

Chinese Religious, Political and Philosophical Proverbs

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Part I: Religious proverbs 宗教俗语

Section 1: Genesis, Tao, Yin-yang 万物起源、道、阴阳五行

1. 道大，天大，地大，王亦大
2. 风水轮流转
3. 天有不测风云，人有旦夕祸福

Section 2: Heaven, Earth, spirits, gods, ghosts 天地日月、万物有灵、神鬼

4. 谋事在人，成事在天
5. 尽人事而听天命
6. 人算不如天算
7. 不怨天，不尤人
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10. 天无绝人之路
11. 天作孽，犹可违；自作孽，不可活
12. 顺天应人
13. 替天行道
14. 吉人自有天相
15. 天地君亲师
16. 尔俸尔禄，民膏民脂，下民易虐，上天难欺
17. 四大皆空
18. 信则有，不信则无
19. 祭神如神在
20. 举头三尺有神明
21. 多个香炉多个鬼
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27. 龙生龙，凤生凤，老鼠的儿子会打洞
28. 落地的凤凰不如鸡
29. 鲤鱼跃龙门
30. 龙游浅水遭虾戏，虎落平阳被犬欺
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32. 敬鬼神而远之
33. 有钱能使鬼推磨

- 34. 不做亏心事，不怕鬼叫门
- 35. 阎王好见，小鬼难当

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- 38. 魔高一尺，道高一丈
- 39. 佛要金装，人要衣装
- 40. 不看僧面看佛面
- 41. 人争一口气，佛争一炷香
- 42. 放下屠刀，立地成佛
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- 45. 无事不登三宝殿
- 46. 天下名山僧占多
- 47. 宁拆十座庙，不破一门婚
- 48. 和尚无儿孝子多
- 49. 指着和尚骂秃子
- 50. 一个和尚挑水吃，两个和尚抬水吃，三个和尚没水吃
- 51. 经是好的，让歪嘴和尚念歪了
- 52. 当一天和尚撞一天钟
- 53. 远来的和尚会念经
- 54. 苦海无边，回头是岸
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- 58. 家家有本难念的经
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- 61. 哪个庙里没有冤死的鬼
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- 68. 死者为大

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70. 冤冤相报何时了
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72. 祸福无门，惟人自招
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74. 祸福相依
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77. 早死早超生
78. 七十三、八十四，阎王不叫自己去
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80. 叫天天不应，叫地地不语
81. 天道酬勤
82. 天打五雷轰
83. 有缘千里来相会
84. 千里姻缘一线牵
85. 善有善报，恶有恶报
86. 酒肉穿肠过，佛祖心中留
87. 扫地不伤蝼蚁命
88. 逃不出如来佛的手掌心
89. 泥菩萨过河——自身难保
90. 来世做牛做马
91. 看破红尘
92. 既来佛会下，都是有缘人
93. 十年修得同船渡，百年修得共枕眠
94. 救人一命，胜造七级浮屠
95. 善恶到头终有报，只争来早与来迟
96. 入土为安
97. 恶人自有恶人磨
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102. 君无戏言
103. 一朝天子一朝臣
104. 皇帝的女儿不愁嫁

- 105. 窃钩者诛，窃国者为诸侯
- 106. 胜者王侯败者贼
- 107. 伴君如伴虎
- 108. 舍得一身剐，敢把皇帝拉下马
- 109. 一个将军一个令
- 110. 一将功成万骨枯
- 111. 上有所好，下必甚焉
- 112. 千金之子，不死于市

Section 2: officialdom, officers, judiciary 官场、官员、司法

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- 116. 楚王好细腰，宫中多饿死
- 117. 上梁不正下梁歪
- 118. 临下骄者，事上必谄
- 119. 官大一级压死人
- 120. 官官相护
- 121. 三世为官，方知穿衣吃饭
- 122. 三年清知府，十万雪花银
- 123. 新官上任三把火
- 124. 事不关己，高高挂起
- 125. 朝里无人莫作官
- 126. 大树底下好乘凉
- 127. 只敬衣衫不敬人
- 128. 山高皇帝远
- 129. 山中无老虎，猴子称大王
- 130. 县官不如现管
- 131. 白屋出公卿
- 132. 只许州官放火，不许百姓点灯
- 133. 当官的不打送礼的
- 134. 文无第一，武无第二
- 135. 相逢尽道休官好，林下何曾见一人
- 136. 欲加之罪，何患无辞
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- 162. 民不举，官不究
- 163. 光脚的不怕穿鞋的
- 164. 人多力量大
- 165. 君子群而不党，小人党而不群
- 166. 党同伐异
- 167. 入境而问禁，入国而问俗，入门而问讳
- 168. 墙倒众人推
- 169. 群众的眼睛是雪亮的
- 170. 大丈夫能屈能伸
- 171. 富贵不还乡，如衣锦夜行
- 172. 量小非君子，无毒不丈夫
- 173. 公道自在人心
- 174. 民为贵，社稷次之，君为轻
- 175. 修身、齐家、治国、平天下
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- 179. 皇帝轮流做，明年到我家
- 180. 合久必分，分久必合
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- 182. 半部论语治天下
- 183. 水能载舟，亦能覆舟
- 184. 顺我者昌，逆我者亡
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- 186. 存天理，灭人欲
- 187. 得陇望蜀
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- 194. 枪打出头鸟
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- 198. 对事不对人
- 199. 身体是革命的本钱
- 200. 留得青山在，不怕没柴烧
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Part III: Philosophical proverbs 哲学俗语

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- 206. 智者千虑，必有一失
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- 208. 工欲善其事，必先利其器
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- 210. 直木先伐，甘井先竭
- 211. 过犹不及
- 212. 麻雀虽小，五脏俱全
- 213. 沙门不敬王者
- 214. 本来无一物，何处惹尘埃

- 215. 如人饮水，冷暖自知
- 216. 普天之下，莫非王土
- 217. 闻诛一夫纣矣，未闻弑君也
- 218. 己所不欲，勿施于人
- 219. 人之初，性本善
- 220. 君子远庖厨
- 221. 为有源头活水来
- 222. 天与地卑，山与泽平
- 223. 大巧若拙，大智若愚
- 224. 塞翁失马，焉知非福
- 225. 侯之门，仁义存
- 226. 子非鱼，安知鱼之乐
- 227. 法不阿贵
- 228. 法不责众
- 229. 大盗与乡愿
- 230. 名不正则言不顺
- 231. 远交近攻
- 232. 飞鸟尽，良弓藏；狡兔死，走狗烹
- 233. 各人自扫门前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜
- 234. 君子慎于言而敏于行
- 235. 病从口入，祸从口出
- 236. 曲突徙薪无恩泽，焦头烂额座上客
- 237. 三人行，必有我师焉
- 238. 行百里者半九十

Chinese Religious, Political and Philosophical Proverbs

Introduction

Chinese proverbs (*suyu*) are roughly equivalent to English proverbs, some idioms and some maxims. This project deals with Chinese proverbs pertaining to religion, politics and philosophy. It is intended to be a quick reference to the most frequently used proverbs in the aforementioned areas. The 238 fully annotated entries catalogued here not only provide Chinese learners a useful study resource, but also serve as a cultural primer since many of the proverbs in this manual reflect Chinese core values, ancient and contemporary.

Many of these morals transcend time and are reiterated in the diverse proverbs that encapsulate them. For example, the concept of war and competition being a zero-sum game are emphasized not only in the proverb, ‘The people who stole a hook were hanged, whereas the people who stole a state became a duke’ (little thieves are hanged, but great ones escape, 窃钩者诛, 窃国者为诸侯, see Entry #105 in this manual) which can be traced far back to Chuang Tzu in the fourth century BC, but also in the thirteenth century saying, ‘Winners are kings, and losers are bandits’ (胜者王侯败者贼, see Entry #106). The value is most famously repeated now by quoting Chairman Mao Zedong’s saying that ‘Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun’ (枪杆子里面出政权, see Entry #143). While there is a similar proverb in English, ‘The ends justify the means,’ these three Chinese proverbs embody ruthlessness and almost tangible blood.

A brief introduction to Chinese proverbs can be found in the Introduction of *500 Common Chinese Proverbs and Colloquial Expressions* published by Routledge in 2014. That book mainly dealt with colloquial Chinese proverbs and intentionally omitted the most formal, or 书面 (*shumian*), ones. This manual is intended to complement that book by offering a similar format but with a special focus on proverbs that transmit societal beliefs and values rather than quotidian phrases such as “it’s nothing personal” (对事不对人) or “it’s now or never” (过了这个村, 就没这个店).

Why are proverbs on religion, politics and philosophy addressed together?

Chinese politics have played a pivotal role in the lives of the people throughout the course of history. The renowned Tsinghua University Professor Qin Hui (秦晖) once said in a lecture that, ‘The only tradition that we (China) inherited (in the last two thousand years) is probably the Qin dynasty’s (political) system’.

¹ While China was not a religious state, religion was frequently inseparable from politics. 天地君亲师 (Heaven, earth, emperor, parents, teacher, see Entry 15) were objects of Chinese worship. Buddhist monks are not supposed to salute emperors (沙门不敬王者, see Entry 213), but when the founding emperor of the Song dynasty, Emperor Taizu of Song (Zhao Kuangyin, 927-976) visited Daxiangguo

¹ 腾讯文化“大家讲堂”《从诸子争鸣到新文化运动》第19集《西化冲动》，秦晖，2015年。From Qin Hui’s series of lectures ‘From Hundred Schools of Thought to the New Cultural Movement’, Episode 19, 2015.

Temple and burned incense before Buddha, he asked if he should salute to Buddha. An eminent monk, Zanning who was known for being proficient in Buddhist disciplines said, ‘现在佛不拜过去佛’² which means ‘the living Buddha does not salute the past Buddha’. Those words were what Emperor Taizu exactly wanted, so it became a norm. These proverbs provide not only a window into Chinese history and folklore but into deep-seated beliefs that have been reinforced orally for millenia.

Philosophy is vital to a people’s way of thinking. However, according to the great Chinese scholar Wang Guowei (王国维, 1877-1927), ‘China did not have metaphysics. The most developed parts of Chinese philosophy were ethics and political philosophy.’³ A modern Chinese thinker and reformist Tan Sitong (谭嗣同, 1865-1898) said ‘All scholars in the past two thousand years are disciples of Xun Zi, i.e., hypocrites... And hypocrites fawn on great thieves (rulers)’⁴ (大盗与乡愿, see Entry 229). Taken together, there are fewer entries on philosophical proverbs than those pertaining to politics and religion.

Structure of entries

Each entry is annotated with translations in simplified and traditional characters, character-to-character translation, and literal and free translations, in addition to examples in simplified and traditional characters, as well as pinyin and English and, at times, a note. In the Note portion, the source, variants of the entry, explanation of relevant cultural traits, and cultural comparisons are added when necessary.

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² 北宋·欧阳修《归田录》卷一。Ouyang Xiu’s *Gui Tian Lu* (notes on after returning to the countryside), Volume 1.

³ 王国维《哲学辨惑》，《教育世界》第 55 号，1903 年 7 月。Zhaxue Bianhui (philosophical enlightenment) by Wang Guowei, *Jiaoyu Shijie* (education world), No. 55, 1903.

⁴ ‘二千年来之学，苟学也，皆乡愿也……乡愿工媚大盗’，清·谭嗣同《仁学》。Tan Sitong’s *Renxue* (studies on benevolence).

Part I: Religious proverbs 宗教俗语

Section 1: Genesis, Tao, Yin-yang 万物起源、道、阴阳五行

1. 道大，天大，地大，王亦大

Traditional Character: 道大，天大，地大，王亦大

Pinyin: dào dà, tiān dà, dì dà, wáng yì dà

Character To Character translation: Tao-great, Heaven-great, Earth-great, king-great

Literal translation: The tao is great, heaven is great, the Earth is great, the king is also great.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 老子说“~”。“王亦大”也有人说“人亦大”。后一种说法更尊重人民。

Traditional Chinese: 老子說“~”。“王亦大”也有人说“人亦大”。後一種說法更尊重人民。

Pinyin: Lǎozǐ shuō “~”。“Wáng yì dà” yě yǒu rén shuō “rén yì dà”。Hòu yī zhǒng shuōfǎ gèng zūnzhòng rénmin。

English translation: The founder of Taoism and Chinese philosopher Lao Tze (c. 500 BC) said, “The tao is great, heaven is great, the Earth is great, the king is also great”. “The king is also great” was said as “people are also great” by some people. The latter saying is the one that shows more respect for the citizens.

Note: In 1966 a song became popular in China and it is called 天大地大不如党的恩情大 which means ‘Heaven is great, Earth is great, but they are no greater than the Communist Party’s benevolence’.

2. 风水轮流转

Traditional Character: 風水輪流轉

Pinyin: fēng shuǐ lún liú zhuàn

Character To Character translation: Feng Shui-in turn-shift

Literal translation: feng shui flows back and forth

Free translation: It all works out in the end. // Fortune’s wheel is ever turning.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你要有信心。以前你那么不顺利，可是~，这次该你走运了。

Traditional Chinese: 你要有信心。以前你那麼不順利，可是~，這次該你走運了。

Pinyin: Nǐ yào yǒu xìnxīn。Yǐqián nǐ nàme bú shùnlì, kěshì ~, zhècì gāi nǐ zǒuyùn le。

English translation: You have to have confidence. Before you were so unsuccessful, but fortune’s wheel is ever turning. This time you will be lucky.

Note:

3. 天有不测风云，人有旦夕祸福

Traditional Character: 天有不測風雲，人有旦夕禍福

Pinyin: tiān yǒu bú cè fēng yún, rén yǒu dàn xī huò fú

Character To Character translation: Heaven-have-unpredictable-wind and cloud

Literal translation: Heaven’s mishaps are storms, people have disaster and happiness between morning

and evening

Free translation: Storms gather without warning, and bad luck befalls men overnight. // In nature, there are unexpected storms and later in life, unpredictable vicissitudes. // It is the unforeseen that always happens.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他的事业刚起步，本来前途无量。可是~，他出车祸死了。太可惜了！

Traditional Chinese: 他的事業剛起步，本來前途無量。可是~，他出車禍死了。太可惜了！

Pinyin: Tāde shìyè gāng qǐbù, běnlái qiántú wúliàng. Kěshì ~, tā chū chēhuò sǐ le. Tài kěxī le!

English translation: His career has just started, and he has a promising future. But it is the unforeseen that always happens, he died in a car accident. What a pity!

Note:

Section 2: Heaven, Earth, spirits, gods, ghosts 天地日月、万物有灵、神鬼

4. 谋事在人，成事在天

Traditional Character: 謀事在人，成事在天

Pinyin: móu shì zài rén, chéng shì zài tiān

Character To Character translation: Plan-things-on-people, accomplish-things-on-Heaven

Literal translation: It's on people to plan things, it's on the heavens to accomplish them

Free translation: Planning is with man, accomplishing with heaven // Man proposes but God disposes.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 结果就这样了，你也不要太难过了。~。这不是你的错。

Traditional Chinese: 結果就這樣了，你也不要太難過了。~。這不是你的錯。

Pinyin: Jiéguǒ jiù zhèyàng le, nǐ yě búyào tài nánguò le. ~. Zhè búshì nǐde cuò.

English translation: The result is so, and you don't have to be so sad anymore. Man proposes but God disposes. This isn't your fault.

Note:

5. 尽人事而听天命

Traditional Character: 盡人事而聽天命

Pinyin: jìn rén shì ér tīng tiān mìng

Character To Character translation: exhaust-human's possibility-and-listen to-Heaven's-will

Literal translation: Do everything in one's power to listen to/obey God's will

Free translation: Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you // do one's level best and leave the rest to God's will

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我们只要努力就好，至于最后怎么样，那就不由我们了。我们~吧。

Traditional Chinese: 我們只要努力就好，至於最後怎麼樣，那就不由我們了。我們~吧。

Pinyin: Wǒmen zhǐyào nǔlì jiù hǎo, zhìyú zuìhòu zěnmeyàng, nà jiù bù yóu wǒmen le.

Wǒmen ~ ba.

English translation: We only need to work hard, as for how things will turn out in the end, that's

not up to us. Let's do our level best and leave the rest to God's will.

Note:

6. 人算不如天算

Traditional Character: 人算不如天算

Pinyin: rén suàn bù rú tiān suàn

Character To Character translation: Human-plan-inferior to-Heaven-plan

Literal translation: People's plans are inferior to God's plans.

Free translation: God's plans supersede our own. // The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. //
Man proposes, God disposes.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他在竞选总统，本来民调领先，可是~，多年前的一起丑闻被曝光，他被迫退出了竞选。

Traditional Chinese: 他在競選總統，本來民調領先，可是~，多年前的一起醜聞被曝光，他被迫退出了競選。

Pinyin: Tā zài jìngxuǎn zǒngtǒng, běnlái míndiào lǐngxiān, kěshì ~, duō nián qián de yī qǐ chǒuwén bèi bàoguāng, tā bèipò tuìchū le jìngxuǎn。

English translation: He was running for the presidency, and the poll was leading, but man proposes, God disposes. A scandal of many years ago was exposed and he was forced to withdraw from the campaign.

Note:

7. 不怨天，不尤人

Traditional Character: 不怨天，不尤人

Pinyin: bú yuàn tiān, bù yóu rén

Character To Character translation: not-resent-Heaven, not-resent-others

Literal translation: Do not resent heaven, do not express discontentment toward people.

Free translation: Stop blaming everyone and everything.// Do not say the Lord's name in vain.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他坦然接受自己的失败，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他坦然接受自己的失敗，~。

Pinyin: Tā tǎnrán jiēshòu zìjǐ de shībài, ~。

English translation: He calmly accepted his own failure, and did not blame anyone or anything.

Note: This proverb is from the *Analects*.

8. 死生有命，富贵在天

Traditional Character: 死生有命，富貴在天

Pinyin: sǐ shēng yǒu mìng, fù guì zài tiān

Character To Character translation: death-life-have-destiny, wealth-honor-by-Heaven

Literal translation: Life and death have destiny, wealth and honor are in heaven

Free translation: Life and death are a matter of destiny; Wealth and honour depend on the afterlife.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我这次决定孤注一掷了，要把所有的资产都押在这支股票上，~。求求老天爷保佑我。

Traditional Chinese: 我這次決定孤注一擲了，要把所有的資產都押在這支股票上，~。求求老天爺保佑我。

Pinyin: Wǒ zhècì juéding gūzhù yīzhì le, yào bǎ suǒyǒu de zīchǎn dōu yā zài zhè zhī gǔpiào shàng, ~. Qiúqiú lǎotiānyé bǎoyòu wǒ.

English translation: This time I am going all in and putting all my assets into this one stock. Life and death are a matter of destiny. May God be on my side.

Note:

9. 小富由俭，大富由天

Traditional Character: 小富由儉，大富由天

Pinyin: xiǎo fù yóu jiǎn, dà fù yóu tiān

Character To Character translation: small-rich-by-thrift, big-rich-by-Heaven

Literal translation: Thriftiness leads to small riches, God's blessing leads to big riches

Free translation: Thriftiness leads to small riches, God's blessing leads to big riches

Example:

Simplified Chinese: ~。节俭只能让一个人过上比较好的生活，但是要想大富大贵，只能靠天了。

Traditional Chinese: ~。節儉只能讓一個人過上比較好的生活，但是要想大富大貴，只能靠天了。

Pinyin: ~。Jiéjiǎn zhǐnéng ràng yī gè rén guòshàng bǐjiào hǎo de shēnghuó, dànshì yàoxiǎng dàfù dàguì, zhǐnéng kàotiān le.

English translation: Thrift can only make a person live a better life, but if you want to be very rich, you can only rely on the Heavens.

Note:

10. 天无绝人之路

Traditional Character: 天無絕人之路

Pinyin: tiān wú jué rén zhī lù

Character To Character translation: Heaven-would not have-die-people-'s-road

Literal translation: God doesn't shut all doors.

Free translation: Heaven never bars one's way; Don't despair and you will find a way through; Never give up hope; Never say die // If there is a will there is a way. // There is always a way out.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不能放弃。~。你以后一定会好起来的。

Traditional Chinese: 你不能放棄。~。你以後一定會好起來的。

Pinyin: Nǐ bùnéng fàngqì. ~. Nǐ yǐhòu yīdìng huì hǎo qǐlái de.

English translation: You can't give up. There is always a way out. You will definitely get better in the future.

Note:

11. 天作孽，犹可违；自作孽，不可活

Traditional Character: 天作孽，猶可違；自作孽，不可活

Pinyin: tiān zuò niè, yóu kě wéi; zì zuò niè, bù kě huó

Character To Character translation: Heaven-do-evil, still-can-escape; oneself-do-sins, cannot-live

Literal translation: When heaven does evil, still can get away. When the self does evil (sins), he/she cannot live.

Free translation: When heaven sends calamities, there is hope of weathering them; when a man brings them upon himself, there is no hope of escape. // What will be will be.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他用欺诈的手法让对手的公司破产，数千人失业，真是作孽啊！~。他会遭受报应的。

Traditional Chinese: 他用欺詐的手法讓對手的公司破產，數千人失業，真是作孽啊！~。他會遭受報應的。

Pinyin: Tā yòng qī hà de shǒufǎ ràng duìshǒu de gōngsī pòchǎn, shù qiān rén shīyè, zhēn shì zuòniè a! ~。Tā huì zāoshòu bàoyìng de。

English translation: He used fraudulent methods to make his opponent's company go bankrupt, and thousands of people lost their jobs. What will be will be. He will suffer retribution.

Note: This proverb talks about how if heaven sends calamities, people can usually overcome them, however in Western religions such as Christianity, the belief is usually the opposite; people are not able to overcome the wrath of the Lord (according to the Bible).

12. 顺天应人

Traditional Character: 順天應人

Pinyin: shùn tiān yìng rén

Character To Character translation: follow-Heaven-comply-people

Literal translation: follow the mandate of Heaven and comply with the popular wishes of the people

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你这么大年纪了，该辞职就辞职吧。把职位让给年轻人，~。

Traditional Chinese: 你這麼大年紀了，該辭職就辭職吧。把職位讓給年輕人，~。

Pinyin: Nǐ zhème dà niánjì le, gāi cízhí jiù cízhí ba。Bǎ zhíwèi ràng gěi niánqīngrén, ~。

English translation: You are so old, and it is time for you to resign. Give the position to younger people to follow the mandate of Heaven.

Note: In the Bible, unlike in this proverb, following the will of God was often contrary to what was acceptable at the time. Thus, a large emphasis was always placed on following God despite persecution.

13. 替天行道

Traditional Character: 替天行道

Pinyin: tì tiān xíng dào

Character To Character translation: on behalf of-Heaven-enforce-justice

Literal translation: stand in for the propagation of Heaven's doctrine

Free translation: right wrongs in accordance with Heaven's decree

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 虽然这件事跟我们没有关系，但是我们积极揭发他的罪行，把他送进监狱，这是~。

Traditional Chinese: 雖然這件事跟我們沒有關係，但是我們積極揭發他的罪行，把他送進監獄，這是~。

Pinyin: Suīrán zhè jiàn shì gēn wǒmen méiyǒu guānxì, dànshì wǒmen jījí jiēfā tā de zuìxíng, bǎ tā sòngjìn jiānyù, zhè shì ~。

English translation: Although this had nothing to do with us, we actively exposed his crimes and sent him to prison. This is to right wrongs in accordance with Heaven's decree.

Note: This slogan was often used by leaders of peasant uprisings.

14. 吉人自有天相

Traditional Character: 吉人自有天相

Pinyin: jí rén zì yǒu tiān xiàng

Character To Character translation: lucky-people-definitely-have-Heaven-blessings

Literal translation: Lucky people will definitely get Heaven's blessings.

Free translation: Heaven helps the worthy. // God "will repay each person according to what they have done." Romans 2: 6

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 别太紧张，你不会有问题的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 別太緊張，你不會有問題的，~。

Pinyin: Bié tài jǐnzhāng, nǐ búhuì yǒuwèntí de, ~。

English translation: Don't be so nervous, you won't have problems. Heaven helps the worthy.

Note:

15. 天地君亲师

Traditional Character: 天地君親師

Pinyin: tiān dì jūn qīn shī

Character To Character translation: Heaven-Earth-emperor-parents-teacher

Literal translation: Heaven, Earth, emperor, parents, teacher

Free translation: Worship heaven, earth, emperor, parents, and teachers.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 古代中国人最尊重~。老师的地位仅次于父母。

Traditional Chinese: 古代中國人最尊重~。老師的地位僅次於父母。

Pinyin: Gǔdài Zhōngguó rén zuì zūnzhòng ~。Lǎoshī de dìwèi jǐncìyú fùmǔ 。

English translation: Ancient Chinese people most respect five kinds of people, "Heaven, Earth, emperor, parents, and teachers." The teacher's status is second only to the parents'.

Note: In Western society, people are discouraged from putting humans en par with God and do not hold their parents and teachers to the same level of respect.

16. 尔俸尔禄，民膏民脂，下民易虐，上天难欺

Traditional Character: 爾俸爾祿，民膏民脂，下民易虐，上天難欺

Pinyin: ěr fèng ěr lù, mǐn gāo mǐn zhī, xià mǐn yì nüè, shàng tiān nán qī

Character To Character translation: your-salary-your-pension, people's-grease-people's-fat, low-people-easily-abuse, up-Heaven-hard-cheat

Literal translation: Your salary is the blood and flesh of the people. The common people are easy to be maltreated, but Heaven is hard to be cheated.

Free translation: You can cheat the people but not God. // God is greater than our heart and knows all things. (John 3: 20)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 从宋朝开始，中国的官府都会立一块石碑，上面写着“~”这16个字，意思是提醒官员要体恤老百姓。

Traditional Chinese: 從宋朝開始，中國的官府都會立一塊石碑，上面寫著“~”這16個字，意思是提醒官員要體恤老百姓。

Pinyin: Cóng Sòngcháo kāishǐ, Zhōngguó de guānfǔ dōu huì lì yī kuài shíbēi, shàngmiàn xiězhe “~” zhè 16 gè zì, yìsī shì tíxǐng guānyuán yào tǐxù lǎobǎixìng。

English translation: Beginning in the Song Dynasty, the Chinese government would set up a stone tablet with the words “Your salary is the blood and flesh of the people. The common people are easy to be maltreated, but Heaven is hard to be cheated”, which reminded officials to be sympathetic to the people.

