

# Lü Zhenzhong : a Chinese translator of the Bible

Autor(en): **Gálik, Marián**

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LÜ ZHENZHONG –  
A CHINESE TRANSLATOR OF THE *BIBLE*

Marián Gálik, Bratislava

For Robert P. Kramers, Professor emeritus of Zurich University, at his 80th birthday.

In 1970, a Chinese translation of the whole *Bible* appeared, but found only a very limited number of readers. The reason for this was not so much the good or bad qualities of the translation, but an extraordinary fact: this book had been published, certainly at great financial expense, by the Bible Society of Hong Kong (henceforth *BSHK*) for the Reverend Lü Zhenzhong 呂振中 and his relatives and friends only. We read on the inner cover of the book: “Published for Rev. Lu Chen-chung”.<sup>1</sup> The book is very rare, and I have a copy of it by courtesy of Professor emeritus Robert P. Kramers, to whom I express my deepest thanks. Professor Kramers placed at my disposal also other materials dating from the years 1954-1964, when the draft translation of some parts of the *Old Testament* was discussed first with him, and later with the representatives of the different Bible Societies, where he, as a Translations Adviser of the Bible Societies in Hong Kong & Taiwan (*BSHKT*), and responsible organizer for the meeting of Translations Secretaries on the subject of Chinese Bible revision, April 8-14, 1963, played a very important role.

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In the 1950s and 1960s, European missionaries, Chinese theologians and religionists began to feel that China needed a new translation of the *Bible*, where the new discoveries of eminent *Bible* commentators and translators, especially from Europe and America, could be used for a better and more adequate rendition of this most influential spiritual creation of mankind.

1 *Shengjing* 聖經 (The Holy Bible. A New Translation). 1970. 1854+504 and Errata 5 pp.

Many Chinese Protestants, who were most industrious in this respect, were no longer quite satisfied with their most influential product: *Jiu xinyue quanshu* 舊新約全書 (Old and New Testaments of the Bible), Shanghai, American Bible Society (ABS), British & Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) and National Bible Society of Scotland (NBSS), 1919. The subtitle of this publication is: *Guanhua hehe ben* 官話和合本, or *Guanhua hehe yiben* 官話和合譯本, i.e., *Mandarin Union Version*, or *Translated Mandarin Union Version (UV)*. The great impact of this translation was due to its new, modern form of *guoyu* 國語, the Chinese national language in the vernacular. Although this kind of language was proposed by returned students already in 1906,<sup>2</sup> it stood no chance to replace the classical literary language *wenyan* 文言 up to the year 1917, when Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) suggested the adoption of the former for the new literature of the day,<sup>3</sup> which happened on January 12, 1920, when the Ministry of Education issued an instruction to use the vernacular instead of the classical literary language from the fall of that year in primary schools.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to observe that a book translated mainly by foreigners with the help of Chinese informants became a textbook, and maybe the most important one, for children, young people and members of the modern intelligentsia to acquire a command of the most appropriate language tool of the next decades. Especially the most capable Chinese writers, cultural workers, politicians, and even those who later participated in the anti-religious movement (1922-1928), used this tool and therefore also read the *Bible* and its *Gospels*.<sup>5</sup>

2 Chow Tse-tsung: *The May Fourth Movement. Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Stanford, Stanford University Press 1967, p. 34.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 273-275.

4 *ibid.*, p. 279.

5 Robinson, L.S.: *Double-Edged Sword. Christianity and 20th Century Chinese Fiction*. Hong Kong, Tao Fung Shan Ecumenical Centre 1986. See also Find-eisen, R.D.: "Wang Jingzhi's *Yesu de fenfu* (The Instructions by Jesus). A Christian Novel?", In: Eber, I., Sze-kar Wan, Walf, K. (in collaboration with R. Malek) (eds.): *Bible in Modern China. The Literary and Intellectual Impact*. Institute Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin 1999, pp. 279-299 and Gálik, M.: "Mythopoeic Warrior and femme fatale: Mao Dun's Version of Samson and Delilah", *ibid.*, pp. 301-320. This volume contains or mentions other Chinese

In 1946 and 1947, broad cooperation started between different Bible Societies of Denmark, England, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA, and this brought together many people representing the “metropolises” of the Christian world with other countries, mainly in Asia and Africa. China and the Chinese world were no exception. Between 1946 and 1949 the Council of the United Bible Societies (henceforth *UBS*) formed a “Functional Group on Translation”, of which the later famous theoretician of translation, and mainly of the *Bible*, Eugene A. Nida (\*1914) became a chairman.<sup>6</sup> The Netherlands Bible Society (*NBS*) and its representative John J. Kijne helped him a lot in his endeavours.<sup>7</sup> Probably through the intervention of the last, Robert P. Kramers became at first representative of the Netherlands Bible Society, and later, as a Sinologist well versed in Chinese philosophy and language, a Translations Adviser of the *BSHKT*. Nida was a *spiritus movens* of the whole world-wide project of translating the *Bible* into the different languages of the world. When Kramers had the idea of discussing the new Chinese translation of the *Bible*, or—more precisely—some parts of, he studied the methods propounded and systematized by Nida, as we know from his article on Lü Zhenzhong’s translation of the *Gospels*, published as *Xinyue xinyi xiugao* 新約新譯修稿

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studies in the essay by Liang Gong 梁工: “Twenty Years of Studies of Biblical Literature in the People’s Republic of China, 1976-1996”, *ibid.*, pp. 399-401. Cf. also Gálík, M.: “The Bible and Chinese Literature as Seen from the Angle of Intercultural Communication”. *Asian and African Studies*, n.s. (Bratislava), 2, 2, 1993, pp. 113-133. There are also Chinese books dealing with this question in the vein of L.S. Robinson: Ma Jia 馬佳: *Shizijia xia de paihui. Jidu zongjiao wenhua he Zhongguo xiandai wenxue* 十字架下的徘徊. 基督宗教文化和中國現代文學 (Wandering Under the Cross. Christian Culture and Modern Chinese Literature). Shanghai, Xuelin chubanshe 1995, and Yang Jianlong 楊劍龍: *Kuangye de husheng. Zhongguo xiandai zuojia yu chidujiao wenhua* 曠野的呼聲. 中國現代作家與基督教文化 (Crying in the Wilderness. Contemporary Chinese Writers and Christian Culture). Shanghai, Jiaoyu chubanshe 1998.

6 North, E.M.: “Eugene A. Nida: An Appreciation”. In: Black, M. and Smalley, W. A. (eds.): *On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida*. The Hague-Paris, Mouton 1974, p. x.

7 loc. cit.



(Revised Version of the New Testament) by the Christian Literature Agency in 1952. When studying Lü's rendition (done in cooperation with Mr. Douglas Lancashire, Executive Secretary of HKBS, and even with Reverend Lü), Kramers published an article on Lü's revised version, in which he used Nida's *Translator's Commentary on Selected Passages*, Glendale, CA, Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1947, as his (and his collaborators') guide through the textual, exegetical, lexical and syntactical problems connected with Lü's translation. This article was first published in *The Bible Translator*, October 1954, and later reprinted in its Chinese version in Jia Baoluo 賈保羅 (Kramers, R.P.) (ed.): *Shengjing Hanyi lunwen ji* 聖經漢譯論文集 (Studies in Chinese Translations of the Bible), Hong Kong, The Council on Christian Literature for Overseas Chinese, 1965.<sup>8</sup> I do not know whether Kramers was acquainted with another book by Nida entitled *Bible Translating: An Analysis of Principles and Procedures*, New York, American Bible Society, 1947, mostly concerned with "aboriginal languages", where China was mentioned only once.<sup>9</sup> Probably it was not necessary for him to use it, although, on the other hand, the methods he employed when convening the above-mentioned meeting followed the procedures used by the UBS and formulated in this last book.

It seems that the discussions dealing with the draft translation of the *Old Testament* by Lü Zhenzhong started at the end of 1953, or at the beginning of 1954. In Kramers' archives, now deposited in my library, there are the pages 9-22, entitled "Bible Discussion Group", starting with March 15, 1954 and ending April 22, 1955. But there are no notes whatsoever, in the materials Kramers gave to me, concerning discussions after April 1955 and before October 1962.

In 1964, just before Whitsun, Kramers finished in Hong Kong another important essay "Zhongwen Shengjing zhi xiuding - qiantu ruhe" 中文聖經之修訂 - 前途如何 (What is the Future of the Bible Revisions in Chinese?).<sup>10</sup> Here he summarized more than ten years of his experiences

8 Kramers, R.P. (Jia Baoluo): "Ping Lü Zhenzhong mushi Xinyue xinyi xiugao" 評呂振中牧師新約新譯修稿 (On Reverend Lü Zhenzhong's Revised Translation of the New Testament). In: *Studies in Chinese Translations of the Bible*, pp. 135-149.

9 op. cit., p. 138.

10 Kramers, R.P.: *Studies in Chinese Translations of the Bible*, pp. 150-160.

of the work in the *HKBS* and in *HKTBS* between 1953-1964, just before he left for Switzerland to become a Professor of Zurich University. I shall devote more attention to this important question at the end of this contribution. It is necessary to say that almost all Kramer's experience is connected, directly or indirectly, with Lü Zhenzhong's endeavours.

## 2

Lü Zhenzhong (†1995) graduated from the University of Hong Kong in 1922. Later he studied Greek and Hebrew at Yanjing University in Peking and taught for fourteen years at the South Fujian Theological College in Amoy.<sup>11</sup> His *guoyu* was slightly flavoured by the Amoy dialect. In 1940, he was called to Yanjing University to translate the *New Testament*.<sup>12</sup> Its first draft was privately published in 1945,<sup>13</sup> or in 1946 published by Yanjing daxue zongjiao xueyuan 燕京大學宗教學院 (Institute of Religion of Yanjing University).<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s he was already working on the translation of the *Old Testament* after receiving some deeper training in Biblical languages at Union Theological Seminary, New York (1947-1948) and at Westminster College, England (1948-1949).<sup>15</sup> Americans were the first who began to be interested in this, to some extent, "strange" man, but for some reason, maybe also because of his individualist orientation, they did not devote much attention to him. The attitude of the *BFBS*, especially of its representative, Mr. Douglas Lancashire, later Kramers' colleague in Hong Kong, was different. Lü was financially and

11 Young, L.K.: "Honorary Degrees Congregation, Thursday, 12th April, 1973". In: *University of Hong Kong Gazette*, Vol. XX, No. 4, 1973, p. 62.

12 Kramers, R.P.: "A Note on Reverend Lü Zhenzhong's Draft Translation of the Bible." In: Findeisen, R.D. and Gassmann, R.H.: *Autumn Floods. Essays in Honour of Marián Gálik*. Bern, Peter Lang 1998, p. 630.

13 loc. cit.

14 Liang Gong et alii: *Shengjing baike cidian* 聖經百科辭典 (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Bible). Shenyang. Liaoning renmin chubanshe 1990, p. 477.

15 "Honorary Degrees Congregation", p. 62.

otherwise supported by the *BFBS*. From 1953 on the collaboration between Lü and Kramers started and brought its positive results.<sup>16</sup>

After his return from England to Hong Kong, Lü Zhenzhong never actively participated in affairs of the Church, and allegedly, according to his own admission, he preached only twice between his ordination in 1948 up to April 12, 1973,<sup>17</sup> when Sir Murray MacLehose, the Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity on him for his rendition of the whole *Bible* into the Chinese vernacular, the first in history. According to the Public Orator at this ceremony, Professor Leonard Kenneth Young, Reverend Lü “has reached into the ancient past and has traced and retraced old paths pondering the perplexities of Greek and Hebrew texts. Single-handed but indomitable he has fought the battle of the translations, making his journey through the conflicting and contending fields of linguistics, history, philosophy and religion ... He has scorned sensuous delights and lived laborious days. He has overcome all pitfalls, snares, the clamours of war, and his own physical infirmities. Like Bunyan’s Christian he has gone steadily forward with infinite patience and courage through the valleys of doubt, despondency and despair that every scholar of quality must encounter before he hears the trumpets sounding triumphantly as he reaches Promised Land. As a result the splendour of Revelations, the haunting beauty of the Songs (sic!) of Solomon and the moving simplicity of the Sermon on the Mount are set within a framework of ideas and terms entirely relevant to his contemporaries, in language that can be heard and understood.” According to this speaker: “The work which is now finished is a milestone in Biblical scholarship.”<sup>18</sup>

## 3

Robert Kramers in his circular letter from October 1962 to twenty six consultants asked them to read the attached translated material from the

16 Kramers, R.P.: “On Reverend Lü Zhenzhong’s Revised Translation of the New Testament”, p. 135.

17 Young, L.K.: op. cit., p. 63.

18 loc. cit.

*Old Testament* and to send their comments.<sup>19</sup> These consultants represented different theological seminaries and other institutions of Hong Kong and Kowloon, Taiwan, U.S.A., England, Philipines, Singapore and Sarawak. Five of the addressees did not respond before the deadline, i.e. up to January 31, 1963. The entire draft translation of the *Old Testament* by Lü Zhenzhong was not sent to the consultants, but only the portions as follow:

*Exodus*, chapters 16-20  
*I Samuel*, chapters 1-21  
*Psalms*, 26, 90-100  
*Job*, chapters 7-10  
*Song of Songs*, chapters 1-4  
*Proverbs*, chapters 8-9  
*Isaiah*, chapters 7-10  
*Ezekiel*, chapters 1-3

The comments, according to Kramers' wish, should be as detailed as possible, with regard to four aspects:

- 1/ Text in relation to the emendation by Lü in relation to the *Bible* written in Hebrew and its value in the light of contemporary biblical scholarship.
- 2/ The value of the exegesis by Lü in relation to the *UV* where his views are different from those of the most popular Chinese translators.
- 3/ There are many changes in Lü's vocabulary of the well-known biblical terms in comparison with *UV*. What are the opinions of the consultants on this question?
- 4/ As to the syntax and style, Lü preferred a literal translation and as to the style he tried to follow the practice of the contemporary national language. Was he right in the first case, and was he successful in the second?

As we may observe, these four aspects are in agreement with four demands by Nida in his book *Translator's Commentary on the Selected Passages*.

19 All letters, decisions concerning Reverend Lü Zhenzhong's "case", and his remarks or attitudes, are quoted here without further specification. All are based on the materials presented to me by Robert P. Kramers.

After receiving the answers to his circular letter, Kramers in February 1963 wrote (and hopefully sent) another letter to the consultants. It was called "Enquiry on Reverend Lü Zhenzhong's *Old Testament* Translation", and probably later with his own hand, he wrote down the most typical opinions. As quoting the whole letter with all Kramers' questions and the views of the consultants would make this contribution unduly long, I shall quote only the prevalent opinions concerning Lü's enterprise:

Q.: "Do you think that Rev. Lü's translation is more faithful to the original texts, than the Mandarin Union Version now used in the Churches?"

A.: "In general, yes."

Q.: "Do you think that Rev. Lü's translation has more accurate and precise interpretation than the Union Version?"

A.: "Not entirely."

Q.: "Do you think that a revision of the present Mandarin Version is urgently necessary?"

A.: "Yes, absolutely."

As to the question whether a minor revision or a completely new translation from the original text was necessary, the answers were not clear. A minor revision was judged "not worthwhile", and the question concerning a completely new translation remained unanswered. As to the combination of both, the answer was: "While undertaking new translation, *UV* is one of good referencies."

At the meeting in April 1963 four representatives of the *UBS* from abroad were present: Rev. V.J. Bradnock, *BFBS*, Rev. D. McGavin, *NBSS*, Dr. Eugene A. Nida, *ABS*, and Dr. J.L. Swellengrebel, *NBS*. Also present at the discussion, were Lü Zhenzhong and some other Chinese, as we may conclude from the minutes of the meeting written by Kramers' hand. Among those who were active during the meeting, we may mention Mr. Moses Hsü (Xu Mushi 許牧世), Dr. Timothy Y.H. Chow, Rev. S.K. Lee, Mr. Liu Yiling 劉翼凌, Rev. Philip C.H. Teng, all from Hong Kong and Kowloon. From the minutes, written in a hurry and barely legible, it is doubtful whether Dr. Fred C.C. Peng (USA) was present or not.

After the meeting, the "Report on Consultations Concerning the Chinese Bible Held in Hong Kong, April 1963" was elaborated by W.J. Bradnock, and addressed to Nida, McGavin, Swellengrebel and Kramers. The



“private opinions” of the representatives of the four foreign Bible Societies were partly flattering to Lü Zhenzhong, but partly they gave him a fatal blow. In Bradnock’s letter we may read:

- a. There can be no doubt at all that no one sees in it a possible alternative to the Kuoyu (U.V.) Bible. Only one or two see it as even a working basis for a new translation.
- b. There was general appreciation of the scholarly labour and devotion involved in its preparation.
- c. There was a general recognition that it contains numerous valuable scholarly insights and that on these grounds it could be a major contribution towards any project of U.V. revision or new translation on which the Societies might decide.
- d. On grounds of style and general semantic principles there was a high measure of agreement that it could not stand as a Bible Society production.

In spite of this the representatives of the Bible Societies and the Chinese consultants agreed: “It is by any reckoning a major contribution.”

