

TRACING BACK SNIPPETS OF KNOWLEDGE
EMBEDDED IN TANG POEMS,
OR
WHAT SOURCES MIGHT EXPLAIN THE RICH
INFORMATION ON PLANTS PRESENT IN
TANG POETRY

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS OR QUESTIONS

- If we agree that poetry is not just lyrical, then:
 - How far can we stretch our understanding of what defines *shi* 詩?
 - 情 → 志 → 贈答 → 學問
- How can we identify these different layers in /types of *shi* 詩?
 - Style and diction
 - Lexicon
 - Textual sources (borrowings, copying, reusing, intertextual links)

TÚ 荼 (DANDELION)

Sonchus oleraceus L.

Family : asteraceae

Tropicos.org. Missouri Botanical Garden.

<<http://www.tropicos.org/Image/I00184038>>

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TÚ AND ITS EQUIVALENTS (+ SOURCES)

Equivalent	Source text	Present in poem
苦菜	爾雅 證類本草	No
苦荼	說文解字	Yes
荼草	神農本草經 (reconstructed)	
空草	證類本草	Yes
貝母	證類本草	No
藥實	證類本草	No
苦花	證類本草	Yes
商草	證類本草	No
勒母	證類本草	No
堇荼/勒母	陸璣：毛詩草木鳥獸蟲魚疏	No

SHIJING 詩經 35 “谷風” (I)

習習谷風，
以陰以雨。
黽勉同心，
不宜有怒。

Whistles the wind in the valley,
At times it darkens, at times rains.
Let us be good to each other,
We should not get angry.

采葑采菲，
無以下體？
德音莫違，
及爾同死。

When we pluck the crucifers,
We might not need its lower part.
We shall not turn away from our righteous vows:
Shall be together until death.

SHIJING 詩經 35 “谷風” (2)

行道遲遲，
中心有違。
不遠伊邇，
薄送我畿。

Slow along the road,
Resisting within.
Not far, so close,
Just accompanied me to the sill.

誰謂荼苦，
其甘如薺。
宴爾新昏，
如兄如弟。

Who said dandelion was bitter?
As sweet as water chestnut it is.
Off you celebrate your new bride,
As [close] as brothers

獨孤及 (725-777): 季冬自嵩山赴洛道中作 (I)

皇運偶中變，
長蛇食中土。
天蓋西北傾，
衆星殞如雨。
邊塵動地起，
千里聞戰鼓。
死人成為阜，
流血塗草莽。

Halfway through the august destiny,
The violent snake swallowed half of our land.
The celestial cover bends to the North-West,
Stars, in number, drip like rain.
The dust of the barbarians rises over a shaken earth,
And the drums of war are heard through thousands
of leagues.
The dead ones have turned into mound,
Flowing blood spreads through the grassland.

獨孤及 (725-777): 季冬自嵩山赴洛道中作 (2)

策馬何紛紛，
捐軀抗豺虎。
甘心赴國難，
誰謂荼葉苦。
天子初受命，
省方造區宇。
斬鯨安溟波，
截鼉作天柱。

Our horses we whip, how disordered!
Those ready for sacrifice resist this leopard, this tiger.
Their heart like honey, they jump into the troubles of
the State.
Who said dandelion is bitter?
When the son of heaven first received his mandate,
Watchful he arranged the universe.
Had he beheaded the whale, there would be no wave,
Had he cut the testudinal monster, it would steady
heavens.

李咸用 (ACTIVE 817): 放歌行

蠢蠢荼蓼蟲，
蕙蕙避葵薺。
悠悠狷者心，
寂寂厭清世。
如何不食甘，
命合苦其噬。
如何不趣時，
分合辱其體。
至哉先聖情，
于物不凝滯。

Swarm the insects on the dandelion, the knotweed,
rustle as they leave the mallow, the water chestnut.
Agitated the heart of the impetuous ones
who in solitude hate peace.
How so do they not eat sweet?
They were meant to taste bitter.
How so do they not adapt to circumstances?
They realized they abhor its form.
How perfect, the feelings of the ancient sages!
Not locked by things.

EXAMPLES OF SCHOLARSHIP ON TÚ

荼，苦菜也。

Tú is kǔcài (bitter plant). Mao (commentator)

荼誠苦矣，而君子於己之苦毒又甚於荼，比方之，荼則甘如薺。

Tú is bitter indeed, but the bitterness her beloved one brings her is even more intense than the bitterness of tú. In comparison with her [situation], tú is sweet as water chestnut. Zheng Xuan (commentator)

《釋草》云：「荼，委葉。」舍人曰：「荼，一名委葉。某氏引此詩，則此荼謂委葉也。」王肅云：「荼，陸穢。蓼，水草。」

The “Plants” [chapter of the *Erya*] states: “*Tú* is wild endive”. The Secretary explained: “One calls *tú* wild endive. Another one, quoting this poem, says *tú* is called wild endive”. Wang Su elucidated: “*Tú* is a terrestrial weed, *liǎo* an aquatic weed.” *Kong Yingda (commentator) quoting the Erya and other texts*

陶弘景 (452-536): 本草經集注

苦菜：味苦，寒。主五藏邪氣，厭穀胃痺。久服安心，益氣，聰察，少臥，輕身，耐老。一名荼草。

kǔcài (bitter plant): its taste is bitter, it is a cold medication. It cures wicked energy circulation in the five organs and stomach paralysis under the pressure of cereals. After long medication, it brings peace to the heart, it strengthens the energy circulation; [the cured person] is perceptive, seldom needing to lie down, with a lighter body, in good disposition to grow old. Some call it *tucào* (bitter weed).

賈思勰 (N.D.): 齊民要錄

荼

《爾雅》曰：“荼，苦菜。” “可食。”

《詩義疏》曰：“山田苦菜甜，所謂“堇、荼如飴”。”

Tú:

The *Erya* 爾雅 (Elegantiae) states: “Dandelion is called *kǔcài* (bitter plant)”. “It can be eaten”.

The *Commentary on the Meaning of the Poems* states: “In the fields in the mountain, *kǔcài* (bitter plant) is sweet, as in ‘buttercup, dandelion, as if honeyed’”.

FINAL REMARKS AND QUESTIONS

- Illustrate poetic references in their variety and the fact that these references may not directly come from its original source but rather from its quotation in a commentary or a *leishu*
 - Partly recognized, but still much to be manifested
- Try and find out how large the corpora that has been “injected” in Tang poetry
 - Requires to choose plants under study more carefully
- Identify networks of linked texts including less visible authors and texts
- Illustrate poetry composition in its diversity (not limited to lyrical poetry)