Note: During the Song dynasty there was a tablet in the court of each local government that read this passage. It was to warn the local government officials to respect the people and to treat them fairly.

17. 四大皆空

Traditional Character: 四大皆空

Pinyin: sì dà jiē kōng

Character To Character translation: Four Elements-all-empty

Literal translation: The four elements are vanity

Free translation: The world is an illusion. // Everything is empty. // Don't be too attached to the mortal world. // For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. (John 2: 16)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他信了佛教，认为~，生活就是受苦。

Traditional Chinese: 他信了佛教，認為~，生活就是受苦。

Pinyin: Tā xìnle Fójiào, rènwéi ~, shēnghuó jiùshì shòukǔ。

English translation: He believed in Buddhism and thought that everything is empty and to live is to suffer.

Note:

18. 信则有，不信则无

Traditional Character: 信則有，不信則無

Pinyin: xìn zé yǒu, bú xìn zé wú

Character To Character translation: believe-then-exist, not-believe-then-nonexist

Literal translation: If you believe it, it's there. If you don't believe it, it won't be there.

Free translation: If you believe it is fated to be, it will be.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 人有没有下辈子? ~。

Traditional Chinese: 人有没有下辈子? ~。

Pinyin: Rén yǒuméiyǒu xiàbèizi? ~。

English translation: Do people have an afterlife? If you believe it is fated to be, it will be.

Note:

19. 祭神如神在

Traditional Character: 祭神如神在

Pinyin: jì shén rú shén zài

Character To Character translation: sacrifice-god-as if-god-exist

Literal translation: to sacrifice to the God as if he is really there

Free translation: The eyes of the Lord are in every place. --Proverbs 15: 3 / Everything a man does is in the Lord's presence. --Proverbs 15: 3

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 尽管你是共产党员，但是到庙里也得虔诚一些，~。

Traditional Chinese: 儘管你是共產黨員，但是到廟裏也得虔誠一些，~。

Pinyin: Jìnguǎn nǐ shì gòngchǎndǎngyuán, dànshì dào miàolǐ yěděi qiánchéng yīxiē, ~。

English translation: Even though you are a member of the Communist Party, you have to be pious in the temple. The eyes of the Lord are in every place.

Note: This proverb is from the *Analects*.

20. 举头三尺有神明

Traditional Character: 舉頭三尺有神明

Pinyin: jǔ tóu sān chǐ yǒu shén míng

Character To Character translation: raise-head-three-inches-exist-god

Literal translation: God is three feet above your head.

Free translation: And indeed he is not far from each of us. Acts 17: 27

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你说话怎么这么肆无忌惮? ~。上天会记住你所做的一切的。

Traditional Chinese: 你說話怎麼這麼肆無忌憚? ~。上天會記住你所做的一切的。

Pinyin: Nǐ shuōhuà zěnmě zhème sìwú jìdàn? ~。Shàngtiān huì jìzhù nǐ suǒ zuò de yīqiè de。

English translation: Why are you so unrestrained when you talk? God is three feet above your head. He will remember everything you do.

Note:

21. 多个香炉多个鬼

Traditional Character: 多個香爐多個鬼

Pinyin: duō gè xiāng lú duō gè guǐ

Character To Character translation: more-measure word-incense-burner-more-measure word-ghost

Literal translation: more incense burners, more ghosts.

Free translation: The more backers you approach, the more trouble you invite.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你想拉一个政府单位跟你合作，可是你忘了，～。你的利润中的大部分得“孝敬”他们啊。

Traditional Chinese: 你想拉一個政府單位跟你合作，可是你忘了，～。你的利潤中的大部分得“孝敬”他們啊。

Pinyin: Nǐ xiǎng lā yīgè zhèngfǔ dānwèi gēn nǐ hézuò, kěshì nǐ wàngle, ~。Nǐ de lìrùn zhōng de dàbùfèn děi “xiàojìng” tāmen a。

English translation: You want to bring in a government unit to collaborate you, but you forgot the more backers you approach, the more trouble you invite. The majority of your profits will be paid as “filial honors” to them.

Note: In the West, Christian doctrine teaches that God blesses those who do good, therefore this proverb is contradictory.

22. 羊有跪乳之恩，鸦有反哺之义

Traditional Character: 羊有跪乳之恩，鴉有反哺之義

Pinyin: yáng yǒu guì rǔ zhī ēn, yā yǒu fǎn bǔ zhī yì

Character To Character translation: lamb-have-kneel-suck milk-'s-affection, crow-have-back-feed-'s-affection

Literal translation: Lambs kneel down to get milk from their mother, little crows get food for their parents.

Free translation: Children are eternally grateful to their parents.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他成名了，有钱了，可是不愿意孝敬父母，他父母还过着清贫的生活。他这个人简直白活了，不知道~。

Traditional Chinese: 他成名了，有錢了，可是不願意孝敬父母，他父母還過著清貧的生活。他這個人簡直白活了，不知道~。

Pinyin: Tā chéngmíng le, yǒuqián le, kěshì bú yuànyì xiàojìng fùmǔ, tā fùmǔ hái guò he qīngpín de shēnghuó。 Tā zhègè rén jiǎnzhí bái huó le, bù zhīdào ~。

English translation: He became rich and famous but he wasn't willing to honor his parents. His parents still live an impoverished life. He simply lived in vain and didn't know that children are eternally grateful to their parents.

Note:

23. 马有垂缰之义，狗有湿草之恩

Traditional Character: 馬有垂繮之義，狗有濕草之恩

Pinyin: mǎ yǒu chuí jiāng zhī yì, gǒu yǒu shī cǎo zhī ēn

Character To Character translation: horse-have-put down-rein-'s-affection, dog-have-wet-grass

Literal translation: The horse puts down its reins, the dog has wet the hay. Both have affections toward their owners. // If an owner is good to his animal, then the animal will be good to his owner.

Free translation: Repay others' kindness.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 不要觉得动物低等，其实他们是有爱心的。~。

Traditional Chinese: 不要覺得動物低等，其實他們是有愛心的。~。

Pinyin: Búyào juéde dòngwù dīděng, qíshí tāmen shì yǒu àixīn de. ~。

English translation: Don't think that animals are inferior. In fact, they are caring and will repay others' kindness.

Note: In Christianity, there is less emphasis put on the acts of others as being the determining factor for whether you should be good to them; people are taught to be kind to even "love their enemy".

24. 不是冤家不聚头

Traditional Character: 不是冤家不聚頭

Pinyin: bú shì yuān jiā bú jù tóu

Character To Character translation: not-be-foe-not-meet

Literal translation: Enemies or lovers are destined to meet.

Free translation: It's fate that throws enemies or lovers together.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他们两个人争争吵吵了一辈子，也不离婚，真是~。

Traditional Chinese: 他們兩個人爭爭吵吵了一輩子，也不離婚，真是~。

Pinyin: Tāmen liǎng gè rén zhēngzhēng chǎochǎo le yībèizi, yě bù líhūn, zhēn shì ~。

English translation: The two of them quarreled their entire lives and never got divorced, it really is fate that throws enemies or lovers together.

Note: Often said about lovers who have a disagreement.

25. 强龙压不住地头蛇

Traditional Character: 強龍壓不住地頭蛇

Pinyin: qiáng lóng yā bú zhù dì tóu shé

Character To Character translation: powerful-dragon-press-not-able to-local-snake

Literal translation: Even a powerful outsider cannot crush a local bully.

Free translation: You can't beat someone on their own turf.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 省长的话到了县里也不如县长说话管用，~。

Traditional Chinese: 省長的話到了縣裏也不如縣長說話管用，~。

Pinyin: Shěngzhǎng de huà dào le xiàn lǐ yě bù rú xiànzhǎng shuō huà guǎnyòng, ~。

English translation: When the governor's words arrived in the county, they were not as good as the county magistrate's. You can't beat someone on their own turf.

Note:

26. 蛟龙岂是池中物

Traditional Character: 蛟龍豈是池中物

Pinyin: jiāo lóng qǐ shì chí zhōng wù

Character To Character translation: flood dragon-how-is-pond-inside-creature

Literal translation: How can a dragon stay in a pond?

Free translation: How can the flood dragon be just mediocre? // A cat may look at a King. // A big fish won't stay in a little pond forever.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他在咱们公司待不长。咱们公司这么小，他那么优秀，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他在咱們公司待不長。咱們公司這麼小，他那麼優秀，~。

Pinyin: Tā zài zánmen gōngsī dài bùcháng. Zánmen gōngsī zhème xiǎo, tā nàme yōuxiù, ~。

English translation: He won't stay long at our company. Our company is so small, but he is that good. A big fish won't stay in a little pond forever.

Note: It is difficult to find a close equivalent for this proverb because it is making a general statement about how someone with ability will always seize the opportunities that life throws at him. However in English, the majority of our proverbs are normative, such as, “If life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” or “If opportunity doesn't come knocking, build a door.”

27. 龙生龙，凤生凤，老鼠的儿子会打洞

Traditional Character: 龍生龍，鳳生鳳，老鼠的兒子會打洞

Pinyin: lóng shēng lóng, fèng shēng fèng, lǎo shǔ de ér zi huì dǎ dòng

Character To Character translation: dragon-birth-dragon, phoenix-birth-phoenix, mouse-'s-son-can-dig-hole

Literal translation: Dragon births dragon, phoenix births phoenix, the mouse's son will dig a hole.

Free translation: Like father like son, like mother like daughter.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他爸爸是亿万富翁，结果他大学还没毕业就是千万富翁了，真是龙生龙，凤生凤。

Traditional Chinese: 他爸爸是億萬富翁，結果他大學還沒畢業就是千萬富翁了，真是龍生龍，鳳生鳳。

Pinyin: Tā bàba shì yìwàn fùwēng, jiéguǒ tā dàxué hái méi biyè jiù shì qiānwàn fùwēng le, zhēnshì lóng shēng lóng, fèng shēng fèng。

English translation: His father is a billionaire, as a result he became a millionaire before graduation from college. It really is like father like son.

Note: If used in a positive way, the latter part 老鼠的儿子会打洞 will be left.

28. 落地的凤凰不如鸡

Traditional Character: 落地的鳳凰不如雞

Pinyin: luò dì de fèng huáng bù rú jī

Character To Character translation: fall-ground-'s-phoenix-no better than-chicken

Literal translation: The phoenix that falls to the ground is no better than a chicken.

Free translation: A king without a crown

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他以前是总统，后来因为丑闻被弹劾下台。下台以后再也没有人愿意跟他说话，真是~。

Traditional Chinese: 他以前是總統，後來因為醜聞被彈劾下臺。下臺以後再也沒有人願意

跟他說話，真是~。

Pinyin: Tā yǐqián shì zǒngtǒng, hòulái yīnwèi chǒuwén bèi tánhé xiàtái。Xiàtái yǐhòu zài yě méiyǒu rén yuànyì gēn tā shuōhuà, zhēnshì ~。

English translation: He used to be the president and was later impeached because of the scandal. No one is willing to talk to him after he stepped down. He is really a king without a crown.

Note:

29. 鲤鱼跃龙门

Traditional Character: 鯉魚躍龍門

Pinyin: lǐ yú yuè lóng mén

Character To Character translation: carp-leap-dragon's gate

Literal translation: Carp leaping over the dragon's gate.

Free translation: To make a significant advance in one's career. // To get one's "big break" // Climbing the social ladder

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他出身贫苦家庭，后来~，从省长的秘书换过几次工作以后，成了一个重要城市的市长。

Traditional Chinese: 他出身貧苦家庭，後來~，從省長的秘書換過幾次工作以後，成了一個重要城市的市長。

Pinyin: Tā chūshēn pínǔ jiāting, hòulái ~, cóng shěngzhǎng de mìshū huàn guò jǐcì gōngzuò yǐhòu, chéngle yīgè zhòngyào chéngshì de shìzhǎng。

English translation: He was born into a poor family, and later got his big break. After changing his jobs from being the secretary of the governor, he became the mayor of an important city.

Note: An alternative form of this expression is 鲤鱼跳龙门。

30. 龙游浅水遭虾戏，虎落平阳被犬欺

Traditional Character: 龍游淺水遭蝦戲，虎落平陽被犬欺

Pinyin: lóng yóu qiǎn shuǐ zāo xiā xì, hǔ luò píng yáng bèi quǎn qī

Character To Character translation:

Literal translation: Alas, when the dragon swims in shallow waters it can be teased by even the shrimp; a tiger in an open field can be bullied by even a dog.

Free translation: One thrives in his or her own territory. An able person in an adverse environment cannot bring his talent into full play. // Hares may pull dead lions by the beard.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 那位省长因为犯错误下台后，连县长都敢开他的玩笑，虎落平阳被犬欺。

Traditional Chinese: 那位省長因為犯錯誤下臺後，連縣長都敢開他的玩笑，虎落平陽被犬欺。

Pinyin: Nà wèi shěngzhǎng yīnwèi fàn cuòwù xiàtái hòu, lián xiànzhǎng dǒu gǎn kāi tā de wánxiào, hǔ luò píngyáng bèi quǎn qī。

English translation: After the governor stepped down because of making a mistake, even a county mayor dared to make jokes on him. Hares may pull dead lions by the beard.

Note: The latter part of this expression 虎落平阳被犬欺 can be used singly and is more popular than the

former part. The second character 游 is interchangeable with 困 (kùn, stranded).

31. 人中龙凤

Traditional Character: 人中龍鳳

Pinyin: rén zhōng lóng fēng

Character To Character translation: mass-inside-dragon-phoenix

Literal translation: An outstanding person among his peers.

Free translation: A giant among men

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这个小伙子是~, 将来一定有大出息。

Traditional Chinese: 這個小夥子是~, 將來一定有大出息。

Pinyin: Zhègè xiǎohuǒzi shì ~, jiāng lái yīdìng yǒu dà chūxī。

English translation: This young guy is a giant among men. He certainly has bright prospects in his future.

Note: In Chinese, 龙凤, or “dragon and phoenix” are used to signify an able and virtuous person.

32. 敬鬼神而远之

Traditional Character: 敬鬼神而遠之

Pinyin: jìng guǐ shén ér yuǎn zhī

Character To Character translation: respect-ghost-god-but-stay far away from-it

Literal translation: While respect gods and demons from a distance.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这样的人能帮你的忙, 但也不会白帮你。对这样的人, 我一向~。

Traditional Chinese: 這樣的人能幫你的忙, 但也不會白幫你。對這樣的人, 我一向~。

Pinyin: Zhèyàng de rén néng bāng nǐ de máng, dàn yě bú huì bái bāng nǐ。Duì zhèyàng de rén, wǒ yīxiàng ~。

English translation: These types of people are able to help you, but they won't do it for free. To such people, I always respect but keep my distance.

Note: This expression can be shortened to an idiom 敬而远之。

33. 有钱能使鬼推磨

Traditional Character: 有錢能使鬼推磨

Pinyin: yǒu qián néng shǐ guǐ tuī mò

Character To Character translation: have-money-can-make-ghost-turn-millstone

Literal translation: Money will make the Devil turn millstones.

Free translation: With money, you can do anything you like // Money makes the world go ‘round’. // Money talks.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在的社会钱最重要, ~; 没钱寸步难行。

Traditional Chinese: 現在的社會錢最重要, ~; 沒錢寸步難行。

Pinyin: Xiànzài de shèhuì qián zuì zhòngyào, ~; méi qián cùn bù nán xíng。

English translation: In today's society, money is most important. Money makes the world go 'round'. Without money you can do nothing.

Note:

34. 不做亏心事，不怕鬼叫门

Traditional Character: 不做虧心事，不怕鬼叫門

Pinyin: bú zuò kuī xīn shì, bú pà guǐ jiào mén

Character To Character translation: not-do-guilty-conscience-thing, not-fear-ghost-knock-door

Literal translation: He who never wrongs others does not fear the knock in the night

Free translation: A clean conscience makes a soft pillow. // to rest with a clear conscience

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我没有做过对不起别人的事，~，所以睡觉睡得香。

Traditional Chinese: 我沒有做過對不起別人的事，~，所以睡覺睡得香。

Pinyin: Wǒ méiyǒu zuòguò duìbùqǐ biérén de shì, ~, suǒyǐ shuìjiào shuì de xiāng.

English translation: I have not done anything wrong to others. A clean conscience makes a soft pillow, so I sleep soundly.

Note:

35. 阎王好见，小鬼难当

Traditional Character: 閻王好見，小鬼難當

Pinyin: yán wáng hǎo jiàn, xiǎo guǐ nán dāng

Character To Character translation: King of Hell-easy to-see, little-ghost-hard to-deal with

Literal translation: Standing in front of the King of Hell is easy, but smaller devils are difficult to deal with.

Free translation: It is harder to deal with those who work for the King than to deal with the King himself.
// Getting past the gatekeeper is the hard part.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在领导的秘书们很难对付，要想跟领导见面，不把秘书打点好是不行的。~。

Traditional Chinese: 現在領導的秘書們很難對付，要想跟領導見面，不把秘書打點好是不行的。~。

Pinyin: Xiànzài lǐngdǎo de mìshūmen hěn nán duìfù, yàoxiǎng gēn lǐngdǎo jiànmiàn, bù bǎ mìshū dǎdiǎn hǎo shì bùxíng de. ~。

English translation: Nowadays it is very difficult to deal with the leaders' secretaries. If you want to meet with the leaders, you'll have to kiss the secretaries' asses. Getting past the gatekeeper is the hard part.

Note: The word 当 (當) in this expression is interchangeable with 缠 (chán, 纏). This proverb refers to the inefficiencies of bureaucracy, which are also alluded to in English as "red tape".

Section 3: religions, Buddha, monks, temples, Taoists, other religions 宗教信仰；佛、僧、和尚、庙；道、道术及其他宗教

36. 三教原来是一家

Traditional Character: 三教原來是一家

Pinyin: sān jiào yuán lái shì yī jiā

Character To Character translation: three-religion-originally-is-one-family

Literal translation: The Three Religions (Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) come from the same tree.

Free translation: The Three Religions are essentially the same.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国有三大主要的宗教，儒教、佛教和道教，从宋朝开始就有学者提倡~。

Traditional Chinese: 中國有三大主要的宗教，儒教、佛教和道教，從宋朝開始就有學者提倡~。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó yǒu sān dà zhǔyào de zōngjiào, Rújiào、Fójiào hé Dàojiào, cóng Sòngcháo kāishǐ jiù yǒu xuézhě tíchàng~。

English translation: There are three major religions in China, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Since the Song Dynasty, scholars had promoted the notion that the three religions are essentially the same.

Note: The Three Doctrines Include Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. 儒门释户道相通，三教从来一祖风。红莲白藕青荷叶，三教原来是一家。

37. 道高一尺，魔高一丈

Traditional Character: 道高一尺，魔高一丈

Pinyin: dào gāo yī chǐ, mó gāo yī zhàng

Character To Character translation: virtue-rise-one-foot, evil-rise-one-ten feet

Literal translation: When virtue rises one foot, evil rises ten.

Free translation: Evil will always prevail over justice.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 警车的最快速度是每小时 150 英里，可是~，有些犯罪分子用的车的最高时速达到 200 英里。

Traditional Chinese: 警車的最快速度是每小時 150 英里，可是~，有些犯罪分子用的車的最高時速達到 200 英里。

Pinyin: Jǐngchē de zuìkuài sùdù shì měixiǎoshí 150 yīnglǐ, kěshì~, yǒuxiē fànzuì fènzi yòng de chē de zuìgāo shísù dá dào 200 yīnglǐ。

English translation: The fastest speed of a police car is 150 miles per hour, but evil will always prevail over justice. Some criminals use cars with top speeds of 200 miles per hour.

Note: This expression is rather discouraging for the side of justice. Compare with the opposite expression 魔高一尺，道高一丈。

38. 魔高一尺，道高一丈

Traditional Character: 魔高一尺，道高一丈

Pinyin: mó gāo yī chǐ, dào gāo yī zhàng

Character To Character translation: evil-rise-one-foot, virtue-rise-one-ten feet

Literal translation: When evil rises one foot, justice rises ten.

Free translation: Justice will always prevail over evil.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我们的对手想通过搞乱全国的警察系统来给我们制造麻烦，但是~，我们可以通过提前选举的方式粉碎他们的阴谋。

Traditional Chinese: 我們的對手想通過搞亂全國的警察系統來給我們製造麻煩，但是~，我們可以通過提前選舉的方式粉碎他們的陰謀。

Pinyin: Wǒmen de duìshǒu xiǎng tōngguò gǎoluàn quánguó de jǐngchá xìtǒng lái gěi wǒmen zhìzào máfán, dànshì ~, wǒmen kěyǐ tōngguò tíqián xuǎnjǔ de fāngshì fěnsuì tāmen de yīnmóu.

English translation: Our opponents want to create trouble for us by messing up the federal judicial system, but justice will always prevail over evil. We can smash their plots by early elections.

Note: Not to be confused with the opposite expression 道高一尺，魔高一丈。

39. 佛要金装，人要衣装

Traditional Character: 佛要金裝，人要衣裝

Pinyin: fó yào jīn zhuāng, rén yào yī zhuāng

Character To Character translation: Buddha-want-gold-costume, human-want-clothes-costume

Literal translation: Because Buddha wore gold, people should always try to dress well.

Free translation: People should try to dress well.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你跟客户见面，穿得这么随便怎么能行呢？~。

Traditional Chinese: 你跟客戶見面，穿得這麼隨便怎麼能行呢？~。

Pinyin: Nǐ gēn kèhù jiànmiàn, chuānde zhème suíbiàn zěnmé néng xíng ne? ~。

English translation: You will meet with a client. How can you dress so casually? People should try to dress well.

Note:

40. 不看僧面看佛面

Traditional Character: 不看僧面看佛面

Pinyin: bú kàn sēng miàn kàn fó miàn

Character To Character translation: not-for-monk's-sake-(but) for-Buddha's-sake

Literal translation: (Do something) for a superior's sake

Free translation: Do something out of deference to somebody who is higher in social status.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他做得是不对，但是他爸爸帮过咱们大忙，~，这次我们就放过他吧。

Traditional Chinese: 他做得是不對，但是他爸爸幫過咱們大忙，~，這次我們就放過他吧。

Pinyin: Tā zuòde shì búduì, dànshì tā bàba bāng guò zánmen dà máng, ~, zhècì wǒmen jiù fàngguò tā ba.

English translation: He indeed did wrong, but his father once did us a huge favor. For his father's

sake, we just let him go this time.

Note:

41. 人争一口气，佛争一炷香

Traditional Character: 人爭一口氣，佛爭一炷香

Pinyin: rén zhēng yī kǒu qì, fó zhēng yī zhù xiāng

Character To Character translation: human-fight for-one-(measure word)-breath, Buddha-fight for-one-(measure word)-incense

Literal translation: We humans live for our pride.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他把我看扁了，我非要出人头地不可。~。我就要争这口气。

Traditional Chinese: 他把我看扁了，我非要出人头地不可。~。我就要爭這口氣。

Pinyin: Tā bǎ wǒ kànbiǎn le, wǒ fēiyào chūrén tóudì bùkě. ~。Wǒ jiù yào zhēng zhè kǒu qì.

English translation: He looked down upon me, but I must distinguish myself. We humans live for our pride. I want precisely to make a good showing.

Note:

42. 放下屠刀，立地成佛

Traditional Character: 放下屠刀，立地成佛

Pinyin: fàng xià tú dāo, lì dì chéng fó

Character To Character translation: lay-down-butcher-knife, on-spot-become-Buddha

Literal translation: Lay down the butcher's knife, become a Buddha on the spot; instant rehabilitation

Free translation: To attain salvation through repentance.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国有句古话，~。只要一个人改过自新，就是可以被原谅的。

Traditional Chinese: 中國有句古話，~。只要一個人改過自新，就是可以被原諒的。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó yǒu jù gǔhuà, ~。Zhǐyào yīgè rén gǎiguò zìxīn, jiùshì kěyǐ bèi yuánliàng de.

English translation: As the old saying goes in China, 'To attain salvation through repentance.' As long as a person is rehabilitated, he can be forgiven.

Note:

43. 送佛送到西天

Traditional Character: 送佛送到西天

Pinyin: sòng fó sòng dào xī tiān

Character To Character translation: escort-Buddha-escort-to-Western Paradise

Literal translation: To escort Buddha to his home.

Free translation: If you are doing something good, complete it. // do good deeds to the end

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 既然你已经帮了他，那就帮到底吧。~。

Traditional Chinese: 既然你已經幫了他，那就幫到底吧。~。

Pinyin: Jìrán nǐ yǐjīng bāngle tā, nà jiù bāng dàodǐ ba. ~。

English translation: Since you have already helped him, then help him all the way through. See good deeds through to the end.

Note:

44. 平时不烧香，急时抱佛脚

Traditional Character: 平時不燒香，急時抱佛脚

Pinyin: píng shí bù shāo xiāng, jí shí bào fó jiǎo

Character To Character translation: ordinary-time-not-burn-incense, urgent-time-hold-Buddha-feet

Literal translation: Never burn incense when all is well but clasp Buddha's feet when in distress; wait until the last minute/leave things to the last minute.

Free translation: Fair weather believers turn to God in a pinch; to cram.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 很多大学生平时不努力学习，都是到考试前几天才努力。~。

Traditional Chinese: 很多大學生平時不努力學習，都是到考試前幾天才努力。~。

Pinyin: Hěnduō dàxuéshēng píngshí bù nǔlì xuéxí, dōushì dào kǎoshì qián jǐtiān cái nǔlì. ~。

English translation: Many college students do not study hard until just several days before an exam. Fair weather believers turn to God in a pinch.

Note: The word 急 in this expression is interchangeable with 临 (lín, 臨).

