The semantics and pragmatics of translating the CUV Bible

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JERRY HWANG

Abstract

In his 1934 overview of Chinese Bible versions, Marshall Broomhall observed that the translators of the Chinese Union Version (CUV) into Mandarin surprisingly found Wenli easier to work with than vernacular Mandarin. Their struggle in using Mandarin is belied by the fact that the Mandarin CUV produced by the translators is a work of literary beauty which Chinese Christians still esteem today. However, it also means that its linguistic limitations in using Mandarin have remained an under-examined area of research. Thus, this article explores the CUV's translation methodology at the intersection of semantics and pragmatics, particularly in its renderings of irony, sarcasm, and rebuke—three communicative devices which require consideration of both semantic and pragmatic elements to understand correctly.

INTRODUCTION

The historical impact of the Chinese Union Version (CUV) of the Bible during the past century has been monumental. Published in 1919 at

Jerry HWANG (HUANG Zhengyi 黃正義) is academic dean and associate professor of Old Testament, Singapore Bible College.

nearly the same time the May Fourth Movement was beginning, it became an important force in reinforcing Mandarin as the vernacular language (*baihua* 白話) of modern China.[1] In addition, Chinese Christians around the world esteem the CUV to such an extent that attempts to revise or replace it have typically met with resistance.[2] Indeed, the CUV's literary beauty and cultural influence become all the more remarkable due to two linguistic challenges in the history of translating the Bible into Chinese.

The first of these was already evident during a lengthy process of over two decades in which different translation teams worked on three Bible versions, two in *Wenli* 文理 and one in Mandarin (which eventually became *Guoyu* 國語, China's "national language"). All three versions initially bore the title of *Heheben* 和合本 ("Chinese Union Version"), a historical datum that is often overlooked today. In Marshall Broomhall's 1934 retrospective look at the publication of the Mandarin CUV, he quotes a translation committee's report at the time that Mandarin was itself a cause for frustration:

> It has a Scylla on the one hand, and a Charybdis on the other. It is the constant danger of falling into undignified colloquialisms and unintelligible localisms, or else of mounting into the cloudland of Wenli. Its vocabulary is limited, and its construction lacks suppleness, whereas Wenli has a vocabulary co-extensive with the Imperial dictionary, and its style, as used by foreigners, is as supple as a rubber ball.[3]

It is evident that the Mandarin CUV translators found Mandarin to be less manageable than Wenli would have been.

The second of these challenges has materialized more recently due to advances in translation theory since the Mandarin CUV first appeared a century ago. Though a word-for-word approach was

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[1] Thor Strandenæs, "The Bible in the Twentieth-Century Chinese Christian Church," in *Reading Christian Scriptures in China*, ed. Chloë Starr (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 69–72. For a full history of the CUV Bible, see Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 45 (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999).

[2] Joseph Hong, "Revision of the Chinese Union Version Bible (CUV): Assessing the Challenges from an Historical Perspective," *The Bible Translator* 53 (2002): 239.

[3] Marshall Broomhall, *The Bible in China* (London: The China Inland Mission, 1934), 92.

considered by the Mandarin CUV translators to be a matter of faithfulness to the Scripture, Bible translators have since realized that meaning in texts resides both in the *semantic* relationships between words as well as the *pragmatic* relationships between words and contextual factors (both within texts and outside them).[4] This is especially true for multi-layered communicative devices such as irony (*fanyu* 反語), sarcasm (*fengci* 諷刺), and rebuke (*zebei* 責備). Because successful communication with these devices turns upon both semantics (*yuyixue* 語義學) and pragmatics (*yuyongxue* 語用學), a merely literal translation may miss the mark when words *mean* the opposite of what they *say*. This study thus aims to identify the linguistic issues in the Mandarin CUV's renderings which, in some cases, are prone to misunderstanding by its readers. Although this endeavor does mean challenging some traditional interpretations based on the Mandarin CUV, the ultimate result of reexamining the literary textures of the Bible will be a richer heritage for Chinese Christians to draw upon.

LINGUISTIC METHODOLOGY AND CHINESE BIBLES

A few remarks on the semantics and pragmatics of the Chinese language are necessary prior to exploring the Mandarin CUV's approach to translating irony, sarcasm, and rebuke. In a recent volume on Chinese linguistics, Professor Jiang Yan 蔣嚴 summarizes that

> pragmatic meaning is never directly gleaned from the encoded meaning of linguistic expressions alone, and can only be obtained by

[4] Gene L. Green, "Relevance Theory and Biblical Interpretation," in *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Matthew Brook O'Donnell (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 217–40; Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

> making contextualized inferences, using the linguistic expressions as the starting point of total meaning construction.[5]

Though the differences between straight and sarcastic utterances can sometimes reside solely in pragmatic features which lie outside the words themselves,[6] spoken Chinese often employs two semantic features to serve as markers for *modality*, that is, the speaker's purpose or disposition toward what they are saying.

