

仲昭



Bai Juyi (Po Chü-i) 白居易

According to both *Book of Tang* and *The New Book of Tang*, Bai Juyi (Po Chü-i in older transcription) was from Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. Recent research shows, however, that he was actually born near the east gate of the seat of Xinzheng County, now in Henan Province (Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 1). This seemingly insignificant correction reveals a typical phenomenon in the life of a Tang scholar-official: they and their families were relatively privileged people, who enjoyed significant mobility. Thus, in the traditional Chinese terminology, Taiyuan was Bai Juyi's *junwang* 郡望, the place where the clan had made its fame. But it was not necessarily the place where each member of the clan was born or raised. Bai Juyi's great-grandfather seven generations back had been Bai Jian 白建, a powerful general of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550–577), who made the family's fame in northern China and settled down near the city of Taiyuan. Subsequently, however, serving in various posts for the Tang, Bai Jian's descendants had dispersed. Bai Juyi's grandfather, Bai Huang 白滄, for example, served as magistrate of Gong County in what is now Henan Province. Seeing the beautiful landscape of a neighboring county, Xinzheng, he settled his branch of the Bais there. And so this was the place of Bai Juyi's birth.

Recent research by the modern scholars Gu Xuejie and Wei Changhong goes further, suggesting that Bai Juyi's family was not even Chinese, but were originally a branch of the royal family of the Guizi Kingdom in what is now Kuqa, in the arid lands of the farthest northwestern corner of modern China (quoted in Lu Weifen and Zhang Yanjin, eds., *Sui, Tang, Wudai Wenxue Yanjiu*. Beijing, Beijing Publishing Company, 2001, p. 1001). American critics nowadays, especially eco-critics, find “sense of place” a promising site for literary investigation. Bai Juyi's story suggests, however, that for the Tang poets, such analysis had an additional layer of exploration. While attached to their homes, they were also always on the road in pursuit of official rank, carrying the honor of their clan, their *junwang*, with them wherever they went.

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As both career bureaucrat and talented poet, Bai Juyi was much more successful than most of his fellow poet-officials. Starting as sheriff of Zhouzhi County, he gradually moved up the ladder of ranks. He did have reverses: his honesty and outspokenness caused him to be demoted to Jiangzhou, now Jiujiang in Jiangxi Province, where the marsh-like landscape of the mid-Yangtze region both depressed and inspired this northerner. He was, however, subsequently recalled to the central government and when sent again to a provincial post went to be prefect of one of the wealthiest and most beautiful prefectures, Hangzhou, where he wrote many poems celebrating the land south of the Yangtze.

He retired to the eastern capital Luoyang, where he built a garden and raised animals such as cranes and fish. The garden and its animal residents became the subject matter of many of his poems. His close observation of his garden and its inhabitants led him to contemplate the independent minds of animals.

In the poems of Bai Juyi we see a kind-hearted, honest, and caring man. He made many friends with his contemporary poets. His best friend was Yuan Zhen, with whom he promoted a literary movement known as *xin yuefu* (new folk songs), which advocated the notion that literature should address real issues in the real lives of real people. Their friendship has been the subject matter of literary studies in China for over a millennium. He was also friendly with Liu Yuxi, and even Han Yu, who had an opposite theory about the role of literature and who had an obscure style drastically different from the plain style that Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen tried to promote.

《采地黄者》（《全唐诗》卷424）

麦死春不雨，禾损秋早霜。
岁晏无口食，田中采地黄。
采之将何用，持以易糒粮。
凌晨荷锄去，薄暮不盈筐。
携来朱门家，卖与白面郎。
与君啖肥马，可使照地光。
愿易马残粟，救此苦饥肠。

To the Herb Man Who Digs the Rehmanniae*

No rain during the spring.
All the wheat died.
Frosts too early in the fall.
Much rice is lost.

It's late in the year
when food runs out.
Preparing for the coming winter, you
comb the field for rehmanniae roots.

I ask what you're going to do with these roots.
You reply, "Of course I trade them for food."

You get up early every chilly morning,
with a hoe on your shoulder, you search
and dig all day long. Despite your hard work
you're unable to fill the basket until the sun sets.

