

HAN SHAN READER

Upaya Zen Center
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*Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds?
Han Shan (Gary Snyder)*

<http://www.hermitary.com/articles/han-shan.html>)

Two distinct biographical traditions exist about the ninth-century Chinese poet and recluse who called himself Han-Shan (Cold Mountain). The first version emphasizes his eccentricity, his visits to a Buddhist temple for stints of odd jobs or to poke fun at the monks' self-importance. This tradition associates him with two other eccentric hermits, Shih-te (Pickup) and Feng-kan (Big Stick). The second tradition is based more solidly on the biographical elements found in his three-hundred-plus poems. These clues to the biography of Han-shan center around his life after the An Lu-shan Rebellion (755-763).

For forty years the benign emperor Ming Huang had witnessed unprecedented prosperity under his rule. War, trade, social reform, and the proliferation of the arts had bestowed wealth on nearly every strata of T'ang dynasty China. But in dotage, the emperor's obsession with a concubine grew. He appointed the concubine's unscrupulous brother to full power while disappearing behind a veiled curtain of private pleasures. When the brother's rule inevitably brought about rebellion, the revolt was led by a Tatar official An Lu-shan, and the blood-letting and turmoil continued unabated for eight years. In this chaos and its aftermath emerged the great T'ang poets Li Po, Tu Fu -- and Han-shan.

Apparently Han-shan was born to privilege but did not succeed in civil or military service. He was then employed by an official in a clerical capacity.

My writing and judgment are not that bad
but an unfit body receives no post
examiners expose me with a jerk
they wash away the dirt and search for my sores.

Han-shan married and had a son. But then came the An Lu-shan Rebellion.

Han-shan's employer had offered his services to the new government, but two years later when the capital was recaptured by the emperor, not all the civil servants who had switched allegiance were pardoned, including Han-shan's employer. The poet had to flee for his life, and in the midst of continued chaos and violence escaped to the Tientai Mountains with a new identity, family in tow. As translator Red Pine says: In the entire history of Chinese culture, no other poet of singular stature has managed to preserve the veil of mystery concerning his true identity as well as Cold Mountain, and I propose that this was not literary conceit but a matter of life or death.

We get a quick glimpse of Han-shan's new daily life:

A mountain man lives under thatch
before his gate carts and horses are rare
the forest is quiet but partial to birds
the streams are wide and home to fish
with his son he picks wild fruit
with his wife he hoes between rocks
what does he have at home

a shelf full of nothing but books.

With this turning point, Han-shan embraces the life of a hermit in the Tientei Mountains.

My true home is Cold Mountain
perched among cliffs beyond the reach of trouble ...

The Tientei Mountains are my home
mist-shrouded cloud paths keep guests away
thousand-meter cliffs make hiding easy
above a rocky ledge among ten thousand streams
with bark hat and wooden clogs I walk along the banks
with hemp robe and pigweed staff I walk around the peaks
once you see through transience and illusion
the joys of roaming free are wonderful indeed.

The poems reveal a thorough knowledge of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist sources as well as of poetry and literature. Han-shan never professes a particular creed but freely borrows from all the traditions. Indeed he was a consistent critic of rituals and monks. In one poem he speaks of encountering Taoist monks who praise elixirs and await a crane or fish at death and calls them "fools ... persisting in foolishness." In general he finds the "homeless" or professed monks and nuns "do not practice the homeless profession."

Nor does Han-shan respect the scholar-gentlemen, court poets, and civil servants who play at reclusion (such as Li-Po):

You are not really hermits
you just call yourselves recluses
they would never wear silk headdress
they prefer a hemp bandana ...
you are like monkeys with those hats
aping those who shun the dust and wind.

It is not that Han-shan is a cynic with no point of view, for everywhere his poems reflect the wisdom of Taoist and Buddhist thought.

I have always loved friends of the Way
friends of the Way I have always held dear
meeting a traveler with a silent spring
or greeting a guest talking Chan ...

Daily Life

In an early poem, Han-shan had described himself as a "poor clerk" and his escape and mountain isolation meant that his former poverty became hermit simplicity. At first he lived in a cave ("my cave is on a distant ridge"), and amenities were few:

soft grass serves as a mattress

my quilt is the dark blue sky
a boulder makes a fine pillow.

He reflects philosophically on his fate: "Heaven and earth can crumble and change."

Eventually, though, he made a hut.

I cut some thatch to roof a pine hut
I made a pool and channeled the spring ...

Apparently he farmed a while, but probably only as long as he had a family:

I returned to the edge of a forest
and chose the life of a farmer
forthright in my dealings
no flattery in my speech ...
out working I love to watch buffalo calves
at home I don't go far.

But after the personal ignominy of the An Lu-shan Rebellion, not all was contentment for Han-shan. He mentions that his wife "disdained" him, probably referring to the difficult poverty after their reclusion. He never mentions her again, nor his son -- only his aloneness and seclusion. One early poem offers a glimpse of his bleakest years.

A trifle poor in the past
today I am completely poor
whatever I do does not work out
every road is a treadmill
my legs quake in the mud
my stomach aches on festival days ...

And in another poem, he reveals

last night I dreamt I went home
and saw my wife at her loom
she stopped the shuttle as if in thought
then raised it as if without strength
I called and she turned to look
looking, she did not know me ...

This passage suggests that she may have died in those early years of poverty.

Han-shan mentions how dew soaks his thatched eaves and that the sill of his only window, through which moonlight enters, is made of old crockery -- obvious signs of poverty. But for all that, he asserts, "Even if I had a heap of gold, I would rather be poor in the woods."

Han-shan had made of his existence something positive.

When hermits hide from society
most retire to the hills
where green vines veil the slopes
and jade streams echo unbroken
where happiness reigns
and contentment lasts
where pure white lotus minds
are not stained by the muddy world.

In his encounters, he notes, people call him crazy, ugly, unkempt, and unintelligible. Han-shan did not care. People could not begin to understand, he reflects. He was perpetually "hard in pursuit of meeting a buddha," but it probably would not happen. "There is a road," he writes, "but not to town." Instead, he invites all (rhetorically) to follow this road up Cold Mountain and see if they might not ascend it and understand.

