

## THE IMAGES OF SHULAMITE IN THE CHINESE TRANSLATIONS OF THE *BIBLE* (1822 – 2004)\*

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The aim of this essay is to present an analysis of a few verses of the biblical *Song of Songs* (*Šir hašširim*) eleven from the many Chinese translations produced in the years 1822 – 2004. Three of them were rendered into shen wenli 深文理 high wenli language, used by missionaries, but not by Chinese or foreign scholars for wenyan 文言, one into qian wen-li 浅文理 easy wen-li which was a lower kind of it, but understandable for many educated Chinese readers, and the last six translated into guoyu 国语 or guanhua 官话 Mandarin. It is only a small part of all the translations into Chinese, but they show the development from mostly following the European translations sticking to the style and sentence order of the biblical originals, to the first attempts at renditions that tried to be more genuinely Chinese, paying more attention to the rhythm of Chinese prose and poetry. The best specimens are probably the translations by the Delegates' and by Schereschewsky. Among the six translations into vernacular, analysed in this contribution, the *Guanhua heheben* 官话和合本 *Mandarin Union Version* from the year 1919 is the most popular and influential, but many others have tried to find sympathy among the millions of Chinese readers in the last decades. The most progressive method of translation used in China is the "dynamic or functional equivalence" proposing that the message is to be made understandable to the readers of the target language. More conservative translators use the method of "formal equivalence", where the source languages of the Bible are more important, and attempts to convey their forms and contents to their readers.

**Key words:** *Song of Songs*, high wen-li and easy wen-li translations, vernacular translations, dynamic or functional equivalence, formal equivalence

*The Song of Songs* is very probably the most translated and the most read book of the *Old Testament* of the *Bible* in China. The aim of this study will be to

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\* This study is published within the VEGA 2/0107/15 grant project.

show the images of the only female protagonist mentioned by name and depicted in this jewel of world love poetry, which has had an exceptional influence on the development of poetry and partly of other literary genres, namely drama, in the world,<sup>1</sup> but also in China.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the restricted space that could be devoted to this paper, I shall limit myself to the analysis of some verses of the *Song of Songs* among the many translations into Chinese between the years 1818 and 2004.

The first will be the very little known and studied high wen-li 深文理 translation by Joshua Marshman (1768 – 1837) and Joannes Lassar (1781 – before 1835) under the title: *Jiu xin yue quanshu* 舊新約全書, 4 threadbound vols., Serampore Mission, near Calcutta, 1817 – 1822, of which the *Song of Songs* was published in Vol. 2 in 1818. The second one is the better known version translated by Robert Morrison (1782 – 1834) and William Milne (1785 – 1822) under the title *Shen tian shengshu* 神天聖書 in 21 vols. in 1823 and presented to the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1824. The third one is the translation from the *Old Testament* by Karl F.A. Gützlaff (1803 – 1851) translated by him and privately published in 1838. One of the best translations of the *Old Testament* in shen wen-li 深文理 high wen-li is the so-called *Weiban yiben* 委辦譯本 *Delegates' Version* published in 1854. The last translation of the first part of this paper is qian wen-li 淺文理 easy wen-li by Samuel I.J. Schereschewsky's *Jiu xin yue Shenjing* 就新約聖經, published by the American Bible Society, Shanghai 1902 and reprinted in 1922.

Starting from the year 1919, the first is the famous *Guanhua heheben* 官話和合本 *Mandarin Union Version*, or *Guanhua hehe yiben* 官話和合譯本 *Translated Union Version* that appeared under the title: *Jiu xinyue quanshu* 舊新約全書 *Old and New Testament of the Bible*, Shanghai: American Bible Society (ABS), British & Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) and National Bible Society of Scotland (NBSS) in 1919, and the last *Xin yi – Hehe Shengjing* 新譯 – 和合聖經 *The Holy Bible – New Chinese Version/Chinese Union Version Parallel*, Hong Kong-San Jose-Singapore-Taipei-Scarborough, Ontario, 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. for instance, JEFFREY, D.L. *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, pp. 727 – 730.

<sup>2</sup> WU, Chongshu. 吴充树. “‘Wenti zuojia’: Shen Congwen yu ‘Yage’” 文体作家: 沈从文与《雅歌》 “‘Man of Style’: Shen Congwen and ‘Song of Songs’” In *Bijiao wenxue yu shijie wenxue* 比较文学与世界文学 *Comparative Literature and World Literature*, 2004, No. 1, pp. 199 – 218. GÁLIK, M. “The Song of Songs and the New Vision of Literature: An Essay in Hebrew-Chinese Interliterary Process”. In *Passioni d'Oriente. Eros ed Emozioni nelle Civiltà Asiatiche. Supplemento No. 4 alla Rivista degli Studi Orientali. Nuova Serie*, Vol. LXXVIII, 2007, pp. 47 – 59.

From other translations I have selected the following: *Gezhong zhi ge* 戰中之歌 *Song of Songs*, Shanghai: Langyou tushu yinshua gongsi 1932, translated by the well-known Chinese poet Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911 – 1966), *Jiu xinyue Shengjing* 舊新約聖經 *The Holy Bible. A New Translation* by Lü Zhenzhong 呂振中 (1898 – 1988) published by Xianggang Shengjing gonghui Hong Kong Bible Society 1970 “for Rev. Lü Chen-chung” and his relatives and friends,<sup>3</sup> *Shengjing* 聖經 *The Holy Bible*, Hong Kong: Sigao 思高 Shengjing xuehui Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, translated into Chinese under leadership of Gabriele M. Allegra (1907 – 1976). I shall use here its edition from the year 1992 (first ed. 1968). The fifth translation after 1919 is *Shenjing. Xiandai Zhongwen yiben xiuding ban* 聖經. 現代中文譯本修訂版 *The Holy Bible. Today's Chinese Version Revised Edition*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Bible Society 1995 and the last *Xinyi – Hehe Shengjing* 新譯 – 和合聖經 *The Holy Bible – New Chinese Version/Chinese Union Version Parallel*. Hong Kong: The Worldwide Bible Society Ltd. 2004.

