

Daughters of Emptiness

Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns

BEATA GRANT

DAUGHTERS OF EMPTINESS

DAUGHTERS *of* EMPTINESS

Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns

Beata Grant



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

Wisdom Publications
199 Elm Street
Somerville MA 02144 USA
www.wisdompubs.org

© 2003 Beata Grant
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system or technologies now known or later developed, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Grant, Beata, 1954–

Daughters of emptiness : poems of Chinese Buddhist nuns / Beata Grant.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-86171-362-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Chinese poetry—Women authors—Translations into English.
2. Chinese poetry—Qing dynasty, 1644-1912—Translations into English.
3. Buddhist nuns—China. I. Title: Poems of Chinese Buddhist nuns.

II.

Title.

PL2658.E3G73 2003

895.1'1480809287—dc22

2003017357

Cover design by Christian Dierig

Interior design by Gopa & Ted2. Set in AGaramond 10.25/14.

Calligraphy of nun's names by Gu Xingzhi of Tianjin, China.

Wisdom Publications' books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	IX
Introduction	I
Abbreviations	20

POEMS

SIX DYNASTIES (220–581)	21
Huixu	22
SUI AND TANG DYNASTIES (581–907)	25
Fayuan	26
Haiyin	28
Plum Blossom Nun	29
SONG DYNASTY (960–1279)	31
Miaozong	32
Zhengjue	34
Benming	36
Zhenru	38
Zuqin	40

Deying	41
Zhitong	42
Fahai	45
YUAN DYNASTY (1260–1368)	47
Miaozhan	48
EARLY AND MID-MING DYNASTY (1368–1600)	49
Wulian	50
Jueqing	52
One-Eyed Jingang	54
Jixing	56
Wuwei	58
LATE MING AND EARLY QING DYNASTY (1600–1750)	59
Daoyuan	60
Shenyi	62
Zaisheng	65
Jingwei	67
Chaoyi	69
Jingming	70
Xinggang	72
Yikui	78
Jingnuo	85
Xingche	92
Jifu	101
Jizong	106
Yinyue	108

Mingxiu	110
Mingben	113
Chaoyan	116
Yuanduan	120
Miaohui	121
Shiyan	123
Wanxian	126
Kedu	128

SECOND HALF OF THE QING DYNASTY (1750–1911)

Jizhu	132
Ziyong	134
Daoqian	139
Yinhui	141
Wuwo	143
Wuqing	144
Lianghai	146
Dawu	155
Longlian	157

Sources of Poems	161
Note	163
Select Bibliography	183
Index	187

PREFACE

BUDDHIST POETRY CONSTITUTES an important, although often undervalued, tributary of the Chinese poetic tradition: anthologies and other sorts of collections often included the works of monk-poets such as Hanshan and Jiaoran of the Tang dynasty as well as the Buddhist-inspired verse of many of the great poets of the tradition, such as the Tang-dynasty poets Wang Wei and Po Juyi and the Song-dynasty poet Su Shi. Less known, however, is the fact that there were also a significant number of poet-nuns as well as ordinary laywomen who wrote Buddhist-inspired verse. They were by no means numerous: if the idea of men becoming monks and abandoning their familial responsibilities was never fully accepted in Confucian China, the notion of women becoming nuns and failing to fulfill their procreative duties or, as the case might be, leaving the protective shelter of fathers, husbands, or sons, was looked upon with even less favor. Still, whether due to warfare and displacement, difficult personal or financial circumstances, or simply determined religious aspiration, many women did become “daughters of emptiness.” And, as this selection of translations demonstrates, many of them did write poetry; and some of them wrote very good poetry indeed.

Poems by Buddhist nuns are to be found scattered in various different sources; a very, very few in collections of their own, somewhat more in anthologies of women’s poetry, and many others embedded in biographical and other sorts of anecdotal and historical accounts. None are available in the annotated editions that have often been compiled for their more famous male counterparts. Lacking these editorial and scholarly supports,

I have had to rely even more than usual on the generous advice and expertise of many colleagues and friends. First of all, I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Wilt L. Idema of Harvard University, who has been a wonderful mentor in the art of translation, and has consistently provided me with sometimes much-needed encouragement and support. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professor John McCrae of Indiana University for encouraging me to rethink some of my translations and for clarifying my introduction, as well as to my colleague at Washington University, Professor Robert E. Hegel, who kindly read the introduction to this book and offered his usual succinct and insightful editorial advice. The editorial advice and moral support of these colleagues has been generous indeed; any errors of fact, translation, or interpretation remain, of course, mine alone. I must also express my appreciation to Edward S. Macias, Executive Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Washington University for allowing me to take some time from teaching and administrative duties in order to be able to focus more singlemindedly on research and translation. Last, but by no means least, I want to express my gratitude and admiration for the expertise and dedication of the editorial and production staff at Wisdom Publications: they have been a pleasure to work with from beginning to end.

I would like to dedicate this book to my parents, Robert and Carolyn Grant, who early on provided me with an abiding appreciation for the beauty and power of the written word, as well as with constant reminders of what Chinese Buddhist poets have always known: that which is of greatest importance often lies far beyond words.

Beata Grant
St. Louis, Missouri
August 15, 2003

INTRODUCTION

MANY WESTERN READERS are familiar with poetry written by Chinese Buddhist monks, perhaps the most famous of which is that collected under the name of the elusive Buddhist recluse Hanshan, or Cold Mountain.¹ They may also be familiar with poetry written by Japanese Buddhist nuns such as the sixteenth-century Rengetsu.² Until now, however, there have been no translations of poetry written by Chinese Buddhist nuns. That such poetry exists may come as a surprise to some, given the widely held belief that, unlike the case of Japan, there were very few women writers in China before the modern period. However, the fact that there are now two anthologies of translations into English of Chinese women's writing of the imperial period, both of which are many hundreds of pages long, should put that misapprehension firmly to rest.³

Poetry writing assumes, of course, a fairly high degree of literacy. This is particularly true in the case of traditional Chinese poetry, which requires a mastery not only of the classical language but also, because of the frequent use of intertextual references and allusion, of the larger literary tradition, including poetry, history, and philosophy. This is one of the reasons why women poets are considerably less represented in the Chinese poetic tradition. In China, literacy and literature were traditionally looked upon largely as a means to an end, the end being not so much self-expression and aesthetic fulfillment as an official post in the imperial bureaucracy. Because women were excluded from this career goal, it was not considered vital—indeed many felt it to be morally dangerous—that they be provided more than a rudimentary education, if any at all.

Nevertheless, a significant number of women, mostly from elite families, of course, did manage to obtain the classical education that was necessary if they were to write. Such educated women writers can be found throughout the entire imperial period; one of the earliest was Ban Zhao (ca. 45–116). For many women writers from the earlier periods we have only a handful of poems, or even just a single poem. From the seventeenth century and onward, however, we have significantly more poems by Chinese women writers: we know the titles of at least three thousand collections of poetry composed by women, one third of which are still preserved. This was due to momentous economic and social changes in Chinese society (which meant that more elite women were afforded education in the literary arts as well as the domestic ones) and to a veritable explosion in book-printing technology and publishing. Not surprisingly, we find the same pattern in the case of Buddhist nun-poets. Although the records contain the names of Buddhist nuns from the earlier periods of Chinese history known to have been highly educated and even famous for their literary talents, only rarely were any of their writings preserved. Of the many women of later periods whose writings have been collected and anthologized, there was also a small but significant number of Buddhist nuns. Indeed, many of these nuns had established reputations as *cainü*, or “talented women,” even before they entered the religious life.

The reason the writings of these Buddhist nuns has received so little attention is due, in part, to the fact that Buddhist nuns in general have occupied a marginal place in the eyes of both male scholar-officials and Buddhist monastics; over the long span of Chinese history the men were the ones responsible for compiling official histories, genealogical records, and poetic anthologies. Thus, although the percentage of Buddhist nun-poets was quite small compared to that of their male counterparts, it was probably always greater than the extant texts and records would indicate. In any case, the reader needs to bear in mind that the nuns and the poems presented in this translation are shadows and echoes of a world that, given the paucity of sources, we will never be able to recover fully.

Writing Nuns in China: A Brief History

Buddhism found its way to China in the first century of the Common Era, and although the orthodox lineages of nuns did not begin until sev-

eral centuries later, according to at least one source, a Chinese woman by the name of A Pan became a Buddhist nun as early as 67 C.E.⁴ The first ordained Chinese Buddhist nun, however, is traditionally considered to be Jingjian (ca. 292–ca. 361), a woman from an educated, elite family who was inspired by reading some of the Buddhist sutras that had been translated into Chinese. She sought out a monk from Kashmir who explained to her that since the Buddhist monastic code or *vinaya* with the rules and regulations had not yet come to China, he would not be able to give her a full ordination. She would, however, be able to take the preliminary vows of a novice, that is, the ten precepts (to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, intoxicants, indulging in singing, dancing, or the playing of music, self-adornment, sleeping on a high bed, eating after mid-day, and handling money). Jingjian took the tonsure, along with twenty other women of similar resolve, and the women took up residence in the Bamboo Grove Convent, located in the capital of Loyang. Subsequently, she “supported and cared for her community of disciples [and] observed the monastic rules with purity and distinction.”⁵ Moreover, the power of her preaching was likened to the power of the wind under which the grass cannot help but bend.⁶

We know about Jingjian and other eminent nuns from this formative period of Chinese Buddhism thanks to Baochang, a monk at the court of the Liang dynasty, who in the year 516 compiled a collection of sixty-five accounts of nuns from the two preceding centuries entitled *Lives of the Nuns* (*Biqiuni zhuan*). Although these accounts are indisputably hagiographic in nature, the factual detail they contain is enough to provide a vivid picture of the first Chinese Buddhist nuns. What quickly becomes evident is that these first nuns exerted unprecedented authority, political and social as well as moral, not only within their own monastic communities, but in society at large. The nun Miaoyin, for example, was in the year 385 appointed the abbess of a convent in Loyang that had been built for her by the grand tutor. Subsequently, many people, both monastic and lay, aristocratic and common, rich and poor, came to her bearing gifts and hoping that she would use her influence on their behalf. As Baochang tells us, every day would find over a hundred horse-drawn chariots at the doors of her convent.⁷

Fifty-three of the sixty-five nuns represented in Baochang’s collection are described as being able to read and write—at a time when girls and women

were rarely afforded an education. Lingshou (fourth century), for example, is said to have “widely perused all kinds of books, and, having read a book through only once, she was always able to chant it by heart.”⁸ A near contemporary text, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang*, compiled in the year 547 by Yang Xuanzhi, also provides a glimpse into these often quite wealthy convents. In the Jingluo Convent, for example, “Halls and corridors encircled each other, while inner rooms followed one after another. Soft branches brushed the windows; blooming flowers covered [every inch] of the courtyard...as this was a nunnery, no male visitors were [ordinarily] admitted, but those who were permitted to come in for a look considered themselves as having paid a visit to paradise.”⁹

Of the Hutong Convent in Loyang, we are told that “with its many suites of spacious rooms, fitted with symmetrical windows and doors, red pillars and white walls, it was the height of elegance and beauty. The nuns here were among the most renowned and accomplished in the imperial city, skillful at preaching and discussing Buddhist principles. They often came to the palace to lecture on Dharma....”¹⁰ These nuns were known for a wide diversity of talents, including chanting, preaching, asceticism, monastic discipline, and meditation. Several were also admired for their literary gifts. Daoyi (fourth century), for example, is described as being “intelligent, quick-witted, widely learned, and [possessing an] excellent memory.”¹¹ Miaoyin, the influential abbess mentioned above, was “well versed in subjects both inner and outer [secular and sacred] and was skilled at composing literary essays” and often “would engage in discussions and write compositions” in the company of court scholar-officials and even the emperor himself.¹² This early period can, in many ways, be considered the heyday of Buddhist nuns in China, a time when they were accorded a respect and exerted an influence unheard of again until contemporary times. Unfortunately, however, no writings by these early Chinese nuns—apart from the one poem by Huixu (431–99) included in this book—have been preserved.

After the Liang dynasty (502–57), either the number of Buddhist nuns engaged in literary and intellectual activities diminished considerably, or else, in the absence of another Baochang, no record was kept of their activities. One of several possible reasons for this was the stricter enforcement of the vinaya for women in the late sixth century and afterward. Accord-

ing to some scholars, this female monastic code, burdened as it was with the so-called Eight Special Rules,¹³ which ensured the subservience of nuns to monks, reinforced the indigenous Confucian emphasis on the social submission of women to men and in so doing greatly restricted the social mobility of Buddhist nuns.

