

# A Comparative Appreciation of Three English Translations of Ding Feng Bo

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of globalization, more and more Chinese classical works have been translated into English to the world. Ding Feng Bo was written by Su Shi when he was demoted to Huangzhou. The whole poem shows the process that the poet went through arduous self-regulation, psychological construction until he finally got the feeling and realized spiritual freedom. By comparing and appreciating the English versions of Xu Yuanchong, Yang Xianyi and his wife and Zhuo Zhenying, this paper analyzes the expression of the word in terms of language, image and artistic conception, so that translation learners can gain something from it and translators can better translate it.

**Keywords:** English translation of Ding Feng Bo, Imagery, Translation criticism.

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## 1. Brief Introduction of Su Shi and Ding Feng Bo

Su Shi was born on December 19, the third year of Jingyou Reign (January 8, 1037) in Meishan, Meizhou. Su Shi's grandfather was Su Xu, Zhongxian, and his grandmother Shi Shi. Su Shi's father Su Xun, that is, "three character classics" mentioned in the "twenty-seven, beginning vigorous" of the "Su Lao Quan". Though Su Xun works hard late, he studies very hard. Su Shi's name "Shi" originally meant the armrest in front of the car, to take its unknown but to help the crisis, the indispensable meaning. Su Shi was born to be unrestrained, frank and sincere, and deeply acquired the style of Taoism. Good friends, good food, to create a lot of food boutique, good tea, also good tour mountains and forests. Su Shi was a literary leader in the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty. He made great achievements in poetry, ci, prose, books and paintings. Su Shi not only has a deep attainments of poetry and calligraphy, but also can be called an ancient gourmands of China. He is also very good at cooking dishes, especially in the preparation of braised meat from the source. Su Shi's braised meat was first made in Xuzhou, further improved in Huangzhou, and became famous throughout the country in Hangzhou.

Ding Feng Bo is a Song Dynasty writer Su Shi's words. It was written in the spring of the fifth year of Yuanfeng during the reign of Emperor Shenzong of Song Dynasty. It was the third spring after Su Shi was banished to Huangzhou for his "Wutai Poetry Case". At that time, Su Shi was put in prison for more than 100 days, experiencing the double blow of body and spirit, and facing the threat of death. With the help of the people, the final did not push Su Shi on the wall. At the beginning of his arrival in Huangzhou, Su Shi was uneasy and embarrassed. However, with the loss of time, Su Shi gradually found a quiet and indifferent place in the embarrassment. He began to think about the relationship between society, life and ideal, and began to rise up from suffering. His attitude towards life also changed, so he gradually created excellent works, such as Ding Feng Bo. This word describes the poet and his friends encountered wind and rain on their way to the wilderness. Through the sudden wind and rain, the poet felt the profound meaning of it, showing the broad-minded and

transcendent mind, sent to meet the extraordinary ideal of life. The first film focuses on the rain, and the next film focuses on the rain. This poem reflects the way of an upright scholar striving for relief in the rough life. Although the length is short, it has profound artistic conception and rich connotation, which interprets the author's life belief and shows the author's spiritual pursuit.

## 2. Three English Translations and Translators Introduction

Ding Feng Bo is one of Su Shi's masterpieces. With the help of unrestrained song lines in the rain, the author shows his unafraid, free and optimistic attitude towards life and big mind in spite of setbacks. This poem has generated spiritual resonance in the hearts of readers and obtained aesthetic experience. There are many unhappy things in life. How to relieve the bitterness of life, transcend the dilemma, expand the spiritual space, and obtain spiritual comfort is the eternal pursuit of people. To read the poem well, we need to understand the words and images in the poem on a deeper level. Although there have been many English translations of Ding Feng Bo, there are few comparative studies on relevant translations that the author have searched on the Internet. In this paper, three translators, Xu Yuanchong, Yang Xianyi and Zhuo Zhenying, are selected to compare and appreciate the English versions of Ding Feng Bo.