1822 was the year when Protestant missionary activities ended with the first translation of the Bible into Chinese. However, it could not be published on Chinese territory because of the political situation. All other attempts of these missionaries were more successful. In any case their renditions appeared in the Chinese territories. According to the edicts on religion from the Ming Code applied for the first four decades of the 19th century, China closed its doors to Christian missions and it was legally not possible for Christian missionaries to be resident in China, although there were some who found local employment in another category of work. Until 1843 it was not possible for missionaries to be Chinese residents.<sup>4</sup> One may fully agree that European cannons brought Christianity again to China. In 1844 an imperial edict allowed the building of Roman Catholics churches and in 1845 another decree promised the same for Protestants. After the publication of the Bible translation by the “two Mas”, that is by Marshman (and Lassar) Morrison (and Milne) others followed, among them the New Testament by Walter Henry Medhurst (1796 – 1857), Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801 – 1861). Here we are interested in the Old Testament translation which was almost entirely Gützlaff's translation. He started work in 1835, the first version appeared in 1838 in Singapore and the

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the decision of the Biblical Societies it could not be used in the Churches. More about it in my essay under Note No. 20.

<sup>4</sup> MOFFET, S.H. A History of Christianity in Asia. Vol. II, 1500 – 1900, pp. 285 – 286 and LEUNG KA-LUN, B., YOUNG, J.D. (Eds.) Christianity in China: Foundations for Dialogue, p. 37.

whole translation was finished in 1845.<sup>5</sup> It seems to me that the best Chinese translation in high wen-li was the *Delegates' Version* headed by W.H. Medhurst (1796 – 1857) and his colleagues. In any case it is possible to believe Jost O. Zetzsche who asserts that it proved “to be the most significant factor in the early history of Bible translation”.<sup>6</sup> Zetzsche, who is the best expert on biblical translation into Chinese, mentions Schereschewsky’s easy wen-li translation from the year 1902 (on p. 408), but he does not analyse it in any detail. He quotes Schereschewsky’s idea from 1890 that “the immediate want is a *Wen-li* version in modern style; in a style which, whilst not unacceptable to scholars, could be read and understood by all who are not illiterate; a style which should employ words in their primary sense and call a spade a spade; which should not strive after classicalities, and that should avoid ready-made phrases and expressions culled from poetical and rhetorical compositions...”<sup>7</sup> Irene Eber in her invaluable book *The Jewish Bishop & the Chinese Bible. S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831 – 1906)* does not even mention it.

The year 1919, the date of China’s entrance into the family of modern nations and one may say the start of its pre-globalisation epoch, and the year 2004, when the *New Chinese Version* as the *kua shiji* 跨世紀 “surpassing the century” during high development of globalisation appeared, and preceding nearly one hundred years are a good opportunity to look at the changes that occurred in the translation of the *Bible* in the modern and contemporary Chinese world.

My paper will be oriented more towards the practical results of the translation activity than to the theoretical considerations. I put aside the theories of translation concerned with or applicable to the *Bible*, and I shall follow the translated lines in the books mentioned above and not devote my attention to the different explanations by exegetes of the text of the *Song of Songs* as they are known from the extremely rich literature about it, written by biblical critics and specialists in hermeneutics. There are two exceptions in my analysis. The first is Yair Zakovitch’s *Das Hohelied (The Song of Songs)*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2004),<sup>8</sup> which has enriched the exegesis of the *Song of Songs* at

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<sup>5</sup> See SCHLYTER, H. Karl Gützlaff als Missionar in China, pp. 105 and 205.

<sup>6</sup> ZETZSCHE, J.O. The Bible in China. The History of the Union Version or The Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 162. Robert P. Kramers, who before his death presented Schereschewsky’s easy wen-li translation to me, remarked on a piece of paper tagged on the inner cover of the book this appreciation: “This translation is one of the best ever made. It was prepared by one of the most gifted missionaries to China...” Kramers was a Translations Adviser to the Bible Society of Hong Kong & Taiwan (BSHKT) in the years 1954 – 1964.

<sup>8</sup> ZAKOVITCH, Y. *Das Hohelied (The Song of Songs)*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2004. When selecting the verses I followed the sequence used in this book.

many points, while also highlighting its literary values. It is extremely important for modern understanding of this work, which has been a part of the World of Literature for at least two thousand years. The second is Michael V. Fox: *The Song of Songs and the Egyptian Love Songs*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press 1985). A few other well known books and studies are cited presently.<sup>9</sup>

The verses I would like to present and, if necessary also analyse in this paper, are the following:

Chapter 4, verse 1.

Chapter 7, verses 2-3.

Chapter 8, verses 6-7.