Sometime between 335 and 342 a monk named Sengjian acquired a copy of a Mahasanghika vinaya for nuns (no longer extant), which was translated into Chinese in Loyang in 357. It was only after the translation of this text that Chinese Buddhists began to have a clearer notion of the rules of the female sangha, and in particular the stages of ordination, beginning with that of novice and culminating in full ordination and the taking of the full range of precepts. That same year Jingjian and four other women received a more formal ordination by a foreign monk named Tanmojie. Baochang points out that although some objected to the fact that these women were not being ordained in the presence of the requisite number of senior nuns and monks, this did not deter Jingjian and her Dharma sisters from devoting themselves to the religious life with complete dedication.

In the year 429 a missionary monk and eight nuns from Sri Lanka arrived in China and asked how it was that the Chinese nuns had been able to be ordained. According to Baochang's account, a nun named Huikuo (ca. 364–433) explained to him that, in the absence of an established Chinese female sangha, they had accepted the monastic rules in the same way that Mahaprajapati Gotami, the Buddha's aunt, traditionally considered to be the first Buddhist nun, had accepted ordination directly from the Buddha.¹⁴ Unwilling to cast doubt on the authenticity of her predecessors, Huikuo nevertheless became concerned about the validity of the ordination of both herself and her disciples. In 434 eleven more nuns came from Sri Lanka, and three hundred Chinese nuns were re-ordained according to the orthodox procedures.

If authenticity was a concern for Huikuo, lay donors may have been equally concerned with the purity and moral discipline that a stricter monastic code could presumably provide. It is probably safe to say that this concern for the enforcement of vinaya rules reflects the traditional suspicion, in Buddhist India as well as China, about the morality of women living in independent communities without the supervision of fathers, husbands, and sons. In fact, during the Tang dynasty (618–907), we find

that much of this obsession with the supposed moral laxity of both monks and nuns, but in particularly the latter, was to be found among (largely Confucian) opponents of Buddhism. Their concerns were not entirely without foundation.

For one thing, convents had increasingly become havens not only for women with strong religious vocations, but also, and perhaps even primarily, for women in need of refuge, whether from poverty, the vulnerability of the childless widow, or other sorts of familial and social discord. The number of nuns increased greatly during this period. According to one account, during the reign of the emperor Xuanzong (r. 713–41), there were at least 50,567 registered nuns in comparison to 75,524 monks, making up 40 percent of the entire monastic population.¹⁵ The significantly larger number of inhabitants in these nunneries resulted in a lower level of education and, consequently, an overall lower standing in the eyes not only of the male Buddhist clergy but also of lay donors. This may explain the relative absence of references to spiritually and intellectually accomplished Buddhist nuns in the official records of the time, although given these large numbers of nuns, surely there must have been at least a few. As Valentina Georgieva notes, “monks deemed the deeds of nuns neither significant nor useful in propagating the religion and attracting more donations.”¹⁶

Another reason for the invisibility of writing nuns at this time is that many educated Buddhist nuns served primarily as preachers and educators in the many special religious establishments that were set up within the inner quarters of the palace precincts during this period. These convents were designed primarily to serve the needs of the many thousands of women who made up the imperial harem, as well as women of the royal family or of high officials associated with the court. Given the secluded and largely hidden world of the palace in general and its women’s quarters in particular, coupled with the traditional Confucian inhibition against women teaching and speaking in public, few of these women ever had the opportunity to reach a larger audience, either through their preaching or their writings.

Despite the absence of extant writings, there were literate and literary nuns during the Tang dynasty. Feng Yuan, whose Dharma name is unknown, was the daughter of a high official from Loyang. After the death of her husband, also a high official, she was inducted into the Inner Palace

where, unwilling to join the ranks of palace women, she became a Buddhist nun. She left behind a collection of poetry, which unfortunately has not survived.¹⁷ Another daughter of a high official surnamed Xue who decided to become a nun after being inducted into the Inner Palace was known for her “talent and learning.”¹⁸ Another eminent nun was Fadeng (640–729), who apparently divorced her husband in order to enter the religious life. She was subsequently appointed abbess of the Xingsheng Convent in Chang’an by Emperor Xuanzong, who also received religious instruction from her. She later retired from her duties and devoted herself to the recitation, copying, and explication of the sutras, for which she gained recognition among both monastics and lay followers.¹⁹

There are also references to women embedded in the many stories of the Tang-dynasty Chan Buddhist masters. (Note that although the Chinese romanization “Chan” is familiar to most readers in its Japanese romanized form of “Zen,” “Chan” will be used throughout this book.) They include Liu Tiemo, or Grindstone Liu, a disciple of the famous Chan master Guishan Lingyou (771–853), whose nickname gives some indication of her powerful charisma, and Moshan Liaoran, who became famous for the “Dharma battle” in which she bested the arrogant monk Guanqi Zhixian, who, in admiration of her insight, became a gardener at her convent for three years. In this dialogue Moshan tries to get Guanqi Zhixian to understand that there is no essential, unchanging essence that one can call “man” or “woman.” Moshan Liaoran is the only Tang-dynasty nun who has a record of her own in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* (*The Transmission of the Lamp of the Jingde [Period]*).²⁰

There was a fair number of literate women during the Tang both from the upper echelons of society and from the courtesan quarters. However, most of the few well-known women poets from this period, including Xue Tao (758–831), Li Jilan (d. 784), and Yu Xuanji (b. 848?), were Daoist, rather than Buddhist, nuns. When it comes to poetry written by Buddhist nuns, the only example included in the massive *Quan Tang shi* (*Complete Poetry of the Tang Dynasty*) is by Haiyin, who lived during the last part of the Tang dynasty and was associated with the Ciguang Convent in what is today Sichuan Province.

There continued to be a large number of Buddhist nuns during the Song dynasty (960–1279) as well. According to one source, in 1019 there

were at least 15,643 fully ordained nuns, and only two years later there were 61,239 fully ordained nuns, making up about 13 percent of the entire monastic population at that time. These figures do not include postulants and novices, or nuns who may have been privately ordained and thus not officially registered. It would seem, moreover, that in the Song dynasty convents offered women a far more respectable social role than they did during the Tang. Part of the reason for this, according to one scholar, is that having a daughter enter the convent became an acceptable way of resolving the financial dilemma posed by the growing trend of providing handsome dowries in order to cement relations between the families of the newly emergent scholar-official class.²¹ As Ding-hwa E. Hsieh notes, “the fact that these scholar-officials did not hesitate to include pious daughters in their funerary eulogies for the deceased may indicate that during the [Song] the upper class in general...viewed the monastic life as an acceptable vocation for its women to pursue.”²² Another reason was clearly related to the Song court’s establishment of a new policy whereby nuns were allowed not only to ordain their own female disciples, but also to run their convents without having to rely on the authority of the male monastic sangha. According to the Eight Special Rules, nuns were required not only to defer to monks, but also to be ordained in the presence of at least ten senior monks as well as at least ten senior nuns—the so-called dual ordination. This tradition had been maintained ever since the fifth century, when the arrival of a group of Singhalese nuns in China made possible the full ordination of women. However, in 972 Emperor Taizu (r. 960–72) issued an edict to the effect that from that time onward qualified women who desired to enter the Buddhist monastic order should receive ordination in convents and from nuns only.

There were both male and female clergy who opposed this edict, and, in fact, it seems not to have always been strictly enforced, although it was incorporated into Song-dynasty legal code. As Hsieh notes, one of the positive results of this new policy, contrary as it was to the Buddhist vinaya, was that it “not only allowed women to gain some control...over their own religious lives, but also enabled them to establish their leadership in the Buddhist community.”²³

As was true in earlier periods, it is very likely that the majority of these nuns were from poor, uneducated families. Nevertheless, there was also a

significant number of women from aristocratic or elite backgrounds, who were thus likely to have been at least partially literate. There were also nuns who were quite active as both teachers and abbesses and whose reputation was such as to attract sufficient donations from lay believers to enlarge their nunneries and construct stupas and reliquaries. Daojian, for example, was ordained in 983 and the following year was honored with a purple robe by Emperor Taizong (r. 976–97). In fact, several of Taizong's own female relatives, including several of his daughters, also became Buddhist nuns. One of them, Qingyu (d. 1024), later presented by the court with the honorific title of Eminent Master Baoci Zhengjue, was known not only for her religious attainments, but apparently also for her poetic talents.

Apart from the many convents officially recognized by the court, there were also many smaller, private nunneries or cloisters during the Song. Many of these smaller establishments were established by elite families for pious daughters who either did not want to or could not marry, or widowed relatives without children to care for them. Others were founded by wealthy Buddhist lay women, since during the Song dynasty, married elite women were allowed to “maintain separate ownership of their personal assets, including their dowries and other land or goods purchased after marriage.”²⁴ Not surprisingly, many of these female patrons were members of the imperial family. In addition, since women who were divorced or widowed were also allowed to dispose of their dowries as they wished, those with the inclination for the religious life could also build cloisters for themselves. Other nuns increased their financial resources by renting their land, or by spinning silk: the nuns of the Lotus Convent in Fuzhou (in present-day Jiangxi Province), for example, were known for producing a delicate variety of silk known as “lotus silk.” And finally, nuns were themselves also patrons, using their money to sponsor the printing of Buddhist texts, the building or renovation of Buddhist temples and statues, or feasts for both monastics and lay believers.

Given their upperclass background, many of these nuns were highly educated. As scholars have noted, many elite women of the Song were at least partially literate, a fact that is not reflected in the paucity of written works by Song women included in anthologies and collections of the time.²⁵ Moreover, it would seem that Song women also had somewhat more mobility than their Tang-dynasty counterparts. In the case of at least

a few Buddhist nuns, this meant that they were able to study under some of the great Buddhist masters of the time. In fact, it would seem that during the Song, at least a few male clergy were more willing to acknowledge publicly the ability of women not only to engage in spiritual practice and to be considered exemplars of morality and piety, but also to serve as Dharma teachers, ascending the Dharma hall platform to deliver sermons, accept disciples, and formally pass on the Dharma lineage. It was during the Song dynasty that, for the first time, we find the names of Buddhist nuns, although admittedly very few, formally listed as official Dharma heirs in the venerable lineages of Chan masters.²⁶

The male Chan master credited with doing the most to legitimize women's participation in the "public" sphere of Chan religious life was the Linji Chan master Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163), generally acknowledged as one of the greatest Buddhist figures of his day. Among Dahui's formal Dharma heirs were two extraordinary women, Chan master Miaodao (fl. early twelfth century.), and Chan master Miaozong (1095–1170).²⁷ Both women were known not only for their spiritual attainments and skillful teaching, but also for their literary talents. Miaozong in particular appears to have had an impressive command not only of Buddhist literature, but also of the Confucian classics and Daoist texts. There is also mention of a *yulu* or "recorded sayings" for Miaozong, which may well have been printed and circulated during her lifetime. Such discourse records included accounts of a master's exchanges with his or her disciples, sermons, hymns, letters, and also poetry, both religious and secular. Although Miaozong's collection is unfortunately no longer extant in its entirety, we do have over forty poetic commentaries or *songgu* on well-known Chan Buddhist stories and "public cases" or *koan*.

Complete collections of recorded sayings apparently existed for other eminent Song-dynasty nuns as well, although none remain extant today. One example is the twelfth-century Buddhist nun Huiguang from Chengdu, whose uncle was the Confucian scholar-official Fan Zuyu (1041–98) and author of *The Mirror of the Tang* (*Tang jian*). Huiguang herself was known for her erudition and eloquence, and in 1121 was appointed abbess of the Miaohui Convent in the capital Kaifeng by the emperor Huizong, who greatly admired her learning. The famous Song-dynasty poet Lu You (1125–1210), who wrote a piece in her honor, mentions hav-

ing visited the nun's burial site on West Mountain (in Jiangxi Province) in 1165 and then, in 1172, coming across a collection of her writings in Chengdu—writings that he found to be truly extraordinary. He goes so far as to compare their overall tone and spirit to the poetry of the Song-dynasty writer Fan Zhen (1007–88).

In 1279, the beleaguered Southern Song dynasty fell to the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1260–1368). Although China's new overlords adopted Buddhism as their official religion, it is not until the subsequent Ming dynasty (1368–1644) that we find any significant references to Buddhist nuns. The first Ming emperor had himself begun as a Buddhist monk and although astute enough to realize the importance of exercising a firm control over its institutions, he was in general favorably disposed toward its activities: an edition of the Buddhist canon was reprinted on his command and distributed to many of the larger monasteries. Buddhism continued to flourish under subsequent emperors as well, and the numbers of temples, monasteries, and clergy grew rapidly.

