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張胡露英

TRANSEATION HANDBOOK ON CHINESE IDIOMS
AND 4-CHARACTER TERMS IN COMMON USE

HELEN W.L.Y. CHEUNG

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AND 4-CHARACTER TERMS IN COMMON USE

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501 Hung On Mansion
177-181 Jaffe Road,
Wanchai,
Hong Kong.
Tel: 5-728477

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01-02012-11

First Edition November 1980

Printed in Hong Kong
By Man Ying Printing Press Factory

Acknowledgements

The author is indebted to

Miss Li So-Yan who painstakingly assisted the editorial work and unfailingly exerted her utmost efforts in proof reading.

Mr. CHEUNG Wood-Nang who untiringly gave the author advice and support and whose beautiful Chinese calligraphy adds splendour to the cover of this book.

Foreword

The "Translation Handbook On Chinese Idioms And 4-Character Terms In Common Use" has been compiled to help both foreign students studying or reading Chinese and Chinese students studying English.

The Chinese idioms and 4-character terms are arranged in ascending order according to the number of strokes of the first word in each idiom or term, while the English and American idioms are arranged in alphabetical order.

As Hanyu Pinyin has become more and more popular nowadays this book is also designed with a Hanyu Pinyin Index to give the proper pronunciation and the four tones are denoted by the symbols: - ' x '.

This Handbook is the fruit of long years of research by a practising translator. In the course of research the author has received valuable advice from several experts in Chinese and English. Here the author thanks them whole-heartedly.

In a work of this nature errors are inevitable. Comments and criticisms will, therefore, be greatly appreciated.

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一劃

- 一暴十寒 to do something by fits and starts
- 一諾千金 a solemn promise
- 一面之詞 one-sided statement
- 一鱗半爪 fragments (of antiques, ancient ruins, etc.)
- 一念之差 a false step (which brings untold woes)
- 一概而論 discussed or regarded in the same frame of mind or in an indiscriminating manner
- 一國三公 too many leaders in a country or organisation
- 一官半職 an unimportant official post
- 一匡天下 to unite the whole empire under one government
- 一孔之見 very limited outlook; short-sighted
- 一揮而就 to finish writing an article or drawing a painting very quickly
- 一蹶不振 unable to recover from a failure or after a decline
- 一決雌雄 to fight it out; to compete for championship
- 一氣呵成 to complete in one breath

- 一文不值 } not worth a penny; completely worthless
 一錢不值 }
- 一枝獨秀 to outshine others
- 一枝之棲 a shelter or a minor position
- 一擲千金 to spend money recklessly
- 一朝之忿 a sudden outburst of anger
- 一針見血 pungent; incisive; to the point
- 一張一弛 off and on (referring to pressure, political or military situation)
- 一柱擎天 to lead the nation safely through a crisis single-handed; to be the only man capable of saving the nation in time of trouble
- 一籌莫展 not knowing what to do; at wit's end; helpless
- 一成不變 fixed; conservative; unchangeable; invariable; inflexible
- 一觸即發 imminent
- 一視同仁 impartial; without discrimination
- 一身是膽 to have plenty of guts; very brave
- 一絲不苟 no detail is overlooked; to do things carefully and seriously

- 一刀兩斷 to cut the Gordian knot
- 一石二鳥 }
一矢雙雕 } to kill two birds with one stone
- 一舉兩得 to obtain two objectives or gain two advantages by a single move
- 一知半解 smatter; with very limited knowledge; incomplete comprehension
- 一刻千金 every moment is precious
- 一勞永逸 by one supreme effort to win eternal ease
- 一了百了 when a man is dead everything is finished (the solution of one problem leads to the solution of all problems)
- 一丘之貉 birds of the same feather; very much the same; people of the same liking
- 一團和氣 harmonious; full of good will toward one another
- 一日千里 rapid advance
- 一片胡言 all nonsense
- 一毛不拔 very parsimonious; miserly; stingy
- 一竅不通 utterly stupid and dense