Then you carry it to the mansions of tall red gates.
The roots are good for the eye – of man or horse.
So you sell them to the fat men of fair complexion.
They feed their horses with your medicinal roots
so that the horse see well when they ride at night.

What you get in return is the grain from the horse fodder –
you hope to get enough of it
to appease your growling stomach.

* A genus of flowering plants in the order Lamiales, endemic to China.
Chinese traditional medicine believes that it may cool down overheated
blood in the human body.

《观刈麦(时为盩厔县尉)》
(《全唐诗》卷424)

田家少闲月，五月人倍忙。
夜来南风起，小麦覆陇黄。
妇姑荷簞食，童稚携壶浆。
相随饷田去，丁壮在南冈。
足蒸暑土气，背灼炎天光。
力尽不知热，但惜夏日长。
复有贫妇人，抱子在其傍。
右手秉遗穗，左臂悬敝筐。
听其相顾言，闻者为悲伤。
家田输税尽，拾此充饥肠。
今我何功德，曾不事农桑。
吏禄三百石，岁晏有馀粮。
念此私自愧，尽日不能忘。

Watching the Wheat Reapers

Peasants in the field have no idle months.
They are doubly busy in the month of
May.
The wind from the south arises last night,
to turn the wheat on the ridges brown and
ripe.

At dawn wives and daughters shoulder
foods in baskets.
Boys and young men carry jars of water.
together they ascend the hill in the south
to feed the men who toil on the terraces.

They walk bare-foot on the hard, baked
earth.
They work with back bent in the
scorching sun.
Exhausted laborers don't even feel the
heat –
they grudge the shortness of the long
summer day.

A woman in poverty carries her child to
the field.
She follows the working men, a few yards
behind,
picking up stray ears with her right hand
to fill a broken basket dangling from her
left.

The explanation she gives to the men
seizes my heart with pain and shame.
“The harvest from my half acre was
already done.
It's barely enough to pay taxes with the
grain.
To feed the hungry child and myself,
I depend on these stray ears from your
field.”

Her words make me reflect upon myself –
I've never worked in the field or by
mulberry trees,
but have extra food by the end of the year,
thanks to the three hundred bushels from
the emperor –
my annual income for working in the
court.

In private I can hardly face myself –
contrasted to the working men.
for days I can't erase the child
or the woman from my mind.

《慈乌夜啼》（《全唐诗》绢 424）

慈乌失其母，哑哑吐哀音。
昼夜不飞去，经年守故林。
夜夜夜半啼，闻者为沾襟。
声中如告诉，未尽反哺心。
百鸟岂无母，尔独哀怨深。
应是母慈重，使尔悲不任。
昔有吴起者，母丧丧不临。
嗟哉斯徒辈，其心不如禽。
慈乌复慈乌，鸟中之曾参。

The Night Song of a Filial Crow

A mother crow died – a natural thing in
nature.
Her son cawed and cawed, until his throat
was hoarse.
For a whole year he stayed on the very
tree –
he never left it for more than a single day.

Every night at midnight he'd caw so sadly
that everybody who heard it
would weep profuse tears.

He must be telling a story of unfulfilled
love,
unable to take care of his mother in old
age.
All birds have mothers. Why does this
one
have to cry and mourn in sorrows so deep?

The mother must have loved him so much
when she was alive, he was young,
that the young one, now grown, can't
stand the loss.

There was a “great” general
in one of the warring states,
who in order to obtain the king's trust
forwent his mother's funeral
held in the land of the enemy.
Alas, such a being was called a human
whose heart does not compare to the
crow's!
I can't help but exclaim and sigh.
What a filial crow, what a filial crow!
In the eyes of humans, you're a Saint
among birds!

