

“The King’s Job, Vast as Swan-Flight”: More on *The Sacred Edict* in Canto 98 & 99

Rong OU

Hangzhou Normal University

142, Foreign Languages School, HNU, 58, Haishu Road, Hangzhou P R China, 310007

Email: rongou2007@163.com.

Abstract:

Ezra Pound maintained his commitment to Confucianism and Chinese culture throughout his life and made abundant use of Chinese materials in *The Cantos*. He drew a lot of inspiration from *The Sacred Edict* 圣谕广训 of Qing Dynasty of China and rewrote it in Canto 98 & 99. The paper unfolds the complicated expansion and transmission of *The Sacred Edict* from the literary Chinese version to the colloquial Chinese version, from the East to the West, and clarifies a few errors in some Pound studies. Pound borrowed *The Sacred Edict* into Canto 98 & 99 to create a gleaming “throne” on a Confucian design, an earthly paradise built on “Sagetrieb”, with Pound as one more transmitter of “Sagetrieb” whose job is, “vast as swan-flight”.

Key words: *Thrones, The Sacred Edict, Wang Youpu, Baller*

Ezra Pound maintained his commitment to Confucianism and Chinese culture throughout his life and made abundant use of Chinese materials in *The Cantos*. Yet, only a few Chinese figures enjoy the privilege of being written into his cantos recurrently. Most of them are either Confucian sages like Confucius (as Kung) 孔子, Mencius 孟子 and Zengzi (as Tseng) 曾子, or legendary sage-emperors like Yao 尧, Shun (as Chun) 舜, Yu 禹, or strong rulers like Kangxi 康熙 (as K'ang-hsi or Kang Hi), Yongzheng 雍正 (as IongChing, Iong Cheng or Yong Tching), Qianlong 乾隆 (as Ch'ien-lung or Kien Long).¹ However, one Qing official appears implicitly and explicitly five times in Canto 98. Who could be so favorable to Pound?

I

This figure first comes up in the early part of Canto 98:

Patience, I will come to the Commissioner of the Salt Works
in due course. (98/705)²

Based on this line, we don't know who he is except for his official post as "the Commissioner of the Salt Works". 22 lines later, we read:

Uncle William two months on ten lines of Ronard
But the salt works ... (98/706)

Still, we are puzzled and Pound reassures us with "Patience, ich bin am Zuge ..." (98/706). Two lines after, Pound reveals the identity of this mysterious character:

Until in Shensi, Ouang, the Commissioner Iu-p'uh
volgar' eloquio 又樸

The King's job, vast as swan-flight: (98/706)

Here, we get to know who this man is and where he is from. But why did Pound put him into this canto? What job did he do is "vast as swan-flight"?

Not until the middle of Canto 98 does Pound tell us a little more:

王
Ouang – iu- p'uh 又
on the edict of K'ang-hsi

¹ Pound uses inconsistent Romanization systems in *The Cantos*. To conform to today's standard usage, pinyin is used throughout, except for established one. However, Pound's spellings are given in parenthesis following pinyin at least at the first occurrence, for the sake of easier cross-references to his texts.

² The edition of *The Cantos* used in this paper is *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1998).

in volgar' eloquio taking the sense down to the people. (98/708)

With these lines we can infer that Wang Youpu (as Ouang Iu-p'uh, 王又朴) paraphrases Kangxi's edict to make it understood by common people.

How did Pound get to know the deeds of Wang? What did Pound admire him for? Later, Pound reveals much more:

Thought is built out of Sagetrieb,

and our debt here is to Baller

and to volgar' eloquio.

Despite Mathews this Wang was a stylist.

Uen-li will not help you talk to them,

long-ching republished the edict

But the salt-commissioner took it down to the people (98/710)