The man in the clouds and cliffs
with one thin robe
in autumn he lets the leaves fall
in spring he lets the trees bloom
he sleeps through the Three Realms free of concerns
with moonlight and wind for his home.

Here are a few more poems in which Han-shan describes himself:

Cold Mountain is nothing but clouds
secluded and free of dust
a hermit owns a cushion of straw
the moon is his lone lamp
his bed of stone overlooks a pool
his neighbors are tigers and deer
preferring the joys of solitude
he remains as a man beyond form.

Relaxing below Cold Cliff
the surprises are very special
taking a basket to gather wild plants
bringing it back loaded with fruit
spreading fresh grass for a simple meal
nibbling on magic mushrooms
rinsing my ladle and bowl in a pool
making a stew from scraps
sitting in sunshine wrapped in a robe
reading the poems of the ancients.

Cold Mountain has a dwelling

with no partitions inside
six doors open left and right
from the hall he sees blue sky
wherever he looks the house is bare
the east wall greets the west wall
nothing, really, between them
no need for anybody's care
he makes a small fire when cold comes
cooks plants when he gets hungry
he is not like the old farmer
who enlarges his fields and outbuildings ...

Old age does not spare the hermit of feelings like any other person. Winter's cold is sharper and his body harder to warm (though, he says, there is never a need for a fan in summer!). Looking in a mirror one day, Han-shan sees nothing but "wisps of white." He reflects that his "good days are almost gone."

The Sage of Cold Mountain
I am always like this
up here alone
he is neither dead nor alive. ...
face brown, head white, content with mountain life
cloth robe pulled tight, I accept my karma.

And in another poem:

An old man alone on a darkening ridge
retiring to my hut I accept white hair
but sigh that today and the years gone by
are mindless, like the rivers flowing east.

We do not know when Han-shan died, and it was not for another two centuries before someone copied his poems from the rocks and temple walls of the vicinity in which he had left them, assembling the poems into a collection to be added to the definitive T'ang anthology. But even to his last day, we may image Han-shan as he was in one of his more heart-felt poems:

Today I sat before the cliffs
I sat until the mists drew off
a single crystal stream
a towering ridge of jade
a cloud's dawn shadow not yet moving
the moons night light still adrift
a body free of dust
a mind without a care.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The best collections of Han-shan in English translation include:

The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain, translated by Red Pine [i.e., Bill Porter]. Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2000; The View from Cold Mountain, translated by Arthur Tobias, James Sanford, and J.P. Seaton. Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 1982; Cold Mountain: 100 Poems, translated by Burton Watson. New York: Grove Press, 1962; and The Poetry of Han-shan, translated by Robert Henricks. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990. Red Pine's edition includes the original Chinese.

: <http://www.hermitary.com/articles/han-shan.html>

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Thirty years ago I was born into the world.
A thousand, ten thousand miles I've roamed.
By rivers where the green grass grows thick,
Beyond the border where the red sands fly.
I brewed potions in a vain search for life everlasting,
I read books, I sang songs of history,
And today I've come home to Cold Mountain
To pillow my head on the stream and wash my ears.

Gary Snyder translations

7

You have seen the blossoms among the leaves;

tell me, how long will they stay?
Today they tremble before the hand that picks them;
tomorrow they wait someone's garden broom.

Wonderful is the bright heart of youth,
but with the years it grows old.
Is the world not like these flowers?
Ruddy faces, how can they last?

21
When I see a fellow abusing others,
I think of a man with a basketful of water.
As fast as he can, he runs with it home,
but when he gets there, what's left in the basket?
When I see a man being abused by others,
I think of the leek growing in the garden.
Day after day men pull off the leaves,
but the heart it was born with remains the same.

29
I spur my horse past the ruined city;
the ruined city, that wakes the traveler's thoughts:
ancient battlements, high and low;
old grave mounds, great and small.
Where the shadow of a single tumbleweed trembles
and the voice of the great trees clings forever,
I sigh over all these common bones —
No roll of the immortals bears their names.

Cold Mountain
Han-shan
tr. by Burton Watson

Han Shan and Shi De
(translated by Mary Jacob)



Han Shan (<http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/S/ShanHan/>)

He lived in China sometime between 630 and 830 CE. Since many writers refer to Han Shan as a late 8th Century poet, I will assume he flourished from around 750 to 800 CE. Han Shan is one of those Taoist-Chan Sages who are reported to have enjoyed very long lives due in part to their sheer luck, all that fresh air, gruel, pure water, long daily walks, rugged individualism, and all those secret Taoist herbs and unusual exercises.

Han Shan was a hermit and poet of the T'ang Dynasty (618 - 906). Red Pine tells us that political intrigue may have led the handicapped young scholar-bureaucrat to flee the aftermath of the An Lu-shan Rebellion in 760 and retreat to the cold mountains of far eastern China - for his life.

Han Shan was considered, when an older man, to be an eccentric Taoist, crazy saint, mountain ascetic mystic, and wise fool. He liked to play pranks, tease, goof off, joke, and get friends laughing.

Most of Han Shan's poems were written when he lived in the rugged southern and far eastern mountains of China in what is currently Fujian (Fukien) Province. He lived alone in caves and primitive shelters in the rugged mountains in an area referred to as the

Heavenly Terrace (T'ien T'ai) Mountains. Han Shan's cave-hut was a long one day's hike from the Kuo-ch'ing monastery in the T'ien T'ai Mountains.

he name Han Shan means: Cold Cliff, Cold Mountain, or Cold Peak. Han Shan is known in Japan as "Kanzan."

One of Han Shan's friends was Shih-te (Japanese "Jittoku", English "Pick Up"). He was an orphan raised at the Kuo-ch'ing monastery and a helper in the kitchen.

Little is known about all of Han Shan's life, and he is somewhat of a legendary character. The best two articles about Han Shan's life are by Red Pine and John Blofield, and these are found in: *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*.

