

Translated by  
Xu Yuan-zhong 許淵沖譯

蘇東坡詩詞新譯

*Su Dong-po —  
A New Translation*

The Commercial Press, Ltd.



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*A New Translation*

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贈洛陽外國語學院

The Commercial Press, Ltd.



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**SU DONG PO - A NEW TRANSLATION**

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*Su Dong-Po--A  
New Translation*

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## *Preface*

Su Shi (Su Dong-po or Master of Eastern Slope) has been regarded by many as the greatest of Song poets. Born at Meishan in present-day Sichuan, he was educated at home by his mother and his father Su Xun. In 1056, he came with his younger brother Su Zhe (Zi-you, 1039-1112) to Kaifeng, capital of Northern Song dynasty and the largest city in the world at that time, to take the government civil service examination, and both of them passed it with distinction in 1057. Then, as a provincial administrator or magistrate, he moved about from place to place, from office to office, which is why so much of his poetry deals with journeys and scenic splendors of hills and rivers he visited. In Hangzhou he watched the tidal bore of the Qiantang River and wrote the well-known poem "West Lake"; in Mizhou he wrote his pathetic elegy on his deceased wife; in Xuzhou he took part in prayers for rain and acquainted himself with the life of the common people.

But his chequered political career was marred by a series of defeats and banishments, chiefly due to his opposition to the reforms made by Prime Minister Wang An-shi. From 1080 to 1084, he was exiled to Huangzhou, where he visited the ancient battlefield at Red Cliff and wrote his heroic "Song of the River". From 1094 to 1100, he was again banished to



## 序

蘇東坡是我國宋代最偉大的一位詩人，公元一〇三七年初生於眉州（今四川眉山）。二十歲時，他同弟弟子由（1039—1112）赴京（今河南開封）應試，殿試第二，文名大噪。後來做官，“宦遊直送江入海”，遊歷了祖國的名山大川，寫下了許多膾炙人口的詩句。寫山如“橫看成嶺側成峯，遠近高低各不同。”寫水如“水光瀲灩晴方好；山色空濛雨亦奇。”這些名句一直傳誦至今，使祖國的錦繡河山生色不少。

不過蘇東坡的政治生涯却是坎坷不平的。當時的宰相王安石變法維新，蘇東坡却追隨舊黨，因此受到貶謫，先後到過密州（今山東），湖州（今浙江），徐州，黃州（今湖北），惠州（今廣東），甚至遠到瓊州（今海南島）。在密州，他寫過《江城子·記夢》聲淚俱下的悼亡詞；在徐州，他寫過聲勢磅礴的《百步洪》；在黃



Huizhou in present-day Guangdong (Kwangtung), when his “dishevelled white hair flows in the wind like frost spread”, yet he still sang of his “sweet sleep in spring” and, as a result, he was ordered farther south to Hainan Island, from where he was not permitted to return to the mainland until one year before his death. His life of exile acquainted him with the plight of the poor people, which is why he wrote such poems as “Lament of a Peasant Woman”, “Snow on New Year’s Day”, etc.

His poetry usually combines description with narration, and these two with philosophical meditation. His philosophy represents a combination of Confucian and Buddhist ideas, with a large mixture of philosophical Taoism. In his description of nature he makes far freer use of personification than any of his predecessors. His style is spontaneous, unrestrained, exuberant, rich in similes and metaphors. For instance, he thus describes a light boat in the Hundred-Pace Rapids which strives to avoid a row of jagged rocks:

*“As a hare darts away, an eagle dives below,  
A gallant steed gallops down a slope beyond control,  
A string snaps from a lute, an arrow from a bow,  
Lightning cleaves clouds or off lotus leaves raindrops  
roll.”*

Seven similes are used one after another so that they eclipse Shakespeare’s Sonnet LII. Similes are not only used in description but also in narration. He wrote on a New Year’s Eve: