
**Abstract:** Four approaches to presenting *kanshi* in translation have been in use, the most common being (1) where a translation is presented and nothing else. The inclusion of the following—(2) the *kanji* text, (3) *kundoku* renderings of how poem-lines might be parsed and read aloud “in Japanese,” and (4) a visual sense of the caesurae and rhymes involved in the original by giving Chinese or *ondoku* readings—are improvements that have been employed (with increasing infrequency, the higher the number).

A fifth approach (illustrated here), one incorporating the features already noted, would engage the two perennial problems of translation that usually still remain: “naturalization” vs. “barbarization,” and the handling of allusions. Currently what one gets, while generally helpful, is only the paraphrasable sense of poetic lines—much of the “poeticity” of the text, namely, concrete metaphors, and especially allusions, is overlooked; the translation skates over the surface of the poem and ignores what lies beneath and is most important. Hence, the proposed inclusion of the following: (5) naturalized and barbarized translations to bring out the “literal” and paraphrasable sense of lines, and (6) notes to clarify the expressions being used, especially allusions, in terms of their historical use, referentiality, and contextual implication.

“Kanshi in Translation: How Its Features Can Be Effectively Communicated”
John Timothy Wixted
Harbert, Michigan

Four approaches to presenting *kanshi* in translation have been in use, here termed Approach A through Approach D (illustrated by Text 1 through Text 4). A fifth approach will be proposed and illustrated (with contrasting renditions) that, furthermore, engages two of the perennial problems of translation: “naturalization” vs. “barbarization,” and the handling of allusions.

For years, *kanshi* in Western-language translation, at least in book-length works, have been treated via Approach A, where a translation is presented and nothing else.

**Text 1:**
Ryōkan [良寛], 1758-1831
[“冬夜長”] “Long Winter Night”

I remember when I was young
reading alone in the empty hall,
again and again refilling the lamp with oil,
ever minding then how long the winter night was.

For various reasons the *kanji* text has not been included: Most such books were published at a time when it was cumbersome or prohibitively expensive to supply the original text in *kanji*. The translations were aimed at a general audience assumed not to know Japanese or Chinese. And they were presented as independent poems standing on their own, thus reflecting a view both of poetry and of translation that was current at the time. The many contributions of Burton Watson provide the most obvious examples of this type: his two-volume *Japanese Literature in Chinese; kanshi* selections by him in *From the Country of Eight Islands*; and volumes of his devoted, in whole or in part, to the *kanshi* of Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山 (1583-1672), Gensei 元政 (1623-1668), Ryōkan 良寛 (1758-1831), and Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867-1902). Additional volumes of poem-translations of this type could be cited.¹

**Approach B** illustrates a format comparatively rare in *book-length volumes* of translation, although *most scholarly articles now* follow the convention: namely, that of providing both the original *kanji* text and a poem translation.

**Text 2:**

Tanaka Kaei (Tōto) 田中歌永 (東濤), 1822-1897  
“賴政鐵燈” “An Iron Lamp Dedicated to Yorimasa”

洗塵無字跡  I wash off the dust, no trace of any words.  
鐵鏽帶青苔  The iron rusty, covered with green moss.  
七百星霜古  Seven hundred years now have passed,  
英雄魂未灰  But his valiant spirit has never turned to ash.

Needless to say, it is always helpful to have the original as well as a translation, even if only for reference. And the original offers no obstacle to those who cannot read the language, for they can simply pass over it. Fortunately, advances in computer technology have made it comparatively easy to supply texts in East Asian languages.

But Approach B, which has become standard in scholarly articles, can be frustrating. As with Approach A, one cannot but wonder: How would a silent reading of the text go? How would it be read aloud? How would it be intoned or chanted? Are we only to see *kanshi* texts—original and translation—and completely overlook their aural/oral dimension? One could read these texts in Chinese, as if they were Chinese poems and not the Sino-Japanese creations that they are. But that is not how Japanese wrote, read, and recited them.

In other words, why not go a step further and include a *kundoku* 訓読 rendering, whether in Japanese with *furigana*, or preferably (as noted below) in romanization? Note the following **Texts 3a and 3b** illustrating **Approach C**, which are distinguished by the inclusion not only of a translation and the original text, but also of romanized *kundoku* renderings of the poems.

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2 Edo period and of Japanese court-tradition *kanshi* also follow Approach A, the first with spare annotation, the second with much fuller explication.