Since nearly all, who will hear me here and most of those who will read me later after the publication of the paper, understand Chinese, if I am not instructed otherwise, I shall not give the English translation of the Chinese texts. The following abbreviations will be used in the following text for high wen-li and easy wen-li translations:

<i>Jiu xin yue quanshu</i> , Serampore Mission, 1822	Marshman-Lassar
<i>Shen tian shengshu</i> , British and Foreign Bible Society, 1823	Morrison-Milne
Gützlaff's translation of the Old Testament, 1838	Gützlaff
<i>Delegates Version</i> , 1854, reprint 1908	Delegates
Schereschewsky's translation into easy wen-li, 1902, new ed.1922.	Schereschewsky

For the Mandarin versions after 1919:

<i>Hehe ben</i> or <i>Hehe yiben</i> (Mandarin Union Version) (1919)	UV
<i>Gezhong zhi ge</i> (1932)	Chen Mengjia
<i>Jiu xinyue Shengjing</i> (1970)	Lü Zhenzhong
<i>Shengjing</i> (1968, 1992)	Allegra
<i>Xiandai Zhongwen yiben xiuding ban</i> (1995)	Xiandai
<i>Xinyi – Hehe Shengjing</i> (2004)	Xinyi

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<sup>9</sup> FOX, M.V. *The Song of Songs and the Egyptian Love Songs*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. These two publications are very important for understanding the *Song of Songs* and its place within the biblical and extra-biblical traditions.

## The High Wen-li and Easy Wen-li Translations

### Chapter 4, verse 1:

吾愛者,夫汝是白。夫汝是白。汝髻髮下有鴿眼,汝髮似一羣山羊現於  
記里阿度山者。 Marshman-Lassar

我新婦者,爾何美哉,爾何美哉。爾鬢髮之間有班鳩之眼,爾首髮乃似個  
羣山羊從厄利亞得山下來也。 Morrison-Milne

我寵人係美矣,汝係麗矣,繚髮中有鴿眼,其毛如羣羊,所見在其列山也。  
Gützlaff

良人曰,愛妃甚美,以巾蔽面,目光流露,其麗若鴿,髮若羣羊,臥於基列  
山。 Delegates'

我之佳耦,爾甚美麗,爾眼在帕內猶如鴿眼,髮如羣山羊於基列山。  
Schereschewsky

The first look at the verse translated by Lassar and Marshman tells us that they very probably misunderstood the meaning of “fair” in the *King James Version*, which does not mean *bai* 白 white in Chinese. It is interesting that “all fair” is rendered in 4:7 as *quan mei* 全美 all beautiful. Shulamite was “black, but comely” according to 1:5. These words are translated as *fu bai wei li* 弗百惟麗 not white, but beautiful. The first three translations contain no mention of *zama*, the Hebrew term for face veil which should accentuate the beauty of Shulamite’s eyes.<sup>10</sup> Veil as *jin* 巾 covering the face is used in the Delegates’ version and 帕 in Schereschewsky. Another shortcoming in the first three translations of this verse as well as those that follow was, according to W.H. Medhurst, and in explanation by Patrick Hanan, that the Morrison-Milne version was “too profuse with its particles; it adhered to the original sentence order, even when that order was unnatural; it had strings of relative clauses, which were abhorrent in Chinese; and so forth”.<sup>11</sup> In the first three, not all particles are necessary: in Marshman-Lassar and in Morrison-Milne the emphasising particle *zhe* 者, one introductory particle *fu* 夫 in Marshman-

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. ZAKOVITCH, Y., op.cit., p. 182.

<sup>11</sup> HANAN, P. The Bible as Chinese Literature: Medhurst, Wang Tao, and the Delegates’ Version. In *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 2003, Vol. 63, No. 1, p. 208.

Lassar, two exclamatory particles *zai* 哉 in Morrison-Milne, two final particles *yi* 矣 and probably two very rare possessive particles *hsi* 係 in Gützlaff. There are no particles in the Delegates' or in Schereschewsky. The Delegates' translation consists of four syllabic phrases, as common in old Chinese language, and the Lover in Schereschewsky's rendition addresses Shulamite as *jia ou* 佳耦 beautiful mate as in the translation in the UV, see below. It is possible that the translators of the most popular Chinese translation of the Bible into the vernacular followed this or another version at least to some extent without acknowledgement of the debt. This is to be proved or rejected after deeper research.

Chapter 7, verses 2-3:

若之女乎, 汝足在履何其美載. 汝髀之節似巧人手造之首飾. 汝腰似不缺酒之圓爵. 腹似一堆麥週似玉簪花. Marshman-Lassar

君之女歟, 爾脚穿之鞋何美載, 爾裙之轉襪, 繡以寶石, 巧工所作也. 爾帶鉤乃圓爵富以農酒, 爾身乃似麥一束, 圍縛以蓮花也. Morrison-Milne

噫諸公着鞋之脚美矣, 汝腿之骸如珍寶, 如巧手之工也, 其臍如圓杯缺酒也, 其肚如一堆麥周種白合. Gützlaff

諸婢為新婦解孺, 美之曰, 公主, 爾足爾履, 洵美矣, 爾髀豐隆, 猶之瓔珞, 巧公所製, 爾臍圓若盞盂, 盛以酒醴, 爾服若積麥, 周白合花. Delegates'