### 2.1. Xu Yuanchong and his translation

Xu Yuanchong is a translator and professor at Peking University. He has been engaged in literary translation for more than 60 years, and his translations cover Chinese, English, French and other languages. His translations focus on the English translation of ancient Chinese poetry, and he has developed the method and theory of poetry translation in rhyme style. He is known as "the only person who translates poetry into English and French". Xu Yuanchong was born in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, on April 18, 1921. His mother was educated and skilled in painting, which gave him a love of literature and the pursuit of beauty. His cousin Xiong Shiyi was a translator. He translated the play "Precious Stream" into English, which caused a sensation when it was put on in England and was received by the British dramatist George

Bernard Shaw. This made Xu Yuanchong have a strong interest in English at a young age and set his ambition to learn English well. He excelled in English when he was a student at Nanchang No. 2 Middle School, the best school in the region. In 1938, he was admitted to the Foreign language department of the National Southwest Associated University with excellent results.

Although Southwest Associated University was just established in September 1937, during the eight-year Anti-Japanese War, the environment was extremely difficult. However, due to the gathering of famous teachers and the democratic style of study, it became one of the best universities in China at that time. Yang Zhenning even thought it could be regarded as a world-class university. Among the graduates of the university, there are outstanding natural scientists such as Yang Zhenning and Li Zhengdao who won the Nobel Prize in physics, Wang Xiji, Zhu Guangya and Deng Jiaxian who won the Medal of Merit for two bombs and one Star, and many famous scholars in the fields of literature, history and philosophy. Mr. Xu Yuanchong is one of them. In 1939, when he was a freshman at the United Nations, he translated Lin Huiyin's poem "Don't Lose It" into English and published it in Literary Translation Newspaper, which was his earliest translation. Xu began publishing translations in 1956, but only four books were published in the 30 years after liberation due to the interference of political campaigns. By the end of a decade of turmoil, he was almost sixty and entering the best autumn of his life. In 1983, he returned to Beijing and became a professor in the Department of International Politics and the Department of English at Peking University. He has long been psychologically prepared for the translation of Chinese classical poetry, and has the practice of translating poetry, so he is naturally familiar with the translation of classical poetry.

Xu Yuanchong's English translation of Su Shi's Ding Feng Bo (hereinafter referred to as Xu's translation) is as follows:

Calming the Waves

Caught in Rain on My Way to the Sandy Lake

On the 7th day of the 3rd month we were caught in rain on our way to the Sandy Lake. The umbrellas had gone ahead, my companions were quite downhearted, but I took no notice. It soon cleared, and I wrote this.

Listen not to the rain beating against the trees.

I had better walk slowly while chanting at ease.

Better than a saddle I like sandals and cane.

I'd fain,

In a straw cloak, spend my life in mist and rain.

Drunken, I am sobered by the vernal wind shrill

And rather chill.

In front, I see the slanting sun atop the hill;

Turning my head, I see the dreary beaten track.

Let me go back!

Impervious to rain or shine, I'll have my own will.

## 2.2. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie and their translation

Yang Xianyi is a famous Chinese translator, foreign literature expert and poet. De Naidie is his wife, and their cooperation for more than decades made them both win the reputation of "leaders in the field of translation", creating a