Now, how Wang is related to Pound and Canto 98 is clear: Kangxi made an edict in Uen-li³, his son Yongzheng interpreted the edict, which was still beyond the comprehension of common people; then, Wang put it in colloquial language for the ordinary person; Baller did the translation of Wang's colloquial rendering and finally Pound borrowed it into his cantos. Pound is convinced that "Thought is built out of Sagetrieb". "Sagetrieb" is an invented word by Pound to mean "pass on the tradition" in the context of *Rock-Drills* and *Thrones*, as quoted by Terrell in his *A Companion to The Cantos*. (479) "Sagetrieb" appears twice in Canto 85 juxtaposed to Chinese character "教", (577, 579) once in Canto 89 connected with "oral tradition". (617) In my view, "Sagetrieb" is richer than "pass on the tradition". It is a vortex where tradition is passed on from "an old man" to "a child" (as "教" is understood by Pound) through language (written or spoken) with something new added. I agree with Zhaoming Qian 钱兆明 that the transmission of *The Sacred Edict* best exemplifies "Sagetrieb." (Qian 215) Yongzheng received the Sixteen Maxims 圣谕十六条 from his father, Kangxi, and passed on the *Amplification* 广训 to Wang, who in turn transmitted his colloquial interpretation to Baller and Baller did another rendering. Pound admired Wang enormously because he is a stylistic transmitter of tradition. Wang not only passed on two emperors' wisdom but made it new and more accessible to the people. He seems to fully deserve Pound's admiration.

II

³ uen-li (文理, pinyin: wenli), a term for literary Chinese commonly used among Western missionaries in the 19th and early-20th centuries but no longer current today. Today wenyán 文言 is generally used instead of wenli.

However, Wang Youpu turns out not the author of the text translated by Baller. Baller made a mistake in the introduction to his book, which has misled Pound and many Pound scholars.⁴ Carroll F. Terrell has written about the history of *The Sacred Edict* (1973); nevertheless, the truth is more complicated.

In fact, the history of *The Sacred Edict* can be traced back to Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋(1328–98), the first emperor of Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In order to eradicate the aftermath of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and strengthen the ruling of the Ming lineage, Zhu Yuanzhang worked hard to restore the Confucian teachings. In 1397, the 37th year of his reign, Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed an edict consisting of six mottos with four characters in each, known as The Sacred Edict of Six Maxims 圣谕六言, including “Filial Piety to Parents” 孝顺父母, “Respect for Senior” 恭敬长上, “Concord among Neighbors” 和睦乡里, “Instruction of Youth” 教训子孙, “Attending to One’s Proper Employment” 各安生理 and “Prevention of Evil Deeds 勿作非为.” (王四霞 7) These maxims, based on Neo-Confucian thought, were neatly written out on small slips of wood, placed in the public offices and read to the people six times a month. After Ming dynasty declined and Qing dynasty was established, Shunzhi (as Chun Tchi 顺治), the first Manchu emperor, adopted the Ming political system to ensure minimal disruption and cultural continuance. In the 9th year of his reign (1652), he decreed the order that Six Maxims be read publicly to the people on the fifth and fifteenth of each month.

Shunzhi died in 1661 and was succeeded by his son Kangxi, who carried on his father’s policies. In the 9th year of his rule (1670), drawing on the Six Maxims, Kangxi published an edict of sixteen mottos with 7 characters in each, known as The Sacred Edict of Sixteen Maxims, often referred as *The Sacred Edict* as follows:

- I. Duteousness and subordination 敦孝悌以重人伦
- II. Clan relationships and harmony 笃宗族以昭雍睦
- III. Keeping the peace 和乡党以息争讼
- IV. Farming and mulberry culture 种农桑以足衣食
- V. Thrift and economy 尚节俭以惜财用

⁴ A number of papers and monographs on Pound’s use of the *Sacred Edict* in *Thrones* have been produced, none of which points out this mistake but relays the erroneous message. See Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, Berkeley-Los Angeles: U of California P, 1971:534; Carroll F. Terrell, “The Sacred Edict of K’ang-Hsi,” *Paideuma* 2 (1973):69–112; David M. Gordon, “Thought Built on Sagetrieb,” *Paideuma* 3.2 (1974):169–90; and idem, “Pound’s Use of the Sacred Edict in Canto 98,” *Paideuma* 4.1 (1975):121–68; James J. Wilhelm. *The Later Cantos of Ezra Pound*, New York: Walker, 1977: 133-134; Massimo Bacigalupo, *The Formed Trace: The Latter Poetry of Ezra Pound*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980:372; Chao-ming Chou, “The Teachings of the Sacred Edict: Pound’s Cantos 98 and 99,” *Studies in English Literature and Linguistics* 18 (1992):13–27; Zhaoming Qian, *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2003:216; Peter Makin, *Ezra Pound’s Cantos: A Casebook*, Oxford·New York: Oxford University Press, 2006:282; Haoming Liu, “Pharmaka and Volgar’ Eloquio: Speech and Ideogrammic Writing in Ezra Pound’s Canto XCVIII,” *Asia Major*, 22. 2 (2009): 179-214.