顯者之女乎, 爾足納履, 何其美載, 爾股豐隆, 猶若瓔珞, 巧工所製, 臍如圓盂, 盛以酒醴, 腹如麥束, 周以白合花. Schereschewsky

When analysing the translation by Marshman-Lassar, we may see that it begins with the adaptation of the phrase from the verse before, which in the KJV version sounds: "What will you see in the Shulamite?" in their rendition with the words: "Ruo zhi nǚ hu" 若之女乎 "What a woman are you?" In the translation of the previous verse her name is not mentioned. She is differently addressed or characterised: in Marshman-Lassar and Delegates' as *xin fu* 新婦 Beloved, Gützlaff *zhu gong* 諸公 Noble Lady, Morrison-Milne *jun zhi nǚ* 君之女 which means the same, and Schereschewsky *xian zhe zhi nǚ* 賢者之女

Illustrious Woman. “Ru bi zhi jie” 汝髀之節 in Marshman-Lassar is a rendition of the KJV version “the joints of thy thighs”, just as the immediately following “si qiao ren shou zaozhi shou shi” 似巧人手造之首飾 “are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman”. The third verse is also the translation of the KJV text. The joints of Shulamite’s thighs, or “die Biegungen (ihrer) Hüften” (or bendings of her hips), *chet-mem-qof* “die Rundung der Hüften” (or curves of her hips)<sup>12</sup> is also a problem of the translation. In Morrison-Milne it is expressed as “qun zhi zhuanzhe” 裙之轉褶 “revolving pleated skirt” which means that they stress her dressed figure not her naked body. Gützlaff’s “tuiqiao” 腿骹 “joint of thighs”, or Schereschewsky’s “gu” 股 “haunches” or “two halves of buttocks” are the better translations. In the third verse the first two translators use the term “jue” 爵 for Shulamite’s navel, while others use the more common “qi” 臍, which in all cases is full of “jiu” 酒 “wine” or “jiu li” 酒醴 “wine must”. It is not necessary to say that the navel could not be a vessel for wine or must.<sup>13</sup> If in the first three translations the impact of European languages, mostly of English and German on the style is evident, and the “unidiomatic nature”<sup>14</sup> is quite obvious to the Chinese readers, in the last two the rhythms of Chinese prose, in this case the four syllable phrases are abundantly used. In Schereschewsky’s even more than in the Delegates’. Lilies are translated as *baihe* 百合 in Gützlaff, *baihehua* 百合花 in the Delegates’ and Schereschewsky, *lianhua* 蓮花 Morrison-Milne and for an unknown reason *yuzanhua* 玉簪花 *hosta sieboldiana*<sup>15</sup> in Marshman-Lassar.

## Chapter 8, verses 6-7

使我如印在汝心上, 如印在汝臂上. 蓋愛乃猛如死, 妒乃曲如墳穴. 彼間之炭是火炭有至猛火燄. 許多條何弗能熄愛, 又非洪水可滅之. 若人願給家中所有財物為愛, 則全為棄矣.

Marshman-Lassar

帶我如個印在爾心懷中, 如個印環在爾臂也, 蓋寵愛強如死然也, 其情忍然如其冢也, 其矢乃火之矢然, 列如焱焉. 大水不能滅寵愛且江漲不能蓋毀之, 或個人要以欺家之全財帛交出想得寵愛, 必被盡然輕忽也.

Morrison-Milne

<sup>12</sup> ZAKOVITSCH, Y., op.cit., p. 244.

<sup>13</sup> More about it see No. 27 below.

<sup>14</sup> HANAN, P., op.cit., p. 208.

<sup>15</sup> Zhiwu xue dacidian 植物学大辞典 Great Botanical Dictionary, p. 279.



在本心銘我如印蓋，如印在手上。其愛情強如死，忍虐如墓。其炭如燒炭，冲燄焉。多水不得熄愛情，濫洪不得沈之，若人以家之諸業代愛情而給者，則必盡輕忽之。

Gützlaff

新婦曰，願爾心懷我，手抱我，心心相印，若合符節，我愛汝甚切，至死不渝，如有他婦奪寵，我銜憾實深，雖入土猶不已，我必忿怒，烈若火焰。我眷愛爾，我愛汝甚篤摯，河水汎濫，亦不能滅，雖傾家以博愛，亦不可得。

Delegates'

願爾懷我於心如佩印，如佩印於臂，因愛強如死，由愛而生之妒心，酷如阿勒，愛情之烈，如火如巨焰。大水不能滅之，江河不能冲之，人雖以家之全業易愛，亦必被藐視。

Schereschewsky

As in the previous verses, the Marshman-Lassar rendition exactly follows the KJV version. In the Morrison-Milne version, the *yin* 印 seal in relation to the arm is conveyed as *yin huan* 印環 signet-ring which is more appropriate and love as *chong ai* 寵愛 because this term is needed for a rhythmical purpose and following for a four-syllabic phrase *qiang ru si ran ye* 強如死然 strong as death. Similarly to Marshman-Lassar, the translation by Gützlaff closely follows the KJV version. The Delegates' version is different. The translators do not agree with the legacy of the biblical text that "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned" (KJV text), or with the rendition in the *Good News Bible (Today's English Version)*: "But if anyone tried to buy love with his wealth contempt is all he would get". The translation into English of the Delegates' text concerning this passage is as follows: "I love you dearly, big waves of the river cannot *mie* 滅 extinguish it. If I gave all family property for love, I could not *de* 得 acquire it". This is a misunderstanding of the opinion the old Hebrews had towards love between man and woman.<sup>16</sup> In the rendition by Schereschewsky we find that *ale* 阿勒 which according to him means *huang quan* 黃泉 Hades, or *yinfu* 陰府 hell, or *fenmu* 墳墓 grave as in Marshman-Lassar. Zakowitsch use for it *unterwelt* (underworld).