- 一絲不掛 utterly naked; not a stitch on
- 一網打盡 to capture all in one net
- 一落千丈 rapid declination; utter failure
- 一敗塗地 a crushing defeat; a complete failure
- 一波三折 meeting repeated difficulties; hitting one snag after another
- 一本正經 in a serious manner
- 一筆勾銷 to undo something by a single stroke; all cancelled; to settle an account once for all
- 一臂之力 help; assistance
- 一表人材 handsome or dashing
- 一步登天 a sudden rise in high position or fast advancement (in one's career, etc.)
- 一貧如洗 as poor as a church mouse
- 一鳴驚人 to become famous overnight; to achieve enormous success at the very first try
- 一目了然 to understand fully at a glance
- 一髮千鈞 to hang by a thread (referring to a desperate or critical situation)

- 一衣帶水 separated by a narrow strip of water
- 一葉知秋 a falling leaf augurs the coming of autumn;
a straw shows which way the wind blows
- 一笑置之 to dismiss it with a laugh
- 一瀉千里 rushing down (the river) swiftly; a bold and
forceful style of writing
- 一心一德 united as one
- 一心一意 whole-heartedly
- 一無可取 nothing worth taking; not a point worth
acclaiming
- 一無是處 nothing is right; all wrong
- 一無所長 without a speck of talent
- 一無所有 to have nothing
- 一無所知 to know nothing
- 一息尚存 still breathing; not dead yet
- 一廂情願 unilateral desire or aspiration
- 一往無前 advancing fearlessly as if there are no
obstacles
- 一往情深 unrestrained, deep emotional involvement
- 一望無際 a limitless expanse of land or water etc.

- 一絲一毫 wee bit
- 一潭死水 a pool of stagnant water
- 一手包辦 everything is handled by one person who
refuses the participation of others; to do
something all by oneself
- 一事無成 nothing has been accomplished
- 一日三秋 a day seems as long as three autumns
- 一掃而空 swept clean at one attempt
- 一盤散沙 a plate of loose sand; lack of unity
- 一目十行 reading ten lines at a glance
- 一模一樣 identically alike
- 一命嗚呼 died
- 一面之辭 evidence given by one party
- 一馬當先 a horse in the fore; to be in the lead
- 一脈相承 following in the same vein
- 一技之長 a talented skill
- 一見如故 like old friends at the first meeting

- 一見鍾情 love at first sight
- 一呼百諾 numerous attendants; one call will evoke hundred replies
- 一鼓作氣 to do something in one breath
- 一乾二淨 nothing is left
- 一改故轍 reversing away from the old tracks
- 一板三眼 words and action in accord with rules; dull and unimaginative
- 一唱一和 singing a duet
- 一塵不染 not contaminated by dirt or vice
- 一意孤行 to do something against the advice of others
- 一言九鼎 a solemn promise or pledge
- 一言興邦 a timely warning may avert a national crisis
- 一言喪邦 a single wrong statement may bring disaster to the nation
- 一言爲定 to reach a binding agreement verbally
- 一語道破 to hit the nail on the head; to expose someone's ulterior motive or secret design by a single remark; to disclose it by a word
- 一言難盡 it is a long story

- 一言以蔽之 in a few words
- 一報還一報 tit for tat; to serve one with the same sauce
- 一蟹不如一蟹 getting worse and worse
- 一不做，
二不休 over shoes, over boots; in for a penny, in for a pound
- 一失足成
千古恨 a slip in life may turn out to be the sorrow for the years to come
- 一將功成
萬骨枯 what millions died that Caesar might be great
- 一寸光陰
一寸金 time is money; an inch of time is an inch of gold
- 一波未平，
一波又起 while one problem has not yet been solved another is cropping up
- 一犬吠日，
百犬吠聲 if you pull one pig by the tail, all the rest squeal
- 一言既出，
駟馬難追 the swiftest horse cannot recall the word spoken; what is said cannot be retracted
- 一朝被蛇咬，
十年怕井繩 a burnt child dreads the fire
- 一鼻子灰 to meet rejection, humiliation or frustration
- 一長二短 the general effect and the minute details