During the sixteenth century, however, with the ascent of the Jiajing emperor (r. 1522–66) to the throne, Buddhism went into eclipse. Although the emperor appears to have been completely obsessed with his desire to obtain Daoist immortality for himself, a number of dedicated Confucian officials took advantage of their emperor's undisguised anti-Buddhist feelings to impose what were often quite draconian measures on the many Buddhist establishments that dotted the Chinese physical and social landscape. Many of these men found their orthodox Confucian sensibilities particularly offended by the ubiquitous presence of convents. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this is an official named Huo Tao, who in 1536 assumed the post of secretary of the Nanjing Board of Rites. After taking a count of the nunneries (nearly seventy) and nuns (nearly five hundred) in the Nanjing area, he launched a determined campaign to return all of them to their proper Confucian places. His reasoning—no doubt shared by many of his counterparts—was as follows:

Men and women are different; this is the norm of the ancients. As for nuns, within they lack a husband and family; above, they lack a father and mother; below, they lack descendents. Is this not pathetic? They call [what they are doing] religious cultivation, but

in actuality, they are transgressing the norms. And, moreover, they also contaminate the wives and daughters of others. Is this not disgusting?²⁸

Huo Tao issued orders for all nuns under the age of fifty to marry and all those over this age to return to live with their families or, if they had no families, to take up residence in charity houses. In the meantime, a concerted effort was made to destroy all of the nunneries, large and small. By 1537, after only one year in office, he was able to announce that “Now all of the nuns fifty and below have been returned to their natal families; their pernicious influence has been mitigated, and there are no longer any cloisters or temples into which people’s wives and daughters can secretly repair.”

The death of the Jiajing emperor put a halt to this persecution, and Buddhism flourished again during the subsequent Wanli period (1572–1619) and continuing on until the end of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). This period of Buddhist revival coincided with a period of significant social and cultural upheaval, often referred to simply as the Ming-Qing transition. It also coincided with a number of momentous changes in Chinese society, including an unprecedented expansion of commerce and trade, which led to growing urbanization and private wealth. This was accompanied by an explosion in writing and publishing of all sorts. In their eagerness to cater to the needs of a burgeoning readership, especially in the urban areas of southeast China, publishers, editors, and anthologists for the first time began to pay attention to the writing, in particular the poetry, of women.²⁹ Yet another of the consequences of the socioeconomic changes of this period was that, although still denied access to schools and academies, many women from elite families—again, especially those in the highly urbanized regions of southeast China—were afforded the education required not only to read widely, but also to write themselves and even to circulate and publish their writings. In a bibliography compiled by the modern Chinese scholar Hu Wenkai, we find the names of four hundred women writers for the Ming dynasty and more than three thousand names (as well as more than two thousand titles of extant collections) for the Qing dynasty.³⁰ Among these names are a number of Buddhist nuns, and among the titles are several collections of sermons, letters, and poems composed by female Chan

Buddhist masters. Although many of these writings are lost, fortunately a significant number are still extant today. Of particular interest are the seven collections of discourse records found in a privately published seventeenth-century edition of the Buddhist canon printed in a temple in the city of Jiaxing, in what is today Zhejiang Province. These women represent a brief but vigorous revival of Chan Buddhism that took place at the end of the Ming and the first decades of the Qing dynasty. Most of these women were first- or second-generation Dharma heirs of the most important figure in this revival, the influential Linji Chan master named Miyun Yuanwu (1566–1642) and his twelve Dharma heirs. In terms of time, they span the entire seventeenth century and three generations of Linji Chan masters. Their lives reflect many of the trends and concerns of this volatile period of Chinese religious, social, and literary history, which we normally see only through the eyes of male scholars, writers, and officials. The appearance of female Chan masters can in large part be attributed to the fact that this revival coincided both with the explosion of publishing and women's writing in general during this period, and with the political turmoil and social upheaval of this transitional period between dynasties. These events helped to loosen many of the traditional restrictions on women's lives. As such, it might be compared to the Six Dynasties, also a time when the grip of the Confucian orthodoxy was loosened by political upheavals. And just as the reunification of the empire in the Tang dynasty resulted in a significant diminishing of the public presence of religious women, so the reassertion of traditional Confucian gender restrictions from the last half of the seventeenth century onward put a virtual end to this brief flourishing of female Chan masters.

In general, the Buddhism of most of the Qing dynasty was largely in the hands of lay believers. The most outstanding figures of this period were neither monks nor nuns, but rather, with few exceptions, devout lay men and women. The latter are most vividly represented by a collection entitled *The Biographies of Pious Women* (*Shannüren zhuan*) compiled by one of the most well known Buddhist laymen of the time, Peng Shaosheng (1740–96). Unlike the collection of biographies compiled by the monk Baochang over a thousand years earlier, Peng's collection of biographies offers as spiritual role models not nuns of independent mind (although he does mention Tang-dynasty Buddhist women such as Moshan Liaoran), but rather pious

laywomen. Some of these laywomen were indeed commended for their literary talents—the wife of Peng’s nephew, Tao Shan (1756–80), left a collection of Buddhist poems that he praised most highly.³¹ The primary justification for their inclusion in this collection of exemplary women was, however, the fact that they managed to somehow embody both the ideals of proper Confucian womanly behavior—including serving their husbands and in-laws and bearing children—and the ideals of Pure Land piety, which allowed them at the moment of death, at least, to detach themselves from these domestic concerns and single-mindedly focus on obtaining birth in the Pure Land.

Toward the end of the imperial period, when the Qing dynasty was on its last legs and society was again plunged into turmoil, the religious life again appears as a last resort, if not always a choice, for intelligent women caught up in the chaos and uncertainty of the times. I have included a few selections from Buddhist nuns who were born in the last days of the Qing dynasty, including Longlian (b. 1909), a famous abbess who is, as of this writing, still alive and active. Recently the female monastic sangha has experienced a dramatic revival, especially in Taiwan, but also in the People’s Republic of China.³² Many if not most of these contemporary nuns are highly educated and no doubt many of them find time from their busy schedules as administrators, educators, preachers, and teachers to write poetry. Translations of their poems will, however, have to wait for another book and another time.

A Note on the Translations

There are a number of Chinese anthologies of monk-poets, but there are no such anthologies of poetry written by nuns. As we have seen, there is only one poem attributed to a nun included in the voluminous *Complete Poetry of the Tang Dynasty*. Nuns are somewhat better represented in anthologies of women’s poetry compiled during the Qing dynasty by women anthologists, such as Wang Duanshu’s *Mingyuan shiwei* (*The Longitudinal Canon of Poetry by Noteworthy Women*) compiled in 1667, Wanyan Yun Zhu’s *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji* (*Correct Beginnings: Poems by the Women of Our Dynasty*) published in 1831, and its sequel *Guochao guixiu zhengshi xu ji* (*Continuation of Correct Beginnings: Poems by the*

Women of Our Dynasty) published in 1836. Most of the poems in the present translation, however, are to be found embedded in the brief accounts of these nuns' lives found scattered in various official and unofficial records, such as Baochang's *Lives of the Nuns*, and in later Buddhist genealogical histories, such as the *Jingde chuandeng lu* and the *Wudeng quanshu* (*The Complete Records of the Five Lamps*), compiled by the monk Chaoyong in 1699. They are also to be found in the few complete collections of female Chan masters' writings preserved in the privately sponsored Jiaxing edition of the Buddhist canon first printed in 1676. Many of the sources for both the biographical material and the writings of nuns from the seventh century and onward can be found in the *Xu biqiuni zhuan* (*Continuation of the Lives of the Nuns*) compiled by Zhenhua (b. 1921) in the early part of the twentieth century. I have checked Zhenhua's original sources wherever possible, but, for the sake of expediency, have refrained from providing all of the citations from these other sources in the notes.

That these poems should be embedded in other sorts of texts should come as no surprise, however. Many of these nuns, and in particular those from the seventeenth century and onward, were known for their literary talents before entering the religious life. Some women actually gave up the writing of poetry after becoming nuns, regarding it as an inherently secular activity incompatible with their religious aspirations. For those who continued to write, poetry became above all a vehicle for either the expression of their own religious understanding or the conveyance of Dharma lessons to their disciples.

It is worth noting in this regard that the majority of these nun-poets were practitioners of Chan Buddhism, although clearly Pure Land devotions also found a place in their activities. Chan Buddhism, as is well known, distinguished itself from other forms of Buddhism in its emphasis on a mind-to-mind transmission that transcended language. The great irony is that, despite its claim of independence from words and letters, from the Song dynasty onward Chan produced a staggering number of written texts. One of the justifications for this, of course, is that language, and in particular poetic and paradoxical language, could be used as a tool with which students might be jolted out of their rational ruts as well as a means by which masters and students alike could demonstrate the depth and authenticity of their realization. Many of these texts, for example,

sought to record examples and exemplars of dialogues between masters and disciples, known as public cases, or *gong'an*, more familiar to Western readers as *koan*, the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese term. These koan were designed not so much to be studied as to be meditated upon and experienced, ideally under the guidance of an enlightened master. In other words, these koan, and the poetic verses by later commentators designed to explicate or rather embody them, were not primarily vehicles for the expression of personal emotions or biographical dilemmas. Rather, they sought to touch on the ultimate nonduality (including, at least theoretically, the transcendence of the duality of male and female) that was considered to be the essence of the enlightened state.

This does not mean, however, that these poems can tell us nothing about their authors as women. What biographical information we have on the Chan Buddhist nuns in particular demonstrates that these women overcame tremendous odds in order to find themselves a place in a tradition that was largely defined in masculine, even martial, terms. This is reflected in the fact that many of these women were praised not for being great women, but rather for being “great heroes” (*da zhangfu*).³³ Unlike Pure Land practice, which could be carried out in the home if necessary, Chan practice required rigorous training and extended periods of meditation under the tutelage of a master. It also required a thorough internalization of the experience of previous masters as embodied in Chan texts and, as such, presupposed a high degree of literacy. Indeed, we find that many of these women first became interested in Chan after having read one or another compilation of records by eminent Chan masters. In other words, the ability to write a religious poem meant both that these women had thoroughly mastered the written tradition and that they felt they had the spiritual authority to express their personal realization of the truths embodied in that tradition in their own writing.

Many of the poems composed by Buddhist nuns are virtually indistinguishable from those composed by Buddhist monks. Rarely do they refer to gender, except to remind their readers of its irrelevance. It is important to note, however, that monks rarely if ever feel a need to stress the irrelevance of gender distinctions (except when they are addressing their few female disciples). In other words, a nun stressing the irrelevance of gender means something quite different from a monk doing so. Both may be seen

as a form of rhetoric, but the practical implications are very different: men could take it for granted, women most certainly could not. In a poem titled “Writing of My Feelings Within the Convent” by the Qing-dynasty nun Wanxian, we find the following lines: “The red cord that stretches a thousand *li* is at this very second cut in two:/ In this sublime setting, it is pointless to speak of the Thrice-Following.” The red cord in these lines refers to the traditional belief that couples karmically destined to be together are bound together with a cord of red silk; the “Thrice-Following” refers to the traditional Confucian assumption that as a daughter, a woman should submit to her father, as a wife, to her husband, and as a mother, to her son. This kind of direct and personal reference to being a woman is, however, very rare: most of the nun-poets mention gender only as an example of the sort of duality that they aspire to transcend. For example, the seventeenth-century nun known as One-Eyed Jingang, having lost the sight in one eye due to her repeated reading of the *Diamond Sutra* (*Jingang jing*), writes:

Male or female: what need to distinguish false and true?
 When Guanyin manifests, what sort of person can it be?
 Even if you peeled away the skin, it would be to no avail:
 I ask you: is it the body of a man or the body of a woman?²⁴

That direct and personal reference to being a woman is rare does not mean, however, that there is no indication at all of gender in these poems. For one thing, often these nuns refer to previous Buddhist nuns or lay women as spiritual exemplars, an indication that there was a sense of there being a female lineage to which they belonged as well. The seventeenth-century abbess Jizong, for example, reminds a lay disciple that “the pearl-offering Dragon Girl was bound to become a buddha./ The sapling-planting wife of Pang was fond of studying Chan.” The first reference here is to the daughter of the dragon king who, when she hears the bodhisattva Manjushri preach the *Lotus Sutra*, attains immediate and supreme enlightenment. Later, another of the Buddha’s eminent disciples, Shariputra, questions how it could be that a person could attain enlightenment so quickly when it took the Buddha many lifetimes, and more importantly, how this person could be a woman, since women were supposedly subject to the five

hindrances, the last of which specifically stated that they could not become a buddha. The dragon king's daughter replies not in words but in an action: she quickly turns herself into a man, thus demonstrating that her spiritual insight has endowed her with the ability to determine her own gender, since she has transcended both. The second allusion is to the wife of the eighth-century layman and poet Pang Yün, who, along with their daughter, Lingzhao, was considered to be as dedicated to the spiritual life as Pang himself.³⁵

Another thing that readers should note is that these nuns often addressed poems to their female disciples, both lay and monastic, as well as to their "Dharma masters" and "Dharma sisters." (It is telling that relationships within the female sangha were often described using male kinship terms, such as "Dharma younger brother" (*fadi*) and "Dharma older brother" (*faxiong*.) Such poems point to the shared aspirations and, in many cases, strong bonds of religious community among women within a largely male-dominated tradition. In short, although I believe that many of these poems can certainly be enjoyed on their own, in order to be fully appreciated, they should be read with an understanding of the larger context in which they were written.