- VI. Schools and Academies 隆學校以端士習
- VII. Heretical sects 黜異端以崇正學
- VIII. Laws and penalties 講法律以儆愚頑
- IX. Courteousness 明禮讓以厚風俗
- X. Abiding in one's vocation 務本業以定民志
- XI. Education of the young 訓子弟以禁非為
- XII. Prevention of false accusations 息誣告以全良善
- XIII. Sheltering deserters 誠高逃以免株連
- XIV. Payment of taxes 完錢糧以省催課
- XV. Wards and tithings 聯保甲以弭盜賊
- XVI. Making up quarrels 解仇忿以重身命

(Baller, vii)

Compared with the Six Maxims, the Sixteen Maxims extended the scope of filial piety and added clear instructions on agriculture, economy, education, religion, ethics and law. Kangxi decreed that *The Sacred Edict* should be read to the public twice a month, displayed on the law court and included in the Imperial Examination. All intellectuals who wanted to work in the government must take the Imperial Examination, so they should familiarize themselves with *The Sacred Edict*. If they did very well in the Examination, they would be selected as government officials and they would carry out Kangxi's policies more readily. The public readings were undertaken by officials or scholars; when the succinct Sixteen Maxims were read to the public, the speakers had to paraphrase them in common tongue to facilitate its dissemination. Quite a few expanded and simplified versions of *The Sacred Edict* had already been published and put into use before Yongzheng issued an amplification in the second year of his reign (1724), known as *Amplification of The Sacred Edict*. *Amplification* consists of sixteen chapters each of which takes one maxim as the subtitle followed by a commentary of around 600 words, totaling 10,000 words; hence also referred to as *The Edict of Ten Thousand Words* 萬言諭. Yongzheng also wrote a preface to *Amplification* to stress the significance of Kangxi's instruction.

Although *Amplification* was written in a simple literary style, it was beyond the common people, especially those who were illiterate. Again, some officials and scholars paraphrased and further amplified Yongzheng's text in the vernacular language in order for it to be disseminated among the masses. Among a number of colloquial versions of *Amplification*, two have been most popular. One was titled *Paraphrase of the Amplification of The Sacred Edict* 聖諭廣訓衍 written by Wang Youpu (1681-1760), first published in 1726, just two years after the promulgation of *Amplification*, and had been reissued again and again ever since.⁵ The other

⁵ The authorship and the time of the editio princeps are ascertained by Wang Youpu's preface included in the extant versions of the text.

was titled *Precise Rendering of the Amplification of The Sacred Edict* 圣谕广训直解 by an anonymous author, first published in 1850.⁶ Being a compulsory textbook of the Imperial Examination, a compulsory reading proclaimed to the public with various colloquial renderings, *The Sacred Edict* became a household book in China during Qing Dynasty, as popular as Bible in the west. In fact, the Manchu rulers strategically employed the Confucian philosophy to facilitate Qing's success. William Rowe, in *China's Last Empire*, states that Qing's implementation of the neo-Confucian ideology in governance contributed to its prosperity and stability. (Rowe 32)

In the 19th century, Western missionaries translated *The Sacred Edict* and its expansions to help English readers to learn Chinese language and Chinese culture. In 1817 William Milne (1785-1822), a British missionary, published *The Sacred Edict, Containing Sixteen Maxims of the Emperor Kang-Hi, Amplified by His Son, the Emperor Yoong-Ching: Together with a Paraphrase on the Whole by a Mandarin* in London. The last part of the title refers to the *Paraphrase* written by Wang Youpu. Milne's book contains only the English translation with annotation, but no Chinese original version. In the translator's preface, Milne introduced the history of *The Sacred Edict* and the decreed public reading practice. In 1892 Frederick W. Baller (1852-1922), also a British missionary, published *The Sacred Edict: With a Translation of the Colloquial Rendering* in Shanghai, intended for Western missionaries to learn colloquial Mandarin. The edition was bilingual with notes on vocabulary and grammar. The English translation was based on the anonymous *Precise Rendering*. The book also included the entire Chinese text of Yongzheng's *Amplification* and his preface to the *Amplification*, yet without providing a translation. In the preface, Baller paid great compliment to Wang Youpu as he took him for the author of the *Precise Rendering*. How could that be? Some scholar argues that Wang Youpu's *Paraphrase* was so popular that it had been reissued again and again; the extant versions of Wang's text involved revisions of the title by later publishers and some versions were also titled the *Precise Rendering*, which may have led to Baller's confusion. (姚达兑 83) Baller's bilingual book was more practical and more convenient for English readers to learn Chinese from; therefore it was more popular than Milner's edition and reissued many times. *The Sacred Edict* that Pound based his Canto 98-99 on is Baller's 1921 reissue.