Lü Zhenzhong in his remarks on “‘The Report on an Enquiry into Rev. Lu Chen Chung’s Draft Translation of the Old Testament’ by R.P. Kramers, April 1963”, expressed his thanks to Kramers “for the time and labour he has spent on the well-thought out and systematic questionnaire, for the masterly and fair manner in which he has managed to summarize the criticism and comments, pointing out relevant, crucial problems of Bible translation all along”, but he also regretted, that under “the missiles of criticism and attacks, it might seem as though the venture of trust started by Yenching University and continued by BFBS through a stretch of over 23 years has been a great mistake and failure and a gross waste of time and money spent on the projects.” He protected himself against the criticism mainly as regards the problems of exegesis and style. According to him “God’s message must be communicated not only to the well-educated (although it was one of his aims, and probably even most important, M.G.), but also to the children and the countryfolk; and the people get the message not only by reading, but also by listening; and this can best be obtained from a Bible in the simple spoken language.” His examples were the *Vulgate* and different later versions in German, English and other colloquial languages. He admitted that his *guoyu*, based mainly on the Peking dialect, was not good, but this shortcoming could be corrected in

the process of future work on the translation. He manifested his hope that after “some sort of improvement of the manuscripts,” his draft (and may be also the whole book, although he did not write it explicitly), will be “available to people who wish to read and study it.”

The resolution of the representatives of the Bible Societies was more strict and stringent than Lü Zhenzhong expected. It was decided to recommend:

That the BFBS be asked to finance the publication and printing of a small *tentative* edition of Lu Chen Chung’s Bible, to be printed and published under private auspices and under his name.

That Lu Chen Chung be asked to provide a completed manuscript of the whole Bible in final form not later than September, 1965.

## 4

To follow the whole discussion in correspondence and also in a long 95 pp. summary by Kramers would probably be boring for the majority of readers, and certainly not necessary for this contribution. I think it will be enough to analyze the opinions concerned with the *Song of Songs*. More than ten remarks by consultants were connected with it. It was a neglected part of the *Bible* among those drafts sent to the consultants asking for their opinions. This was probably caused by the fact that the theologians, who were asked to comment on Lü’s drafts, were less interested in this work of the highest poetic qualities highlighting the power of love between the two sexes. God, the main object of theological study and devotion, is not even mentioned in this work. It seems to me that Lü Zhengzhong in his translation of the *Song of Songs* adhered mainly to the *Revised Standard Version*, published in 1952. This translation was made by thirty-two scholars “charged with making a revision (of the earlier versions, M.G.), and they have secured the review and counsel of an Advisory Board of fifty representatives of the cooperating denominations.”<sup>20</sup> The translation of the *Song of Songs* was the work of

20 *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha. Revised Standard Version.* New York, Oxford University Press 1965, p. x.



Professor Robert Gordis, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, who published it later separately together with a study and commentary in 1954.

There are some short notes in the comments by consultants on Lü's draft of the first four chapters of the *Song of Songs* in Kramers' "Discussion Notes on Rev. Lü Chen Chung's Old Testament Draft Translation" (pp. 1-30 and 33-95) and "Corrections and Additions to pp. 1-30" (pp. 31-32), and besides these also in the letters of the consultants. The first part of the manuscript (1-32) was written before Christmas 1963, and the second part was finished in April 1964.

When bringing the words of criticism and of praise by the consultants, or the opinions of Kramers and Lü, who often compare only *UV*, *RSV* and Lü's draft, I beg the reader for permission to quote also two earlier versions of the *Song of Songs*, namely the *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis* (henceforth *V*),<sup>21</sup> translated by St. Jerome (ca. 347-419), later adapted in 1592-1593, and the *King James' Version* (1611) (*KJV*), and also other interesting renderings into Chinese. I do this because of the poetic beauty or even musical cadence I find in these translations. And these two qualities, according to my opinion, should be the aim of the translators of this jewel of world love literature.

Chapter 1, 1 (first part):

Lü's draft: *Yong ta kou de jiewen qin wo* 用他口的接吻親我 'Let him kiss me with his mouth.' *Gen wo qin* 跟我親 means 'kiss me' in modern Chinese.

*V*: Osculetur me osculo oris sui.

*KJV*: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

*UV*: *Yuan ta yong kou yu wo qinzui* 源他用口與我親嘴 'Let him kiss me with his mouth.'

*RSV*: O that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!

Lü's printed version: *E, yuan ta yong ta de qinzui shi wo taozui e!* 哦, 源他用他的親嘴使我陶醉哦 'O that he would kiss me with his mouth and make me intoxicated!'

21 I use here the edition by Valentinus Loch, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, Ratisbonae 1863.

Between the draft and the printed form there is a big difference. In comparison with *RSV* Lü changed the pronoun, thus following the Hebrew text where it is not “you”, but “he”. Otherwise Lü’s rendition is too wordy and too free.

Probably the best is the translation by Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911-1966), a well-known Chinese poet: *Yuan ta yong ta de kou yu wo jiewen* 源他用他的口與我接吻 ‘Let him kiss me with his mouth.’<sup>22</sup> This translation is similar to that of the *UV*, but much more poetic.

Very similar to Chen Mengjia is that of Bishop S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831-1906): *Wei yuan yu wo jiewen* 惟願與我接吻 ‘If only (he) would kiss me.’<sup>23</sup> *Jiewen* 接吻 to join lips is a much more poetical expression for kiss than *qinzui* 親嘴 to join mouths. The last was used in the early Chinese texts, “but always as *pars pro toto*, i.e. symbolizing sexual intercourse.”<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 2, 4:

*V*: Introduxit me in cellam vinariam, ordinavit in me charitatem.

*KJV*: He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

*UV*: *Ta dai wo ru yanyansuo, yi ai wei qi zai wo yi shang* 他帶我入筵宴所，以愛爲旗在我以上 ‘He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.’

*RSV*: He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Lü’s draft: the materials do not give an exact rendering of the whole verse.

Lü changed *yanyansuo* 筵宴所 ‘banqueting house’ for *jiulou* 酒樓 lit. ‘winehouse,’ having a not quite appropriate flavour alluding to a modern

22 *Gezhong zhi ge* 歌中之歌 (Song of Songs). Shanghai, Langyou tushu yinshua gongsi 1932, p. 12.

