

Chinese Australian Herald. “Laixin zhaodeng” 來信照登 [Letter Published as Received].

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Letter Published as Received

To the esteemed editor of the *Chinese Australian Herald* as well as to whom it may concern,

Every time I read the articles in this newspaper, I am filled with admiration for your unwavering frankness and steadfast adherence to moral rectitude. You always remain impartial and are genuinely the Bao Zheng¹ in our times, and your fairness in commenting on current affairs is comparable to that of the renowned historiographer Dong Hu 董狐².

In addition, I learned that all six provinces in Australia have enacted stringent policies prohibiting us from communicating with each other. In response, we reported to our emperor through a telegram,³ hoping to exert every effort to address this desperate situation. Therefore, it was truly a mercy for us as Chinese migrants when Britain lifted this prohibition. I also have to earnestly thank you all for the efforts and enthusiasm you have tirelessly invested in turning the tide. I did not mean to sound overly flattering, and my visceral words were perhaps simply rooted in the genuine emotions delivered by your articles that I empathised with. Hence, I know that I would simply expose myself to ridicule with my superficial scholarship and slight talent, yet I still ardently hope to express a token of my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude in these few humble words.

Likewise, I would like to donate ten shillings to the *Chinese Australian Herald*, and the money has now been entrusted to a friend of mine in my city, Mr Zhaocong Zhang, who will purchase and send the money order for me from a post office. Please check the money order and the amount. Moreover, I also desperately wish you could kindly inform me of your receipt of the donation so that I can no longer worry about this matter. Please allow me to implore everyone who has read my letter, to clearly see my sincerity with these few simple words of mine.

Written on February 29, at Peace and Harmony⁴, Port Darwin.

¹ This is a Chinese story called “Longtu Gong’an” [Criminal Cases of the Lord of the Imperial Sketch], which is also known as “Bao Gong’an” (Boerdahl 2013, 368). The sender here wished to borrow from the praise of Longtu Gong’an to commend the editor of the *Chinese Australian Herald* for their fair and impartial judgment, which was free from bias and self-interest.

² Dong Hu, who was an official historian of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn periods, fearlessly recorded historical events with unwavering honesty. This earned Confucius’s praise as “an exemplary historian of ancient times”, which was recorded in *Zuo Zhuan, Duke Xuan, 2nd year*. In later generations, writing without fear and with integrity came to be known as “Dong Hu’s pen”.

³ The electronic telegram was one of the important channels for expressing public opinion during the late Qing Dynasty’s New Policies period. At that time, some citizens used newspaper media to disseminate their views on various domestic and foreign affairs (Wang 2019).

⁴ This was the name of a shop.

I, Fan Zhenglu with Dun as my style name, hereby would now like to humbly⁵ transcribe a poem presented to the *Chinese Australian Herald* by Traveller to the South in this section.

The beginning of the *Chinese Australian Herald* was tough,
But together, our patriotic merchants generously donated to its foundation.
The Chinese scholars caring for their nations are as numerous as the crucian carp in rivers.
Who, among them, has shed tears with deep emotion like those at Xinting⁶ in the past?

Secluded Hermit adapted the rhymes of the previous poem (*heyun* 和韻)⁷:

Enduring, weeping, our patriots are suffering as times grow tough.
Wouldn't our men have wasted their time if they kept reading newspapers for this duration?
The Europeans returned the peaceful times back to Asians,
And we should never let the precious time go past.

A Passing and Passionate Traveller adopted the same characters as rhymes from the previous poem (*yuanyun* 原韻):

Compared with expressing pain with ink, promoting our cause with ardour is tough;
Complaining about our domestic affairs would waste more of our time in this duration.
Who will be the Rousseau in our times?
And who will eliminate all misrule, as Rousseau sought to do, similar to the abandonment of other problematic political systems in the past?

Another contribution from Traveller to the South:

No one expected that through such intensive effort, this arduous task would not be finished,⁸

⁵ The sender of the letter referred to himself as *di* 弟 (lit. little brother), traditionally a self-addressing term in China that is specifically and primarily used between peers to show humility. Considering that no equivalents were available in English, the “humbly” was added in hopes of achieving the same effect. See Ministry of Education (2021).