Text 3a:
Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, 1867-1916
[“無題”]

秋風鳴萬木          Shūfū banboku nari
山雨撼高樓         San’u kōrō wo yurugasu
病骨棱如劍         Byōkotsu ryō to shite tsurugi no gotoku
一燈青愁欲          Ittō aoku shite ureen to hossu

(The autumn wind soughs through a myriad of trees / The mountain rain shakes the soaring tower / My ailing bones are like sharp rapiers / The blue flame of a lamp is about to abandon itself to grief)

What is remarkable about this example is the prominence given to both the original and the *kundoku* rendering, while the translation is put in parentheses to underscore its function simply as an aid in helping the reader follow the text.

The following translation, **Text 3b**, illustrates the only *book-length work* that includes all three: original texts, romanized *kundoku* readings, and translations. (The Smith/ Huang volume also includes *kundoku* renderings, but without *furigana* or romanization.)

Text 3b:
Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, 1867-1916
“題自畫”  Title not translated

唐詩讀罷倚欄干     Tōshi yomi owarite rankan ni yoru
午院沈沈綠意寒     Goin chinchin toshite ryoku’i samushi
借問春風何處有     Shamonsu shunpū izure no tokoro ni ka aru
石前幽竹石間蘭     Sekizen no yūchiku sekikan no ran

Je cesse de lire des poèmes Tang fais quelques pas sur la véranda
Midi profond silence du jardin fraîcheur de la verdure
Je descends voir où passe le vent du printemps
Devant les rochers ombre des roseaux et entre les rochers une orchidée.

The sample comes from the end of Parvulesco’s volume and partly misrepresents it, since the vast majority of her poem-translations are of Tokugawa *kanshi* poets.

Without the *kundoku* text, much the most interesting part of a Sino-Japanese poem is left out. A *kundoku* reading tells us how the text *was read*, or *might have been read*, or *has been read* by many, most, or at least one reader. A *kundoku* parsing tells much about how the text has been construed: what, in a poetic line, is taken to be the topic, subject, verb, direct object, or adverb,
as well as whether the verb is understood to be active, passive, causative, and the like.\(^3\) This is crucial, for any kanshi text is tripartite: it involves (1) the original, (2) the “reading” of it (the literal reading of it, either silent or aloud; or what is probably even more important, the visual reading of it phrase-by-phrase), and (3) the construing of the work (whether simply in one’s mind, or as put onto paper black-on-white by a translator).

In terms of translation, kundoku renderings help us to see the translator at work—the better to appreciate how Language X has been recast into Language Z, as spanned by the Language Y of kundoku. The kundoku bridge between vastly different language systems often has its own mesmerizing rhythms which join the two worlds beautifully, and can be enjoyed as an end in its own right. But often the construct is suspended between worlds in a linguistic limbo all its own.

It can be counterproductive to include kundoku readings in kanji and kana, as opposed to supplying them only in romanization. In my experience, if one prints out any kanbun text in the original together with the kundoku in kanji and kana, and gives it to students or scholars whose first East Asian language is Japanese, they will skip the kanji text and go straight to the kundoku; it is a struggle to get them to focus at all on the Sino-Japanese original. But if one supplies the kundoku only in romanization, as in Texts 3a and 3b above and Texts 4 and 6 below, readers are forced to engage with the original kanji text while trying to make sense of how the kundoku has been arrived at. It takes longer to determine what is being read as what, what has been reordered and why, and what verb endings, etc., have been added. At conscious and unconscious levels, the reader is engaging more directly with the original Sino-Japanese.

**Approach D,** illustrated by Text 4 which follows, goes further. It presents what has already been mentioned, while at the same time doing three additional things: (1) including romanized modern-Chinese readings of the text, (2) indicating rhyme (via underlining in both the

\(^3\) As illustrated by the Mori Ōgai poem cited below in Texts 5 and 6, sometimes there are a variety of kundoku renderings available:

Original text (Lines 7-8): 老来殊覺官情薄 / 頭柱頭彼一時。

*Kundoku* renderings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>入谷仙介</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>老来 殊に覚ゆ 官情の薄きを / 柱に題するも回頭すれば彼の一時のみ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>陳生保</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>老来 来たりて殊に覚ゆ 官情薄きを / 頭柱を回頭すれば 彼の一時のみなり</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吉田島洋介</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>老來 殊に覚ゆ 官情の薄きを / 柱に題せしは 頭を回らせば 彼も一時</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To provide the *kundoku* readings proposed in this article, one would have to choose from among these (either as is or romanized), or devise an alternative of one’s own. But making any of them available would be better than having none.
original and the *pinyin* romanization), and (3) marking caesurae in both sets of romanization, the Japanese and the Chinese versions, by putting extra spaces where there are pauses.

