

A DICTIONARY OF  
CHINESE PROVERBS AND  
MAXIMS WITH  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION

中国谚语与格言英译辞典

◎ 尹邦彦 编译

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# 中国谚语与格言英译辞典

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## Foreword

The progression from *word* to *phrase* to *sentence* (as well as further downwards to speech sound and written letter, or upwards to spoken discourse and literary text) is not the whole story when it comes to presenting information in a dictionary, particularly if that material is connected to “idioms”, defined in the *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (Hartmann & Stork 1972, Chinese translation 1981) as “a group of words which has a special connotation not usually equal to the sum of the meanings of the individual words, and which usually cannot be translated literally into another language ...”. What is needed is additional knowledge about such features as inherent lexical meaning, extended metaphoric sense and situational context, which make the whole process so much more difficult and challenging!

Take the recent example of the “hacking” scandal in the British media. What actually is *hacking*, and is its literal meaning important? Or do we need to know more about its idiomatic connotations? How is this word defined and illustrated in existing English dictionaries, e. g. based on the polysemous verb *hack* (*into*)? And do they actually account for all the actual occurrences, e. g. in newspaper headlines such as *Phone hacking: the smoking gun*, which hints at implications for the future relations between politicians, the police and the media, as in the more recent headline *Hacking scandal topples Britain’s top policeman*?

How is it possible to cover all the uses of such idiomatic phrases in particular types of discourse, as in sayings, proverbs and other statements (of which collections or corpora of quotations may be available)? And is

there even a difference in the way they appear in particular text genres, such as personal letters, newspaper articles, public announcements or technical discussions? So we need to move on from the simple linguistic hierarchy (which helps us analyse words in their collocational co-text) to a more “stereotypical” hierarchy (which explains the figurative content of relatively opaque expressions), facing us with the problematic task of their adequate treatment in lexicography (how is *hacking into computers* different from *hacking something to pieces* or *hacking it in a job*?). And if another language is involved, we have to move from monolingual paraphrase to bilingual translation (in German, the verb *abhören* works for the phone context, but not for computing, which has the direct borrowing *hacken* or the more circumlocutory equivalent *eindringen*; in Chinese, the equivalent *qieting* (*men*) has the meaning of “unauthorized listening” or “eavesdropping”, and the wider connotation of “bugging gate”, with possible links to *Watergate*).

The closest I ever got myself to the process of compiling a dictionary of idiomatic expressions was the project by two Chinese visiting scholars at Exeter, Xiaojun Heng and Xuezhi Zhang, which was not merely a bilingual collection of such items, but tried several new approaches. The detailed informative introduction to *A Chinese-English Dictionary of Idioms and Proverbs* (1988) set out some criteria used in their underlying linguistic analysis (in terms of the structural hierarchy of idioms from *blackbird* to *an early bird* and *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*), interlingual comparison (by using a 3-step procedure, from literal translation to free translation to English equivalent) and lexicographic coverage (in separate sections on 3,000 idioms like *birds of a feather* and 355 proverbs like *Birds of a feather flock together*).

“Proverbs”, defined in the *Dictionary of Lexicography* (Hartmann & James

1998/2001) as “culturally significant pithy saying(s) with a moral or practical message”, are not just collocations of words in their literal meaning, but combinations of figurative phrases in an idiomatic context, often difficult to understand even for native speakers because of their relatively obscure formulation and traditional associations, which all adds to the fact that it is almost impossible to transfer them from one language, culture and nation to another. I don’t know whether expressions such as English *hacking* and Chinese *qieting* have produced any proverbs and maxims yet, but this is very likely to happen, with connections such as media and police corruption, starting perhaps with expressions such as *ting bijiao* “to overhear through a wall” or “eavesdrop”, and *ting qi yan er guan qi xing* “listen to what someone says and observe what someone does” or “judge a person by his deeds, not just by his words”.

Professor Yin is one of those who have taken on this complex expert task of treating Chinese proverbs and their English equivalents. He is well qualified for this, as he grew up learning and teaching the English language (and literature), specialising in reading, grammar and translation, and researching into aspects of bilingual lexicography, which included study leave at the Australian National University and University of Birmingham in Britain. In the last few years, he has concentrated on compiling material relevant to the lexicographic treatment of idioms and proverbs, the results of which have been published in the form of *A Chinese Dictionary of Commonly Used Idiomatic Expressions* (1989), *A Dictionary of Chinese Idiomatic Expressions with English Translations* (2006) and *A Collection of Chinese Maxims* (2009).

His latest compilation project is what he calls a “twin dictionary”: *A Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs and Maxims with English Translation*, in which he combines the treatment of proverbs with that of “maxims”,

defined in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) as “short, pithy statements expressing a general truth or rule of conduct (e. g. *actions speak louder than words*)”, which apparently has a long and powerful tradition in China.

Typically, each of the around 6,000 entries consists of the cited proverb or maxim, first in the form of Chinese characters and then in pinyin transcription, followed by an English translation (with an equivalent if available, e. g. *ren bu cuo cheng xian, ma bu cuo cheng long* — *To err is human, to forgive divine*), together with available quotations which support the evidence. Occasional notes supplement the information given in the text of the entry.

This work deserves a wide readership, and I wish him well.

**Reinhard R. K. Hartmann**



## 译苑又见新奇葩(代序)

日前,年兄尹邦彦教授携夫人从镇江来到我南京寓所,告诉我他已完成《中国谚语与格言英译辞典》一书的编撰工作,并即将付梓出版。阔别多年之后,即得此喜讯,实为盛事,至感欣慰。蒙邦彦仁兄垂青,征序于我。对于这一光荣任务,我是既兴奋又惶悚。兴奋,因为这部词典无疑是译苑又一新奇葩;惶悚,因为我实在不配写序。虽说多年来一直从事翻译教学与研究,但是未曾涉足汉语谚语与格言之类“炼语”的英译领域,下笔难免词不达意、文饰墨非,有背老友原意;二是因为不常作文,才思枯竭,拙笔难以成文,让方家笑话。诸多因素让我忐忑良久。

中国文化源远流长。在五千多年的历史长河中,历代先圣时贤和劳动大众创造了灿烂辉煌的华夏文明。他们打造的谚语和格言不仅是中华民族的宝贵财富,也是人类文明的璀璨明珠。谚语与格言作为民族语言文化的精华,语言洗练、短小精悍、结构精巧、哲理丰富、寓意深刻。由于汉语言文字的特殊性和其所特有的语言策略,传统中国人将所要表达的思想意义与语言构成一种深刻的有机关系,而无意于在句子中建立明确的指谓关系。由于思想立足于天地人合一的基本哲学观,并且就语言本身的产生而言,象天法地,也表明了自己与人与世界的不可分割性,也就是说,它不仅指谓世界,还显示世界,它的漫不经心只是表象,而真正的思想均出自其人的灵府,胎息于深深的生命体悟,这就使得它对世界的观察和表述脱略了形相,并不拘泥于字迹,有洞穿言语的透辟,洋溢着东方民族特有的哲学智慧和美的感染力。编写中国谚语与格言的英译词典,如何通过译笔将它们在上述诸方面的特点如实地传达出来,实非易事。首先,由于我们今天读到的谚语与格言多是经后人根据自己的理解加上现代标点、注释和语译的,这就难免产生与原意的距离和读者相互间的歧解。其次,翻译是以一种语言为载体的文化内涵转换为另一种文化形式的广义的文化翻译,从本

质上说是一种“跨文化交际”。由于英汉谚语与格言存在文化差异,在英汉互译实践中,译者应从文化的角度出发,把握好“异化”与“归化”之间的辩证关系。这部历时有年编就的词典告诉我们:编者显然考虑到了。

顾名思义,这部词典是以译介中国的谚语和格言为己任。循览其书,意旨丰富,涵盖了关于自然、人生、社会的至理名言,涉及修身、勤学、励志之语,有关谋略、治国、用兵的睿智之言,关于亲情、友情、爱情的感人之语,还有养生、怡情、绘景的精妙之词,凡五类,若网在纲,有条而不紊,令人有探骊得珠之感。其编撰经过,“前言”中言之详矣。观之,此书既考证钩稽,又评述阐释;多见旁搜远绍,又不乏烛幽索隐。处处可见编撰者探究发现之精神,与穷治其事之韧劲。在编写过程中,邦彦兄还自费西渡英伦,负笈访师,借助网络“上天”,躲进书馆“入地”,不辞辛劳,上下求索,查阅浩繁的文献经典,进而充分调动自己的学术积累,披沙拣金,辨正证伪,博采众长,字斟句酌,由他编撰的词典可以得证矣。

尹邦彦教授学养宏富,功底深厚,长年埋首于中国谚语、成语、格言等的研究,勤奋掇英,在中国熟语英译的园地里孜孜矻矻,屡有佳构问世,成绩斐然,影响广泛。在经济大潮席卷一切的今天,尹兄虽年近古稀,仍忘情于书斋,伏身书案,笔耕不辍,让人佩服不已。

愿邦彦兄能编写出更多更好的词典,为我国中外文化交流事业做出更大的贡献。

是为代序。

张柏然 谨识

## 前言

我是英语词典之父塞缪尔·约翰逊(Samuel Johnson)博士的忠实粉丝,青年时代读《约翰逊致切斯特菲尔德伯爵书》一文,深深被他那刚正不阿的独立人格和独力编典的韧性所感动,立志在教学、读书之余在双语词典编纂领域干点实事。基于对英语习语和汉语熟语的浓厚兴趣,每逢看书,必做卡片,日积月累,多年来竟制作了有关熟语英译的卡片三万余张。我的第一本正规编作《汉英常用熟语词典》(江苏教育出版社,1989)大部分书证援引有影响的文学作品,就是仿效约翰逊博士的做法,其独编的大词典因丰富的书证而改变了词典编纂的历史。

“莫道秋霜不滋物,菊花还借后时黄。”正是借助上海外语教育出版社提供的平台,还不够成熟的《汉英常用熟语词典》有了较大幅度修订和增补的机会,书名更改为《汉语熟语英译词典》(上海外语教育出版社,2006)。此书2007年获江苏省第十届哲学社会科学优秀成果奖后,我内心又萌发了再独编一部与此相配、规模相当、更有特色的《中国谚语与格言英译辞典》,形成一人独编、每部百万字左右、外语类权威出版社出版的“双子典”(twin dictionaries)。今天终于圆了这个梦!这首先得感谢上海外语教育出版社庄智象社长、张宏副社长、辞书事业部张春明主任以及本书责任编辑潘敏女士和章骏德先生多年来对我的充分信任和鼎力支持,他们在本词典编写过程中给予我诸多具体指导和直接帮助。这些信任、支持、指导和帮助就是鞭策我“五年磨一典,一典磨五年”的原动力。

将常用的谚语和格言合并收录为一本词典,是因为它们有不少共性:它们大都精辟而又洗练,流传很广且为人们喜闻乐用,是民族智慧和民族意识生动又深刻的体现,其自身魅力足以令人咀嚼回味。尽管如此,二者还是有区别的:谚语大多形成于民间,多与生产、生活相关,是民间集体创作的产物,难以找寻作者与出处,而格言则多是主流文化的反映,大多源自

哲人、智者或其他名人的要言和著作。因此,本书原则上将有出处可考的条目视为格言。

本书的读者对象为英语专业高年级学生、大学及中学英语教师、中高级汉英翻译人员和热爱汉语的外国学习者。为此,本书在经营筹划上煞费周章,参考、借鉴了国内外相关辞书、中国典籍和其他作品及其英语译本280多部,披沙拣金,精选了上自先秦下迄当代的中国谚语和格言约6000条,内容涵盖政治、经济、军事、文化、修身与治学等方方面面,大多具有积极或深刻的内涵。作为一本意在为文化传译提供参考便利的专门性语文词典,本书也酌情收录了少数流传广久但带点宿命论色彩或反映旧意识的条目。本书的谚语条目较多采撷自拙编《汉语熟语英译词典》,格言条目则部分选自我和尹海波合编的《中国历代名人名言(双语对照)》(译林出版社,2009),但在斟酌英译时,更多地考虑了语义辨析、语法结构、文化差异、修辞色彩、语用效果等因素,付出了更多的劳动。在本书诞生之际,谨向有关的作者、译者、出版机构等致以诚挚的谢意。

译文是汉外词典的灵魂,译文质量决定了这类词典的使用价值,本书也不例外。书中不少条目的译文是反复比较多个正规出版的译本后甄选出来的,参考价值可谓不低。有些译文来自百多年前的译本,措辞和标点可能与现在有一定差异,在未影响语法正确性的前提下,大都尊重原译。书中还有部分条目译文由我自己倾力推敲,自译或改译他人译文而来,其间不乏灵感闪现的东西。唯恐自己的译事水准有限,我又特请专家对这部分译文重点审读把关,以求用流畅的现代英语明白、准确、简洁地传译条目。视需要和可能,译文后配以贴切浅显的例证,且只用书证,全书无一自撰例证。有些格言和谚语在流传过程中表述形式有所改变,因此条目与最原始的出处可能不完全一致(多见于出自古文的条目),例证也有不与条目字字相符的情形。

书中有些条目意思与表达方式都比较相似。鉴于呈现前人佳译是本书主旨之一,因此这类条目只要入选的译文不同,均单独立条并设参见。为了表达对前人成果的尊重,本书尽量为条目、例证及二者的译文注明了出处和译者;译者不可得时,则注出处的主要责任者;二者均不可得时,则

(Jennifer Fawson)女士,诸位之帮助均使我铭感无极。

在编纂过程中,镇江思考乐教育培训中心负责人尹海波先生不仅提供相关资料最多,而且还协助查阅资料、制作卡片和部分校对工作,并以丰富的学养和对文学经典的热爱,不时对初稿提出自己的真知灼见。陈娟女士倾心负责编务工作,而尹红女士承担了大部分录入和注音工作。北京工商大学周解机先生利用国家图书馆查阅并提供资料,为提高书稿质量用力甚勤。以满腔热情帮助查阅资料和注音的还有无锡太湖学院教师孙敏硕士、中航工业西航商泰进出口有限公司王莉硕士和南京市广播电视大学何绮老师。提供英文资料的还有:2009年访学伯明翰大学的朱文信博士和陈艳波博士,现在该校攻读博士学位的毛中婉女士和2009年在英国达勒姆大学做访问学者的郑军副教授。南京金陵科技学院何文斌副教授承担了部分注音和校对工作,南京市建邺高级中学高级教师黄永华女士也参与了一部分注音工作。后期的校对工作,特别是在梳理条目收录形式和出处及处理审稿质疑方面,在读硕士许霞作为助手配合良好。责任编辑潘敏女士和章骏德先生精心审校,付出了很多心血。借此机会,谨向他们表示由衷的谢意。

同时还要感谢伯明翰大学词典中心给我访学时提供的方便,感谢江苏科技大学校、院有关领导的热情鼓励 and 大力支持,感谢江苏科技大学科技处为项目提供科研经费。“得贤内助,非细事也。”向辛勤操持家务还兼查阅中文资料、使我能把大量心血投入心爱的词典编纂事业的内子何重玲女士,表示深深的谢意。由于项目较大,个人学识、精力有限,书中的遗误和谋划不周之处恐难避免,恭请诸位方家和读者不吝教正。

尹邦彦

注“佚名译”。由于本书所用参考文献并非全是直接文献,因此书中所注出处也可能是间接来源。

注释工作是同研究工作相结合的。本书注释根据权威工具书而作,但细心的读者会发现有些前人的译文理解与此不完全相符。这正好反映出翻译的灵活、译者的见仁见智和上下文对翻译的制约,有兴趣的读者不妨再做研究。

古人云:“人生德业成就,少朋友不得。”本书能够顺利完成,有赖于国内外学术界朋友的鼎力支持。饮水思源,缘木思本,首先要感谢前全国高等学校大学外语教学研究会会长杨治中教授,他是引我进入词典编纂殿门的第一人。30年前我揣着一本自编的、内部发行的《汉语成语英译》小册子登门请益,他不但没有取笑这个“丑小鸭”,而且热情鼓励我以“板凳一坐十年冷”的精神坚持到底,后来还担任拙编《汉英常用熟语词典》全稿审校工作,为今天这本词典打下了较好的基础。1993至1994年我访学澳大利亚国立大学语言学系时,精通汉语的安迪·基尔帕特里克(Andy Kirpatrick)教授担任导师,具体指导我做“汉英谚语对比研究与翻译”这个课题,经他修改的多条谚语英译实例,现在也派上了用处,令人感佩不已。2009年9月至11月,经前欧洲词典中心主任赖因哈德·哈特曼(Reinhard Hartmann)教授推荐,我获英国伯明翰大学词典研究中心邀请,担任客座研究学者,为本书广搜资料,请教专家,获益匪浅。哈特曼教授对我勉励有加,还慨然赐序。赐序的还有中国翻译协会名誉理事、中国辞书学会副会长、博士生导师张柏然教授。他们两位对送审的样稿从宏观上提出极为宝贵的中肯意见,在此谨向他们深致谢忱。

此外,参加具体审校工作的有:前大连外国语学院院长、前中国典籍英译研究会会长、博士生导师汪榕培教授,中国辞书学会双语辞典专业委员会副主任、博士生导师魏向清教授,中国英汉语对比研究会理事、南京大学外国语学院博士生导师柯平教授,华东师范大学对外汉语学院主任、博士生导师傅惠生教授和该校美籍专家彼得·克里斯蒂安松(Peter Christianson)先生,江苏科技大学美籍教师基尔·史密斯(Keir Smith)先生,英国学者西蒙·汤姆森(Simon Thomson)先生和珍妮弗·法森

## 使用说明

1. 本词典词条主要由汉语条目、类别标注、汉语拼音和英语译文构成。视需要和可能,词条还可能包括后列板块的一种或几种:出处、条目含义或用法提示、汉英对照书证、注释以及参见。

汉语条目置于鱼尾号“【】”中,出处置于圆括号“( )”中,含义或用法提示置于方括号“[ ]”中,书证以仿宋体汉语和斜体英语表示,注释以“NOTE”引出,参见以“SEE ALSO”引出。

2. 本词典词条按汉语条目汉字的拼音排序。同音字按笔画排序,笔画多的在前,少的在后。笔画相同时,按汉字起笔笔形横、竖、撇、点、折的次序排列。首字相同时,则以第二字按此规则排列,以此类推。

3. 本词典条目汉字按单字注音,只注本音,不注变音。

4. 条目对应英语译文不止一条时,若有语义大致相当的英语谚语,则英语谚语放在首位;其他译文则视作者的评断,较优者置前。各译文间以双竖线“||”分隔。英语译文首字母大小写若与转行有关,则以斜线“/”标示转行处。

5. 出处中的近代和现代人物一般不注朝代或年代信息。

6. 条目或条目的分句在意思和表达上都相近时,若对应英语译文不同,则多互设参见。例如:

【爱而知其恶,憎而知其善】格言 ài ér zhī qí è, zēng ér zhī qí shàn (先秦《礼记·曲礼上》)

For those you love, you should also realize their demerits; while for those you detest, you should also realize their merits. (安增才译)

NOTE 恶: shortcomings or weak points 善: strong points

SEE ALSO 〔恶而知其美,好而知其恶〕

【恶而知其美,好而知其恶】格言 wù ér zhī qí měi, hào ér zhī qí è (明·冯梦龙《警世通言》)

If you are disgusted with someone, you must know his advantages; if you are fond of someone, you must know his disadvantages. (改译)

**SEE ALSO** 《爱而知其恶，憎而知其善》

但当一条的译文完全包含在另一条的译文中时，译文更丰富或完整的一条不回参译文较少的一条。例如：

【行不信者名必耗】格言 xíng bù xìn zhě míng bì hào (先秦《墨子·修身》)

A man who always breaks his promise is bound to lose his reputation. (汪榕培、王宏译)

**SEE ALSO** 《原浊者流不清，行不信者名必耗》

【原浊者流不清，行不信者名必耗】格言 yuán zhuó zhě liú bù qīng, xíng bù xìn zhě míng bì hào (先秦《墨子·修身》)

As a river that has a dirty source cannot have a clear flow, so a man who always breaks his promise is bound to lose his reputation. (汪榕培、王宏译)

**NOTE** 原: the same as 源, source of water



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