river and the first wild geese are flying south. In Morrison's translation, however, the shadow became a single swallow, obviously because that he had confused the character *Yan* 雁 (wild geese) with *Yan* 燕 (swallow). In the second line, *cui-wei* 翠微 refers to the Cui-wei Pavilion located at the top of the Qi-shan Mountain, which was built by the poet when he was demoted to be an official there. Morrison did not mention this image, but directly translated the phrase as "ascend the lofty mountain", as a means to facilitate understanding. In the third line, *Chen-shi* 尘世 is more of an established word referring to the "mundane world" or the "current society" of the author's time. While Morrison translated it word by word, as "impure world". *Ju-hua* 菊花 (chrysanthemum), in the fourth line, is transliterated as "Keü flower", rather than a literal translation of "chrysanthemum". The reason is that in China, chrysanthemum was an important item for celebrating the Double Ninth Festival, and was often cited by the literati as a symbol of personal purity and nobleness. While in most European countries, chrysanthemums are usually placed on graves to honor the dead. Therefore, the translation method Morrison adopted here was apparently designed to avoid misunderstanding. In the last line, when translating the phrase *niu-shan zhan-jin* 牛山沾襟, Morrison realized that it has an allusion to the ancient story of "Qi-jing-gong 齐景公 (Tse-king-kung) crying over the Niu-shan mountain (Cow-hill)" and added with note that the Cow-hill refers "to a Person named Tse-king-kung" (Morrison et al., 1815, p. 40).

The original text of the second poem, *The Country Cottage*, does not appear in the book, nor is there any mention of its cultural background. Considering that the two poems are similar both in genre and content, it is possible that the second poem was offered to make a comparison. The original and Morrison's translation are as follows:

村舍

自翦青莎织雨衣，南峰烟火是柴扉。
 莱妻早报蒸藜熟，童子遥迎种豆归。
 鱼下碧潭当镜跃，鸟还青嶂拂屏飞。
 花时未免人来往，欲买严光旧钓矶。

The Country Cottage

HE, himself, cut the Sō, and wove the garment for rain;
 The smoke on the Southern hill discovers the door of his cot;
 The hill-wife soon announces, "Well boil'd are the pears";
 The Children roam distant to meet him from the pea-field returning.
 In the shaded lake, the fish frisk on the watery mirror;
 The birds revert to the green turfted-hill, and brush flying about.
 In the season of flowers, crowds of men will be going and returning.
 O! could I purchase Yen-kwang's retired stone in the brook, where of old he angled.

Since this poem was translated with a third-person perspective, Morrison mistook the scene depicted in the poem for the poet's own life. In the first line, *suo* 蓑 (a kind of raincoat in ancient China), an image that does not appear in the original, was added by Morrison and transliterated as Sō. The 蓑 was usually made with dried grass or palm leaves. While in the note, Morrison means that "the leaf of Sō are used by the Chinese to make a kind of cloak", which is clearly a misunderstanding. In the third line, the word *lai-qi* 莱妻 refers to "an admirable wife", while Morrison notes that it means "rustic". Also, the word *li* 藜 refers to a kind of vegetable. Morrison confused it with the fruit *li* 梨, or "pears", because of a similar pronunciation. In the sixth line, *fu-ping-fei* 拂屏飞 is a metaphor adopted to describe that the mountain is like a screen, of which the returning birds are just brushing the surface. But Morrison rendered it word by word into "brush flying about", completely misunderstanding the original text. In the last line, there is also an ancient story hidden behind the sentence. Morrison broadly introduced, in the note, the famous hermit named *Yan-Guang* 严光 (Yen-kwang). Apparently, the second poem was cited to further exemplify that historical allusions are widely adopted in Chinese poetry.