Finally, a note on the technicalities of the translations themselves. These poems, like all traditional Chinese poetry, are written in rhyme and, in most cases, contain either five or eight syllables (or words, since in classical Chinese, the literary language, most words consist of only one syllable) per line. Moreover, they rely considerably on intertextual allusions and references both to Buddhist texts and Chinese historical and literary texts, to lend their sometimes rather bland (or bewilderingly opaque) surfaces a texture and resonance that is often lost in translation.

Many translators of Chinese poetry are tempted to vary line length and even, in some cases, to spice up the language in order to make the poems more palatable to a non-Chinese reader. Many such translations do indeed capture the spirit of the originals, often, if truth be told, more fully than translations that are more faithful to the letter. In this book, however, I have tried to preserve the original form (rhyme is, of course, impossible to translate) and adhere as closely as possible to the text without sacrificing readability. I have tried to refrain from depicting the lives of these nuns as being more feminine or feminist than they were. I have also tried to refrain

from making their poems sound more entrancing (or enlightened) than they appear in the original. I have done so not primarily out of allegiance to rigid academic or scholarly standards, but rather because I feel that presenting these nuns as realistically as possible (given, of course, the limited number and the largely hagiographic nature of many of the primary sources) in the end does them a greater justice. The nun-poets presented in this small book represent only a small percentage of the thousands of nuns who lived in imperial times, many of whom could not read or write. Moreover, the poems in this collection represent only a small percentage of the poetry written by this small minority of nun-poets. I hope, however, that this selection of poems, along with the brief biographical accounts that accompany them, will afford readers a glimpse into the extraordinary diversity and sometimes startling richness of these women's lives.

ABBREVIATIONS

- JT* *Mingban Jiaxing zheng xu da zang jing*. 40 vols. Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1987. Reprint of Ming dynasty edition.
- ZZ* *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō*. Ed. Nakano Tatsue. 150 vols. Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin, 1905–12. Reprint: Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1968–70.
- T* *Taishō shinshō daizōkyō*. Ed. Takakuso Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32.

Six Dynasties

(220–581)



HUIXU (431–99), whose family name was Zhou, was born in Jiangsu Province in southeastern China. She was drawn to Buddhist practice from an early age: we are told that she began to adhere to a vegetarian diet at the age of seven and took the tonsure at the age of eighteen. She soon gained a reputation for her firm adherence to the monastic rules and for her straightforward and direct manner. During the first part of her religious career, she spent some time with an eminent contemplative from northwestern China. “Disregarding the age difference between them [they] followed the Buddhadharma,” and engaged in at least one intensive three-month summer retreat together.

These were turbulent times, and Huixu was often forced to leave one place for another. In time, however, Huixu attracted the attention of a member of the royal family, the prince of Yuzhang, who happened to be stationed in the area. Appreciating her religious attainments, he invited her to live in his home, where his wife and the other royal family members sought instruction from her and became her devoted followers. During this time Huixu met a meditation master by the name of Xuanchang who taught her advanced meditation methods, in which she became extremely proficient. When the prince and his family returned to the Qi capital of Jiankang in the southeast, Huixu went with them and took up residence in the convent the prince had built for her on one of the royal estates located in the suburbs of the capital.

In time, the emperor himself had a convent built for her and her community of nuns. After this, despite repeated invitations, she did not visit the

royal residences for many years. Finally, she agreed to attend a special religious feast held in her honor, at which time she wrote the poem translated below. Upon her departure, she told her devotees that she would never again leave her convent. About a month later, she fell ill and passed away.

世人或不知
呼我作老周
忽請作七日
禪齋不得休

Worldly people who do not understand me
Call me by my worldly name of Old Zhou.
You invite me to a seven-day religious feast,
But the feast of meditation knows no end.³⁶

Sui and Tang Dynasties

(581–907)



FAYUAN (601–63) was a sixth-generation descendent of Emperor Wudi of Liang (502–50), a ruler famous for his patronage of Buddhism: legend has it that he was the emperor visited by Bodhidharma, the first Patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China. Fayuan was also the third daughter of a member of the Tang dynasty royal family, and as such was raised in an atmosphere of privilege and luxury. We are told that she was an exceptionally intelligent and loving child who showed a real talent for study as well as painting and calligraphy. From an early age she was drawn to Buddhism as well, and as she grew into a young woman, she apparently refused to wear fancy brocades, jewelry, or cosmetics. Even as a child, she refused to eat meat. When it came time for her to be married, she went to her parents and pleaded with them to allow her to enter the religious life. They did not put up any resistance, and Fayuan entered the Jidu Convent in the Tang capital of Chang'an. Fayuan appears to have led a secluded life devoted to meditation and the study of Buddhist texts, rarely returning to the court circles in which she had been raised. Eventually, she attracted many disciples and began to acquire a reputation for her skillful teaching and exemplary discipline. In the autumn of 663, Fayuan fell seriously ill. Knowing that her death was imminent, she instructed her disciple to dispose of her body in the wilds to serve as food for hungry birds and not to encase it in precious metals or rare woods. Her family overruled her last request, however, and had her buried in the imperial tombs.

是身無我
取譬水萍
是身有累
同夫風葉
生死循環
實均晝夜

This body without a self
Can be compared to floating duckweed.
This body with its troubles
Is exactly like a leaf in the wind.
This cycle of life and death
Is just like that of night and day.³⁷



HAIYIN. We know very little about Haiyin, apart from the fact that she appears to have lived during the last part of the Tang dynasty and was associated with the Ciguang Convent in what is today Sichuan Province. Hers is the only poem attributed to a Buddhist nun (there are quite a few by Buddhist monks) among the over fifty thousand poems written by some two thousand poets included in the voluminous compendium of Tang poetry, *The Complete Poetry of the Tang Dynasty*.

水色連天色
風聲益浪聲
旅人歸思苦
魚叟夢魂驚
舉棹雲先到
移舟月遂行
旋吟詩句罷
猶見遠山衡

The color of the water merges with that of the sky,
The sound of the wind adds to that of the waves.
The traveler's thoughts of home are painful,
The old fisherman's dream-self is startled.
Lifting his oars, the clouds get there before him,
When his boat moves, the moon follows along.
Although I've done reciting the lines of my poem,
I can still see the hills extending in both directions.³⁸



PLUM BLOSSOM NUN. Nothing is known about this nun: she may well be a fabrication. However, the poem she is said to have written is very famous and often included in anthologies.

盡日尋春不見春
芒鞋踏遍嶺頭雲
歸來笑撚梅花嗅
春在枝頭已十分

The entire day I searched for spring but
spring I could not find,
In my straw sandals I tramped among the
mountain peak clouds.
Home again, smiling, I finger a sprig of
fragrant plum blossom;
Spring was right here on these branches in
all of its glory!³⁹

Song Dynasty

(960–1279)



MIAOZONG (1095–1170) was the granddaughter of a prime minister, Su Song (1020–46), and the widow of a high-ranking scholar-official. Coming as she did from an upperclass literati family, Miaocong was highly educated and appears to have had an impressive command not only of Buddhist literature, but also of Confucian and Daoist texts. Her interest in Buddhism showed itself early: at fifteen she is said to have suddenly said, “Where did this body come from in this life? And after one passes away, where will it go?” She became the disciple, and subsequently a Dharma heir, of the great Linji Chan master Dahui Zonggao. Miaocong was also quite well known for her poetry and other writings. Many of her poems were in the form of responses to traditional Chan stories or koans, a literary tradition made famous by the Chan master Xuedou Chongxian (998–1052), who compiled a hundred koans to which he appended a commentary (designed to further challenge rather than elucidate) in verse. Later the students of another Chan monk, Yuanwu Keqin (1063–1135)—Dahui Zonggao’s Dharma master—took Xuedou Chongxian’s koans and verses, added their own teacher’s commentaries, and thus produced the famous book known today as the *Blue Cliff Record*. Forty-three of the poetic commentaries by Miaocong remain extant today.

一葉扁舟泛渺茫
呈橈舞棹別宮商
雲山海月都拋卻
贏得壯周蝶夢長

A leaf of a boat drifts across the endless
expanse of water,
Lifting and dancing the oars to a different
melody now.
Clouds on the mountain, moon over the sea:
all tossed away;
This done, Zhuang Zhou's butterfly dream
will last forever.⁴⁰

驀然觸著鼻頭
伎倆冰消瓦解
達摩何必西來
二祖枉施三拜
更問如何若何
一隊草賊打敗

Suddenly I have made contact with the tip
of the nose,
And my cleverness melts like ice and shatters like tiles.
What need for Bodhidharma to have come from the
West?
What a waste for the Second Patriarch to have paid
his respects!⁴¹
To ask any further about what is this and what is that
Would signal defeat by a regiment of straw bandits!⁴²



ZHENGJUE (twelfth century) came from an elite scholarly family from Haiyan (in present-day Zhejiang Province). She married a young scholar by the name of Ye, but when she was left a widow shortly afterward, she chose the life of a Buddhist nun rather than remarry. She spent the rest of her life in the Fayun Convent. She was quite well known for her poetry, although unfortunately very little of it survives. The following are two of her quatrains.

春朝湖上風兼雨
世事如花落又開
退省閉門真樂處
閒雲終日去回來

Spring morning on the lake: the wind merges
with the rain,
Worldly matters are like flowers that fall only to
bloom again.
I retire to contemplate behind closed doors,
a place of true joy,
While the floating clouds come and go the whole
day long.⁴³

幽鳥枝頭不住聲
天開雨霽一窗晴
西來妙意非文字
金屑休教落眼睛

The hidden birds on the treetops sing without pause,
The sky clears, the rain stops, the window brightens.
From the West came the wondrous meaning
without words,⁴⁴
It may be gold dust, but don't let it get in your eyes!⁴⁵



BENMING. We know very little about the nun Benming, also known as Mingshi, apart from the fact that she was a Dharma heir of Chan master Yuanwu Keqin (1063–1135). In 1141, shortly before her death on a visit to her family, she wrote a series of verses, which she dedicated to Chan master Caotang Shanqing (1057–1142). He was so impressed with them that, after she died, he published them together with a laudatory colophon of his own. The great Song-dynasty Chan master Dahui Zonggao also found her poetry exemplary and quoted her verses in sermons to his own disciples.

不識煩惱是菩提
若隨煩惱是愚癡
起滅之時須要會
鷄過新羅人不知

不識煩惱是菩提
淨華生游泥
人來問我若何爲
喫粥喫飯了洗鉢盂
莫管他
莫管他
終日癡憨弄海沙
要識本來真面目
便是祖師一本叉
道不得底又下死
道得底也又下死
畢竟如何
不許夜行投明須到

Don't you know that afflictions are nothing more
than wisdom,
But to cling to your afflictions is nothing more
than foolishness?
As they rise and then melt away again, you must
remember this:
The sparrow hawk flies through Silla without
anyone noticing!⁴⁶

Don't you know that afflictions are nothing more
than wisdom
And that the purest of blossoms emerges from
the mire?⁴⁷
If someone were to come and ask me what I do:
After eating my gruel and rice, I wash my bowl.⁴⁸
Don't worry about a thing!
Don't worry about a thing!
You may play all day like a silly child in the sand
by the sea,⁴⁹
But you must always realize the truth of your
original face!⁵⁰
When you suffer the blows delivered by the
patriarchs' staff,
If you can't say anything, you will perish by the staff,
If you can say something, you will perish by
the staff.
In the end, what will you do
If you are forbidden to travel by night but must
arrive by dawn?⁵¹



ZHENRU was the daughter of a Wang family from northwest China (Shenxi and Gansu area). As a young girl she was inducted into the inner palace because of her considerable talents and abilities, and there she became an attendant to an imperial concubine by the name of Qiao. Concubine Qiao was herself a Buddhist devotee, and so did not put up any resistance when Zhenru expressed a desire to leave the palace and enter the religious life. Zhenru subsequently traveled as far as Fujian Province in the south, where Chan master Dahui Zonggao was then living in exile. Dahui thought very highly of her and cited her poetry in his writings.