《燕诗示刘叟》（《全唐诗》卷424）

梁上有双燕，翩翩雄与雌。
 衔泥两椽间，一巢生四儿。
 四儿日夜长，索食声孜孜。
 青虫不易捕，黄口无饱期。
 觜爪虽欲敝，心力不知疲。
 须臾十来往，犹恐巢中饥。
 辛勤三十日，母瘦雏渐肥。
 喃喃教言语，一一刷毛衣。
 一旦羽翼成，引上庭树枝。
 举翅不回顾，随风四散飞。
 雌雄空中鸣，声尽呼不归。
 却入空巢里，啁啾终夜悲。
 燕燕尔勿悲，尔当返自思。
 思尔为雏日，高飞背母时。
 当时父母念，今日尔应知。

A Poem for the Swallows in My House

In my house, upon the roof beam
 two swallows, husband and wife, have
 made a home.

They fly in and out with grace and care
 to build a nest of twigs and mud.

Four chicks are born there,
 four grow up day and night.
 They chatter and scream for food,
 for parents' everlasting love.

The chicks' beaks grow larger everyday,
 with larger appetite to match.

The worms are tiny and hard to catch.
 The parents wear out their beaks and
 claws

yet never give up hunting, tired as they
 are.

Ten times they come, ten times they go,
 all within an hour, every hour of the day.
 After thirty days of hard work the mother
 is reduced to bones. The chicks are grown.

Then the mother teaches them how to
 speak,
 how to brush their new feathers with their
 beaks.

When their wings are strong enough,
 she escorts them onto the top of the tree.
 The four flap their wings for the first time,
 vanish, dispersing with the summer winds.

The couple scream and circle in the sky.
 The chicks may have heard them but
 never come back.

The couple finally return to the empty
 nest
 to chant their sad songs day and night.

I've been touched and tried to tell the
 swallows
 to control their sorrow, to reflect on life:
 when you were young chicks didn't you
 fly away

from your own parents who summoned
 you in vain?

You didn't know how they felt at that
 time.

Now you're parents, your parents you
 understand.

《放鱼（自此后诗，到江州作）》
（全唐诗卷424）

晓日提竹篮，家僮买春蔬。
青青芹蕨下，叠卧双白鱼。
无声但呀呀，以气相煦濡。
倾篮写地上，拨刺长尺馀。
岂唯刀机忧，坐见蝼蚁图。
脱泉虽已久，得水犹可苏。
放之小池中，且用救干枯。
水小池窄狭，动尾触四隅。
一时幸苟活，久远将何如。
怜其不得所，移放于南湖。
南湖连西江，好去勿踟蹰。
施恩即望报，吾非斯人徒。
不须泥沙底，辛苦觅明珠。

**Releasing the Fish (Composed in
Jiangzhou Prefecture)**

My servant rises with the sun.
He brings back in a bamboo basket
the freshest catch from the market.

Under the green celeries and greener
fiddleheads
Two big white fish curl up in a pile,
moving and breathing – very much alive!
Their mouths open and shut –
no sounds ever come out.
Are they breathing moisture to each
other's face
so as to stay alive longer together?

The boy dumps them onto the ground
to show the two-foot full length of each.
They leap and turn on the earthen floor.
Without water they can make no splash.
They must be scared of the knife and pan,
most directly the gathering ants.

Although they're out of the river for a
while,
I still can save their life with a water bowl.
I transfer them then into a pool nearby
to keep them away from certain death.
The pool being small, they bump into the
banks
with a slight shake of tails and fins.
They may stay alive for a little longer
but there's not enough water for their
natural span.

I pity them for being out of place,
so I take them to South Lake to set them
free.
The lake is fed by the famous West River
where they may swim without hesitation
or fear.

There you go, fish, with a free will of
your own.
I'm not the kind of man who expects
rewards for every little help I provide.
Feel free to forget the legend of the
dragon carp
who, to reward its savior, searched the
ocean floor
to find and bring him the largest pearl.

《赎鸡》（《全唐诗》卷430）

清晨临江望，水禽正喧繁。
 凫雁与鸥鹭，游飏戏朝墩。
 适有鬻鸡者，挈之来远村。
 飞鸣彼何乐，窘束此何冤。
 喔喔十四雏，罩缚同一樊。
 足伤金距缩，头抢花冠翻。
 经宿废饮啄，日高诣屠门。
 迟回未死间，饥渴欲相吞。
 常慕古人道，仁信及鱼豚。
 见兹生惻隐，赎放双林园。
 开笼解索时，鸡鸡听我言。
 与尔镪三百，小惠何足论。
 莫学衔环雀，崎岖漫报恩。

Redeeming Chickens

Early in the morning
 I stroll by the broad river
 to view and hear the cackling fowls:
 grebes, wild geese, gulls, herons and
 egrets
 wheel in the breeze
 and chase each other in play,
 against the rising sun.

