



SELECTED WRITINGS  
FROM  
A BOOK TO BE BURNT

# 焚书选

(汉英对照)



[明]李贽 著  
余军 王朝晖 注译

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自中国文化“走出去”战略实施以来，发展文化产业，推进中华文明国际传播，提升文化软实力，已成为热潮。中华文化源远流长，异彩纷呈，借“一带一路”东风，扬文化出海之帆，可谓集合天时地利，处于文化发展与文化传播的绝佳时期。

闽南文化典籍是中华文化典籍的重要组成部分，内容丰富，涵盖了哲学、历史学、军事学、地理学、文学、艺术、科学技术等各个领域，在中国学术史上具有重大的价值和意义。在哲学方面，晋江李贽著有《焚书》《续焚书》《藏书》《续藏书》等一系列哲学著作<sup>①</sup>。

李贽是明代杰出的思想家，其思想兼容儒、释、道三教，但同时他又追求独立、崇尚真我，充满叛逆精神，被称为“东方布鲁诺”。对李贽的著作进行选译，于闽南文化的海外传播具有较大意义。《焚书》是研究李贽生平和思想的重要著作，亦是影响力最大的一部作品。因此，我

<sup>①</sup>胡沧泽. 闽南文化典籍的抢救、整理与出版 [J]. 闽台文化交流, 2008 (02): 25-27.

们从《焚书》中选译了32篇文章，涵盖自序、书信、史论、杂文等，希望让国内外更多读者有机会了解李贽的思想。

英译工作对我们来说是一个挑战，因为李贽的文章涉及较多思想文化术语和典故，需要认真研读和理解，并在译文中予以准确传达。同时，李贽的文字风格也十分独特，或诙谐，或严肃，或通俗，或古奥，时而嬉笑怒骂，时而庄重雅致。英译时尽量保持原文风格，但为了英文的可读性，亦要做不少变通。译无定法，译事艰辛，一字之译，或旬日踟蹰，其中甘苦，唯译者自知。

本书获厦门理工学院外国语学院资助，在此致谢！

希望本书能引起更多人对于李贽作品以及闽南文化翻译与传播的关注。由于水平有限，不当之处在所难免，诚挚地希望广大读者批评指正。

余 军 王朝晖

2022年12月于厦门

## Translators' Preface

The development of cultural industries, internationalization, and the enhancement of the cultural soft power of China have all become hot topics following the implementation of the “Going Global” strategy of Chinese culture, which is rich in history and full of splendor. With the wind of the Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese culture is sailing overseas in the right place at the right time, seizing the best opportunity for cultural development and communication.

Minnan cultural classics, an important part of Chinese cultural classics, are rich in content in philosophy, history, military science, geography, literature, art, science and technology and other fields, with great value and significance in Chinese academic history. In terms of philosophy, Li Zhi, a native of Jinjiang, wrote a series of works, such as *A Book to Be Burnt*, *Another Book to Be Burnt*, *A Book to Be Hidden*, and *Another Book to Be Hidden*<sup>①</sup>.

As an outstanding thinker in the Ming Dynasty, Li Zhi was influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. He was a rebel with an independent spirit in pursuit of the true self, and, as such, he was called the “Oriental Bruno”. The translation of his works is of great

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<sup>①</sup>Hu Cangze. The Rescue, Editing and Publishing of Minnan Cultural Classics[J]. Fujian-Taiwan Cultural Exchange, 2008(02): 25-27.

significance to the overseas promotion of Minnan culture in general, and *A Book to Be Burnt* is an important work, also the most influential one, with regard to Li Zhi's life and thought in particular. Therefore, we have selected 32 essays from it for translation, covering the author's preface, letters, readings of history, and miscellaneous essays, in the hope that more readers at home and abroad will have the opportunity to understand Li Zhi's thought.

It is a challenge for us to render Li Zhi's writings into English since they involve terms in Chinese thought and culture as well as allusions, which must be carefully studied, understood, and accurately conveyed in the translation. Meanwhile, Li Zhi's writing style is very unique, varying from witty to serious, from colloquial to ancient, sometimes playful and sharp, sometimes solemn and elegant. In the English translation, efforts are made to preserve the original style, but adaptations have also been made for readability. For translation, an arduous task, there is no fixed method, and it may take days to choose a word, of which only the translator is aware of the joy and pain.