"Han Shan and Shih-te are two inseparable characters in the history of Zen Buddhism, forming one of the most favorite subjects of Sumiye painting by Zen artists. Han Shan was a poet-recluse of the T'ang dynasty. His features looked worn out, and his body was covered in clothes all in tatters. He wore headgear made of birch-bark and his feet carried a pair of sabots too large for them. He frequently visited the Kuo-ch'ing monastery at T'ien-tai, where he was fed with whatever remnants there were from the monk's table. He would walk quietly up and down through the corridors, occasionally talking aloud to himself or to the air. When he was driven out, he would clap his hands and laughing loudly would leave the monastery." - D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism, Third Series*, 1953, p. 160

"Chinese scholar and Cold Mountain translator Red Pine estimates Cold Mountain lived from 730-850 during the Tang Dynasty. He was born into some level of privilege and may have been a gentleman farmer and some sort of minor official in the grand bureaucracy of imperial China. At some point he was married. Eventually he became disaffected with society and left the world at 30 to make his home in the T'ien-T'ai Mountains at a place called Cold Cliff. He may or may not have become a monk. His physical appearance in drawings make him look like a template for the Zen lunatic or hobo-saint: wild hair, birch bark hat, patched robe, big wooden clogs, gnarled staff and an unconventional manner interpreted by others as craziness. He had two companions; Big Stick (Feng-Kan) and Pick-Up (Shih-Teh)."

Preface to the Poems of Han Shan. By Lu Ch'iu-yin, Governor of T'ai Prefecture. 13K

"He looked like a tramp. His body and face were old and beat. Yet in every word he breathed was a meaning in line with the subtle principles of things, if only you thought of it deeply. Everything he said had a feeling of Tao in it, profound and arcane secrets. His hat was made of birch bark, his clothes were ragged and worn out, and his shoes were wood. Thus men who have made it hide their tracks: unifying categories and interpenetrating things. On that long veranda calling and singing, in his words of reply Ha Ha Ha! - the three worlds revolve. Sometimes at the villages and farms he laughed and sang with cowherds. Sometimes intractable, sometimes agreeable, his nature was happy of itself. But how could a person without wisdom recognize him?" - Lu Ch'iu-yin

Rock and Bark Poetry ("Shih shu", Chinese)

Beams with a thatch over them, - a wild man's dwelling!
Before my gate pass horses and carts seldom enough;
The lonely woods gather birds;
The broad valley stream harbours fish;
With my children I pluck the wild fruits of the trees;
My wife and I hoe the rice field;
What is there in my house?
A single case of books.

- Han Shan, 750
Translated by R. H. Blyth
Zen and Zen Classics, p 132

Once, my back wedded to the solid cliff,
I sat silently, bathed in the full moon's light.

I counted there ten thousand shapes,
None with substance save the moon's own glow.

The pristine mind is empty as the moon,
I thought, and like the moon, freely shines.

By what I knew of moon I knew the mind,
Each mirror to each, profound as stone.
- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Peter Stambler

People ask the way to Cold Mountain.
Cold Mountain? There is no road that goes through.
Even in summer the ice doesn't melt;
Though the sun comes out, the fog is blinding.
How can you hope to get there by aping me?
Your heart and mine are not alike.
If your heart were the same as mine,
Then you could journey to the very center!
- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Burton Watson
Cold Mountain: One Hundred Poems

Cold Mountain is a house
Without beams or walls.
The six doors left and right are open
The hall is blue sky.
The rooms all vacant and vague
The east wall beats on the west wall

At the center nothing.

Han Shan, 750; Translated by Gary Snyder; Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems

House With No Walls

I laugh at my failing strength in old age,
Yet still dote on pines and crags, to wander there in solitude.
How I regret that in all these past years until today,
I've let things run their course like an unanchored boat.

Shih-te, 750; Translated by James Hargett

Thirty years ago I was born into the world.
A thousand, ten thousand miles I've roamed,
By rivers where the green grass lies thick,
Beyond the border where the red sands fly.
I brewed potions in a vain search for life everlasting,
I read books, I sang songs of history,
And today I've come home to Cold Mountain
To pillow my head on the stream and wash my ears.

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Burton Watson; Cold Mountain: One Hundred Poems

I think of the past twenty years,
When I used to walk home quietly from the Kuo-ch'ing;
All the people in the Kuo-ch'ing monastery-
They say, "Han-shan is an idiot."
"Am I really an idiot?" I reflect.

But my reflections fail to solve the question:
for I myself do not know who the self is,
And how can others know who I am?

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by D. T. Suzuki; Essays in Zen Buddhism, Third Series, 1953

Ha ha ha.

If I show joy and ease my troubled mind,
Worldly troubles into joy transform.
Worry for others--it does no good in the end.
The great Dao, all amid joy, is reborn.
In a joyous state, ruler and subject accord,
In a joyous home, father and son get along.
If brothers increase their joy, the world will flourish.
If husband and wife have joy, it's worthy of song.
What guest and host can bear a lack of joy?
Both high and low, in joy, lose their woe before long.
Ha ha ha.

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Mary Jacob

Hanshan came specially to see me,



Shihte too, a rare visitor.

We spoke unaffectedly and with without reserve
of the Mind,

How vast and free the Great Emptiness,

How boundless the universe,

Each thing containing within itself all things.

- Feng Kan (Big Stick), 750; Translated by R. H. Blyth; Zen and Zen Classics

This is my resting place;

Now that I know the best retreat.

The breeze blows through the pines,

Sounding better the nearer it is.

Under a tree I'm reading

Lao-tzu, quietly perusing.

Ten years not returning,

I forgot the way I had come.

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Katsuki Sekida

Kyozan asked a monk,

"Where are you from?"

"Cold Mountain," answered the monk.

"Have you reached the Five Peaks of Cold Mountain?"

"No, not yet," said the monk.

Kyozan said, "You are not from Cold Mountain."

Later, Ummon said, "This talk of Kyozan was

falling into the weeds,

all out of kindness."

Setcho's Verse:

Falling or not falling, who can tell?

White clouds piling up,

Bright sun shining down,

Faultless the left, mature the right.

Don't you know Han Shan?

He went very fast;

Ten years not returning,

He forgot the way he had come.

- The Blue Cliff Records, Case 34; Two Zen Classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku (1977); Translated by Katsuki Sekida



Han Shan and Shih-te "were a shabby, dirty pair, half madmen, half hermits, talking and laughing loudly and reciting poems. One day they disappeared before the eyes of the monks and were never seen again. People searched for them and came upon a cave where Han Shan had lived. Poems were written all over the walls of the cave. According to legend, the poems were copied down, and we have today a collection called the Cold Mountain Poems, which contains about three hundred masterpieces."