The first semantic marker is the use of modal adverbs in the middle of a sentence which can impart an air of exasperation to the entire statement. Whether these adverbs appear in indicative sentences (for example, *qishi* 其實) or interrogative sentences (for example, *nandao* 難道), they share the purpose of communicating the speaker's attitude toward either the ideas at stake or toward the perspective of the other party.[7] Tellingly, these Chinese adverbs are rare in the CUV's renderings of the doubled-edged communicative devices that will be examined below. In addition to modal adverbs, Chinese's second semantic marker of modality is the use of particles at the end of a sentence, a feature termed "utterance-final particles" (UFPs).[8] Some of the more significant UFPs in Chinese speech are *a* 啊, *ne* 呢, *ba* 吧, *le* 了, *o* 哦, *lo* 咯, and *la* 啦. The first four of these appear in the CUV to some degree, but it is revealing that the translators did not use UFPs which convey exasperation or skepticism, such as *o* 哦 and *lo* 咯, to mark statements that should not be taken at face value.

The reasons for this omission are not explicitly stated in the extant archives of the CUV translation committees, but they likely represent the sort of "undignified colloquialisms" that the CUV translators

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[5] Jiang Yan, "Pragmatics," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of the Chinese Language*, ed. Chan Sin-wai, James W. Minett, and Florence Wing-yee Li (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 187.

[6] For example, the intended meaning of the English assertion, "That was a *great* movie," depends on context more than this particular string of words.

[7] Wang Yu-fang, Tsai Pi-hua, and Yang Ya-ting, "Objectivity, Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity: Evidence from *qishi* ('actually') and *shishishang* ('in fact') in Spoken Chinese," *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (2010): 705–27; and Zhuo Jing-Schmidt, "The Manifestation of Emotion: On the Mandarin Chinese *nandao*-Interrogation," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 36 (2008): 211–34.

[8] Li Bin, "Integrating Textual and Prosodic Features in the Interpretation of Chinese Utter-Final-Particles: A Case of *A* and *NE*," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* (2013): 145–69; Chauncey Chu, "Relevance and the Discourse Functions of Mandarin Utterance-Final Modality Particles," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2009 (2009): 282–99.

deemed unworthy of a sacred literary text. The reality that the Bible contains a significant amount of speech genres nevertheless meant that the translators still needed to use oral modality markers, albeit in an underrepresented way. In this regard, it is less problematic in Wenli than Mandarin to represent modality acceptably because of the former's characteristic use of *parataxis* to create tensive statements through juxtaposition.[9]

The linguistic differences between Wenli and Mandarin suggest the following procedure to assess the CUV's renderings of instances which biblical scholars generally recognize as irony, sarcasm, and rebuke. Firstly, we will outline a few cases in which the CUV seems to have overlooked the contextual factors which necessitate the semantic marking of a pragmatic intent. To address this under-specification of meaning, secondly, we will offer an alternative rendering of irony, sarcasm, and rebuke which could render the double-edged character of these communicative devices more clearly for Chinese readers of the CUV. Thirdly and finally, a comparison will be drawn between the relevant Mandarin and Wenli constructions to see how any gaps in pragmatic meaning could be bridged.

IRONY AND THE CUV

The difficulty of recognizing *irony* 反語 is a longstanding issue in literary theory.[10] In biblical studies, however, scholars have arrived at a consensus that the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes contains numerous cases of irony. Two related passages which overturn conven-

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[9] Charles Kwong, "Reflections on a Century of Exploration: Whither Chinese Poetry?" in *Modernisation of Chinese Culture: Continuity and Change*, ed. Jana S. Rošker (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 134–40.

[10] Wayne C. Booth influentially observes that "reconstructions of irony are seldom if ever reducible either to grammar or semantics or linguistics. In reading any irony worth bothering about, we read life itself, and we work on our relations to others as they deal with it. We read character and value, we refer to our deepest convictions. For this reason irony is an extraordinarily good road into the whole art of interpretation. Though ironic statements are only a small part of all that men say to each other—even in this highly ironic age—they bring to light the hidden complexities that are mastered whenever men succeed in understanding each other in any mode, even the most flat and literal." Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 43–44.

tional teaching about wisdom will suffice for purposes of illustration. The first is when Qoheleth the speaker asserts, "貧窮而有智慧的少年人，勝過年老不肯納諫的愚昧王 / Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition any more" (4:13, CUV/ERV).[11] This initially sounds like the "better than" statements in Proverbs which teach that wisdom is of the highest value (for example, 8:19; 15:16; 19:1; 28:6; cf. 1:1–7). Ecclesiastes 4 nonetheless goes on to say that the poor and wise youth may someday replace the king, but his people still may not take lasting pleasure in him (4:14–16b). It is evident that Qoheleth echoes Proverbs in parodying an idea which he pointedly rejects as "虛空、也是捕風 / vanity and a striving after wind" (4:16c, CUV/ERV).

