



CLASSICAL CHINESE POETRY AND PROSE

SELECTED LYRICS OF TANG AND FIVE DYNASTIES

TRANSLATED BY XU YUANCHONG



许译中国经典诗文集

唐五代词选 | 许渊冲 译



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Ancient Chinese classic poems are exquisite works of art. As far as 2,000 years ago, Chinese poets composed the beautiful work *Book of Poetry* and *Elegies of the South*. Later, they created more splendid Tang poetry and Song lyrics. Such classic works as *Thus Spoke the Master* and *Laws Divine and Human* were extremely significant in building and shaping the culture of the Chinese nation. These works are both a cultural bond linking the thoughts and affections of Chinese people and an important bridge for Chinese culture and the world.

Mr. Xu Yuanchong has been engaged in translation for 70 years. In December 2010, he won the Lifetime Achievement Award in Translation conferred by the Translators Association of China (TAC). He is honored as the only expert who translates Chinese poems into both English and French. After his excellent interpretation, many Chinese classic poems have been further refined into perfect English and French rhymes. This collection of Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose gathers his most representative English translations. It includes the classic works *Thus Spoke the Master*, *Laws Divine and Human* and dramas such as *Romance of the Western Bower*, *Dream in Peony Pavilion*, *Love in Long-life Hall* and *Peach Blooms Painted with Blood*. The largest part of the collection includes the translation of selected poems from different dynasties. The selection includes various types of poetry. The selected works start from the pre-Qin era to the Qing Dynasty, covering almost the entire history of classic poems in China. Reading these works is like tasting "living water from the source" of Chinese culture.

We hope this collection will help English readers "understand, enjoy and delight in" Chinese classic poems, share the intelligence of Confucius and Lao Tzu (the Older Master), share the gracefulness of Tang poems, Song lyrics and classic operas and songs and promote exchanges between Eastern and Western culture. We also sincerely invite precious suggestions from our readers.

Oct. 2011

出版前言

中国古代经典诗文是中国传统文化的奇葩。早在两千多年前，中国诗人就写出了美丽的《诗经》和《楚辞》；以后，他们又创造了更加灿烂的唐诗和宋词。《论语》《老子》这样的经典著作，则在塑造、构成中华民族文化精神方面具有极其重要的意义。这些作品既是联接所有中国人思想、情感的文化纽带，也是中国文化走向世界的重要桥梁。

许渊冲先生从事翻译工作70年，2010年12月荣获“中国翻译文化终身成就奖”。他被称为将中国诗词译成英法韵文的唯一专家，经他的妙手，许多中国经典诗文被译成出色的英文和法文韵语。这套“许译中国经典诗文集”荟萃许先生最具代表性的英文译作，既包括《论语》《老子》这样的经典著作，又包括《西厢记》《牡丹亭》《长生殿》《桃花扇》等戏曲剧本，数量最多的则是历代诗歌选集。这些诗歌选集包括诗、词、散曲等多种体裁，所选作品上起先秦，下至清代，几乎涵盖了中国古典诗歌的整个历史。阅读和了解这些作品，即可尽览中国文化的“源头活水”。

我们希望这套许氏译本能使英语读者对中国经典诗文也“知之，好之，乐之”，能够分享孔子、老子的智慧，分享唐诗、宋词、中国古典戏曲的优美，并以此促进东西文化的交流。也敬请读者朋友提出宝贵意见。

2011年10月

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PREFACE

The word “lyric” used in this anthology refers to a poem composed to a certain tune. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the subject matter of a lyric often corresponded to the meaning of its tune title. For example, the *Magpie on the Branch*, a popular song selected here, deals with a magpie in the cage; the *Dream of a Maid of Honour*, the first literary lyric attributed to Li Bai, depicts the solitude of a young woman waking from the dream of her husband; Zhang Zhihe’s *A Fisherman’s Song* describes the happiness of a fisherman; Bai Juyi’s *Everlasting Longing* depicts the longing of a young wife for the return of her husband; Liu Yuxi’s *Ripples Sifting Sand* deals with the women washing gold from sand; Huangfu Song’s *The South Recalled* reveals the poet’s nostalgia for the Southern Country. Since the Late Tang, the subject of the lyric had gradually lost its thematic connection with the tune pattern.

In 1900, in a Buddhist monastery of Dunhuang were found the hand-copied manuscripts of over a thousand lyrics and songs which had been sealed and preserved there for almost a thousand years. Among the manuscripts we find a considerable number of popular songs that may be dated back to the Early Tang (c. 650) and that were sung during the Tang and Five Dynasties (907–960) period. Originally the lyric was considered a popular song form. The differences between a literary lyric and a popular song are as follows: (1) The former is characterized almost exclusively by the lyrical mode while the latter contains a variety of modes—narrative, dramatic and lyrical. For example, in the first popular song selected in this anthology, a