平地偶然著顛
起來都無可說
若人更問如何
笑指清風明月

I suddenly find myself upside-down on level
ground;
When I pick myself up, I find there's nothing
to say!
If someone should ask me what this is all about,
Smiling, I'd point to the pure breeze and bright
moon.⁵²

今日如師姑
 昔日王師父
 身居羅綺叢
 只著麤麻布
 開口便高談
 嫌佛不肯做
 跳出是非坑
 裁斷生死路
 入虎穴魔宮
 心中無怕怖
 杜選八陽經
 自又三千部
 愛吟落韻詩
 偏不勒字數
 行腳走天下
 參禪無所悟
 近日到雲門
 一時都敗落
 錯認碓嘴頭
 喚作冬瓜瓠
 如此作師姑
 勸君少吃醋
 更有一處乖
 且道那一處
 嘉州大象喫炙麩
 陝府鐵牛撐破肚
 可概見矣

Today she is Buddhist Nun Ru,
 Yesterday she was Teacher Wang.
 Although born to wear silken gauze,
 She now wears only the roughest hemp.
 Mouths that open and spew out lofty talk
 Have no interest at all in becoming buddhas.
 Leap out of the cauldron of right and wrong,
 Cut off completely the road of life and death,
 Then enter tiger's lair and demon's palace
 With a heart that feels not the slightest fear.
 The made-up nonsense of the *Eight Yang Sutra*
 Easily adds up to three thousand chapters!⁵³
 I am fond of chanting poems that have no rhymes,
 And I can't be bothered with counting syllables!⁵⁴
 This wandering nun had traveled the world,
 Investigated Chan, but was not yet enlightened.
 Until recently I found my way to Cloud Gate,⁵⁵
 Where I immediately encountered total defeat.
 I'd mistaken the shape of a mortar pestle,
 Thinking it was a winter melon gourd!
 Having gone through all this just to be a nun,
 I urge you not to feel jealous of me!
 Is there anything else that I've got wrong?
 If so, then do tell me what it may be!
 When the elephant of Jiazhou eats steaming bran,
 The iron ox of Shanfu suffers a distended belly:⁵⁶
 This is easy to see!⁵⁷



ZUQIN was a disciple of Chan master Huo'an Shiti (1108–79). Apparently, her intelligence, perspicacity, and literary talent were such that local male literati-officials sought her company, no doubt interested more in intellectual diversion than in spiritual illumination. She was unwilling to fraternize with them and clearly did not think much of their worldly occupations. The following poem uses the analogy of the official life to refer to that of the deluded and unenlightened mind.

終日爲官不識官
終年多被吏人瞞
喝散吏人官自顯
揭翻北斗面南看

All day long you play the official oblivious of
what it means,
All year long you are duped and deceived by
your petty clerks.
If you chased away your clerks with a shout, the
official would appear,
But instead you tip over the northern dipper
and face toward the south.¹⁵⁸



DEYING came from a well-known elite family: she was a descendent of the eminent scholar Yang I (974–1020) who, among other things, was known for re-editing one of the first Chan genealogical histories (the *Jingde chuandeng lu*). Deying very early on gained a reputation for her precocious intelligence. She studied under a number of eminent Chan masters and eventually was named a Dharma heir of the Yunmen master Fazhen Shouyi (dates unknown). She subsequently preached at a number of different convents in the Jiangnan area, including the Zhuming Convent in Suzhou and the Jinghui Convent in Changzhou. After her death, her writings and sermons were compiled into a collection of discourse records, which is no longer extant.

自贊

A Self-Description

自贊贊不出
自畫畫不成
有箇本來相
如何呈似人
活潑潑
本無生
鼻孔依然搭上唇

I try to characterize myself, but can't seem to do it;
I try to sketch a self-portrait, but with no success!
There is such a thing as the original oom,⁵⁹
But how can it be made to look like a person!
Alive and lively,
It was never born.
As always the nostrils hang over the upper lip.⁶⁰



ZHITONG (d. 1124) came from a famous scholar-official family and even as a young girl gained a reputation for her intelligence and love of study. When she reached marriageable age, she was engaged to the son of another eminent gentry family but, unhappy with the realities of married life, she returned to her parents' home and requested permission to become a nun. When her father refused to give her his permission, she retreated to her room in order to practice visualization and meditation. After her parents died, she accompanied her elder brother when he went to take up various official posts around the country. She lived for a time in Jinling (what is today Nanjing), where she sponsored the building of a bathhouse at the Baoning Monastery and wrote the text to be inscribed over its entrance.

During this time, she also had interviews with a number of eminent Chan Buddhist masters in the Jiangnan area, including Master Sixin (1044–1115), who was a Dharma heir of Master Huanglong (1002–69). She eventually realized her aspiration to take the tonsure and become a nun. She took up residence at the Xizhu Convent in Suzhou (in Jiangsu Province), where she attracted a devoted following of both laypersons and nuns. She is known to have composed a work, no longer extant, entitled *Record of Mind Illumination* (*Mingxin lu*), which was published along with a preface and several verses penned by eminent male Chan Buddhist masters of the time.

一物也無
洗個什麼
纖塵若有
起自何來
道取一句子玄
乃得大家入浴
古靈祇解揩背
開士何曾明心
欲證離垢地時
須是通身汗出
盡道水能洗垢
焉知水亦是塵
直饒水垢頓除
到此亦須洗卻

Since there is nothing that exists, what are you
bathing?
If there is even a speck of dust, from where does
it arise?
If you produce a single profound phrase,
Then everyone can come in and bathe.
The most the ancient holy ones can do is scrub
your back;
When has a bodhisattva ever illuminated anyone's
mind?
If you want to realize the stage beyond impurity,⁶¹
You should sweat from every last pore of your body.
It is said that water is able to wash away impurities,
But how do you know that the water is also not dirty?
Even if you erase the distinction between water
and dirt,
When you come in here, you must still be sure
to bathe!⁶²

浩浩塵中體一如
縱橫交互印毘盧
全波是水波非水
全水成波水自殊

Within the vast expanse of dust essentially a single
suchness,
Whether vertical or horizontal, everything bears
the seal of Vairocana.⁶³
Although the entire wave is made of water,
the wave is not the water;
Although all of the water may turn into waves,
the water is still itself.⁶⁴

物我元無異
森羅鏡像同
明明超主伴
了了徹真空
一體含多法
交參帝網中
重重無盡處
動靜悉圓通

Subject and object from the start are no different,
The myriad things nothing but images in the mirror.
Bright and refulgent, transcending both guest and host,
Complete and realized, all is permeated by the absolute.
A single form encompasses the multitude of dharmas,
All of which are interconnected within the net of Indra.⁶⁵
Layer after layer there is no point at which it all ends,
Whether in motion or still, all is fully interpenetrating.⁶⁶



FAHAI was from a high-ranking elite family from Hunan Province: she was the aunt of a high-ranking scholar-official named Lu Jia, who was a member of the Institute of Academicians who served in the palace Hall for Treasuring Culture. Even as a young girl she was known for her intelligence, and from an early age took a special interest in the practice of Chan meditation. She became a nun and spent many years traveling from one place to another studying with various teachers, and in the end received Dharma transmission from an eminent Chan master. She then retired to a life of quiet contemplation. She attracted the attention of many eminent Confucian scholars of the day (many of whom no doubt knew of her through her nephew) who repeatedly tried to get her to leave her mountain retreat and give Chan teachings to the public. However, Fahai refused to abandon her life of quiet contemplation and remained in seclusion until her death.

霜天雲霧結
山月冷涵輝
夜接故鄉信
曉行人不知

On this frosty day, clouds and mist congeal,
On the mountain moon, the icy chill glows.
At night I receive a letter from my home,
At dawn I leave without anyone knowing.⁶⁷

Yuan Dynasty

(1260–1368)



MIAOZHAN. Little is known about this nun, apart from the fact that the Changming Convent where she lived was painted by one of the most famous woman painters of premodern China, Guan Daosheng (1260–1308). Miaozhan, who was known for her calligraphy, is said to have inscribed the following poem, or one like it, on Guan’s painting.

雙樹陰陰落翠岩
一燈千古破幽關
也知諸法皆如幻
甘老煙霞水石間

In the shade of two trees and the hanging green
of the cliffs,
One lamp for a thousand years broke open the
dark barriers.⁶⁸
I too now realize that phenomena are nothing
but a magic show
And happily grow old among the mist, the
rivers, and the stones.⁶⁹

*Early and
Mid Ming Dynasty*

(1368–1600)



WULIAN was born in 1395 in Shandong Province. She is said to have been very precocious as a young girl: she learned to read at five, and by seven was already able to recite Buddhist sutras and had memorized the *Lotus Sutra*, among others. At the age of thirteen, she was inducted into the inner palace, where she was often called upon to write and recite poetry for the emperor and other members of the royal family, and she took every opportunity to urge him to rule with compassion. She also tried to get him to abstain from the slaughter of animals for the royal table. At the age of twenty-two she fell ill, and requested permission to become a nun. She then devoted herself to the study of Vajrayana Buddhism, and within two years had mastered the most esoteric of texts. She died at the age of twenty-four in 1419, leaving behind a collection of poetry as well as a hymn on the *Lotus Sutra* in seven sections.

雨晴

海棠初種竹新移
流水潺潺入水池
春雨乍晴風日好
一聲啼鳥過花枝

After the Rain

The crabapple has just been put in and the
bamboo transplanted,
The flowing stream bubbles and gurgles as it
enters the pond.
The spring rain suddenly clears, both breeze
and sun are fine,
As the call of a singing bird wafts past the
branches in flower.⁷⁰



JUEQING was born to an elite, educated family from the Nanjing area. After entering the religious life, she took up residence in a small, impoverished convent in the countryside, where she grew her own vegetables. Her quiet, secluded life was thrown into turmoil, however, when in 1537 secretary of the Board of Rites, Huo Tao, made it his mission to destroy all of the convents in the Nanjing area, large and small, and return all the Buddhist nuns to lay life. Jueqing took her small community and fled to safety. She is said to have left the following poem written on a wall before she left.⁷¹

題壁

急忙簡點破袈裟
收拾行囊沒一些
袖拂白雲歸洞口
肩挑明月遶天涯
可憐松頂新巢鶴
卻負籬根舅種花
卻負叮嚀與犬貓
休教流落俗人家

Written on a Wall

In haste and hurry we gather up our tattered robes,
And pack up our traveling bags: not much to take.
Sleeves brushing white clouds, we retreat to the cave's mouth,
Carrying the moon on our shoulders, we circle the sky's edge.
I feel such sad pity for the young cranes nesting on the pine tops,
And for abandoning the flowers I planted at the foot of the fence.
Again and again I admonish the cats and the dogs
Not to hang around the homes of the laypeople!⁷²



ONE-EYED JINGANG. This nun got her name from the fact that she lost the sight in one eye as a result of reading the *Diamond Sutra* (*Jingang jing*) with great single-mindedness. She was known for her simple and straightforward personality and lifestyle, and for giving away everything that she received. Every time she preached on the *Diamond Sutra*, crowds of monks, nuns, and laypeople, including many officials and literati, would gather to listen to her and engage her in dialogue. Many were converted to Buddhism after having heard her preach. She died when she was over seventy years old, having predicted the day of her death.

男女何須辯假真
觀音出現果何人
皮囊脫盡渾無用
試問男身是女身

Male or female: why should one need to
distinguish false and true?
What is the shape in which Guanyin would
finally take form?⁷³
Peeling away the bodhisattva's skin would be of
no use whatsoever
Were someone to ask if it were the body of a
woman or that of a man.⁷⁴



JIXING entered a nunnery as a young girl, perhaps because her family was too poor to raise her. When she grew older, she visited a number of Buddhist masters and appears to have had an enlightenment experience as the result of her practice. She then took to wandering around begging for food. She made no effort to shelter herself from wind and rain, and bathed in the cold river. At first people took her for a madwoman and would not feed her. She gained a reputation for being able to forecast the future, however, and soon people found that blessings seemed to visit the household that invited her in as a guest. She also acquired a reputation for her wisdom and insight, expressed in simple and straightforward language.