45. 无事不登三宝殿

Traditional Character: 無事不登三寶殿

Pinyin: wú shì bù dēng sān bǎo diàn

Character To Character translation: no-reason-not-climb-three-divine-temple

Literal translation: One doesn't visit a temple without a cause

Free translation: Fair-weather friends never visit unless they need something.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他不是一个喜欢闲逛的人，~。现在来找你一定是有事。

Traditional Chinese: 他不是一個喜歡閑逛的人，~。現在來找你一定是有事。

Pinyin: Tā búshì yīgè xǐhuān xiánguàng de rén, ~。Xiànzài lái zhǎo nǐ yīdìng shì yǒushì。

English translation: He is not a loafer. He never visits unless he needs something.

Note:

46. 天下名山僧占多

Traditional Character: 天下名山僧佔多

Pinyin: tiān xià míng shān sēng zhàn duō

Character To Character translation: world-famous-mountain-monk-take-most

Literal translation: Monks have good taste in choosing beautiful mountains.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这座山风景真美，山上肯定会有一座庙。~。

Traditional Chinese: 這座山風景真美，山上肯定會有一座廟。~。

Pinyin: Zhè zuò shān fēngjǐng zhēnměi, shānshàng kěndìng huì yǒu yī zuò miào. ~。

English translation: The mountain scenery is beautiful, there will definitely be a temple on the mountain. Monks have good taste in choosing beautiful mountains.

Note:

47. 宁拆十座庙，不破一门婚

Traditional Character: 寧拆十座廟，不破一門婚

Pinyin: nìng chāi shí zuò miào, bú pò yī mén hūn

Character To Character translation: would rather-demolish-ten-(measure word)-temple, not-destroy-one-(measure word)-marriage

Literal translation: Rather destroy ten temples than a single marriage

Free translation: Anything is better than destroying a marriage.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他们两口子的关系本来就已经不好了，你别再挑拨了，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他們兩口子的關係本來就已經不好了，你別再挑撥了，~。

Pinyin: Tāmen liǎngkǒuzi de guānxì běnlái jiù yǐjīng bùhǎo le, nǐ bié zài tiǎobō le, ~。

English translation: The relationship between the two of them is already bad, you should not provoke them again. Anything is better than destroying a marriage.

Note:

48. 和尚无儿孝子多

Traditional Character: 和尚無兒孝子多

Pinyin: hé shang wú ér xiào zǐ duō

Character To Character translation: monk-no-son-filial-children-many

Literal translation: Monks are so kind to others that others always want to repay their kindness as though they were their children.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 听说那个和尚生病了，当地很多人都去探望。~。

Traditional Chinese: 聽說那個和尚生病了，當地很多人都去探望。~。

Pinyin: Tīngshuō nàgè héshang shēngbìng le, dāngdì hěnduō rén dōu qù tànwàng。~。

English translation: It was said that the monk was ill, and many local people went to visit as though they were his children.

Note:

49. 指着和尚骂秃子

Traditional Character: 指著和尚罵禿子

Pinyin: zhǐ zhe hé shang mà tū zi

Character To Character translation: point-at-monk-abuse-bald person

Literal translation: To point at a monk and abuse a bald person

Free translation: Even though you are pointing at A, you are actually cursing B. // to criticize somebody by insinuation

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你把话说清楚，到底在说谁，不要~。

Traditional Chinese: 你把話說清楚，到底在說誰，不要~。

Pinyin: Nǐ bǎ huà shuō qīngchū, dàodǐ zài shuō shéi, búyào ~。

English translation: You should clarify who you are talking about. Don't criticize by insinuation.

Note: 秃子 ('bald person') is a disrespectful name for monks.

50. 一个和尚挑水吃，两个和尚抬水吃，三个和尚没水吃

Traditional Character: 一個和尚挑水吃，兩個和尚擡水吃，三個和尚沒水吃

Pinyin: yī gè hé shàng tiāo shuǐ chī, liǎng gè hé shàng tái shuǐ chī, sān gè hé shàng méi shuǐ chī

Character To Character translation: one-monk-shoulder-water-drink, two-monk-carry-water-drink, three-monk-not-water-drink

Literal translation: One monk will shoulder two buckets of water, two monks will share the load, but add a third and no one will want to fetch water

Free translation: Everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国人缺乏合作精神，~。

Traditional Chinese: 中國人缺乏合作精神，~。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó rén quēfǎ hézuò jīngshen, ~。

English translation: The Chinese lack a spirit of cooperation. Everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility.

Note:

51. 经是好的，让歪嘴和尚念歪了

Traditional Character: 經是好的，讓歪嘴和尚念歪了

Pinyin: jīng shì hǎo de, ràng wāi zuǐ hé shàng niàn wāi le

Character To Character translation: scripture-is-good, by-crooked-mouth-monk-recite-crookedly

Literal translation: The scripture is good, but crooked-mouthed monks recite it crookedly.

Free translation: The scripture is just but misinterpreted by the monk with ill intent. / The intention is good but the execution is poor.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 马克思主义本来不错，~。

Traditional Chinese: 馬克思主義本來不錯，~。

Pinyin: Mǎkèsī Zhǔyì běnlái búcuò, ~。

English translation: Marxism was good, but intentionally misinterpreted.

Note:

52. 当一天和尚撞一天钟

Traditional Character: 當一天和尚撞一天鐘

Pinyin: dāng yī tiān hé shàng zhuàng yī tiān zhōng

Character To Character translation: be-one-day-monk-ring-one-day-bell

Literal translation: Be a monk for a day, ring the temple bell for a day. / to take a passive attitude towards one's work

Free translation: Going through the motions. / If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他工作不努力, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 他工作不努力, ~。

Pinyin: Tā gōngzuò bù nǔ lì, ~。

English translation: He does not work hard; he just goes through the motions.

Note: A variant of 撞 in this saying is 敲 (qiāo, to knock).

53. 远来的和尚会念经

Traditional Character: 遠來的和尚會念經

Pinyin: yuǎn lái de hé shang huì niàn jīng

Character To Character translation: afar-come-'s-monk-good at-chant-scripture

Literal translation: Monks from afar chant scripture better than local ones.

Free translation: All that is foreign must be better. // The grass is greener on the other side of the fence.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他明显不如国内的学者水平高。可是~, 他被邀请做大会发言。

Traditional Chinese: 他明顯不如國內的學者水平高。可是~, 他被邀請做大會發言。

Pinyin: Tā míngxiǎn bùrú guónèi de xuézhě shuǐpíng gāo。Kěshì ~, tā bèi yāoqǐng zuò dàhuì fāyán。

English translation: He is obviously not as good as domestic scholars. However, he was invited to make a keynote speech. Monks from afar chant scripture better than local ones.

Note: A variant of 远 in this saying is 外。

54. 苦海无边, 回头是岸

Traditional Character: 苦海無邊, 回頭是岸

Pinyin: kǔ hǎi wú biān, huí tóu shì àn

Character To Character translation: bitter-sea-have no-edge, return-head-is-shore

Literal translation: The bitter ocean has no edges, looking back is the shore.

Free translation: The bitter ocean has no bounds, but the shore is there upon repenting. / It's never too late to mend one's ways.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你选择的路是错的, 以后会越来越痛苦。~。

Traditional Chinese: 你選擇的路是錯的, 以後會越來越痛苦。~。

Pinyin: Nǐ xuǎnzé de lù shì cuò de, yǐhòu huì yuèlái yuè tòngkǔ。~。

English translation: The road you chose is wrong, and it will become more and more painful in the future. It's never too late to mend one's ways.

Note:

55. 跑了和尚跑不了庙

Traditional Character: 跑了和尚跑不了廟

Pinyin: pǎo le hé shang pǎo bù liǎo miào

Character To Character translation: run away-(past tense)-monk-run away-not-able to-temple

Literal translation: A monk may run away but the temple cannot. // A runaway monk cannot escape from his temple.

Free translation: You can run, but you can't hide.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他因为贪污怕被抓而逃到外国去了，可是~，只要我们密切监督他在国内家人的对外联系，一定能发现他的信息。

Traditional Chinese: 他因為貪汙怕被抓而逃到外國去了，可是~，只要我們密切監督他在國內家人的對外聯繫，一定能發現他的信息。

Pinyin: Tā yīnwèi tānwū pà bèi zhuā ér táodào wàiguó qùle, kěshì ~, zhǐyào wǒmen mìqiè jiāndū tā zài guónèi jiārén de duìwài liánxì, yīdìng néng fāxiàn tāde xìnxī 。

English translation: He fled to a foreign country because he was afraid of being arrested for corruption. However, while one can run, he can't hide. As long as we closely monitor his contacts with his relatives in the country, we will definitely find his information.

Note:

56. 僧多粥少

Traditional Character: 僧多粥少

Pinyin: sēng duō zhōu shǎo

Character To Character translation: monk-many-porridge-less

Literal translation: Too many monks, too little porridge. // a situation in which there is not enough if a desired commodity to go around

Free translation: There are too many mouths to feed.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在找工作不容易，~，每个职位都有上百个求职者。

Traditional Chinese: 現在找工作不容易，~，每個職位都有上百個求職者。

Pinyin: Xiànzài zhǎo gōngzuò bù róngyì, ~, měigè zhíwèi dōu yǒu shàng-bǎigè qiúzhízhě。

English translation: It is not easy to find a job now. There are too many mouths to feed. There are hundreds of job seekers vying for each position.

Note:

57. 大水冲了龙王庙

Traditional Character: 大水沖了龍王廟

Pinyin: dà shuǐ chōng le lóng wáng miào

Character To Character translation: big-flood-rush-(past tense)-dragon-king-temple

Literal translation: The flood rushes toward the Temple of the Dragon King. // to accidentally wrong an alley

Free translation: friendly fire

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 原来你也是**中学毕业的！我们是上下届。好了，我们别吵了，原来是~。

Traditional Chinese: 原來你也是**中學畢業的！我們是上下屆。好了，我們別吵了，原來是~。

Pinyin: Yuánlái nǐ yě shì ** zhōngxué biyè de! Wǒmen shì shàngxià jiè。 Hǎo le, wǒmen bié chǎo le, yuánlái shì ~。

English translation: You turn out to have graduated from ... middle school! We are graduates of successive classes. Okay, let's stop quarrelling. It turns out to be friendly fire.

Note: This expression is sometimes followed by 一家(人)不认一家人。

58. 家家有本难念的经

Traditional Character: 家家有本難念的經

Pinyin: jiā jiā yǒu běn nán niàn de jīng

Character To Character translation: each family-have-(measure word)-hard-chant-scripture

Literal translation: Every family has a hard-to-chant scripture.

Free translation: Every family has its own challenges. // We all have our burdens to bear.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他在国际舞台上呼风唤雨，可是在家里连孩子都管不了，最后孩子进了监狱，可见~。

Traditional Chinese: 他在國際舞臺上呼風喚雨，可是在家裏連孩子都管不了，最後孩子進了監獄，可見~。

Pinyin: Tā zài guójì wǔtái shàng hūfēng huànyǔ, kěshì zài jiālǐ lián háizi dōu guǎn bùliǎo, zuìhòu háizi jìnle jiānyù, kějiàn ~。

English translation: He stirs up trouble on the international stage, but at home he can't even control his child who ended up in prison. It is thus obvious that every family has its own challenges.

Note:

59. 一花一世界

Traditional Character: 一花一世界

Pinyin: yī huā yī shì jiè

Character To Character translation: one-flower-one-world

Literal translation: A flower, a world.

Free translation: "To see a world in a grain of sand" - Auguries of Innocence by William Blake

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事虽小，可是牵涉到很多人。如果你仔细观察，也能发现人生的很多哲理，~。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事雖小，可是牽涉到很多人。如果你仔細觀察，也能發現人生的很多哲理，~。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì suī xiǎo, kěshì qiānshè dào hěnduō rén。 Rúguǒ nǐ zǐxì guānchá, yě néng fāxiàn rénshēng de hěnduō zhé lǐ, ~。

English translation: Although this matter is small, it involves many people. If you observe carefully, you can also find many philosophies of life. You can see a world in a grain of sand.

Note: This phrase is often followed by a similar one 一叶一如来/菩提。

60. 半路出家

Traditional Character: 半路出家

Pinyin: bàn lù chū jiā

Character To Character translation: half-way-leave-home

Literal translation: Halfway down the road, one leaves home to become a monk or nun.

Free translation: Halfway through his career, he switched to a different profession he was not trained in.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我搞经济学是~, 原来我是搞物理的。

Traditional Chinese: 我搞經濟學是~, 原來我是搞物理的。

Pinyin: Wǒ gǎo jīngjìxué shì ~, yuánlái wǒ shì gǎo wùlǐ de.

English translation: I am a mid-career economist. I was trained to be a physicist.

Note:

61. 哪个庙里没有冤死的鬼

Traditional Character: 那個廟裡沒有冤死的鬼

Pinyin: nǎ gè miào lǐ méi yǒu yuān sǐ de guǐ

Character To Character translation: which-temple-inside-not-have-wrongly treated-die-'s-ghost

Literal translation: Which temple doesn't have a ghost who met an unjust fate?

Free translation: Injustice can happen anywhere.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这起 20 年前的杀人案的凶手被宣布无罪释放, 人们纷纷指责当时的法官。可是, ~。当时的法官也未必是违心地判决。

Traditional Chinese: 這起 20 年前的殺人案的兇手被宣布無罪釋放, 人們紛紛指責當時的法官。可是, ~。當時的法官也未必是違心地判決。

Pinyin: Zhè qǐ 20 niánqián de shā rén'àn de xiōngshǒu bèi xuānbù wúzuì shìfàng, rénmen fēnfēn zhízé dāngshí de fǎguān. Kěshì, ~. Dāngshí de fǎguān yě wèibì shì wéixīn de pànjué.

English translation: The murderer was acquitted 20 years ago, and people, one after another, criticised the judge at that time. However, injustice can happen anywhere. That judge was not necessarily decide against it.

Note:

62. 庙小妖风大

Traditional Character: 廟小妖風大

Pinyin: miào xiǎo yāo fēng dà

Character To Character translation: temple-small-evil spirit-wind-big

Literal translation: The temple is small, but the evil winds are heavy.

Free translation: Don't underestimate a small place because bad characters can come from anywhere. /

Still waters run deep.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你别看他们几个的行政级别不高, 可是做起坏事来本事可大了, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 你別看他們幾個的行政級別不高, 可是做起壞事來本事可大了, ~。

Pinyin: Nǐ bié kàn tāmen jǐgè de xíngzhèng jíbìe bù gāo, kěshì zuò qǐ huài shì lái běnshì kě dà le, ~。

English translation: Don't be misled that their administrative level is not high; they are very capable of doing bad things. Still waters run deep.

Note:

Section 4: Karma, fate, justice 公道、报应、缘分、生死轮回

63. 天网恢恢，疏而不漏

Traditional Character: 天網恢恢，疏而不漏

Pinyin: tiān wǎng huī huī, shū ér bú lòu

Character To Character translation: Heaven-net-vast, sparse-but-not-leak

Literal translation: The Heaven's net is vast, but it lets nothing leak.

Free translation: The wheels of justice turn slowly, but grind exceedingly fine.// Justice has long arms.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 大家都知道他贩毒，虽然警方现在还没有足够的证据逮捕他，但是~，他肯定会坐牢的。

Traditional Chinese: 大家都知道他販毒，雖然警方現在還沒有足夠的證據逮捕他，但是~，他肯定會坐牢的。

Pinyin: Dàjiā dōu zhīdào tā fàndú, suīrán jǐngfāng xiànzài hái méiyǒu zúgòu de zhèngjù dài bǔ tā, dànshì ~, tā kěndìng huì zuòláo de.

English translation: Everyone knows that he traffics in drugs. Although the police do not have enough evidence to arrest him, justice has long arms. He is bound to be imprisoned.

Note:

64. 大难不死，必有后福

Traditional Character: 大難不死，必有後福

Pinyin: dà nán bù sǐ, bì yǒu hòu fú

Character To Character translation: big-catastrophe-not-dead, must-have-later-fortune

Literal translation: If you experience a big catastrophe but no death, you must have good fortune later.

Free translation: Those who survive catastrophe are bound to have good fortune.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这次飞机失事，他居然没死，~。

Traditional Chinese: 這次飛機失事，他居然沒死，~。

Pinyin: Zhècì fēijī shīshì, tā jūrán méisǐ, ~。

English translation: Luckily he survived an airplane crash. Those who survive catastrophe are bound to have good fortune.

Note:

65. 乐天知命

Traditional Character: 樂天知命

Pinyin: lè tiān zhī mìng

Character To Character translation: satisfied-with-Heaven-know-fate

Literal translation: Be happy with the fate heaven gives you.

Free translation: Happily submit to one's destiny.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 有智慧的人从不抱怨，他们~。

Traditional Chinese: 有智慧的人從不抱怨，他們~。

Pinyin: Yǒu zhìhuì de rén cóng bú bàoyuàn, tāmen ~。

English translation: Wise people never complain, since they happily submit to their destiny.

Note:

66. 天生我材必有用

Traditional Character: 天生我材必有用

Pinyin: tiān shēng wǒ cái bì yǒu yòng

Character To Character translation: Heaven-borne-me-talent-must-have-use

Literal translation: If you are born with talent, it will be used eventually.

Free translation: A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. -Proverbs 18: 16

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我在很多方面的才能还没有被别人发现，但是以后一定会被别人发现的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 我在很多方面的才能還沒有被別人發現，但是以後一定會被別人發現的，~。

Pinyin: Wǒ zài hěnduō fāngmiàn de cáinéng hái méiyǒu bèi biérén fāxiàn, dànshì yǐhòu yīdìng huì bèi biérén fāxiàn de, ~。

English translation: My talents in many aspects have not been discovered by others, but they will certainly be discovered later. A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Note:

67. 盖棺定论

Traditional Character: 蓋棺定論

Pinyin: gài guān dìng lùn

Character To Character translation: close-coffin-conclude-comment

Literal translation: A man's merits or demerits can be finally judged only after his death.

Free translation: Don't pass judgment on someone until you've seen the end.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他死了，他的历史地位也~了，那就是人类最伟大的发明家之一。

Traditional Chinese: 他死了，他的歷史地位也~了，那就是人類最偉大的發明家之一。

Pinyin: Tā sǐle, tāde lìshǐ dìwèi yě ~ le, nà jiùshì rénlèi zuì wěidà de fāmíngjiā zhīyī。

English translation: He died and his historical position is locked. He was one of the greatest inventors in human history.

Note: A variant form of this saying is 盖棺论定.

68. 死者为大

Traditional Character: 死者為大

Pinyin: sǐ zhě wéi dà

Character To Character translation: dead-people-is-biggest

Literal translation: The dead must be honored.

Free translation: Honor the deceased.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 她是个学生，在外国上学的时候被谋杀了。你们能不能不议论她生前跟一个小垃圾谈恋爱的事，~。

Traditional Chinese: 她是個學生，在外國上學的時候被謀殺了。你們能不能不議論她生前跟一個小垃圾談戀愛的事，~。

Pinyin: Tā shìgè xuéshēng, zài wàiguó shàngxué de shíhòu bèi móushā le. Nǐmen néngbùnéng bú yìlùn tā shēngqián gēn yīgè xiǎo lājī tánliàn'ài de shì, ~。

English translation: She was a student, but was murdered while studying abroad. Can't you stop gossiping about her dating that piece of trash before she died? Honor the deceased.

Note: An alternative form is 人死为大.

69. 哪里黄土不埋人

Traditional Character: 那裡黃土不埋人

Pinyin: nǎ lǐ huáng tǔ bù mái rén

Character To Character translation: what place-yellow-earth-not-bury-people

Literal translation: Where does yellow earth not bury people?

Free translation: Yellow earth buries the deceased everywhere.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他已经病得站不起来了，还非得要坐飞机回老家，死在那里。这是何苦呢？~？

Traditional Chinese: 他已經病得站不起來了，還非得要坐飛機回老家，死在那裏。這是何苦呢？~？

Pinyin: Tā yǐjīng bìngde zhàn bù qǐlái le, hái fēiděi yào zuò fēijī huí lǎojiā, sǐ zài nǎlǐ. Zhè shì hékǔ ne? ~？

English translation: He was too ill to stand up, but insisted on flying back to his hometown and dying there. Why bother? Yellow earth buries the deceased everywhere.

Note:

70. 冤冤相报何时了

Traditional Character: 冤冤相報何時了

Pinyin: yuān yuān xiāng bào hé shí liǎo

Character To Character translation: injustice-injustice-each other-revenge-

Literal translation: Injustice after injustice, when will it end?

Free translation: There is no end to the cycle of vengeance.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 以前是他错了，但是过去的事情就让他过去吧，你就不要再想着报复的事了，~。

Traditional Chinese: 以前是他錯了，但是過去的事情就讓他過去吧，你就不要再想著報復

的事了，~。

Pinyin: Yǐqián shì tā cuòle, dànshì guòqù de shìqíng jiù ràng tā guòqù ba, nǐ jiù búyào zài xiǎngzhe bàofù de shì le, ~。

English translation:

Note: He was wrong before, but let bygones be bygones. You should stop thinking about revenge. There is no end to the cycle of vengeance.

71. 杀人放火金腰带，修桥补路无人埋

Traditional Character: 殺人放火金腰帶，修橋補路無人埋

Pinyin: shā rén fàng huǒ jīn yāo dài, xiū qiáo bǔ lù wú rén mái

Character To Character translation: kill-people-set-fire-(wear) gold-waist-belt, repair-bridge-mend-road-no-people-bury

Literal translation: Killers and arsonists wear gold belts, but bridge-builders and road-pavers are without burials.

Free translation: Scammers may wear gold belts, but honest workers cannot afford their burials.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这是什么世道？~。好人也会变成坏人。

Traditional Chinese: 這是什麼世道？~。好人也會變成壞人。

Pinyin: Zhè shì shénme shìdào? ~。Hǎorén yě huì biàncéng huàirén。

English translation: What a society! The bad people live a good life and the good live miserably. The good people will just turn bad in the future.

Note:

72. 祸福无门，惟人自招

Traditional Character: 禍福無門，惟人自招

Pinyin: huò fú wú mén, wéi rén zì zhāo

Character To Character translation:

Literal translation: There is no door to good fortune, only self-invitation.

Free translation: There is no gate to happiness or misfortune, every man brings it onto himself.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不用抱怨你运气不好，其实这都是你自己招来的。~。

Traditional Chinese: 你不用抱怨你運氣不好，其實這都是你自己招來的。~。

Pinyin: Nǐ búyòng bàoyuàn nǐ yùnrì bùhǎo, qíshí zhè dōu shì nǐ zìjǐ zhāolái de. ~。

English translation: You shouldn't complain about your bad luck. In fact, you brought it all on yourself. There is no gate to happiness or misfortune, every man brings it unto himself.

Note:

73. 多行不义必自毙

Traditional Character: 多行不義必自斃

Pinyin: duō xíng bú yì bì zì bì

Character To Character translation: much-do-injustice-must-self-destruct

Literal translation: Multiple instances of immorality must lead to doom.

Free translation: Persisting in evil brings about self-destruction. // The wicked are brought down by their own wickedness. (Bible)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他做过太多坏事，下场好不了，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他做過太多壞事，下場好不了，~。

Pinyin: Tā zuòguò tàiduō huàishì, xiàchǎng hǎobùliǎo, ~。

English translation: He has done so much wrong; he will not come to a good end. The wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.

Note:

74. 禍福相依

Traditional Character: 禍福相依

Pinyin: huò fú xiāng yī

Character To Character translation: misfortune-fortune-mutual-dependent

Literal translation: Misfortune and good fortune are dependent on each other.

Free translation: Good fortune may foreshadow bad luck, misfortune may be a blessing in disguise.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不要太难过了，坏事以后也可能变成好事，~。

Traditional Chinese: 你不要太難過了，壞事以後也可能變成好事，~。

Pinyin: Nǐ bùyào tài nánguò le, huàishì yǐhòu yě kěnéng biànchéng hǎoshì, ~。

English translation: Don't be so sad. Bad things can turn into good things later. Good fortune may foreshadow bad luck, misfortune may be a blessing in disguise.

Note: A variant of this saying is 禍福相倚.

75. 好人不长寿，祸害一千年

Traditional Character: 好人不長壽，禍害一千年

Pinyin: hǎo rén bù cháng shòu, huò hài yī qiān nián

Character To Character translation: good-people-not-longevity, scourge-one-thousand-year

Literal translation: Good people don't live long, bad people live a thousand years.

Free translation: Good people don't live long, but bad people live for a thousand years. // The good die young.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他人品这么好，可惜不到四十岁就死了，真是好人不长寿啊！

Traditional Chinese: 他人品這麼好，可惜不到四十歲就死了，真是好人不長壽啊！

Pinyin: Tā rénpǐn zhème hǎo, kěxī bú dào sìshí suì jiù sǐle, zhēnshì hǎorén bù chángshòu a!

English translation: He is such a nice person, but unfortunately died before 40. It is true that the good die young.

Note: Either half of this expression can be used alone.

76. 生不带来，死不带去

Traditional Character: 生不帶來，死不帶去

Pinyin: shēng bú dài lái, sǐ bú dài qù

Character To Character translation: born-not-bring-here, die-not-take-away

Literal translation: Birth doesn't bring anything, death does not take anything.

Free translation: One comes to the world empty-handed and dies leaving everything behind. / You're made from dust and you'll return to dust. Genesis 3: 19

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 赚那么多钱有什么用啊? 够花了就行了。钱这个东西, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 賺那麼多錢有什麼用啊? 夠花了就行了。錢這個東西, ~。

Pinyin: Zhuàn nàme duō qián yǒu shénme yòng a? Gòu huā le jiù xíng le. Qián zhègè dōngxī, ~。

English translation: What's the use of making so much money? It's fine as long as it is enough. One comes to the world without any money and dies leaving all money behind.

Note: This proverb is typically about money: You are born without money and when you die, you cannot take your money into the afterlife.

77. 早死早超生

Traditional Character: 早死早超生

Pinyin: zǎo sǐ zǎo chāo shēng

Character To Character translation: early-die-early-reincarnate

Literal translation: Early death, early reincarnation.