This instance of irony becomes an interpretive key for the second passage in Ecclesiastes 9. When Qoheleth intones, "智慧勝過勇力 / wisdom is better than strength" (Eccles. 9:16a, CUV/ERV), this again resembles Proverbs' characteristic teaching that wisdom is stronger than everything else (for example, 8:11; 21:22). However, the surrounding context of Ecclesiastes 9:16 points to another case of irony in which "something contrary to what is said is to be understood."[12] The next statement undermines the first by saying, "然而那貧窮人的智慧、被人藐視、他的話也無人聽從 / nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard" (9:16b, CUV/ERV).

How should these opposing statements in Ecclesiastes 9:16 be understood? Ecclesiastes scholars note that wisdom's reversal in Ecclesiastes 9:16b indicates that Ecclesiastes 9:16a is a facetious quote of the wisdom tradition with which Qoheleth does not agree,[13] as in the case of Ecclesiastes 4:16. Despite the irony at hand, both the Mandarin CUV and the ERV before it render Ecclesiastes 9:16a as an independent clause and 9:16b as a subordinate clause, bringing the teaching of

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[11] "ERV" stands for the English Revised Version of 1885, the Bible that frequently served as an English reference point for the CUV translators. Unless otherwise indicated, renderings attributed to the "CUV" denote the Mandarin CUV of 1919 and its many reprints, not the New Punctuation Version CUV (1988) or the Revised CUV (2010).

[12] As Quintilian the Roman orator famously defined irony: *contrarium ei quod dicitur intelligendum est*.

[13] Robert D. Holmstedt, John A. Cook, and Phillip S. Marshall, *Qoheleth: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text, Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 264; Sophie Ramond, "Y a-t-il de l'ironie dans le livre de Qohélet?" *VT* 60 (2010): 624–25; C. L. Seow, ed., *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible 18C (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 322.

Qoheleth in line with Proverbs. Similarly, the Wenli CUV exhibits the same sense as the Mandarin CUV: "我則曰，智愈於力、然貧者之智、為人蔑視、言不見聽" ["So I said, Wisdom surpasses might, but as for the wisdom of the poor, they are ignored, no one listens" (the author's translation)]. Likely due to these renderings and their sentence punctuation which suggest that Ecclesiastes 9:16a is the main idea for which Ecclesiastes 9:16b is a caveat, Chinese commentators on this verse tend to overlook the irony at hand and understand Qoheleth to be praising wisdom (9:16a), with only the minor qualification (9:16b) that wisdom has limits or sometimes fails to be recognized.[14] The semantics of Ecclesiastes 9:16 on its own makes this interpretation possible, but the pragmatics of the broader context renders it unlikely.

In this regard, the two Wenli translations that predated the Wenli CUV recognized that something is amiss with Qoheleth's statement in Ecclesiastes 9:16a. The Delegates' Version of 1854 reads:[15] "我竊思之、智愈於力、貧者之智、為人藐忽、不從其言" ["I humbly thought, Wisdom surpasses might, [but] as for the wisdom of the poor, it is neglected, no one listens" (the author's translation)]. Similarly, Bishop S. I. J. Schereschewsky's Easy Wenli version of 1902, which was a Chinese translation directly from Hebrew by a Messianic Jew, draws out the sardonic commentary on wisdom even more clearly: "我自言曰、智慧雖愈於勇力、貧者之智慧仍被人藐忽、不聽其言" ["I said to myself, Although

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[14] For example, James M. Cheung 張慕皚 (Zhang Mu'ai), *Chuandaoshu* 傳道書 [Ecclesiastes], Jiandao shijing congshu 建道釋經叢書 [Alliance Biblical Seminary Exegetical Series] (Hong Kong: Alliance Biblical Seminary, 2002), 167; Archie Chi-chung Lee 李熾昌 (Li Chichang) and Chow Lien-hwa 周聯華 (Zhou Lianhua), *Chuandaoshu, Yage* 傳道書．雅歌 [The Book of Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon], Chinese Bible Commentary, vol. 17 (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1990), 118; Denny Y. C. Ma 馬有藻 (Ma Youzao), *Chuandaoshu zhuti quanshi* 傳道書主題詮釋 [A Thematic Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes] (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1987), 93–94; Andrew Y. W. Hsieh 謝友王 (Xie Youwang), *Xukong yu chongman: Chuandaoshu zhushi* 虛空與充滿——傳道書註釋 [Vanity and Verity: A Commentary on Ecclesiastes] (Hong Kong: Seed Press, 1981), 233. The exception that proves the rule is Mary Wai-yi Tse 謝慧兒 (Xie Hui'er), *Chuandaoshu: Shikan rensheng* 傳道書——試看人生 [Ecclesiastes: A Contemplation on Life], Mingdao yanjing congshu 21 明道研經叢書 21 [Ming Dao Commentary Series 21] (Hong Kong: Ming Dao Press, 2005), 294.

[15] The writer is grateful to the National Library of Australia for making high-resolution facsimiles of these Wenli Bibles available on its website. The Wenli Bibles from the National Library of Australia's online collection are the following editions (listed in order of their appearance in the article): (1) The Wenli CUV published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1919, (2) The Delegates' Version published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1908, and (3) Schererschewsky's Easy Wenli Version published by the American Bible Society in 1902.

wisdom surpasses strength, the wisdom of the poor is still ignored, no one listens" (the author's translation)].

