



## Chapter 20

### Informative/Culture-Bound Text:

### 河南介绍 About Henan

河南在中国中部，这里是中国人口最多的省，是中国产粮最多的省，更是中国历史与文化悠久的省。<sup>1</sup>黄河从河南的中部流过，黄河孕育了中国最古老的文明，河南有三处世界文化遗产。<sup>2</sup>安阳是距今 3,300 多年的商代后期的都城，这里发现的青铜器、甲骨文以及宫殿遗址显示了当年的辉煌。<sup>3</sup>龙门石窟迄今已有 1,500 余年的历史，现存有窟龕 2,345 个，造像 10 万余尊，碑刻题记 2,800 余品。<sup>4</sup>登封嵩山是中国古人观念中的天中地心。<sup>5</sup>这里有中国古代保留最完整的观测天象的天文台，有众多的佛教寺院，其中少林寺是中国佛教禅宗的发源地，少林武术名扬世界。<sup>6</sup>中国历史上有二十多个朝代在河南建都。洛阳是十三朝古都，“天子驾六”是周代天子的遗存，白马寺是中国第一个佛教寺院。众多的文物与古迹说明了昔日的辉煌。<sup>7</sup>开封是七朝古都，宋朝时期最为发达，铁塔、繁塔是当年的建筑遗留，清明上河园按照宋代的绘画，复原了当时的城市景观。<sup>8</sup>



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### Text Analysis and Translation Strategies

This is an excerpt from a text for a video by Henan Museum. It describes the many rich resources of Henan in a factual way, but also contains some descriptive language to attract and persuade the readers, so it has vocative aspects as well. This kind of text is directed at foreign readers, to stir their interest and curiosity. The translator must thus be both accurate about the information, much of it historical, and must also find language to make it all appealing. Sometimes extra pieces of information (like dates) may have to be added to clarify things for the foreign readers who are ignorant of much that Chinese readers know. For this kind of writing, there is no need to use complicated, long sentences or flowery language. Since these are subtitles for a video, accuracy, precision and clarity are preferable.

### Sample Translation: Version One

Located in central China, Henan not only has the greatest population and the largest grain production, but also boasts a long history and rich cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> The Yellow River, flowing across the central province, has given birth to the oldest civilization in China. There are three world heritage properties in Henan.<sup>2</sup> Anyang was the capital in the late Shang Dynasty more than 3,300 years ago. The bronzes, oracle inscriptions, and palace ruins discovered here have shed light on a past age of splendour.<sup>3</sup> Longmen Grottoes, with a history of over 1,500 years, have 2,345 statue grottoes, over 100,000 statues and more than 2,800 pieces of stone inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> Mount Songshan in Dengfeng used to be the center of Heaven and Earth in ancient Chinese outlook of the world.<sup>5</sup> Here lies the best preserved astronomical observatory built



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in ancient China. There are numerous Buddhist temples in Henan. Among them, Shaolin Temple is the place of origin of the Chan sect of Chinese Buddhism. It also has worldwide fame for its kungfu.<sup>6</sup> In Chinese history, over 20 dynasties established their capitals in Henan. Luoyang used to be capital of thirteen dynasties. The remains of the carriage drawn by six horses were left over by the monarch of the Zhou Dynasty. Baima Temple, or White Horse Temple, was the first Buddhist temple in China. The galaxy of cultural relics and historic sites all bear evidence to Luoyang's glorious past.<sup>7</sup> Kaifeng, capital of seven dynasties, reached its heyday in the Song Dynasty. The Iron Pagoda and Fanta Pagoda are also relics from the Song Dynasty. The Millennium City Park represents the cityscape of Bianliang in the Song Dynasty according to the famous painting by Song painter Zhang Zeduan, *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*.<sup>8</sup>

### Sample Translation: Version Two

The province of Henan is situated in central China. It has the largest population and produces the greatest amount of grain in the country. It also has a very long history and rich cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> The Yellow River flows west to east through the province and has nurtured the oldest Chinese civilization, now represented in three world cultural heritage sites.<sup>2</sup> These are the ruins of the city of Anyang, the Longmen Grottoes, and Mt. Songshan of Dengfeng.

