

国学经典·处世三奇书



汉英对照

CHINESE-ENGLISH

FIRESIDE TALK  
AT NIGHT

围炉夜话

[清]王永彬 / 著  
周文标 / 英译  
周文标 应佳鑫 / 译注



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WEI LU YEHUA : HAN-YING DUIZHAO

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## 走向世界的明清小品 ——汉英对照本“处世三奇书”序

The Sketches of the Ming and Qing Dynasties Going Abroad  
— Preface to the “Three Canons of Personal Cultivation”

赵丽宏  
Zhao Lihong

“处世三奇书”是中国古典文学的汉英对照本。在中国传统文化的出版物中，这是一套体例新颖的双语读本。这个读本，不仅向读者展现了中国古典文学一方迷人的天地，也为对中国文化有兴趣的英语读者提供了一个学习的园圃。读者可以由中文而英文，也可以由英文而中文。研习英文的中国读者，学习中文的外国读者，都可以在其中获得阅读的乐趣。

“Three Canons of Personal Cultivation” is a Chinese-English version of Chinese classical literature. In the publications of Chinese traditional culture, this is a set of bilingual readings with new style. It not only shows the charming world of Chinese classics, but also provides a learning garden for English readers who are interested in Chinese culture. Readers can read the canons in two ways, either from Chinese to English or from English to Chinese. Both Chinese readers who are learning English and foreign readers who are learning Chinese are enabled to get the pleasure of reading them.

《菜根谭》《小窗幽记》和《围炉夜话》是明清时期流传下来的三本以修身养性、劝善励志为中心话题的清言体小品集，作者分别是洪应明、陈继儒和王永彬。因其在同类书中出众的地位和影响力，被世人誉为“处世三奇书”，颇受文人墨客和普通百姓的喜爱。

*The Roots of Wisdom, Meditative Notes in Solitude* and *Fireside Talk at Night* are the three famous books successively appearing in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), with subjects mainly on moral cultivation and inspirational exhortations on doing good and working hard, and therefore known as the “Three Canons of Personal Cultivation” out of their unparalleled status in books of the same kind and influence among the intellectuals and ordinary people.

华夏文化的发展，每个历史时期都有创造性的文学形态，并在各自领域中登峰造极，成为一个时代的文化标记。明清两朝也不例外，在前后五个多世纪里，小说显然是明清时期的一个主要文化特色，其次就是那些饱蕴着智慧才情、展示着世态风情的辑录和承载着先人学说和思想的格言体小品集了。通过这些作品，我们可以清楚地了解到：优秀的文学家，是中国传统文化的脊梁，他们那些形诸文字的精神与情感结晶是中华文明最有生命力的一部分。世风日下依然能倡导并坚持孝悌，物欲横流依然能淡泊名利，仕途得意依然能心存忧患意识，遭遇不测依然能泰然处之，国家危亡依然能竭尽忠诚，温饱之余依然能不忘劳作之苦，生活清贫依然能寄情山水，凡此种种，都是这些优秀文人留给后世的宝贵精神财富。

In the long history of China, cultural development of each era has its own creative literary form and insurmountable height, thus becoming a cultural mark of the time, the same those of the dynasties of Ming and Qing. During more than five centuries, the novels and fictions are of course the primary literary identity of the dynasties, and the collections brimming with human wits and revealing the ways of the world and the compilations of previous classical works, ancestors' quotes and their developed writings must be the next. Through these works and writings, we see clearly that the excellent literati are really the backbone of Chinese classical culture, and that the crystallization of spirit and emotion they created in words is one of the most vivid parts of Chinese civilization. As the breeders of the civilization of that times, even when the general moves were getting worse and worse they would remain faithful to filial piety and fraternal duty;

even when in an acquisitive time they would remain indifferent to fame and wealth; even when content with their official careers they would remain preoccupied with the misery consciousness; even when coming across unexpected occurrences they would remain unruffled and take them calmly; even when the state was in peril they would remain loyal; even when having enough food and clothing they would remain concerned about the pain of labor; even when living a poor life they would remain disposed to bask in the poetic mood between mountains and rivers. — All these refined qualities are the precious spiritual wealth the excellent literati handed down to us later generations.

“处世三奇书”所收纳的短句小品均为清言体，风格相似，读起来朗朗上口，既有诗歌的韵律又有散文的流畅。这些编辑成集、主题鲜明的短句小品，是被柔美化了的格言，似诗非诗，似文非文，是小品文的一种，形式上是介于箴言警句和散文之间的文体，通常由前后对仗或排比的两句或两段组成，以达到均衡与和谐之美。由清言汇集而成的书籍叫清言集或清言体小品集，有分编和不分编两种，题材自由，体例松散，所收清言小品数量少则近百则、多则数百则不等，每则小品的篇幅少则七八个字，多则逾百。内容涵盖古贤经典和民俗文化，其中尤以演绎儒道释三家之言为多，形式短小精致，文风飘逸清雅，具有“小品中的小品（林语堂语）”的美称。

The short sketches contained in the “Three Canons of Personal Cultivation” are all with distinctive themes, clear-spoken, similar in style, easy to read, and full of the rhythm of poetry and fluency of prose. So far as the form is concerned, these sketches belong to a kind of maxims literarily beautified with a manner of seemingly like but actually not a poem or seemingly

like but actually not a prose, normally composed of two sentences or two paragraphs adorned with antitheses, couplets and other rhetoric devices to achieve the beauty of balance and harmony, and with its writing style lying between maxim and prose. The collections with such writings are called clear-and-upright sketches, usually there being two ways of compilation, classified or non-classified, either freely with subject matter or loose in layout, in which the pieces collected vary from nearly one hundred to several hundreds, and Chinese characters used in different pieces vary from seven or eight to more than a hundred, and the contents arranged cover Chinese classics and folk culture, mostly related to the sayings derived from the theories of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. They are short in length, vivid in format and elegant in expression, and therefore praised by Mr. Lin Yutang (a famous modern Chinese scholar) as “a mini-sketch of sketches”.

“处世三奇书”的可贵之处在于：三位作者皆以其丰富的学养、渊博的知识、明敏的思辨、冷隽的文字、促人深省的做诫、益人心智的启迪，以及豁达如禅的觉醒，从古贤经典和民俗文化中撷取菁华但又不简单地复述这些原文，而是在赋予它们一定的情景衬托后将其锻造一个个既养眼又养心的段子，于寥寥隽语中将经典所含的意旨优雅地展现在读者面前，充分诠释了中国传统文人的文化底蕴和人文情怀，为世人展现了一幅古人修身养性的清晰图景，让读者在诵读这些金科玉律时多了一份愉悦感和亲近感。

The praiseworthiness of the “Three Canons of Personal Cultivation” is as obvious as this: instead of simply quoting the original sayings, the three authors, by applying their rich learning and cultivation, profound knowledge, dialectical thinking, grave

and stern expressions, thought-provoking warning, meditative enlightenment and self-awareness, turned out their sketches in the least paradoxes to exemplify the extracts from the classical works and folk culture, and gave prominence to the pieces well matched with relevant scene, sight, circumstances, background or landscape, thus achieving the effect of being pleasant to readers' eyes and minds. Their endeavors fully annotate the cultural deposits and humanistic sensibilities of the traditional literati, and thus enable us to have the opportunity to see a clear picture of the personal cultivation of the ancients, and make us feel more pleasure and intimacy than ever in reading the famous aphorisms of ancient classics.

十年前，周文标先生在上海人民出版社出版发行《菜根谭》汉英对照本时，我曾为他写过一篇序。据我所知，十余年来，他一直不懈地致力于用英文翻译和编撰中国传统典籍，并在呈现方式上做了积极的探索。这次他与百花洲文艺出版社共同成套推出“处世三奇书”汉英对照本，足见他这些年在这方面所倾注的时间和精力。周文标先生是上海市作家协会的会员，我为我们作协有这么一位孜孜不倦向世界推广中国传统文化的同仁感到骄傲。衷心祝贺他的“处世三奇书”汉英对照本成功出版，这是明清小品走向世界的一次积极尝试。期待他有更多新著在不久的将来问世。

10 years ago, when Mr. Zhou Wenbiao's *The Roots of Wisdom* in Chinese-English version was about to be published by Shanghai People's Publishing House, I wrote a preface for him. As I know, Mr. Zhou has been unceasingly spending most of his spare time on translating and compiling Chinese classics in English for more than ten years, and has made an active scrutiny into the modes of presentation. This time, he and Baihuazhou Literature and Art Press jointly plan to issue the "Three Canons of Personal Cultivation" in the form of three-in-one packing, which shows how much time and energy he has devoted in this respect. Mr. Zhou is a member of Shanghai Writers Association, and I am proud to have such a colleague who has been working so tirelessly to introduce Chinese traditional culture to the world. Here I'd like to extend my hearty congratulations on his successful publication of the Chinese-English

“Three Canons of Personal Cultivation”, thinking that it is a positive attempt for the sketches of the Ming and Qing Dynasties to go abroad. Furthermore, I’ll look forward to seeing his more new works to be published in the near future.

是为序。

It’s my pleasure to write this preface as above.

2018年7月31日于四步斋

Four-Pace Study in Shanghai

July 31st, 2018

## 序

Introduction to *Fireside Talk at Night*

周文标

Zhou Wenbiao

寒夜围炉，田家妇子之乐也。顾篝灯坐对，或默然无一言，或嘻然言非所宜言，皆无所谓乐，不将虚此良夜乎？余识字农人也。岁晚务闲，家人聚处，相与烧煨山芋，心有所得，辄述诸口，命儿辈缮写存之，题曰围炉夜话。但其中皆随得随录，语无伦次浅辞芜，多非信心之论，特以课家人消永夜耳，不足为外人道也。倘蒙有道君子惠而正之，则幸甚。

It is quite a pleasure for the members of a peasant household to sit by the fireside on winter night. Face to face, with eyes gazing at the jack-o'-lantern, they now stay in silence by saying nothing at all, now talk about something inappropriate at ordinary time in a way of laughing or joking, only for the purpose of amusing themselves and not spending the good night in dullness. I'm in fact a farmer of literacy. By the end of the year, when nothing is left to be undone, all my family would get together to roast sweet potato for each other; and in case I am seized by sudden inspiration, I would relate it orally and let my sons to record it, and eventually creating a book titled *Fireside Talk at Night*. Honestly, what contained in this book are some of my random talks and incoherent speeches without any decoration, many of them are the things I myself am not so confident of, merely for the family to while away the hours in the long winter, not worthy of any attention of outsiders. Nevertheless, it would still be my great honor if someday my book can luckily be rectified by a man of virtue and learning.

以上这段文字传闻是清代文人王永彬为其自撰的《围炉夜话》所写的序，寥寥数语勾勒出了作者著书时的生活背景和心境，使读罢该序的人即刻就会有详读其书的欲望。

The above lines are said to be the preface written by Wang Yongbin himself, a literary man of the Qing Dynasty, for his book of *Fireside Talk at Night*. With words as brief as that, it roughs out the author's living condition and status of the mind in the time he wrote this book, giving birth to the ones the desire to read the whole text immediately after they go over the preface.

王永彬（1792年—1869年），字宜山，人称宜山先生，王氏后人称其宜山公，一生经历了乾隆、嘉庆、道光、咸丰、同治五个王朝，享年七十有八。他不喜科举，很晚才恩获贡生科名，为修职郎，参与编修同治版本《枝江县志》，担任“分修”，后候选教谕。因深受儒家思想熏陶，在教学中，先令学生修身，次教其治学，不以科举应试为唯一目的，并能身先士卒，修养己身而后教。同时对于乡人见善必赏；见过必反复规劝，一定要使其彻底改正。他涉猎广泛，在著述授业之余，经史、诸子、书法、医学皆习，尤好吟诗。其同郡文友王柏心为其撰写《勅授修职郎宜山王公传》记载：“公著述外，尤好吟咏，与高安周柳溪、彝陵（夷陵）罗梦生结诗社，号吟坛三友。”

Wang Yongbin (1792-1869), styled Yishan and so called Mr. Yishan by the locals and esteemed as the Reverend Mr. Yishan by his descendants, went through five reigns of the Qing Dynasty in life, namely Qianlong, Jiaqing, Daoguang, Xianfeng and Tongzhi, and lived to the age of 78. He personally disliked the system of imperial examination and therefore was very late recommended as a tribute student and then nominated as an assistant editor in charge of compiling *Zhijiang County Annals*, and given the teacher's qualification afterwards. Deeply influenced by Confucianism, he adhered to an idea in his teaching that moral cultivation should go ahead of cultural learning, and never thought the imperial examination was the only purpose of study. Meanwhile, he always paid high attention to cultivating himself

when performing education and thus set a very good example for his disciples. In his hometown, he often rewarded those who had done good and more often admonished those who had errors and persisted in doing so till they had corrected them. Besides writing and teaching, he also spent much time to read a big variety of books including Confucian classics, historical records, philosophical writings and miscellaneous works, especially fond of poem chanting. Wang Baixin, one of the author's pen friends of the same prefecture, recorded it in his *Life of the Reverend Mr. Yishan, a Conferred Assistant Editor*, saying, "Apart from authoring books, the Reverend Mr. Yishan had a special hobby in poem chanting, and together with Zhou Liuxi of Gao'an and Luo Mengsheng of Yi Ling, formed a poets' club named the 'Three Companions of Poetic Circle'."

王永彬是个崇尚儒学的学者，修为奉行“立德、立功、立言”三不朽理念，所著《围炉夜话》凡184则，为“处世三奇书”的第三部。该书儒家色彩浓重，十分注重和强调儒教所倡导的、更具人生要义的耕读文化，对类似“竹林七贤”的玄学新风以及历朝历代离群索居、遗世独立的隐士做派多有不屑和针砭，个别篇幅甚至还有蔑视和贬低道佛墨杨四家的倾向，学术立场和意见不可谓不分明。但是尽管如此，书中涉及道德、修身、读书、安贫乐道、教子、忠孝、勤俭等多方面的锦言佳句却丝毫未减作者的智慧和人性光芒，对当代读者仍有颇多启迪。

Wang Yongbin advocated Confucianism all his life and pursued the realization of immortality in cultivating virtue, making achievements and establishing arguments. His book of *Fireside Talk at Night* is chronologically listed the third one of the "Three Canons of Personal Cultivation", containing 184 pieces of

sketches in all. With heavy Confucianist overtones, the book he wrote especially emphasizes the concept of farming and reading proposed and considered much more important than anything else in life by Confucians. It disdains and criticizes at the same time the metaphysics of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove and the style and methods of those solitary recluses in the past dynasties, and even shows little inclination to agree with the views of Taoism, Buddhism, Moism and Yang Zhu in certain sketches, whereby we know clearly his academic position and opinion. But even so, the brilliance of his wisdom and humanity in his sayings about morality, personal cultivation, learning, contentment in poverty and devotion to the Tao, family education, loyalty and filiality, hardworking and practicing thriftiness is in no way diminished, and there are still many enlightenments for contemporary readers.

2017年9月于上海

Shanghai, China  
September, 2017

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37. Failure can make a comeback.
38. 生命有穷期 学问无止境 /042  
38. Life must have its end while knowledge has no limit.
39. 做事要问心无愧 创业需量力而行 /043  
39. Things need to be done with a clear conscience; Entrepreneurship needs to be done according to one's ability.
40. 气性乖张无足取 言语矫饰属可疑 /044  
40. It is undesirable to be eccentric and questionable.
41. 守拙可取 交友宜慎 /045  
41. It's quite advisable to remain free from ambition and careful in making friends.
42. 放眼读书 立跟做人 /046  
42. Be open-minded when reading; stand firm to be a man.
43. 持身贵严 处世贵谦 /047  
43. Solemnness is valuable in conducting oneself, so is modesty in dealing with the world.
44. 善用其财 无愧其禄 /048  
44. It will bring you no shame if you can make a good use of your salary.
45. 交益友 立品行 /049
45. It's better to make helpful friends and behave yourself properly.
46. 君子如神 小人如鬼 /050  
46. The man of virtue is like a deity and a ghost, the man of no virtue.
47. 严以律己 宽以待人 /051  
47. Be strict with yourself and lenient with others.
48. 守口如瓶 持身若璧 /052  
48. Keep your mouth as tight as a bottle and be yourself as pure as jade.
49. 不较横逆 安守贫穷 /053  
49. Overlook the importunate persons and be content with poverty.
50. 白云山岳皆文章 黄花松柏乃吾师 /055  
50. White clouds and high mountains are all good texts; chrysanthemums and pines are my examples.
51. 行善自乐 奸谋自坏 /056  
51. The person who is willing to help others entertains himself; the fellow who hatches a plot can be ruined by his own plot.
52. 以人为镜 防微杜渐 /057  
52. To practice precaution, take human as mirror.
53. 谨守规模 必无大错 /058  
53. Act according to the public conventions and one will make no big mistake.
54. 耐得住烦 吃得起亏 /059  
54. Be patient in everything and ready to suffer losses at any time.
55. 习读书业 知读书乐 /060  
55. Taking learning as a lifetime hobby, one should know the pleasure in it.

56. 知己不足 学业日进 /061

56. Only when you are aware of your shortcomings can you study hard and make progress every day.

57. 敬人者人恒敬之 靠人者莫若靠自己 /062

57. To respect others is to respect yourself; to rely on others is no better than to rely on yourself.

58. 学长者助人之道 识君子修己之功 /063

58. Learn the way of helping others from the elders and from the men of virtue, the way of moral cultivation.

59. 奢侈恠吝俱可败家 庸愚精明都能覆事 /064

59. Luxury is enough to dissipate a family, so is stinginess; stupidity is enough to spoil a thing, so is astuteness.

60. 安守本业 不合浊流 /065

60. Do your own business and never go with the turbid current.

61. 衣食比下有余 学业比上不足 /066

61. It's not desirable to be worse off than some in study and better off than many in daily life.

62. 富不骄纵 贫不改志 /067

62. Don't be arrogant when you are rich; don't change your mind whether you are poor.

63. 富贵要谦恭 衣禄需俭省 /069

63. Be modest when getting rich and powerful, and frugal when carefree of food and clothing.

64. 作善降祥 不善降殃 /070

64. Good luck will call on you if you show mercy while bad luck will do so if you do evil.

65. 和平处事 正直居心 /071

65. Live peacefully with the world and be fair and upright yourself.

66. 君子拯救尘世 圣贤关心民生 /072

66. It's a duty for a man of virtue to save the world and take care about the people, for a sage.

67. 偷安败家 争货必伤 /074

67. Indulgence in ease and comfort is to ruin the family; scrambling for family properties is to injure the kindred.

68. 沉实谦恭兴业 忠厚勤俭兴家 /075

68. Being steady and modest makes a business prosperous; being honest and diligent makes a family flourish.

69. 莲朝开而暮合 草冬枯而春荣 /076

69. Lotus flowers bloom in the morning and shut in the evening; grasses flourish in spring and wither in winter.

70. 自伐自矜当戒 我自求仁求义 /077

70. Guard against the habit of boasting and cultivate yourself with benevolence and righteousness.

71. 贫寒更须读书 富贵不忘稼穡 /078

71. Study harder when poor and don't forget the hardship of farmwork when rich.

72. 俭可养廉 静能生悟 /079

72. Thrift helps to nourish the character of incorruptibility; quiet helps to breed the sense of the world.

73. 助人在于有心 虑事在于精详 /080

73. Helping others is all about the heart; considering a thing is all about the accurateness and carefulness.

74. 常怀振奋心 多说切直话 /081

74. Always keep in mind your lofty aspirations and speak as earnestly as you can.