As a consequence, Pound followed Baller to pay high tribute to Wang Youpu in Canto 98. Did

⁶ There is no author's preface to the extant versions of the text. The time of the editio princeps is identified by an edict included in an extant version of the text; the edict was issued by Emperor Xianfeng 咸丰 to reiterate the importance of *The Sacred Edict*, in the year when he succeeded to Emperor Daoguang 道光, the thirtieth year of Dongguang's reign (1850). See Liao Zhengwang 廖振旺, 'What the Emperor sai-Analysis on the 19th century missionaries on the *Sacred Edict*' 萬歲爺意思說——試論十九世紀來華新教傳教士封《聖諭廣訓》的出版與認識, *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究, 26-3 (2008), p. 232.

Pound admire the wrong person? It's too early to assume that. We need to learn more about the Honorable Wang.

III

From his autobiography, we know that Wang Youpu was born in Yangzhou 揚州, a beautiful town along the Yangtze River;⁷ he took the Imperial Examination and became a *jinshi* 進士 (advanced scholar) degree-holder in 1723, the first year of Yongzheng's reign. (王又朴 13-80) Since then he held various public offices and served his offices with dutiful enthusiasm. He was also a learned scholar and a prolific writer on *Yi Jing* 易经 and Mencius. He wrote the *Paraphrase* in 1926 when he was the Salt Commissioner in Shaanxi (as Shensi 陝西). Although his text was not the only vernacular version ever produced, it was the most popular one before the mid-19th century on account of its literary merits. Yoshio Ogaeri, a Japanese sinologist, holds that it's vivid and lucid style with homely illustrations excels many mandarin writings that prevailed during the language reform movement of the early 20th century. (魚返善雄 3) He also presumes that the *Precise Rendering* was adapted from the *Paraphrase*, as the former was produced much later and the wordings of the two versions are most similar. (魚返善雄 4)⁸ In his essay on the written popularization of *The Sacred Edict*, Victor H. Mair states unequivocally that later on the *Paraphrase* was revised and changed the title into the *Precise Rendering*. (338) This view is strongly endorsed by Zhou Zhenghe 周振鶴, in his careful study of all extant 13 colloquial renderings. (周振鶴 607)⁹ After my own comparison of the two versions, I find their arguments are convincing: the *Precise Rendering* is more than 85% similar to the *Paraphrase* and both are much different from the other 11 colloquial renderings.

Then, why was the *Precise Rendering* produced to replace the *Paraphrase*? The probable answer is that the *Precise Rendering* was more favored by the Qing authority in the mid-19th century.

Let us examine the difference between the two versions. Compared with the *Paraphrase*, the *Precise Rendering* is mostly more concise and a little more literary with shorter sentences and omission of some illustrations. For example, to illustrate the importance of duteness and

⁷ Wang was born in Yangzhou, and later moved to Tianjin 天津. Haoming Liu mistakes him as "a native of Tianjin." (Haoming Liu. "Pharmaka and Volgar' Eloquio: Speech and Ideogrammic Writing in Ezra Pound's Canto XCVIII." *Asia Major*: Third Series, 22, no. 2 (2009): 181)

⁸ For a general account of the language reform movement in China since the late Qing, Liu Jincai's *Yuyan yundong* is invaluable. Liu Jincai 刘进才, *Language and Chinese Literature 语言运动与中国文学* (Beijing, 2007).