Anyang was the capital of the later Shang dynasty 3,300 years ago. Many bronze vessels, oracle bones and the foundations of palaces have been excavated there, attesting to its former glory.<sup>3</sup> The Longmen Grottoes date back 1,500 years. Today, there are 2,345 caves and niches, over 100,000 statues and 2,800 inscriptions carved in stone.<sup>4</sup>



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Mt. Songshan was considered by the ancient Chinese to be the center of earth and heaven,<sup>5</sup> and has the best-preserved ancient observatory for astronomical phenomena. There are many Buddhist temples in Mt. Songshan, with Shaolin Temple as the best known, both as the source of the Chan sect of Chinese Buddhism and also where Shaolin kungfu was born.<sup>6</sup>

Over the millennia, some two dozen dynasties established their capitals in the province of Henan. The city of Luoyang alone was the capital for thirteen of them. The remains of a Zhou dynasty (BCE 1,000) imperial chariot drawn by six horses were unearthed here, while the existing White Horse Temple was the earliest Buddhist temple in China. A great many other cultural relics and ancient sites have been discovered, attesting to the city's rich and glorious past.<sup>7</sup>

The city of Kaifeng was the capital of seven dynasties, rising to its greatest prosperity in the Song dynasty (960-1279). The Iron Pagoda and the Pota Pagoda both date back to this vibrant and wealthy era, which comes vividly to life in the Millenium City Park where sites are recreated from the famous Song dynasty painting "Along the River During the Qingming Festival."<sup>8</sup>

Translated by Shi Xiaojing

### Notes

1. The biggest difference here is sentence structure. V1 follows the original closely and puts all this information into one long sentence. In fact, these components are all separate, which is why V2 has divided them into three sentences according to their content. Most foreign readers will probably not know where Henan is, so its location is the first thing



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they want. However, V1 starts the sentence with a past participle phrase which puts the emphasis instead on the population and grain, and then continues with a “but also” clause to link with “not only” as if these parts are all linked by logic, while in fact they are just statements of unrelated facts (there is no logical link between location, population, grain production and a long history). The use of “boasts” is overdone here, “has a long history” is very common collocation.

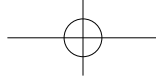
2. Sometimes, the translator has to do a bit of rewriting to “clean up” the original. For example, in this sentence, the original uses 黄河 twice as the subject, and then suddenly switches to 河南. This is poor writing. V1 breaks this into two sentences, whereas V2 makes this one. In V1, using a participle phrase “flowing across the central province” places the emphasis on “has given birth...” as if there is some logical connection. Again, this is just a statement of facts, so a simple SVO structure with a compound sentence (joined by “and”) is more appropriate. “The Yellow River...has given birth to...civilization” is poor collocation. A river usually “nurtures” a civilization. The sudden switch to 河南 creates a disjointed feeling in the original, which V1 has not corrected. V2 uses “now represented in three world cultural heritage sites” to link it with “the oldest Chinese civilization.” V2 then boldly decides to add a new sentence to connect the “heritage sites” with the next part: “These are the ruins of the city of Anyang, the Longmen Grottoes, and Mt. Songshan of Dengfeng,” information summarized from the later text which also clarifies the three sites. This then very neatly leads into the details of those sites. When “cleaning up” a poorly constructed original, the translator has to be very careful and be able to justify the changes.
3. There are several points worth noting. First, the paragraph break here signifies the end of the introduction to Henan province and the beginning of a series of descriptions of the heritage sites. This makes



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things clearer to the readers. Punctuation is an important addition to clarifying meaning. Second, V1 uses “here” but the description of the sites is from a third party’s perspective so the demonstrative adverb should be “there.” Both translations of 显示了当年的辉煌 “shed light on a past age of splendour” and “attesting to its former glory” are more a question of word choice than good or bad.