We wish to express our gratitude to the School of Foreign Languages of Xiamen University of Technology for funding the publication.

This book aims to increase public awareness of Li Zhi's works and the translation and promotion of Minnan culture. Readers are sincerely invited to point out any mistakes due to our limitations.

**Yu Jun, Wang Zhaohui**

**Dec. 2022, Xiamen**

# 自序

自有书四种：一曰《藏书》，上下数千年是非，未易肉眼视也<sup>①</sup>，故欲藏之，言当藏于山中以待后世子云也<sup>②</sup>。一曰《焚书》，则答知己书问，所言颇切近世学者膏肓<sup>③</sup>，既中其痼疾<sup>④</sup>，则必欲杀我矣，故欲焚之，言当焚而弃之，不可留也。《焚书》之后又有别录，名为《老苦》<sup>⑤</sup>，虽同是《焚书》，而另为卷目，则欲焚者焚此矣。独《说书》四十四篇<sup>⑥</sup>，真为可喜，发圣言之精蕴，阐日用之平常，可使读者一过目便知入圣之无难，出世之非假也<sup>⑦</sup>。信如传注，则

①佛经中有五眼之说，谓肉眼（Physical eyes）、天眼（Heavenly eyes）、慧眼（Wisdom eyes）、法眼（Dharma eyes）及佛眼（Buddha eyes）；肉眼为肉身之眼，也泛指俗眼。“未易肉眼视也”，意为“不是轻易能被常人认识的”。将“肉眼”意译为 common eyes。

②“言当”一句源于《史记》之《太史公自序》：“……藏之名山。副在京师，俟后世圣人君子。”子云，即西汉后期辞赋家扬雄（前53—18），字子云。此处以“后世子云”指后世圣人君子，有引为知音之意，意译为 appreciative readers of later generations。

③“切近世学者膏肓”，意译为 criticizing to the point the chronic malady of today's scholars。

④“中其痼疾”略译为 thus，以避免重复。

⑤老苦：佛教用语，为“四苦”（生、老、病、死）之一。《老苦》为一辑有关佛学的文章，译为 *Misery of the Old Age*，也可译为 *Sufferings of the Old Age*。

⑥《说书》，又称《李氏说书》，为李贽对“四书”的评注，共四十四篇，已失传，译为 *On the Four Books*。

⑦“入圣之无难，出世之非假也”，意为“达到圣人的境界并不难，超脱凡世也很容易”，“无难”与“非假”合译为 not hard，以避免重复。“入圣”译为 progress towards sagehood，较 become a sage 更贴近原意。

是欲入而闭之门，非以诱人，实以绝人矣<sup>①</sup>。乌乎可！其为说，原于看朋友作时文<sup>②</sup>，故《说书》亦佑时文，然不佑者故多也<sup>③</sup>。

今既刻《说书》，故再《焚书》亦刻，再《藏书》中一二论著亦刻<sup>④</sup>，焚者不复焚，藏者不复藏矣。或曰：“诚如是，不宜复名《焚书》也。不几于名之不可言，言之不顾行乎？”噫噫！余安能知，子又安能知？夫欲焚者，谓其逆人之耳也<sup>⑤</sup>；欲刻者，谓其入人之心也。逆耳者必杀<sup>⑥</sup>，是可惧也。然余年六十四矣，倘一入人之心，则知我者或庶几乎！余幸其庶几也，故刻之。

卓吾老子题湖上之聚佛楼<sup>⑦</sup>。

①“信如”意为“假如真的如……”，“传注”指儒家学者特别是朱熹对儒家经典的注释，李贽对其持批判态度。该句意为“假如真的如传注所说那样（去理解，去做），那就是想要进门（指理解圣人经典的真意）的时候，门却关上了，那就不是引导人，而是将人隔绝在外了”，译为 Undoubtedly, when Confucian scholars comment on the classics, they are closing the door to sagehood on those who wish to enter. It is not to enlighten people, but to exclude them. 该译文做了变通处理，用 undoubtedly 将原文假设语气转为肯定语气，效果更佳。