It is possible to assert that in the first three translations the impact of the KJV version (in Marshman-Lassar and Morrison-Milne) and in Gützlaff, maybe, Martin Luther's German version is obvious. The Delegates' and Schereschewsky's versions have more "Chinese spirit" and although, especially

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<sup>16</sup> See the analysis of ZAKOVITCH, op.cit., pp. 271 and 274.

after 1843 they were distributed in great numbers among Chinese readers, it is very questionable, how they were favoured among the well-educated Chinese readers.<sup>17</sup> The situation changed considerably after 1919.

### The Vernacular Translations

Those not familiar with the *Bible* in Chinese in the period starting from the year 1919, will probably be interested to know the most important data concerning the translation to be studied presently.

The *Mandarin Union Version*, published for the first time in 1919, is up to now the most important and most widely read Chinese version of the *Bible*. It was the end of a development of well over a century and concluded the missionaries' efforts in this field of their work. Its immediate and later impact in China went beyond the boundaries of the Church and Christianity and influenced the formation of modern Chinese *baihua* 白話 the vernacular language in the May Fourth and post-May Fourth Period. Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1895 – 1967) was right when he predicted in 1920 that the earliest Mandarin in translated European literature (and he had especially *The Gospel according to Matthew* in mind) “will have a very great and very deep relation to the future of new Chinese literature”.<sup>7</sup> The works of many Chinese writers, some of whom are the most outstanding creators of modern Chinese literature, read the *Bible* from the *Mandarin Union Version*: Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881 – 1936), Zhou Zuoren, Xu Dishan 许地山 (1893 – 1941), Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896 – 1981), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892 – 1978), Yu Dafu 郁达夫 (1896 – 1945), Zhang Ziping 张资平 (1895 – 1947), Lin Yutang 林语堂 (1895 – 1976), Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897 – 1931), Huang Luyin 黄庐隐 (1898 – 1934), Wang Duqing 王独清 (1898 – 1940), Wen Yiduo 闻一多 (1899 – 1946), Lao She 老舍 (1899 – 1966), Su Xuelin 苏雪林 (1899 – 1999), Zhang Wentian 张闻天 (1900 – 1976), Xie Bingxin 谢冰心 (1900 – 1999), Xiang Peiliang 向培良 (1901 – 1961), Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902 – 1988), Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱 (1903 – 1983), Wu Shutian 吴曙天 (1903 – 1942), Ba Jin 巴金 (1904 – 2005), Feng Zhi 冯至 (1905 – 1993), Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910 – 1996), Xiao Qian 萧乾 (1910 – 1999), Ai Qing 艾青 (1910 – 1996), Qian Zhongshu 钱锺书 (1910 – 1998), Mu Dan 穆旦 (1918 – 1977), Wang Meng 王蒙 (\*1934), probably also Li Ping 礼平, Bei Cun 北村, Zhang Xingjian 张行健, Gu Cheng 顾城 (1956 – 1993), Haizi 海子

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<sup>17</sup> HANAN, P., op.cit., p. 207.

(1964 – 1989), Yu Xie 余杰 (\*1973) and Shi Tiesheng 史铁生 (1951 – 2010).<sup>18</sup> These are all from the Mainland. We know less from Taiwan, but the impact of the *Bible* may be clearly observed in the works of Rongzi 蓉子 (\*1928), Xia Yu 夏宇 (\*1956), Siren 斯人 (i.e. Xie Shude 谢淑德) (\*1951), Zhang Xiguo 张系国, Qideng Sheng 七等生, Zhu Xining 朱西萼 (\*1927), Chen Yingzhen 陈映真 (\*1936), Diran 滌然, Zhang Xiaofeng 张晓风 (\*1941), Bao Zhen 保真 (\*1955), and certainly others.

When citing UV I shall use a copy bought by Zhang Wentian on January 25, 1922 (published in 1920) and now deposited in the Mao Dun Museum, Peking.

*Gezhong zhi ge* is a translation by Chen Mengjia based on the well-known rendition by R.G. Moulton's *The Modern Reader's Bible*, New York and London: Macmillan & Co. (1899).<sup>19</sup>

For Lü Zhenzhong's translation of the *Bible*, see my study "Lü Zhenzhong – A Translator of the *Bible*".<sup>20</sup>

The Catholic Sigao 思高 rendition of the Bible made by the group of translators at the Hong Kong Studium Biblicum Franciscanum was completed in 1968 after about 20 years of work. Jost O. Zetzsche, characterised it as "translation into Mandarin with special emphasis on fidelity and comprehensibility".<sup>21</sup> According to the principles underlying the translation

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<sup>18</sup> More about the impact of the Bible and Christianity in the PRC see JI, Bin. 季玢. "Yedi li de baihehua": *Lun xin shiqi yilai de Zhongguo* 《野地里的百合花: 论新时期以来的中国基督教文学》 *Lilies in the Wilderness: On the Christian Literature in the Contemporary Times*. Peking: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010 and ZHUO, Xinping. 卓新平. "Shengjing wenxue zai xiandai Zhongguo de yiyi" 圣经文学在现代中国的意义 "The Significance of Biblical Literature in Contemporary China." In *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 圣经文学研究 *Studies in Biblical Literature*, 2011, Vol. 5, pp. 1 – 10.

<sup>19</sup> See the excellent study by FINDEISEN, R.D. "God Was Their Souls' Love, Women Their Bodies' – Two Chinese Versions of the *Song of Songs* (1930/32)". In FINDEISEN, R.D., SLOBODNIK, Martin (Eds.) *Talking Literature. Essays on Chinese and Biblical Writings and Their Interaction*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 125 – 138.