**Text 4:**


Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, 1862-1922

"丙晨夏日校水沫集感觸有作” “Hinoetatsu Year [1916], Spring Day: Editing Minawashū, I Feel Moved and Write” “Hinoetatsu kajitsu, Minawashū ’o kōsu, kanshoku shite saku ari” “Bīngchén xiārì, xiào ‘Shuǐmò jī,’ gānchù yōu zuò”

空拳尚擬拓新阡  Kūken nao shinsen o hirakan to gisuru mo
意氣當年却可憐  Yìqì dāngnián què kělián
將此天潢霑涸沫  Jiāng cǐ tiānhuáng zhānhé mò
無端灑向不毛田  Wúduān sā xiàng bùmáo tián

With but bare fists, intent on opening new fields;
My determination then—how pathetic it seems now.
With freshets of water as from the Milky Way’s stream (namely, with my new and experimental writings of twenty-five years ago that are being reprinted here—both original works and translations), I wanted to resuscitate a literature that was gasping for life (like the frothing fish in Zhuāngzǐ 莊子);
But it is pointless to try to water totally barren land (—a public and a literary world both unreceptive). 4.

In addition to the original and a *kundoku* reading, romanized modern-Chinese readings are supplied for three reasons. First, to highlight the rhymewords in the *kanshi* (ones which in this case also happen to rhyme in modern Mandarin: qiān, lián, tián). Second, to give an alternative sense of poem-line rhythms, one visually and aurally/orally closer to *on’yomi* (on-readings) of the line (about which more below); they better communicate the pauses in the original (since the main caesura, or pause, in seven-character *kanshi* lines comes after the fourth syllable, and a secondary one often after the second syllable). Third, as a practical matter, whether coming

4 The final couplet is discussed in n. 11 below.
more from a Japanese- or Chinese-language background, potential readers can profit from having the readings in the other language indicated.\(^5\)

When Japanese are reading *kanshi* for the first time, they necessarily engage visually with the *kanji* in terms of the phrasal segments and attendant pauses that this alternative pattern of romanization brings out. Otherwise, they could not understand the passage. Moreover, those writing *kanshi*, like all writers of Chinese or Chinese-style texts in East Asia, mostly fashion poetic lines out of earlier two- and three-word phrases, which the romanized Chinese highlights.

The point could be illustrated similarly by supplying *on’yomi* romanization for Text 4:  
KŪKEN SHŌ GI TAKU SHINSEN / IKI TŌNEN KYAKU KAREN / SHŌ SHI TENKŌ TEN KOMATSU / BUDAN SAI KŌ FUMŌ-DEN. As this illustrates, *on*-readings closely parallel Mandarin ones: semantically in terms of sense, rhythmically in terms of pauses, and sonorously in terms of rhyme (per the underlined SEN, REN, DEN).

All four of the approaches outlined above, however, are problematic in two important ways. They do little to address the implicit problems of (1) how to strike a balance in translation between “naturalization” and “barbarization,” and (2) how to deal with allusions. To illustrate both points, two translations of the same poem will be offered, both of which are good of their kind. The *kanshi* presented below was written by Mori Ōgai shortly before his retirement, and is universally taken to reflect his growing discontent as a career civil and military official.

**Text 5:**


Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, 1862-1922

[“齵鲣”] Title not translated

As a boy I was the wonder of the world;

[2] Why when the road was long did I weary at the halfway mark?

Three years abroad measuring the snow like a disciple of Ch’eng I,

[4] Then twice in battle I managed to avoid a soldier’s death.

To speak one’s mind when drunk invites another’s anger,

[6] And my feeble efforts are met with others’ ridicule.

Above all my love of office weakens with the advancing years,

[8] Glancing back to that promise made on leaving home.

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\(^5\) Romanized renderings in Cantonese or Fukienese or other major Chinese dialect, or the romanized *on’yomi* supplied below, would serve the same purpose of reflecting the rhyme and tone patterns of the Sino-Japanese. Mandarin is simply more practical and accessible (and potentially more helpful) to most readers.
This is a good translation in the sense that it summarizes well in English the import of the poem’s lines, while communicating the poem’s overall thrust. As part of a study of the life and times of an important author, it serves its purpose well. It is a good “naturalized” translation.