一線希望 a gleam of hope

一如既往 consistently like the past

二 劃

八拜之交 sworn brotherhood

八面玲瓏 to be pleasant all round; well polished and elegant throughout; to be perfect mixer in any company

八面威風 influential in every quarter; having an awe-inspiring reputation everywhere

八斗之才 a very talented or gifted person

卜晝卜夜 day and night; around the clock

刀山火海 the most hazardous place

刁鑽古怪 crafty and queer

人云亦云 to parrot what others say

人生朝露 life is ephemeral

人生如夢 life is but a dream

人生如寄 life is short

人人自危 everyone feels insecure

人贓並獲 caught together with the loot

- 人才輩出 great talents appear successively
- 人才濟濟 there is a wealth of talents
- 人一己百 if others can do it, I must exert myself a hundred times harder in order to do the same
- 人言可畏 criticisms should be feared
- 人仰馬翻 to suffer an utter defeat
- 人微言輕 words from a man of lowly position (like me) carries little weight
- 人煙稠密 crowded condition
- 人亡物在 the relics of the dead heightens the grief of the living
- 人慾橫流 mass indulgence in decadent life
- 人地相宜 the right man in the right place
- 人心所向 with people's support
- 人心向背 people's support or opposition
- 人棄我取 I pick up what others discard
- 人聲鼎沸 human voices as loud as when the cauldron is boiling with water
- 人壽年豐 longevity and bumper harvest — scene of peace and prosperity

- 人之常情 the normal human nature
- 人山人海 a sea of faces
- 人滿之患 trouble of overpopulation or overcrowdedness
- 人面桃花 memory of an old sweetheart
- 人面獸心 gentle in appearance but cruel at heart; wolf in sheep's skin
- 人命關天 human life is of utmost importance
- 人非木石 man is a sentimental creature
- 人浮於事 there are more job hunters than jobs
- 人地生疏 to have trouble getting about in a strange land because of unfamiliarity with the local people and their customs
- 人定勝天 man's determination will conquer nature
- 人間地獄 pandemonium; a hell away from hell
- 人間何世 What a world is this?
- 人盡可夫 promiscuous; a woman who will take any man as her husband
- 人笨怨刀鈍 a bad workman quarrels with his tools

- 人生如朝露 man's life is like the morning dew. Our life is but a span.
- 人不可以貌相 appearances are often deceptive
- 人死不能復生 the dead cannot be brought back to life
- 人生七十古來稀 it is seldom that a man lives to be seventy years old.
- 人生自古誰無死 man is mortal; death comes to all men
- 人肉市場 the sex market; houses of ill fame
- 人文地理 political geography
- 人造衛星 satellite
- 人才外流 the brain drain
- 人言嘖嘖 there are plenty of criticisms
- 人民公社 people's commune
- 人民陣線 popular front
- 人海戰術 human-sea tactics
- 入不敷出 to live beyond one's means; to live beyond one's income; cannot make both ends meet
- 入境問禁 never wear a brown hat in Freisland
- 入境問俗 in Rome do as the Romans do

- 入木三分 penetrating analysis
- 力不從心 to have too little power or resources to do as much as one wishes
- 力透紙背 so forceful are the strokes that the force seems to penetrate the paper
- 力竭聲嘶 exhausted and hoarse
- 力爭上游 to try to excel by strenuous efforts; to strive for the best
- 力挽狂瀾 using tremendous effort to retrieve a critical situation
- 力排眾議 to dispute the views of others to establish one's own
- 力所能及 within one's power or ability
- 十全十美 perfect
- 十室九空 nine out of ten houses are vacant — whole villages or cities deserted as a result of war, natural disaster, etc.
- 十有八九
十之八九 } eight or nine chances out of ten; most probably; very likely
- 十拿九穩 to be very sure of success, etc.
- 十惡不赦 crimes that cannot be pardoned