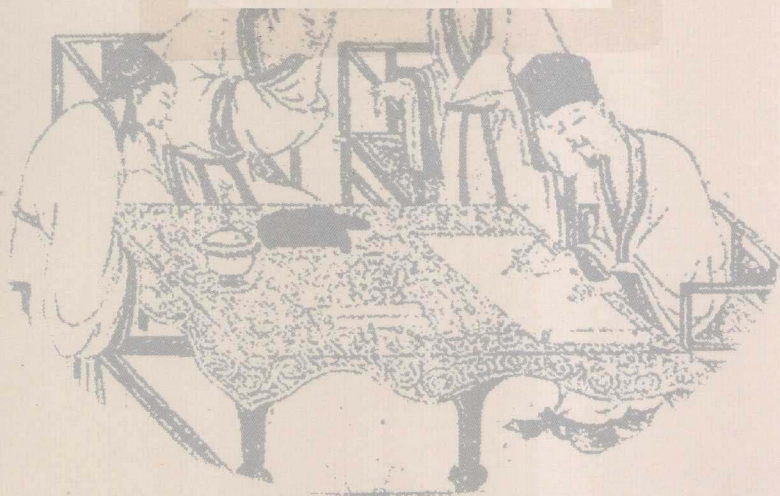


Chinese Literature: A Reader

中国文学选读

唐建清 李彦 选编



南京大学出版社

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Preface

As one of the cradles of human civilization, China has produced a vast library of great literature over the past five thousand years. Like that of many other nations, Chinese literature is the essence of Chinese thought, the treasure of Chinese culture; it is the record of our forefathers' struggles against heaven and earth, providing vivid depictions of the material and spiritual lives of Chinese in both ancient and modern times.

In the long history of Chinese literature, a series of masterful figures emerged in genres such as poetry, fiction, and drama. Unlike the ruling emperors, these writers, sitting on the "throne" of Chinese characters, write about China in pride and elegance with their brushes. Because of their writings, Chinese history becomes more vivid and interesting. And these writers have become immortal with their writings.

Over the course of history, many works of literature have been lost to political upheavals or to the ravages of time. Even so, a great amount of masterpieces of Chinese literature, whether poems, stories, essays, novels, or dramas, have been handed down to the present. *The Book of Songs*, *Li Sao*, poetry of the Tang and Song dynasties, drama from the Yuan, and novels from the Ming and Qing dynasties all exhibit their own unique styles. These works cover a wide range of subjects, reflect on and respond to such eternal themes as love and death, nature and humankind, society and individual life, etc. With gripping images and ornate prose, their messages have profound implications and offer long-standing appeal to even modern audiences. Many lines of poetry, aphorisms from essays, and romantic or heroic stories from fiction or drama are still on everyone's lips in China today, and have become prized gems

in the treasure house of Chinese as well as world literature.

As the saying goes, the best way to come to know a country and its people is to read its literature. In studying Chinese literature, the reader will come to better understand Chinese traditions and society, as well as the cultural mindset, values, and lifestyles of the Chinese people.

Chinese Literature: A Reader is a product of the joint efforts of Professor Jianqing Tang and Professor Yan Li over a two-year span at the Confucius Institute, an institution co-sponsored by two renowned universities in China and Canada: Nanjing University and the University of Waterloo. Professor Tang has taught literature for over twenty years, and Professor Li is herself a fiction writer. Based on their experiences teaching foreign students, the two authors have selected works from the vast ocean of Chinese literature that they deem most appropriate and valuable to the students' learning. As such, the writers included in this textbook are all fitting representatives of significant periods in Chinese literary history. The selected texts are also accessible to foreign readers, and cover all important genres and schools of thought in Chinese literature. With its simple explanatory language, this book can become a gateway to understanding Chinese literature as well as China for both foreign students and international readers.

Cheng Aimin
Oct. 6th, 2009

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Shi Jing and Li Sao

General Description

Chinese literature has a long history with a past that can be traced back to ancient times, to a time before written characters. The original literature was of myths, legends and songs, created orally and passed on from generation to generation.

Poetry was the first form of literature, with early poetry being combined with music to produce chants and songs that could be easily remembered and passed on.