23 *Xin jiu yue shengjing. Qian wenli* 舊新約聖經. 淺文理 (The Old and New Testament of the Bible in Easy Classical Translation). Shanghai, The American Bible Society 1922, p. 591. An excellent monograph on the life and work of Schereschewsky is Irene Eber’s *The Jewish Bishop & the Chinese Bible. S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831-1906)*. Leiden, Brill 1999.

24 Eberhard, W.: *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols. Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*. Translated from the German by G.Y. Campbell. Taipei, SMC Publishing Inc. 1994, p. 156.

restaurant or pub. Lü was therefore criticized by Moses Hsu, although according to Kramers this seemed to be a “weak argument.” Kramers remarked that “winehouse” is a close reproduction of the Hebrew *beit hayayim*. Moses Hsu also protested against the second part of the verse and regarded the rendition: *ta de qizhi jiu zhi shi ai fubizhe wo* 他的旗幟就只是愛覆庇着我 ‘his banner was just love sheltering and protecting me,’ as clumsy. Lü partly followed the suggestions, but partly remained adamant. In the printed version we read:

*Ta dai lingzhe wo jinle yanyinshi, ta de qizhi jiu zhi shi “ai” fubizhe wo* 他帶領着我進了宴飲室, 他的旗幟就只是“愛”覆庇着我 ‘He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner was just “love” sheltering and protecting me.’

It is very interesting to note, that Schereschewsky, who was certainly the best expert on the *Hebrew Bible* among all translators into Chinese, used the most succinct and musical diction: *Yindao wo ru yansuo, bei wo yi chongai* 引導我入宴所, 被我以寵愛 ‘He led me to the banqueting house, and overshadowed me with his royal love.’

Chapter 1, 16:

V: Ecce, tu pulcher es, dilecte mi, et decorus. Lectulus noster floridus.

KJV: Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant: also our bed is green.

UV: *Wo de liangren na, ni shen meili keai, women yi qingcao wei chuangpeng* 我的良人哪, 你甚美麗可愛, 我們以青草為牀棚 ‘My beloved, you are fair and worthy of love. Our bed is made out of green plants.’

According to Kramers, *liangren* 良人 is “somewhat old-fashioned, referring to the husband.” Lü’s draft had *lianaizhe* 戀愛者 ‘loved one,’ although he allegedly used *airen* 愛人 lover. *Lianaizhe* was a mistake of the copyist. Lü in his printed book translated the verse as:

*E, wo de airen na, ni hen meili! Zhen keai! A, women de chuangpeng fanmao qingcong* 哦, 我的愛人哪, 你很美! 真可愛! 啊, 我們的牀棚繁茂青蔥 ‘O, my lover, you are fair! Really worthy of love! Our bed is luxuriantly green.’

The term for ‘lover’ is a problem in Chinese. In the PRC *airen* 愛人, ‘be-loved’ or ‘lover,’ is normally used for ‘husband.’ In order not to mislead the readers, the editors of the slightly revised version of the *UV* for their PRC readers, used in *Shengjing* 聖經 (Bible), Nanking, Chinese Protestant Association 1996, the old term from the *UV*, i.e. *liangren* 良人. The same is done in another recent publication: *Shengjing* 聖經 (Holy Bible, Chinese/English, New International Edition). Hong Kong-Taipei, International Bible Society 1997, although here this term is translated as ‘lover.’ Lü has been often accused of using too many words. This is a clear case of wordiness.

Chapter 2, 1:

V: Ego flos campi, et lilium convalium.

KJV: I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

UV: *Wo shi Shalun de meiguihua, shi gu zhong de baihehua* 我是沙崙的玫瑰花, 是谷中的白荷花 ‘I am the rose of Sharon, I am the lily of the valleys.’ According to the note, ‘rose’ may also be translated as *shuixianhua* 水仙花 ‘narcissus.’

RSV: I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

The RSV also adds a note pointing out that ‘rose’ means ‘crocus’ in Hebrew.

Lü in his draft renders ‘rose of Sharon’ as *pingyuan shang de fanhonghua* 平原上的番紅花 ‘saffron on high plains’ and makes it parallel to the next *shan gu zhong de baihehua* 山谷中的白荷花 ‘lily in the valleys.’ The final text of Lü we read: *Wo, wo shi pingyuan shang de fanhonghua, shi shangu zhong de baihehua* 我, 我是平原上的番紅花, 是山谷中的白荷花 ‘I, I am the saffron on high plains and the lily of valleys.’

Chen Mengjia’s rendition is much shorter: *Wo shi Shalun de meigui, gu zhong de baihehua* 我是沙崙的玫瑰, 谷中的白荷花 ‘I am the rose of Sharon, a lily of valleys.’ It is consistent with the old Hebrew and modern Chinese understanding of the character of metaphorical expression.

Schereschewsky’s translation follows the ancient Chinese poetic diction where comparison (*bi* 比) was much more used and acknowledged: *Wo ru Shalun zhi meiguihua, ru gu zhong zhi baihehua* 我如沙崙之玫瑰花, 如谷中之白荷花 ‘I am like a rose of Sharon, like a lily of the valleys.’ Schereschewsky also understands a rose as narcissus.

From both Lü's translations, we may see that he preferred to bring out parallelism rather than transliteration, and he did not succeed to convince the consultants and later translators. He was criticized by Virginia C. Lee of Chicago, the only *mulier in ecclesia* of the consultants, who wrote in her letter that the "proper names of person and place should be retained in translation and the meaning or interpretation of the name in notes or in the parenthesis." The same also applies to the next verse.

Chapter 2, 10:

V: En, dilectus meus loquitur mihi: Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, et veni.

KJV: My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

UV: *Wo liangren dui wo shuo, Wo de jiaou, wo de meiren, qilai, yu wo tongqu*  
我良人對我說，我的佳偶，我的美人，起來，與我同去 'My beloved said to me: Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come with me.'