Free translation: "Fear not death for the sooner we die, the longer we shall be immortal." - Benjamin Franklin // An early death begets an early reincarnation. / "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-14)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他这样活着多没意思啊, 不如早点儿死, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 他這樣活著多沒意思啊, 不如早點兒死, ~。

Pinyin: Tā zhèyàng huózhe duō méiyìsī a, bùrú zǎodiǎnr sǐ, ~。

English translation: How boring to live a life like this! It would be better to die earlier. An early death begets an early reincarnation.

Note:

78. 七十三、八十四, 阎王不叫自己去

Traditional Character: 七十三, 八十四, 閻王不叫自己去

Pinyin: qī shí sān、bā shí sì, Yánwáng bú jiào zì jǐ qù

Character To Character translation: seventy-three, eighty-four, Yama-not-call-yourself-go

Literal translation: At the age of 73 or 84, Yama doesn't call you to go, you will go by yourself.

Free translation: Once you're between the ages of 73 and 84, one would pass on without Yama's calling.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 估计他挺不过今年了, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 估計他挺不過今年了, ~。

Pinyin: Gūjì tā tǐng bú guò jīnnián le, ~。

English translation: He probably won't be able to survive this year. Once you're between the ages of 73 and 84, one would pass on without Yama's calling.

Note: Confucius died at 73, Mencius died at 84, so Chinese people believe they're most likely to die between those ages. // Yama is a Buddhist deity.

79. 天知地知你知我知

Traditional Character: 天知地知你知我知

Pinyin: tiān zhī dì zhī nǐ zhī wǒ zhī

Character To Character translation:

Literal translation: Heaven knows, Earth knows, you know, I know.

Free translation: Keep it a secret. / Don't let the cat out of the bag.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事千万不要告诉别人，~。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事千萬不要告訴別人，~。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì qiānwàn búyào gàosù biérén, ~。

English translation: You should never tell this to others. Don't let the cat out of the bag.

Note:

80. 叫天天不应，叫地地不语

Traditional Character: 叫天天不應，叫地地不語

Pinyin: jiào tiān tiān bú yìng, jiào dì dì bù yǔ

Character To Character translation: call-Heaven-Heaven-not-respond, call-Earth-Earth-not-speak

Literal translation: Call Heaven. If Heaven does not respond, call Earth. Earth doesn't speak.

Free translation: There's nowhere to turn for help because neither Heaven nor Earth respond.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他求遍了所有认识的人，可是没有一个人答应帮他的忙，真是~。

Traditional Chinese: 他求遍了所有認識的人，可是沒有一個人答應幫他的忙，真是~。

Pinyin: Tā qiú biàn le suǒyǒu rènshí de rén, kěshì méiyǒu yīgè rén dāying bāng tā de máng, zhēnshì ~。

English translation: He begged almost everybody he knows for help, but no one agreed. It really is desperate.

Note:

81. 天道酬勤

Traditional Character: 天道酬勤

Pinyin: tiān dào chóu qín

Character To Character translation: Heaven-way-reward-diligent

Literal translation: Heaven rewards the diligent.

Free translation: Heaven rewards the hardworking. / You will eat the fruit of your labors; blessings and prosperity will be yours. --Psalm 128: 2

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 她工作这么努力，现在她的工作得到了大家的认可，是应该的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 她工作這麼努力，現在她的工作得到了大家的認可，是應該的，～。

Pinyin: Tā gōngzuò zhème nǔlì, xiànzài tāde gōngzuò dédào le dàjiā de rènkě, shì yīnggāi de, ～。

English translation: She works this hard. Now her work has been awarded the recognition of everyone. Heaven rewards the hardworking.

Note:

82. 天打五雷轰

Traditional Character: 天打五雷轟

Pinyin: tiān dǎ wǔ léi hōng

Character To Character translation: Heaven-send-five-thunder-strike

Literal translation: Heaven punishes with the five elements.

Free translation: Punished by Heaven with five thunders. / Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. --Matthew 25: 41

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我绝对没有说谎。如果我说谎，～。

Traditional Chinese: 我絕對沒有說謊。如果我說謊，～。

Pinyin: Wǒ juéduì méiyǒu shuōhuǎng. Rúguǒ wǒ shuōhuǎng, ～。

English translation: I definitely did not lie. If I lied, I would be cursed.

Note:

83. 有缘千里来相会

Traditional Character: 有緣千里來相會

Pinyin: yǒu yuán qiān lǐ lái xiāng huì

Character To Character translation: have-fate-thousand-mile-come-meet

Literal translation: If it's fated, you will cross thousands of miles to meet.

Free translation: Fate brings people together no matter how far apart they may be.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 咱们从世界各个角落来到同一家公司工作，这就是缘分，～。

Traditional Chinese: 咱們從世界各個角落來到同一家公司工作，這就是緣分，～。

Pinyin: Zánmen cóng shìjiè gège jiǎoluò láidào tóngyī jiā gōngsī gōngzuò, zhè jiùshì yuánfèn, ～。

English translation: We came from every corner of the world to this company to work. This is fate. Fate brings people together no matter how far apart they may be.

Note: The opposite expression of this proverb is 无缘对面不相逢 which means 'if there is not fate, two will not meet even they pass by each other.'

84. 千里姻缘一线牵

Traditional Character: 千里姻緣一線牽

Pinyin: qiān lǐ yīn yuán yī xiàn qiān

Character To Character translation: thousand-mile-destined marriage-one-thread-bound

Literal translation: Marriage follows along a red thread for a thousand miles.

Free translation: Even if thousands of miles apart, two people are destined for marriage, bound by a red thread of a fate, tied by an old man under the moonlight. / Love knows no bounds.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他在美国，她在中国，两个人本来互不相识，结果在欧洲的一次会议上见到并从此开始恋爱，直到结婚。真是~。

Traditional Chinese: 他在美國，她在中國，兩個人本來互不相識，結果在歐洲的一次會議上見到並從此開始戀愛，直到結婚。真是~。

Pinyin: Tā zài Měiguó, tā zài Zhōngguó, liǎng gè rén běnlái hù bù xiāngshí, jiéguǒ zài Ōuzhōu de yī cì huìyì shàng jiàndào bìng cóngcǐ kāishǐ liàn'ài, zhídào jiéhūn. Zhēn shì ~。

English translation: He was in the U.S. and she was in China. They originally did not know each other, however, they met at a conference in Europe and started dating until they got married. It is true that love knows no bounds.

Note:

85. 善有善报，恶有恶报

Traditional Character: 善有善報，惡有惡報

Pinyin: shàn yǒu shàn bào, è yǒu è bào

Character To Character translation: good-have-good-reward, evil-have-evil-reward

Literal translation: Good has good consequences, evil has evil consequences.

Free translation: Karma will bring good to those who do good, karma will bring ill to those who do ill. / What goes around comes around. / As you sow, so shall you reap. --Galatians 6: 7

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 太谢谢您了。您真是大好人。善有善报。您以后一定会万事顺利的。

Traditional Chinese: 太謝謝您了。您真是大好人。善有善報。您以後一定會萬事順利的。

Pinyin: Tài xièxie nín le. Nín zhēnshì dà hǎorén. Shàn yǒu shàn bào. Nín yǐhòu yīdìng huì wànshì shùnlì de.

English translation: Thank you so very much. You are truly a good man. Karma will bring good to those who do good. Anything you do will definitely go extremely well.

Note: A longer form of this proverb is 善有善报，恶有恶报；不是不报，时候未到。

86. 酒肉穿肠过，佛祖心中留

Traditional Character: 酒肉穿腸過，佛祖心中留

Pinyin: jiǔ ròu chuān cháng guò, fó zǔ xīn zhōng liú

Character To Character translation: liquor-meat-pass-intestine-through, Buddha-heart-inside-remains

Literal translation: Wine and meat pass through the intestines, but Buddha remains in the heart.

Free translation: Food and drink are temporary and corporal, but Buddha is forever. / "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." --Galatians 5: 16

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你别看他大吃大喝，其实内心的佛性很深，~。 *Traditional Chinese:* 你別看他大吃大喝，其實內心的佛性很深，~。

Pinyin: Nǐ bié kàn tā dàchī dàhē, qíshí nèixīn de fóxìng hěn shēn, ~。

English translation: Don't be misled that he makes a pig of himself, he has a Buddha-like nature

inside. Food and drink are only temporary and corporal.

Note:

87. 扫地不伤蝼蚁命

Traditional Character: 掃地不傷螻蟻命

Pinyin: sǎo dì bù shāng lóu yǐ mìng

Character To Character translation: sweep-ground-not-harm-ant-life

Literal translation: Sweep the ground without harming the lives of ants.

Free translation: Respect all lives, even ants.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 她爱惜所有动物的性命，不但全素，甚至~。

Traditional Chinese: 她愛惜所有動物的性命，不但全素，甚至~。

Pinyin: Tā àixī suǒyǒu dòngwù de xìngmìng, búdàn quánsù, shènzhì ~。

English translation: Besides being a vegan, she values all lives of animals, even ants.

Note: Buddhism values all life, unlike Christianity, which sees humans as God's favorite creatures.

88. 逃不出如来佛的手掌心

Traditional Character: 逃不出如來佛的手掌心

Pinyin: táo bù chū Rúláifó de shǒu zhǎng xīn

Character To Character translation: escape-not-out of-Buddha-'s-palm-center

Literal translation: Cannot escape from the palm of Buddha

Free translation: Buddha is always in charge, you cannot escape from a higher power.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 别看他现在折腾得挺厉害，但是~，早晚得让他的上司给收拾了。

Traditional Chinese: 別看他現在折騰得挺厲害，但是~，早晚得讓他的上司給收拾了。

Pinyin: Bié kàn tā xiànzài zhēteng de tǐng lihài, dànshì ~, zǎowǎn de ràng tāde shàngsī gěi shōushí le。

English translation: Don't be misled that he makes quite a scene, however, he cannot escape from a higher power. He will sooner or later be settled by his superior.

Note:

89. 泥菩萨过河——自身难保

Traditional Character: 泥菩薩過河——自身難保

Pinyin: ní púsà guò hé —— zì shēn nán bǎo

Character To Character translation: clay-Buddha-cross-river--oneself-hard-protect

Literal translation: A clay Buddha crossing a river--it's difficult for one to protect oneself.

Free translation: Like a clay Buddha crossing a river, you are powerless to defend yourself.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你想请他帮忙？恐怕不行吧？他自己还~呢。

Traditional Chinese: 你想請他幫忙？恐怕不行吧？他自己還~呢。

Pinyin: Nǐ xiǎng qǐng tā bāngmáng? Kǒngpà bùxíng ba? Tā zìjǐ huán ~ ne。

English translation: You want to ask him for help? I am afraid it will not work. He is unable to

protect himself.

Note:

90. 来世做牛做马

Traditional Character: 來世做牛做馬

Pinyin: lái shì zuò niú zuò mǎ

Character To Character translation: come-life-be-ox-be-horse

Literal translation: In the coming life, be an ox or horse.

Free translation: In the next life, work like an ox or a horse.

*phrase used to pay somebody back for their favor, for working extremely hard.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 您的大恩大德我永远不忘，我~也要报答您。

Traditional Chinese: 您的大恩大德我永遠不忘，我~也要報答您。

Pinyin: Nín de dà'ēn dà dé wǒ yǒngyuǎn bú wàng, wǒ ~ yě yào bào dá nín.

English translation: I will never forget your great kindness. In the next life, I will be your slave to repay you.

Note:

91. 看破红尘

Traditional Character: 看破紅塵

Pinyin: kàn pò hóng chén

Character To Character translation: see-through-red dust

Literal translation: See through the world of mortals.

Free translation: to be disillusioned by the mortal world

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 她原来是很成功的生意人，现在~，去当了尼姑。

Traditional Chinese: 她原來是很成功的生意人，現在~，去當了尼姑。

Pinyin: Tā yuánlái shì hěn chénggōng de shēngyìrén, xiànzài ~, qù dāngle nígū.

English translation: She was a very successful businesswoman, but she became a nun after becoming disillusioned by the mortal world.

Note:

92. 既来佛会下，都是有缘人

Traditional Character: 既來佛會下，都是有緣人

Pinyin: jì lái fó huì xià, dōu shì yǒu yuán rén

Character To Character translation: since-come-Buddha-preaching, all-are-predestined-people

Literal translation: Since you come to listen to Buddha's preachings, all have fate.

Free translation: Since you belong to the same Buddhist community, everyone is linked by fate.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 虽然你走错了房间，但是如果有时间的话，听一听我们的讨论也无妨，~。

Traditional Chinese: 雖然你走錯了房間，但是如果有時間的話，聽一聽我們的討論也無妨，~。

~。

Pinyin: Suīrán nǐ zǒucuo le fángjiān, dànshì rúguǒ yǒu shíjiān de huà, tīng yī tīng wǒmen de tāolùn yě wúfáng, ~。

English translation: Although you went to the wrong room, if you got some time, why not listen to our discussion for a while? This is fate.

Note:

93. 十年修得同船渡，百年修得共枕眠

Traditional Character: 十年修得同船渡，百年修得共枕眠

Pinyin: shí nián xiū de tóng chuán dù, bǎi nián xiū de gòng zhěn mián

Character To Character translation: ten-years-practice-get-same-boat-cross, hundred-years-practice-get-same-pillow-sleep

Literal translation: Ten years of good deeds gets the same boat crossing, a hundred years of good deeds gets the same sleep.

Free translation: Ten years of good deeds lead to sharing the same ferryboat, a hundred years of good deeds lead to sleeping on the same pillow. / “Journeys end in lovers meeting, Every wise man's son doth know.” --Twelfth Night (II, iii, 44-45)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你们两口子再好好想想，不要轻易离婚。~。两个人到一起不容易。

Traditional Chinese: 你們兩口子再好好想想，不要輕易離婚。~。兩個人到一起不容易。

Pinyin: Nǐmen liǎngkǒuzi zài hǎohǎo xiǎngxiang, búyào qīngyì líhūn。~。Liǎnggè rén dào yīqǐ bù róngyì。

English translation: Can you couple think it over again and don't divorce easily? Journeys end in lovers meeting, as every wise man's son doth know. It is not easy for two to come together.

Note:

94. 救人一命，胜造七级浮屠

Traditional Character: 救人一命，勝造七級浮屠

Pinyin: jiù rén yī mìng, shèng zào qī jí fú tú

Character To Character translation: save-people-one-life, better than-make-seven-storey-pogoda

Literal translation: Save one life wins over building a seven-story pagoda.

Free translation: Saving a life is better than building a seven-story pagoda.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他都要跳楼了，你快借他一点钱吧，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他都要跳樓了，你快借他一點錢吧，~。

Pinyin: Tā dōu yào tiàolóu le, nǐ kuài jiè tā yīdiǎn qián ba, ~。

English translation: He is about to jump to his death. Please lend him some money. Saving a life is better than building a seven-story pagoda.

Note:

95. 善恶到头终有报，只争来早与来迟

Traditional Character: 善惡到頭終有報，只爭來早與來遲

Pinyin: shàn è dào tóu zhōng yǒu bào, zhǐ zhēng lái zǎo yǔ lái chí

Character To Character translation: good-evil-in the end-eventually-have-returns, only-different-arrive-early-or-arrive-late

Literal translation: Good and evil will eventually have returns, the only thing to argue about is if it will arrive early or late.

Free translation: Good and evil will always have the proper consequences, it is only a question of time. / What goes around comes around.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你放心，他不会有好下场的。~。

Traditional Chinese: 你放心，他不會有好下場的。~。

Pinyin: Nǐ fàngxīn, tā búhuì yǒu hǎo xiàchǎng de. ~。

English translation: You can rest assured that he will not come to a good end. Good and evil will always have the proper consequences, it is only a question of time.

Note:

96. 入土为安

Traditional Character: 入土為安

Pinyin: rù tǔ wéi ān

Character To Character translation: enter-earth-be-peaceful

Literal translation: Entering the earth leads to peace.

Free translation: Burial brings peace to the deceased. / Dead and buried.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你们几个孩子不要为遗产的事再争吵了，还是让老人家先~吧。

Traditional Chinese: 你們幾個孩子不要為遺產的事再爭吵了，還是讓老人家先~吧。

Pinyin: Nǐmen jǐgè háizi búyào wèi yíchǎn de shì zài zhēngchǎo le, háishì ràng lǎorénjiā xiān ~ ba。

English translation: You kids do not quarrel over the matter of inheritance any more. Wait until your parents are buried and resting in peacefully first.

Note:

97. 恶人自有恶人磨

Traditional Character: 惡人自有惡人磨

Pinyin: è rén zì yǒu è rén mó

Character To Character translation: evil-people-definitely-have-evil-people-plague

Literal translation: An evil person will be harassed by another evil.

Free translation: The big thieves hang the little ones.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他做了那么多坏事，不用看他现在好像很好，~，以后肯定会有人找他麻烦的。

Traditional Chinese: 他做了那麼多壞事，不用看他現在好像很好，~，以後肯定會有人找他麻煩的。

Pinyin: Tā zuòle nàme duō huàishì, búyòng kàn tā xiànzài hǎoxiàng hěnhǎo, ~, yǐhòu kěndìng

huì yǒurén zhǎo tā máfán de。

English translation: He committed so many atrocities. Despite the fact that he appears well now, great thieves hang the little ones. He will definitely be in trouble in the future.

Note:

98. 自求多福

Traditional Character: 自求多福

Pinyin: zì qiú duō fú

Character To Character translation: oneself-beg-more-blessing

Literal translation: Beg yourself for greater happiness.

Free translation: One will achieve more happiness asking yourself for help than asking others for help. //

You are on your own, good luck!

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事谁也帮不了你了，你就~吧。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事誰也幫不了你了，你就~吧。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì shéi yě bāng bùliǎo nǐ le, nǐ jiù ~ ba。

English translation: Nobody can help you on this matter. You are on your own, good luck!

Note:

99. 一世为官，十世打砖

Traditional Character: 一世為官，十世打磚

Pinyin: yī shì wéi guān, shí shì dǎ zhuān

Character To Character translation: one-generation-be-official, ten-generation-make-bricks

Literal translation: One generation as an official, ten generations poor and miserable.

Free translation: If one is an official in this generation, his will be punished with poverty and misery for the next ten generations.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 当官的贪赃枉法，一定会遭报应的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 當官的貪贓枉法，一定會遭報應的，~。

Pinyin: Dāngguānde tānzāng wǎngfǎ, yīdìng huì zāo bàoyìng de, ~。

English translation: Government officials take bribes and bend the law, and they will definitely get retribution. If one is an official in this generation, his will be punished with poverty and misery for the next ten generations.

Note: There are some alternative forms, including 一世为官，九世为牛 and 一世为官，十世为牛.

Part II: Political Proverbs

Section 1: emperors, ministers, generals 皇帝、大臣、将军

100. 国之大事，在祀与戎

Traditional Character: 國之大事，在祀與戎

Pinyin: guó zhī dàshì, zài sì yǔ róng

Character To Character translation: country-'s-major-affair, be-sacrifice-and-military

Literal translation: The great thing about the country lies in sacrifice and war.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在穿汉服、拜孔子又成了时尚，因为在古代～。

Traditional Chinese: 現在穿漢服、拜孔子又成了時尚，因為在古代～。

Pinyin: Xiànzài chuān hànfú , bài Kǒngzǐ yòu chéng le shíshàng , yīnwèi zài gǔdài 。

English translation: Now wearing ancient Chinese clothes and worshipping Confucius once again has become trendy, because in ancient China, the great thing about the country lies in sacrifice and war.

Note:

101. 国不可一日无君

Traditional Character: 國不可一日無君

Pinyin: guó bùkě yī rì wú jūn

Character To Character translation: country-cannot-one-day-without-monarch

Literal translation: The country cannot go one day without a monarch.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在西方最高领导人辞职不是什么大不了的事。可是在中国却不可能发生，～。

Traditional Chinese: 在西方最高領導人辭職不是什麼大不了的事。可是在中國卻不可能發生，～。

Pinyin: Zài xīfāng zuì gāo lǐngdǎorén cízhí búshì shénme dàbùliǎo de shì 。 Kěshì zài Zhōngguó què bù kěnéng fāshēng , 。

English translation: In the western countries it is not a big deal for the highest leader to resign, but it could not happen in China. The country cannot go one day without a monarch.

Note:

102. 君无戏言

Traditional Character: 君無戲言

Pinyin: jūn wú xìyán

Character To Character translation: monarch-no-joking-remarks

Literal translation: The emperor does not go back on his words.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 领导说的话就算数，～。

Traditional Chinese: Leaders' words count, since an emperor does not go back on his words.

Pinyin:

English translation:

Note: This saying is from a story about King Cheng of Zhou (1055-1021 BC) who as a kid jokingly gave a tung tree leaf to his little brother, but the Regent heard it and urged King Cheng of Zhou fulfill his promise since 'the emperor does not go back on his words'.

103. 一朝天子一朝臣

Traditional Character: 一朝天子一朝臣

Pinyin: yī cháo tiānzi yī cháo chén

Character To Character translation: every-sovereign-emperor-every-sovereign-ministers

Literal translation: Every new sovereign brings his own courtiers.

Free translation: A new chief brings in new aides.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 又有一位新官员要上任了，换句话说，下面的一批官员也要换人了，～。

Traditional Chinese: 又有一位新官員要上任了，換句話說，下面的一批官員也要換人了，～。

Pinyin: Yòu yǒu yī wèi xīn guānyuán yào shàngren le , huànjùhuàshuō , xiàmiàn de yī pī guānyuán yě yào huànrén le , ～。

English translation: For every new official who assumes his post, there will be another batch of bureaucrats to be replaced. A new chief brings in new aides.

Note:

104. 皇帝的女儿不愁嫁

Traditional Character: 皇帝的女兒不愁嫁

Pinyin: huángdì de nǚ'ér bù chóu jià

Character To Character translation: emperor-'s-daughter-not-worry-marriage

Literal translation: The emperor's daughter need not worry about a good marriage.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不用担心省长的女儿长得丑就嫁不好，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你不用擔心省長的女兒長得醜就嫁不好，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ búyòng dānxīn shěngzhǎng de nǚ'ér zhǎng de chǒu jiù jià bù hǎo , ～。

English translation: You need not be concerned that the governor's daughter will not marry a good husband just because she is ugly. The emperor's daughter need not worry about a good marriage.

Note:

105. 窃钩者诛，窃国者为诸侯

Traditional Character: 竊鉤者誅，竊國者為諸侯

Pinyin: qiè gōu zhě zhū, qiè guó zhě wéi zhūhóu

Character To Character translation: steal-belt hook-person-executed, steal-state-person-become-duke

Literal translation: He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life, but he who steals a nation gets to be a feudal lord.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 古代很多政治家就是流氓，～，比方刘邦。

Traditional Chinese: 古代很多政治家就是流氓，～，比方劉邦。

Pinyin: Gǔdài hěnduō zhèngzhìjiā jiùshì liúmáng , ～, bǐfāng Liú Bāng 。

English translation: In ancient times, many politicians were just thugs. He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life, but he who steals a nation gets to be a feudal lord, such as was the case with Liu Bang.

Note: This saying is from a Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* 庄子.

106. 胜者王侯败者贼

Traditional Character: 勝者王侯敗者賊

Pinyin: shèngzhě wánghóu bàizhě zéi

Character To Character translation: won-person-king or duke-lost-person-traitor

Literal translation: The winners are the aristocracy, and the losers are the traitors.

Free translation: Legitimacy belongs to the victor and losers are always in the wrong. // Winners take it all.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国人崇拜结果，不关心过程，～。

Traditional Chinese: 中國人崇拜結果，不關心過程，～。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó rén chóngbài jiéguǒ, bù guānxīn guòchéng, ～。

English translation: The Chinese people care only about the result, not the procedure. Winners take it all.

Note:

107. 伴君如伴虎

Traditional Character: 伴君如伴虎

Pinyin: bàn jūn rú bàn hǔ

Character To Character translation: accompany-monarch-like-accompany-tiger

Literal translation: Being close to the sovereign can be as perilous as lying with a tiger.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你的老板地位很高，但是不讲情面，你要小心啊，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你的老闆地位很高，但是不講情面，你要小心啊，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ de lǎobǎn dìwèi hěn gāo, dànshì bù jiǎng qíngmiàn, nǐ yào xiǎoxīn a , ～。

English translation: Your boss has a very high status, but has no considerations for other's feelings. You must be careful. Being close to the sovereign can be as perilous as lying with a tiger.

Note:

108. 舍得一身剐，敢把皇帝拉下马

Traditional Character: 舍得一身剐，敢把皇帝拉下馬

Pinyin: shěde yī shēn guǎ, gǎn bǎ huángdì lā xià mǎ

Character To Character translation: be willing to-whole-body-boned, dare-make-emperor-pull-down-a horse

Literal translation: Only if one does not fear to die a painful death, will he have the guts to pull the emperor off his horse.

Free translation: To a fearless person, no fence is high enough.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我就是耍告政府，大不了进监狱，可是我不在乎了。～。

Traditional Chinese: 我就是耍告政府，大不了進監獄，可是我不在乎了。～。

Pinyin: Wǒ jiùshì yào gào zhèngfǔ, dàbùliǎo jìn jiānyù, kěshì wǒ bú zàihū le. ～。

English translation: What I want to do is to sue the government. Worst case scenario, I'm put in prison, but I don't care anymore. To a fearless person, no fence is high enough.

Note:

109. 一个将军一个令

Traditional Character: 一個將軍一個令

Pinyin: yīgè jiāngjūn yīgè lìng

Character To Character translation: one-MW-general-one-MW-order

Literal translation: Each leader has his own policies.

Free translation: New boss, new rules.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 新领导上任了，你先不要多说，看看他的思想，跟以前的很可能不一样。～。

Traditional Chinese: 新領導上任了，你先不要多說，看看他的思想，跟以前的很可能不一樣。～。

Pinyin: Xīn lǐngdǎo shàngren le, nǐ xiān búyào duō shuō, kànkàn tā de sīxiǎng, gēn yǐqián de hěn kěnéng bù yīyàng. ～。

English translation: The new leader has assumed office. You'd better not speak out too much and get to know his way of thinking first, which likely will differ from that of the previous leader. New lords, new rules.