奉勸學道人
學道要認真
如若心不切
苦海永沉淪

大地浩無邊
眾生多難數
幾個聰明人
跳出輪回苦

I urge those of you who aspire to enlightenment—
In aspiring to enlightenment you must be diligent!
If your mind is not completely sincere,
You will wallow forever in the bitter sea!

The great earth is vast and without limit,
And sentient beings are too many to count.
Yet how many people are there with the sense
To leap out of the bitterness of samsara?⁷⁵



WUWEI, who hailed from Xiaoshan in Zhejiang Province, apparently decided very early on in life that she would remain unmarried. She also decided to adhere to a vegetarian diet and dedicate herself to Buddhist recitation. At the age of twenty, she was tonsured, after which she built herself a small hermitage and devoted herself to Pure Land practice. Despite her ill health, when she was thirty she began to travel around the country visiting various pilgrimage sites and Buddhist masters. Sometime during the early 1500s she attracted the attention of the court in Beijing, and was summoned to the capital to give teachings as well as to receive an honorary title from the emperor. She then returned to her hermitage, where she lived out the rest of her life. After her death, a stupa was built on Mount Guan in Jiangxi to house her relics.

六十四年活計
得箇菩提三昧
今朝撒手歸西
依然明月滿地

After sixty-four years of working and toiling,
I've managed to achieve a *samadhi* of wisdom.
At dawn, I'll let it all go and head home to the
West,⁷⁶
And the bright moon will blanket the earth just
as before.⁷⁷

*Late Ming and
Early Qing Dynasty*

(1600–1750)



DAOYUAN. We know very little about Daoyuan, apart from the fact that she was born to a certain Wu family in the area that today comprises Anhui and Henan Provinces. She was inducted into the inner palace during the last years of the Ming, and fled south with the court when the capital of Beijing fell in 1644. Not long afterward, she entered the Mingyin Convent in Hangzhou. She was known for her poetry, examples of which were collected in a number of anthologies, including the *Mingyuan shiwei* compiled by the woman anthologist Wang Duanshu. Her poem reflects this transition from life in an imperial palace to that in a Brahma palace, or Buddhist monastery.

禪坐書懷

碧雲靜鎖梵王宮
猶似明霞拱禁中
玉樹舊枝歸靜業
內家新調擅宗風
三千里外腸堪斷
十二年前淚暗紅
欲悟無生何處是
禪燈移照鏡臺空

Seated Meditation:

A Description of My Feelings

Green-tinted clouds quietly lock in the
Brahma Palace,
Just as radiant rose clouds guarded the
Forbidden Palace.
Old branches from the jade tree have taken
refuge in a life of purity,
But new melodies from the inner palace still
dominate the lineage airs.⁷⁸
What happened three thousand *li* away was
enough to break one's heart,
What happened twelve years ago has made
my tears flow dark and red.⁷⁹
I long to become enlightened as to where
the birthless is to be found;
When the *dhyana* lamp is brought to shine,
the mirror proves to be empty.⁸⁰



SHENYI, whose secular name was Xia Shuji, was the daughter of Xia Yunyi, director of the Bureau of Evaluations during the Ming and brother of Xia Wanchun (1631–47), a brilliant poet who died at the hands of the invading Qing troops. Her husband, who was the nephew of Hou Dongceng (1591–1645), a high-ranking Ming official and also fervent loyalist, also died fighting the Qing. After her home was reduced to rubble in the ensuing chaos of the times, Shenyi retreated to a small hermitage, where she was later joined by other members of her family, including two of her sisters-in-law. Even as a young girl, Shenyi was known for her talents in poetry writing and calligraphy. She left behind a collection of her religious discourses (unfortunately no longer extant) and is said to have attracted a considerable number of disciples.

憶王庵舊游寄再

人生聚散本浮漚
回首蒼茫感昔游
曉露未收花力重
午陰欲定鳥聲幽
聞香小坐忘塵世
步月清言掃舊愁
梅影橫斜應似畫
殘英滿地有誰收

*Recalling a Past Excursion to Wang Convent:
Sent to Zaisheng*

Human life consists of meetings and partings,
in the end but froth and foam,
Gazing back at the vast expanse, I am moved
by thoughts of our past excursion.
The morning dew had not yet dried, the blossoms were plentiful and firm,
The noon shade was about to settle, the songs of the birds were hidden away.
Inhaling the fragrance around the little bench,
we were oblivious to the dusty world,
Walking in the moonlight, our pure talk swept away all the old sorrows.
The slanting shadow of the plum blossom looked just like a painting;
Who will gather up the tattered blossoms strewn upon the ground?²⁸¹

夢游天台

石梁飛度接花茵
殿閣經行覲勝因
香氣入衣初不觸
鐘聲到耳迴無塵
木童石女賓中主
翠竹黃花覺後身
憶舊臨風三歎息
碧潭明月影磷磷

A Dream Journey to Mount Tiantai

Across the Stone Bridge I soared until I came
to the Lotus Throne,⁸²
Wandering through halls and towers, I saw
firsthand the supreme causes.
When a fragrant vapor suffused my clothes,
for the first time I felt cleansed,
When the sound of a bell reached my ears, in
a split second, I was dust-free.
The wooden lad and the stone maiden, the
host within the guest,⁸³
Green bamboo and yellow blossoms, I now
see what they mean.
Recalling the past, I lean into the wind and let
out three long sighs;
On the azure waters, the bright moon's
reflection glows like a jewel.⁸⁴



ZAISHENG was the daughter of Yao Ximen (1597–1636), who served as a Minister of Culture in the late Ming. Like Shenyi, she married into the Hou family of Ming loyalists; her husband, Hou Yan, died a martyr at the hands of the Qing troops. After his death, she became a nun and joined Shenyi, whom she apparently took as her spiritual teacher, in her hermitage.

仲春十五夜大人山中言旋既別寫懷

白雲天末和秋低
無限離懷怨賸難
煙柳河橋殘月小
疏鐘古寺曉風淒
白年幻影花枝老
二十浮生草路迷
一葦江頭如何折
竺乾西去待相攜

*On the Night of the Fifteenth of the Second
Month of Spring, in the Daren Mountains,
Writing of My Feelings after Saying Goodbye
after a Conversation*

The white clouds at heaven's end hover low
like this sadness,
I blame this endless sorrow of parting on the
rooster at dawn.
Misty willows along the river bridge, a small
new moon,
Sporadic bells from an ancient temple, a cool
dawn breeze.
The illusory mirage of a lifetime, flowering
branches grown old,
A floating existence of twenty years lost on
the weed-covered road.
The lone reed at the river's mouth is about to
be snapped in two,
When you set off to the West, we'll go there
hand in hand.⁸⁵



JINGWEI was Shenyi's cousin and also from an elite scholarly family of Huading. She had been engaged to marry the third son of the loyalist Hou Dongceng, but before the wedding could take place, the young man was executed by the Qing. Jingwei then joined Shenyi and Zaisheng in their Buddhist hermitage.

贈聖幢師

自是閨中秀
超然遠物華
心能同水月
骨自帶煙霞
翠長真如竹
黃開般若花
寄言劉鐵磨
應識超州茶

Presented to Master Shengchuang

From these inner chambers you shine forth,
Having left all worldly glory far behind you.⁸⁶
Your mind is able to be like moon in water,
Your bones naturally glow with misty colors.
Emerald it grows, the bamboo of suchness,
Golden it blooms, the flower of wisdom.
I will send a message to Iron-Grinder Liu:
I must understand the tea of Zhaozhou.⁸⁷

碧海

碧海風濤靜不飛
凌霄高閣敞雲扉
擁書千卷無人到
翦燭三更鶴歸
漢殿香消青鳥去
緱山秋冷玉笙微
劫灰辨得餘悲愴
獨向人間寄衲衣

The Jade-Green Sea

When the wind settles, the waves on the jade-green sea do not soar,
The lofty heaven-skimming pavilion opens up wide its cloud doors.
I have around me thousands of books but not a single guest arrives,
Although when I trim the wick at the third watch, a heron returns.
The incense in the Han halls has dispersed, the bluebirds are gone,⁸⁸
In the autumn chill of the Hou Mountains the jade pipes grow faint.⁸⁹
In the ashes I can make out the remnants of sadness and sorrow
As alone I face the human world, wrapped in the robes of a nun.⁹⁰



CHAOYI was from Guangling, in Jiangsu Province. She married, but was left a widow at a relatively young age, after which she became a nun. Three years after entering the religious life, she passed away. She left a small collection of poems and religious verse, unfortunately no longer extant. However, the noted poet Wang Shizhen (1634–1711) wrote of her very highly.

看花

土來澆灌水來栽
顛倒工夫任我來
滿院春風花自語
不將顏色向人開

Flower-Gazing

Using soil to irrigate them, using water to
plant them in—
This topsy-turvy way of working allows me to
do as I please.
In the garden full of spring breezes, the flowers
chatter to themselves;
They do not feel the need to show off their
colors to anyone else!⁹¹



JINGMING appears to have been a very sickly child, which is perhaps why at the age of seven her parents entrusted her to the care of the nuns in the Xiaoyi Convent of Hangzhou, which is where Madam Tang, the second wife of the great Ming-dynasty Buddhist master Yunqi Zhuhong (1535–1615), had pursued her devotions after he left her to become a monk. Jingming grew up in this convent, and at the age of nineteen was ordained. It would appear that she eventually became an abbess at the convent, and by dint of sheer determination, added a number of buildings to the nunnery over time, including a lecture hall, a meditation hall, and a stupa garden. The girl who had been so sickly as a child that no one thought she would survive finally died at the ripe old age of eighty-two.

口占示徒

Oral Instructions to My Disciples

庭中卓刹竿
懸旛更懸鐙
鐙明大千界
旛引最上乘

In the center of the hall is a stately pole
From which hang banners and lanterns.
Lanterns that illumine the great chiliocosm,⁹²
Banners that draw down the highest vehicle.⁹³

門外河之水
照面復照心
眞面何虞皺
道心須要深

Outside the gates are the river's waters,
Which reflect both the face and the mind.
The face of truth doesn't worry about wrinkles
As long as the mind of the Way is profound.⁹⁴



XINGGANG (1597–1654) was born in Jiaxing, in what is today Jiangsu Province in southeast China, the only child of a scholar by the name of Hu Rihua and his wife, Madam Tao.⁹⁵ She was very intelligent and gifted with a talent for writing poetry: her name is listed in the Jiaxing gazetteer in the section of “talented women.” Like many of our other nuns, she showed an inclination for the religious life at an early age, and upon reaching adolescence, expressed a desire to remain unmarried. Her parents insisted that she marry, however, and she was engaged to a young scholar who succumbed to an illness and died shortly after the betrothal. As was the custom, Xinggang went to live with her fiancé’s parents, and did her best to fulfill the duties of a filial daughter-in-law. She had not given up on her religious aspirations, however, and when she was thirty-four years old and both of her parents had died, she became a nun and a Dharma disciple first of the Linji Chan master Miyun Yuanwu and then later of Miyun Yuanwu’s senior Dharma heir, Shiche Tongsheng (1593–1638). After nearly a decade of solitary meditation, Xinggang was asked to become the abbess of the Crouching Lion Convent in nearby Meixi. She appears to have been a charismatic and eloquent teacher, and people came from all over to listen to her sermons and Dharma talks. When she died, she left behind numerous lay disciples, both male and female, and seven female Dharma heirs. She also left behind a collection of recorded sayings, which remains extant today.

孟夏關中間詠

*The First Month of Summer Retreat:
Written in Leisure (Four Verses)*

諸老門庭家業盛
自知疏拙隱爲安
玄機棒喝都休歇
萬法虛融莫問禪

In the gates and halls of the elders, the work of
the lineage flourishes,
Knowing my own lazy ignorance, I've hidden
away in order to be still.

Esoteric methods, blows and shouts⁹⁶—

白結鶉衣倒掛肩
饑來吃飯倦時眠
蒲團穩坐渾忘世
一任窗前日月遷

I am giving them all a rest,
The myriad dharmas merge in emptiness—
stop asking about Chan!

高臥雲嶒寄幻軀
白雲翠竹兩依依
眼前幻境隨遷變
深掩柴扉樂有餘

A worn, patched robe hangs lopsided from my
shoulders,

When hunger comes, I will eat, when tired,
I will sleep.

Sitting still on my cushion, I will completely
forget the world

And just let the days and the months drift by
my window.⁹⁷

Resting high in the cloudy peaks, a lodging
for this illusory body,

White clouds and green bamboo, one leaning
against the other.

Before my eyes this magical scene undergoes its
transformations,

Fastening shut my brushwood gate, my happi-
ness spills over.