2.2 Translation of Chinese Poetry in *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*

In the same year, *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*, compiled by Morrison, was published to facilitate followers' learning and mastery of Chinese language. By applying the English grammar as a reference to the study of the Chinese language, "it is the first work of the kind in English" (Morrison, 1815, Preface). This book is divided into four sections: *Orthography*, *Etymology*, *Syntax* and *Prosody*. In the section of *Prosody*, Morrison focuses on the introduction of two kinds of *Shi* 诗 (Poem), namely, *Wu-yan-shi* 五言诗 (a verse containing five characters in each line) and *Qi-yan-shi* 七言诗 (a verse containing seven characters in each line), and some of their basic features; In addition, some other genres of Chinese poetry, such as *Ci* 辞 (Tsee) and *Qu* 曲 (Keö), are also mentioned. To facilitate understanding, he cited and translated 寄友人 (*To A Friend*), 忆父 (*On Remembering My Father*), 送春辞 (*An Adieu to Spring*) and 江南曲 (*A Keang Nan Keö*). In particular, Morrison noted that "without extensive knowledge of their ancient history, and the customs and manners of the country, it is difficult to understand their poetical compositions. The very point and beauty of the piece often depends on some slight allusion which a foreigner does not perceive" (Morrison, 1815, p. 275). The original of *To A Friend* and its translation are as follows:

寄友人

病多慵引架书看，官职无才兴已阑。
 穴凤瑞时来却易，人龙别后见何难。
 琴樽风月闲生计，金玉松筠旧岁寒。
 早晚烟村碧江畔，挂罾重对蓼花滩。

To a Friend

Through much disease, I rarely take my book from the shelf;
 I hold an office, but am without ability—my spirits are broken.
 When the queen of birds from the interstices of the mountains appeared, and times were prosperous, we easily met,
 But since the man who is a prodigy parted from me, how difficult to see him.
 In playing on the kin, drinking in the breeze, or beneath the shining moon, I spend my life,
 (But my friend valuable as) the gold and the gem remains, like the trees Sung and Kiun, unhurt by the rigours of winter.
 Ere long I shall return to my obscure village, and by the side of the stream spread my net;
 There again I shall fish over against the ló flower, and the stones of the brook.

Again, this translation only conveys the literal meaning of the original poem, and there are also some inaccuracies. *Xue-feng* 穴凤 in the third line is in contrast to the *Ren-long* 人龙 in the fourth. The former image is a metaphor for young men with high potential, while the latter represents those who have been successful in their own profession. In Morrison's translation, the first image was correspondingly translated as "the queen of birds", with note "a fabulous bird, said to be seen when eminently great men appear" (Morrison, 1815, p. 276). But he didn't render the word 人龙 into a corresponding image in English, probably because that he had realized the cultural difference of 龙, or dragon, between China and the west. *Qin* 琴 in the fifth line refers to an ancient Chinese instrument and it has no English equivalent. So Morrison transliterated it as "kin", thereby retaining its cultural trait. On the other hand, however, this kind of translation method makes it difficult to understand by the Westerners. Similarly, the *Sung* 松, *Jun* 筠 and *Liao-hua* 蓼花 in the last few lines are also treated with homophonic translation, thus forming a distinctive feature in Morrison's translation of Chinese poetry.

The original and the translation of the second poem are as follows:

忆父

吴树燕云断尺书，迢迢两地恨何如。
 梦魂不惮长安远，几度乘风问起居。
 欲归未得怅空囊，儿女相思泪数行。
 苦忆寝门双白鬓，朝朝扶杖倚闾望。

On Remembering My Father

The trees of Woo are entirely separated from the clouds of Yen,
 So is our correspondence entirely broken off,
 Extremely remote are the two countries; I am anxious how to act.
 My spirit in dreams cares not for the distance.
 I have often mounted on the wind, and gone to inquire when he arose, and where he dwelt;
 I desire to return but cannot; I mourn in poverty.
 My children, boys and girls, think of me with many tears,

I am distressed, when I remember my parents, and their hoary locks,
Morning after morning, leaning on their staff, and against the posts of the gate,
they anxiously look for my return.

Song Lingyun was born in present-day Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, which is located in the ancient state of Wu 吴 (Woo). This poem is written to her father when she had gotten married in a place belonging to the ancient region of Yan 燕 (Yen). Therefore, in the first line, the poet uses the phrase *Woo-shu-yan-yun* 吴树燕云 to describe that she herself was like a cloud in Yan and her father was the tree in Wu. Both metaphors were adopted to convey how far the distance was between the author and her father. While in Morrison's word-by-word translation, the connotations are completely lost. In the second line, the phrase *tiao-tiao liang-di* 迢迢两地 (a long way from two lands) exactly refers to the above mentioned places of Suzhou and the city she got married, not the "two countries" as understood by Morrison. In the fourth line, *wen qi-ju* 问起居 means that the author hoped to return to her father's side to take care of his daily life. While Morrison still translates it word by word as "inquire when he arose, and where he dwelt".