Note:

110. 一将功成万骨枯

Traditional Character: 一將功成萬骨枯

Pinyin: yī jiāng gōng chéng wàn gǔ kū

Character To Character translation: one-general-mission-accomplished-10,000-bone-decayed

Literal translation: The success of one general is enjoyed over the bodies of ten thousand soldiers.

Free translation: What millions died that Caesar might be great!

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他成功了，媒体上铺天盖地地宣传，可是谁知道他背后的团队付出的努

力啊，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他成功了，媒體上鋪天蓋地地宣傳，可是誰知道他背後的團隊付出的努力啊，～。

Pinyin: Tā chénggōng le, méitǐ shàng pūtiān-gàidì de xuānchuán, kěshì shéi zhīdào tā bèihòu de tuánduì fùchū de nǔlì a, ～。

English translation: He succeeded, and the media is hyping it up. However, who knows how much his team has sacrificed. What millions died that Caesar might be great!

Note:

111. 上有所好，下必甚焉

Traditional Character: 上有所好，下必甚焉

Pinyin: shàng yǒu suǒ hǎo, xià bì shèn yān

Character To Character translation: superior-have-what-favored, inferior-must-go further

Literal translation: What the superior loves, the inferior will further strive for.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 因为本地的最高领导喜欢打乒乓球，现在下级官员们下班后都去练乒乓球了，～。

Traditional Chinese: 因為本地的最高領導喜歡打乒乓球，現在下級官員們下班後都去練乒乓球了，～。

Pinyin: Yīnwèi běndì de zuìgāo lǐngdǎo xǐhuān dǎ pīngpāngqiú, xiànzài xiàjí guānyuánmen xiàbān hòu dōu qù liàn pīngpāngqiú le, ～。

English translation: Because the local's highest official likes to play table tennis, now all of the inferior officials go to practice table tennis after work. What the superior loves, the inferior will further strive for.

Note:

112. 千金之子，不死于市

Traditional Character: 千金之子，不死于市

Pinyin: qiān jīn zhī zǐ, bù sǐ yú shì

Character To Character translation: a lot of-gold-(people)'s-son, won't-die-in-market

Literal translation: A boy worth a thousand pieces of gold will not die in the market.

Free translation: The offspring of the rich will never lose their dignity.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 别看他好像违法的程度很严重，其实判不了几个月，～。

Traditional Chinese: 別看他好像違法的程度很嚴重，其實判不了幾個月，～。

Pinyin: Bié kàn tā hǎoxiàng wéifǎ de chéngdù hěn yánzhòng, qíshí pàn bù liǎo jǐ gè yuè, ～。

English translation: Although it appears that he flagrantly violated the law, he won't be sentenced to prison for a few months. The offspring of the rich will never lose their dignity.

Note:

Section 2: officialdom, officers, judiciary 官场、官员、司法

113. 一言而兴邦，一言而丧邦

Traditional Character: 一言而興邦，一言而喪邦

Pinyin: yī yán ér xīng bāng, yī yán ér sàng bāng

Character To Character translation: one-utterance-and-thrive-a country, one-utterance-and-weaken-a country

Literal translation: One utterance can make the country prosperous, and one utterance can destroy the country.

Free translation: An utterance can change the fate of a country.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在中国古代，语言是神圣的，尤其是皇帝说的话对整个国家影响很大，～。

Traditional Chinese: 在中國古代，語言是神聖的，尤其是皇帝說的話對整個國家影響很大，～。

Pinyin: Zài Zhōngguó gǔdài, yǔyán shì shénshèng de, yóuqí shì huángdì shuō de huà duì zhèngè guójiā yǐngxiǎng hěn dà, ～。

English translation: In ancient China, language was divine, especially since emperors' words had such great influence over the country. One utterance could change the fate of the nation.

Note: It was said by Confucius.

114. 人在江湖，身不由己

Traditional Character: 人在江湖，身不由己

Pinyin: rén zài jiānghú, shēn bù yóu jǐ

Character To Character translation: people-in-rivers and lakes/ganghood, body-not-up to-oneself

Literal translation: You can't always do as you like. // One has to make compromises in this world.

Free translation: You can't always get what you want.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 其实我也不想这么做，可是没办法，～。

Traditional Chinese: 其實我也不想這麼做，可是沒辦法，～。

Pinyin: Qíshí wǒ yě bù xiǎng zhème zuò, kěshì méi bànfǎ, ～。

English translation: I actually don't want to do it this way, but I have no choice. You can't always do as you like.

Note: This phrase was arguably coined by a Chinese martial arts novelist Gu Long in 1980s. However, it pertains to the common dilemmatic situation and went viral very soon. As The Rolling Stones' puts it (in their 1996 song), *You Can't Always Get What You Want*.

115. 不在其位，不谋其政

Traditional Character: 不在其位，不謀其政

Pinyin: bú zài qí wèi, bù móu qí zhèng

Character To Character translation: not-at-that-post, not-make plans for-its-duty

Literal translation: If not in that certain office, one should not discuss its affairs.

Free translation: Don't meddle in affairs that are not part of your position. // Mind your own business. // Don't stick your nose where it doesn't belong.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我已经退休了，你们就不用再征求我的意见了。我～。

Traditional Chinese: 我已經退休了，你們就不用再徵求我的意見了。我～。

Pinyin: Wǒ yǐjīng tuìxiū le, nǐmen jiù búyòng zài zhēngqiú wǒde yìjiàn le. wǒ ～。

English translation: I have retired, and you need not ask for my advice any more. I won't meddle in affairs that are not part of my duties.

Note: It is from *Confucius*.

116. 楚王好细腰，宫中多饿死

Traditional Character: 楚王好細腰，宮中多餓死

Pinyin: Chǔ wáng hǎo xì yāo, gōng zhōng duō è sǐ

Character To Character translation: Chu State-king-favor-thin-waist, palace-people-many-starved-to death

Literal translation: Since King Chu favored small waists, many of his court attendants starved to death.

Free translation: Some people would risk their lives to pay court to their superiors. // Fashion is at the mercy of the whims of movers and shakers.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 有什么样的上级就有什么样的下级，～。

Traditional Chinese: 有什麼樣的上級就有什麼樣的下級，～。

Pinyin: Yǒu shénmeyàng de shàngjí jiù yǒu shénmeyàng de xiàjí, ～。

English translation: Superiors will select inferiors that are similar in kind to them, and some people would risk their lives to pay court to their superiors.

Note: This saying originated from the story of King Ling of Chu (reign 540-529 BC) who preferred that people, male or female, have small waists. Ironically, his family name is 熊 (bear).

117. 上梁不正下梁歪

Traditional Character: 上梁不正下梁歪

Pinyin: shàng liáng bú zhèng xià liáng wāi

Character To Character translation: upper-beam-not-straight-lower-beam-awry

Literal translation: When those in authority stray from righteousness, those below them will follow suit.

Free translation: A crooked stick will have a crooked shadow.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 高级领导干部必须以身作则，否则～。

Traditional Chinese: 高級領導幹部必須以身作則，否則～。

Pinyin: Gāojí lǐngdǎo gānbù bìxū yǐshēnzuòzé, fǒuzé ～。

English translation: Higher-level officials must set a good example. Otherwise, a crooked stick will have a crooked shadow.

Note:

118. 临下骄者，事上必谄

Traditional Character: 臨下驕者，事上必諂

Pinyin: lín xià jiāo zhě, shì shàng bì chǎn

Character To Character translation: to face-inferior-arrogant-person, to serve-superior-must-flatter

Literal translation: He who is arrogant toward his inferiors must fawn on his superiors.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不要看他对下属那么凶，见到上级跟狗似的，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你不要看他對下屬那麼兇，見到上級跟狗似的，～。

Pinyin: nǐ búyào kàn tā duì xiàshǔ nàme xiōng, jiàndào shàngjí gēn gǒu shìde, ～。

English translation: You shouldn't be confused about why he is merciless toward his inferiors.

When meeting his superiors, he is just like a dog. He who is arrogant toward his inferiors must fawn on his superiors.

Note:

119. 官大一级压死人

Traditional Character: 官大一級壓死人

Pinyin: guān dà yī jí yā sǐ rén

Character To Character translation: post-higher-one-level-crush-dead-people

Literal translation: Officials one rank superior crush the inferiors.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 市长在省长面前就跟小学生一样，真是～。

Traditional Chinese: 市長在省長面前就跟小學生一樣，真是～。

Pinyin: Shìzhǎng zài shěngzhǎng miànqián jiù gēn xiǎoxuéshēng yīyàng, zhēn shì ～。

English translation: The mayor behaves just like a pupil in front of the governor. Officials one rank superior crush the inferiors.

Note:

120. 官官相护

Traditional Character: 官官相護

Pinyin: guān guān xiāng hù

Character To Character translation: official-official-mutual-shield

Literal translation: All officials shield one another.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他们都是当官的，肯定会互相照顾，～，而不会站在老百姓的一方。

Traditional Chinese: 他們都是當官的，肯定會互相照顧，～，而不會站在老百姓的一方。

Pinyin: Tāmen dōu shì dāngguān de, kěndìng huì hùxiāng zhàogù, ～, ér búhuì zhàn zài lǎobǎixìng de yīfāng。

English translation: They are all government officials, and they must shield each other. All officials shield one another. They will never stand by the side of the ordinary people.

Note:

121. 三世为官，方知穿衣吃饭

Traditional Character: 三世爲官，方知穿衣吃飯

Pinyin: sān shì wéi guān, fāng zhī chuān yī chī fàn

Character To Character translation: three-generation-be-official, then-know-wear-clothes-dine (food)

Literal translation: One could know how to behave gracefully only after his last three generations had been government officials.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 官场有很多讲究，不是一下子就能够弄明白的。～。

Traditional Chinese: 官場有很多講究，不是一下子就能夠弄明白的。～。

Pinyin: Guānchǎng yǒu hěnduō jiǎngjiū, búshì yīxiàzi jiù nénggòu nòng míngbái de. ～。

English translation: There are many tacit rules in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. One can never understand them in a short while. Only after three generations of socialization does one know how to behave with the nuanced grace of the government officials.

Note:

122. 三年清知府，十万雪花银

Traditional Character: 三年清知府，十萬雪花銀

Pinyin: sān nián qīng zhī fǔ, shí wàn xuě huā yín

Character To Character translation: three-year-(being) uncorrupted-perfectural magistrate, ten-10,000-(snowflake) silver

Literal translation: Even an official of integrity could have taken bribes of 10,000 silver *liang* after a tenure of just three years. // Every government official tends to be corrupted.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 古代的官员再清廉，也会贪污一些。～。

Traditional Chinese: 古代的官員再清廉，也會貪汙一些。～。

Pinyin: Gǔdài de guānyuán zài qīnglián, yě huì tānwū yīxiē. ～。

English translation: Even the most uncorrupted ancient government official would take some bribes. Every government official tends to be corrupted.

Note:

123. 新官上任三把火

Traditional Character: 新官上任三把火

Pinyin: xīn guān shàng rèn sān bǎ huǒ

Character To Character translation: new-official-assume-office-three-MW-fire

Literal translation: New officials make drastic changes to an organization upon taking charge.

Free translation: A new broom sweeps clean.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他到了新的领导岗位，～，对原来的官员和作风做了很大的调整。

Traditional Chinese: 他到了新的領導崗位，～，對原來的官員和作風做了很大的調整。

Pinyin: Tā dào le xīn de lǐngdǎo gǎngwèi, ～, duì yuánlái de guānyuán hé zuòfēng zuò le hěndà de tiáozhěng.

English translation: He assumed the new post. A new broom sweeps clean. He made great changes to the officials and their work styles.

Note: This saying is extremely popular to describe a new leader's initial endeavors.

124. 事不关己，高高挂起

Traditional Character: 事不關己，高高挂起

Pinyin: shì bù guān jǐ, gāo gāo guà qǐ

Character To Character translation: thing-not-related to-oneself, (very) high-hang-up

Literal translation: If things are not directly relevant to one person, he will stand aside.

Free translation: Do not get involved with things that do not concern you.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 很多中国人认为多一事不如少一事，～。

Traditional Chinese: 很多中國人認為多一事不如少一事，～。

Pinyin: Hěnduō Zhōngguó rén rèn wéi duō yī shì bù rú shǎo yī shì, ～。

English translation: Many Chinese people think it is a good strategy to let a sleeping dog lie and to not get involved with things that do not concern you.

Note:

125. 朝里无人莫作官

Traditional Character: 朝裏無人莫作官

Pinyin: cháo lǐ wú rén mò zuò guān

Character To Character translation: imperial court-inside-no-backer-do not-be-official

Literal translation: It is better not to be an official if you do not have connections at court.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你还是当教授吧，不要去政府当官了。你上面没有人，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你還是當教授吧，不要去政府當官了。你上面沒有人，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ hái shì dāng jiàoshòu ba, búyào qù zhèngfǔ dāngguān le. Nǐ shàngmiàn méiyǒu rén, ～。

English translation: You'd better be a professor and not work in the government. It is better to not be an official if you do not have connections at the higher levels.

Note:

126. 大树底下好乘凉

Traditional Character: 大樹底下好乘涼

Pinyin: dà shù dǐ xià hǎo chéng liáng

Character To Character translation: large-tree-under-easy-get shade

Literal translation: Benefits accrue for those close to influential people.

Free translation: follow closely behind heavy-laden wagons

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 那么多官员都拼命地巴结他，因为他是一棵大树，～。

Traditional Chinese: 那麼多官員都拼命地巴結他，因為他是一棵大樹，～。

Pinyin: Nàme duō guānyuán dōu pīnmìng de bājiē tā, yīnwèi tā shì yī kē dà shù, ～。

English translation: So many officials strive to court him, because he is a top gun. It is beneficial to follow closely behind heavy-laden wagons.

Note:

127. 只敬衣衫不敬人

Traditional Character: 只敬衣衫不敬人

Pinyin: zhǐ jìng yī shān bú jìng rén

Character To Character translation: only-respect-(official) robe-not-respect-person

Literal translation: only respect the clothes the man wears and not the man himself

Free translation: judge people by their clothes, not their qualities // respect a person's power, not himself

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在中国的官场，人们只在乎你的位置和权力，而不在于你这个人，～。

Traditional Chinese: 在中國的官場，人們只在乎你的位置和權力，而不在于你這個人，～。

Pinyin: Zài Zhōngguó de guānchǎng, rénmen zhǐ zàihū nǐde wèizhì hé quánlì, ér bú zàihū nǐ zhègè rén, ～。

English translation: In Chinese political circles, people only care about and respect your position and power, not you.

Note: A variant of this saying is 只重衣衫不重人.

128. 山高皇帝远

Traditional Character: 山高皇帝遠

Pinyin: shān gāo huáng dì yuǎn

Character To Character translation: mountain-high-emperor-faraway

Literal translation: remote areas where laws and decrees are not strictly enforced; places beyond the reach of the government.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这个城市经济不发达，上级领导不重视，～，所以市长想做什么就做什么。

Traditional Chinese: 這個城市經濟不發達，上級領導不重視，～，所以市長想做什麼就做什么。

Pinyin: Zhègè chéngshì jīngjì bù fādá, shàngjí lǐngdǎo bú zhòngshì, ～, suǒyǐ shìzhǎng xiǎng zuò shénme jiù zuò shénme.

English translation: The economy of this city is not very developed, and the superiors do not pay much attention to it. It is a place beyond the reach of the government, and the mayor can do whatever he wants.

Note: A variant of this saying is 天高皇帝远.

129. 山中无老虎，猴子称大王

Traditional Character: 山中無老虎，猴子稱大王

Pinyin: shān zhōng wú lǎo hǔ, hóu zi chēng dà wáng

Character To Character translation: mountain-on-no-tiger, monkey-proclaim-king

Literal translation: When the top tier is not present, the second tier rules according to their whim.

Free translation: When the cat's away, the mice will play.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 大领导因病要疗养两个月，小领导们就开始牛起来了。～。

Traditional Chinese: 大領導因病要療養兩個月，小領導們就開始牛起來了。～

Pinyin: Dà lǐngdǎo yīn bìng yào liáoyǎng liǎng gè yuè, xiǎo lǐngdǎomen jiù kāishǐ niú qǐlái le. ～。

English translation: When the highest official rests and recuperates for two months, the lower officials become unstrung; when the cat's away, the mice will play.

Note:

130. 县官不如现管

Traditional Character: 縣官不如現管

Pinyin: xiàn guān bù rú xiàn guǎn

Character To Character translation: county magistrate-not-as good as-local-ruler

Literal translation: A county magistrate is not as powerful or useful as a person who is in charge of the place where the issue occurs.

Free translation: A county magistrate is better off being in charge.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 虽然国家有对外资的优惠政策，但是这位县长就是不执行，谁也没有办法，～。

Traditional Chinese: 雖然國家有對外資的優惠政策，但是這位縣長就是不執行，誰也沒有辦法，～。

Pinyin: Suīrán guójiā yǒu duì wàizī de yōuhuì zhèngcè, dànshì zhè wèi xiànzǎng jiùshì bù zhíxíng, shéi yě méiyǒu bànfǎ, ～。

English translation: Although the country has preferential policies toward foreign investment, that county mayor just does not make things happen and nobody can do anything about it. Whatever he says goes in that county.

Note:

131. 白屋出公卿

Traditional Character: 白屋出公卿

Pinyin: bái wū chū gōng qīng

Character To Character translation: plain-house-produce-high-ranking officials

Literal translation: Poor families produce high-ranking officials.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他的老家在农村，他高考后就去砖厂搬砖挣钱，被北京大学录取的消息

是在砖厂听别人告诉他的，真是～。

Traditional Chinese: 他的老家在農村，他高考後就去磚廠搬磚掙錢，被北京大學錄取的消息是在磚廠聽別人告訴他的，真是～。

Pinyin: Tāde lǎojiā zài nóngcūn, tā gāokǎo hòu jiù qù zhuānchǎng bānzhuan zhèngqián, bèi Běijīng Dàxué lùqǔ de xiāoxī shì zài zhuānchǎng tīng biérén gàosù tā de, zhēn shì ～。

English translation: His hometown is in the rural area. He went to work at a brick factory to earn some pocket money. It was at the brick factory via others that he heard the news that he was accepted into Peking University. Poor families produce high-ranking officials.

Note: The preceding part is 寒门生贵子, literally meaning ‘impoverished families can nurture promising sons’.

132. 只许州官放火，不许百姓点灯

Traditional Character: 只許州官放火，不許百姓點燈

Pinyin: zhǐ xǔ zhōu guān fàng huǒ, bù xǔ bǎi xìng diǎn dēng

Character To Character translation: only-allow-city-official-set-fire, not-allow-common people-lit-light

Literal translation: those in power may do as they desire while common people are restricted.

Free translation: One man may steal a horse while another may not look over a hedge.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 政府不许老百姓用苹果手机，而他们自己却坐奥迪、用苹果，～。

Traditional Chinese: 政府不許老百姓用蘋果手機，而他們自己卻坐奧迪、用蘋果，～。

Pinyin: Zhèngfǔ bùxǔ lǎobǎixìng yòng Píngguǒ shǒujī, ér tāmen zìjǐ què zuò Àodí, yòng Píngguǒ, ～。

English translation: The government does not allow the common people use iPhones, but they themselves drive Audi cars and use iPhones. One man may steal a horse while another may not look over a hedge.

Note:

133. 当官的不打送礼的

Traditional Character: 當官的不打送禮的

Pinyin: dāng guān de bù dǎ sòng lǐ de

Character To Character translation: officials-do not-beat-gift-giver

Literal translation: Officials never reject bribery or flattery.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你就放心去吧，领导不会批评你的。～。

Traditional Chinese: 你就放心去吧，領導不會批評你的。～。

Pinyin: Nǐ jiù fàngxīn qù ba, lǐngdǎo búhuì pīpíng nǐ de. ～。

English translation: You should feel assured to go. The leader won't be annoyed by you. Officials never reject bribery or flattery.

Note:

134. 文无第一，武无第二

Traditional Character: 文無第一，武無第二

Pinyin: wén wú dì yī, wǔ wú dì èr

Character To Character translation: literary-has no-first-place, martial arts-has no-second-place

Literal translation: Academics specializing in the humanities will never admit that their peers are better than them, but practitioners of martial arts or sciences will admit that others can be better than them.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 文科出身的人往往瞧不起同样是文科出身的人，因为他们根深蒂固的观念是～。

Traditional Chinese: 文科出身的人往往瞧不起同樣是文科出身的人，因為他們根深蒂固的觀念是～。

Pinyin: Wénkē chūshēn de rén wǎngwǎng qiáobùqǐ tóngyàng shì wénkē chūshēn de rén, yīnwèi tāmen gēnshēn dìgù de guānniàn shì 。

English translation: Academics specializing in humanities tend to look down upon those in their same field, because of their deep-rooted conviction are. Academics specializing in the humanities will never admit that their peers are better than them, but practitioners of martial arts or sciences will admit that others can be better than them.

Note:

135. 相逢尽道休官好，林下何曾见一人

Traditional Character: 相逢盡道休官好，林下何曾見一人

Pinyin: xiāng féng jìn dào xiū guān hǎo, lín xià hé céng jiàn yī rén

Character To Character translation: each other-met-all-say-leave-post-good, woods-inside-never-saw-one-person

Literal translation: When two officials meet, they both proclaim that it is great to retire soon, however, you can never find a person in the woods who enjoys his retirement.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你看他们当官的总是说想提前退休，可是都想再多干一届。～。

Traditional Chinese: 你看他們當官的總是說想提前退休，可是都想再多幹一屆。～。

Pinyin: Nǐ kàn tāmen dāngguānde zǒngshì shuō xiǎng tíqián tuìxiū, kěshì dōu xiǎng zài duō gān yī jiè。～。

English translation: Look at them! Those officials always say that they want to retire early, however, they really want to have one more term. They claim that it is great to retire soon, however, you can never find a person in the woods who enjoys his retirement.

Note:

136. 欲加之罪，何患无辞

Traditional Character: 欲加之罪，何患無辭

Pinyin: yù jiā zhī zuì, hé huàn wú cí

Character To Character translation: want-impose-a person-accusation, why-worry about-no-pretext

Literal translation: One can always trump up a charge against somebody.

Free translation: Give a dog a bad name, then hang him.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 上级领导想让哪个下级官员下台他就得下台，～，最简单的罪名就是贪腐。

Traditional Chinese: 上級領導想讓哪個下級官員下臺他就得下臺，～，最簡單的罪名就是貪腐。

Pinyin: Shàngjí língdǎo xiǎng ràng nǎgè xiàjí guānyuán xiàtái tā jiù děi xiàtái, ～, zuì jiǎndān de zuì míng jiù shì tānfǔ.

English translation: Superior officials can make inferior officials step down at their will. They can give a dog a bad name, then hang it. The easiest accusation is corruption and degeneration.

Note: This saying originated from the Southern Song Chancellor Qin Hui's persecution and the execution of national hero and marshall Yue Fei (岳飞) in 1141.

137. 成也萧何，败也萧何

Traditional Character: 成也蕭何，敗也蕭何

Pinyin: chéng yě Xiāo Hé, bài yě Xiāo Hé

Character To Character translation: succeeded-also-(because of) Xiao He, failed-also-(because of) Xiao He

Literal translation: One's successes and failures are both due to the same person.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他重用了某个智囊，在初期取得了巨大的成功，但是～，后来因为接受智囊的建议加大改革开放的步伐，却受到了严厉的批评。

Traditional Chinese: 他重用了某個智囊，在初期取得了巨大的成功，但是～，後來因為接受智囊的建議加大改革開放的步伐，卻受到了嚴厲的批評。

Pinyin: Tā zhòngyòng le mǒugè zhì'náng, zài chūqī qǔdé le jùdà de chénggōng, dànshì ～, hòulái yīnwèi jiēshòu zhì'náng de jiànyì jiādà gǎigé kāifàng de bùfǎ, què shòudào le yánlì de pīpíng.

English translation: He put a think tanker in an important position, and achieved great success at the beginning. However, his successes and failures are both due to the same person. Later he accepted his think tanker's suggestion to broaden the steps for reform and opening, but was criticized severely.

Note: Xiāo Hé (257 BC-193 BC) was a Chancellor and major advisor to the founding emperor, Emperor Gao of Han dynasty.

138. 王子犯法，与庶民同罪

Traditional Character: 王子犯法，與庶民同罪

Pinyin: wáng zǐ fàn fǎ, yǔ shù mín tóng zuì

Character To Character translation: prince-violate-the law, with-ordinary-people-equal-crime

Literal translation: A prince who breaks the law must be punished like an ordinary person.

Free translation: All are equal before the law.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他的爸爸是正部级干部他就可以免于刑事起诉吗？～。

Traditional Chinese: 他的爸爸是正部級幹部他就可以免於刑事起訴嗎？～。

Pinyin: Tāde bàba shì zhèng-bùjí gǎnbù tā jiù kěyǐ miǎnyú xíngshì qǐsù ma ? ～。

English translation: Can he be exempted from accusation just because his father is a provincial-level official? All are equal before the law.

Note:

139. 天大官司，磨大银子

Traditional Character: 天大官司，磨大銀子

Pinyin: tiān dà guān sī, mó dà yín zi

Character To Character translation: heaven-size-lawsuit, millstone-size-silver

Literal translation: Even the worst felony can be settled with bribery of a large enough sum.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 只要你有钱，什么事都能摆平。～。

Traditional Chinese: 只要你有錢，什麼事都能擺平。～。

Pinyin: Zhǐyào nǐ yǒuqián, shénme shì dōu néng bǎipíng. ～。

English translation: As long as you have money, even the worst felony can be settled.

Note:

140. 乱世用重典

Traditional Character: 亂世用重典

Pinyin: luàn shì yòng zhòng diǎn

Character To Character translation: troubled-times-use-severe-punishment

Literal translation: Severe punishment should be imposed in troubled times.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在这个特别的时期一定要加大惩罚的力度，～。

Traditional Chinese: 在這個特別的時期一定要加大懲罰的力度，～。

Pinyin: Zài zhègè tèbié de shíqī yīdìng yào jiādà chéngfá de lìdù, ～。

English translation: At this special time we must strengthen the punishment. Severe punishment should be imposed in troubled times.