Given these hints from the Delegates' Version and Schereschewsky's Easy Wenli version, a similar use of adverbial qualifiers and modal markers in the Mandarin CUV would lend clarity to Ecclesiastes 9:16. Qoheleth's skepticism toward conventional wisdom could be better expressed as follows: "智慧雖然勝過勇力, 貧窮人的智慧卻被人藐視、他的話也無人聽從咯" ("Though wisdom is better than strength, nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.") The combination of *suiran* 雖然 ("though, although, despite"), *que* 卻 ("but, however"), and *lo* 咯 (an untranslatable UFP which highlights the obviousness of a conclusion) would show unmistakably that Qoheleth is satirizing the rest of the Old Testament's sages instead of agreeing with them. This does not mean that Old Testament wisdom is ultimately pessimistic or even contradicts itself, but that it displays the kind of nuance which is truer to human experience than a simplistic focus on either the ideal or the reality can provide. The complexities of life require "fear of the LORD" (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 23:18; cf. Eccles. 12:13; Job 28:28) to navigate well—a theocentric emphasis that distinguishes Israelite wisdom from the moralistic bent of Confucian wisdom, even though the ethical themes within these two traditions often look similar at first glance.[16]

SARCASM AND THE CUV

Somewhat differently from irony, *sarcasm* 諷刺 is a communicative device that operates simultaneously as praise and criticism, with the rhetorical effects of this dissonance requiring awareness of both. But when the recipient misses one or the other dimension, a complex act of communication is reduced to only praise or criticism; misunderstanding can arise. Precisely this happened when the Mandarin CUV rendered Judges 6, which will be discussed as a representative example, in a manner that makes Gideon a more virtuous character than a character which the narrative's thick sarcasm depicts him to be. Though scholars

[16] Yao Xinzhong, *Wisdom in Early Confucian and Israelite Traditions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016).

of the book of Judges concur that Gideon is a round character with both strengths and weaknesses, the depiction of Gideon in the Mandarin CUV has tended to steer Chinese Christians toward viewing him as an exemplar of courageous young people.

Judges 6 in the Mandarin CUV reflects several translational decisions which are unusual. This is especially so when compared with other Chinese Bibles which highlight the negative aspects of Gideon in the narrative, whether in the narrator's description, Gideon's own words, or the response of Yahweh's angel to him. After describing Israel's oppression by Midian, the narrator records Gideon's response of threshing wheat inside the confined space of a winepress rather than in an open area with adequate wind. The Mandarin CUV portrays Gideon's motivation as a desire to "guard against" (*fangbei* 防備) Midian (6:11), but the Hebrew verbal root actually means "to flee/hide."[17] Thus, the Mandarin CUV turns the narrative's criticism of Gideon's timidity, whether to hide himself or his threshing activities, into praise of his vigilance for safeguarding grain. By contrast, the Wenli CUV and all other Chinese Bibles (notably including the Revised CUV [*Heheben xiudingban* 和合本修訂版]) highlight Gideon's fearfulness in hiding from Midian (6:11).[18]

The Mandarin CUV's initially positive portrayal of Gideon shapes one's expectations for the dialogue that ensues between Gideon and the angel of Yahweh. When the angel of Yahweh addresses Gideon as "大能的勇士啊, 耶和華與你同在 / O mighty warrior, Yahweh is with you" (6:12), this utterance is often seen by Chinese commentators as a

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[17] To be precise, the Hebrew verb is a Hiphil causative form of *nus*, which occurs three times in the Old Testament besides Judges 6:11. All other instances (Exod. 9:20, Deut. 32:30 and Judg. 7:21) reflect the characteristic nuance of flight or haste.

[18] Wenli CUV: "基甸打麥於酶酒處、以避免米甸人 / Gideon threshed grain in the winepress to avoid the Midianites"; Schereschewsky: "基甸打麥於壓酒處、不慾為米甸人所知 / Gideon threshed grain in the winepress since he did not want the Midianites to know"; Delegates' Version: "基田撲麥與酶旁、不慾為米田人所知 / Gideon threshed grain in the winepress since he did not want the Midianites to know"; Contemporary Chinese Bible: "基甸因為要躲避米甸人，正躲在擠酒池子 / because Gideon was hiding from the Midianites, he was hiding in the winepress"; "基甸打麥於酶酒處、以避免米甸人 / Gideon threshed grain in the winepress to avoid the Midianites"; Revised CUV: "基甸正在酶酒池那裏打麥子，為了躲避米甸人 / Gideon was threshing in the winepress to hide from the Midianites." Interestingly, the Chinese New Version is closer to the Mandarin CUV by using dotted underlines to imply that Gideon may be hiding the grain rather than himself: "基甸正在壓酒池，為要避免米甸人的搶奪 / Gideon threshed grain in the winepress to avoid it being taken by [the] Midian[ites]." The renderings above from the Wenli Bibles are the writer's own.