<sup>20</sup> *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques*, LII, 4, 2000, pp. 815 – 838. Later appeared under the title: "Lü Zhenzhong: One of the Chinese Translators of the Bible". In GÁLIK, M. *Influence, Translations and Parallels. Selected Studies on the Bible in China*, pp. 145 – 162 and its Chinese version "Lu Zhengzhong: 'Yi wei Zhongwen Shengjing fanyijia' 吕振中: 一位中文圣经翻译家 Lü Zhenzhong: One Chinese Translator of the Bible". In *Shenjing wenxue yanjiu* 圣经文学研究, 2013, Vol. 7, pp. 72 – 93.

<sup>21</sup> ZETZSCHE, J.O., op.cit., p. 421.

program was namely: “to translate the original texts”, namely Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic,<sup>22</sup> to use the “national Chinese language, *guoyu* 國語, with simplicity and elegance, as the Sacred Scriptures are intended to serve the holy people of God” and have in mind a “popularisation of scientific Catholic exegesis”.<sup>23</sup>

*The Holy Bible. Today's Chinese Version Revised Edition*, like its English model *Today's English Version* is translated according to Professor Eugene A. Nida's principle of “dynamic (or functional) equivalence” emphasising “the message that should be communicated and made understandable to the speaker of the receptor language”,<sup>24</sup> to make the biblical text from the *Old and New Testament* understandable to contemporary Chinese readers.

The “Shuoming” 說明 “Explanation” at the beginning of *The Holy Bible – New Chinese Version/ Chinese Union Version Parallel* asserts like the Sigao version tries to communicate with readers in a language understandable to common Chinese readers and that it is translated on the basis of the original language. Since its translators and the Worldwide Bible Society Ltd. regard this translation as “surpassing” the 20th century (see “Xuyan” 序言 “The Preface”), and the *Mandarin Union Version* is still most popular among Chinese readers, they presented it together with UV.

Chapter 4, verse 1:

我的佳偶, 你甚美麗, 你的眼在帕子內好像鴿子眼. 你的頭髮如同山羊群, 卧在基列山旁 (UV)

看, 我的愛, 你是美德; 看, 你真美豔; 你面紗裏的眼好像鴿子眼: 你的秀髮像一群山羊 躺在基列山的山旁 (Chen Mengjia)

哦, 我的愛侶阿, 你很美麗! 哦, 你很美麗! 你的眼在你帕子後面簡直是鴿子. 你的頭髮如同山羊群從基列山下來. (Lü Zhenzhong)

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<sup>22</sup> See the “Xu” 序 Preface, *Sigao Translation* 1992, p. III.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted according to CAMPS, A. “Gabrielle M. Allegra and the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*”. In EBER, I., WAN, Sze-kar, WALF, K. ((Eds.) in collaboration with Roman Malek). *Bible in Modern China. The Literary and Intellectual Impact*, p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> ZETZSCHE, J.O., op.cit., p. 349.

我的愛卿, 你多麼美麗! 你多麼美麗! 你的兩眼隱在面紗後, 有如以一对鴿眼; 你的頭髮猶如由基肋阿得山下來的是一群山羊. (Allegra)

我的親愛的, 你多麼美麗! 你的眼睛像鴿子的眼睛, 在面紗後面閃耀着愛的光輝. 你的頭髮像一群山羊, 從基列山跳躍着下來. (Xiandai)

我的佳偶啊! 你很美麗; 你很美麗. 你的眼在面紗後面好像鴿子的眼睛; 頭髮如從基列山下來的山羊群. (Xinyi)

If we compare all the translations we may find the first and the last (UV and Xinyi) are the most similar to each other. The most poetic, at least according to me, is the rendition by Chen Mengjia. All the theological translations are very near to the original text that is very simple. To use the words *ailü* 愛侶 in Lü Zhenzhong or *aiqing* 愛卿 in Allegra for beloved girl is probably unusual. The most contemporary seems to be the verse translated in Xiandai. *Miensha* 面紗 veil in Chen Mengjia, Allegra, Xiandai and Xinyi is an adequate translation for the Hebrew *zama*.<sup>25</sup>

#### Chapter 7, Verses 2-3

王女阿, 你的腳在鞋中何其美好. 你的大腿圓潤好像美玉, 是巧匠的手作成的. 你的肚臍如圓杯, 不缺調和的酒. 你的腰如一堆麥子, 周圍有百合花. (UV)

阿, 王女, 你的腳在鞋中這樣炫目? 你腿上的肌肉如像珠玉, 是經過什麼巧匠的雕琢?

你的肚臍如同一隻圓杯? 不需要攪雜的酒配: 你的腰如一束麥? 四面有百合. (Chen Mengjia)

像人君威儀的女子阿, 你的腳穿上了鞋, 多麼美麗阿. 你大腿的彎曲如美飾品, 是巧匠的手作成的. 你的肚臍如圓杯, 不缺調和的酒; 你的腰如一堆麥子, 周圍有百合花. (Lü Zhenzhong)

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<sup>25</sup> See Note No. 10.