Then I'm accosted by a chicken peddler
 who
 comes to market from a village far away.
 The fourteen chickens in his cage,
 are bleeding against the barbed wire,
 their crowns rubbed raw against the
 bamboo lid.
 They haven't had any food
 for a full day and night.
 When the sun rises higher
 they'll be offered to the butcher.
 Faced with imminent death, they try
 to devour one another, for chickens are
 no saints but victims of hunger and thirst.

Oh, how happy are the fowls who fly and
 scream at large!
 How sad are these chickens that starve to
 death in cage!
 A bookish scholar I always love
 the lofty ethics of ancient sages
 who extended their kindness to fish and
 pigs.

Out of sympathy I purchase them –
 fourteen in all –
 to let them free in the Garden of Double
 Trees.
 Before I let them go I offer them advice.
 Chickens, chickens please listen:
 You mustn't follow the example
 of the legendary sparrow
 who searched all over the world
 to find a precious ring,
 to offer it to the man who set its life free.

I only paid the peddler
 three hundred brass farthings.
 The small help is not worth
 your lasting gratitude,
 let alone your searching up and down the
 world
 for that silly reward – the legendary ring.

《游石门涧》（《全唐诗》卷430）

石门无旧径，披榛访遗迹。
时逢山水秋，清辉如古昔。
常闻慧远辈，题诗此岩壁。
云覆莓苔封，苍然无处觅。
萧疏野生竹，崩剥多年石。
自从东晋后，无复人游历。
独有秋涧声，潺湲空旦夕。

Hiking up the Creek of Rock Gate

The old trail to the Rock Gate is nowhere
to be found.
I push through the bushes hoping to see
traces left by poets in the past.
What meets my eyes and ears?
Autumnal mountains and gurgling brooks
radiating a pure light as they did in
ancient days.

I've heard that Master Huiyuan, with
other Buddhist poets,
wrote poems on the cliff rocks,
somewhere near,
hidden behind clouds and under mosses.

There grow a few bamboo – skinny and
wild.
Million-year old rocks stand – eroding
away.

Nobody has visited this place
since the poets of the East Jin Dynasty.
But I hear a unique chanting in the
autumn creek
– in the empty day, empty night.

《山雉》（《全唐诗》卷431）

五步一啄草，十步一饮水。
适性遂其生，时哉山梁雉。
梁上无罾缴，梁下无鹰鹯。
雌雄与群雏，皆得终天年。
嗟嗟笼下鸡，及彼池中雁。
既有稻粱恩，必有牺牲患。

To a Mountain Pheasant

Five steps you stop
to peck some grass seeds.
Ten steps you stop again
to drink from the creek.

Oh, the sage of a mountain pheasant
that lives happily on the ridge!
Your guide is your own temperament,
your life whatever you please.

No net or poison on mountains where you
live.
No hawks or falcons hunt over your ridge.
Cocks, hens, new-born chicks
all live out their natural lives.

Thinking of you I sigh for chickens in
cages
and the geese kept by men on ponds.
For them a handful of grain's assured
daily –
before the birds are served on the table.

《东溪种柳》（《全唐诗》434）

野性爱栽植，植柳水中坻。
乘春持斧斫，裁截而树之。
长短既不一，高下随所宜。
倚岸埋大干，临流插小枝。
松柏不可待，楸楠固难移。
不如种此树，此树易荣滋。
无根亦可活，成阴况非迟。
三年未离郡，可以见依依。
种罢水边憩，仰头闲自思。
富贵本非望，功名须待时。
不种东溪柳，端坐欲何为。

Planting Willow Trees on the Banks of the East Creek

I'm a man of nature and field.
I love to plant and grow
especially willows on river isles.

I trim them in the spring
with an ax and scissors.
Soon they'll grow into mature trees.