greeting or encouragement to reinforce Gideon's faith[19] instead of a pointed remark on his fear (cf. 6:11) which necessitates a rebuke (cf. 6:14).[20] In addition, Gideon's continued insistence that he is unable to deliver Israel (6:15) becomes an expression of modesty in the face of the task[21] rather than continuing resistance to God's call.[22] While exceptions to these tendencies can be found among more recent Chinese interpreters,[23] older Chinese scholarship usually moralizes Gideon's call as basically a recapitulation of Moses' call (Exod. 3–4).[24] The latter approach overlooks the narrative's critique that Gideon is not Moses' equal to rescue a despondent generation from oppression.[25]

How could sarcasm in Judges 6 have been rendered better by the Mandarin CUV (but still in its own vernacular idiom) to depict Gideon as a rounder character? Besides the semantic factors already noted for Gideon's fear rather than boldness in Judges 6:11, the pragmatic indicators of sarcasm in Judges 6:12–15 could follow the Wenli versions' use of various adverbs and modal particles to highlight the narrator's critique of Gideon. The following is a proposed revision of the Mandarin CUV's text of Judges 6:11–15 with deletions marked with strikethrough and additions with underline:

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[19] James M. Cheung 張慕皚 (Zhang Mu'ai), *Shishiji: Luanshizhong de zhengjiu* 士師記——亂世中的拯救 [Judges: Salvation in the World of Chaos], Shengming xinxi xilie 生命信息系列 [Life Messages Series] (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2000), 89–90; Chow Wing-kin 周永健 (Zhou Yongjian) and Chow Lien-hwa 周聯華 (Zhou Lianhua), *Shishiji, Ludeji* 士師記．路得記 [Judges, Ruth], Chinese Bible Commentary, vol. 8 (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 2012), 84; Jacob C. S. Tsang 曾祥新 (Zeng Xiangxin), *Shishiji* 士師記 [Judges], Tiandao shengjing zhushi 天道聖經註釋 [Tien Dao Bible Commentary] (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1998), 184.

[20] Mark E. Biddle, *Reading Judges: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyths & Helwys Publishing, 2012), 80; Tammi J. Schneider, *Berit Olam: Judges* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 105.

[21] For example, Chow and Chow, *Shishiji, Ludeji*, 85; Tsang, *Shishiji*, 185.

[22] Richard D. Nelson, *Judges: A Critical and Rhetorical Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 131.

[23] For example, Liu Kwang-chi 劉光啟 (Liu Guangqi), *Shishiji fansi: Chenlun yu zhengjiu* 士師記反思——沉淪與拯救 [The Book of Judges: Fall and Salvation] (Hong Kong: Chinese Baptist Press, 2013), 126; Sam Tsang 曾思瀚 (Zeng Sihan) and Nancy Ou 吳瑩宜 (Wu Yingyi), *Shishiji de kehua yanjiu: Lingxiu, nuxing yu jiating de gushi* 士師記的刻劃研究——領袖、女性與家庭的故事 [Judges Characterized: Stories of Leadership, Women and Family] (Hong Kong: Logos Publishers, 2010), 122–25.

[24] Chow and Chow, *Shishiji, Ludeji*, 83; Tsang, *Shishiji*, 192–93.

[25] Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, New American Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 259–61; Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, Bible and Literature Series, vol. 14 (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1999), 50–51.

11 約阿施的兒子基甸正在酒醡那裏打麥子、為要~~防備~~躲避米甸人。
12 耶和華的使者向基甸顯現、對他說、大能的勇士阿、耶和華已經與
你同在。 13 基甸說、主阿、耶和華若真與我們同在、我們何至遭遇
這一切事呢？我們的列祖不是向我們說、耶和華領我們從埃及上來
麼？他那樣奇妙的作為在哪裏呢？現在他卻丟棄我們、將我們交在
米甸人手裏！~~。~~ 14 耶和華觀看基甸、說、你靠着你這能力去從米甸
人手裏拯救以色列人。難道不是我差遣你去的麼？ 15 基甸說、主阿、
我有何能拯救以色列人呢？我家在瑪拿西支派中、原來是至貧窮的。
我在我父家是至微小的。

Each of these five verses contains a revision to highlight the tensions which lead to a sarcastic exchange in the dialogue. Firstly, in v. 11, Gideon has chosen to *duobi* 躲避 ("hide from, avoid") rather than *fangbei* 防備 ("guard against") Midian. As noted above, the Revised CUV already contains this change. Secondly, in v. 12, the addition of the adverb *yijing* 已經 ("already") draws out the pointedness of the angel's address to fearful Gideon (v. 12a) as "mighty warrior" (v. 12b) by referring the angel's promise of divine presence (v. 12c) back to what Yahweh had already spoken to Israel (cf. v. 10). Thirdly, in v. 13, another adverb *zhen* 真 ("really") emphasizes that Gideon sets a counterfactual condition, since he does not really believe that Yahweh is with his people. This verse's concluding change in punctuation from period (".") to exclamation ("!") underscores Gideon's disappointment that Israel remains oppressed by Midian. Fourthly and responding in v. 14 with a similar tone, Yahweh's rhetorical question uses the *nandao* 難道-construction to communicate his exasperation at Gideon's ongoing defiance. Fifth and finally, in v. 15, the addition of the modal adverb *yuanlai* 原來 ("truly") expresses Gideon's complaining retort that he is simply unable to obey.