⁹ Thirteen colloquial renderings of the *Amplification* are produced in Zhou Zhenhe's book, *Shengyu guangxun: jijie yu yanjiu* 圣谕广训, 集解与研究 (Shanghai, 2006), including the *Paraphrase* and the *Precise Rendering*; the book is a critical collection of all the relevant imperial texts and vernacular renditions.

subordination, the *Paraphrase* begins with:

万岁爷意思说、我圣祖仁皇帝坐了六十一年天下、最敬重的是祖宗、亲自做成孝经衍义这一部书、无非是要普天下人都尽孝道的意思、所以圣谕十六条、头一件就说个孝弟、如今万岁爷坐了位、想着圣祖教人的意思、做出圣谕广训十六篇来、先把这孝弟的道理讲给你们众百姓听。(周振鹤 163)

[The meaning of his Imperial Majesty is to this effect. Our sacred ancestor, the benevolent Emperor, sat over the empire sixty-one years. He venerated his progenitors in the highest degree. He himself wrote a commentary on the book *Hiaou King*¹⁰, with no less design than to induce all persons under heaven, to carry the practice of filial piety, to its utmost perfection. Therefore, in *The Sacred Edict*, which contains Sixteen Maxims, he placed that first which treats of filial piety and fraternal affection. His present Imperial Majesty sitting on the throne, and reflecting on the intentions of his venerated father to instruct men, wrote largely on the admonitions of *The Sacred Edict* in sixteen sections. Let us first take the doctrine of filial piety and fraternal affection, and discourse of them in the hearing of all you people.] (Milne 4-5)

The *Precise Rendering* begins as:

万岁爷意思说、我圣祖仁皇帝坐了六十一年天下、最敬重的是祖宗、因劝普天下都要孝弟、所以圣谕十六条，孝弟就是头一件。(周振鹤 165)

[The meaning of the Emperor: (he) says: --

Our Imperial Ancestor, the Benevolent Emperor ruled the empire for sixty-one years. Those he held in the highest esteem were his ancestors; consequently he exhorted everybody to duteousness and subordination. Hence, in the sixteen sections of *The Sacred Edict*, duteousness and subordination are first in order.] (Baller 1)

In a few cases, the *Precise Rendering* provides more examples and illustrations. For instance, when explaining Maxim XI “Education of the Young”, the *Precise Rendering* added detailed recordings of the Penal Code to illustrate “the law of the land will not forgive it [evil doing] on any account.” (Baller 125) The tone is more stern and authoritative.

Besides, Zhou Zhenghe finds that the *Precise Rendering* is more conservative than the *Paraphrase*, exhorting absolute and unquestioning filial piety and loyalty. (周振鹤 607) Let’s again take the first chapters for example. Regarding how to serve parents, the *Paraphrase* says:

这个孝顺也不是做不来的事、且如古来的人、有卧冰的、有割股的、有埋儿的，这样的事便难学了、也不必定要这么做才叫做孝、只要心心念念的放在父母身上就好、

¹⁰ *Hiao King* (pinyin: *Xiao Jing* 孝经), *Classic of Filial Piety*, a Confucian classic treatise giving advice on filial piety; that is, how to behave towards a senior (such as a father, an elder brother, or ruler). In the book Confucius preaches that *Xiao* is the foundation of virtue, and is what all teaching grows out of.

你们果然要报恩，但凡自己力量做将来的、无所不至去奉承两个老人家，(周振鹤 163)

[For filial piety is not a thing difficult to practice. In ancient times, in order to display filial affection, some slept on the ice, some cut the thigh, and one buried her own child. This kind of service it would be difficult to imitate; nor is it necessary thus to act in order that it may be denominated filial piety. It only requires the heart and thoughts placed on your parents then all will be well.] (Milne 7)

The *Paraphrase* discourages blind filial piety as illustrated by three extreme filial models well-known in Chinese history. The first model recounts a man who slept on the ice in order to catch a certain fish that his sick mother longed to eat; the second one details a man who cut out a portion of his thigh so that his mother will have meat for boiling in soup and to eat; the third one describes a woman who resolved to bury her child alive to save breast milk for her mother whose teeth were decayed and could eat nothing else. In the *Paraphrase*, Wang Youpu advocated a more liberal filial piety which “only requires the heart and thoughts placed on your parents then all will be well”.