Note:

Section 3: wars, heroes, diplomacy 战争、英雄、外交

141. 远交近攻

Traditional Character: 遠交近攻

Pinyin: yuǎn jiāo jìn gōng

Character To Character translation: distant-ally-nearby-attack

Literal translation: allying distant states while attacking nearby states

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 对于跟我国不接壤的国家我们要合作，跟我们接壤的国家要小心，这就

是～的策略。

Traditional Chinese: 對於跟我國不接壤的國家我們要合作，跟我們接壤的國家要小心，這就是～的策略。

Pinyin: Duìyú gēn wǒ guó bù jiērǎng de guójiā wǒmen yào hézuò, gēn wǒmen jiērǎng de guójiā yào xiǎoxīn, zhè jiùshì ~ de cèlüè.

English translation: To the countries not adjacent to us, we should ally them; for those which are adjacent, we should keep vigilant, and this is the strategy of allying distant states while attacking nearby states.

Note: In 266 BC, King Zhaoxiang of Qin appointed Fan Ju (范雎) as the Chancellor and adopted Fan Ju's strategy of 'allying distant states while attacking nearby states' (远交近攻) which made Qin eventually united China in 221 BC.

142. 春秋无义战

Traditional Character: 春秋無義戰

Pinyin: Chūnqiū wú yì zhàn

Character To Character translation: the Spring and Autumn-has no-just-war

Literal translation: During the Spring and Autumn Period there were no righteous wars.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 春秋亡国五十二，可是沒有一场战争是正义的，～。

Traditional Chinese: 春秋亡國五十二，可是沒有一場戰爭是正義的，～。

Pinyin: Chūnqiū wángguó wǔshí'èr, kěshì méiyǒu yī chǎng zhànzhēng shì zhèngyì de, ~。

English translation: Fifty-two states perished during the Spring and Autumn Period, but none of the wars were righteous. There were no righteous wars during the Spring and Autumn Period.

Note: This quotation is from *Mencius*.

143. 枪杆子里面出政权

Traditional Character: 槍杆子裏面出政權

Pinyin: qiāng gǎn zi lǐ miàn chū zhèng quán

Character To Character translation: gun-barrel-itself-produce-political power

Literal translation: Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 独裁者都严密掌控军队，因为他们相信～。

Traditional Chinese: 獨裁者都嚴密掌控軍隊，因為他們相信～。

Pinyin: Dúcaizhě dōu yánmì zhǎngkòng jūnduì, yīnwèi tāmen xiāngxìn ~。

English translation: All dictators control the army firmly, because they believe that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.

Note: This saying was coined by Mao Zedong in 1927.

144. 擒贼先擒王

Traditional Character: 擒賊先擒王

Pinyin: qín zéi xiān qín wáng

Character To Character translation: catch-brigand-first-catch-(their) chief

Literal translation: to catch brigands, first catch their leader

Free translation: If you want to round up the gangs, you must get their leader first.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这是一个犯罪集团，对下面的成员我们先不要动，免得打草惊蛇，一定要先抓他们的头领，～。

Traditional Chinese: 這是一個犯罪集團，對下面的成員我們先不要動，免得打草驚蛇，一定要先抓他們的頭領，～。

Pinyin: Zhè shì yīgè fànzuì jítuán, duì xiàmiàn de chéngyuán wǒmen xiān búyào dòng, miǎnde dǎcǎo jīngshé, yīdìng yào xiān zhuā tāmen de tóulǐng, ～。

English translation: They are a group of gangsters. We should avoid catching the lower-level gangsters at first so as not to beat the grass and frighten away the snake. We must first catch their leader. If you want to round up the gangs, you must get the leader first.

Note:

145. 乱世出英雄

Traditional Character: 亂世出英雄

Pinyin: luàn shì chū yīng xióng

Character To Character translation: troubled-times-bring forth-heroes

Literal translation: An age of unrest brings forth heroes.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 世道越乱越会出现杰出的人物，～。

Traditional Chinese: 世道越亂越會出現傑出的人物，～。

Pinyin: Shìdào yuè luàn yuè huì chūxiàn jiéchū de rénwù, ～。

English translation: The more chaotic the time is, the more likely that heroes will appear. An age of unrest brings forth heroes.

Note:

146. 时势造英雄

Traditional Character: 時勢造英雄

Pinyin: shí shì zào yīng xióng

Character To Character translation: times-trend-produce-heroes

Literal translation: Times produce their heroes.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他赶上了好时代，那时出国留学的人很少回国，而他回国了，被国家树立为典型，成了风云人物，～，而并不是他个人能力有多强。

Traditional Chinese: 他趕上了好時代，那時出國留學的人很少回國，而他回國了，被國家樹立為典型，成了風雲人物，～，而並不是他個人能力有多強。

Pinyin: Tā gǎnshàng le hǎo shídài, nàshí chūguó liúxué de rén hěnnǎo huíguó, ér tā huíguó le,

bèi guójiā shùlì wéi diǎnxíng, chéngle fēngyún rénwù, ～, ér bìng búshì tā gèrén nénglì yǒu duō qiáng。

English translation: He was lucky to live during a time when few study-abroad students returned to their country, but he did. So he became an example and a hero of his time. Times produce their heroes. It was due to the timing, not his innate capacity or skill.

Note:

147. 自古英雄出少年

Traditional Character: 自古英雄出少年

Pinyin: zì gǔ yīng xióng chū shǎo nián

Character To Character translation: from-antiquity-heroes-grow out of-youngsters

Literal translation: Heroes are born young.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这个高中生有思想，有勇气，很了不起，～。

Traditional Chinese: 這個高中生有思想，有勇氣，很了不起，～。

Pinyin: Zhègè gāozhōngshēng yǒu sīxiǎng, yǒu yǒngqì, hěn liǎobùqǐ, ～。

English translation: This high school student has his own ideas and courage. He is great. Heroes are born young.

Note:

148. 英雄不问出处

Traditional Character: 英雄不問出處

Pinyin: yīng xióng bú wèn chū chù

Character To Character translation: heroes-not-be asked-(family) background

Literal translation: Any background can produce heroes.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 不要在意他以前是做什么的，只要现在有能力我们就重用，～。

Traditional Chinese: 不要在意他以前是做什麼的，只要現在有能力我們就重用，～

Pinyin: Búyào zàiyì tā yǐqián shì zuò shénme de, zhǐyào xiànzài yǒu nénglì wǒmen jiù zhòngyòng, ～。

English translation: Don't worry about his professional background. As long as he is capable, we will put him in an important position. Any background can produce heroes.

Note:

149. 识时务者为俊杰

Traditional Character: 識時務者為俊傑

Pinyin: shí shí wù zhě wéi jùn jié

Character To Character translation: understand-current-situation-person-is-smart-person

Literal translation: He who understands the times is a wise man.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你要好好想想到底要跟我们对抗还是合作，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你要好好想想到底要跟我們對抗還是合作，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ yào hǎohǎo xiǎngxiǎng dàodǐ yào gēn wǒmen duìkàng háishì hézuò, ～。

English translation: You need to think about whether to oppose or cooperate with us. He who understands the times is a wise man.

Note:

150. 豹死留皮，人死留名

Traditional Character: 豹死留皮，人死留名

Pinyin: bào sǐ liú pí, rén sǐ liú míng

Character To Character translation: leopard-die-leave-skin and fur, people-die-leave-reputation

Literal translation: A leopard's skin outlives the body, and a man's reputation outlives his time on Earth.

Free translation: Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国人非常在意死后的名声，～。

Traditional Chinese: 中國人非常在意死後的名聲，～。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó rén fēicháng zàiyì sǐhòu de míngshēng, ～。

English translation: The Chinese people care much about their reputation after death. They believe that a man will be finally judged by the reputation that succeeds him when he is no longer living.

Note:

151. 人过留名，雁过留声

Traditional Character: 人過留名，雁過留聲

Pinyin: rén guò liú míng, yàn guò liú shēng

Character To Character translation: people-pass-leave-reputation, wild goose-pass-leave-calls

Literal translation: A man leaves behind his reputation, and a wild goose leaves behind her calls.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 财富、地位都是过眼烟云，最重要的是名声，～。

Traditional Chinese: 財富、地位都是過眼煙雲，最重要的是名聲，～。

Pinyin: Cáifù、dìwèi dōu shì guòyǎn yānyún, zuì zhòngyào de shì míngshēng, ～。

English translation: Fortune and rank are just passing clouds. The most important thing is one's reputation. A true man leaves behind his reputation.

Note:

152. 千里马常有，而伯乐不常有

Traditional Character: 千裏馬常有，而伯樂不常有

Pinyin: qiān lǐ mǎ cháng yǒu, ér Bólè bù cháng yǒu

Character To Character translation: 1000-mile-horse-often-have, but- Bo Le-not-often-have

Literal translation: Talent is everywhere, however, hardly can it be recognized.

Free translation: Pearls are everywhere but the people who can spot them are not easily found.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 人才很多，但是能够脱颖而出的很少，因为能发现人才的人不多。～。

Traditional Chinese: 人才很多，但是能夠脫穎而出的很少，因為能發現人才的人不多。～。

Pinyin: Réncái hěnduō, dànshì nénggòu tuōyǐng érchū de hěnshǎo, yīnwèi néng fāxiàn réncái de rén bùduō。～。

English translation: Talent is everywhere, but those who have it don't always stand out. This is because the people who can recognize talented people are rare. Pearls are everywhere but the people who can spot them are not easily found.

Note: This quotation is from the Tang scholar-official Han Yu's fable 马说 (*On Horse*). Bo Le, the Chinese horse connoisseur, is a quintessential good judge of talent.

153. 养兵千日，用兵一时

Traditional Character: 養兵千日，用兵一時

Pinyin: yǎng bīng qiān rì, yòng bīng yī shí

Character To Character translation: keep-an army-1,000-days, use-the army-one-time

Literal translation: maintain an army for one thousand days to use it at the moment of need

Free translation: Soldiers are trained for use in times of crisis. // Extensive preparation will pay off one day.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这几天是我们这个项目最关键的几天，～，关键时刻绝对不能出差错。

Traditional Chinese: 這幾天是我們這個項目最關鍵的幾天，～，關鍵時刻絕對不能出差錯。

Pinyin: Zhè jǐ tiān shì wǒmen zhègè xiàngmù zuì guānjiàn de jǐ tiān, ～, guānjiàn shíkè juéduì bùnéng chū chācuò。

English translation: These few days are crucial to our project. Extensive preparation will pay off now. We cannot make any mistakes at this critical moment.

Note:

154. 弄刀者刀下死，弄剑者剑下亡

Traditional Character: 弄刀者刀下死，弄劍者劍下亡

Pinyin: nòng dāo zhě dāo xià sǐ, nòng jiàn zhě jiàn xià wáng

Character To Character translation: play-knife-person-by-knife-die, play-sword-person-by-sword-die

Literal translation: He who makes a knife dies by the knife, and he who makes a sword dies by the sword.

Free translation: For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (*Matthew 26:52*)

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他通过炒股起家，可是最后倾家荡产也是因为炒股，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他通過炒股起家，可是最後傾家蕩產也是因為炒股，～。

Pinyin: Tā tōngguò chǎogǔ qǐjiā, kěshì zuìhòu qīngjiā dàngchǎn yě shì yīnwèi chǎogǔ, ～。

English translation: He made a fortune by betting on stocks, but also lost a family fortune because of it. For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Note:

155. 非我族类，其心必异

Traditional Character: 非我族類，其心必異

Pinyin: fēi wǒ zú lèi, qí xīn bì yì

Character To Character translation: not-my-race, its-heart-must be-different

Literal translation: Those who are not our kin are sure to be of a different heart.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这些老外，打着帮助我们的名目，一定别有用心。～。

Traditional Chinese: 這些老外，打著幫助我們的名目，一定別有用心。～。

Pinyin: Zhèxiē lǎowài, dǎzhe bāngzhù wǒmen de míngmù, yīdìng biéyǒu yòngxīn. ～。

English translation: Although these foreigners come in the name of helping us, surely they must have ulterior motives. Those who are not our kin are sure to be of a different heart.

Note:

156. 弱国无外交

Traditional Character: 弱國無外交

Pinyin: ruò guó wú wài jiāo

Character To Character translation: weak-country-has no-diplomacy

Literal translation: Weak nations have no preferential diplomacy.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 那些经济体较小的国家在国际舞台上很难发声，～。

Traditional Chinese: 那些經濟體較小的國家在國際舞臺上很難發聲，～。

Pinyin: Nàxiē jīngjìtǐ jiàoxiǎo de guójiā zài guójì wǔtái shàng hěnnán fāshēng, ～。

English translation: Those nations with a relatively small economy are hard to make their voices heard on the international stage. Weak nations have no preferential diplomacy.

Note:

Section 4: common people, classes, customs 平民、政党、习俗

157. 劳心者治人，劳力者治于人

Traditional Character: 勞心者治人，勞力者治于人

Pinyin: láo xīn zhě zhì rén, láo lì zhě zhì yú rén

Character To Character translation: toil-mind-people-rule-others, toil-labor-people-ruled-by-others

Literal translation: Those who work with their brains govern and those who work with their muscles are governed.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 老百姓没有文化，没有思想，天生就是被统治的对象。～。

Traditional Chinese: 老百姓沒有文化，沒有思想，天生就是被統治的對象。～。

Pinyin: Lǎobǎixìng méiyǒu wénhuà, méiyǒu sīxiǎng, tiānshēng jiùshì bèi tǒngzhì de duìxiàng. ～。

English translation: Common folks do not have knowledge or thought. They are born to be ruled. Those who work with their brains govern and those who work with their muscles are governed.

Note: This saying is from *Mencius*.

158. 当官不为民作主，不如回家卖红薯

Traditional Character: 當官不為民作主，不如回家賣紅薯

Pinyin: dāng guān bú wèi mín zuò zhǔ, bù rú huí jiā mài hóng shǔ

Character To Character translation: be-official-not-for-the masses-back up, not-as good as-go-home-sell-sweet potato

Literal translation: It is better to go home and sell sweet potatoes if officials do not make decisions for the people.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 政府官员要为老百姓服务，～。

Traditional Chinese: 政府官員要為老百姓服務，～。

Pinyin: Zhèngfǔ guānyuán yào wèi lǎobǎixìng fúwù, ～。

English translation: Government officials should serve the people. It is better to go home and sell sweet potatoes if officials do not make decisions for the people.

Note:

159. 铁打的衙门流水的官

Traditional Character: 鐵打的衙門流水的官

Pinyin: tiě dǎ de yá mén liú shuǐ de guān

Character To Character translation: steel-made-feudal court-running water-officials

Literal translation: Imperial courts were as sturdy as made of iron, but the officials replaced as fast as water.

Free translation: Government officials come and go.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你在这个位置上不会永远坐下去，肯定会离开，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你在這個位置上不會永遠坐下去，肯定會離開，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ zài zhègè wèizhì shàng búhuì yǒngyuǎn zuò xiàqù, kěndìng huì líkāi, ～。

English translation: You cannot stay at this post forever, and will leave for sure. Government officials come and go.

Note:

160. 打狗也要看主人

Traditional Character: 打狗也要看主人

Pinyin: dǎ gǒu yě yào kàn zhǔ rén

Character To Character translation: beat-dog-also-need to-see-master

Literal translation: When one beats a dog, one must answer to its master.

Free translation: Every action has consequences. // Think about the consequences of your actions.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他虽然没有正式的职位，但是也不能慢待他，他的亲戚可是一个大人物，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他雖然沒有正式的職位，但是也不能慢待他，他的親戚可是一個大人
物，～。

Pinyin: Tā suīrán méiyǒu zhèngshì de zhíwèi, dànshì yě bùnéng màndài tā, tāde qīnqī kě shì
yīgè dàrénwù, ～。

English translation: Although he has no formal position, we cannot slight him since his relative is
a top gun. When one beats a dog, he must answer to its master.

Note:

161. 有多大的主子，就有多大的奴才

Traditional Character: 有多大的主子，就有多大的奴才

Pinyin: yǒu duō dà de zhǔ zi, jiù yǒu duō dà de nú cai

Character To Character translation: have-how-powerful-master, then-have-how-daring-minion

Literal translation: A lackey will be as fierce as his master.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 市长的秘书看起来多牛啊！～。

Traditional Chinese: 市長的秘書看起來多牛啊！～。

Pinyin: Shìzhǎng de mì hū kànqǐlái duō niú a! ～。

English translation: Look! How arrogant the secretary of the city mayor is! A lackey will be as
fierce as his master.

Note:

162. 民不舉，官不究

Traditional Character: 民不舉，官不究

Pinyin: mín bù jǔ, guān bù jiū

Character To Character translation: the masses-do not-report, government-do not-investigate

Literal translation: If people do not report a violation of laws, the government will not bother to
investigate.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事只要老百姓不反对，政府根本不想管。～。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事只要老百姓不反對，政府根本不想管。～。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì zhǐyào lǎobǎixìng bù fǎnduì, zhèngfǔ gēnběn bù xiǎng guǎn. ～。

English translation: As long as the ordinary people do not report this matter, the government will
surely not be interested in investigating at all.

Note:

163. 光脚的不怕穿鞋的

Traditional Character: 光腳的不怕穿鞋的

Pinyin: guāng jiǎo de bú pà chuān xié de

Character To Character translation: bare-foot-people-do not-fear-wear-shoe-people

Literal translation: Those with nothing do not fear those with power.

Free translation: He who is down need fear no fall.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我就是个老百姓，跟政府打官司就是输了还能怎么样？～。

Traditional Chinese: 我就是个老百姓，跟政府打官司就是输了还能怎么样？～。

Pinyin: Wǒ jiùshì yīgè lǎobǎixìng, gēn zhèngfǔ dǎ guānsī jiùshì shūle hái néng zěnmeyàng? ～。

English translation: I am just an ordinary person. What could be worse than losing a lawsuit with the government? He who is down need fear no fall.

Note:

164. 人多力量大

Traditional Character: 人多力量大

Pinyin: rén duō lì liàng dà

Character To Character translation: people-many-strength-great

Literal translation: The more people, the more strength.

Free translation: There is strength in numbers.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 咱们～，最后一定会赢。

Traditional Chinese: 咱們～，最後一定會贏。

Pinyin: Zánmen , zuìhòu yīdìng huì yíng.

English translation: There is strength in numbers. We will definitely prevail in the end.

Note:

165. 君子群而不党，小人党而不群

Traditional Character: 君子群而不黨，小人黨而不群

Pinyin: jūn zǐ qún ér bù dǎng, xiǎo rén dǎng ér bù qún

Character To Character translation: gentlemen-socialize-but-not-partisan, mean-men-partisan-but-not-(sincerely) socialize

Literal translation: True gentlemen are sociable, not political. The mean people are political and not sociable.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他们几个就会勾结起来干坏事，但是内心也不团结，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他們幾個就會勾結起來幹壞事，但是內心也不團結，～。

Pinyin: Tāmen jǐgè jiù huì gōujié qílái gàn huàishì, dànshì nèixīn yě bù tuánjié, ～。

English translation: They are only good at ganging up and doing evil, and cannot lay their hearts bare. True gentlemen are sociable, not partisans. The mean people are partisans and not sociable.

Note:

166. 党同伐异

Traditional Character: 黨同伐異

Pinyin: dǎng tóng fá yì

Character To Character translation: party-same-attack-others

Literal translation: stick together with one's own faction members and attack those who belong to other factions.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 保守派的政治家出了丑闻，自由派的对手一起攻击他，～。

Traditional Chinese: 保守派的政治家出了醜聞，自由派的對手一起攻擊他，～。

Pinyin: Bǎoshǒupài de zhèngzhìjiā chūle chǒuwén, zìyóupài de duìshǒu yìqǐ gōngjī tā, ～。

English translation: A conservative politician had a scandal, and liberal politicians attacked him together. Members of the same fraction attack those who belong to other fractions.

Note:

167. 入境而问禁，入国而问俗，入门而问讳

Traditional Character: 入境而問禁，入國而問俗，入門而問諱

Pinyin: rù jìng ér wèn jìn, rù guó ér wèn sú, rù mén ér wèn huì

Character To Character translation: enter-territory-and-ask-ban, enter-country-and-ask-custom, enter-gate-and-ask-taboo

Literal translation: When entering a territory, ask about the ban; when entering a country, ask about the customs; when entering a home, ask about the taboo.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 应该尊重不同国家、不同地区人民的风俗习惯，～。

Traditional Chinese: 應該尊重不同國家、不同地區人民的風俗習慣，～。

Pinyin: Yīnggāi zūnzhòng bùtóng guójiā, bùtóng dìqū rénmin de fēngsú xíguàn, ～。

English translation: We should respect the customs of different countries and areas. When entering a territory, ask about the ban; when entering a country, ask about the customs; when entering a home, ask about the taboo.

Note:

168. 墙倒众人推

Traditional Character: 牆倒衆人推

Pinyin: qiáng dǎo zhòng rén tuī

Character To Character translation: wall-fallen-crowd-push

Literal translation: When a wall is about to collapse, everyone gives it a push.

Free translation: Everyone kicks a man who is down.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在他倒台了，以前的同事们纷纷揭露他工作上的问题，～。

Traditional Chinese: 現在他倒臺了，以前的同事們紛紛揭露他工作上的問題，～。

Pinyin: Xiànzài tā dǎotái le, yǐqián de tóngshì men fēnfēn jiēlù tā gōngzuò shàng de wèntí, ～。

English translation: Once he fell from power, his former colleagues, one after another, disclosed his wrongdoings at work. Everyone kicks a man who is down.

Note:

169. 群众的眼睛是雪亮的

Traditional Character: 群眾的眼睛是雪亮的

Pinyin: qún zhòng de yǎn jīng shì xuě liàng de

Character To Character translation: the masses-'s-eyes-are-bright as snow

Literal translation: The eyes of the masses are sharp.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我们对自己的任何一件小事都要小心谨慎，不能犯错误，因为～。

Traditional Chinese: 我們對自己的任何一件小事都要小心謹慎，不能犯錯誤，因為～。

Pinyin: Wǒmen duì zìjǐ de rènhé yī jiàn xiǎoshì dōuyào xiǎoxīn jǐnshèn, bùnéng fàn cuòwù, yīnwèi～。

English translation: We should be careful and cautious about any small things and not make mistakes, because the eyes of the masses are sharp.

Note: This saying was probably originated in the era of Mao Zedong.

170. 大丈夫能屈能伸

Traditional Character: 大丈夫能屈能伸

Pinyin: dà zhàng fū néng qū néng shēn

Character To Character translation: great-man-can-bow-can-stand

Literal translation: A great man knows when to yield and when not to.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事你就忍一忍吧，要算账也要等以后，～。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事你就忍一忍吧，要算賬也要等以後，～。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì nǐ jiù rěn yī rěn ba, yào suànzhang yě yào děng yǐhòu, ～。

English translation: You'd better bear with it for the moment and get even in the future. A great man knows when to yield and when not to.

Note:

171. 富贵不还乡，如衣锦夜行

Traditional Character: 富貴不還鄉，如衣錦夜行

Pinyin: fù guì bù huán xiāng, rú yī jǐn yè xíng

Character To Character translation: (if) rich and honored-not-return-hometown, like-wear-magnificent clothes-night-walk

Literal translation: Becoming rich and honored but never returning to your hometown is like only wearing magnificent clothes at night.

Free translation: glory unknown to others

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国古代人当官以后都要敲锣打鼓地回老家炫耀，～。

Traditional Chinese: 中國古代人當官以後都要敲鑼打鼓地回老家炫耀，～。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó gǔdàirén dāngguān yǐhòu dōu yào qiāoluó dǎgǔ de huí lǎojiā xuànyào, ～。

English translation: Chinese people in ancient times would return to their hometowns in a high

profile, beating drums and gongs, to show off. Otherwise the glory would be unknown to others.

Note: This quotation is by Xiang Yu (232-202 BC), a mighty general and a major competitor for the throne after the Qin dynasty with Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han dynasty.

172. 量小非君子，无毒不丈夫

Traditional Character: 量小非君子，無毒不丈夫

Pinyin: liàng xiǎo fēi jūn zǐ, wú dú bú zhàng fū

Character To Character translation: tolerance-little-not-gentleman, not-vicious-not-a manly man

Literal translation: As an intolerant man makes no gentleman, a real man lacks no venom.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 既然你决定要做对不起你的朋友的事了，那就狠心做，～。

Traditional Chinese: 既然你決定要做對不起你的朋友的事了，那就狠心做，～。

Pinyin: Jìrán nǐ juéding yào zuò duìbùqǐ nǐde péng you de shì le, nà jiù hěnxīn zuò, ～。

English translation: Since you made up your mind to wrong your friend, do it without any hesitation. As an intolerant man makes no gentleman, a real man lacks no venom.

Note:

Part 5: democracy, revolutions, political thoughts 民主、革命、政治思想

173. 公道自在人心

Traditional Character: 公道自在人心

Pinyin: gōng dào zì zài rén xīn

Character To Character translation: justice-surely-in-people's-heart

Literal translation: The masses know clearly about the merits of the matter.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 若干年后，这件事一定有一个公正的说的，～。

Traditional Chinese: 若干年後，這件事一定有一個公正的說法的，～。

Pinyin: Ruògān nián hòu, zhè jiàn shì yīdìng yǒu yīgè gōngzhèng de shuōfǎ de, ～。

English translation: The essence of this matter will get a fair judgement many years from now. The masses know clearly about the merits of the matter.

Note:

174. 民为贵，社稷次之，君为轻

Traditional Character: 民為貴，社稷次之，君為輕

Pinyin: mín wéi guì, shè jī cì zhī, jūn wéi qīng

Character To Character translation: the people-be-first, the state-second-it, monarch-be-least

Literal translation: To a state, the people are the most important, the state second, and the monarch is the least important.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 老百姓应该是国家的主人，而不是皇帝。～。

Traditional Chinese: 老百姓應該是國家的主人，而不是皇帝。～。

Pinyin: Lǎobǎixìng yīnggāi shì guójiā de zhǔrén, ér búshì huángdì. ～。

English translation: The people should be the owner of the nation, not the emperor. To a state, the people are the most important, the state the second, and the monarch is the least important.