公主！你的腳穿上涼鞋，是多麼美麗！你的兩腿，圓滿似玉，是藝術家手中的傑作。你的肚臍，有如圓樽，總不缺少調香的美酒。你的肚腹，有如一堆麥粒，周圍有百合花圍繞。  
(Allegra)

儀態萬千的少女啊，你穿着涼鞋的腳多麼美麗！你大腿的曲線是藝術家的傑作！你的肚臍像一個圓圓的酒杯，裏面盛滿着美酒。你的腰像一束麥子，四周圍有百合花圍繞着。  
(Xiandai)

王女啊！你的腳在鞋中多麼美麗！你的大腿的曲線美如珠玉，是巧匠手裡的傑作。你的肚臍如圓杯永不缺乏調和的酒；你的肚腹像一堆麥子，周圍有百合。  
(Xinyi)

Here once again we may see that the UV and Xinyi are very near to each other and I assume, that the first and last verses 1 and 2 from Chapter 7, and very probably much of the Xinyi are mostly stylistic variations of the UV. There are four question-marks in the rendition of Chen Mengjia, but none in other translations. Chen's translation was more literary, while all the others have been done by foreign or domestic theologians. He put the question-marks into his rendition since he suspected that some symbolic meaning had been hidden behind the simple words of the original text. Some more liberal interpreters see under verse 2 "the curves of buttocks",<sup>26</sup> and under the navel in the verse 3 a euphemism for pudenda.<sup>27</sup> "Heap of wheat" surrounded by lilies seems to be, at least for me, another euphemism for the same part of a woman's body. 巧匠 in the translation in the UV, Xinyi and Lü Zhenzhong seems to be more appropriate than 藝術家 in Allegra and Xiandai although probably in the last it was taken over from *the Good News Bible (Today's English Version)*.<sup>28</sup> In the original the word 'amman means artisan.<sup>29</sup>

#### Chapter 8, verses 6 and 7

求你將我放在你心上如印記，帶在你臂上如戳記。因為愛情如死之堅強，嫉恨如茵蔯間之殘忍。所發的電光，是火焰的電光，是耶和華的烈焰。愛

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<sup>26</sup> ZAKOVITCH, Y., op.cit., p. 244.

<sup>27</sup> FOX, M.F., op.cit., p. 158.

<sup>28</sup> *Good News Bible (Today's English Version)*. The Bible Societies, p. 663.

<sup>29</sup> ZAKOVITCH, Y., op.cit., p. 245.

情,眾水不能息滅,大水也不能淹沒。若有人拿家中所有的財寶要換愛情,就全被藐視。(UV)

求你將印記在心上,如現像印記刺在你的臂上:因為愛如死一般強蠻;妒嫉像地獄一般毒狼:那閃光,是火焰的閃電,是耶和華的列焰。眾水不能把愛衝滅,洪水也能把它停息:有誰挈家產去買愛情,必然給眾人看輕。  
(Chen Mengjia)

將我印在你心上如印章吧!將我帶在你手臂上如戳印吧!因為愛情恰如死亡之堅強;熱愛好似陰間之牢固;它是列焰是火的列焰,非常猛烈的火燄。愛情,大水不能息滅,洪水不能淹沒;若有人拿家裏所有的財產要換取愛情,定會絕對受鄙視。  
(Lü Zhenzhong)

情價將有如印璽,放在你的心上,有如印璽,放在你的臂上,因為愛情猛如死亡,妒愛頑如陰府:它的焰是火焰,是上主的火焰。洪流不能熄滅愛情,江河不能將它沖去;如有人獻出全部家產想購買愛情,必受人輕視。  
(Allegra)

願你的心只向我敞開,原你的手臂只擁抱我。愛情跟死一樣堅強;戀情跟陰間一樣牢固。  
它爆出火焰,像烈火一樣燃燒。水不能息滅愛情,洪水也無法淹沒。如有人想用財富換取愛情,他必定招來鄙視。  
(Xiandai)

求你把我放在你心上如印記,把我帶在你臂上如戳記;嫉妒如陰間般的堅穩;它的烈焰是火的烈焰,是非常猛烈的火焰。愛情,眾水不能熄滅,洪流不能淹沒;如果有人拿自己家裡所有的財產換取愛情,就必被藐視。  
(Xinyi)

Professor Zhu Weizhi 朱維之 (1905 – 1999), the first to introduce the Bible to Chinese readers as a literary masterpiece after the Cultural Revolution, chose precisely these two verses from the *Song of Songs* to show its *chunjie* 純潔 purity and extolling constancy *zhuan yi* 專一 in love.<sup>30</sup> Since the translation is also dependent on the socio-political situation, Zhu Weizhi who was

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<sup>30</sup> ZHU, Weizhi. “Xu” 序 “Introduction”. In GONG, Liang. 梁工. *Shengjing shige* 圣经诗歌 *Biblical Poetry*, p. 2.

accustomed to the UV rendition, but instead of *yinjian* 阴间 nether world, hell, which may be regarded as a religious term, his essay published in 1980 used the more neutral *fenmu* 坟墓 grave.<sup>31</sup> However, in this book and in another one published in 1993, in a freer atmosphere he used *yinjian* once again,<sup>32</sup> this time taking it from *Shengjing. Xiandai Zhongwen yiben* 聖經. 現代中文譯本 *The Holy Bible. Today's Chinese Version* from the year 1979. The last edition was not accessible to me, but the text of Chapter 8, verses 6-7, is the same as quoted above. Liang Gong, Zhu Weizhi's pupil did the same as his mentor following closely, although not fully, the whole text of the *Song of Songs* from *Today's Chinese Version* in his book *Shengjing shige* 聖經詩歌 *Biblical Poetry*.<sup>33</sup>

Nida's "dynamic (or functional) equivalence"<sup>34</sup> is most conspicuous in Chapter 8, verse 6 in *Today's Chinese Version*, where there is no word *seal* which meant for the old Hebrews mutual "belonging and special intimacy". It was like a signature in modern times, and "as such would be kept on one's person continually", could be worn on a cord around the neck, or as a ring on the finger, or as an amulet on the arm.<sup>35</sup> The heart of the beloved should be closed to everybody except for the partner and no one could hold the beloved in his arms except her spouse.