miracle in the history of translation. Danaidi and Yang Xianyi can be regarded as a model of perfect marriage between China and foreign countries. Born Gladys B. Tayler and renamed Gladys Yang, she was born in 1919 to missionaries in Beijing. His father J.B.Tayler, Chinese name Dai Leren, graduated from the London School of Economics, at the beginning of the last century to China missionary, once served as the first head of the department of economics at Yenching University, and responsible for the use of British Geng (derived to study in the UK) affairs; Later, he helped China establish the Industrial Cooperation Organization (CIC), dedicated to famine relief work. In 1937, she went to Oxford University to read French literature. At that time, there were many club associations in Oxford University, and her tutor Mr. Huwens introduced her to the Chinese Association. This led her to meet Yang Xianyi, a Chinese student who later became the president of the association. Yang Xianyi was originally a rich son of Tianjin, with great talent. His cleverness, naughtiness and humor, as well as the charm of traditional Chinese culture, deeply attracted Diana. The influence of her family and her inherent China complex made her fall in love with Yang Xianyi at first sight. Later in his life, Yang Xianyi recalled that he loved Nai, and besides being attracted by her amazing beauty, he also found her to have a simple heart. She is fresh and refined, without the vanity and snobbery that British upper-class girls often have, which is "rare among upper-class Chinese ladies". In her later years, she humorously told her friends: What I love is not Yang Xianyi, but Chinese traditional culture. Although this is a joke, but it really reflects the love of Dianaedi to Chinese traditional culture. After she met Yang Xianyi, she resolutely gave up her major in French literature and changed her major to Chinese literature, becoming the first Oxford University graduate to receive an honorary degree in Chinese literature. Yang Xianyi also gave up his major in French literature to study English literature. This kind of complementarity laid the foundation for the two foreign young people to make brilliant achievements in the translation field (Chinese-English translation).

The English translation (hereinafter referred to as Yang's translation) of Su Shi's Ding Feng Bo by Yang Xianyi and his wife is as follows:

Ding Feng Bo

On the seventh day of the third month we were caught in the rain on our way to Shahu. The umbrellas had gone ahead, my companions were downhearted, but I took notice. It soon cleared, and I wrote this.

Forget that patter of rain on the forest leaves,

Why not chant a poem as we plod slowly on?

Pleasanter than a saddle this bamboo staff and straw sandals.

Here's nothing to fear.

I could spend my whole life in the mist and rain.

The keen spring wind has sobered me,

Left me chilly,

But slanting sunlight beckons from high on the hill;

One last look at scene behind

And on I go,

Impervious to wind, rain or sunny weather.

### 2.3. Zhuo Zhenying and his translation

Zhuo Zhenying, professor of Translation Department, College of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Normal University, standing director of the Comparative Study of English and Chinese, convenor of the Subject Committee of English Translation of Classics. Zhuo is regarded as an outstanding translator of special status in China. He has translated lots of Chinese poems into English and has made a lot of pioneering work in spreading Chinese culture, improving the status of Chinese literature in the world. Apart from the great achievements he made in practice, he also puts forward a set of relatively systematic translation theory.

Zhuo Zhenying's English translation of Su Shi's Ding Feng Bo (hereinafter referred to as Zhuo's translation) is as follows:

Taming the Waves and Winds

On 7th of the third moon, I was caught in rain on my way to Sandy Lake. As the rain-gear had been sent to the place in advance, all the company felt awkward except me. I composed this ci-poem when the rain stopped.

What matters if on the woods and leaves splatters the rain?

I may well recite poems while pacing on the cane

And in sandals, which than horse back make me more eased.

However could one with dread be seized,

Who's known in the eventful life rain and wind and pain?

I feel the chill when the breezes sober me from wine,

But then a soothing sun atop the hill does shine.

I glance back at the place that I am to return:

There's the seclusion for which I yearn:

It is secure and quiet, be the weather rough or fine!

## 3. A Comparative Appreciation of The Three Translations of Ding Feng Bo

Poems are often short and concise, but they contain a lot of information. To understand poetry correctly requires taking it apart and reassembling it word by word, which is not an easy task for the unskilled. It is even more difficult to translate poetry. The ambiguity of interpretation space and the particularity of poetic language form often make many people shy away from poetry translation. (Yang Zhu, Jiang Lin 2021:4) First of all, it is necessary to correctly understand the meaning and the information conveyed by the poem, and then choose the right words to describe it, so as to reproduce the image and artistic conception in the poem text for us. Some translators will also pursue the same exact match with the original text, which is even more difficult and tests the translator's literary skills and language level. This paper will explore and appreciate the three selected English translations of Su Shi's Ding Feng Bo through the forest from three aspects: language, image and artistic conception.

### 3.1. Language level

The process of translation is also the process of the translator choosing words. The translator's understanding of the original text and the choice of words determine the reader's feeling and understanding of the translation.

