

正氣歌

The Song of the Spirit of Righteousness

宋 文天祥著 By Wen Tian-xiang of the Song Dynasty

馮欣明注譯 Translated and Annotated by Feng Xin-ming 2008

http://www.tsoidug.org/Papers/Spirit_Righteousness_Exp.pdf

(文天祥被蒙古忽必烈虜後獄中寫。他堅持拒降五年，終遇難。)
(Written by Wen Tian-xiang in prison after capture by the Mongol Kublai Khan.
For five years he steadfastly refused to surrender and change sides. He was finally executed.)

天地有正氣，雜然賦流形¹

tian- di` you^ zheng` qi`, za` ran` fu` liu` xing`

In the world there is the spirit of righteousness, taking many forms, bestowed on the ever-changing things.

下則為河嶽，上則為日星

xia` ze` wei` he` yue`, shang` ze` wei` ri` xing-

Below they are the rivers and mountains; above they are the sun and stars.

於人曰浩然²，沛乎塞蒼冥

yu- ren` yue^ hao` ran`, pei` hu^ sai- cang- ming`

With people it is called the spirit of honor and fearlessness, so vast it fills the universe.

皇路當清夷，含和吐明庭

huang` lu` dang- qing- yi`, han` he` tu^ ming` ting`

¹ 流 is taken to mean “varying, changing” here, as in 流光（往來無定或轉運不停：《辭海》，上海1989年，第1070頁）。

² 浩然（《辭海》，上海1989年，第1057頁）：正大剛直之氣，浩然之氣，楊繼盛《臨刑詩》：“浩氣還太虛，丹心照萬古”。

When the empire is tranquil one pours forth harmony in the splendid court.

時窮節乃見，一一垂丹青

shí' qióng' jié' nǎi[^] jiàn[`], yī- yī- chuí['] dān- qīng-

When times are extreme true fidelity is seen, and goes down in history case after case.

在齊太史簡，在晉董狐筆

zài' qí' tài' shǐ[^] jiǎn[^], zài' jìn' dòng[^] hú' bǐ[^]

During the State of Qi it is the official historian's bamboo slats; during the State of Jin it is Dong Hu's pen.

The official historian's bamboo slats: in ancient China before paper was invented, books were made of bamboo slats. Also, from the earliest times the governments of China have always had official historians. In 548 B.C.E., Cui Zhu 崔杼, the prime minister of the state of Qi, killed the head of state, the duke, for having had an affair with Cui Zhu's wife. Cui Zhu installed another duke, and ordered the official historian to write into the records that the killed duke had died of illness. The historian refused, saying that what he feared was not death but inaccuracy. He then wrote onto the bamboo slat, "In the fifth month, Cui Zhu killed his lord". The historian was killed by Cui Zhu. The younger brother who then became state historian, however, wrote the same thing onto the new bamboo slat and also got killed. When the third brother became royal historian and also wrote the same thing down Cui Zhu relented and allowed the record to stand.³

Dong Hu's pen: in 607 B.C.E., Zhao Dun 趙盾, the powerful prime minister of the state of Jin, escaped assassination by the duke who headed the state. While Prime Minister Zhao Dun hid in the state, his cousin killed the duke. Zhao Dun then came out of hiding and resumed his post. The official historian Dong Hu then wrote into the records, "Zhao Dun killed his lord" and showed the record in the court. Zhao Dun told the historian, "It was my cousin, not me, who killed the lord." Dong Hu said, "You hid but did not leave the state, then you came back and retook your position but did not execute the person who rebelled, so who could have killed the lord except you?"⁴

³ See *Shi Ji* 史記, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 32, p. 1502, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 1, *Shi Ji*, p. 382. For the date in terms of B.C.E. that this event took place see <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/齊後莊公>.

⁴ See *Shi Ji* 史記, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 39, p. 1675, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 1, *Shi Ji*, p.

在秦張良椎，在漢蘇武節

[zai` qin` zhang- liang` zhui-](#), [zai` han` su- wu^ jie`](#)

During the Qin Dynasty⁵ it is **Zhang Liang's hammer**; during the Han Dynasty⁶ it is **Su Wu's ambassadorial staff**.

Zhang Liang's hammer: Zhang Liang 張良 was a famous figure in Chinese history who helped established the Han (Han` 漢) Dynasty that replaced the Qin Dynasty. Originally he was a disenfranchised noble whose father and grandfather had both served as prime ministers of Han' 韓, one of the states extinguished by the “First Emperor” when all China was unified in 221 B.C.E. To avenge the extinguishing of the state of his forebears, in 218 B.C.E. Zhang Liang attempted (but failed) to assassinate the First Emperor by having a strong man throw a large 60 pound hammer at the emperor during one of his inspection tours.⁷

Su Wu's ambassadorial staff: Su Wu 蘇武 was a Chinese historical figure famous for unswerving loyalty. He was sent by the emperor in 100 B.C.E. as an ambassador to the Xiong Nu Confederation. The Xiong Nu detained him instead and demanded that he surrender and work for them. Despite being made to suffer many hardships, for nineteen years he steadfastly refused to surrender. With the passage of time all the trimmings had fallen off his ambassadorial staff, but Su Wu held onto it as a symbol of his loyalty. He finally returned to China when the emperor found out he was still alive.⁸

為嚴將軍頭，為嵇侍中血

[wei' yan' jiang- jun- tou'](#), [wei' ji- shi` zhong- xue^](#)

It is **General Yan's head**; it is **Imperial Attendant Ji's blood**.

426. For the date in terms of B.C.E. that this event took place see

<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/赵盾>.

⁵ Qin Dynasty: 221 – 207 B.C.E., established by Qin Shi Huang, popularly known as “The First Emperor”. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Dynasty.

⁶ Han (Han`) Dynasty: from 207 B.C.E. to 220 C.E. It is the dynasty from which Chinese people take the name for referring to themselves: “the Han people”. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_Dynasty).

⁷ See <http://baike.baidu.com/view/9442.htm#4>.

⁸ See *The Book of Han-Han Shu* 漢書, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 54, pp. 2459-2469, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 2, *Han Shu*, pp. 628-630. For the dates in terms of years B.C.E. see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/27500.htm>.

General Yan's head: In 212 C.E. during the Three Kingdoms Period General Yan' Yan' 嚴顏 was captured in battle by one of the famed "Three Brothers", Zhang Fei 張飛. When told to surrender or lose his head, Yan Yan roared, "There are only generals who lose their heads here; there are no generals who surrender!" For being so courageous Yan Yan was not executed, but he later committed suicide upon hearing that his lord was defeated and had surrendered.⁹

Imperial Assistant Ji's blood: Imperial Assistant or *shi zhong* 侍中 was a very high office something along the lines of an executive assistant to the emperor. (See *Ci Hai* 辭海, Shanghai 1989, p. 268 under the entry *shi zhong* 侍中.) In 304 C.E. during battle against rebel troops¹⁰, the imperial guards fled and the rebel troops were able

⁹ See *The Annals of the Three Kingdoms-San Guo Zhi* 三國志, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 36, p. 943, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 3, *San Guo Zhi*, p. 247. For the date in terms of years C.E. and for his later committing suicide see <http://www.haww.gov.cn/html/20050905/131664.html>.

¹⁰ This was during the "Rebellion Wars of the Eight Princes (八王之亂)" during the Jin Dynasty officially for fifteen years 291 – 306 C.E., but actually there had been a reprieve for eight years from 292 to 300 C.E. Therefore the actual wars were basically the six years from 300 to 306 C.E. The Eight Princes were all cousins and distant cousins of the Emperor, and each had a small independent fiefdom in the provinces with his own army.

At the time an incompetent emperor, said by some historians to be mentally handicapped, was on the throne. The turmoil started when the Emperor's wife, the Empress, called two of the Princes with their armies into the capital to overthrow the Empress Dowager (the previous, deceased emperor's wife) who had controlled the court. When the Empress gained control of the court, however, she found the Princes in her way, and incited one Prince to kill the other, then called in a third Prince to eliminate the second. Before she could eliminate the third Prince, however, he killed her. Other Princes then denounced him as a rebel, and raised armies to attack him and the capital, while he issued decrees in the Emperor's name declaring them rebels. After that the Princes serially allied with then turned on each other to gain control of the capital Loyang and thereby the powerless emperor. The Prince who controlled the capital and therefore the emperor would issue decrees in the name of the emperor and would call the Princes who oppose him rebels, until they overpowered him and assumed the mantle of legitimacy. The Rebellion Wars, nonstop from 300 to 306 C.E., raged on both in the capital Loyang and throughout north China, wreaking tremendous devastation and depopulation. At the end only the Prince of Dong-hai survived and he took control of a much-weakened Jin Dynasty. The incompetent emperor was then poisoned and his brother was put on the throne. The incident where Ji Shao protected the emperor took place in 304 C.E.

to come near the chariot of the Emperor Hui Di (惠帝). The Imperial Assistant Ji-Shao` 嵇紹 was on the chariot and used his body to shield the emperor from the rain of arrows. Ji Shao died, his blood splattering the emperor's clothes. After the battle was over the emperor told his attendants when they went to wash the blood off his clothes, "This is Imperial Assistant Ji's blood; do not wash off!"¹¹

為張睢陽齒，為顏常山舌

wei' zhang- sui- yang' chi^, wei' yan' chang' shan- she'

It is Zhang's teeth at Sui Yang; it is Yan's tongue at Chang Shan.

Zhang's teeth at Sui Yang: in 757 C.E. during the famous "An Lu-shan Rebellion", after being besieged for ten months Sui Yang 睢陽 City with only 6,000 defenders and out of food and supplies finally fell to the main rebel force of over 100,000. The commander, General Zhang Xun 張巡, was captured. Before execution his interrogation made fun of the fact that during the ten months of siege Zhang Xun had lost all but three of his teeth because he yelled so loud and bit his teeth so hard during fighting that they broke. Zhang Xun roared his denunciation of the rebels and was executed.¹² Thanks to Zhang Xun's stubborn resistance, the government forces had time to organize a counter-attack force that turned the tide of the entire war. Sui Yang City was recaptured only ten days later. (A note of interest here: Sui Yang City was only about fifteen miles from Yu Cheng, the town where Mulan the woman warrior from 300 years prior to Zhang Xun, was from.)

Yan's Tongue at Chang Shan: in 756 C.E. Governor Yan Gao-qing 顏杲卿 (brother to the famous calligrapher Yan Zhen-qing 顏真卿 who also fought during this time) of Chang Shan City was captured when the city fell to the rebel troops during the An

The capital and the emperor were being held by the Prince of Chang-sha but an alliance among the Princes of Cheng-du, He-jian, and Dong-hai launched a successful attack and captured the capital. Presumably the "rebels" here were the attacking Princes' men who had successfully broken through to the Imperial Palace. See <http://baike.baidu.com/view/6627.htm#1>, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/26588.htm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Eight_Princes.

¹¹ See *The Book of Jin-Jin Shu* 晉書, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 89, pp. 2298-2303, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 4, *Jin Shu*, pp. 590-591. For the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://www.uname.cn/top/celebresult.asp?id=11664463>.

¹² See *The Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書), Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 187, pp. 4900-4902, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 11, *Jiu Tang Shu*, p. 1252. For more details and the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/张巡>.

Lu-shan Rebellion. When brought before him, the rebel leader An Lu-Shan 安祿山 said to Yan, “It was I who got you promoted to Governor; what have I done to deserve you enmity?” Yan replied, “It was the Emperor who got you promoted to high office; what has he done to deserve your rebellion?” When being put to death by being tied to a post on a bridge and having his joints cut apart one by one, unto death the Governor never stopped denouncing the rebels, hence “Yan Chang Shan’s tongue”.¹³

或為遼東帽，清操厲冰雪

huo` wei` liao` dong- mao^, qing- cao- li` bing- xue`

Or it is the Eastern Liao hat, the incorruptibility purer than ice and snow.

The Eastern Liao Hat: refers to Guan^ Ning’ 管寧 (158-241 C.E.), a scholar toward the end of the Han Dynasty known for his moral uprightness and incorruptibility. Around the 180’s C.E. he moved to the far off northeastern province of Eastern Liao to flee from the lawlessness as the Han Dynasty broke up into eventually what became the Three Kingdoms. After thirty years he moved back to the center of China because that area had become peaceful and Eastern Liao where he was was sinking into turmoil. By then the Wei Dynasty had usurped the throne from the Han Dynasty and ruled the center of China. The Wei Emperor very much wanted Guan Ning, a former Han Dynasty subject widely respected for his moral uprightness, to serve as minister to legitimize the rule of the Wei Dynasty. Guan Ning, however, steadfastly refused to serve the usurper dynasty and declined the riches and high position offered. To the end of his life he lived plainly, wearing plain cloth clothes and a plain cloth hat in the Eastern Liao Provincial style. The Eastern Liao Hat thus became a symbol of incorruptibility by riches and high position.¹⁴

或為出師表，鬼神泣壯烈

huo` wei` chu- shi- biao^, gui^ shen` qi` zhuang` lie`

¹³ See *The Old Book of Tang-Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 187, pp. 4896-4899, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 11, *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp. 1251-1252. For the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://www.haww.gov.cn/html/20050905/131664.html>.

¹⁴ See *The Annals of the Three Kingdoms-San Guo Zhi* 三國志, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 11, pp. 354-360, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 3, *San Guo Zhi*, pp. 99-100. For more details and the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/34593.htm>.

Or it is the Memorials to Embark on the Campaign – the courage and fierce loyalty make gods and spirits weep.

Memorials to Embark on the Campaign: The prime minister Zhu-ge Liang 諸葛亮, of Three Kingdoms fame, wrote two very famous Memorials to Embark on the Campaign to his Shu (“Han”) Kingdom emperor, one in 225 and one around 226 C.E. They were campaigns to attack the strongest kingdom of the three, the Kingdom of Wei. The memorials demonstrated boundless loyalty to both the deceased emperor and the present emperor, gave carefully thought-out advice to the young emperor on running the country after the prime minister leave on the campaign, expressed an unshakeable dedication to the cause of unifying China and restoring the Han Dynasty, and displayed utter fearlessness in the face of great odds. The last sentence in the second Memorial is especially famous: “I bend my back and exert my energy to the utmost; until death do I stop – as for success or failure, I do not have the clairvoyance to foresee them (臣鞠躬尽瘁，死而后已；至于成败利钝，非臣之明所能逆睹也 *chen’ ju- gong- jin` cui`, si^ er’ hou` yi^, zhi` yu’ cheng’ bai` li` dun`, fei- chen’ zhi- ming’ suo^ neng’ ni` dao^ ye^*).” This quote has been held up since the author’s time as laudatory faithfulness to a cause and exemplary persistence in doing what is right no matter what the consequences. The commentator An Zi-shun 安子顺 (around 1200 C.E.) said, “He who reads Memorials to Embark on the Campaign and not weep is not loyal, he who reads Memorial Explaining the Situation and not weep is not *xiao* (good to parents), and he who reads Eulogy to Twelfth Son and not weep is not kind.”¹⁵

或為渡江楫，慷慨吞胡羯

huo` wei` du` jiang- ji`, kang- kai^ tun- hu` jie`

Or it is the oar during the River crossing – the fervency swallows up the barbarians.

Oar during the River crossing: this refers to the 313 C.E. event when Zu^ Ti` 祖逖 crossed the Yangtze River (Yangze Jiang or Chang Jiang) leading his men north to recover territory lost to the Xiong Nu barbarians: halfway across Zu Ti struck the water with an oar and said, “If I, Zu Ti, cannot clear the Central Plains and restore sustenance to the people, then let me be like this big river! (祖逖不能清中原而復

¹⁵ See *The Annals of the Three Kingdoms-San Guo Zhi* 三國志, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 35, pp. 911-931, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 3, *San Guo Zhi*, pp. 239-244. Also see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/39790.htm>, and for a rebuttal of those who doubt the authenticity of the second Memorial see http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/print_4b5a29bf010005w5.html.

济者，有如大江！)” He succeeded in recapturing all land south of the Yellow River and in holding that land against the Xiong Nu up to his death in 321 C.E.¹⁶

或為擊賊笏，逆豎頭破裂

huo` wei` ji- zei` hu`, ni` shu` tou` po` lie`

Or it is the court tablet striking the villain, breaking the rebel rogue's head.

The court tablet striking the villain: in 783 C.E. General Zhu- Ci[^] 朱泚 rebelled in the capital city and called himself emperor. General Duan` Xiu` Shi' 段秀實, who was under the rebel general's command, secretly organized a suicidal assassination plot against him with three other loyal generals. The next time Duan was summoned for a meeting with Zhu, Duan would signal by striking Zhu and the other three were to rush into the room and kill him. At the meeting the next day, Duan set off the signal by grabbing Zhu's court tablet out of his hands and striking him so hard on the forehead with it that even though he lifted his arm to ward off the blow, his head bled and he fell to the ground. However, the other three generals were prevented from entering the room and Duan, along with the three, were killed by Zhu's men.¹⁷

是氣所磅礴，凜烈萬古存

shi` qi` suo[^] bang` bo', lin[^] lie` wan` gu[^] cun`

What is permeated by this spirit lives on forever revered.¹⁸

當其貫日月，生死安足論

dang- qi` guan` ri` yue`, sheng- si[^] an- zu' lun`

It links up the cosmos¹⁹, so how can life and death compare in importance?

¹⁶ See *The Book of Jin-Jin Shu* 晉書, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 62, pp. 1693-1702, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 4, *Jin Shu*, pp. 438-440. For the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/25707.htm>.

¹⁷ See *The Old Book of Tang-Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1959, Vol. 128, pp. 3586-3589, reprinted in the *Twenty-four Histories* 二十四史, Zhonghua Books 中華書店, 1997, Vol. 11, *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp. 921-922. For the date in terms of years C.E. see <http://www.haww.gov.cn/html/20050905/131664.html>. Also see <http://baike.baidu.com/view/340938.htm>.

¹⁸ I've translated 凜烈 here as “revered” as in 凜然 and not “icy, cold” as in 凜冽; I think this is the author's intended meaning.

地維賴以立，天柱賴以尊

dì wéi lái yǐ lì, tiān-zhù lái yǐ zūn-

The Corners of Earth depend on it to stand; the Pillars of Heaven depend on it to maintain their honor.

三綱實繫命，道義為之根

sān-gāng-shí-xì-mìng, dào-yì-wéi-zhī-gēn-

The Three Relationships really do determine one's life; moral righteousness is the root.

The Three Relationships (*san gang* 三綱): are the relationships between ruler and subject, between father and son, and between husband and wife.

嗟余遘陽九，隸也實不力

jiē-yú-gòu-yáng-jiǔ, lì-yě-shí-bù-lì

Sad that I met with the Yang Nine; the slaves really didn't exert themselves.

Yang Nine (*yang jiu* 陽九): refers to the "Nine Yang-Type Misfortunes (陽九厄)" that are present in every "eon (元)" of 4,500 years, and is used to mean extremely bad luck.

楚囚纓其冠，傳車送窮北

chǔ-qiū-yīng-qí-guān-, chuān-che-sòng-qióng-bei'

The head of the prisoners of war was tied up and sent on the transport cart to the extreme north.

Head of the prisoners of war: the author is referring to himself here.²⁰

¹⁹ I take the liberty here to interpret 日月, literally "the sun and the moon", as meaning the cosmos – the two most important celestial bodies being used as the symbol for the cosmos. Chinese terms involving more than one character are composed of characters that can be words by themselves, and therefore often connote, besides the meaning of the term itself, meanings of that of the characters themselves. So here one can take the term 日月 to mean both the cosmos as well as the sun and moon.

²⁰ Unlike Guo Shang Hou (see 古文評註 *Gu Wen Ping Zhu* or *Classical Writings with Commentary and Annotations*, ed. by Guo Xiang-hou 過商侯, 1703 C.E., Hong-Ye Books 宏業書店, Taipei 1975), I do not believe the entire phrase 楚囚纓其冠 is an

鼎鑊甘如飴，求之不可得

ding[^] guo` gan- ru' yi', qiu' zhi- bu` ke[^] de'

The cauldron would have been sweet as syrup; I sought it but couldn't get it.

陰房闐鬼火，春院悶天黑

yin- fang' qu` gui' huo[^], chun- yuan` men` tian- hei-

The dark room was silent with ghost fires; the spring garden was depressing with dark skies.

牛驥同一皁，雞栖鳳凰食

niu' ji' tong' yi- zao`, ji- qi- feng` huang' shi'

Cattle and the thoroughbred shared the same manger; the phoenix ate from the chicken's roost.

