

gǔn gǔn zhǎngjiāngdōng shì shuǐ làng huā táo jìn yīngxióng
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shì fēi chéng bài zhuǎn tóu kōng
是非成敗轉頭空。

qīngshān yī jiù zài jǐ dù xī yánghóng
青山依舊在，幾度夕陽紅。

Hello! You roaring and rolling and east-flowing water of the Yangzijiang River, may I ask how many great personalities have you carried away with your flowery-crowned waves?

Who were right, who were wrong, who were successful, or who failed became questions of insignificance, for historical significance changed so quickly even as one turned his head.

Only the green mountains remain, and the evening sun shines red.

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This poem appears at the beginning of one of the greatest Chinese novels of all times: the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 三國演義。It was at the end of the Han Dynasty 漢朝, and there were three kingdoms – Wei 魏國, Shu 蜀國, and Wu 吳國 – which competed with one another to be the next ruler of the entire China 中國.

By chance or otherwise, a young man had to be on one side or another. When you read, you immediately realize the difference between the great literature works of the East and the West.

Take Iliad for example. You are actually reading poems. The entire book are poems on how the war was fought. On the contrary, when you read the Chinese Classical novels, you are reading them exactly the way you read a contemporary novel. But why?

Answer: the classical novels survive the Chinese history through the story tellers. They would set up an outfit in a corner of a marketplace, or even in the street. People would gather around him and listen. And that was how an ancient long story remained, until the printing press came into being.

Problem solved: a great classical novel was set in stone.

Homer, being blind, would do the same thing. Only that he would sing his stories in poems. The tradition would carry on until the Chinese-invented printing press was brought back by the Crusaders around the 10th century AD. Homer was able to rest in peace from then on because his stories were set in the printing press!