First, it is a translation of the title. It is "Calming the Waves" in Xu's translation, "Ding Feng Bo" in Yang's version, and "Taming the Waves and Winds" in Zhuo's translation.

Yang's translation does not directly imply, but uses pinyin. Both Xu's and Zhuo's translation explain the meaning of "calm". Xu's version uses the word "calm", while Zhuo's translation uses the word "tame", which means "docile". So in my opinion, Zhuo's translation is more powerful than Xu's. In addition, Zhuo's translation of "风浪" as "waves and winds" is exactly the same as the original word, but it seems less concise than Xu's translation. For the translation of word names, Xu's translation will give people a feeling of ease, very ordinary; However, Zhuo's translation gives people a strong feeling of "I want to conquer the ups and downs". Combined with the whole poem, I think the translation is more in line with the context. In fact, the author himself has a very calm and open-minded attitude and does not convey too strong emotion. The word "沙湖" in Yang's translation also uses pinyin directly. Both Xu's translation and Zhuo's translation translate it as "Sandy Lake". It is easy to find that for some words with Chinese characteristics, Yang's translation prefers to use pinyin instead. But it retains the taste of ancient poetry, not conventional. For the word "雨具", both Xu's translation and Yang's translation are translated as "umbrellas", while Zhuo's translation is translated as "rain-gear", obviously Zhuo's translation is more consistent with the original text, and the meaning is more clear. Xu's translation and Yang's translation translate it as "umbrellas" to some extent, the author think it is more clear, because "umbrellas" is more familiar to people. Some people may not know the meaning of "rain-gear", but the author have looked it up and found that the rain gear includes other tools besides umbrellas, such as raincoat, rain shoes and mountain crest and so on. So "rain-gear" is more accurate than using "umbrellas" alone. Then there is the translation of "狼狈". Xu and Yang both use the word "downhearted" and Zhuo uses the word "awkward". The author personally prefer Xu and Yang's choice of words to each other. It was like a group of people who were enjoying a trip but it was raining and they didn't have an umbrella. In such a situation, people who were hearted were confused and tried to get back as soon as possible. The author think downhearted is a better word. Although it is tricky, it is a bit overstated here. As for "余独不觉", both Xu's translation and Yang's translation are "but I took no notice", while Zhuo's translation is "all the company felt awkward except me", which did not translate this sentence separately. The author think the first two are better handled. It shows that the writer doesn't care about the rain at all. Finally, there is the translation of "已而遂晴", which is translated as "It soon cleared" in both Xu's and Yang's translation, and "when the rain stoped" in Zhuo's translation. People in the same trade were all at a loss for the arrival of the rain, only the author "did not notice", here the "已而遂晴" not only refers to the rain has stopped, but also refers to the wind and rain in the author's life also "clear", a pun, so Zhuo's translation only shows the wind and rain in nature has stopped, but the word "clear" in the translation of Xu and Yang, It can better show the meaning of the original text, and there is a taste of sunshine after rain.

### 3.2. Image level

Image is an indispensable and important factor in poetry. As for the concept of image, some people explain it this way: "Image refers to the subjective feelings placed on an objective object and transformed into an artistic image with specific emotional content." "Image" is composed of "Yi" and "Xiang",

"Yi" means "meaning" and "Xiang" means "image". Specifically, it means that the poet places the subjective emotional emotion on the objective object with relative equivalence, so that the emotionless object is transformed into the object with emotion, and thus the image is formed. (Shen Shuya 2021:2) Generally speaking, the ancient poets used objective things to express their feelings, so the image became a kind of artistic creation of the poet, so the image in the poem should organically combine the objective things and express the author's feelings. In this poem, the magnanimity of the poet that we read is revealed by a series of images.