I'm not picky with saplings –
long and short, big or small.
Whatever shape they come, I simply
find them the right places
on banks high or low.

Pines and cypresses take too long to grow.
*Phoebe Nanmu** is hard to transplant.
It's best to plant more willows
that can prosper on shallow roots
and offer shade in three years,
before my term expires as magistrate
in this remote prefecture in the south.

After planting I rest by the waterside,
reflect upon my own life.
As a man I expect neither fame nor wealth.
What else should I do but plant these willows
mid-stream in East Creek?

*A hardwood tree that grows in southern China, often used for building
imperial palaces.

《步东坡》（《全唐诗》卷434）

朝上东坡步，夕上东坡步。
东坡何所爱，爱此新成树。
种植当岁初，滋荣及春暮。
信意取次栽，无行亦无数。
绿阴斜景转，芳气微风度。
新叶鸟下来，萎花蝶飞去。
闲携斑竹杖，徐曳黄麻屦。
欲识往来频，青芜成白路。

Hiking the East Hill

I hike the East Hill in dawn.
I hike the East Hill in eve.

What attracts me so on the East Hill?
I love what I planted there – the newly grown trees.

It was the beginning of this auspicious year,
in the moist and blooming later spring.

I randomly planted these saplings
with no rows or number in mind.

As the season progresses green
shades emerge with the mounting sun
to wave and shiver in fragrant breeze.

Wild birds descend among new leaves
as butterflies flit away from withering flowers.

Whenever I have some leisure time
I'd hike the hill in my hemp sandals,
with the help of my spotted-bamboo stick.

If you have to know how often I come here,
please look at the white trail I wear
with my feet in the green carpet of grass.

《放旅雁（元和十年冬作）》
（《全唐诗》卷435）

九江十年冬大雪，江水生冰树枝折。
百鸟无食东西飞，中有旅雁声最饥。
雪中啄草冰上宿，翅冷腾空飞动迟。
江童持网捕将去，手携入市生卖之。
我本北人今谴谪，人鸟虽殊同是客。
见此客鸟伤客人，赎汝放汝飞入云。
雁雁汝飞向何处，第一莫飞西北去。
淮西有贼讨未平，百万甲兵久屯聚。
官军贼军相守老，食尽兵穷将及汝。
健儿饥饿射汝吃，拔汝翅翎为箭羽。

Releasing a Migrating Goose

Over Jiujiang, the River of Nine Rivers,
it snowed heavily in the winter of the
Tenth Year
of the Reign of Original Harmony.
Ice congeals the river and breaks the trees.
Hundreds of birds, hungry, flew
east and west in search of food.

Among them I heard the saddest cry
of the most hungry migrating geese.
They pecked at the frozen grasses in snow,
slept on the cold surface of the ice.
Wings stiffened by the wind
they couldn't fly fast enough to flee
the net of river boys, who captured a
goose,
brought it to the market alive.

I'm a northerner demoted to the south
a sojourner facing the sojourning bird.
Oh, bird! The sight of you saddens my
heart
I now redeem you, and release you
into the clouds.

Sweet goose wherever you're to fly,
you stay away from the Northwest.
West of River Huai, my childhood home,
the rebels are still fighting for their lives.
Millions of armored troops are still
stationed there,
some "official," others called "bandits."
Trapped in a deadlock for years and years,
running out of supplies, they would
readily prey
on you. Strong soldiers are good
marksmen.
They wouldn't hesitate to shoot you down
to make a supper of your meat
and attach your feathers to their arrow-
tails.

《得袁相书》（《全唐诗》卷437）

谷苗深处一农夫，面黑头斑手把锄。
何意使人犹识我，就田来送相公书。

**On Receiving a Letter from
Minister Yuan**

I'm a dark-faced peasant handling a hoe
In the middle of the rice paddy, among
fresh seedlings.

Your messenger nevertheless recognizes
me

and delivers a letter to the field –

a letter from you, my friend,
Lord Prime Minister Yuan.

《白鹭》（《全唐诗》卷438）

人生四十未全衰，我为愁多白发垂。
何故水边双白鹭，无愁头上亦垂丝。

To the Snowy Egrets

In his late forties
a man
should not be totally weakened
by age.