Hekiganroku: Blue Cliff Records, Case 34. Translated by Katsuki Sekida, pp. 237-240. Based on Katsuki Sekida's Notes for Case 34: Kanzan is Han Shan, Jittoku is Shih-te, Mount Rosan is Cold Mountain, and Gorocho Peak is known as the Five Peaks. Kyoizan lived from 814 - 890.

Shih-te and Han Shan

Shih-te is often pictured with a broom, and Han Shan with a scroll. These represent two of many paths to enlightenment - honest labor and scriptural studies.

I enjoy my great Buddhist way,
On plants and stones it is to lay,
My mind's nature is free and vast,
White clouds are with me, day by day!
My path is not open to the world.
My heart is void; unable to say!
On the stone bed I sit alone,
The white moon rises up round and gay!
My mind is like the white moon,
Clean and clear as the mirror,
Nothing can compare with it,
How could I make a metaphor?
- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Yogi C. M. Chen

Gone, and a million things leave no trace
Loosed, and it flows through the galaxies
A fountain of light, into the very mind--
Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:
Now I know the pearl of the Buddha-nature
Know its use: a boundless perfect sphere.

- Han-Shan, 750
The Enlightened Heart
Translated by Stephen Mitchell

I sit and gaze on this highest peak of all;
Wherever I look there is distance without end.
I am all alone and no one knows I am here,
A lonely moon is mirrored in the cold pool.
Down in the pool there is not really a moon;

The only moon is in the sky above.
I sing to you this one piece of song;
But in the song there is not any Zen.

- Han-Shan, 750; Translated by Arthur Waley; Zen Poems

The mountain is like powder,
The Sumeru, a mustard,
The great ocean like one drop,
All induced in mind standard.
From which grows the Bodhi-seed.
Leaves cover many a god.
You who love the Dharma,
Tangle not things easy or hard!

Ancient traces are still on stone,
Highest peak is an empty point.
Moon is always bright and clean
There is no east or west to count.

I look at the clean stream,
And sit on the great stone,
Mind depends on nothing;
All worldly tasks have gone!

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Yogi C. M. Chen

People ask about Cold Mountain Way;
There's no Cold Mountain Road that goes straight through:
By summer, lingering cold is not dispersed,
By fog, the risen sun is screened from view;
So how did one like me get onto it?
In our hearts, I'm not the same as you --
If in your heart you should become like me,
Then you can reach the center of it too.

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by E. Bruce Brooks,
People Ask About Cold Mountain Way

Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist-blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds?

- Han Shan, 750; Translated by Gary Snyder
Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems

A thousand clouds among a myriad streams
And in their midst a person at his ease.
By day he wanders through the dark green hills,
At night goes home to sleep beneath the cliffs.
Swiftly the changing seasons pass him by,
Tranquil, undefiled, no earthly ties.
Such pleasures! - and on what do they rely?
On a quiet calm, like autumn river water.
- Han-Shan, 750; Translated by Peter Harris
Zen Poems

The Way to Hanshan is a queer one;
No ruts or hoof prints are seen.
Valley winds into valley,
Peak rises above peak;
Grasses are bright with dew,
And pine trees sigh in the breeze.
Even now you do not know?
The reality is asking the shadow the way.
- Han Shan, 750; Translated by R. H. Blyth
Zen and Zen Classics, p 134.

As for me, I delight in the everyday Way,
Among mist-wrapped vines and rocky caves.
Here in the wilderness I am completely free,
With my friends, the white clouds, idling forever.
There are roads, but they do not reach the world;
Since I am mindless, who can rouse my thoughts?
On a bed of stone I sit, alone in the night,
While the round moon climbs up Cold Mountain.
- Han-Shan, 750; The Enlightened Heart
Translated by Stephen Mitchell

The moon's low, a crow caws,
The landscape's laced with frost.
Under the riverside maples,
Lit by fishing lamps,
My sadness keeps me from sleep.
Beyond old Suzhou town,
Down to the traveler's boats,
Han Shan's Temple bell
Rings clear -
Right at midnight.

- Zhang Ji, 780

Night Mooring at Maple Bridge
Rephrased by Michael P. Garofalo
Translated by Francis Chin
Sleepless in Suzhou by Richard Lim
Zuzhou: City of Gardens
Night Mooring at Maple Bridge - Links
Suzhou Gardens

In the third month when the silkworms were still small
The girls had time to go and gather flowers,
Along the wall they played with butterflies,
Down by the water they pelted the old frog.
Into gauze sleeves they poured the ripe plums;
With their gold hairpins they dug up bamboo sprouts.
With all that glitter of outward loveliness
How can Cold Mountain hope to compete?
- Han-Shan, 750; Translated by Arthur Waley



Crazy Wisdom

"The European court jester of the Middle Ages saw through pretence and hypocrisy, and enjoyed poetic license in unhesitatingly telling things as they are. The 'holy fools' ("Fools for Christ's Sake") such as St. Symeon of Emesa of the Eastern Church; Sufis including the legendary Mulla Nasruddin; historical Zen iconoclasts such as the Chinese vagabond-poets Han Shan and Shih-te, and other Zen masters; these are the spiritual kin of the Indian and Tibetan siddhas. Intoxicated by crazy wisdom, the bawdy, spontaneous behavior of these unorthodox spiritual masters rarely conformed to the rigid strictures, materialistic values and arid proprieties of respectable society.

Irreverently flaunting their uncompromising freedom by subverting all forms of social convention and superficial value systems, these enlightened lunatics had a genius for shaking up the religious establishment and keeping alive the inner meaning of spiritual truth during the time of Indian Buddhism's external decline-- continuing to motivate and challenge those members of society open to such inspired spiritual influence while

appearing mad from the banal, ordinary point of view. Presumably, this is why St. Francis of Assisi once appeared stark naked in church, and also referred to himself and his disciples as "the Lord's jesters" -- parodying the apparent absurdity of existence."