The first era of Chinese literature began prior to the Qin Dynasty. It covers the period of the Xia(夏), Shang(商) and Zhou(周) Dynasties(2100BC~221BC). In terms of literary development, the Pre-Qin(先秦) can broadly be divided into three sections. First period: Xia Dynasty—Shang Dynasty(2100BC~1100BC). Second period: Western Zhou(西周 1100BC)—Spring and Autumn(春秋 770BC~476BC). Third period: Warring States(战国 475BC~221BC).

In comparison to the oral literature that had previously existed, the literature of the Pre-Qin period advanced with the addition of written characters, and included prose as well as poetry. Naturally, due to the length of time that has passed, the authorship of many of the works created in the Pre-Qin cannot possibly be unequivocally confirmed.

The most recognized literary achievements of the Pre-Qin period were *Shi Jing* (《诗经》 *Book of Songs or Book of Odes*), *Chu Ci* (《楚辞》 *Songs of Chu or Songs of the South*) and essays from various scholars.

This chapter includes selections from *Shi Jing*, the first and last chapters of *Li Sao*, and a genuine masterpiece, *The Spirit of the Mountains*, by Qu Yuan. The supplementary piece is by Zhuangzi.

Introduction to *Shi Jing*

Shi Jing is the earliest collection of Chinese poems in existence. Originally called “Shi(诗)” or “300 Poems”, it actually consists of 305 poems spanning 500 years from the early Zhou Dynasty(1100BC) to the Mid-Spring and Autumn period(600BC), with the final list of poems drawn up around that time. Throughout history there have been many terms used to describe *Shi Jing* such as Xian Shi(献诗 presenting poems), Cai Shi(采诗 collecting poems) and Shan Shi(删诗 editing poems). It was believed that the collection, included in the “Six Classics(六经 Liu Jing)”, had been compiled by Confucius(孔子) who once said, “If one does not learn poetry, one cannot speak well.” This indicates that during the time of Confucius, *Shi Jing* was not just a collection of poems, it was also looked upon as the equivalent of knowledge of the humanities by intellectuals. Learning and using *Shi Jing* became a mandatory part of an aristocratic cultural education.

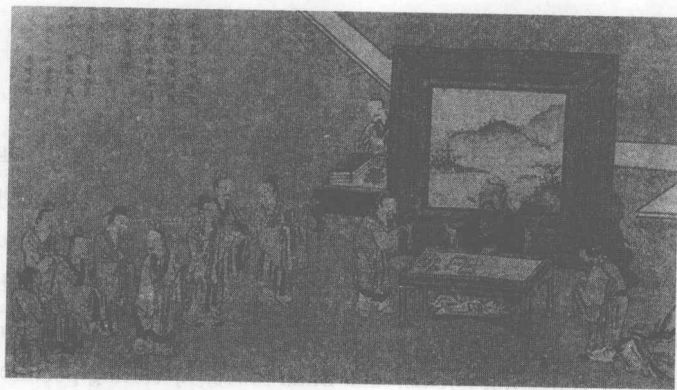
Shi Jing is composed of Liu Yi(六艺 six kinds) referred to as Feng(风), Ya(雅), Song(颂), Fu(赋), Bi(比) and Xing(兴). The first three categories signify the contents of the poems. So, Feng, Ya, and Song are categories of the various musical hymns and tunes that were developed in different areas. Fu, Bi and Xing on the other hand, indicate the literary styles employed.

“Feng”, also called “Guo Feng(国风)”, are folk songs or ballads from different areas, with romantic love and prominent themes. The ballads came from 15 areas and total 160 poems, accounting for a major portion of *Shi Jing*.

“Ya” songs are imperial court music and are typically divided into the 31 titles of Da Ya(大雅 major festal odes—for more solemn ceremonies) and the 74 titles of Xiao Ya(小雅 minor festal odes—for court festivities). Most of these works were created by the aristocracy.

“Song” pieces are religious hymns and eulogies. There are 40 titles of Zhou Song(周颂), Lu Song(鲁颂) and Shang Song(商颂). Ya and Song are special works written for the court or for temple sacrificial feasts.