The original and translation of the third and fourth poem are as follows:

送春辞

日日人空老，
年年春更归。
相欢在樽酒，
不用惜花飞。

An Adieu to Spring

Day after day man advances to vacant old age;
But year after year the spring returns.
Let us rejoice together and take a bottle.
It is in vain to regret the flowers that are fled.

江南曲

枝中水上春并归
长扬扫地桃花飞
清风吹人光照衣
光照衣，景将夕
掷黄金，留上客

A Keang Nan Keō

To the midst of the branches, and the surface of the water, spring has returned.
The long rows of willows brush the earth; the peach flowers fly in the wind.
The gentle breeze blows on man; the light of the setting sun shines on his garments.
It illumines his garments,
It glows as the evening advances.
Draw out the yellow gold; (prepare a repast),
Detain our worthy guest.

These two poems is relatively simple, and the translations generally convey the meaning of the original. The first title of *Song-chun Ci* 送春辞 literally means *A Poem of Bidding Farewell to Spring*, Morrison's translation is relatively precise. But for the second title of *Jiang-nan Qu*, he applies the way of homophonic translation. This provides clear evidence that Morrison had delved into the origin of the title of various Chinese poetry. In the first line of *A Keang Nan Keō*, the author uses two images, *zhi-zhong* 枝中 (in the branches) and *shui-shang* 水上 (on the surface of the water), to represent the returning of spring. Morrison misunderstands it as "spring has returned to the branches and the water".

2.3 Two Poems from the Indo-Chinese Gleaner

Most of the articles published in the *Gleaner* came from the pen of Milne, and Morrison mainly contributed English translations from the *Peking Gazette*. As late as 1820, Milne still complained that "correspondents and contributors have hitherto been few" (Milne, 1820, p. 191).

The poems was published in the *Translations, & c. Chinese Poetry* section of the No.VIII, April, 1819. Morrison translated the poem mainly in response to the letter from a reader named *Ai-gong-zhe* 爱公者. "We Chinese are accustomed to a sort of poetry that consists in a simple delineation of the beauties of nature; the feelings of the human mind; real incidents in the lives of great men, and the pleasures of social intercourse. We are shocked by the impiety of that imagination which attributes to Gods, lust, animosity, folly, and every species of wickedness....." (Morrison, 1819, p. 64). He also criticizes *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner* for its denigration of China. From today's standpoint, his comment is not without justification. Apart from the reports on personnel changes and important events in China's official circles, most of the articles in the *Gleaner* were devoted to exposing the dark side of China's politics and social culture, such as political corruption, social decadence, superstition and poverty of the ordinary people, thus creating "a dark, uncivilized, backward and impoverished image of China" (Wu, 2010, pp. 70-82). In the reply, Morrison emphasizes, "We give the foregoing piece of poetry more from the peculiar circumstances of the writer, than from having a very favorable opinion of its merits" (Morrison, 1819, p. 68).

Before the poem, Morrison introduces the background of Ruan Yuan's (1764-1849) *Sishi Yonghuai* 四十咏怀 (*On Attaining My 40th Year*). Ruan Yuan, the Viceroy of Liangguang (Guangdong and Guangxi provinces), was widely recognized as an honest and upright official. He never held birthday feast, but celebrated it by drinking tea alone in the countryside, which was called *Cha-yin* 茶隐 (literally means "Tea Hermitage"). On the 20th day of the first month of the eighth year of the Jiaqing era (1803), Ruan Yuan, then Viceroy of Zhejiang province, went to the riverside alone to celebrate his 40th birthday. He recalled that when he was ten years old, his mother taught him to recite poems by Bai Juyi (or Pih-heang-shan), the renowned poet of Tang dynasty, whose birthday was in the same day. Ruan Yuan was inspired and wrote this poem:

春风四十度，与我年相期。
 驻心一回想，意绪纷如丝。
 慈母久违养，长怀雏燕悲。
 严君七十健，以年喜可知。
 人生四十岁，前后关壮衰。
 我发虽未白，寝食非往时。
 生日同白公，恐比白公羸。

百事役我心，所劳非四肢。
 学荒政也拙，时时惧支离。
 宦较白公早，乐天较公迟。
 我复不能禅，尘俗日追随。
 何以却老病，与公商所治。

Morrison first demonstrated the pronunciation of each character:

Chun fung sze shīh too, Yu wo n'æn seang ke;
 Choo sin yīh hwuy seang, E seu fun joo sze.
 Tsze moo kew we yang, Chang hwae tsoo yen pei;
 Yen keun tsīh seun keen, E n'æn he ko che.
 Jin sāng sze shīh suy, Ts'æn how kwan chwang shwae,
 Wo fā suy we pīh, Tsin shīh fei wang she,
 Sāng Jīh tung Pīh-kung, Kung pe Pīh-kung, luy;
 Pīh sze yīh wo sin, So laou fei sze che.
 Heō hwang ching yīh chuē, She she keaou she le;
 Hwan keaou Pih-kung tsaou, Lō t'æn keaou kung che.
 Wo fuh puh nāng shen, Chin suh ih chuy suy;
 Ho e keō laou ping, Yu kung shang so che.

Then he gave the translation:

Forty seasons has the vernal breeze brushed the plain,
 To accord with the number of the days of my life.
 When I detain my mind to reflect on the past,
 My thoughts by crowding ideas, are confused as a skein of ravelled silk.
 Long have I been called from dutiful attentions to my tender mother,
 And her anxieties for me, have been those of a bird for its young.
 My stern and princely father is strong in his seventh decade;
 Which enables me with joy to remember his age.
 A man who like me, has lived forty years;
 Looks back on strength, but forward to decline.
 Although my hair be not yet turned grey;
 I sleep not, nor eat as in times that are past.
 My age is the same, as was the noted Pih-shan's,
 But I fear, that more than he I am fast failing.
 My mind is the slave of manifold affairs,
 My toil is worse than that of the hands or the feet.
 The field of learning is to me become a wilderness; and in politics I'm dull;
 I am under continual dread of neglect or of error.
 Sooner than Pih was I called forth to office,
 But later than he have I delighted in nature.
 Never can I return to retirement and to contemplation,
 But must trudge onward still beclouded by the dust of vulgar politics,
 Ah! how shall I cast off my old disease of ambition;
 And consult with the poet Pih about the means of reformation!

For the first time, Morrison demonstrated the pronunciation of each character in the whole poem, thereby “offering such phonetic details as tones and aspirations shown by diacritical marks” (Lai, 2017, pp. 56-62). In the fourth paragraph, the poet mentioned that his father was still in good health at the age of seventy, so that

“the joy can be imagined”. Morrison mistranslated it as “which enables me with joy to remember his age”. In the ninth paragraph, the word *zhi-li* 支离 generally refers to a broken, fragmented or disorganized state. It was adopted here to describe the physical weakness of the poet himself. In the penultimate paragraph, the poet used the word *Chan* 禅 (Zen) to compare with the state of “being occupied by work”. Morrison translated it as “retirement” and “contemplation”. In the last paragraph, the word *lao-bing* 老病 does not refer to the “old disease”, nor the “old disease of ambition” as translated by Morrison, but the “disease of being old” as said by Bai Juyi in his *Bai-fa* 白发, a verse also written in his fortieth birthday. Morrison had realized that the *gong* 公 (kung) in the last line refers to Bai Juyi, but he didn't realize that the last line has an allusion to that of the *Bai-fa* by Bai Juyi. Accordingly, he added in the translation with some of his own opinions.

Zao Xing 早行, or *On Setting out Early in the Morning*, was published in the *Poetry* section of the No. IX, April, 1819. Morrison states before the translation, “In casting the eye over the following specimen of modern Chinese Poetry, the reader will be struck with the poverty of the words, when expressed in alphabetic writing, compared with the variety which appears in the original character”. He also notes that “The writer professes merely to give the sense of the original” (Morrison, 1819, p. 143). Similarly, the original poem, its pronunciation and the translation are as follows:

早行

戒道鸡声歇，炊烟起孤村。
寒林无恋叶，随鸟下平原。
平原多枯草，繁霜被其根。
鸟来无所食，还向空巢翻。
村中有老农，晓起抱诸孙。
传闻达官过，策杖倚蓬门。
屋西积草廩，屋东延朝暾。
布衣木棉厚，颜色有馀温。
悬知尔室中，尚有升斗存。

Keae taou ke shing hëe, Chuy yen ke koo tsun;
Han lin woo lwan yë, Suy neaou hea ping yuen.
Ping yuen to koo tsaou, Fan shwang pe ke kãn;
Neaou lae woo so shih, Hwan heang kung chaou fan.
Tsun chung yew laou nung, Heaou k'he paou choo sun;
Chuen wãn tã kwan kwo, Tsih chang e pung mun.
Uh se tseih tsaou lin, Uh tung yen chaou tun.
Poo e muh m'ën how, Yen sih yew yu wãn,
Heuen che urh shih chung, Shang yew shing tow tsun.

On Setting out Early in the Morning

Our journey was commenced just as the cock ceased to crow;
When the rising smoke began to curl from the isolated villages;
On the cold-smitten forest, not a pendent leaf was to be seen;
And the birds in fights, rushed down on the face of the plain;
But the plain was filled only with rotten stubble,
The hoar frost moreover, had covered its roots;
The descending birds found nothing there to eat,

And again hurried back to their nests in the air.
 In yonder village, the poor aged husbandman,
 Rising with the dawn, fondly embraces his infant grand-children.
 The report flies round, that a great man is passing,
 And supported by a staff, to gaze, the villager leans against the door of his hut.
 On the west of it are accumulated stacks covered with straw,
 Whilst the eastern side is struck with the beams of the rising sun.
 The villager's plain cloth garments are thickly stuffed with wood-cotton,
 And the colour of his face, shows he enjoys a generous plenty.
 I know very well that in the midst of the cottage,
 There are still in reserve a few measures of grain.

Zao-xing is a work translated by Morrison solely for introducing the poem itself, and the translation quality is of a relatively high standard. The only inaccuracy lies in the last paragraph, where *xuan-zhi* 悬知 generally means “suppose”, not what Morrison translated as “I know very well”.

In both poems, Morrison began to, on the basis of literal translation, add his own understandings into the translations of some certain images. The word 严君 (stern father), 尘俗 (mundane world) and 所治 (the means of curing the disease of being old) in the first poem were respectively rendered into “stern and **princely** father”, “dust of vulgar **politics**” and “the means of **reformation**”. While in the second poem, 炊烟起孤村 (smoke rising from the isolated villages), 随鸟下平原 (birds rushing down to the plain) and 颜色有馀温 (face still warm) were respectively translated as “the rising smoke began to **curl** from the isolated villages”, “the birds in fights, rushed down on the **face** of the plain” and “the colour of his face, shows he enjoys a **generous plenty**”.

There is no signature attached in both English translations, but the author can be certainly identified as Robert Morrison. The reasons are as follows: First, there were no Chinese and English translations published by Milne, whereas Morrison had already translated Chinese poetry in his previous works; second, since Milne lived in Malacca from 1815 until his death, it is more likely that Morrison, who lived in Guangzhou at that time, had access to get and read the poems by then viceroy Ruan Yuan; third, there was no other person capable of understanding and even translating Chinese poetry to such a standard than Morrison; and fourth, the translation of these two poems, especially the principal of phonetic notation, is in accordance with that of Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language*.

2.4 Two Folk Poems in *The Chinese Repository*

In the *Miscellanies* section of *The Chinese Repository*, Vol.I, No.12, April, 1833, Morrison introduced a kind of Chinese gazette named *Sin-wan-che* 新闻纸, or newly-heard paper. He translated a story published in this “newspaper” a few days ago (Morrison, 1833, pp. 492-493). A poor intellectual named Wang Tsohang, who was addicted to poetry and books, was arrested and taken to the local open court for he didn't yield a sidewalk to a mandarin in the street. The magistrate asked him what he did for a living, and he replied that he went to the hills to cut wood during the day and read books at night. The official then threw a pencil to the young man and asked him to write something he remembers perfectly. The man wrote as follows:

E keä tso go, urh laou tsin;
 Wang shan tsae tseou, too jih shin;
 Chang keu shun shan, woo jin kin,

Puh che wang fǎ, leuh yen sin.