I, because of many worries,
feel old in mid-life
with long and hanging white hair.

The couple of snowy egrets,
standing by waterside
must be worry free.

Why do they also
have long silver threads.

《种荔枝》（《全唐诗》卷441）

红颗珍珠诚可爱，白须太守亦何痴。
十年结子知谁在，自向庭中种荔枝。

Planting the Litchi Tree

Giant pearls of coral,
so red and lovely!

The magistrate in exile,
so old with white beard!

He plants a litchi tree
in the courtyard of his official residence
now.

It'll bear fruits in ten years
here.

Where
would the old man be
then?

《鹦鹉》（《全唐诗》卷447）

陇西鹦鹉到江东，养得经年觜渐红。
常恐思归先剪翅，每因喂食暂开笼。
人怜巧语情虽重，鸟忆高飞意不同。
应似朱门歌舞妓，深藏牢闭后房中。

To A Parrot

Bird of far west, how did you
get here to the east of the Yangtze?

After a year in captivity
your beak gradually turns red –
ready to talk.

Your master loves you and is afraid
of losing a favorite pet.
He cuts off your remex feathers,
keeps the little cage-door locked
after he feeds you in morning and evening.

His love for your words seems real and profound.
Your love, bird, is always devoted
to the days of high, free flight.

He treats you the same way
he treats sing-song girls –
deep in the harem, behind locked doors.

《春风》（《全唐诗》卷450）

春风先发苑中梅，樱杏桃梨次第开。
荠花榆莢深村里，亦道春风为我来。

The Wind of Spring

In the Imperial Garden,
they say the wind of spring
first opens with its warm breath
plum buds followed by
cherry, apricot, peach and pear.

Growing wild
in remote villages
the shepherd's purse and elm pods say,
"Spring wind comes for us."

《舟中夜坐》（《全唐诗》卷451）

潭边霁后多清景，桥下凉来足好风。
秋鹤一双船一只，夜深相伴月明中。

Mid-Night, Sitting in a Boat

After rain, the sky clears up
to reveal pleasant views
by the freshened lake.

Under the bridge,
the current moves fast
making cool wind.

Autumn, one man, two cranes,
on one tiny boat,
keep each other company
in bright moonshine.

《四月池水满》（《全唐诗》卷452）

四月池水满，龟游鱼跃出。
吾亦爱吾池，池边开一室。
人鱼虽异族，其乐归于一。
且与尔为徒，逍遥同过日。
尔无羨沧海，蒲藻可委质。
吾亦忘青云，衡茅足容膝。
况吾与尔辈，本非蛟龙匹。
假如云雨来，只是池中物。

When April Fills the Pond

When April fills the pond
turtles swim,
fish splash into the air.

I love the full pond
as well as they, and build
a hut on its banks.

I know fish and men
belong to different groups.

The happiness we share is the same –
we live together as friends and spend
the same relaxing days.

You no longer admire the ocean,
comfortable with bulrushes and algae.
I forgot the ambition for fame in clouds,
settling in my thatched shack.

It's easy by this pond to live
a humble life. You and I
are no match for dragon gods*
either deep or high. When they make
clouds and rains in rivers and sky,

we remain lowly
dwellers of this pond.

*In Chinese mythology, dragons control clouds, rain, and snow.

《池上寓兴二绝 其一》
(《全唐诗》卷459)

濠梁庄惠漫相争，未必人情知物情。
懒捕鱼来鱼跃出，此非鱼乐是鱼惊。

Two Extempore Poems on the Pond

No. 1

On a Stone Bridge
two philosophers Zhuang and Hui
debated whether
Zhuang really knew
the happiness of fish
or not,
in vain.

The human mind
doesn't understand
feelings of animals.

A fish leaping out of water
may not be happy
but is frightened
of the otter after him.

《其二》

水浅鱼稀白鹭饥，劳心瞪目待鱼时。
外容闲暇中心苦，似是而非谁得知。

No. 2

The snowy egret
stands by the shallow rapids,
where fish are few,
water cold,
for long hours in apparent ease,
with eyes wide open.