- Lama Surya Das, Crazy Wisdom and Tibetan Teaching Tales Told by Lamas

Essential Crazy Wisdom. Nes Scoop Wisker. 2001

"Big Stick (Feng Kan) was something of a renegade monk at Kuoching Temple, which Cold Mountain (Han Shan, 750) would often visit near his home at Cold Cliff. According to legend, Big Stick showed up one day at the temple gate on the back of a tiger, took up residence in the temple library, refused to shave his head, and came and went as he liked. Whenever he was asked about Buddhism, he would answer "Whatever."

- Han Shan by Samantha

[The Tai Chi Chuan martial-arts and chi-kung forms have deep Taoist roots. I play-dance-practice the Tai Chi Chuan forms, and the Yang style form includes a movement called: Retreat and Ride the Tiger. Tai Chi Chuan players seem a bit crazy to onlookers. Whatever - they just keep a soft smile and ride the tiger anyway.]





Bodhisattva Han Shan (<http://www.hermetica.info/hanshan.htm>)

"No one knows what sort of man Han-shan was. There are old people who knew him: they say he was a poor man, a crazy character. He lived alone seventy li west of the T'ang-hsing district of T'ien-t'ai at a place called Cold Mountain. He often went down to the Kuo-ch'ing Temple. At the temple lived Shih-te, who ran the dining hall. He sometimes saved leftovers for Han-shan, hiding them in a bamboo tube. Han-shan would come and carry it away; walking the long veranda, calling and shouting happily, talking and laughing to himself. Once the monks followed him, caught him, and made fun of him. He stopped, clapped his hands, and laughed greatly--Ha Ha!--for a spell, then left.

"He looked like a tramp. His body and face were old and beat. Yet in every word he breathed was a meaning in line with the subtle principles of things, if you only thought of it deeply. Everything he did had a feeling of the Tao in it, profound and arcane secrets. His hat was made of birch bark, his clothes were ragged and worn out, and his shoes were wood. Thus men who have made it hide their tracks: unifying categories and interpenetrating things. On that long veranda calling and singing, in his words of reply--

Ha Ha!--the three worlds revolve. Sometimes at the villages and farms he laughed and sang with cowherds. Sometimes intractable, sometimes agreeable, his nature was happy of itself. But how could a person without wisdom recognize him?

"I once received a position as a petty official at Tan-ch'iu. The day I was to depart I had a bad headache. I called a doctor, but he couldn't cure me and it turned worse. Then I met a Buddhist Master named Feng-kan, who said he came from the Kuo-ch'ing Temple of T'ien-t'ai especially to visit me. I asked him to rescue me from my illness. He smiled and said, 'The four realms are within my body; sickness comes from illusion. If you want to do away with it, you need pure water.' Someone brought water to the Master, who spat it on me. In a moment the disease was rooted out. He then said, 'There are miasmas in T'ai prefecture, when you get there take care of yourself.' I asked him, 'Are there any wise men in you area I could look on as Master?' He replied, 'When you see him you don't recognize him, when you recognize him you don't see him. If you want to see him, you can't rely on appearances. Then you can see him. Han-shan is a Manjusri hiding at Kuo-ch'ing. Shih-te is a Samantabhadra. They look like poor fellows and act like madmen. Sometimes they go and sometimes they come. They work in the kitchen of the Kuo-ch'ing dining hall, tending the fire.' When he was done talking he left.

"I proceeded on my journey to my job at T'ai-chou, not forgetting this affair. I arrived three days later, immediately went to a temple, and questioned an old monk. It seemed the Master had been truthful, so I gave orders to see if T'ang-hsing really contained a Han-shan and Shih-te. The District Magistrate reported to me: 'In this district, seventy li west, is a mountain. People used to see a poor man heading from the cliffs to stay awhile at Kuo-ch'ing. At the temple dining hall is a similar man named Shih-te.' I made a bow and went to Kuo-ch'ing. I asked some people around the temple, 'There used to be a Master named Feng-kan here. Where is his place? And where can Han-shan and Shih-te be seen?' A monk named Tao-ch'iao spoke up: 'Feng-kan the Master lived in Bodhisattva Shr-De back of the library. Nowadays nobody lives there; a tiger often comes and roars. Han-shan and Shih-te are in the kitchen.' The monk led me to Feng-kan's yard. Then he opened the gate: all we saw was tiger tracks. I asked the monks Tao-ch'iao and Pao-te, 'When Feng-kan was here, what was his job?' The monks said, 'He pounded and hulled rice. At night he sang songs to amuse himself.' Then we went to the kitchen before the stoves. Two men were facing the fire, laughing loudly. I made a bow. The two shouted HO! at me. They struck their hands together--Ha Ha!--great laughter. They shouted. Then they said, 'Feng-kan--loose-tongued, loose-tongued. You don't recognize Amitabha, why be courteous to us?' The monks gathered round, surprise going through them. 'Why has a big official bowed to a pair of clowns?' The two men grabbed hands and ran out of the temple. I cried, 'Catch them'--but they quickly ran away. Han-shan returned to Cold Mountain. I asked the monks, 'Would those two men be willing to settle down at this temple?' I ordered them to find a house, and to ask Han-shan and Shih-te to return and live at the temple.

"I returned to my district and had two sets of clean clothes made, got some incense and such and sent it to the temple--but the two men didn't return. So I had it carried up to Cold Mountain. The packer saw Han-shan, who called out in a loud voice, 'Thief! Thief!'

and retreated into a mountain cave. He shouted, 'I tell you man, strive hard!'--entered the cave and was gone. The cave closed of itself and they weren't able to follow. Shih-te's tracks disappeared completely.

"I ordered Tao-ch'iao and the other monks to find out how they had lived, to hunt up the poems written on bamboo, wood, stones, and cliffs--and also to collect those written on the walls of people's houses. There were more than three hundred. On the wall of the Earth-shrine Shih-te had written some gatha. It was all brought together and made into a book.

"I hold to the principle of the Buddha-mind. It is fortunate to meet with men of Tao, so I have made this eulogy."

Lu Ch'iu-Yin, Governor of T'ai Prefecture (Snyder, tr.)