By contrast, the *Precise Rendering* omits the discouraging of the blind filial piety and proposes:

爹娘就如天，天生下来一根草，春来发生也由天、秋来霜杀也由天、爹娘生下的身子、生也由爹娘、死也由爹娘、说什么长短、古人说天下无不是的父母。(周振鹤 166)

[Parents are like heaven. Heaven produces a blade of grass. The arrival of spring causing it to germinate, and autumn coming to kill it with frost, are equally by the will of heaven. In like manner, the power of life and death over the body which they have begotten, likes with the parents. What have you to urge (to the contrary)? The Ancient said, “Under heaven there are no parents in the wrong.”] (Baller 8)

The *Precise Rendering* preaches the unconditional filial piety to parents, which naturally leads to the blind submission to authority. It serves better to indoctrinate people and is definitely more favored by the Manchu rulers. Therefore, The *Precise Rendering* is thought to have been intentionally issued by Qing government to replace the more liberal *Paraphrase* after the mid-19th century when Taiping Rebellion was rampant and Manchu rulers became more conservative; and that explains in part why all extant versions of the *Paraphrase* were issued before the mid-19th century while all extant versions of the *Precise Rendering* were issued after the mid-19th century. (周振鹤 607)

Consequently, when Milne translated *The Sacred Edict* in the early 19th century, *Paraphrase* was still popular and served him well; whereas, when Baller translated *The Sacred Edit* in the late 19th century, *Precise Rendering* prevailed and he took it as the original text. As the clarification of the complicated history of *The Sacred Edict* shows, Pound’s admiration for Wang Youpu is justified; Wang is at least the first author of *Precise*

Rendering, the basis of Baller’s *The Sacred Edict* which in turn inspired Pound to create Canto 98-99.

So far, the complicated evolution of *The Sacred Edict* and it’s relation to Pound’s cantos can be illustrated in the following diagram:

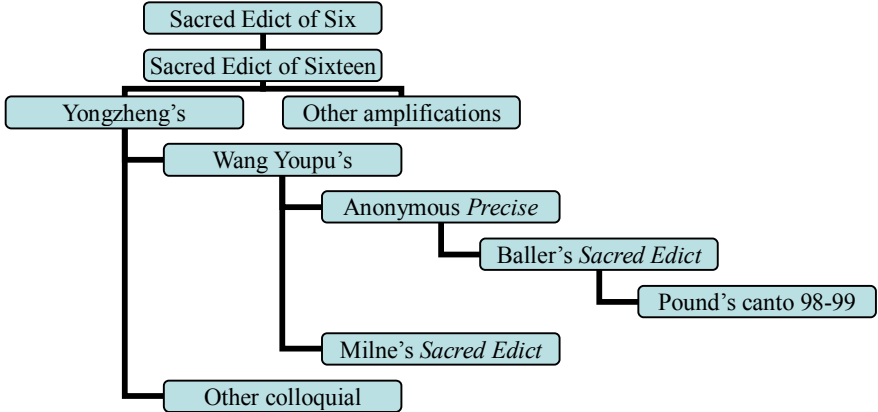


Figure 1 Evolution of *The Sacred Edict* and it’s relation to Pound’s cantos.

IV

According to Mair, it is “somewhat unfortunate” that Baller took the *Precise Rendering* as the original text, because Wang’s version is “an almost flawless masterpiece of natural, colloquial prose,” while the *Precise Rendering* is “awkward” in many instances where it departs from the *Paraphrase*. (340) The *Precise Rendering*, with the “telling differences” from the *Paraphrase* that are analyzed in the previous part, leads Baller to the conclusion in the preface to his translation:

And lastly, it well exemplifies both the strength and weakness of mere morality. There is high thinking, but the outcome is low living. These moral maxims have no life-giving power in them. There are as sterile as a schoolboy’s copybook headings. (v)

Fortunately, Pound was not affected by Baller’s unfavorable comment and he made use of *The Sacred Edict* to fit his particular thematic and aesthetic concerns in his cantos. More fortunately, many lively expressions and imageries that he selectively quoted or adapted from Baller’s text originate from Wang Youpu’s version; the *Precise Rendering* took over these expressions and imageries intact or followed them up closely. A case in point is Wang’s elaboration on “heretical sects.” He refutes the futile worship in Buddhism and Taoism by asking who has seen those Buddhist or Taoist priests “go to the Western Paradise? or fly up in broad daylight?” (Baller 76); When one’s heart is “free from impurity, it is as (clear as) flowers

in a looking-glass, as the moon in water”; (74) and “If you recognize that reason is true, and know that the mind enlightened – that is heaven; the mind in darkness – that is hell.” (87) These lines are again and again put into Canto 98 & 99.

“Who has seen Taoist priests fly up in broad daylight?