First of all, the appreciation of the image of "horse" : “竹杖芒鞋轻胜马”. The "horse" in the word refers to the horse that people ride, but not everyone can ride this "horse". In the social context of that time, only the dignitaries could ride horses, and ordinary people had to wear shoes made of dried grass, or “芒鞋”, and use walking sticks made of bamboo. The poet said that “竹杖芒鞋轻胜马”, which means that for him at that time, although he was debased as an official, he thought being an ordinary person was better than being an official. Here, the author has shown that he is not sad about being debased as an official, but has been over it, and the mood is "no official, light" pleasure. For the image of "horse", the three translators also have different translations:

Xu's translation: Better than a saddle I like sandals and cane.

Yang's translation: Pleasanter than a saddle this bamboo staff and straw sandals.

Zhuo's translation: And in sandals, which than horse back make me more eased.

Both Xu and Yang translate the word “马” as "saddle", not "horse". In Zhuo's translation, it is translated as "horse back", “马背”, which means to sit on a horse, meaning to ride a horse. After the analysis and comparison of the two translation methods, it can be seen that the translation of Xu and Yang is more beautiful and catchy to read; From the perspective of the transmission of artistic conception, the translation of Zhuo's translation seems to be more able to show the dynamic scene at that time, which can remind people of the scene of riding on horseback. When translating “竹杖” and “芒鞋”, Xu translates them as "sandals" and "cane" while Zhuo translates them as "sandals", only Yang's translation has translated the materials "bamboo" and "straw" when they are only "sandals", so that they are more compatible with the two images in the original text. Next is the image of “烟雨”: 一蓑烟雨任平生. This sentence is the central sentence of the whole sentence. The poet feels that the storm on this road can be withstood by the “一蓑”, and the “烟雨” does not refer to the wind and rain in nature, but rather to the wind and rain encountered in the author's life. “一蓑烟雨任平生” is the true portrayal of Su Shi's life, and he also took this sentence to express his life despite the wind and rain, but also always maintain a calm and optimistic attitude. Although he was frustrated in politics, he never lost confidence in life. Facing the wind and rain on the road of life, he could face calmly, which reflects the open-minded mind of the poet. The three versions of this sentence are as follows:

Xu's translation: In a straw cloak, spend my life in mist and rain.

Yang's translation: I could spend my whole life in the mist and rain.

Zhuo's translation: Who's known in the eventful life rain and wind and pain?

In both Xu and Yang's translation, “烟雨” is translated as "mist and rain". The original meaning of “烟雨” is "mist or fog", combined with "rain", a hazy feeling of rain in fog and fog in rain arises naturally, and it is corresponding to the original sentence “烟雨”, which makes readers feel full of poetry. Besides, in Xu's translation, 一蓑 was also translated. "a straw cloak" was described by the translator about the material of the coir raincoat. It seems that you can really see such a scene: under the green sky, bamboo shadows sway. It can be said that Xu's translation is really a high degree of restoration of the original words, compared to Yang's translation, it seems that there is less atmosphere. The Zhuo's translation also directly translates “烟雨” into wind and rain in nature. Instead, it concretifies this image with the word "life" and directly points out that it is wind and rain in the poet's life. Compared to the other two translations, the Zhuo translation seems less poetic, but this is the style of the Zhuo translation, the intuitive telling tells the reader, this is the bitterness of my life. The author thinks this point can be echoed with Su Shi's mood, the poet in adversity but not afraid of depression, against wind and rain laugh proud life; The translator shows the meaning of the author's words directly, as if there is a heroic gas.

Finally, there is the image of “斜照”: 山头斜照却相迎. The upper part of the poem depicts the poet's expression of feelings in the rain, showing his broad-minded and unique life perception. The next part of the word moves into the description of the sunny day after the rain. “斜照” refers to the western sunshine. The chilly spring breeze makes the poet feel the chill of the mountain rain, and when he looks up, he sees the slanting sun from the mountain, which is a kind of effect. Such a change in the weather draws the poet back to the real world, where the natural world is in flux, as is the political struggle between light and shade. Although he was banished from the court, he was also far away from the dark struggle, and on the contrary, he gained the joy of the field, the natural beauty and the joy of the people. (Si Weirong 2021:2) Here, the author has a new experience and harvest of life in this breeze and drizzle. The translation of this sentence by the three translators is as follows:

Xu's translation: In front, I see the slanting sun atop the hill;

Yang's translation: But slanting sunlight beckons from high on the hill;

Zhuo's translation: But then a soothing sun atop the hill does shine.