*The Holy Bible. Today's Chinese Version* as well as *The Holy Bible – New Chinese Version/Chinese Union Version Parallel* are the products of globalisation of the last thirty years of the twentieth century. They are very different. The first followed the progressive ideas of Professor Nida that are now acknowledged among the translators of the biblical books in different parts of the world, the second one, as we may see from the above texts and our short analysis, although criticising partly the UV in the "Xuyan" 序言 "Preface", rather closely sticks to the text of the now classic *Mandarin Union Version*. Economic considerations certainly played a role in the production of this version. The vision of higher profit from selling the most widespread classic text of the Bible in China with its new version in one volume was probably important for the publishers.

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<sup>31</sup> ZHU, Weizhi. "Xibolai wenxue jianjie" 希伯来文学简介 "A Short Introduction to Hebrew Literature". In *Waiguo wenxue yanjiu* 外国文学研究 *Studies in Foreign Literature*, 1980, No. 2, p. 116.

<sup>32</sup> ZHU, Weizhi, YU, Jiuhong 俞久洪 (Eds.) *Shengjing qiwen miaoyu xuan* 圣经奇文妙语选 *Phantastic Stories and Wonderful Texts from the Bible*, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> GONG, Liang, op.cit., pp. 205 – 236.

<sup>34</sup> NIDA, E.A. *Towards a Science of Translating*. Laiden: E.J. Brill, 1964. Critical evaluation of it see in NORTH, E.M. "Eugene A. Nida: An Appreciation". In BLACK, M., SMALLEY, W. A. (Eds.) *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honour of Eugene A. Nida*, pp. xi – xiii.

<sup>35</sup> FOX, M.F., op.cit., p. 169.



From our analysis it is possible to deduce that the first three high *wen-li* translations, followed the method of “formal equivalence”<sup>36</sup> as it is called now, trying to bring to Chinese readers the content and style of the original texts, in the case of Hebrew and later old Western translations of the *Song of Songs*, with some necessary changes only. These translations, as shown above, were too profuse with particles of different kinds, adhering to the sentence order of the originals from which they were translated, felt to be unnatural for Chinese. The following two, namely the Delegates’ and Schereschewsky’s, especially the first one, due to the ingenious idea of Medhurst claiming that the translated Bible into Chinese should be regarded “as a work of Chinese literature”<sup>37</sup> were progressive at the beginning of the 1850s. In this Medhurst run the risk of his fellow missionaries and even more the Bible societies. He should send back to China his assistant in translation Mr. Zhu Delang 朱德郎 whom he took with him to England.<sup>38</sup> The translators of the Bible into English at that time were required to reproduce: “as far as possible, characteristic features of the original language such as the order of words, the structure and division of sentences, and even the irregularities of grammar”.<sup>39</sup> Medhurst’s opinions anticipated later development by more than half a century. Since I do not have access to later Chinese translations after the Delegates’ in 1854 and Schereschewsky’s in 1902, I cannot analyse their character from this point of view.

Medhurst was right. Even if the publication of the *Mandarin Union Version* in 1919 did not become a “work of Chinese literature”, it helped to renew its language and had great impact on the May Fourth new literature and later.<sup>40</sup>

Probably more translations with dynamic equivalence will appear in the future and less those trying to transfer the message as exactly as possible from the original language. The more conservative translators will use this second method of “formal equivalence”. Much will also depend on the different

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<sup>36</sup> ZETZSCHE, J.O., op.cit., p. 349.

<sup>37</sup> HANAN, P., op.cit., p. 222.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 207 and 209.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 207. This citation is taken over from LEWIS, J.P. The English Bible, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. ZHOU, Zuoren 周作人 “Shengshu yu Zhongguo wenxue” 圣书与中国文学 “The Bible and Chinese Literature”. In *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue yanjiu ziliao, 1919 – 1949* 中国比较文学研究资料, 1919 – 1949, *Material for the Study of Chinese Comparative Literature, 1919 – 1949*, pp. 376 – 385. Also, especially see the books from the end of the 1990s, among them three most representative: MA, Jia. 马佳. *Shizijia xia de paihui. Jidu zongjiao wenhua he Zhongguo xiandai wenxue* 十字架下的徘徊. 基督宗教学文化和中国现代文学 Wandering under the Cross. Christian Culture and Modern Chinese Literature. Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1995. YANG, Jianlong. 杨剑龙. *Kuangye de husheng – Zhongguo xiandai zuojia yu jidujiao wenhua* 旷野的呼声 Crying in Wilderness. Contemporary Chinese Writers and Christian Culture. Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998 and WANG, Benchao. 王本朝. *Ershi shiji zhongguo wenxue yu jidujiao wenhua* 20 世纪中国文学与基督教文化 Twentieth Century Chinese Literature and Christian Culture. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe 2000.

Biblical Societies which follow their own policies. *The Bible* although regarded by them as the Word of God, became in China in the time of globalisation not only a question of fidelity to the biblical texts, but also a commodity in the market economy.

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