But precisely because the rendering has been naturalized, some of the lines reflect a general problem with *kanshi* translation. Namely, what we get, while usually extremely helpful, is only the paraphrasable sense of poetic lines—much of the “poeticity” of the text, namely, concrete images and metaphors, as well as any indication of the rhyme-scheme of the poem, not to mention allusions, are overlooked. The reader has no idea that the poem, although “accurately” translated, is much richer and more interesting than a straight line-by-line rendering (and nothing more) allows.

Translations of the sort we have seen earlier—namely, in *all* of the Texts 1 through 5—inevitably reflect a compromise between concrete and “literal” signification on the one hand, and paraphrase and other concessions on the other. Often an impressive balance is struck, and one admires the interpreter’s skill. Other times, too, when comparing translated lines against the original, one can see and understand the compromises the translator has made and would be hard-pressed to improve on them.

Of course, certain texts and authors lend themselves better to translation with little or no textual or scholarly apparatus than do others. But this can skew our perceptions of the poetic tradition. Works by more “cerebral” and allusive poets seldom translate well in the above formats.

Mori Ōgai is a case in point, as illustrated by taking the poem just cited and presenting it via proposed **Approach 5**, exemplified by **Text 6**. What is presented is not simply a translation, regardless of its virtues or defects. Central is the *format*, one intended to deal with the dimensions noted, namely, the poem’s (A) rhythm, rhyme, and aural/oral readings; (B) concrete specificity as well as paraphrasable sense; and (C) referencing of other texts via allusion. In other words, the approach tries to deal with the “Five R’s”: rhythm, rhyme, readings (oral or aural), renderings (literal and figurative), and referencing (via allusion).

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6 Line 3 is wrong; but the translation was made when there was little commentary available on Ōgai’s *kanshi*. 
Text 6:
John Timothy Wixted
Mori Ōgai 森鷗外, 1862-1922
“齠齔” “Shedding Milk Teeth” “Chōshin” “Tiáochèn”

齠飼期為天下奇

Shedding milk teeth / expected to become / an under-heaven wonder

齠飼時今朝不缺

Tiáochèn ní cháo bù quē

Chōshin yori tenka no kī taran to kisuru mo

齠飼期為天下奇

Tiáochèn qí wéi tiānxià qí

齠飼期為天下奇

Tiáochèn qí wéi tiānxià qí

其如路遠半途疲

Qí rú lù yuǎn bāntú pí

But how! / the road far // mid-route am tired

Sore ikan michi tik shē  hān tiān xī àn bāntú pí

But alas! the road is long, and midway I feel spent.

三年海外經雪

Sān nián kǎigāi ni, Tiēsè shí yì

Three years / beyond the sea // passed time ‘Cheng snow’-style

Sān nián hǎiwài jīng chéng xuě

Two times / in war // avoided ‘leather corpse’

For three years abroad, I respectfully sought instruction, ‘the snow mounting,’
(as happened to the disciples of Cheng Yi 程頤, 1033-1107)

And twice in wars, was spared becoming a leather-wrapped corpse.

醉裏放言逢客怒

Zuì lǐ fàng yán féng kè nù

While drunk / unguarded words // met with guests’ anger

Shōuyō no shōgi wā hān tiān xī àn bāntú pí

‘A superfluous / minor skill’ // by others viewed with ridicule.

My unguarded words while drunk, met with guests’ anger;

老來殊覺官情薄

Lǎolái shū jué guānqíng bó

Growing old, am especially aware / office feeling has thinned

日來 kōtō ni oboyu kanjū no usuki o

At my ‘inscribing on a pillar’ / looking back (now) // off there (was) another time

Hashira ni dāsēshi wā kōbe o meguraseba kare mo ichī

Getting old, acutely aware that my taste for office has diminished,

Looking back at the ambition I expressed when young— that, far away, was another time!

(i.e., ambition of the sort inscribed on a pillar by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如, 179-118 B.C.)
Title and Line 1: 齢龀: ‘Shedding milk teeth’; cf. Yu Xin 禹信 (513-581), 齊王憲碑, "Epitaph for Qi Wangxian": 未逾齢龀，已講論天文. “Before losing his milk teeth, he was already expounding on affairs of the world.”
Line 3: 晴雪: ‘Cheng snow’: The allusion is to Song shi 428, 宋史, 楊時傳: “When Yang Shi and You Zuo 遊酢 went to seek instruction from the philosopher Cheng Yi 程頤, he was sitting with his eyes closed. They stayed in attendance and did not leave. When Cheng came to, the snow outside was already a foot deep.” The anecdote underscores the patient and respectful attitude one should have when seeking instruction, how much one should value learning, and how quickly time passes in their pursuit.
Line 8: 题柱: ‘Inscribed on a pillar.’ According to one source, Menqqiu 明求, 相如題柱, when Sima Xiangru left his native Chengdu to go to the capital, he inscribed on the pillar of the main bridge, “Until I’ve made it big and have a carriage with four horses, I won’t cross this bridge again.” Another source, Huayang guozhi 華陽國志, 蜀志, has him inscribing something similar, but on the pillar of the Chang’an city gate upon his arrival in the capital.