茅舍風高孰敢親
棒風喝月走煙雲
儼然寶鉢虛空托
淡飯黃齋自現成

A thatched hut buffeted by high winds—
who would dare come near?
Blows of wind and shouts of moon keep away
the mist and clouds.
Solemnly, I lift up my alms bowl toward the
empty heavens;
My unseasoned rice and minced yellow pickle
will soon be ready!⁹⁸

蒲團

蒲團一片絕遮欄
覆地翻天在處安
聖號凡名都坐斷
大千收在一毫端

The Meditation Cushion

A single meditation cushion, and one is
completely protected,
Earth may crumble, heaven collapse—
but here one is at peace.
Sacred titles and worldly fame: both fade away
in the sitting,
And a great chiliocosm assembles on the tip
of a feather.

拄杖

超然迴別骨稜稜
獨立孤標互古今
凡聖齊施全正令
撐天拄地獨爲尊

The Staff

Transcending all major distinctions, cold and
detached as bone,
Its independent and solitary style extends
from past to present.
It applies equally to sage and fool,
its commands are authentic,
Raised to the sky or resting on the ground,
it deserves respect!⁹⁹

拂子

拂拂真風絕覆藏
橫拈堅用好風光
當年馬祖曾懸壁
今日何妨再舉揚

*The Fly Whisk*¹⁰⁰

Swoosh, swoosh, the true tradition uncovers
all that is hidden,
Waved to and fro with vigor, it improves the
atmosphere!
Once in years gone by, Mazu took it and hung
it on the wall;
Today what harm is there in lifting it up and
waving it again?¹⁰¹

鉢盂

滲漏全無何俊哉
饑食渴飲絕纖埃
要知洗後渾無事
多少迷人安衲來

The Alms Bowl

How very elegant it is, with not even a single
leak or hole!
When thirsty I drink; when hungry I eat,
leaving not a crumb.
I understand that once washed, nothing more
need be done,
Yet how many lost souls insist on attaching a
handle to it!¹⁰²

新正警眾

浮生幻化苦奔波
終日茫茫被業磨
若能掃斷無明窟
獨露逍遙自在多

人生幻世愛相延
若休時大覺仙地
獄天堂倏自取話
頭透綿密莫貪緣

心常坦坦本來清
細察多知混世情
值下翻身登彼岸
無明頓破笑笑吟

New Admonitions to the Assembly (Four Verses)

This floating life an everchanging dream, yet
we bitterly toil away,
The entire day full of busyness, as our karma
grinds us down.
If only you can make a clean sweep of the cave
of ignorance,
You will be left with a life full of leisurely
freedom and ease!

Human life and this mirage of a world are
kept going by desire,
Once desire stops, all is the realm of the Great
Enlightened One.
The lords of the heavens and hells will find
themselves speechless,
Having poked through the web, there will be
no conditions of desire.

The mind always composed and calm—
that is the original purity.
Careful study and accumulation of facts—
turbid worldly emotions.
If you immediately change your life and step
onto the further shore,¹⁰³
Your ignorance will shatter on its own with
a laugh and a song!

了得凡心聖自圓
急參父母未生前
覷破本來一著子
山花流水共同歡

Understand the ordinary mind, and realize
one is naturally complete,
Ask urgently who you were before your father
and mother were born.
When you have seen through the method that
underlies them all,
The mountain blossoms and flowing streams
will rejoice with you.¹⁰⁴

掩關

挈挈波波多少年
杜門息影隱林泉
乾坤蹄破腳收轉
獨坐寒窗皎月圓

終日如愚頓息機
箇中無是也無非
堂堂坐斷聖凡路
亙古彌今一本如

Behind Closed Doors

After teaching and preaching, running about
for so many years,
Now I've shut my door and retired to the
hidden forest spring.
Having kicked open heaven and earth, I can
now rest my feet;
Alone I sit before the winter window, the
shimmering moon full.

Spending the day in a foolish way: no need
for any method,
Here within there is neither existence nor
nonexistence.
Straight and tall, I sit, cutting off the path
of sage and fool;
Since time immemorial to the present day
it has been so.¹⁰⁵



YIKUI (1625–79) was one of the seven Dharma heirs of Master Xinggang. The great-granddaughter of a Minister of Justice and the daughter of a scholar-painter, Yikui had two sisters and two brothers, one of whom, Zilin, would play a particularly central role in her life. Yikui was by all accounts a precociously intelligent girl, who not only mastered the feminine arts of sewing and embroidery, but also excelled in the arts of painting and poetry writing. She married a young scholar and apparently fulfilled all of the requirements of a good wife and daughter-in-law happily and successfully. In the fall of 1648, however, her husband, with whom she had a companionate marriage, passed away, leaving Yikui a widow at the age of twenty-three.

After her husband's death, Yikui retreated to her room, where she remained in seclusion, eating a minimal vegetarian diet and engaging in single-minded Buddha-recitation (*nianfo*). Later, she became interested in Chan meditation and sought out the guidance of Master Xinggang, under whom she eventually took ordination. Yikui lived for a few years at the Crouching Lion Convent, but after Master Xinggang's death, moved into a lovely hermitage located on the river bank, which had been built for her by her brother Zilin and which was named Cantong Cloister, or "Cloister of Investigating Commonality." The cloister quickly developed into a fairly large establishment, and Master Yikui attracted a great number of disciples.

This seemingly idyllic life came to an abrupt end in 1667 when, seven years after taking over the leadership of the Crouching Lion Convent, Master Xinggang's designated successor and Yikui's Dharma sister, Yigong, fell

ill from exhaustion and overwork. Not long after, the forty-six-year-old Yigong passed away, but not before formally designating Yikui as her successor. After six tiring but productive years as abbess of the Crouching Lion, Yikui moved back to her beloved hermitage, where she died in 1679 at the age of fifty-four. Her own collection of religious discourses and other writings was compiled several years before her death.

哭本師祇老和尚

折心磨琢幾春秋
午夢驚殘淚未收
嘆息離師何太早
家松蕩盡不知愁

幾見青黃不事師
自規啼偏落花枝
傷心愁聽三回喚
靜掩柴扉風雨時

*Mourning My Teacher,
the Venerable Nun Zhiyuan [Xinggang]*

After submitting myself to her rigorous
training for several years,
A midday dream shattered awake, tears not
yet wiped away.
Alas, why did I have to be separated from my
teacher so soon?
The family pine tree has grown still and
knows no sorrow.

Since when have spring and fall passed
without me serving her?
I find myself imitating the birds crying over
the fallen branches.
Brokenhearted, I listen as again and again
they return my calls,
Then silently I shut the brushwood gate
against the wind and rain.¹⁰⁶

輓義公法兄

夢覺含悲聽曉鐘
空彈血淚染舟楓
追思共唱無生曲
何意風吹別調中

An Elegy for Elder Dharma Sister Yigong

Half dreaming, half awake, sorrowfully I listen
to the morning bell,
In vain I wipe away tears of blood that stain
the boat and the maples.
I think back on how together we sang the
songs of the birthless,
Why is it, then, that the wind now seems to
blow a different tune?¹⁰⁷

傷風不得睡

通身發燒咳難儘
起坐披衣氣漸清
出定了然更漏絕
只問麟犬吠滾村

Unable to Sleep Because of a Cold

My whole body burns with fever, I cannot
keep from coughing,
Rising, I sit, my robes pulled about me; my
breath slowly clears.
As I emerge from a state of samadhi
the hourglass has run out;
All I hear is the sound of neighbors' dogs
barking in the town.¹⁰⁸

禁足

九旬收足且偷閑
欲了殘經對月看
有耳不聞塵俗事
熏風透戶億高賢

自愧彩疏遯古溪
抱病終日掩雙扉
藤蘿密密無人到
林鳥時談向上機

冷看浪走法門衰
盡地爲牢自活埋
條忽夏向秋又杪
剛剛學得一痴呆

*Summer Retreat*¹⁰⁹

Ninety days of staying put and yet one can
find moments of leisure,

Trying to make out a tattered sutra, I read
under the light of the moon.

Although I have ears, I hear nothing of the
dusty affairs of the world;

A fragrant breeze slips through the door
as I think of the lofty sages.

Ashamed of my meager talents, I flee the
world to ancient streams,

Nursing my illness, all day long I keep the
double-shuttered gate closed.

The vines and creepers grow thick and dense,
and no one comes;

Sometimes the forest birds and I discuss
methods of self-cultivation.

I watch unmoved as waves recede and Dharma
gates fall into disrepair,

I draw a circle on the ground within which
I will hide myself away.

Suddenly the summer begins to draw to
a close, and fall comes again;

It is only recently that I have mastered the art
of being a complete fool.¹¹⁰

Chan Meditation

和禪坐偈

打破重關隨處安
無心于物更瀟然
閒來危坐松陰下
漸看蟾蜍東上懸

嘉饒說法墜天花
擬議尋思被物遮
觸境遇緣無不足
敲空取髓作主涯

浩浩談玄疊似雲
相逢難得箇知音
紅爐突出超凡志
宿有天機轉法輪

勞生泊泊姿貪嗔
頓發心花大地春
烹雪煮茶消白晝
胸懷廓徹若永輪

Once the layered gates are shattered, any place
is a place of tranquility,
Once the mind becomes unattached to things,
all things become pure.
In moments of leisure, I sit upright in the
shade of the pine tree,
Watching as the toad in the moon slowly rises
to hover in the east.

When one freely speaks of the Dharma, the
heavenly flowers fall,
When one deliberates and debates, one is only
confused by things.
With the right opportunity and good fortune
nothing is impossible,
Knocking on emptiness, extracting the mar-
row,¹¹¹ becomes a way of life.

How wonderfully sublime to discuss mysteries
layered like clouds,
It is truly rare to meet someone who can be
called a kindred soul.
The red stove blazes forth with an extraordi-
nary determination,
As if it possessed the karmic power to turn the
Dharma wheel.

This toiling life disordered and confused by
lust, greed, and anger,
But when the mind-flower suddenly opens,
the world becomes spring.
Melting snow to boil water for tea, I while
away the entire day,
Feeling inside as vast and expansive as the icy-
cold moon above.

輕舟帶月水生花
菡萏花開暗度香
聞見覺知無別法
頭陀懶散髮垂長

A tiny boat in the moonlight stirs up foam-
flowers on the water,
Blossoming water lilies send across their fra-
grances in the dark.
Hearing, seeing, knowledge, and conscious-
ness are all one dharma,
Now this nun can afford to be lazy and let her
hair grow long.¹¹²

題鏡

相逢覩而觸人性
箇裏無私物物親
我愛秋波清徹底
胡來漢現不留情

Inscribed on a Mirror

We meet and scrutinize each other, I confront
my own nature;
If within there is no self, then each and every
thing is intimate.
I am fond of this mirror, which like autumn
water is completely clear,
Always the same, whether reflecting the face of
a foreigner or a Chinese.¹¹³

贈洞雲禪友

古院堂堂一整新
洞雲深鎖有知音
焚香默坐君有委
無舌人傳語最新

To My Meditation Companion, Dongyun

The ancient hall stands tall and proud, com-
pletely renewed,
Locked inside the caves and clouds is a kin-
dred soul.¹¹⁴
Burning incense, sitting silently, you are com-
pletely at ease,
The words of a tongueless person are the most
novel of all.¹¹⁵

這漢一生骨硬如釘
一處轉腳最難移根
二十四上知有此事
十年克苦忘形
四十九上憫絕婆婆世界
覷得世態如冰
實求早離如願
業緣又使七春
目今鐵釘如灰
四大風火分散
葉落知秋
正是歸根時候
啊呵呵
逍遙惟我

All her life, this "fellow" has been as tough as
nails,
Once I dug my heels in, I could not be moved.
At twenty-four, I first found out about this
matter
And for ten years struggled to forget outward
appearances.
At forty-nine, I cut myself loose from this
suffering world
And could see through mundane affairs as if
through water.
I'd got to the truth of things and could leave
when I wished,
But I stuck to my labors for seven more seasons
of spring.
Now in front of your eyes, the iron nails will
turn to dust,
And the four great elements will disperse like
wind and fire.
When leaves fall, one knows autumn has come,
Now is the time for me to return to the source.
Ha, ha, ha!
Footloose and fancy-free—that's me!¹¹⁶



JINGNUO was the daughter of a county magistrate from Hangzhou. She entered the monastic life as a young girl and became the senior Dharma heir of the woman Chan master Weiji Xingzhi (d. 1672). Like her teacher, Jingnuo earned a reputation for compassionate but strict discipline and impeccable behavior and attracted hundreds of followers, many of them women of the gentry class. It is possible that some of these women knew that behind Jingnuo's stern facade was a lover of poetry and nature. One anecdote relates how she built a grass hut on the banks of the river. Every time she saw the blossoming plum on the myriad trees or the wildly blowing snow, she would say: "This is where true enlightenment is to be found." Jingnuo also occasionally professed shame at the pleasure she derived from words. Late in life she is said to have noted to a disciple, somewhat ruefully, that "The religious life does not rely on words and letters. I am already old, and I've managed to cleanse myself of all kinds of attachments; still I laugh at myself and this one remaining thought."

