

I-chih CHEN 陳義芝

THE COMING INTO BEING OF THIS EXISTENCE
這一生的發生[†]

translated by Chris Wen-Chao Li 李文肇

It all began with a cave,
With a cliff and traces of a stream of water and a cave drifting with floral scents
and a solitary individual sitting cross-legged and a stick of burning incense
facing a boundless sphere of blue sea
and a dark bird atop the clouds breaking through the mist;
a cave, into which dew falls drop after drop, and lightning carves stroke after stroke.

It all began with zero —
zero: call it a solitary individual embracing a solitary cave,
a cave carved out by the distant pounding surf,
guarded by watchful eagles;
a cave the bodhisattva Tara hinted would one day split open,
all starting from zero, from a circular prayer mat.

One hundred and eight pagodas towering over the mountain top,
five hundred Arhats standing in wait aside the pagodas;
the day finally arrives: a large boulder marks the location of the main hall;
monks and nuns trek up the mountain path on this arduous yet joyful pilgrimage,
all because of a solitary individual sitting in meditation —
this existence came into being
because of one individual.

It all started with a mantra,
a volume of scripture, a bodhi tree,
the melody of a wind chime and the clatter of a string of prayer beads,
a heart of gold a benevolent gaze and a wheel of dharma;
the long dark night being also a voyage of compassion —
Om Ma Ni Padme Hum

The Big Dipper comes into view as the cave splits open —
it all began with a previous life of one hilltop
and meanders unto the next life of a mountain trail;
this existence came into being long before,
with a cave, a bodhisattva, and the hum of myriads of mantras,
back when the reality of this existence had not yet come into being.

[†] From the Literary Supplement of *United Daily News* (聯合報), August 4, 2005.

AFTERWORD: On June 12, 2005 my wife and I paid a humble visit to the Venerable Dharma Master Hsin Tao at Wu Sheng Monastery on Ling Jiou Mountain. The master was kind enough to present my wife with a copy of his book *Ling Jiou Mountain and Beyond*. On the title page he wrote the words “the coming into being of this existence,” reminiscent of a line from an esoteric Buddhist verse, a clue perhaps to the nature of karmic destiny. This poem is dedicated to Master Hsin Tao as a show of appreciation.

中文原文
這一生的發生[§]
陳義芝

一切從一個山洞開始
從一座斷崖一行水跡一個花香漂浮的山洞
一個趺座的人一炷裊裊的香
面向一片蒼鬱的海
一隻飛在雲頂的黑鳥突破漫天的雨霧
一個山洞，露水一滴滴滴著閃電一刀刀鑿著

一切從零開始
零是孤單的一人包容孤單的一個山洞
海潮遙遙沖激的山洞
鷹首切切衛護的山洞
多羅觀音隱隱預示終將開啓的山洞
一切從零從一個蒲團開始

一百零八座塔一座座矗立山頭
五百尊羅漢一尊尊侍立塔旁
那一天終於來臨，一顆巨石標定大殿的位置
一群僧尼艱難而喜悅地走在朝山的路上
一切都因為一個趺坐的人
這一生的發生因一個人

從一句咒語開始
從一本經書一株菩提
一句簷馬的叮嚀一串佛珠的摩挲
一切從一顆悲心一雙垂眉的眼一具法輪
漫漫的黑夜也是慈航
唵嘛呢叭彌吽

北斗的方位於是顯現，山門打開
一切從一個山頭的前世開始
到一條山路的來生還未終了
這一生的發生是很久以前就發生的
很久以前從一個山洞一尊菩薩一群梵唄聲開始

[§] 原載於民國九十四年八月四日《聯合報》副刊。

很久以前這一生的發生還未發生

後記：2005年6月12日於福隆靈鷲山「無生道場」拜謁心道法師，師父持《靈鷲山外山》一書贈紅媛，扉頁手寫「這一生的發生」，似指人間因緣，如偈語。歸作此詩，獻給心道師父。

Chris Wen-Chao LI (李文肇) is a translator and theoretical linguist. He received his doctoral degree in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology from Oxford University, and is currently Associate Professor of Chinese Linguistics at San Francisco State University. His translations and scholarship have appeared in *Renditions*, *Target*, *Language and Communication*, and the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.