The place where I spend my days
Is farther away than I can tell.
Without a word the wild vines stir,
No fog, yet the bamboos are always dark.
Who do the valleys sob for?
Why do the mists huddle together?
At noon, sitting in my hut
I realize for the first time that the sun has risen.
Han Shan

Have I a body or have I none?
Am I who I am or am I not?
Pondering these questions,
I sit leaning against the cliff as the years go by,
Till the green grass grows between my feet
And the red dust settles on my head,
And the men of the world, thinking me dead,
Come with offerings of wine and fruit to lay by my corpse.
Han Shan (Watson, tr. p. 114)

[Han Shan means "Cold Mountain", "Cold Peak" or "Cold Cliff", and is sometimes called "Silly Mountain". He is known in Japan as "Kanzan."]

* Once, my back wedded to the solid cliff,
I sat silently, bathed in the full moon's light.

I counted there ten thousand shapes,
None with substance save the moon's own glow.

The pristine mind is empty as the moon,
I thought, and like the moon, freely shines.

By what I knew of moon I knew the mind,
Each mirror to each, profound as stone.

Translated by Peter Stambler

* People ask the way to Cold Mountain.
Cold Mountain? There is no road that goes through.
Even in summer the ice doesn't melt;
Though the sun comes out, the fog is blinding.
How can you hope to get there by aping me?
Your heart and mine are not alike.
If your heart were the same as mine,
Then you could journey to the very center!
o Translated by Burton Watson

* I brewed potions in a vain search for life everlasting,
I read books, I sang songs of history,
And today I've come home to Cold Mountain
To pillow my head on the stream and wash my ears.
o Translated by Burton Watson

* All the people in the Kuo-ch'ing monastery—
They say, "Han-shan is an idiot."
"Am I really an idiot?" I reflect.
But my reflections fail to solve the question:
for I myself do not know who the self is,
And how can others know who I am?
o Translated by D. T. Suzuki

* Worry for others— it does no good in the end.
The great Dao, all amid joy, is reborn.
In a joyous state, ruler and subject accord,
In a joyous home, father and son get along.
If brothers increase their joy, the world will flourish.
If husband and wife have joy, it's worthy of song.
What guest and host can bear a lack of joy?
Both high and low, in joy, lose their woe before long.
Ha ha ha.
Translated by Mary Jacob

* Under a tree I'm reading
Lao-tzu, quietly perusing.
Ten years not returning,
I forgot the way I had come.
Translated by Katsuki Sekida

The Story of Han-shan and Shih-te



The first and by far the most famous Ch'an (Zen) eccentrics are Han-shan ("Cold Mountain"; Japanese: Kanzan) and Shih-te ("Foundling"; Japanese: Jittoku). The origins of the legends of Han-shan and his inseparable companion Shih-te can be traced to a collection of about three hundred T'ang poems, known as the Collected Poems of Han-shan. According to the preface, Han-shan was a recluse and poet who lived on Mount T'ien-t'ai (Chekiang, a place renowned for its hermits, both Taoist and Buddhist). He was a friend of the monks Feng-kan and Shih-te of the Kuo-ch'ing-ssu, a monastery near his hermitage. Shih-te, who had been found as a child by Feng-kan (Japanese: Bukan), and who had been brought up in the monastery, worked in the dining hall and kitchen. He supplied his hermit friends with leftovers. Sometimes, the legend says, Han-shan would stroll for hours in the corridors of the monastery, occasionally letting out a cheerful cry, or laughing or talking to himself. When taken to task or driven away by the monks, he would stand still afterwards, laugh, clap his hands, and then disappear. Judging from his poems, which abound with references to the Tao-te-ching and Chuang-tzu, the Taoist classics, Han-shan was actually more of a Taoist recluse than a Ch'an monk.

Kanzan lived in a cave behind Kuo Ch'ing monastery on Mount Tientai, the locus of the Tendai worship in China. The kitchen worker Jittoku would bring him food from the monastery, and the two men would amuse themselves in the evening with poetry and moon viewing. One among many examples of Kanzan's poetry is the following:

I divined and chose a distant place to dwell-

T'ien-t'ai: what more is there to say?
Monkeys cry where valley mists are cold;
My grass gate blends with the color of the crags.
I pick leaves to thatch a hut among the pines,
Scoop out a pond and lead a runnel from the spring.
By now I am used to doing without the world.
Picking ferns, I pass the years that are left.

Burton Watson, trans., Cold Mountain





Words from Cold Mountain

Twenty-Seven Poems by Han-shan

Translated by A. S. Kline, 2006

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Introduction

Han-shan, the Master of Cold Mountain, and his friend Shi-te, lived in the late-eighth to early-ninth century AD, in the sacred T'ien-t'ai Mountains of Chekiang Province, south of the bay of Hangchow. The two laughing friends, holding hands, come and go, but mostly go, dashing into the wild, careless of others' reality, secure in their own. As Han-shan himself says, his Zen is not in the poems. Zen is in the mind.

The Poems

1.

Don't you know the poems of Han-shan?
They're better for you than scripture-reading.
Cut them out and paste them on a screen,
Then you can gaze at them from time to time.

2.

Where's the trail to Cold Mountain?
Cold Mountain? There's no clear way.
Ice, in summer, is still frozen.
Bright sun shines through thick fog.
You won't get there following me.
Your heart and mine are not the same.
If your heart was like mine,
You'd have made it, and be there!

3.

Cold Mountain's full of strange sights.
Men who go there end by being scared.
Water glints and gleams in the moon,
Grasses sigh and sing in the wind.
The bare plum blooms again with snow,
Naked branches have clouds for leaves.
When it rains, the mountain shines –
In bad weather you'll not make this climb.

4.

A thousand clouds, ten thousand streams,
Here I live, an idle man,
Roaming green peaks by day,
Back to sleep by cliffs at night.
One by one, springs and autumns go,
Free of heat and dust, my mind.
Sweet to know there's nothing I need,
Silent as the autumn river's flood.

5.

High, high, the summit peak,

Boundless the world to sight!
No one knows I am here,
Lone moon in the freezing stream.
In the stream, where's the moon?
The moon's always in the sky.
I write this poem: and yet,
In this poem there is no Zen.

6.