Note: This brilliant idea was from Mencius but was impossible to be valued in imperial China.

175. 修身、齐家、治国、平天下

Traditional Character: 修身、齊家、治國、平天下

Pinyin: xiū shēn, qí jiā, zhì guó, píng tiān xià

Character To Character translation: cultivate-oneself, bring order to-family, rule-country, bring peace to-the world

Literal translation: to improve oneself, to manage the family, to govern the state, to bring peace to the world

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 儒家的理想就是～。

Traditional Chinese: 儒家的理想就是～。

Pinyin: Rújiā de lǐxiǎng jiùshì ～。

English translation: Confucian ideals are to improve oneself, to manage the family, to govern the state, and to bring peace to the world.

Note: These were ideals for Confucian scholars in ancient China.

176. 内圣外王

Traditional Character: 內聖外王

Pinyin: nèi shèng wài wáng

Character To Character translation: inside-sage-outside-kingdom

Literal translation: sageliness within and kingliness without

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 儒家希望最高统治者能够做到～。

Traditional Chinese: 儒家希望最高統治者能夠做到～。

Pinyin: Rújiā xīwàng zuìgāo tǒngzhìzhě nénggòu zuòdào ～。

English translation: Confucians hope that the highest leader can be sageliness within and kingliness without.

Note: The word was from Zhuangzi but the idea was borrowed into Confucianism. The 王 should be pronounced as wàng, not wáng according to similar language phenomena.

177. 以孝治天下

Traditional Character: 以孝治天下

Pinyin: yǐ xiào zhì tiān xià

Character To Character translation: by-filial piety-rule-the world

Literal translation: govern the world with the value of filial piety

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 古代中国很多朝代都说要~, 可是那些朝代的皇帝对家人和老百姓也没怎么好。

Traditional Chinese: 古代中國很多朝代都說要~, 可是那些朝代的皇帝對家人和老百姓也沒怎麼好。

Pinyin: Gǔdài Zhōngguó hěnduō cháodài dōu shuō yào ~, kěshì nàxiē cháodài de huángdì duì jiārén hé lǎobǎixìng yě méi zěnmě hǎo.

English translation: Many Chinese dynasties said to govern the world with the value of filial piety, but the emperors of those dynasties were not really kind to their families and the ordinary people.

Note: The Han and Ming dynasties proclaimed they would rule the country with this rule.

178. 王侯将相, 宁有种乎

Traditional Character: 王侯將相, 甯有種乎

Pinyin: wáng hóu jiāng xiàng, nìng yǒu zhǒng hū

Character To Character translation: king-duke-general-minister, rather-have-breed-?

Literal translation: Is anyone born to be a king, a duke, a general or a minister?

Free translation: Is someone destined to be noble?

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 那些当官的天生都应该当官吗? ~?

Traditional Chinese: 那些當官的天生都應該當官嗎? ~?

Pinyin: Nàxiē dāngguānde tiānshēng dōu yīnggāi dāngguān ma? ~?

English translation: Were those officials born to be officials? Can someone be destined to be noble?

Note: This quotation was from Chen Sheng (d. 208 BC), a peasant leader who rebelled against the Qin dynasty.

179. 皇帝轮流做, 明年到我家

Traditional Character: 皇帝輪流做, 明年到我家

Pinyin: huáng dì lún liú zuò, míng nián dào wǒ jiā

Character To Character translation: emperor-take-turn-be, next-year-to-my-home

Literal translation: One must wait his turn to be emperor, and next year its my turn.

Free translation: Every dog has its day.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 谁说我以后当不了高官, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 誰說我以後當不了高官, ~。

Pinyin: Shéi shuō wǒ yǐhòu dāng bù liǎo gāoguān, ~。

English translation: Who says that I cannot become a senior official? Every dog has its day.

Note: This saying was definitely to ask for extermination of the speaker's family and much more beyond in imperial China. Luckily it was said by the Monkey King in the *Journey to the West*.

180. 合久必分，分久必合

Traditional Character: 合久必分，分久必合

Pinyin: hé jiǔ bì fēn, fēn jiǔ bì hé

Character To Character translation: united-long enough-must-divide, divided-long enough-must-unite

Literal translation: The state that has long been united must divide, and must unite after a long period of division.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 世界上很多民族和国家总是～，比方说欧洲。

Traditional Chinese: 世界上很多民族和國家總是～，比方說歐洲。

Pinyin: Shìjiè shàng hěnduō mínzú hé guójiā zǒngshì, bǐfāngshuō Ōuzhōu。

English translation: The world's many nations and countries constantly unite and divide, such as Europe.

Note: This saying is from the famous historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in late 1300s.

181. 马上得之，不能马上治之

Traditional Character: 馬上得之，不能馬上治之

Pinyin: mǎ shàng dé zhī, bù néng mǎ shàng zhì zhī

Character To Character translation: horse-back-got-it, cannot-horse-back-govern-it

Literal translation: You can use military force to capture the power, but you cannot use force to rule the country.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 夺取政权靠武力，但是不能继续靠武力治理国家，～。

Traditional Chinese: 奪取政權靠武力，但是不能繼續靠武力治理國家，～。

Pinyin: Duóqǔ zhèngquán kào wǔlì, dànshì bùnéng jìxù kào wǔlì zhìlǐ guójiā, ～。

English translation: You can come to power by force, but you cannot rule the country with force. The rule of force is not always effective.

Note:

182. 半部论语治天下

Traditional Character: 半部論語治天下

Pinyin: bàn bù Lūnyǔ zhì tiān xià

Character To Character translation: half-volume-*Analects*-govern-the world

Literal translation: With just half of the *Analects*, one can rule the whole world.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 《论语》思想博大精深，～。

Traditional Chinese: 《論語》思想博大精深，～。

Pinyin: 《Lūnyǔ》sīxiǎng bó dà jīngshēn, ～。

English translation: The thoughts in the *Analects* are broad and deep. One who can master half of the *Analects* can master the whole world.

Note: It was said by Zhao Pu (922-992), a chief chancellor of early Song dynasty.

183. 水能載舟，亦能覆舟

Traditional Character: 水能載舟，亦能覆舟

Pinyin: shuǐ néng zǎi zhōu, yì néng fù zhōu

Character To Character translation: water-can-a float-boat, also-can-sink-boat

Literal translation: The people can support a regime or overturn it.

Free translation: Things can be double-edged.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 一个老百姓的影响力可能很小，但是所有老百姓加在一起影响力就大了，他们能够决定一个国家的兴亡。～。

Traditional Chinese: 一個老百姓的影響力可能很小，但是所有老百姓加在一起影響力就大了，他們能夠決定一個國家的興亡。～。

Pinyin: Yīgè lǎobǎixìng de yǐngxiǎng lì kěnéng hěnxǎo, dànshì suǒyǒu lǎobǎixìng jiā zài yìqǐ yǐngxiǎng lì jiù dà le, tāmen nénggòu juéding yīgè guójiā de xīngwáng. ～。

English translation: One common person has little influence, but when united as one, the common folk together have tremendous influence. They can determine the fate of their country. The people can support a regime or overturn it.

Note: This was from *Xunzi* but is commonly associated with Emperor Taizong of Tang and his chancellor Wei Zheng.

184. 順我者昌，逆我者亡

Traditional Character: 順我者昌，逆我者亡

Pinyin: shùn wǒ zhě chāng, nì wǒ zhě wáng

Character To Character translation: submit-me-person-prosper, resist-me-person-perish

Literal translation: Those who obey me will prosper and those do not will perish.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他是一个强势人物，别人都是顺他者昌，逆他者亡。

Traditional Chinese: 他是一個強勢人物，別人都是順他者昌，逆他者亡。

Pinyin: Tā shì yīgè qiángshì rénwù, biérén dōushì shùn tā zhě chāng, nì tā zhě wáng.

English translation: He is very dominating. Those who obey him will prosper and those who do not will perish.

Note: (1) 昌 and 亡 rhyme and thus make this phrase more catchy. (2) If describing somebody other than the speaker, the 我 in this saying should be changed to 他 or 你 accordingly.

185. 屁股决定脑袋

Traditional Character: 屁股決定腦袋

Pinyin: pìgu juéding nǎodai

Character To Character translation: ass-determine-head

Literal translation: Where one stands depends on where one sits. // One's factional standing determines his behavior.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他为什么会那么说话? 很简单, ~。他所在的位置决定了他的立场。

Traditional Chinese: 他為什麼會那麼說話? 很簡單, ~。他所在的位置決定了他的立場。

Pinyin: Tā wèishénme huì nàme shuōhuà? Hěn jiǎndān, ~。Tā suǒzài de wèizhì juéding le tāde lìchǎng。

English translation: Why would he speak that way? It's simple. Where one stands depends on where one sits.

Note: A newer and similar expression is 用脚投票 (yòng jiǎo tóupiào), which literally means 'to vote with the direction of one's footsteps.' The English expression is 'to vote with one's feet.'

186. 存天理, 灭人欲

Traditional Character: 存天理, 滅人欲

Pinyin: cún tiān lǐ, miè rén yù

Character To Character translation: preserve-heavenly-law, exterminate-human-desire

Literal translation: preserve Heaven's laws and eliminate human desires

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 儒家思想在南宋以前还算有些人情味儿, 可是到了南宋提出~的观点后, 就变得完全没有人情味儿了。

Traditional Chinese: 儒家思想在南宋以前還算有些人情味兒, 可是到了南宋提出~的觀點後, 就變得完全沒有人情味兒了。

Pinyin: Rújiā sīxiǎng zài Nán Song yǐqián hái suàn yǒuxiē rénqíngwèir, kěshì dào le Nán Song tíchū ~ de guāndiǎn hòu, jiù biànde wánquán méiyǒu rénqíngwèir le。

English translation: Confucianism had some human touch before the Southern Song dynasty, however, after it put forward the concept to preserve Heaven's laws and eliminate human desires, it became apathetic.

Note: It is directly quoted from the words of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a neo-Confucian scholar-official. A variant of this saying is 存天理, 去人欲.

187. 得陇望蜀

Traditional Character: 得隴望蜀

Pinyin: dé lǒng wàng shǔ

Character To Character translation: occupy-Long-expect-Shu

Literal translation: expect to take Shu after having occupied Long

Free translation: The more one gets, the more one wants. // Give him an inch, and he will take a mile.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你已经得到很多了, 还不满足啊? 不要~。

Traditional Chinese: 你已經得到很多了, 還不滿足啊? 不要~。

Pinyin: Nǐ yǐjīng dédào hěnduō le, hái bù mǎnzú a? Búyào ~。

English translation: You have already attained a lot. How can't you be satisfied? You can't demand a mile after getting an inch.

Note: 陇 and 蜀 are two places in northwestern and southwestern China. A colloquial expression is 人心不足蛇吞象 (rén xīn bù zú shé tūn xiàng, man's-heart-not-satisfied-snake-swallow-elephant), and an even more colloquial one is 蹬鼻子上脸 (dēng bízi shàng liǎn, step on-nose-climb-face).

188. 东方不亮西方亮

Traditional Character: 東方不亮西方亮

Pinyin: dōng fāng bú liàng xī fāng liàng

Character To Character translation: eastern-world-not-lit-western-world-lit

Literal translation: While something is not workable in one place, it might be workable somewhere else.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这个办法不行我们就换一个办法，～。

Traditional Chinese: 這個辦法不行我們就換一個辦法，～。

Pinyin: Zhègè bànfǎ bùxíng wǒmen jiù huàn yíge bànfǎ, ～。

English translation: If this method does not work, we will then use another. If one thing does not work, another may.

Note: This quotation is from Mao Zedong. The following part is 黑了南方有北方 which in combination with the preceding part shows Mao Zedong's flexibility in the period of revolution.

189. 不管黑猫白猫，只要能捉住老鼠就是好猫

Traditional Character: 不管黑貓白貓，只要能捉住老鼠就是好貓

Pinyin: bù guǎn hēi māo bái māo, zhǐ yào néng zhuō zhù lǎo shǔ jiù shì hǎo māo

Character To Character translation: no matter-black-cat-white-cat, as long as-can-catch-mouse-then-be-good-cat

Literal translation: As long as something functions properly, its form is irrelevant.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 不要讲什么“主义”和“理论”，～。

Traditional Chinese: 不要講什麼“主義”和“理論”，～。

Pinyin: Búyào jiǎng shénme “zhǔyì” hé “lǐlùn”, ～。

English translation: Don't go on about this 'ism' or that 'theory'; as long as something functions properly, its form is irrelevant.

Note: This saying was not originated by Deng Xiaoping, but its popularity was largely owed to him.

190. 前事不忘，后事之师

Traditional Character: 前事不忘，後事之師

Pinyin: qián shì bú wàng, hòu shì zhī shī

Character To Character translation: past-experience-not-forgotten, future-thing's-guide

Literal translation: learn from past experience

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我们要从这次失败中吸取教训，～。

Traditional Chinese: 我們要從這次失敗中吸取教訓，～。

Pinyin: Wǒmen yào cóng zhècì shībài zhōng xīqǔ jiàoxùn, ～。

English translation: We should learn a lesson from this failure. Always learn from past experience.

Note:

191. 小不忍则乱大谋

Traditional Character: 小不忍則亂大謀

Pinyin: xiǎo bù rěn zé luàn dà móu

Character To Character translation: trivial-not-restrain-therefore-spoil-great-plan

Literal translation: not being to accept imperfection in a small issue will ruin larger plans.

Free translation: A little impatience spoils great plans.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 政治家必须有极大的肚量和忍耐力，在小事上不动声色，～。

Traditional Chinese: 政治家必須有極大的肚量和忍耐力，在小事上不動聲色，～。

Pinyin: Zhèngzhìjiā bìxū yǒu jí dà de dùliàng hé rěnnàilì, zài xiǎoshì shàng bú dòng shēngsè, ～。

English translation: Politicians must have great tolerance and magnanimity, and stay calm and collected upon small matters. A little impatience spoils great plans.

Note:

192. 常在河边走，哪有不湿鞋

Traditional Character: 常在河邊走，哪有不濕鞋

Pinyin: cháng zài hé biān zǒu, nǎ yǒu bù shī xié

Character To Character translation: often-on-river-side-walk, how-not-dampen-shoes

Literal translation: You are marked by your surroundings.

Free translation: touch pitch and you will be defiled

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 她是最高法院的法官，给她送礼的人不在少数。如果说她一次没有接受过礼物，谁也不信。～。

Traditional Chinese: 她是最高法院的法官，給她送禮的人不在少數。如果說她一次沒有接受過禮物，誰也不信。～。

Pinyin: Tā shì zuìgāo fǎyuàn de fǎguān, gěi tā sònglǐ de rén bú zài shǎoshù. Rúguǒ shuō tā yīcì méiyǒu jiēshòu guò lǐwù, shéi yě bú xìn. ～。

English translation: She is a judge in the supreme court, and there must be many people who want to bribe her. No one believes that she has never taken a bribe. Touch pitch and you will be defiled.

Note:

193. 得饶人处且饶人

Traditional Character: 得饒人處且饒人

Pinyin: dé ráo rén chù qiě ráo rén

Character To Character translation: able to-forgive-others-time-then-forgive-others

Literal translation: let people off easily whenever possible

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事既然他已经认错了，你就算了吧。～。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事既然他已經認錯了，你就算了吧。～。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì jìrán tā yǐjīng rèncuò le, nǐ jiù suànle ba. ～。

English translation: Since he confessed that he was wrong, just let it go. (It is a virtue to) let people off easily wherever possible.

Note: A commonly preceding phrase is 得放手时须放手 (dé fàngshǒu shí xū fàngshǒu, ought to-release-hand-time-should-release-hand).

194. 枪打出头鸟

Traditional Character: 槍打出頭鳥

Pinyin: qiāng dǎ chū tóu niǎo

Character To Character translation: gun-shoot-stick out-head-bird

Literal translation: The hunter will shoot the bird that sticks its head out.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事你不要先发表意见，如果你说了，别人都会攻击你，～。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事你不要先發表意見，如果你說了，別人都會攻擊你，～。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì nǐ búyào xiān fābiǎo yìjiàn, rúguǒ nǐ shuōle, biérén dōu huì gōngjī nǐ, ～。

English translation: You'd better not to comment this thing first. If you comment, others will oppose you. The hunter will shoot the bird that sticks its head out.

Note:

195. 树倒猢猻散

Traditional Character: 樹倒猢猻散

Pinyin: shù dǎo hú sūn sàn

Character To Character translation: tree-fallen-monkey-scatter

Literal translation: When an influential person falls from power, those beneath him tend to flee.

Free translation: (like) rats leaving a sinking ship

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他被免去了官职，以前追随他的人都走了，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他被免去了官職，以前追隨他的人都走了，～。

Pinyin: Tā bèi miǎnqù le guānzhí, yǐqián zhuīsuí tāde rén dōu zǒule, ～。

English translation: He was removed from his post. The people who followed him before had all left. It is like rats leaving a sinking ship.

Note:

196. 病从口入，祸从口出

Traditional Character: 病從口入，禍從口出

Pinyin: bìng cóng kǒu rù, huò cóng kǒu chū

Character To Character translation: illness-from-mouth-in, calamity-from-mouth-out

Literal translation: Illness is contracted from the mouth, and calamity comes by means of mouth

Free translation: Disaster emanates from careless talk.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 孩子，记住，没有把握的话不说，～。

Traditional Chinese: 孩子，記住，沒有把握的話不說，～。

Pinyin: Háizi, jìzhù, méiyǒu bǎwò de huà bùshuō, ～。

English translation: Child, remember this, do not say anything you are unsure of. Disaster emanates from careless talk.

Note:

197. 言多语失

Traditional Character: 言多語失

Pinyin: yán duō yǔ shī

Character To Character translation: talk-more-speech-mistake

Literal translation: easily make mistakes while talking more

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不要多说话，话说多了一定有不完善的地方，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你不要多說話，話說多了一定有不完善的地方，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ bùyào duō shuōhuà, huà shuōduō le yīdìng yǒu bù wánmǎn de dìfāng, ～。

English translation: You must not talk more. If you talk more, there are definitely something imperfect. You can easily make mistakes while talking more.

Note:

198. 对事不对人

Traditional Character: 對事不對人

Pinyin: duì shì bú duì rén

Character To Character translation: toward-issue-not-toward-person

Literal translation: It has no reflection on a particular person.

Free translation: It's nothing personal.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我这么说不是针对你个人，而是～。

Traditional Chinese: 我這麼說不是針對你個人，而是～。

Pinyin: Wǒ zhème shuō búshì zhēnduì nǐ gèrén, érshì ～。

English translation: I am not aiming at you when I say this. It's nothing personal.

Note:

199. 身体是革命的本钱

Traditional Character: 身體是革命的本錢

Pinyin: shēn tǐ shì gé mìng de běn qián

Character To Character translation: body-is-revolution-'s-capital

Literal translation: The body is the capital of revolution.

Free translation: Your health is your most precious asset.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你不能只顾工作，不顾休息，～。

Traditional Chinese: 你不能只顧工作，不顧休息，～。

Pinyin: Nǐ bùnéng zhǐgù gōngzuò, búgù xiūxi, ～。

English translation: You can't only work and never rest. Your health is your most precious asset.

Note: This saying was coined by Mao Zedong.

200. 留得青山在，不怕没柴烧

Traditional Character: 留得青山在，不怕沒柴燒

Pinyin: liú dé qīng shān zài, bú pà méi chái shāo

Character To Character translation: leave-green-mountain-remain, not fear-no-firewood-burn

Literal translation: Where there's life, there's hope.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 现在情况对你不利。你先出国躲一躲吧？～。等以后风头过了再回来。

Traditional Chinese: 現在情況對你不利。你先出國躲一躲吧？～。等以後風頭過了再回來。

Pinyin: Xiànzài qíngkuàng duì nǐ búlì. Nǐ xiān chūguó duǒyiduǒ ba? ～. Děng yǐhòu fēngtóu guòle zài huílái.

English translation: The current situation is adverse to you. You'd better go abroad to be away from this for a while. Where there's life, there's hope. You can come back when public attention has subsided.

Note:

201. 长江后浪推前浪，一代新人换旧人

Traditional Character: 長江後浪推前浪，一代新人換舊人

Pinyin: Cháng Jiāng hòu làng tuī qián làng, yī dài xīn rén huàn jiù rén

Character To Character translation: Yangtze River-behind-wave-push-front-wave, one-generation-new-people-replace-old-people

Literal translation: In the Yangtze River the waves behind drive on the waves before, and a new generation excels the previous one.

Free translation: It is a general trend that the latter generation excels the former one.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我老了，没什么新想法了，未来是你们年轻人的。～。

Traditional Chinese: 我老了，沒什麼新想法了，未來是你們年輕人的。～。

Pinyin: Wǒ lǎole, méi shénme xīn xiǎngfǎ le, wèilái shì nǐmen niánqīngrén de. ～。

English translation: I am old and can't come up with new ideas any more. The future belongs to young people like you. It is a general trend that the latter generation excels the former one.

Note:

202. 天下兴亡，匹夫有责

Traditional Character: 天下興亡，匹夫有責

Pinyin: tiān xià xīng wáng, pǐ fū yǒu zé

Character To Character translation: world-rise and fall, ordinary man-have-responsibility

Literal translation: Even an ordinary man has responsibilities for his country's rise and fall.

Free translation: Everyone is responsible for the fate of his country.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 作为受过高等教育的青年，你们一定要记住，～。国家的未来跟你们有很大的关系。

Traditional Chinese: 作為受過高等教育的青年，你們一定要記住，～。國家的未來跟你們有很大的關係。

Pinyin: Zuòwéi shòuguò gāoděng jiàoyù de qīngnián, nǐmen yīdìng yào jìzhù, ～。Guójiā de wèilái gēn nǐmen yǒu hěndà de guānxì。

English translation: As young people who received higher education, you must remember that everyone is responsible for the fate of his country. The future of the country has a lot to do with you.

Note:

Part III: Philosophical proverbs 哲学俗语

203. 百花齐放，百家争鸣

Traditional Character: 百花齊放，百家爭鳴

Pinyin: bǎi huā qí fàng, bǎi jiā zhēng míng

Character To Character translation: hundred-flower-together-to blossom, hundred-school-compete-to voice

Literal translation: one hundred flowers blossom and one hundred schools of thought contend

Free translation: Let different ideas and interest groups compete freely.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 不但在文艺领域，在思想领域也应该~。

Traditional Chinese: 不但在文藝領域，在思想領域也應該~。

Pinyin: Búdàn zài wényì lǐngyù, zài sīxiǎng lǐngyù yě yīnggāi ~。

English translation: We should embrace free competition in not only the arts, but also in the field of ideology.

Note: 百家争鸣 (Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought) is a term referring to the phenomenon of contention of dozens of schools of thought during the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period from the 6th century BC to 221 BC. While 百花齐放，百家争鸣 was a slogan advocated by Chairman Mao in 1956.

204. 尺有所短，寸有所长

Traditional Character: 尺有所短，寸有所長

Pinyin: chǐ yǒu suǒ duǎn, cùn yǒu suǒ cháng

Character To Character translation: foot-have-what-be short of, inch-have-what-be good at

Literal translation: A foot could be too short and an inch could be just long enough.

Free translation: Everyone has his weaknesses and strong points.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 每个人都有优缺点，~，关键是怎么用人。

Traditional Chinese: 每個人都有優缺點，~，關鍵是怎麼用人。

Pinyin: měigè rén dōu yǒu yōuquēdiǎn, ~, guānjiàn shì zěnmē yòng rén。

English translation: Everyone has their advantages and disadvantages. The point is how to better use people.

Note:

205. 满招损，谦受益

Traditional Character: 滿招損，謙受益

Pinyin: mǎn zhāo sǔn, qiān shòu yì

Character To Character translation: smug-invite-loss, modest-receive-gain

Literal translation: Complacency begets loss, and modesty benefits.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 谦虚是美德，～，对年青人更是如此。

Traditional Chinese: 谦虚是美德，～，对年青人更是如此。

Pinyin: qiānxū shì měidé, ～, duì niánqīngrén gèngshì rúcǐ.

English translation: Modesty is a virtue. Complacency begets loss, and modesty benefits. It is especially true for young people.

Note:

206. 智者千虑，必有一失

Traditional Character: 智者千慮，必有一失

Pinyin: zhì zhě qiān lǜ, bì yǒu yī shī

Character To Character translation: wise-people-thousand-overthinking, must-have-one-missed

Literal translation: Even the wise are not always free of error.

Free translation: Even Homer sometimes nods.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他是政坛老将，善于判断形势，但是这次完全判断错了，～。

Traditional Chinese: 他是政壇老將，善於判斷形勢，但是這次完全判斷錯了，～。

Pinyin: Tā shì zhèngtán lǎojiàng, shànyú pànduàn xíngshì, dànshì zhècì wánquán pànduàn cuòle.

English translation: He is a veteran politician who is good at judging the situation, but this time he was completely wrong. Even Homer sometimes nods.

Note: The antonymous expression is 愚者千慮，必有一得 (yú---, ---dé) which literally means a fool thinks one thousand times and can also get one time right.

207. 欲速则不达

Traditional Character: 欲速則不達

Pinyin: yù sù zé bù dá

Character To Character translation: eager to-expedite-but-not-arrive

Literal translation: more haste, less speed

Free translation: Haste makes waste.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 做事不要太着急，～。

Traditional Chinese: 做事不要太著急，～。

Pinyin: Zuòshì búyào tài zháojí, ～。

English translation: Don't hurry. Haste makes waste.

Note:

208. 工欲善其事，必先利其器

Traditional Character: 工慾善其事，必先利其器

Pinyin: gong yù shàn qí shì, bì xiān lì qí qì

Character To Character translation: worker-want-better-his-work, must-first-sharpen-his-tool

Literal translation: A workman must first sharpen his tools if he wants to do his work well.