⁶ This involved an allusion to A New Account of the Tales of the World (Shishuo Xinyu 世說新語) which is known as an idiom *xinting duiqi* 新亭對泣 (lit. xin-ting-face-to-face-cry) nowadays. This originally meant that some celebrated scholars during the Eastern Jin period (317-420) faced each other and subsequently all shed their tears for the misfortune of their country, during a banquet held in a place named Xinting. This is therefore usually referring to all the grieves and indignation raised by one's concerns about their country in modern times. See Ministry of Education (2021).

⁷ This is a collection of “conversation poems” which in this case also involved two rhyming patterns, namely *heyun* (lit. match-rhyme) and its extended concept of *yuanyun* (lit. original-rhyme). Apart from its obvious reference to “the act of rhyming with the previous poem in one's own poem”, *heyun* has been further classified into three categories – *yiyun* 依韻, *ciyun* 次韻 and *yongyun* 用韻 which are defined as follows respectively. While *yiyun* refers to the use of rhymes that are not necessarily the characters in the original poem, *ciyun* would require the poet to both adopt the original rhymes, or *yuanyun*, as well as the sequence of rhymes, in comparison to *yongyun* which only concerns the adoption of original rhymes. In this section, the concept of *heyun* was always discussed in the second condition, namely *ciyun*. Likewise, it was also worth noting that the first, second and fourth lines of each of the poems also rhymed with each other, despite the different characters. This was however, unfortunately, not manifested in the translated versions. See Ministry of Education (2021).

⁸ This referred to the effort of the “patriots” in the poems in supporting the Guangxu Emperor's (1871-1908) return to power during his house arrest enforced by Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908). Guangxu was deeply revered by many Chinese elites at that time for his long-term visions and willingness to initiate thorough

But behold! All beings are still obeying our sage emperor (*dangyang* 當陽)⁹.

Toiling and labouring, the people still constantly complain during these impoverished years;
When will those cups of spirit be able to soothe the hard feelings of our desperate patriots?

Smart Times adapted the rhymes of the previous poem:

For rejuvenating our country, this will be the only goal that must be finished.¹⁰

Be loyal; endeavour to strengthen our country, as we all willingly obey our sage emperor.

The times have always produced their heroes throughout the ages;

The heroes will always become immortal, as they are honourable patriots.

A Passing and Passionate Traveller adopted the same characters as rhymes from the previous poem:

The task of removing the ingrained problems and crushing the treacherous forces has not been finished;

Countless people now support the elimination of all those treacherous in the imperial court for our emperor.¹¹

The people were enlightened with a new turning point;

The image of slaves for the Chinese nation has been swept away, thanks to the efforts of our patriots.

Lisan adapted the rhymes of the previous poem:

With endless chaos in our country, the writing of songs bewailing its misfortune has never been finished.

Gathering together in Australia, we, the Chinese migrants, are forced to comply with society¹² to protect our race and emperor.¹³

With nearly half of the people becoming victims of natural calamities, our concerns have never faded away,

As the white people are targeting and attempting to eliminate us, including our valuable patriots.

Humbly transcribed by Seclusion in the Hill of Dragon.

reforms such as the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, as opposed to Cixi (Mackerras 2014, 25).

⁹ As another respectful way of referring to the emperor, *dangyang* (lit. face-sun) is related to a traditional concept in ancient China – emperors in China usually governed their people while facing the south, a direction exposed to the sunlight.

¹⁰ See Footnote 8.

¹¹ The allusion involved was *zhuyun zhejian* 朱雲折檻 (lit. zhu-yun-break-baluster). Zhu Yun, a loyal minister in the Han times, once earnestly requested Emperor Cheng of Han to execute the treacherous prime minister Zhang Yu at the risk of his life, as this infuriated the Emperor who wanted to put him to death as a result. This now describes the courageous attempts of loyal but direct ministers to advise the emperor in China at the risk of their lives. See Ministry of Education (2021).

¹² This referred to Australian society at that time.

¹³ The meaning of “to protect the emperor” was not explicitly conveyed in the original phrase. However, the word “emperor” was added not only for rhyming, but also because this was actually implied, as the poets all seemed to pay great respect to the emperor who was ultimately also part of the “Chinese race”. Some other lines were also amplified in the same manner in this translation for the same reasons.

References

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