Cattle and the thoroughbred; phoenix... chicken's roost: the author is comparing himself to the thoroughbred and the phoenix, and has to share lodgings with the unrefined, i.e. the cattle and chicken.

一朝蒙霧露，分作溝中瘠

yi- zhao- meng' wu` lu`, fen` zuo` gou- zhong- ji'

Should the dew and fog get to me one morning, my fate would have been that of a corpse cast into a ditch.²¹

allusion to the phrase “楚囚南冠” and therefore merely means “prisoner of war”. (For a discussion of “楚囚南冠” see <http://tieba.baidu.com/f?kz=295353659>.) Instead, I believe that only the first two words 楚囚 refer to prisoners of war. After that, the word 纓 refers to the long rope used to tie prisoners – see *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1339, and is used here as a verb to mean tying a prisoner. So 楚囚纓其冠 is not merely a long way of writing 楚囚南冠, with the word 纓 added in for no reason. Rather, I believe 楚囚 is being used here as the plural, meaning that a number of the soldiers the author commanded had, along with him, become prisoners. The word 冠 then refers to the head of these prisoners, i.e., he, General Wen. The head of the prisoners, i.e., he, was tied up and sent to the Extreme North.

²¹ Here 分 *fen`* is read in the fourth tone instead of the first tone, and means one's station in life or, more loosely, one's fate. The term 溝中瘠 means a corpse cast into a ditch (*Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1012).

The dew and fog get to me: this phrase means becoming ill, probably also, by the “dew and fog”, specifically meaning becoming ill from the moist, dank place in which he was imprisoned.

如此再寒暑，百沴自辟易

ru' ci^ˆ zai^ˆ han' shu^ˆ, bai^ˆ li^ˆ zi^ˆ pi^ˆ yi^ˆ

I lived like that for another winter and summer, yet all the ailments²² stayed away from me²³.

哀哉沮洳場，為我安樂國

ai- zai- ju^ˆ ru^ˆ chang', wei' wo^ˆ an- le^ˆ guo'

How sad that a low, wet space²⁴ is now my tranquil land!

豈有他謬巧，陰陽不能賊

qi^ˆ you^ˆ ta- miu^ˆ qiao^ˆ, yin- yang' bu^ˆ neng' zei'

There can be no other trickery; neither Yin nor Yang can steal from me.

顧此耿耿在，仰視浮雲白

gu^ˆ ci^ˆ geng^ˆ geng^ˆ zai^ˆ, yang^ˆ shi^ˆ fu' yun' bai'

With this in mind I am at peace; I look above to the floating white clouds.

悠悠我心憂，蒼天曷有極

you- you- wo^ˆ xin- you-, cang- tian- he' you^ˆ ji'

My heart is sad but relaxed; don't tell me that the blue sky has an end.²⁵

哲人日已遠，典型在宿昔

zhe' ren' ri^ˆ yi^ˆ yuan^ˆ, dian^ˆ xing' zai^ˆ su^ˆ xi-

²² Ailment or 沴 *li* means the ills brought by the *qi* or “vital energy” not flowing harmoniously in the body. See *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1031.

²³ Avoid: 辟易 *pi yi* means to avoid. See *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 2229.

²⁴ 沮洳 *ju ru* means low and wet. See *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1029.

²⁵ 曷 *he* means 難道 here: “don't tell me that...” or rhetorically in a skeptical sense “could it be that..?” See *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1570.

The philosophers' days are far from us; our models are in the past.²⁶

風簷展書讀，古道照顏色

feng- yan' zhan^ shu- du', gu^ dao` zhao` yan' se`

Under the eaves I open the book and read; the ancient Way lights up my face.

REFERENCE

Classical Writings with Commentary and Annotations 古文評註 (*Gu Wen Ping Zhu*), ed. by Guo Xiang-hou 過商候編, 1703 C.E. (康熙癸末年), Hong-Ye Books 宏業書店, Tapei 1975.

Twenty-four Histories 二十四史 (*Er Shi Si Shi*), Zhonghua Books 中華書店, Beijing 1997.

Ci Hai 辭海 (*Sea of Terms*), Shanghai 1989.

²⁶ 宿昔 *su xi* means "in the past". See *Ci Hai*, Shanghai 1989, p. 1155.