Free translation: Sharp tools make good work.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你想当律师，必须把《民法典》、《刑法》背得滚瓜烂熟，因为上面的每一句话都可能用到。~。

Traditional Chinese: 你想當律師，必須把《民法典》、《刑法》背得滾瓜爛熟，因為上面的每一句話都可能用到。~。

Pinyin: Nǐ xiǎng dāng lǚshī, bìxū bǎ 《mínfǎ diǎn》、《xíngfǎ》 bèide gǔnguā lànshú, yīnwèi shàngmian de měiyí jùhuà dōu kěnéng yòngdào. ~。

English translation: If you want to be a lawyer, you must know the Civil Code and the Criminal Law by heart, because every word of them may be used. Sharp tools make good work.

Note:

209. 城门失火，殃及池鱼

Traditional Character: 城門失火，殃及池魚

Pinyin: chéng mén shī huǒ, yāng jí chí yú

Character To Character translation: city-gate-on fire, misfortune-reach-city moat-fish

Literal translation: In a disturbance innocent bystanders get into trouble.

Free translation: to suffer from other's disaster

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中央想发展 S 城市，可是资金不够，于是从 H 省抽调大笔资金，H 省的经济发展势头被中断。~。

Traditional Chinese: 中央想發展 S 城市，可是資金不夠，於是從 H 省抽調大筆資金，H 省的經濟發展勢頭被中斷。~。

Pinyin: Zhōngyāng xiǎng fāzhǎn S chéngshì, kěshì zījīn búgòu, yúshì cóng H Shěng chōudiào dàbǐ zījīn, H Shěng de jīngjì fāzhǎn shìtóu bèi zhōngduàn。

English translation: The central government wanted to develop City S, but the capital was not enough. So a large sum of capital was transferred from Province H, and the economic development momentum of Province H was interrupted. Province H suffered from City S's disaster.

Note:

210. 直木先伐，甘井先竭

Traditional Character: 直木先伐，甘井先竭

Pinyin: zhí mù xiān fá, gān jǐng xiān jié

Character To Character translation: straight-tree-first-logged, sweet-well-first-drained

Literal translation: The straight tree is the first to be cut down; the well of sweet water is the first to be exhausted.

Free translation: The brilliant bear the brunt.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 大家都干同样的活儿，你不必争先干完，干完了肯定会分配给你新的任务，~。

Traditional Chinese: 大家都幹同樣的活兒，你不必爭先幹完，幹完了肯定會分配給你新的任務，~。

Pinyin: Dàjiā dōu gàn tóngyàng de huór, nǐ búbì zhēngxian gànwan, gànwan le kěndìng huì fēnpèi

gěi nǐ xīnde rènwu

English translation: Everyone does the same job. You don't have to rush to finish it. After you finish it, you will definitely be assigned a new task. The brilliant bear the brunt.

Note: This saying is from *Zhuangzi*(庄子).

211. 过犹不及

Traditional Character: 過猶不及

Pinyin: guō yóu bù jí

Character To Character translation: excessive-like-not-enough

Literal translation: Going too far is as bad as not going far enough.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 拍马屁要拍得恰到好处，一味地阿谀奉承效果并不好，~。

Traditional Chinese: 拍馬屁要拍得恰到好處，一味地阿諛奉承效果並不好，~。

Pinyin: Pāimǎpì yào pāide qiàdào hǎochù, yíwèi de ēyú fèngchéng xiàoguǒ bìngbù hǎo.

English translation: Flattery should be done properly, and it is not good to flatter blindly. Going too far is as bad as not going far enough.

Note:

212. 麻雀虽小，五脏俱全

Traditional Character: 麻雀雖小，五臟俱全

Pinyin: má què suī xiǎo, wǔ zàng jù quán

Character To Character translation: sparrow-albeit-small, five-viscus-all-complete

Literal translation: The sparrow may be small, but all the vital organs are present. // Large or small, the content is comprehensive.

Free translation: small but complete

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 虽然这只是一个只有二十个人的单位，但是各种各样的人际关系都存在，~。

Traditional Chinese: 雖然這只是一個只有二十個人的單位，但是各種各樣的人際關係都存在，~。

Pinyin: Suīrán zhè zhǐshì yīgè zhǐyǒu èrshí gè rén de dānwèi, dànshì gèzhǒng gèyàng de rénjì guānxì dōu cúnzài, ~。

English translation: Although this is a work unit of only twenty people, various interpersonal relationships, whether significant or not, exist.

Note:

213. 沙门不敬王者

Traditional Character: 沙門不敬王者

Pinyin: shā mén bù jìng wáng zhě

Character To Character translation: Buddhist monk-don't-salute-crowned-people

Literal translation: Buddhist monks do not bow down before kings.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 按理说~, 可是现在的和尚跟政府走得很近。

Traditional Chinese: 按理說~, 可是現在的和尚跟政府走得很近。

Pinyin: Ànlǐshuō~, kěshì xiànzài de héshang gēn zhèngfǔ zǒude hěnjìn。

English translation: According to the principle, Buddhist monks did not bow down before kings. However, now the monks are very close to the government.

Note: 沙门不敬王者论 is a series of articles written by Huiyuan (慧远, 334-416), the first Patriarch of the Pure Land School of Buddhism in early 400s.

214. 本来无一物, 何处惹尘埃

Traditional Character: 本來無一物, 何處惹塵埃

Pinyin: běn lái wú yī wù, hé chù rě chén āi

Character To Character translation: originally-no-one-thing, what-place-stain-dust

Literal translation: Since all is void, where can the dust alight?

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 我本来只说到“裸体”这个词, 是美术术语, 可是你想到了色情, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 我本來只說到“裸體”這個詞, 是美術術語, 可是你想到了色情, ~。

Pinyin: Wǒ běnlái zhǐ shuōdào “luǒ tǐ” zhègè cí, shì měishù shùnyǔ, kěshì nǐ xiǎngdào le sèqíng, ~。

English translation: I originally only said the word ‘naked’, which is a metaphorical term, but you think of pornography. If all is void, where can the dust alight?

Note: This phrase is two lines from a stanza by Dajian Huineng (慧能, 638–713), the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism.

215. 如人饮水, 冷暖自知

Traditional Character: 如人飲水, 冷暖自知

Pinyin: rú rén yǐn shuǐ, lěng nuǎn zì zhī

Character To Character translation: as if-people-drink-water, cold-warm-self-know

Literal translation: As if a person drinks water, he knows whether it is warm or cold.

Free translation: My experiences have familiarized me with pain and struggle.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在那场官司以及随后几年的牢狱生活后, 对于友谊和承诺, 他有了新的看法。~。

Traditional Chinese: 在那場官司以及隨後幾年的牢獄生活後, 對於友誼和承諾, 他有了新的看法。~。

Pinyin: Zài nà chǎng guānsī yǐjǐ suíhòu jǐnián de láoyù shēnghuó hòu, duìyú yǒuyì hé chéngnuò, tā yǒule xīnde kàn fǎ。~。

English translation: After the lawsuit and the subsequent years in prison, he had a new view of friendship and commitment. Of what he experienced, he knows weal and woe.

Note:

216. 普天之下, 莫非王土

Traditional Character: 普天之下，莫非王土

Pinyin: pǔ tiān zhī xià, mò fēi wáng tǔ

Character To Character translation: entire-heaven-'s-under, none-not-king's-land

Literal translation: Under heaven, any spot of ground belongs to the sovereign.

Free translation: Everything in the country belongs to the sovereign.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国的事，没有国家主席管不了的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 中國的事，沒有國家主席管不了的，~。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó de shì, méiyǒu guójiā zhǔxí guǎnbùliǎo de, ~。

English translation: Nothing in China is beyond the control of the president. Everything in the country belongs to the sovereign.

Note:

217. 闻诛一夫纣矣，未闻弑君也

Traditional Character: 聞誅一夫紂矣，未聞弑君也

Pinyin: wén zhū yī fū Zhòu yǐ, wèi wén shì jūn yě

Character To Character translation: heard-kill-a-man-Zhou-that's all, not-heard-murder-monarch-[affirmative]

Literal translation: [I] heard of killing a fellow Zhou, not putting King Zhou of Shang to death.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 孟子认为，人民是有权利推翻不称职的国君的。推翻国君不是弑君，~。

Traditional Chinese: 孟子認為，人民是有權利推翻不稱職的國君的。推翻國君不是弑君，~。

Pinyin: Mèngzǐ rènwéi, rénmín shì yǒu quánlì tuīfān bú chènzhí de guójūn de. Tuīfān guójūn búshì shìjūn, ~。

English translation: Mencius believed that the people have the right to overthrow an incompetent monarch. To overthrow a monarch is not regicide. It is just like that Mencius heard of killing a fellow Zhou, not putting King Zhou of Shang to death.

Note: 纣王 (1105 BC to 1046 BC), King Zhou of the Shang dynasty was the infamous last king of the Shang dynasty, known for his brutality and for being a degenerate.

218. 己所不欲，勿施于人

Traditional Character: 己所不欲，勿施於人

Pinyin: jǐ suǒ bú yù, wù shī yú rén

Character To Character translation: oneself-what-not-desire, don't-impose-on-others

Literal translation: Don't treat others differently than you would like to be treated.

Free translation: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 既然你不喜欢别人打你的小报告，你也就不要打别人的小报告，~。

Traditional Chinese: 既然你不喜歡別人打你的小報告，你也就不要打別人的小報告，~。

Pinyin: Jìrán nǐ bù xǐhuān biérén dǎ nǐde xiǎobàogào, nǐ yě jiù búyào dǎ biérén de xiǎobàogào, ~。

English translation: Since you don't like it when others to tell on you, you should not tell on them.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Note: This golden rule was said by Confucius. The context of this saying is when Confucius was asked ‘Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life?’ And Confucius answered, ‘Is not ‘reciprocity’ such a word?’ This saying might be the most famous Chinese proverb.

219. 人之初，性本善

Traditional Character: 人之初，性本善

Pinyin: rén zhī chū, xìng běn shàn

Character To Character translation: human-’s-beginning, nature-originally-kind

Literal translation: Man’s nature at birth is good.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 人本来都是善的，是社会把他们教坏。~。

Traditional Chinese: 人本來都是善的，是社會把他們教壞。~。

Pinyin: Rén běnlái dōushì shàn de, shì shèhuì bǎ tāmen jiāohuài。~。

English translation: People are originally born good, but they are socialized to be bad. Man’s nature at birth is good.

Note: Mencius (372 BC to 289 BC) believed that human nature is good (性本善) whereas another Confucian master Xunzi (316 BC to 237 BC) held the exactly opposite opinion, contending that human nature is “bad”.

220. 君子远庖厨

Traditional Character: 君子遠庖厨

Pinyin: jūn zǐ yuǎn páo chú

Character To Character translation: gentleman-stay away from-slaughter-house-kitchen

Literal translation: A superior man stays away from bloody places.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 年青人不要看那些暴力电影，~，否则会受到不良影响。

Traditional Chinese: 年青人不要看那些暴力電影，~，否則會受到不良影響。

Pinyin: Niánqīngrén búyào kàn nàxiē bàoli diànyǐng, ~, fǒuzé huì shòudào bùliáng yǐngxiǎng。

English translation: Young people should not watch those violent movies and they should stay away from places wrought with conflict, otherwise they will be adversely affected.

Note: Why should a superior man stay away from those bloody places? Mencius’s answer was, ‘he cannot bear to see animals die or to hear their dying cries.’

221. 为有源头活水来

Traditional Character: 爲有源頭活水來

Pinyin: wéi yǒu yuán tóu huóshuǐ lái

Character To Character translation: because-have-river source-flowing water-come

Literal translation: Because the fresh water comes from the head of the spring.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他对各种事情的看法都很有见地，这是因为他抓住了中国人思想的精华，~。

Traditional Chinese: 他對各種事情的看法都很有見地，這是因為他抓住了中國人思想的精華，~。

Pinyin: Tā duì gèzhǒng shìqíng de kànfǎ dōu hěn yǒu jiàndì, zhèshì yīnwèi tā zhuāzhù le Zhōngguó rén sīxiǎng de jīnghuá, ~。

English translation: He has very insightful views on various things, because he has grasped the essence of Chinese thought. The fresh water comes from the head of the spring.

Note: 为 (because, for) is sometimes written as a homophonous character 唯 (only).

222. 天与地卑，山与泽平

Traditional Character: 天與地卑，山與澤平

Pinyin: tiān yǔ dì bēi, shān yǔ zé píng

Character To Character translation: heaven-and-earth-low, mountain-and-marsh-level

Literal translation: Heaven can be as low as the earth, and a mountain can be level to a marsh.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 道家认为事物是可以转化的，~。

Traditional Chinese: 道家認為事物是可以轉化的，~。

Pinyin: Dàojiā rènwéi shìwù shì kěyǐ zhuǎnhuà de, ~。

English translation: Daoism believes that things can be transformed. Heaven can be as low as the earth, and a mountain can be level to a marsh.

Note:

223. 大巧若拙，大智若愚

Traditional Character: 大巧若拙，大智若愚

Pinyin: dà qiǎo ruò zhuō, dà zhì ruò yú

Character To Character translation: great-deft-appear-clumsy, great-wise-appear-fool

Literal translation: A man of great wisdom often appears slow-witted.

Free translation: Pride apes humility.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 别看他好像有点反应迟钝，其实他~。

Traditional Chinese: 別看他好像有點反應遲鈍，其實他~。

Pinyin: Bié kàn tā hǎoxiàng yǒudiǎn fǎnyìng chídùn, qíshí tā ~。

English translation: Do not be concerned that he seems a little slow to respond; wise men often appear slow-witted.

Note: The concept reflected in this saying is rich in *Tao Te Ching* (Lao Tzu, or Laozi).

224. 塞翁失马，焉知非福

Traditional Character: 塞翁失馬，焉知非福

Pinyin: sài wēng shī mǎ, yān zhī fēi fú

Character To Character translation: border area-old man-lost-horse, how is one to know-not-fortune
Literal translation: The old man's loss of a horse may be a fortune in disguise. // A loss may turn out to be a gain, and vice versa.

Free translation: a blessing in disguise

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 他因一票之差没有选上市长，只当了副市长。但是不久该市发生重大伤亡事故，市长引咎辞职，于是他顺利递补当上了市长。~。

Traditional Chinese: 他因一票之差沒有選上市長，只當了副市長。但是不久該市發生重大傷亡事故，市長引咎辭職，於是他順利遞補當上了市長。~。

Pinyin: Tā yīn yī piào zhī chā méiyǒu xuǎnshàng shìzhǎng, zhǐ dāngle fù-shìzhǎng。Dànshì bùjiǔ gāi shì fāshēng zhòngdà shāngwáng shìgù , shìzhǎng yīnjiù cízhí , yúshì tā shùnlì dìbǔ dāngshàng le shìzhǎng。~。

English translation: He wasn't elected to be mayor because he was short one vote, so he was relegated to the position of vice mayor. However, there was soon a serious incident in that city, and the mayor took the blame and resigned. Afterward, he succeeded as mayor without effort.

Note: This saying is also a famous allusion recorded in a Taoist book *Huainanzi* (completed before 139 BC).

225. 侯之门，仁义存

Traditional Character: 侯之門，仁義存

Pinyin: hóu zhī mén, rén yì cún

Character To Character translation: duke-'s-home, kindheartedness and justice-exist

Literal translation: It is at the gates of the princes where benevolence and righteousness exist.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 古代官僚不但掌握着政权，还掌握着舆论，~。

Traditional Chinese: 古代官僚不但掌握著政權，還掌握著輿論，~。

Pinyin: Gǔdài guānliáo búdàn zhǎngwò zhe zhèngquán, hái zhǎngwò zhe yúlùn, ~。

English translation: The ancient bureaucrats not only controlled the political power but also the public opinion. It is at the gates of the princes where benevolence and righteousness exist.

Note: This saying is from *Chuang Tzu* (*Zhuangzi*).

226. 子非鱼，安知鱼之乐

Traditional Character: 子非魚，安知魚之樂

Pinyin: zǐ fēi yú, ān zhī yú zhī lè

Character To Character translation: you-not-fish, how come-know-fish-'s-happy

Literal translation: You are not a fish. How could you know what pleases fish?

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你怎么知道我是怎么想的？~？

Traditional Chinese: 你怎麼知道我是怎麼想的？~？

Pinyin: Nǐ zěnmē zhīdao wǒ shì zěnmē xiǎng de? ~?

English translation: How do you know what I think? Since you are not a fish, how could you know what pleases fish?

Note: This saying is from *Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi)*.

227. 法不阿贵

Traditional Character: 法不阿貴

Pinyin: fǎ bù ē guì

Character To Character translation: law-not-unfairly partial to-nobles

Literal translation: The law does not favor the rich and powerful.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 制定和执行法律时不能偏袒上层社会，~。

Traditional Chinese: 制定和執行法律時不能偏袒上層社會，~。

Pinyin: Zhìdìng hé zhíxíng fǎlǜ shí bùnéng piāntǎn shàngcéng shèhuì, ~。

English translation: When making and enforcing laws, (the government) cannot be partial to the upper class. The law should not favor the rich and powerful.

Note: This saying is from a famous legalist philosopher, Han Fei-tzu (280 BC to 233 BC), the greatest representative of Chinese legalism.

228. 法不责众

Traditional Character: 法不責衆

Pinyin: fǎ bù zé zhòng

Character To Character translation: law-not-punish-the masses

Literal translation: Laws fail where there are many violators.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 很多中国人觉得，只要别人干了没事，他干也应该没事，~。

Traditional Chinese: 很多中國人覺得，只要別人幹了沒事，他幹也應該沒事，~。

Pinyin: Hěnduō Zhōngguó rén juéde, zhǐyào biérén gànle méishì, tā gàn yě yīnggāi méishì, ~。

English translation: Many Chinese people feel that as long as others get away with certain infringements without punishment, they too should be exempt from the law.

Note: This is a Chinese folk concept relating to the violation of law and expectations surrounding the punishment that corresponds.

229. 大盗与乡愿

Traditional Character: 大盜與鄉願

Pinyin: dà dào yǔ xiāng yuàn

Character To Character translation: usurper-and-hypocrite

Literal translation: great thieves and hypocrites

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国的封建政治简单地说就是~，谁有枪谁就掌握政权，别人就歌颂你。

Traditional Chinese: 中國的封建政治簡單地說就是~, 誰有槍誰就掌握政權, 別人就歌頌你。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó de fēngjiàn zhèngzhì jiǎndān de shuō jiùshì ~, shéi yǒu qiāng shéi jiù zhǎngwò zhèngquán, biérén jiù gēsòng nǐ。

English translation: Simply put, Chinese feudal politics is run by thieves and hypocrites. Whoever controls the army will have power, and others will praise him.

Note: The notion that Chinese politics was played by merciless rulers and hypocritical scholar-officials was put forward by a modern revolutionist Tan Sitong (譚嗣同, 1865-1898).

230. 名不正則言不順

Traditional Character: 名不正則言不順

Pinyin: míng bú zhèng zé yán bú shùn

Character To Character translation: name-not-correct-then-language-not-accordant

Literal translation: If names are arbitrary, language is not in accordance with objective truth.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这个奖项到底应该怎么命名? 这会涉及到谁有资格申请。~。

Traditional Chinese: 這個獎項到底應該怎麼命名? 這會涉及到誰有資格申請。~。

Pinyin: Zhègè jiǎngxiàng dàodǐ yīnggāi zěnmě mìngmíng? Zhè huì shèjí dào shéi yǒu zīgé shēnqǐng. ~。

English translation: How should this award be named? It will involve those eligible to apply.

Note: This notion is from Confucius.

231. 远交近攻

Traditional Character: 遠交近攻

Pinyin: yuǎn jiāo jìn gōng

Character To Character translation: befriend-distant-attack-nearby

Literal translation: befriend distant states and attack those nearby

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国自古以来的外交策略就是~。

Traditional Chinese: 中國自古以來的外交策略就是~。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó zìgǔ yǐlái de wàijiāo cèlüè jiùshì ~。

English translation: Since ancient times, China's diplomatic strategy has been to befriend distant states and attack those nearby.

Note: This strategy was put forward by Qin's chancellor Fan Ju (范雎, d. 255 BC) and eventually enabled Qin to unify China in 221 BC.

232. 飞鸟尽, 良弓藏; 狡兔死, 走狗烹

Traditional Character: 飛鳥盡, 良弓藏; 狡兔死, 走狗烹

Pinyin: fēi niǎo jìn, liáng gōng cáng; jiǎo tù sǐ, zǒu gǒu pēng

Character To Character translation: flying-bird-extinct, excellent-bow-hidden; wily-hare-died, running-dog-boiled

Literal translation: After all birds are gone, excellent bows are put away; after wily hares are dead, running dogs are boiled.

Free translation: cast somebody aside when he has served his purpose

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 中国人可以一起艰苦创业，但是成功之后却互不相容，~。

Traditional Chinese: 中國人可以一起艱苦創業，但是成功之後卻互不相容，~。

Pinyin: Zhōngguó rén kěyǐ yīqǐ jiānkǔ chuàngyè, dànshì chénggōng zhīhòu què hù bù xiāngróng, ~。

English translation: Chinese people can work hard together, but after having achieved success, they are no longer compatible. Some cast others aside when they have served their purpose.

Note: This saying is from the *Records of the Grand Historian*. Fear of the result reflected in this saying prevents Chinese people from devoting their last bit of loyalty to their superiors.

233. 各人自扫门前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜

Traditional Character: 各人自掃門前雪，莫管他人瓦上霜

Pinyin: gè rén zì sǎo mén qián xuě, mò guǎn tā rén wǎ shàng shuāng

Character To Character translation: oneself-by oneself-sweep-gate-front-snow, don't-concern-other-people-tile-frost

Literal translation: mind one's own business

Free translation: Sweep your front stoop before sweeping your neighbor's // mind one's own potatoes

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 这件事你就不要多问了，跟你没关系。~。再说你也管不了。

Traditional Chinese: 這件事你就不要多問了，跟你沒關係。~。再說你也管不了。

Pinyin: Zhè jiàn shì nǐ jiù bùyào duōwèn le, gēn nǐ méi guānxì. ~。Zàishuō nǐ yě guǎn bùliǎo。

English translation: Don't ask more about this matter. It has nothing to do with you. Mind your own business. It is beyond your capacity anyways.

Note: This saying can be shortened to 自扫门前雪.

234. 君子慎于言而敏于行

Traditional Character: 君子慎於言而敏於行

Pinyin: jūn zǐ shèn yú yán ér mǐn yú xíng

Character To Character translation: gentleman-cautious-at-speaking-but-swift-at-doing

Literal translation: A gentleman is cautious in words but quick in deeds.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 你应该向他学习，少说多做，~。

Traditional Chinese: 你應該向他學習，少說多做，~。

Pinyin: Nǐ yīnggāi xiàng tā xuéxí, shǎoshuō duōzuò, ~。

English translation: You should learn from him; speak less but do more. A gentleman is cautious in words but quick in deeds.

Note: A variant of this saying is 君子讷(nè, slow of speech)于言而敏于行, from which Mao Zedong chose two characters 讷 and 敏 to name his two daughters 李讷 and 李敏.

235. 病从口入，祸从口出

Traditional Character: 病從口入，禍從口出

Pinyin: bìng cóng kǒu rù, huò cóng kǒu chū

Character To Character translation: illness-from-mouth-enter, disaster-from-mouth-come out

Literal translation: Disease enters by the mouth and trouble comes out of the mouth; mind your words

Free translation: mind your Ps and Qs // Think before you speak.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 不要当众随便发表评论，~。

Traditional Chinese: 不要當眾隨便發表評論，~。

Pinyin: Búyào dāngzhòng suíbiàn fābiǎo pínglùn, ~。

English translation: Don't comment casually in public. Mind your words.

Note:

236. 曲突徙薪无恩泽，焦头烂额座上客

Traditional Character: 曲突徙薪無恩澤，焦頭爛額座上客

Pinyin: qǔ tū xǐ xīn wú ēn zé, jiāo tóu làn é zuò shàng kè

Character To Character translation: bend-chimney-move-fuel-no-reward, badly bruised and battered-guest of honor

Literal translation: The man who suggested to bend the chimney and remove the fuel to prevent a possible fire was not rewarded, but the man whose face was blackened when fighting the fire received highest honor. // Superficial behaviors are well rewarded.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 在中国，实干家往往得不到重视，而做表面文章的人则容易得到提升。~。

Traditional Chinese: 在中國，實幹家往往得不到重視，而做表面文章的人則容易得到提升。~。

Pinyin: Zài Zhōngguó, shígànjia wǎngwǎng dé bú dào zhòngshì, ér zuò biǎomiàn wénzhāng de rén zé róngyì dé dào tíshēng. ~。

English translation: In China, doers are often neglected, but those who are good at acting are easily promoted. Superficial behaviors are well rewarded.

Note:

237. 三人行，必有我师焉

Traditional Character: 三人行，必有我師焉

Pinyin: sān rén xíng, bì yǒu wǒ shī yān

Character To Character translation: three-people-walk, must-exist-my-mentor-there

Literal translation: When I walk along with two others, I can certainly learn something from them.

Free translation: There is always someone to learn from.

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 尽管你是北大毕业的，他们毕业的学校不如你好，但是你能从他们身上学到一些知识，~。

Traditional Chinese: 儘管你是北大畢業的，他們畢業的學校不如你好，但是你能從他們身上學到一些知識，~。

Pinyin: Jǐnguǎn nǐ shì Běidà bìyè de, tāmen bìyè de xuéxiào bùrú nǐ hǎo, dànshì nǐ yě néng cóng tāmen shēnshang xuédào yīxiē zhīshí, ~。

English translation: Although you graduated from Peking University and the school they graduated from is not as good as yours, you can still learn some knowledge from them. There is always someone to learn from.

Note: This saying is from *Analects*.

238. 行百里者半九十

Traditional Character: 行百里者半九十

Pinyin: xíng bǎi lǐ zhě bàn jiǔ shí

Character To Character translation: go-hundred-mile-people-half-ninety

Literal translation: for a person who will travel a hundred miles, ninety miles are only half of the journey.

// The last bit of the task is the hardest to complete.

Free translation:

Example:

Simplified Chinese: 做事要坚持到底, ~。

Traditional Chinese: 做事要堅持到底, ~。

Pinyin: Zuòshì yào jiānchí dàodǐ, ~。

English translation: One has to stick to it. The last bit of a task is the hardest to complete.

Note:

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