②时文：旧时对科举应试文的通称，此处指明代科举应试的八股文。“八股文”直译为 eight-legged essay。

③佑，帮助之意。“亦佑时文，然不佑者故多也”，意为“对八股文写作有帮助，但无助于八股文写作的地方也很多”，译为 beneficial to eight-legged essay writing, but there are in this regard plenty of what may not be of much use, 使用 what 结构，较之名词+定语从句结构更为简练地道。

④“亦刻”易误解为“也刻印了”，但据查，《自序》作于明万历十八年（1590），《藏书》刻印于万历二十七年（1599），故“亦刻”意为“也将刻印”，两处“亦刻”分别译为 will be published shortly 及 will also be released。

⑤“逆人之耳”译为 ear-grating, 较之 grating to people's ears 简练。

⑥“逆耳者必杀”，可指“逆耳之人”，也可指“逆耳之言”，译为 those “ear-grating”，兼具二者之意。

⑦卓吾老子：李贽号卓吾，故自称卓吾老子，音译为 Zhuowu，“老子”略去不译。湖：指龙湖，又称龙潭，在今湖北麻城，译为 Longtan Lake。

## Author's Preface

I have written four books. The first is *A Book to Be Hidden*, which chronicles the rights and wrongs of thousands of years past and not easily recognized by common eyes, so this book of mine is meant to be buried deep in the mountain for appreciative readers of later generations to discover. The second is *A Book to Be Burnt*, a collection of letters written in response to the questions posed by “soul pals”, criticizing to the point the chronic malady of today’s scholars. Thus, there are, to be sure, people who want me dead, so the book itself is meant to be burned and banned from the world. Besides *A Book to Be Burnt*, I also have a collection of essays named *Misery of the Old Age*, which, though organized in a separate volume, can be considered a component of the former work—those who want to burn my writings can do so with both books. Only *On the Four Books*<sup>①</sup>, a work of forty-four essays, is truly gratifying. These writings reveal the profound insights of sages and the wisdom for daily life. Reading them teaches that it is not hard to progress towards sagehood and leave the world behind. Undoubtedly, when Confucian scholars comment on the classics, they are closing

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①The Four Books refers to *Analects*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great Learning*, and *Mencius*.

the door to sagehood on those who wish to enter. It is not to enlighten people, but to exclude them. How intolerable it is! The inspiration for *On the Four Books* was the sight of my friends writing eight-legged essays in preparation for the imperial examination. That being said, this book is also beneficial to eight-legged essay writing<sup>①</sup>, but there are in this regard plenty of what may not be of much use.

Now *On the Four Books* has already been printed; *A Book to Be Burnt* will be published shortly; and then some parts of *A Book to Be Hidden* will also be released. What is meant to be burned is not burned, and what is meant to be hidden is not hidden. Perhaps someone will say, “In that case, your work should no longer be labeled *A Book to Be Burnt*. Otherwise, won’t there be a discrepancy between the name and the reality, as well as between words and actions?” Alas! How am I to know? How could you possibly know? Those who dislike the book consider it to be ear-grating, while those who copy and publish it believe it to be a worthy work with a place in people’s hearts. How awful it is that those “ear-grating” must be eliminated. Nevertheless, I am 64 years old. As long as my books can reach people’s hearts, I believe that there is someone out there who understands me. I am glad that such people exist, so I am having these books printed.

Zhuowu

In Jufo Building on the lake<sup>②</sup>

①The eight-legged essay (八股文) was a style of essay in imperial examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties in China.

②The lake refers to Longtan Lake, which is located in today’s Macheng, Hubei.

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## 与焦弱侯

人犹水也，豪杰犹巨鱼也<sup>①</sup>。欲求巨鱼，必须异水<sup>②</sup>；欲求豪杰，必须异人<sup>③</sup>。此的然之理也。今夫井，非不清洁也，味非不甘美也，日用饮食非不切切于人<sup>④</sup>，若不可缺以旦夕也<sup>⑤</sup>。然持任公之钓者<sup>⑥</sup>，则未尝井焉之之矣。何也？以井不生鱼也。欲求三寸之鱼，亦了不可得矣。