The text immediately stands out because of the kanji compound in its title and opening line, 齢龀, “Shedding Milk Teeth” (“Chōshin”/“Tiáochèn”). Without the original, one is unaware of how striking a phrase is being used, one which illustrates well Ōgai’s vast wordhoard.7 The use of the compound prompts an ancillary point. It is disingenuous simply to supply kanji originals to kanbun compositions, and make believe everyone can read them. Most readers of Japanese today have a far more limited range of kanji recognition than those educated in Meiji times. And even though a trained native Chinese now would probably be able to read the majority of kanji used in kanshi and other kanbun texts by Ōgai, very few would know how to read them kundoku-style “in Japanese.” All the more reason to suppy both sets of readings.

There are two major features that distinguish the poem’s presentation in Text 6 from the format followed in Texts 1 through 5. For one, both “naturalized” and “barbarized” translations are given for each line. For another, the problem of allusion is addressed. To illustrate both, let us look at the last couplet of the poem, Lines 7 and 8, which in its more final, “naturalized” version (in larger type) reads: “Getting old, acutely aware that my taste for office has diminished, / Looking back at the ambition I expressed when young—that, far away, was another time!” A more “barbarized” version is also supplied after each line of kanji: “Growing old / am especially aware // office feeling has thinned || At my ‘inscribing on a pillar’ / looking back (now) // off there (was) another time.” (Note that single slash marks indicate minor pauses, and double ones major caesurae.) Basically the latter is “English kundoku,” the parsing of the text into English—a

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language arguably much closer to the original in terms of structure than is Japanese *kundoku*,
given the similarity in word order between English and Chinese or Sino-Japanese.

The “barbarized” version treats the poetic line phrase-by-phrase (not character-by-character
or “word-by-word,” as some Western scholars have done in studies of Chinese poetry). And
it allows for the inclusion of concrete images and phrases that can be treated more figuratively,
or paraphrased, in the other more “naturalized” rendition: for example the more literal “office
feeling” becomes “taste for office,” while both are maintained. Moreover, the line numbering,
which gives only even numbers, highlights the centrality of the couplet as the organizational
unit—something reflected as well in the underlining of the rhymewords and their Mandarin read-
ings, the latter presented additionally in a central column with *on*-readings for the rhymes.

The problem presented by allusions, however, is even thornier than the one present in the
ever-implicit tension between “naturalization” and “barbarization.” Allusions are always prob-
lematic. With allusions the translator has to make a major choice: (1) to paraphrase the concreteness
of their expression out of existence, (2) to treat them literally (hoping the context

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8 The practice of presenting (a) original text (b) both barbarized and naturalized renderings of poem-lines, (c)
romanization of the original, and (d) highlighted caesurae via slash marks, was followed as early as three decades
ago, in John Timothy Wixted, *Poems on Poetry: Literary Criticism by Yuan Hao-chen* (1190-1257), Calligraphy by
Eugenia Y. Tu (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982; rpt. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1985). Additionally, in
five- to ten-page essays, each poem’s diction, allusions, and implied meaning were discussed, as well as how they fit
into the earlier and later critical tradition and the writer’s corpus of poetry.

It is unfortunate that a recent two-part text aimed at explaining Chinese poetry to general readers gives a mislead-
ing version of (b) and mostly dispenses with (d): Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided
Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Jie Cui and Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese
phrase-by-phrase) translations and final versions for several poems, but for only two (plus four lines elsewhere in
the text) are caesurae indicated visually. Caesurae in poem-lines are at least as important as the couplet-unit for
understanding Chinese poetry (or for our purposes, *kanshi*).

