

Chinese Ethicality and Its Translation in English — With Reference to a Traditional Genre *Biao*表[Memorial]

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Traditional Chinese culture is closely interwoven with the Chinese language that not only reflects the Chinese culture, politics and society but also is an integral part of all those entities. The translation of Chinese classical works involves not just linguistic transfer between Chinese and the TT in question but a thorough comprehension of the Chinese culture, especially the longstanding and influential Confucian ethics thereof as traditional Chinese society has long been one steeped in Confucian ethics (Liang Shuming 2011).

Biao [Memorial], an official document in terms of genre in ancient China, is largely used by the senior officials to report to the emperor, with a view to showing their loyalty while advancing their political wishes/suggestions. What is conveyed in a memorial is not the seeming servility on the part of the subordinates apart from loyalty, but the reciprocal relationship of ethical responsibility enveloped in human touch between *jun*[emperor/monarch] and *chen*[subject], which is the very first relationship of *wulun* [five relationships], a highly important part of Confucianism or Confucian ethics. Of the extant memorials, Zhuge Liang's 'Memorial to the Emperor before the Northern Expedition' and Li Mi's 'A Memorial to His Majesty' are two typical ones.

A review of their translation in English has revealed a lot of misunderstanding or other problems. For example, the typical way for addressing oneself in a memorial '*chen*' 臣 [subject/] has mostly been translated as "I" or "your (humble) servant" (e.g. the one by David E. Pollard), which has been far away from an accurate or appropriate translation, but produced a distorted image of the official at issue and the Chinese political system *per se* with its unique characteristics. This kind of translation will not further but hinder the promotion of excellent Chinese culture to the world as expected. What is worse, it might further exacerbate the situation concerning an updated comprehension of prime traditional Chinese culture. This study is accordingly an attempt to explore the problems born of English translation of Chinese morality with *biao* as an example.

About the Presenter:



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