RSV: My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

We do not know the rendering of Lü's draft, but according to Moses Hsü, 'go with me,' or 'come away,' was here translated as *laiquba* 來去吧 literally 'come and go,' which seems to occur in Amoy dialect. He did not recommend a better equivalent, but Lü acknowledged his fault and corrected it in the final version:

*Wo de airen yingshi dui wo shuo: "Wo de ailü a, qilaiba! Wo de meiren na, zouba!* 我的愛人應時對我說，我的愛侶阿，起來吧！我的美人哪，走吧！ 'My beloved said to me at that time: "Arise, my love! Let us go, my fair one!"'

The same wording is repeated in Chapter 2, 13.

Chapter 2, 17:

V: donec aspiret dies, et inclinentur umbrae. Revertere: similis esto, dilecte mi, capreae hinnuloque cervorum super montes Bether.

*KJV*: Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

*UV*: *Wo de liangren na, qiu ni dengdao tianqi liangfeng, riying feiqu de shihou, ni yao zhuanhui, haoxiang lingyang, huoxiang xiaolu zai Bite shan shang* 我的良人哪, 求你等到天起涼風, 日影飛去的時候, 你要轉回, 好像羚羊, 或像小鹿在比特山上 ‘My beloved, I pray you to wait until a cool breeze comes and night shadows flee. Turn as an antelope, or a young deer upon the mountains of Bether.’

*RSV*: Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle, or a young stag upon rugged mountains.

According to Virginia Lee, ‘mountains of Bether’ should have remained in Chinese transcription in Lü’s translation. He did not follow her advice:

*Wo de airen na, qiu ni laihui tiaoyue, haobi deng lingyang huo xiaolu zizai you liexia de shanling shang, zhidao tianchui liangfeng, riying feiqu shihou* 我的愛人哪, 求你來回跳躍, 好比澄羚羊或小鹿仔在有裂罅的山嶺上, 直到天吹涼風, 日影飛去時候 ‘My beloved, I pray you to walk and jump like a cautious gazelle, or a young stag in the time of morning cool breeze and fleeing shadows upon rugged mountains.’

Both the Nanking and New International Version (in its Chinese part) repeat verbatim the *UV* translation. According to B.F. Price, the Old Testament adviser of *BFBS*, the “link made between [the following] two verses by emendation is an improvement on both Union Version and R.S.V.” It is very difficult to judge the value of this opinion, since we do not know the draft’s wording, and Mr. Price himself acknowledges that he cannot “claim to be a judge of Chinese style.”

Chapter 3, 10 and 11:

*UV*: *Jiaozhu shi yong yin zuo de, jiaodi shi yong jin zuo de, zuodian shi zise de, qi zhong suo pu de nai Yelusaling zhongnüzi de aiqing. Xi'an de zhongnüzi a, nimen chuqu guankan Suoluomen wang, tou dai guanmian, jiu shi zai ta hunyan de rizi, xin zhong de xile de shihou, ta muqin gei ta daishang de.* 轎柱是用銀作的, 轎底是用金作的, 坐墊是紫色的, 其中所鋪的乃耶路撒冷眾女子的愛情. 錫安的眾女子阿, 你們出去觀看所羅門王, 頭戴冠冕, 就是



在他婚筵的日子，心中的喜樂的時候，他母親給他戴上的‘Palankin was made of silver, palankin’s base of gold, its seat of purple, the inside of which was paved with love of the daughters of Jerusalem. Daughters of Zion, go forth and look at king Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding and in the time of the gladness of his heart.’

RSV: He made it (i.e. the palankin, M.G.) of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; it was lovingly wrought within by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

According to the note the meaning of the phrase “it was lovingly wrought within” in the Hebrew text is uncertain. We may see that the Chinese translators followed quite closely *KJV* version where we read: He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Lü’s final version reads as follows: *Ta yong yinzi zuo jiaozhu, yong jinzi zuo jiaokaozi, yong zihongseliao zuo zuodian, neibu zhuangxiu de shi pi. Yelusaling de nüzi a, nimen yao chuqu kan Suoluomen wang daizhe guanmian, jiu shi ta jiehun de rizi, ta xin zhong xileshi, ta mu qin gei ta daishang de* 他用銀子作轎柱，用金子作轎靠子，用紫紅色料作坐墊，內部裝修的是皮。耶路撒冷的女子阿，你們要出去看所羅門王戴着冠冕，就是他結婚的日子，他心中喜樂時，他母親給他戴上的‘His palankin was made of silver, its back of gold, its seat of red purple, and its inside was decorated with leather. O, daughters of Jerusalem (not of Zion, M.G), go forth to see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding and at the time of his gladness.’

We may see here that the most intimate place in Solomon’s palankin was no longer “paved with love” (*KJV* and *UV*), nor “lovingly wrought within by daughters of Jerusalem,” but only “decorated with leather.” Even the rendition of St. Jerome was more erotic. According to this: “media caritate constravit propter filias Jerusalem.” In Schereschewsky’s rendering, we find a more restrained, but very poetical expression: *nei pu yi wenxiu,*



*shi shen keai* 內鋪以文繡，式甚可愛 ‘its inside was paved with exquisite fineries, really very lovable.’ Here *wenxiu* 文繡 ‘exquisite fineries’ allude to the philosopher Mencius (ca. 372-289 B.C.) explaining the idea that those who are filled with moral virtue do not envy other people’s enjoyment including the luxuries these people possess.<sup>25</sup> The most expressive seems to me to be Chen Mengjia’s rendition: *Na zijinse de zuodian zhongxin, shi Yelusaling zhongnüzi de aiqing* 那紫金色的坐墊中心，是耶路撒冷眾女子的愛情 ‘The inside of the purple-golden palankin was for love of daughters of Jerusalem.’<sup>26</sup>

## 5

It seems that Lü Zhenzhong had not finished his translation of the *Bible* by September 1965. The representatives of the Bible Societies, after the resolution quoted above, decided further:

- a. On the basis of the evidence we now have (after the “verdict” on Lü Zhenzhong, M.G.), it would seem now that a new translation of Bible into the Chinese national language will be required in preference to any new attempt to revise the present Kuoyu text.
- b. Scholars competent to undertake this work are not available but must be trained.
- c. It is proposed that we consider a programme of financial assistance to younger scholars who may wish to complete their academic training or obtain special qualifications in specific fields of preparation for Bible translation. Such scholarship assistance would be for not more than two years in each individual case.
- d. We recommend that the following be asked to serve as advisors for such a “scholarship” programme:

Dr. Chi Tung Yung, President of Chung Chi College, Hong Kong

Dr. Chow Lien Hua, President of S. B. Seminary, Taiwan

25 Cf. the translation by D.C. Lau: *Mencius*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Inc. 1970, p. 169, and the original text *Mengzi zhengyi*, juan 23 孟子正義·卷二十三. *SPPY* ed. Taipei, Taiwan zhonghua shuju 1966, p. 13B.

26 Chen Mengjia (trans.): op. cit., p. 27.

Dr. T.Y. Wu, President of Tunghai University, Taiwan

Dr. C.H. Huang, President of Tainan Theological Seminary, Taiwan

We consider that a further period of about five to eight years will be required for further background study of the total situation and for the training of personnel.

Details of this study, its planning and its general financing of the programme will be the subject of joint consultation of the Societies concerned, in their annual Planning Meeting.

So the Report. I am not informed about the later developments from the materials given to me by R.P. Kramers. In a letter to B.F. Price from June 2, 1964, Kramers mentioned “negotiations with the Zürich authorities” and a change of his personal plans, and probably around this time or shortly after he ceased his work with Lü Zhenzhong as Translations Adviser.

From what has been written above it seems clear that the representatives of the *UBS* were not only not satisfied with the draft translation of Lü Zhenzhong, nor were they with the state of biblical scholarship in the Chinese world and among the young generation of students.

From the later “Chinese Consultation Report, January 1965,” it follows that E.A. Nida, in January 1965, after preliminary consultations with Lai Bingjiong 賴炳炯 of the Taiwan Bible Society, met with Zhou Lianhua 周聯華, Gu Dunrou 顧敦蹂, critic and translator, and Song Quanxian 宋泉咸, President of Tainan Theological Seminary.<sup>27</sup> Zhou, Gu, and Song collaborated with Kramers in assessing Lü’s draft translation.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the advisors for the “scholarship” programme mentioned above did not work well. This time it was better and a “‘limited revision’ of the *Union Version* was decided upon, to be executed ‘with principal emphasis on stylistic modification’.”<sup>29</sup> Five to six years were proposed to finish a revision.

27 Zetzsche, J.O.: *The Bible in China. The History of the Union Version, or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*. Sankt Augustin, Monumenta Serica Institute 1999, pp. 347-348.

28 All three corresponded with Kramers during the discussion over Lü Zhenzhong’s draft.

29 Zetzsche, J.O.: op. cit., p. 348.

Nida and his colleagues from *UBS* were probably disappointed when the whole project ended in a failure—at least up to our days. Further attempts at revision came only in the 1970s and later. One of them was *Xiandai Zhongwen yiben* 現代中文譯本 (Today's Chinese Version), United Bible Societies 1980, where Moses Hsü and Chow Lien Hua played an important role. It was made on Nida's principle of "functional equivalence," following the *Good News Bible: Today's English Version* from the year 1976. It was "promoted by many as the new Chinese Bible and the successor of the *Union Version*,"<sup>30</sup> but it also met strong opposition from many Chinese readers, who were—and still are—adhering to the *Union Version*. Conferences were organized in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore in 1983, and in August 1984 new principles for revision were stated. Not much has been done until recently. On the other hand some new slightly changed editions of the *UV* were published in the 1990s: as *Xiandai piaodian heheben* 現代標點和合本 (Union Version With Modern Punctuation), Hong Kong, The Baptist Press 1993.<sup>31</sup> I did not find the alleged changes described by Wang Shenyin 王神蔭 in *Shengjing* 聖經 (Bible), Nanking, Chinese Protestant Association 1996.<sup>32</sup> Probably the Protestant Bible translators on the Mainland abandoned their strong ideological positions from the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Later they even joined the *UBS* efforts to revise the *UV*.<sup>33</sup> Evidently the Chinese do not want to agree with Nida's opinion that "no Scripture is regarded as fully effective for more than fifty years."<sup>34</sup>

## 6

About one year and one month after the meeting of the four representatives of the *UBS* and other consultants in the week before Easter in 1963, Kramers in his Chinese contribution about the future of the *Bible* revisions in

30 *ibid.*, pp. 350 and 416.

31 *ibid.*, pp. 354-356.

32 *ibid.*, pp. 357-359.

33 *ibid.*, p. 359.

34 Nida, E.A.: "Bible Translation in Today's World." *The Bible Translator*, 17, 1966, p. 60.

Chinese, wrote his last essay as a Translations Adviser. It presented his message to Chinese Christians, including those who worked in the field of *Bible*, mostly to the Protestants, but I dare to say, also to Catholics, since at the same time he finished another essay, where he highlighted the *Shengjing* 聖經 (Bible), translated under the leadership of Father Gabriele M. Allegra O.F.M (1907-1976), Hong Kong, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 1961. He characterized this work as a “monument of scholarly achievement, religious fervour and sincerity.”<sup>35</sup>

Kramers regarded revisions or new translations of the *Bible* as a very difficult problem for the Chinese, and especially for the Protestants. They already had the very popular and much-favoured *UV*, which some of them appreciated as their own Confucian classic, or as the biblical works in the original languages, or the great translations of the *Bible* in the Middle Ages and later. The *UV* helped to codify their national language, many of them read it daily, are accustomed to it, and innerly, spiritually formed by it. It is true that the *UV* was a great work worthy of admiration, since its models were the most progressive translations into English of that time: the *English Revised Version (ERV)* (1881, 1885) and the *American Revised Version (ARV)* (1901). But in the meantime some decades passed, and because of the changes in the language and new knowledge in biblical scholarship, new revisions or translations are necessary.

