

15th St. Jerome Translation Contest

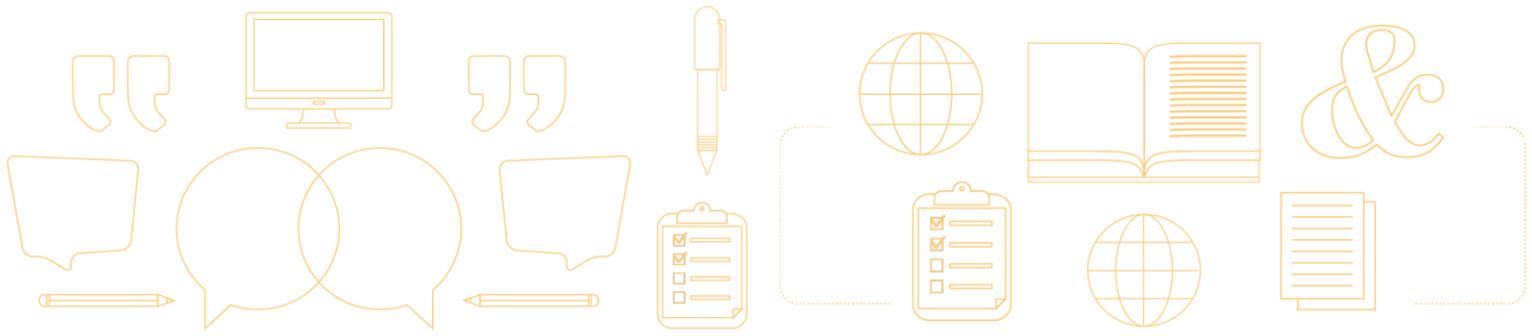
2020 EDITION

Remarks by the judges

Chinese

In the context of multilingualism as one of the core values of the United Nations, it is altogether fitting and proper that an annual translation contest should be held to commemorate St. Jerome (347-420), a Bible translator credited for producing the most famous and successfully used version of the Latin translation of the Bible. Given that Christianity is to the West what Buddhism is to the East, let us not forget Xuanzang (circa 602-664), who is better known to Chinese as Tang Seng, the master of the Monkey King in the household fantasy novel *Journey to the West*. After a seventeen-year odyssey to India, Xuanzang brought back numerous early Buddhist scriptures, which were subsequently translated into Chinese in his translation workshops, or *yichang*, under the auspices of the Tang emperor. Retrospection of those remarkable heroes reminds us translators working in and out of the United Nations system to recommit ourselves to the lofty cause of promoting peace, love and unity in the world by surmounting language barriers.

It was therefore a great honour for us judges to examine the 24 entries from staff translators and 13 entries from student translators submitted for this year's contest. Reading these elaborately polished translations contrived with inspiration and perspiration is a pleasant "journey to the East". Another journey to the East to note is the introduction of rock 'n' roll as a genre of pop music in China. As Tina Turner has been "the symbol of rock 'n' roll stamina for 50 years", translating Tina Turner is Having the Time of Her Life is also proof of stamina—translators of art dance with the shackles of factual precision, artistic licenses and stylistic alignment. A case in point in the source text is the claim by Tina's husband that the song "is called 'Coldplay with the Chainsmokers!'" This is not true, for the Song is actually called "Something Just Like This" by American electronic music duo The Chainsmokers and British rock band Coldplay, released on 22 February 2017. With respect to the faithfulness of translation, who should translators be faithful to? Tina's husband, the author, the artists The Chainsmokers and Coldplay, or readers? Dilemmas such as this are forever haunting and intriguing generations of translators who exercise careful discretion after weighing miscellaneous factors well beyond the mechanism of machine translation. This may suffice to underscore the need for a human touch in this era of mechanization by artificial intelligence—the translation of art merits human intelligence and ingenuity.



Cultural gaps also play a significant role in translation. We are pleased to note that some translators have taken note of the last name Turner, shared by Tina Turner and Ike Turner. Interestingly, Tina got this name from her ex-husband Ike Turner, and kept it after divorce and even after she married Erwin Bach in 2013. Since women in mainland China do not have married names, one possible expedient to address this gap is to add “ex-husband” before Ike Turner in Chinese translation, but no translator has ventured so far as to laud Tina’s triumph as a feminist hero when she refused to take the name of her new husband, Bach. As a world-class artist, Tina could “sleep in”, but the “wake-up call” for gender equality still rings across the world. While this message cannot be conveyed in this translation, it should be translated into concerted efforts for campaigns spearheaded by the United Nations and world leaders.