A study that does what is proposed in this article is Mamdouh Zerikly, “Verweilst Du auch in stillen Bergen,
Hainen / Muss für wahr Dein Herz nach Hohem streben“: Die chinesische Lyrik des jungen Mori Rintaro (Ôgai),
(iv,144 pp.). It treats two *kanshi* by Mori Ôgai: one, of 16 lines, is comparatively long; and the other, 124 lines, is by
far his longest. (The title of the study incorporates translation of a couplet from the latter poem: 雖在山林中，心胸
宜開拓.)

pp. 89-107, where the questions are posed: How does one know something is an allusion? And assuming it is, and its
referentiality has been identified and explained, the real question still remains. To what end is the allusion being
used in the present context? Does it confirm someone else’s formulation, lend support (and prestige) to a current
stance, display one’s learning, test the knowledge of the reader/listener, ratify class membership, add a new twist to
a familiar turn of phrase, express irony or humor, or highlight the author’s cleverness when making a point? More
precisely, what combination of these is operative? And if the expression is not an allusion, does it simply come at
the end of a tradition of earlier writing in *kanji*, whether Chinese or Sino-Japanese, that used similar phrasing? And
is such similarity intentional or fortuitous?
will carry the day), or (3) to explicate them (either interjecting explanation into the running text, or adding a clarifying note).  

Admittedly, translators at times achieve ingenious solutions that give good, or more than satisfactory, “equivalents.” But in the majority of cases, the translation necessarily skates over what lies beneath and is most important, namely, the (A) diachronicity, (B) referentiality, and (C) general implication of the expression being used.

In Lines 7 and 8, for example, the expression “inscribing on a pillar” is an allusion. Clarification of its paraphrasable sense follows the naturalized rendering: “i.e., ambition of the sort inscribed on a pillar by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如, 179-118 B.C.” And fuller explication is found in the note appended to the poem.

The notes following the poem serve more than one purpose. The first, for example, referencing Yu Xin 庾信, brings out the **diachronic dimension** to the poem’s title and opening compound, 龜池, by citing this earlier use of the poem’s most arresting phrase. The notes to Lines 3 and 8 clarify the **referentiality** of the respective allusions: to the *Song shi* 宋史 in one case, and to the *Mengqiu* 蒙求 and/or *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 in the other. Furthermore, the note to Line 3 explicates the **implication** of the allusion, namely, the end to which it is being used: “The anecdote (about Cheng Yi 程頤 and the snow) underscores the patient and respectful attitude one should have when seeking instruction, how much one should value learning, and how quickly time passes in their pursuit.” These dimensions would be lost (or the product of considerable paraphrasing) in the translation formats illustrated by Texts 1 through 5.

Hence, the advantages of a translation format of the sort proposed and illustrated here, one that brings out not only the literal and figurative dimensions of a poem’s phrasing, but also the

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10 The point can be illustrated by an example that would be familiar to American speakers of English. Imagine someone saying, “All right! I cut down the cherry tree!” If asked to translate the expression into Japanese, what would one do? (1) Naturalize it, paraphrasing it into, “I confess, I did it, I can’t tell a lie!” (and thereby lose the concrete specificity of “cherry tree,” and the richness of the anecdote associated with it)? (2) Barbarize it, saying literally, “Yes, I cut down the cherry tree,” and hope that the “cherry tree” reference and its import are somehow conveyed? Or (3) go into an explanation: either (A) a short version, “As young George Washington, when confronted, said, ‘Yes, I did it. I cut down the cherry tree’”; or (B) a longer one: “To quote what George Washington said in an anecdote fancifully related by Pastor Weems in his enormously popular early nineteenth-century biography that became emblematic of the future president’s character, ‘I can’t tell a lie, Pa; you know I can’t tell a lie. I did cut the cherry tree with my hatchet’”?

11 This is exemplified by Lines 3 and 4 in Text 4 cited above, where full paraphrasing (at the cost of concreteness and concision) was used to bring out the underlying import of the lines (including their allusion to *Zhuangzi*). A “barbarized” version of the couplet would read: “With this / Heavenly Pool // moisten dessicated foam— || Pointless / to sprinkle it // on non-arable land.”
diachronicity, referentiality, and connotative significance of the expressions (especially the allusions) it employs. Each of these is a crucial complement to the supplying of the kanji text, kundoku reading, and visual approximation of rhythm and rhyme insisted upon above. All are necessary for the effective communication, in translation, of features that distinguish kanshi.


For a somewhat different way of handling the concrete and implied meanings of kanji-constructed poetic lines, see the sample Yuan Haowen poem translated in John Timothy Wixted, “One Westerner’s Research on Chinese and Japanese Languages and Literatures,” Asian Research Trends (The Toyo Bunko), New Series 4 (2009), pp. 106-108 (Chart I) and the explanation on p. 85.