A posture poets often admire – how leisurely!

What human knows
whether it's leisure or hunger
that the egret feels?

Zhangsun Zuofu 长孙佐辅

Little is known about Zhangsun Zuofu. All we know is that he was from northern China and was a very good poet. A Song Dynasty poet, Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), included him in an early anthology of a hundred Tang Poets and what little is known about Zhangsun comes from the brief introduction provided by Wang Anshi in the anthology. That's probably because Zhangsun Zuofu failed the imperial examination the first time he took it and never tried again. Nor did he serve the empire as a government official. His younger brother, Zhangsun Gongfu, however, was once the governor of Jizhou Prefecture, in what is now Jiangxi Province, in south-central China. Zhangsun Zuofu lived with his younger brother most of his life. Judging from the poems he wrote, we can say that Zhangsun Zuofu was active from the 760s through the 780s, and was probably still alive in 794. He left behind a collection of poems titled *Gudiao Ji* (*Songs to Ancient Tunes*).

《拟古咏河边枯树》

(《全唐诗》卷469)

野火烧枝水洗根，数围孤树半心存。
应是无机承雨露，却将春色寄苔痕。

To A Dead Tree by the River

Your top branches burned off
by wild fire.

Soil between your roots washed away
by flowing water.

Wide trunk half gone,*
there is no way
for you to celebrate
the bounty bestowed
by sunshine and rain.

Yet you've managed
to capture spring's freshness
with the moss
on your dying trunk.

*The species of the tree is unspecified. The trunk in the Chinese original is so large that it takes several men to encircle with their arms outstretched.

《山行经村径》（《全唐诗》卷469）

一径有人迹，到来唯数家。
依稀听机杼，寂历看桑麻。
雨湿渡头草，风吹坟上花。
却驱羸马去，数点归林鸦。

The Trail to a Mountain Village

One trail,
worn by human feet,
leads to the village of
five houses,
where spindles' vague sounds
buzz.

Quietly
hemp and mulberry trees
emerge from thin mist.

Heavy
with large rain drops
the grass blades bend by the ferry.

Brilliantly
wild flowers dance in wind
all over the graveyard.

Sadly
I pull myself away from the peaceful
village
on the back of a skinny horse,

followed
by a few black dots in the air –
crows returning home to the woods.

Li Deyu 李德裕

Li Deyu was born in 787 to the house of Li Jifu, who was at the time prime minister of the empire. The ninth son of the family, he was raised in what is now Hebei Province in northern China. He didn't take the imperial examination but was invited into the court as a token of the emperor's appreciation of his father's service. Li Deyu himself was an able politician who served in the important position of Defense Minister and then eventually himself became prime minister. During the seven years he served in that position, he stripped the eunuchs of excessive power at court, and directed defense of the empire's frontiers. According to his friend and fellow poet Li Shangyin, he was "a great prime minister whose reputation will last for ten thousand years" (quoted in Xiao Difei, et al., eds., *Tangshi Jianshang Cidian*. Shanghai, Shanghai Dictionary Press, 1983, p. 987). While serving the empire, he traveled extensively in China, on the western frontier, the southeastern coast, and in southwest Sichuan. When a new emperor came into the court, he was demoted to what a later poet called "the edge of heaven and corner of sea" – Qiongzhou on Hainan Island. He died there two years later. The poem translated below very likely reflects his longing for home while living on a remote island in humiliation.

《忆平泉杂咏。忆春雨》

(《全唐诗》卷475)

春鸠鸣野树，细雨入池塘。
潭上花微落，溪边草更长。
梳风白鹭起，拂水彩鸳翔。
最羨归飞燕，年年在故乡。

The Memory of Rain in Spring

Spring.
Turtledoves coo
in wild trees.

Rain,
in fine threads falls
over the rippling pond.

Fallen petals,
two or three,
bob on water.

Growing grasses
by the feeding creek
double their height over night.

Soft breeze
combing the feather of the egrets
sends them up the sky.

Wood-ducks
reflected by the water
fly in colorful brilliance.

But I admire most
the migrating swallows
who return to their home
every spring.