At my poor home there sit and sleep two aged parents;
For a livelihood I frequented the hills to cut and gather wood;
Being constantly in the woods far away from the haunts of men,
I was ignorant of the rigorous requirements of the royal law.

The magistrate praised him and said:

Seih yew foo sin, kua keō jin;
Jih wang shan tseaou, yay seih wan;
She ke ěn hew ke, ne ěn shaou tsze,
Tang kaou peih chen, pang shang jin.

Morrison translated it as:

In ancient times the wood-cutter hung his book to the buffalo's horns;
In the daytime he worked among hills, and at night studied letters;
Cease, O ye worldlings, to insult poor young men;
The day will come when their name will stand high in the literary gazette.

The original texts of both poems were not included in the article, nor was there any mention of which *Sin-wan-che* they came from, so the origin of the story is absolutely unknown. In the homophonic translation, Morrison adds a comma after each four syllables in each line, separating them from the next three syllables, so it is clear that the two poems can be categorized as 七言诗. According to the phonetic notation of Chinese characters in Morrison's *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* and the translations of both poems, the originals are presumed to be as follows:

The first one:

一家坐卧二老亲
往山采樵度日身
常居深山无人烟
不知王法律严森

The second one:

昔有负薪挂角人
日往山樵夜习文
世间休欺年少子
登高必成榜上人

3. The Pragmatic Features of Morrison's Poetry Translation

Of the ten Chinese poems translated by Morrison, eight are cited as examples of certain cultural context. Since the translations, as he said, only give the sense of the originals, Morrison was not intended nor motivated to seek a functional equivalence in terms of the rhythm and structure. As a result, these translations are closer to the English editions of prose poetry.

By comparing the works in 1815 and those published later in 1820, we can see a significant drop in Morrison's misunderstandings of individual words and phrases. Furthermore, in both works of *Translations*

from the original Chinese and *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*, Morrison does not spell out the pronunciation of each character; while in the articles published later in *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner* and *The Chinese Repository*, he began to demonstrate the pronunciation of each Chinese character by romanized letters, in a bid to help the Westerners better understand and appreciate such phonetic details as tones and metre in Chinese poetry. As what he said, “nor can a person who knows the language, look with complacency on the words expressed in the letters of an alphabet” (Morrison, 1839, pp. 499-500). All these provide a strong proof that Morrison had not only improved his Chinese skills significantly in the five years, he had also gained a more sophisticated insight into Chinese poetry.

As one of the first foreigners attempting to translate Chinese poetry into English, Morrison pioneered in some translating methods available for reference. Firstly, as there are many allusions in Chinese poetry, a direct translation would easily make the poem complicated, thus losing its nature of simplicity; but if they are rendered literally, the connotations of the original would be lost, and the translation becomes less faithful instead. In this regard, Morrison conveys their meaning with a mix of literal translation and annotation. Secondly, in dealing with such culture-loaded words as 琴, 菊花, 松 and 筠, Morrison consciously adopted the method of homophonic translation, thereby avoiding the potential misunderstandings. Thirdly, being aware of the untranslatability of Chinese poetry, Morrison put rather more focus on conveying the meaning of the original precisely, than on the form of the translated editions.

Conclusion

Among missionary sinologues, Morrison is recognized as “the first to translate Tang poetry into English” (Jiang & Luo, 2009, pp. 33-42). There are more or less misunderstandings in his translations, but it is still possible to gain a glimpse into the extent to which early missionary sinologues understood the Chinese culture, especially Chinese poetry. Morrison did not translate Chinese poetry systematically, but his efforts in translating Chinese poetry into English played an important role in laying the groundwork for future sinologues to study the Chinese language and for the dissemination of Chinese poetics abroad.

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