They destroy the 5 human relations, (98/707)

Wang: that man’s phallic heart is from heaven

a clear spring of rightness,

greed turns it awry,

Bright gleaming, ming

Kuang ¹ in traverse

need you go so far to burn incense? (99/717-8)

A man’s paradise is his good nature

(Khati)

Doubled kuang ¹ ming ² (99/719)

Phoenix to *t’ung* tree

A mirror to flowers, as water is to the moon. (99/720)

Kuang

Kuang

Ming saith Khaty

Ming

tien

t’ang ²

hsin ²

li ³⁻⁵ (99/722)

Pound got Baller's *Sacred Edict* in 1950, when he was revising his former translation of Confucian canons *The Unwobbling Pivot & the Great Digest* 中庸•大学 published in 1947. In "Translator's Note", Pound expressed his admiration for Confucius:

Starting at the bottom as market inspector, having risen to be Prime Minister, Confucius is more concerned with the necessities of government, and of governmental administration than any other philosopher. He had two thousand years of documented history behind him which he condensed so as to render it useful to men in high official position, not making a mere collection of anecdotes as did Herodotus.

His analysis of why the earlier great emperors had been able to govern greatly was so sound that every durable dynasty, since his time, has risen on a Confucian design and been initiated by a group of Confucians. China was tranquil when her rulers understood these few pages. When the principles here defined were neglected, dynasties waned and chaos ensued. The proponents of a world order will neglect at their peril the study of the only process that has repeatedly proved its efficiency as social coordinate. (Pound 19)

Pound's reading of *The Sacred Edict* which was spelled out by strong Manchu rulers on the basis of Confucianism not only reinforced his admiration for Confucius, but also provided further support for his argument in the note. Pound borrowed *The Sacred Edict* into Canto 98-99 to create a gleaming "throne" on a Confucian design, an earthly paradise built on "a filiality that binds things together" (98/707), an ideal society that "Build ben yeh/ the family profession" (99/717), and a harmonious vision in which:

There is worship in plowing

and equity in the weeding hoe,

A field marshal can be literate.

Might we see it again in our day! (99/731)

All I want is a generous spirit in customs

1st/ honest man's heart demands sane curricula

.....

The fu jen receives heaven, earth, middle
and grows. (99/731-2)

It is characteristic of Wang Youpu to start each chapter of his colloquial rendering with “His Imperial Majesty says” 万岁爷意思说。“万岁爷” (one who can live ten thousand years) is a very colloquial and respectful term in Chinese referring to the Emperor, embodying the best wish for the Emperor’s longevity. Milne’s version is “The meaning of his Imperial Majesty is to this effect”. The anonymous *Precise Rendering* copied Wang’s phrase and Baller’s version is “The meaning of the Emperor: (he) says”. Pound put it in three ways: “The meaning of the Emperor, / ten thousand years heart’s-tone-think-say” and “Ten thousand years say”. (98/711) To me, Pound’s literary translation of “Ten thousand years say” not only intends to be humorous, but also indicates the longevity of Confucian wisdom passed on from one generation to another, from the East to the West, with Pound as one more transmitter of “Sagetrieb” whose job is, “vast as swan-flight”.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baller, F. W. tr., 1921, *The Sacred Edict: With a Translation of the Colloquial Rendering*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press.
- [2] Mair, V. H., 1985, Language and ideology in the written popularizations of *The Sacred Edict*, in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed., A. J. Nathan & E. S. Rawski, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [3] Milne, W., tr., 1870, *The Sacred Edict: Containing Sixteen Maxims of the Emperor Kang-He, Amplified by His Son, the Emperor Yoong-Ching: Together with a Paraphrase on the Whole, by a Mandarin*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press.
- [4] Pound, E., 1969, *Confucius: The Great Digest, Unwobbling Pivot & The Analects*, New York: New Directions.
- [5] Rowe, W. T., 2009, *China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- [6] Terrell, C. F., 1993, *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley·Los Angeles·London: University of California Press.
- [7] 王四霞, 2011, 《明太祖“圣谕六言”演绎文本研究》, 东北师范大学硕士论文。
- [8] 王又朴, 1992, 介山自定年谱, 《年谱丛刊》, 北京图书馆编, 13-80, 中华书局。
- [9] 姚达兑, 2011, 圣书与白话——《圣谕》俗解和一种现代白话的天折, 《同济大学学报》, 第4期, 79-121。
- [10] 魚返善雄, 1943, 《漢文華語康熙皇帝遺訓》, Tokyo: Otsuka Yago Shoten.
- [11] 周振鹤, 2006, 《圣谕广训: 集解与研究》, 上海书店出版社。