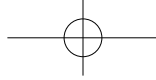
4. Again, V1 puts everything into one sentence. V2 puts the date in one, and then the rest in another. From a foreign reader’s perspective, this is clearer: When talking about historical objects or sites, the first thing to know is the date. “2,800 pieces of stone inscriptions” is poor collocation, since “pieces of stone” sounds like small bits. The number itself actually describes the inscriptions, not the stones. This can also be translated as “2,800 stone inscriptions.”
5. Translating 登封嵩山 as “Mount Songshan in Dengfeng” in V1 means the subject is Mt. Songshan, but in fact, when applying for world heritage status, Dengfeng’s historical buildings were the subject, not the mountain. V2 omits Mt. Songshan (already mentioned in the former paragraph) and focuses on Dengfeng. This is where the translator has to do some research to be sure of the facts. Checking a map is a good idea! V1’s “...ancient Chinese outlook of the world” is poor collocation, it could be changed to “in the ancient Chinese worldview,” but V2’s “considered by the ancient Chinese” is more idiomatic. Anyway, it was the ancients who believed Dengfeng was the center of earth and heaven, it never actually was, so “used to be” is inaccurate, since it implies a fact in the past.
6. By splitting this into three sentences, V1 breaks the flow of meaning. V2 unpacks the links and then combines them into one sentence centered on Shaolin Temple. V1 says the temples are in Henan, but clearly this sentence is all about Songshan which is why V2 says Mt.



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Songshan. This is an example of poor understanding of the context and a poor grasp of cohesion. “Has worldwide fame” for 名扬世界 is bad collocation, it should be “is famous worldwide for...” The verb “to lie” is poor collocation with “observatory.” Starting the sentence with “here” is also awkward, this can be changed to “The best preserved ancient observatory for astronomical observations is situated here.”

7. The paragraph break here is once again to separate the text into chunks of meaning focused on different subjects: after the heritage sites, now the city of Luoyang. In V1, starting the sentence with “in Chinese history” is redundant here. V2 adds “over the millennia” to help the foreign readers understand the length of time that two dozen dynasties cover. Adding “the city of Luoyang” is also to clarify things, since foreigners are often not familiar with Chinese places. V1 is missing the definite article “the” in front of “capital” which changes the meaning. V2 links the thirteen dynasties with their capital in Luoyang to the previous “dozen dynasties” by inserting “of them.” In V1 “were left over” is wrong in this context as “remains” already implies this. The sentence construction also puts emphasis on the “remains” instead of on the connection between them and the city. That’s why V2 says the remains “were unearthed here,” which is common sense even if not stated in the original. V2 simplifies by putting “Zhou dynasty” as an adjective, and “imperial” in place of “monarch.” The date “BCE 1,000” is added for foreign readers. V1 has divided the contents into three sentences without really relating them clearly to Luoyang. V2 groups things into two. Words like “here” “existing” “have been discovered” make the links clearer.
8. The paragraph break once again indicates a change of focus from Luoyang to Kaifeng. In the original, this is a long sentence divided into short clauses. The English must find a way to include all the information



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without repeating certain words too often. In V1, the definite article “the” is again missing from “capital.” Also, “heyday” is too colloquial for this context. The first time “Song dynasty” appears V2 adds the dates in brackets to assist the foreign reader. In the the next part of the paragraph, the translator has to find a way to avoid repeating “Song dynasty” which appears several times. V2 gets out of trouble by using “this vibrant and wealthy era” and by using “which” to link to the next part so that the term only reappears at the end as “Song dynasty painting.” V1 calls 繁塔 Fanta Pagoda but the local people call it Pota Pagoda, hence the change in V2. “Represent” here is bad collocation with “park,” which in this context can only “recreate” something. “Cityscape” for 城市景观 is inappropriate since the word usually refers to the large views of modern cities with many skyscrapers. Using the ancient name of Bianliang instead of Kaifeng is very confusing to a non-Chinese reader. Such additions should be avoided. V1 uses “according to” which is wrong here, “in accordance with” would be correct. A point to be aware of is that 清明上河园 is easily misread as 清明上河图 since the painting is better known than this theme park.

The main problems in V1 are the use of long sentences often starting with participle phrases that shift the emphasis away from the subject. Beginning translators should try to keep their syntax simple and straightforward. They should find the subject and predicate and then consider how to fit the other information in (See Chapter 2, Comparison of Syntax and Discourse Structures).