This time Kramers did not follow Nida in his textual, exegetical, lexical and syntactical requirements for the revisions or translations. He took the well-known requirements for good translation by Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853-1921): *xin* 信 ‘faithfulness,’ *da* 達 ‘comprehensibility,’ or ‘conveyance,’ and *ya* 雅 ‘elegance.’<sup>36</sup> Yan Fu, by the way, was also one of the translators of the *wenli* 文理 classical version of the *Bible*. He translated *St. Mark*, 1-4 and he

35 Kramers, R.P.: “Zuijin zhi Zhongwen Shengjing yiben” 最近之中文聖經譯本 (Recent Chinese Bible Translations). In: *Studies in Chinese Translations of the Bible*, p. 33.

36 Cf. Yan Fu: “‘Tianyanlun’ yiliyan” ‘天演論’譯例言 (Introduction to a Translation of Thomas Henry Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*). In: Luo Xinzhang 羅新璋 (ed.): *Fanyi lunji* 翻譯論集 (Essays in Translation). Peking, Commercial Press 1984, pp.136-138 and Xie Tianzhen 謝天振: *Yijiexue* 譯介學 (Medio-Translatology). Shanghai, Waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe 1999, pp. 65-67.

“hoped to make the Bible a great classic for the Chinese.”<sup>37</sup> It is a pity that Yan Fu, one of the greatest Chinese translators of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, discontinued his translation.

For many Chinese critics, faithfulness is a point of departure for the criticism of *Bible* translation. Of course, knowledge of the original message of the texts is problematic, but it is better nowadays than in earlier times. Here, he indirectly pointed out the insufficient study of the recent achievements of international biblical research. In the case of Lü Zhenzhong, Song Quanxian, being a year before one of the consultants, expressed his doubts whether Lü, in spite of his “energy and patience,” had consulted the then most recent *Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament*, edited by M. Noth, and *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*, edited by A. Weiser. Professor Song recommended especially the first one because of its “detailed textual criticism,” which seems to be the Achilles’ heel of Chinese translators.

For other critics, it is the harmony between the comprehensibility (conveyance) and elegance. Both are related mainly to the amount of classical literary elements in the rendition. From the aesthetic point of view, the classical literary language was valued higher than the national language, but not comprehensible enough for the general readers. On the other hand, Beauty is one of the prerequisites of a translation, since bad style spoils the enjoyment of readers and also prevents proper understanding. On the basis of his own experience with the Pauline letters, Kramers even admitted that various translations for different strata of readers, are possible, and he personally confessed that his difficulties in understanding St. Paul’s work had been solved after reading J.B. Phillips’, otherwise controversial book, *Letters to Young Churches. A Translation of the New Testament Epistles*, London, Geoffrey Bles 1947.<sup>38</sup>

According to Kramers, both the comprehensibility and elegance are important, but faithfulness, in the case of the biblical texts, is even more important. A faithful translation is not the same as a *zhi* 直 ‘literal transla-

37 Zetzsche, J.O.: op. cit., p. 130. This is a quotation from Spillet, H.W.: *A Catalogue of Scriptures in the Languages of China and the Republic of China*. London, British and Foreign Bible Society 1975, p. 45.

38 See R.D. Findeisen’s remark on R.P. Kramers’ essay: “A Note on Reverend Lü Zhenzhong’s Translation of the Bible.” In: Findeisen, R.D. and Gassmann, R.H.: op. cit., p. 632.



tion,’ because the latter is not sufficiently clear, and fluent as well as being quite boring. He points to the words of Confucius: *wen zhi bin bin* 文質彬彬 ‘well proportioned ornament and substance’<sup>39</sup> as an ideal of good literary style and translation.

Kramers maintains that the most important requirements for Chinese translators are good knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and of the results of the vast and broad biblical research. Up to the mid 1960s not many Chinese students of the *Bible* reached this level, and in Kramers’ view Reverend Lü Zhenzhong was one of the few who did. It does not mean that his translation was always perfect and full of elegance. He admitted its inadequacies in many points. Lü stuck to the principle of faithfulness, and in general he brought his style near to the contemporary spoken language. Although his translation was not adequate to the principles of *Bible* translating approved by authorities of the Churches, it can be used within the Churches and outside of them.

From one essay written by Lü Zhenzhong after publication of his translation of the *Holy Bible*, we may deduce that he did not feel offended by the decision of the representatives of the *UBS* in 1964. This was the fate of other translators, too, and he mentioned two names: James Moffatt and Edgar J. Goodspeed.<sup>40</sup>

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Robert P. Kramers’ vision did not come true. His endeavours to help to produce a translation that could replace the *UV* in Chinese Protestant Churches ended in failure. It was, of course, not his fault. Even later, as shown by Jost O. Zetzsche,<sup>41</sup> the old or only slightly revised *UV* is still for the great majority of Chinese Protestants a kind of *tianjing diyi* 天經地義

39 Cf. *Confucius. The Analects (Lun yü)*. Trans. by D.C. Lau. Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press 1979, pp. 50-51.

40 Lü Zhenzhong: “You guanyu Lü yi Shengjing de wenti” 有關於呂譯聖經的問題 (On Lü’s Translation of the Bible), p. 14. The name of the journal, year, and issue remain unknown to me.

41 Zetzsche, J.O.: op. cit., pp. 345-361 and 369-370.

established by heaven and adopted by earth, the everlasting messenger of the *Verbi Divini*.

Lü's nearly thirty years and Kramers' more than ten years of efforts were certainly not exerted in vain. They are and remain in the future a meritorious contribution to the worldwide enterprise of spreading the Good News to the Chinese people.