Thirty years in this world
I wandered ten thousand miles,
By rivers, buried deep in grass,
In borderlands, where red dust flies.
Tasted drugs, still not Immortal,
Read books, wrote histories.
Now I'm back at Cold Mountain.
Head in the stream, cleanse my ears.

7.

Bird-song drowns me in feeling.
Back to my shack of straw to sleep.
Cherry-branches burn with crimson flower,
Willow-boughs delicately trail.
Morning sun flares between blue peaks,
Bright clouds soak in green ponds.
Who guessed I'd leave that dusty world,
Climbing the south slope of Cold Mountain?

8.

I travelled to Cold Mountain:
Stayed here for thirty years.
Yesterday looked for family and friends.
More than half had gone to Yellow Springs.
Slow-burning, life dies like a flame,
Never resting, passes like a river.
Today I face my lone shadow.
Suddenly, the tears flow down.

9.

Alive in the mountains, not at rest,
My mind cries for passing years.
Gathering herbs to find long life,
Still I've not achieved Immortal.
My field's deep, and veiled in cloud,
But the wood's bright, the moon's full.
Why am I here? Can't I go?

Heart still tied to enchanted pines!

10.

If there's something good, delight!
Seize the moment while it flies!
Though life can last a hundred years,
Who's seen their thirty thousand days?
Just an instant then you're gone.
Why sit whining over things?
When you've read the Classics through,
You'll know quite enough of death.

11.

The peach petals would like to stay,
But moon and wind blow them on.
You won't find those ancient men,
Those dynasties are dead and gone.
Day by day the blossoms fall,
Year by year the people go.
Where the dust blows through these heights,
There once shone a silent sea.

12.

Men who see the Master
Of Cold Mountain, say he's mad.
A nothing face,
Body clothed in rags.
Who dare say what he says?
When he speaks we can't understand.
Just one word to you who pass –
Take the trail to Cold Mountain!

13.

Han-shan has his critics too:
'Your poems, there's nothing in them!'
I think of men of ancient times,
Poor, humble, but not ashamed.
Let him laugh at me and say:
'It's all foolishness, your work!'
Let him go on as he is,
All his life lost making money.

14.

Cold Mountain holds a naked bug,
Its body's white, its head is black.

In its hands a pair of scrolls,
One the Way and one its Power.
It needs no pots or stove.
Without clothes it wanders on,
But it carries Wisdom's blade,
To cut down mindless craving.

15.

I'm on the trail to Cold Mountain.
Cold Mountain trail never ends.
Long clefts thick with rock and stones,
Wide streams buried in dense grass.
Slippery moss, but there's been no rain,
Pine trees sigh, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the world's net,
Sit here in the white clouds with me?

16.

Men ask the way through the clouds,
The cloud way's dark, without a sign.
High summits are of naked rocks.
In deep valleys sun never shines.
Behind you green peaks, and in front,
To east the white clouds, and to west –
Want to know where the cloud way lies?
It's there, in the centre of the Void.

17.

Sitting alone by folded rocks,
Mist swirling even at noon,
Here, inside my room, it's dark.
Mind is bright, clear of sound.
Through the shining gate in dream.
Back by the stone bridge, mind returns.
Where now the things that troubled me?
Wind-blown gourd rattling in the tree.

18.

Far-off is the place I chose to live.
High hills make for silent tongues.
Gibbons screech in valley cold
My gate of grass blends with the cliff.
A roof of thatch among the pines,
I dig a pool, feed it from the stream.
No time now to think about the world,
The years go by, shredding ferns.

19.

Level after level, falls and hills,
Blue-green mist clasped by clouds.
Fog wets my flimsy cap,
Dew soaks my coat of straw.
A pilgrim's sandals on my feet,
An old stick grasped in my hand.
Gazing down towards the land of dust,
What is that world of dreams to me?

20

What a road the Cold Mountain road!
Not a sign of horse or cart.
Winding gorges, tricky to trace.
Massive cliffs, who knows how high?
Where the thousand grasses drip with dew,
Where the pine trees hum in the wind.
Now the path's lost, now it's time.
For body to ask shadow: 'Which way home?'

21.

Always it's cold on this mountain!
Every year, and not just this.
Dense peaks, thick with snow.
Black pine-trees breathing mist.
It's summer before the grass grows,
Not yet autumn when the leaves fall.
Full of illusions, I roam here,
Gaze and gaze, but can't see the sky.

22.

No knowing how far it is,
This place where I spend my days.
Tangled vines move without a breeze,
Bamboo in the light shows dark.
Streams down-valley sob for whom?
Mists cling together, who knows why?
Sitting in my hut at noon,
Suddenly, I see the sun has risen.

23.

The everyday mind: that is the way.
Buried in vines and rock-bound caves,
Here it's wild, here I am free,
Idling with the white clouds, my friends.

Tracks here never reach the world;
No-mind, so what can shift my thought?
I sit the night through on a bed of stone,
While the moon climbs Cold Mountain.

24.

I was off to the Eastern Cliff.
Planned that trip for how long?
Dragged myself up by hanging vines,
Stopped halfway, by wind and fog.
Thorn snatched my arm on narrow tracks,
Moss so deep it drowned my feet,
So I stopped, under this red pine.
Head among the clouds, I'll sleep.

25.

Bright water shimmers like crystal,
Translucent to the furthest depth.
Mind is free of every thought
Unmoved by the myriad things.
Since it can never be stirred
It will always stay like this.
Knowing, this way, you can see
There is no within, no without.

26.

Are you looking for a place to rest?
Cold Mountain's good for many a day.
Wind sings here in the black pine.
Closer you are, the better it sounds.
There's an old man sitting by a tree,
Muttering about the things of Tao.
Ten years now, it's been so long
This one's forgotten his way home.

27.

Cold rock, no one takes this road.
The deeper you go, the finer it is.
White clouds hang on high crags
On Green Peak a lone gibbon's cry.
What friends do I need?
I do what pleases me, and grow old.
Let face and body alter with the years,
I'll hold to the bright path of mind.

•



THE COLD MOUNTAIN POEMS, tr. Gary Snyder

1

The path to Han-shan's place is laughable,
A path, but no sign of cart or horse.
Converging gorges - hard to trace their twists
Jumbled cliffs - unbelievably rugged.
A thousand grasses bend with dew,
A hill of pines hums in the wind.
And now I've lost the shortcut home,
Body asking shadow, how do you keep up?