Fu, Bi, and Xing refer to the methods of depiction, approach, or style. “Fu”



孔子及其弟子

means description and with it the poets directly express emotional thoughts and feelings in a straightforward narrative. “Bi” means explicit comparison and uses obvious daily expressions to convey nonfigurative phrases and make them clearly understandable. “Xing” is implied comparison and is commonly used at the beginning of a poem to trigger what follows. These three major styles are often interactively employed and applied to create the artistic images in poetry.

Shi Jing poems are normally written with four-character lines and constructed in four-line groups. Occasionally, though, you will see two-character lines or eight-character lines in the poems. The two-beat tempo contains a very powerful rhythm which can usually be discovered in the four-character lines. The distinctive rhythm is short, sharp and clear. Overlapping lines and repeated characters strengthen the tune’s back-and-forth nature, enhancing the poetic melody. This basic and straightforward method is a fundamental component of *Shi Jing*.

Although *Shi Jing* does contain a few short epic narratives, it is mainly a collection of expressive works, so we can accurately describe *Shi Jing* as a compilation of lyrical poems. It can therefore be said to have paved the way for lyrical poems to become the dominant form of Chinese poetry.

The issues addressed in *Shi Jing*, including a penchant for realism, strong political and moral awareness, sincerity, and a positive attitude towards life are essential spirits that have a direct impact later on Chinese poetic sensibilities, and can be summed up as the “Feng Ya(风雅)” spirit.

Selections from *Shi Jing*

1. Cooing and Wooing

By riverside are cooing
A pair of turtledoves;
A good young man is wooing
A fair maiden he loves.

Water flows left and right
Of cress long here, short there;
The youth yearns day and night
For the good maiden fair.

His yearning grows so strong,
He cannot fall asleep,
But tosses all night long,
So deep in love, so deep!

Now gather left and right
Cress long or short and tender!
O lute, play music bright
For the bride sweet and slender!

Feast friends at left and right
On cress cooked till tender!
O bells and drums, delight
The bride so sweet and slender!

(translated by Xu Yuanchong)

国风·关雎

关关雎鸠，在河之洲。窈窕淑女，君子好逑。
参差荇菜，左右流之；窈窕淑女，寤寐求之。
求之不得，寤寐思服；悠哉悠哉，辗转反侧。
参差荇菜，左右采之；窈窕淑女，琴瑟友之。
参差荇菜，左右芼之；窈窕淑女，钟鼓乐之。

2. Jiang Chung Tzu

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb into our homestead,
Do not break the willows we have planted.
Not that I mind about the willows,
But I am afraid of my father and mother.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of what my father and mother say
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb over our wall,
Do not break the mulberry trees we have planted.
Not that I mind about the mulberry trees,
But I am afraid of my brothers.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of what my brothers say
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb into our garden,

Do not break the hardwood we have planted.
Not that I mind about the hardwood,
But I am afraid of what people will say.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of all that people will say
Indeed I am afraid.

(translated by Arthur Waley)

国风·将仲子

将仲子兮，无逾我里，无折我树杞。岂敢爱之？
畏我父母。仲可怀也，父母之言，亦可畏也。

将仲子兮，无逾我墙，无折我树桑。岂敢爱之？
畏我诸兄。仲可怀也，诸兄之言，亦可畏也。

将仲子兮，无逾我园，无折我树檀。岂敢爱之？
畏人之多言。仲可怀也，人之多言，亦可畏也。

3. The Reed

Green, green the reed,
Dew and frost gleam.
Where's she I need?
Beyond the stream.
Upstream I go;
The way is long.
Downstream I go;
She's there among.

White, white the reed,
Dew not yet dried.

Where's she I need?

On the other side.

Upstream I go;

Hard is the way.

Downstream I go;

She's far away.

Bright, bright the reed,

Dew and frost blend.

Where's she I need?

At river's end.

Upstream I go;

The way does wind.

Downstream I go;

She's far behind.

(translated by Xu Yuanchong)

国风·蒹葭

蒹葭苍苍，白露为霜。所谓伊人，在水一方。

溯洄从之，道阻且长；溯游从之，宛在水中央。

蒹葭凄凄，白露未晞。所谓伊人，在水之湄。

溯洄从之，道阻且跻；溯游从之，宛在水中坻。

蒹葭采采，白露未已。所谓伊人，在水之涘。

溯洄从之，道阻且右；溯游从之，宛在水中沚。

4. Life of Peasants

In seventh moon Fire Star west goes;