今夫海，未尝清洁也，未尝甘旨也<sup>⑦</sup>。然非万斛之舟不可入，非生长于海者不可以履于海<sup>⑧</sup>。盖能活人，亦能杀人，能富人，亦能贫人。其不可恃之以为安，倚之以为常也明矣<sup>⑨</sup>。然而鷗鹏化

① 豪杰：指“才能、才智出众的人”，在不同语境中，可译为 hero, great man, warrior, knight 等。此处译为 outstanding people, 较为恰当。

② 异水：指不同寻常的水，此处指大海。

③ 异人：译为 those who stand out from the crowd, 较为有力。

④ 切切：非常密切，译为 vital。

⑤ “若不可缺”略去不译，以求简练。

⑥ 据《庄子·外物》所载，春秋时任国的公子，投竿于东海钓鱼，一年后钓得一条大鱼。“持任公之钓者”，译为 Master Ren, who had caught a large fish in the East Sea after a year of fishing there, 在译文中阐释背景。

⑦ 未尝：并不。该句译为 The sea is not clean or sweet, 将两个“未尝”合译为一。

⑧ 原文对仗，译为 It is, however, sailable only by large ships and swimmable only by seaside dwellers, 较为简练工整，且 sailable, swimmable, seaside 构成头韵。seaside dwellers 也可改为 seashiders。

⑨ 该句意为“很明显不能依靠大海而安心，也不能依恃大海而以之为常”，译为 Unquestionably, you cannot rely on the sea as a source of security or on a regular basis, 将两句合译，避免重复，as a source of security 与 on a regular basis 结构对称，较为优美。

焉<sup>①</sup>，蛟龙藏焉，万宝之都，而吞舟之鱼所乐而游遨也<sup>②</sup>。彼但一开口，而百丈风帆并流以入，曾无所于碍，则其腹中固已江、汉若矣<sup>③</sup>。此其为物，岂豫且之所能制<sup>④</sup>，网罟之所能牵耶<sup>⑤</sup>！自生自死<sup>⑥</sup>，自去自来，水族千亿，惟有惊怪长太息而已，而况人未之见乎！

余家泉海，海边人谓余言：“有大鱼入港，潮去不得去。呼集数十百人，持刀斧，直上鱼背，恣意砍割，连数十百石，是鱼犹恬然如故也<sup>⑦</sup>。俄而潮至，复乘之而去矣。”然此犹其小者也。乘潮入港，港可容身，则兹鱼亦苦不大也。余有友莫姓者，住雷海之滨，同官滇中，亲为我言：“有大鱼如山，初视，犹以为云若雾也<sup>⑧</sup>。中午雾尽收，果见一山在海中，连亘若太行，自东徙西，直至半月日乃休。”则是鱼也，其长又奚啻三千余里者哉！

嗟乎！豪杰之士，亦若此焉尔矣。今若索豪士于乡人皆好之

① 鸱鹏化焉：“鸱”，同“鲲”，意思是名为鲲的大鱼在那里化作名为鹏的大鸟。语出《庄子·逍遥游》：“北溟有鱼，其名为鲲。鲲之大，不知其几千里也。化而为鸟，其名为鹏。鹏之背，不知其几千里也；怒而飞，其翼若垂天之云。”

② “吞舟之鱼”，不译为定语从句结构 fish that can swallow boats，而译为 boat-swallowing fish，使用前置定语，较为简洁。

③ “则其……”句，意为大鱼之腹如同长江、汉水一样宽阔，译为 its belly, which is as wide as the Yangtze River, “汉水”略去不译。

④ 豫且：即余且，传说是春秋时宋国的捕鱼人，曾捕获神龟。泛译为 any fisherman，不添加背景阐释。

⑤ 罟：网的总称，译为 any fishing net。

⑥ “自生自死”，不译为 It's free to live and die，据网络查询，无此说法，译为 It has the freedom to live and die as it wishes。

⑦ 恬然如故也：安然自得如常之意，译为 unconcerned as if nothing had happened，“怡然”也可译为 at ease，但 unconcerned 更能表达大鱼安然自得，不以为意的神态。

⑧ “初视，犹以为云若雾也”，刚一看好像云雾，译为 that appears to be a foggy cloud at fist sight，“云雾”译为 foggy cloud，优于 cloud and fog。