Collectively, these revisions to Judges 6:11–15 show the progression in Gideon's character from fearful reluctance (Judg. 6) to bold obedience (Judg. 7), though this roundness of depiction continues with his unfortunate fall back into sin (Judg. 8). Recovering the roundness of Gideon as a narrative character, as what the Revised CUV begins to do, will be somewhat at odds with the Chinese Christian tendency to view him as mostly positive, as attested by the ubiquity of youth fellowships called *Jidian tuanqi* 基甸團契 (that is, "Gideon Fellowship," perhaps due also to Heb. 11:32). However, the realization that God can accomplish mighty things through someone as flawed as Gideon ultimately supports the kind of theocentrism which distinguishes the Bible's worldview from a Chinese worldview that focuses on human behavior, as noted already in the discussion of irony.

REBUKE AND THE CUV

The communicative device of *rebuke* 責備 in the Mandarin CUV represents a rather different case from the preceding two cases. In contrast to its subtle renderings of irony and sarcasm which discerning readers could nonetheless detect, the Mandarin CUV seems to turn the rebukes in Psalm 46:10 and Habakkuk 2:20 into comforting words instead. The meaning and tone of these verses in the Mandarin CUV inadvertently become their opposites in a manner that continues to influence Chinese Christians—Psalm 46:10 is seen as a peaceful summons to rest, while Habakkuk 2:20 is the scriptural basis for "The Lord Is in His Holy Temple" (*Zhu zai shengdian zhong* 主在聖殿中), a Chinese translation of a nineteenth-century English hymn by George F. Root which is traditionally used as a musical prelude to worship services. Given the usual understanding of these verses, it is necessary to revisit the semantic and pragmatic factors which resulted in Psalm 46:10 and Habakkuk 2:20 in the Mandarin CUV departing from the original Hebrew's sense of rebuke.

Psalm 46:10 as Rebuke

Psalm 46:10 in the Mandarin CUV reads as follows: "你們要休息，要知道我是神。" ["You shall rest and know that I am God!" (the author's translation)]. This likely reflects a literal translation of the ERV's familiar phrase, which follows the KJV, "Be still and know that I am God." However, there are several issues in such a rendering. The first and more significant is that the verb phrase "be still" in this verse had a different sense in the seventeenth-century English of King James I and William Shakespeare than how later readers came to understand this phrase. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists an obsolete sense of "abstaining from action," which the KJV translators apparently employed in translating the Hebrew verbal root *rph* ("to drop, let go, cease"). The martial emphasis of Psalm 46 makes clear that v. 10 contains a command for the nations to "drop [your weapons]" and stop fighting against Zion as well as the God who dwells within her. Without this context, v. 10 becomes nonsensical in building on the previous verse's assertion that Yahweh disarms all who resist him: "他止息刀兵，直到地極。他折弓、斷槍，把戰車焚燒在火中 / He causes warfare to cease until

the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow, splits the spear, [and] burns chariots in the fire" (the English translation of v.9 is the author's).

The period (".") which concludes v. 9 in the Mandarin CUV has also encouraged the devotional tendency to read v. 10 in isolation. When this is coupled with the misunderstanding of the Hebrew word *rph* as *xiuxi* 休息 ("rest"), the addressees, *nimen* 你們 ("you [all]," the second-person plural pronoun), inadvertently become weary Christians in need of rest,[26] rather than the pagan nations who were already addressed as *nimen* 你們 (cf. v. 8) and are the only grammatically plural persons in this context.[27] Thus, the punctuation and semantics of the Mandarin CUV result in the questionable interpretation that *xiuxi* 休息 is a summons to psychological calm rather than a military cease-fire.

A comparison between the Mandarin CUV and the other Wenli versions reveals another semantic issue in translating Psalm 46:10. Each in their own way, the Wenli versions use a combination of auxiliary words and punctuation to reinforce that it is the previously addressed nations who must stop their rebellion against Yahweh. Also and in contrast to the Mandarin CUV's use of the verbal auxiliary *yao* 要 ("shall") to make the verse sound like a promise to Israel, the Wenli versions link v. 10 to its preceding martial context (*gaorenyue* 告人曰, "tell the people") and/or utilize a verbal auxiliary of obligation (*dang* 當, *qi* 其) and conjunctive punctuation (that is, the enumerative com-

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[26] For example, Titus Chu 朱韜樞 (Zhu Taoshu), *Shipian zhong de jiaohui shenghuo (Shipian juaner)* 詩篇中的教會生活（詩篇卷二）[Psalms in the Life of the Church (Psalm, vol. 2)] (Zhonghe, Taiwan: Return to the Lord Publishing, 2007), 91–92; Zhang Sheng 張聖, *Shipian quanshi* 詩篇詮釋 [A Commentary on Psalms] (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2002), 132; Princeton S. Hsu 徐松石 (Xu Songshi), *Shipian shangxi* 詩篇賞析（卷一）[Appreciation of the Psalms, vol. 1] (Hong Kong: Chinese Baptist Press, 2001), 314–15. Cheung Kwok-ting recognizes that v. 10 is closely connected to two preceding verses about military conflict, but reverts to the Mandarin CUV's sense of psychological calm despite rendering v. 10 correctly with *zhushou* 住手 ("stop") rather than *xiuxi* 休息 ("rest"). Cheung Kwok-ting 張國定 (Zhang Guoding), *Shipian (Juaner)* 詩篇（卷二）[Psalms II], Tien Dao Bible Commentary (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2001), 70.