2

In a tangle of cliffs, I chose a place -
Bird paths, but no trails for me.
What's beyond the yard?
White clouds clinging to vague rocks.

Now I've lived here - how many years -
Again and again, spring and winter pass.
Go tell families with silverware and cars
"What's the use of all that noise and money?"

3

In the mountains it's cold.
Always been cold, not just this year.
Jagged scarps forever snowed in
Woods in the dark ravines spitting mist.
Grass is still sprouting at the end of June,
Leaves begin to fall in early August.
And here I am, high on mountains,
Peering and peering, but I can't even see the sky.

4

I spur my horse through the wrecked town,
The wrecked town sinks my spirit.
High, low, old parapet walls
Big, small, the aging tombs.
I waggle my shadow, all alone;
Not even the crack of a shrinking coffin is heard.
I pity all those ordinary bones,
In the books of the Immortals they are nameless.

5

I wanted a good place to settle:
Cold Mountain would be safe.
Light wind in a hidden pine -
Listen close - the sound gets better.
Under it a gray haired man
Mumbles along reading Huang and Lao.
For ten years I haven't gone back home
I've even forgotten the way by which I came.

6

Men ask the way to Cold Mountain
Cold Mountain: there's no through trail.
In summer, ice doesn't melt
The rising sun blurs in swirling fog.

How did I make it?
My heart's not the same as yours.
If your heart was like mine
You'd get it and be right here.

7

I settled at Cold Mountain long ago,
Already it seems like years and years.
Freely drifting, I prowl the woods and streams
And linger watching things themselves.
Men don't get this far into the mountains,
White clouds gather and billow.
Thin grass does for a mattress,
The blue sky makes a good quilt.
Happy with a stone under head
Let heaven and earth go about their changes.

8

Clambering up the Cold Mountain path,
The Cold Mountain trail goes on and on:
The long gorge choked with scree and boulders,
The wide creek, the mist blurred grass.
The moss is slippery, though there's been no rain
The pine sings, but there's no wind.
Who can leap the word's ties
And sit with me among the white clouds?

9

Rough and dark - the Cold Mountain trail,
Sharp cobbles - the icy creek bank.
Yammering, chirping - always birds
Bleak, alone, not even a lone hiker.
Whip, whip - the wind slaps my face
Whirled and tumbled - snow piles on my back.
Morning after morning I don't see the sun
Year after year, not a sign of spring.

10

I have lived at Cold Mountain
These thirty long years.

Yesterday I called on friends and family:
More than half had gone to the Yellow Springs.
Slowly consumed, like fire down a candle;
Forever flowing, like a passing river.
Now, morning, I face my lone shadow:
Suddenly my eyes are bleared with tears.

11

Spring water in the green creek is clear
Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white
Silent knowledge - the spirit is enlightened of itself
Contemplate the void: this world exceeds stillness.

12

In my first thirty years of life
I roamed hundreds and thousands of miles.
Walked by rivers through deep green grass
Entered cities of boiling red dust.
Tried drugs, but couldn't make Immortal;
Read books and wrote poems on history.
Today I'm back at Cold Mountain:
I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears.

13

I can't stand these bird songs
Now I'll go rest in my straw shack.
The cherry flowers are scarlet
The willow shoots up feathery.
Morning sun drives over blue peaks
Bright clouds wash green ponds.
Who knows that I'm out of the dusty world
Climbing the southern slope of Cold Mountain?

14

Cold Mountain has many hidden wonders,
People who climb here are always getting scared.
When the moon shines, water sparkles clear
When the wind blows, grass swishes and rattles.
On the bare plum, flowers of snow
On the dead stump, leaves of mist.
At the touch of rain it all turns fresh and live
At the wrong season you can't ford the creeks.

15

There's a naked bug at Cold Mountain
With a white body and a black head.
His hand holds two book scrolls,
One the Way and one its Power.
His shack's got no pots or oven,
He goes for a long walk with his shirt and pants askew.
But he always carries the sword of wisdom:
He means to cut down senseless craving.

16

Cold Mountain is a house
Without beans or walls.
The six doors left and right are open
The hall is sky blue.
The rooms all vacant and vague
The east wall beats on the west wall
At the center nothing.

Borrowers don't bother me
In the cold I build a little fire
When I'm hungry I boil up some greens.
I've got no use for the kulak
With his big barn and pasture -
He just sets up a prison for himself.
Once in he can't get out.
Think it over -
You know it might happen to you.

17

If I hide out at Cold Mountain
Living off mountain plants and berries -
All my lifetime, why worry?
One follows his karma through.
Days and months slip by like water,
Time is like sparks knocked off flint.
Go ahead and let the world change -
I'm happy to sit among these cliffs.

18

Most T'ien-t'ai men

Don't know Han-shan
Don't know his real thought
And call it silly talk.

19

Once at Cold Mountain, troubles cease -
No more tangled, hung up mind.
I idly scribble poems on the rock cliff,
Taking whatever comes, like a drifting boat.

20

Some critic tried to put me down -
"Your poems lack the Basic Truth of Tao."
And I recall the old timers
Who were poor and didn't care.
I have to laugh at him,
He misses the point entirely,
Men like that
Ought to stick to making money.

21

I've lived at Cold Mountain - how many autumns.
Alone, I hum a song - utterly without regret.
Hungry, I eat one grain of Immortal medicine
Mind solid and sharp; leaning on a stone.

22

On top of Cold Mountain the lone round moon
Lights the whole clear cloudless sky.
Honor this priceless natural treasure
Concealed in five shadows, sunk deep in the flesh.

23

My home was at Cold Mountain from the start,
Rambling among the hills, far from trouble.

Gone, and a million things leave no trace
Loosed, and it flows through galaxies
A fountain of light, into the very mind -
Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:
Now I know the pearl of the Buddha nature

Know its use: a boundless perfect sphere.

24

When men see Han-shan
They all say he's crazy
And not much to look at -
Dressed in rags and hides.
They don't get what I say
And I don't talk their language.
All I can say to those I meet:
"Try and make it to Cold Mountain."

