

Presenters: Ivan Kory (English) AND Ian Mckee (Classical Chinese)

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Entitled “Light Furs, Fat Horses,” this is a 5-character, old style poem composed by the most prolific poet of the Tang Dynasty, Bai Juyi (772-846). It comes from a series of ten satirical poems entitled “Poems of the Capital Area,” which were written around 810 CE. Bai had earlier urged the imperial court to take measures to aid the victims of severe droughts that plagued the areas around the capital in 810, but as this poem strongly suggests, his pleas went unheeded. It does not say a lot about the environment, but it definitely comments on social justice and responsibility.

輕肥

[唐] 白居易

Qīng féi


[Táng] Bái Jūyì

意氣驕滿路，鞍馬光照塵。Yìqì jiāo mǎn lù, ānmǎ guāngzhào chén.  
借問何為者，人稱是內臣。Jièwèn hé wèi zhě, rénchēng shì nèichén.  
朱紱皆大夫，紫綬或將軍。Zhū fú jiē dàfū, zǐshòu huò jiāngjūn.  
夸赴軍中宴，走馬去如雲。Kuā fù jūn zhōng yàn, zǒumǎ qù rú yún.  
尊壘溢九醞，水陸羅八珍。Zūn léi yì jiǔ yùn, shuǐlù luóbāzhēn.  
果擘洞庭橘，膾切天池鱗。Guǒ bāi dòngtíng jú, kuài qiè tiānchí lín.  
食飽心自若，酒酣氣益振。Shí bǎo xīn zìruò, jiǔ hān qì yì zhèn.  
是歲江南旱，衢州人食人。Shì suì jiāngnán hàn, qúzhōu rén shí rén.

P O C H Ü - I

*Selected Poems*

TRANSLATED BY BURTON WATSON

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*Light Furs, Fat Horses*

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A show of arrogant spirit fills the road;  
a glitter of saddles and horses lights up the dust.  
I ask who these people are—  
trusted servants of the ruler, I'm told.  
The vermilion sashes are all high-ranking courtiers,  
the purple-ribboned are probably generals.  
Proudly they repair to the regimental feast,  
their galloping horses passing like clouds.  
Tankards and wine cups brim with nine-brewed wine;  
from water and land, array of eight delicacies.  
For fruit they break open Tung-t'ing oranges,  
for fish salad, carve up scaly bounty from T'ien-ch'ih.  
Stuffed with food, they rest content in heart;  
livened by wine, their mood grows merrier than ever.  
This year there's a drought south of the Yangtze.  
In Ch'ü-chou, people are eating people.