[27] John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 106; James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 184. Timothy Chow recognizes that Psalm 46:10a's call to stop fighting is a warning to the nations, but asserts that Psalm 46:10b's command to know Yahweh is directed to believers even though the grammatical subject remains the same. Timothy Chow 周郁晞 (Zhou Yuxi), *Shipian shangce* 詩篇上冊 [The Psalms I], Chinese Bible Commentary, vol. 14 (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1996), 408.

ma、) to indicate that the command for the nations to stop fighting (v. 10) is a logical consequence of Yahweh's destructive power (v. 9).

> Delegates' Version: [9]人不興戎兮、 [10]告人曰、當息干戈、以我為上帝……
>
> Schereschewsky: [9]以火焚燬車輛、[10]爾當休息、當知惟我為上帝……
>
> Wenli CUV: [9]折弓斷戟、火焚戰車兮、[10]爾其休息、知我為上帝……

It is true that the Schereschewsky and Wenli CUV Bibles still use *xiuxi* 休息 ("rest") as the Mandarin CUV later would do, but their use of punctuation and the semantics of obligation still make v. 10 a logical continuation of what precedes. On this note, the literal translation of the Chinese New Version (*Xinyiben* 新譯本) breaks with tradition (as does the New American Standard Bible in English) to capture better the sense of the Hebrew text that the nations must abandon their opposition to the Lord's chosen city: "你們要住手，要知道我是 神 / Cease striving and know that I am God" (CNV/NASB). Thus, in its original context, Psalm 46:10 is a rebuke to the arrogant rather than an invitation to the anxious, which has unwittingly become as such for many readers of the Mandarin CUV (as well as the English versions which follow the KJV).

Habakkuk 2:20 as Rebuke

Habakkuk 2:20 resembles Psalm 46:10 for typically being understood as an invitation. The verse reads in the Mandarin CUV: "惟耶和華在他的聖殿中；全地的人都當在他面前肅敬靜默 ["Yahweh alone is in his holy temple; Let all the earth's people keep reverence-silence before him" (the author's translation)]. As mentioned above, a hymn based on this verse serves as a call to worship in many Chinese churches.

The liturgical understanding of Habakkuk 2:20 is nonetheless rooted in a curious semantic decision on the part of the Mandarin CUV translators. The Hebrew verb for "keep reverence-silence" in this verse is an onomatopoeic interjection, *has*, which echoes the English command to "Hush!" or "Shush!" However, the Mandarin CUV has expanded a single Hebrew interjection into two Chinese verbs, *sujing* 肅敬 and *jingmo* 靜默, which denote silence as well as connoting solemnity and reverence. The character *jing* 敬 ("worship, respect") in the latter collocation is particularly significant since it occurs frequently in religious idioms of reverence toward God such as *jingwei*

敬畏 ("revere," for example, Gen. 22:12; Exod. 1:17), and *jingbai* 敬拜 ("worship," for example, Deut. 4:19). Interestingly, the closing line of "The Lord Is in His Holy Temple" chooses one character from each of the Mandarin CUV's verbs to enjoin worshipers to *sujing* 肅靜 ("solemn-silence").[28]

The original context of Habakkuk 2:20 points to the pragmatics of a rebuke and warning rather than a liturgy or call to wait upon God,[29] much like its parallel statements in Zephaniah 1:17 and Zechariah 2:17. Not only is the entire section of Habakkuk 2:9–20 a series of woe oracles against the nations, it is also notable that the final woe confronts the folly of these same nations (cf. vv. 13, 17) for addressing wood, stone, good, and silver images as if they are gods (v. 19). Their idolatrous speech becomes the occasion for an unidentified speaker to retort, *has* ("Hush! Shush!"), since Yahweh alone deserves veneration as the uniquely transcendent God. The semantics of the Hebrew interjection *has* indicates that it could possibly be a neutral injunction to silence (cf. Judg. 3:19; Neh. 8:11), but the pragmatics of this particular instance makes a rebuke more likely. Idolatrous speech must be silenced just as inanimate idols themselves are silent.