As for the translation of the state of “斜”, both the translation of Xu and Yang have adopted the word "slanting" and the form of -ing, which vividly reflects the state of "slanting sun" and achieves semantic equivalence with the original sentence. (Shen Shuya 202:2) An additional phrase "In front" is added in Xu's translation to indicate the position, making it more pictorial. Zhuo's translation uses the word "soothing". A soothing shade, as in the previous style, still refers directly to the inner meaning of the words, not just a soothing afterglow after a rain.

### 3.3. Scene level

Scene refers to a kind of artistic realm formed when the author's subjective feelings and objective conditions blend

with each other, namely the artistic conception in poetry. In classical Chinese poetry, feeling follows the environment, empathy enters the country and feeling merges with things are three ways of blending meaning and environment. (Yang Zhu, Jiang Lin 204:4) In other words, scene means that scenery and emotion blend with each other. While reflecting the "scenery", poetry can also express the author's "meaning" accordingly, so that the author can use the scenery to express his emotion and express the emotion in the scenery.

First of all, this poem describes how the poet encountered a sudden rain on the way out. His companions rushed to take shelter from the rain, but he did not panic, but calmly took it, more is to laugh at the wind and rain of life; Then describe the scene of the sunny after the rain, and the author is not pleased with this, will leave the sunny rain behind, the last sentence will be this calm mood on the paper.

This sentence is full of life philosophy, read to make people feel more detached. The poet woke up with the wine and looked back at his path. The wind and rain had stopped. By the wind and rain just encountered, also refers to their own in real life encountered wind and rain, also drifting away. Sunny or rainy days are also pendulum, the really important thing is to be sober and independent, sunny or rainy can not affect their own will. The translation of this last sentence should not be limited to the original meaning of the words, but should restore the most authentic artistic conception of the words to the readers. The three translations are as follows:

Xu's translation: Impervious to rain or shine, I'll have my own will.

Yang's translation: Impervious to wind, rain or sunny weather.

Zhuo's translation: It is secure and quiet, be the weather rough or fine!

In the face of this pun: the dangerous journey of life in the field of storms and political storms, both the Xu and Yang versions adopt the word impervious, which means "impervious and impervious" to indicate that the poet was unaffected by the storms of officialdom and life, conveying his heroic feelings of being oblivious to the storms of officialdom and life. (Yang Zhu, Jiang Lin 202:4) In Xu's translation, the phrase "I have my own will" is very eye-catching. This sentence is subjective and clear, which is not in the original text, but it is implied in the text. This sentence directly shows Su Shi's attitude towards wind and rain, and also enables readers to have a deeper understanding of the

light and dark information in the original text. Then there is Zhuo's translation. The feeling of Zhuo's translation is very realistic. It does not translate the original sentence, but translates the author's hidden meaning. A thorough reading of Zhuo's translation will find that the style is to convey the author's implied meaning in the words.

## 4. Conclusion

Any wind and rain will stop, meaning that any suffering will pass. But in fact, there is no good or bad way in life. When you are in good times, don't get carried away; When you are in adversity, don't be pessimistic. We should learn from Su Shi the kind of adversity without regret, adversity and calm open-minded spirit, although we are just a mortal, although some things or pressure can not let go, but we can do is to try to calmly face. Life is not easy, so what if there are many difficulties on the road, I will be myself, and sing and do, without fear.

Through the comparative analysis of the three translations, we can find that the three translations have their own advantages. Based on their own understanding of Ding Feng Bo and the mood of the poet at that time, and taking into full consideration the needs of readers, they chose different ways of expression to convey the connotation of the original text. It is not difficult to find that before translation, translators have made full preparations to correctly understand and translate the original text, so as to convey the exquisite connotation of poetry and traditional Chinese culture to readers. This is also worth learning for all translators.

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