However, it is notable that the Mandarin CUV followed an established tradition in understanding Habakkuk 2:20 as a call to reverence. The Wenli versions render the verse as follows:

> Delegates' Version: [20]惟耶和華在厥聖殿、天下之人俱當寅畏焉……
> Schereschewsky: [20] 惟主在其聖殿、普天下之人、當在主前肅然靜默……
> Wenli CUV: [20]惟耶和華在其聖殿、全地當靜默於其前……

Given the connotations of using religiously freighted terms such as *yinwei* 寅畏 (Delegates' Version) and *jingmo* 靜默 (Schereschewsky, Wenli CUV), it seems better to use terms in Chinese's semantic field of

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[28] Compare the Revised CUV's use of a single verb to translate Habakkuk 2:20b: "全地都當在他面前肅靜."

[29] Cf. Wong Tin-sheung 黃天相 (Huang Tianxiang), *Habagushu, Xifanyashu, Hagaishu* 哈巴谷書．西番亞書．哈該書 [Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai], Tien Dao Bible Commentary (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2016), 133; Tsang Lap-wong 曾立煌 (Zeng Lihuang), *Rensheng de kunhuo: Habagushu de shenghuo yingyong* 人生的困惑——哈巴谷書的生活應用 [The Perplexities of Life: Applying the Book of Habakkuk] (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 2003), 62–63.

silence which are not found in the familiar hymn's use of Habakkuk 2:20.

In this regard, several Chinese verbs occur in idioms that echo the Hebrew interjection *has* in its abruptness and restriction to oral contexts, such as the imperative *bizui!* 閉嘴! (shut up!). Since the informality of *bizui* 閉嘴 borders on rudeness, milder verbs such as *zhukou* 住口, *zhuzui* 住嘴, or *jianmo* 緘默 (all of which mean "stop talking") could also be used. Whichever verb for this command is chosen, it would be wise to clarify that Habakkuk 2:20 is a rebuke against idolaters rather than a summons to worship God. For this reason, the Mandarin CUV's rendering of Habakkuk 2:20 would benefit from the following revision: "惟耶和華在他的聖殿中；全地的人都當在他面前住口 / Yahweh alone is in his holy temple; Let all the earth's people shush themselves [or even "shut up"] before him."

In summary, the proposed retranslations of Psalm 46:10 and Habakkuk 2:20 emphasize their semantic and pragmatic sense in the Hebrew original as rebuke. Though these revisions may be alarming for diverging from the traditional understanding of invitation, Chinese Christians would be encouraged to learn that the censures in these verses address a much larger theological horizon than usually held—they are *public* warnings for rebellious nations in the sight of all creation, rather than merely being statements of *private* devotion to God. The result of perceiving the breadth of the Scripture's address to all peoples would be a more majestic picture of the God witnessed within its pages, much like the examples of irony and sarcasm given earlier.

CONCLUSION

The observant reader will have noticed that this study's examples of underspecified meaning in the Mandarin CUV all came from the Old Testament. This naturally raises the question of how irony, sarcasm, and rebuke have been translated in the New Testament, especially since it contains well-attested examples of these communicative devices (for

example, 2 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:12).[30] A full exploration of this issue lies outside this paper's scope, but it is noteworthy that the original languages of the Old Testament, Hebrew and Aramaic, are two Semitic languages that social anthropologists would classify as *high-context* languages for the importance of pragmatics in addition to semantics in conveying meaning.[31] The original language of the New Testament, on the other hand, is Greek, a *low-context* language since it employs comparatively more semantic features than Hebrew and Aramaic to mark utterances that should not be taken at face value (for example, the use of the Koine Greek particle *an* in marking contingency or potentiality). Most of the Mandarin CUV translators were Westerners coming from relatively low-context cultures, yet their translation work on the Old Testament involved bridging between high-context languages (that is, Hebrew and Aramaic on the one hand, and Chinese on the other). It may be that the shorter cultural distance between European languages and Koine Greek attuned them better to the New Testament's lower-context tendency to mark pragmatics using semantics. This would also be consistent with the linguistic reality that a word-for-word translation is generally easier to understand in the target language when the source language is low-context like Greek rather than high-context like Hebrew.

However, the preceding observations should not diminish the fact that the translators of the Mandarin CUV produced a phenomenal literary work. Its status as "the Bible" for Chinese Christians is fully deserved. In fact, one's appreciation of the translators' achievement becomes even greater in light of how they always considered their efforts to be provisional until more native Chinese could join in refining their work.[32] With precisely this task having been undertaken in the translation project of the Revised CUV (2010), though, the conservative revision policy of that version meant that only Judges 6:11 and Habakkuk 2:20 were updated among the cases of irony, sarcasm, and rebuke discussed in this article. It would be desirable, then, to continue fulfilling the wishes of the Mandarin CUV's translators for a greater number of Chinese biblical scholars to join in revising it into a better vernacular.

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[30] See the individual articles on New Testament books in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Fontana Press, 1987).

[31] For the seminal work on distinguishing between high-/low- context cultures and languages, see Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976). Hall generalizes European and American cultures/languages as low-context but Chinese culture/language as high-context in nature. Ibid., 91–92.

[32] Hong, "Revision of the Chinese Union Version Bible," 239.

It is in this constructive spirit—*liangyaokukou* 良藥苦口 ("good medicine is bitter to the taste")—that this study has sought a fuller understanding of the Chinese Bible's rich literary textures.