憶維極師

冰雪家風古
蕭然仗室中
當年親教誨
數語發愚蒙
生死恩難報
箕裘愧未工
妙峰還掬土
道範邈何窮

Remembering Master Weiji

Like ice and snow, the lineage air is an ancient one,
It was stern and strict there in the quarters of the
 abbess.
In years gone by she personally taught and guided me,
With a few words she dispelled my blind ignorance.
Her compassion in life and death matters hard to
 repay,
And I am ashamed that I've not yet lived up to her
 teachings.
I will always return to her extraordinary example for
 sustenance;
As a model of the Way, she will always be inex-
 haustible.¹¹⁷

幽居靜坐

幽居惟自適
一編聊自遺
白晝一何長
安不自黽勉
古人碎往矣
微旨亦須闡
空檐滴長漏
爐香生寶篆
每當興會嘉
雙手不釋卷
嗟哉世俗子
不解親墳典

Living in Seclusion, Sitting in Silence

Living in seclusion, one can simply do as one
pleases,
With a single text, one can forget oneself for
a while.
The daylight hours—how much time is there
really?
Why then do I not exert myself?
Although the ancients are long gone,
Their wisdom must still be grasped.
From the empty eaves, water keeps on
dripping,
From the censer, ashes fall marking the time.¹¹⁸
This mood always brings me great pleasure,
As with both hands, I clasp my book tightly.
What a pity it is that ordinary people of the world
Know not this intimacy with the words of
the wise!¹¹⁹

歲暮作

時序自推遷
忽然驚歲暮
舉目見寒雅
悲鳴如欲訴
太陽慘不舒
似雲四野布
朔風時北來
哀號滿庭戶
翹首望陽春
春陽不我顧
居諸如隙駒
剝啄有定數
況我世外人
浮雲已如故
園有數株梅
結伴儘堪度

Written at Year's End

The sequence of seasons naturally pushes forward,
Suddenly I am startled by the ending of the year.
Lifting my eyes I catch sight of the winter crows,
Calling mournfully as if wanting to complain.
The light of the sun is chill rather than gentle,
Spreading over the four corners like a cloud.
A cold wind blows fitfully in from the north,
Its sad whistling filling courtyards and houses.
Head raised, I gaze up toward the spring,
But the spring pays no attention to me at all.
Time is a galloping colt glimpsed through a crack,
Death's knock on the door has its predestined time.
How could I not know, one who has left the world,
And become familiar with the floating clouds?
In my garden grow several trees of flowering plum
Whose sworn pact of friendship helps me get by.¹²⁰

春宵即事

野藤花氣暗隨風
狼籍春光一半空
斜依石欄頻望處
滿庭明月有無中

Spring Night: An Impromptu Poem

The wild reed breezes have secretly left with
the wind,
The brilliance of the chaotic springtime already
half gone.
Leaning over the stone balustrade, I rest for
a little while,
The courtyard moon somewhere between there
and not.¹²¹

夏日晚晴

窗白雨將去
猶存一帳寒
神清無俗夢
心定不生瀾
紅濕知蓮苦
聲遲識漏殘
畫梁新燕小
窺棟何處聲

Clear Sky Late on a Summer's Day

The window lightens as the rain gradually stops,
Although the curtains still retain a bit of the chill.
A transcendent heart means no mundane dreams,
A stabilized mind does not give rise to any waves.
Its reds soaked through, I know the lotus suffers,
The sounds slow down, the rain must be stopping.
Under the painted crossbeams the little swallow chicks
Peek through the eaves, fill the house with chatter.¹²²

河渚初夏

石枕藤床萬慮忘
跏趺不遂世間忙
風生蒲扇人情冷
竹映紗窗月影涼
隨地可消清夜永
無心嘗戴野荷香
門迎流水塵聲遠
欄外松濤入耳長

On a Riverbank in Early Summer

A stone pillow and a vine cot: the ten thousand worries forgotten,
Sitting cross-legged, I do not chase after the busyness of the world.
A breeze rises from the rush fan: human emotions grow cold,
The bamboo etched against the gauze window: moon shadows grow chill.
No matter where one is, one can mitigate the endlessness of the pure night,
In the state of no-mind one can fully enjoy the fragrance of the wild lotus.
At my door I greet the running brook, the sounds of the world are faraway,
And beyond the railing, the sighing of the pine trees lingers in my ears.¹²³

閱楞嚴經

青蓮自是出游泥
在處明心便不迷
寄語學人須著意
本來無染既菩提

On Reading the Lankavatara Sutra

The blue lotus spontaneously emerges from the
drift of the mire;
If you bring to everything an illumined mind,
you won't get lost.
I send word to those who study to always keep
firmly in mind,
That which is originally pure is none other than
wisdom itself.¹²⁴

舟泊姑蘇

扁舟今夜泊
遙對閶閫城
霞落浦雲晚
雅眠山月明
片帆歸路遠
千里客心驚
鼓枻不成寐
蕭蕭何處聲

Mooring My Boat at Suzhou

My little boat drops anchor tonight,
From afar I gaze at the closed city gates.
As the rosy mist descends, the riverbank clouds
darken,
As the crows return to roost, the mountain moon
shines.
But this little boat still has a long way to go,
And the thousand-*li* traveler's heart is unsettled.
The noise of drums and oars make it difficult
to sleep,
And that rustling sound, from whence does
it come?¹²⁵



XINGCHE was born in 1606 in Hengzhou in Hunan Province. Her father was a scholar-official who himself had a strong interest in Buddhism and often took advantage of his official travels to different parts of China, in particular to the southeast, to visit well-known Buddhist teachers and meditation masters. Xingche relates that on the night she was conceived, her father had a dream that a Buddhist monk came to his door asking for food and shelter, and that he very gladly acquiesced. She also notes that, even as a child, she felt an aversion to meat and was strongly attracted to the Buddhist teachings—details found in many hagiographic stories of holy men and women in the Buddhist tradition. As was true of a growing number of women of the gentry class during this period, Xingche was educated at home. By the time she married (she would have preferred not to), she had read widely in both the Confucian classics and the Buddhist scriptures and had mastered the art of writing poetry as well. Xingche bore her husband several children in quick succession, but not long after the birth of the last child, her husband died while on an official journey in the south. After his death, she retreated to a small cloister on the family property, where she devoted herself to meditation and other religious devotions. Feeling the necessity of a spiritual mentor, she began to study Chan Buddhism, first with a local monk, and then with a Linji Chan master by the name of Shanci Tongji (1608–46), who was a Dharma heir of Chan master Miyun Yuanwu. After several years, at the age of thirty-three, Xingche was ordained, and moved into a small hermitage on Mount Heng (also known as Nanyue, or Southern Peak) to be closer to her teacher. Shanci,

however, died prematurely only a few years later from eating poisonous greens after the area was overrun by invading Qing troops and all of the agricultural crops were destroyed. Xingche left Mount Heng and traveled to southeast China to visit a number of eminent but aging Chan teachers in the Linji lineage of Master Miyun Yuanwu. It was from one of these, Master Wanru Tongwei (d. 1657), in what is today Suzhou, that she received Dharma transmission and to whose lineage she officially belongs. Xingche spent a number of years in the Jiangnan area, where her teaching drew a great number of disciples, both lay and monastic, male and female. She was particularly famous for her strict adherence to monastic discipline in a time many considered to be marked by general religious and moral decline. She was also known for her literary gifts. In 1654, at the age of forty-seven, she was invited to become the abbess of a convent in Suzhou. Two years later, a sizeable collection of her religious discourses and other writings—including the poems translated here—was compiled, printed, and circulated widely. Little is known about Xingche's later life, but it would appear from her poems that she returned to her beloved Mount Heng to pass her final years.

南嶽山居雜

澗底風來嘯
情空物物幽
不聞車馬鬧
遠卻世塵憂
葉落如秋老
林疏露瀑流
忘機鷗與鷺
柏狎若相投

門倩閑雲護
清幽丈室臨
林猿探果熟
巢鳥入林深
撇卻浮名網
超然樂道心
空空四句外
得意芥投針

日出通身暖
風來大地涼
人心多障礙
聖道獨揮揚
白玉生成白
黃金不煉黃
古今無改變
在在露真常

Living in Seclusion in the Nanyue Mountains
(Ten of Twenty-Five Poems)¹²⁶

From the mountain stream the wind gusts fiercely;
When the heart is empty, each and every thing is still.
There is no noise here of clattering carts and horses,
It is far from both neighbors and dusty worldly cares.
The leaves fall, as if autumn had grown old,
The trees are bared, revealing the waterfall.
I've abandoned all ambitions: now seagull and egret
Are as close to me as the most intimate of friends.

The gate borrows stray clouds to guard it,
And a pure solitude borders my quarters.
Forest gibbons go in search of ripe fruit,
Roosting birds fly deep into the forest.
I've thrown off the net of floating fame
And aimed higher with a mind that delights in
the Way.

The emptiness of emptiness, beyond the four
phrases,¹²⁷
A fulfillment as rare as finding a needle in a
haystack.¹²⁸

When the sun comes out, it warms the body through,
And when the wind rises, it cools off the great earth.
The human heart must face so very many obstacles
That only the way of the sages can scatter and dispel.
Like white jade, from the beginning it is completely
white,
Like yellow gold, it needs no refining to become
yellow.

Whether ancient or modern, it undergoes no change,
And in each and every place reveals the eternally real.

亂石千峰裏
危廬依碧岑
黃鶯鳴翠柳
白鷺雜芳林
曲徑穿雲細
荆扉落葉深
幾番遷位處
山色盡沉吟

A jumble of boulders amid thousands of mountaintops,
A thatched hut leaning precariously against jade peaks.
Yellow orioles sing in the kingfisher-green willows,
White egrets wheel through the sweet-smelling woods.
The winding path threads narrowly through the clouds,
The bramblewood gate lies deep among the fallen leaves.
I wander from one vantage point to another and another,
Until all the mountain scenes have been captured in verse.

高隱平生志
今來住此山
幻塵都覩破
浮世漫相觀
石乳隨時汲
藤花任意攀
乾坤空浩大
誰識此中間

To dwell in noble solitude has been the goal of a lifetime,
So from now on I will live my life here on this mountain.
I have seen through the illusions of this dusty world
And am no longer embroiled in this floating existence.
There are stalactites that one can suck whenever one likes
And wisteria flowers that can be pulled down as one pleases.
Heaven and earth make up a space so great and so vast,
Who really appreciates the leisure to be found therein!

林壑晴雲鎖
亭亭幾樹梅
汲泉吟詠去
採藥帶香回
葉上寒山偈
雲中般若臺
杖藜隨所至
石几布蒼苔

The forest ravine locked in by fair-weather clouds,
Where a scattering of plum trees stand tall and proud.
Humming a tune, I set out to draw water from the spring,
Wrapped in fragrances, I return from gathering herbs.
On the leaves, the *gathas* of Hanshan,
In the clouds, the terraces of wisdom.
I follow my bramblewood staff wherever it goes,
To a stone bench covered with gray-green moss.

古樹蟠奇石
清谿遶碧苔
飯餘山鳥靜
雲破盈龍回
壁老形如圖
人間冷似灰
三生如半日
何處得愁來

嚴老山房瘦
閒僧許暫棲
雲深天墜地
影淡日沉西
勞我烏藤杖
看人白壁題
悠悠清興永
說偈對潺谿

窗碧映清輝
開門納翠微
離霞孤鶴迴
繞石亂雲飛
矮榻苔爲席
疏簾葉作衣
斜陽西去遠
倦鳥自知歸

Ancient trees coil around odd-shaped stones,
Clear streams circle around jade-green moss.
Bellies full, the mountain birds settle down,
The clouds break open and the dragons return.
The cliffs are old and shaped as in a painting,
Humans at leisure, passions as cold as ashes.
Three lifetimes pass like just a half of a day,
From what place will melancholy ever emerge?

The cliffs are old, the mountain hut decrepit,
A good place for this idle nun to roost a while.
The clouds darken as the sky descends into the earth,
The shadows grow faint, as the sun sets in the west.
Trudging along with my staff of black cane,
I notice someone's inscription on a white wall.
Long and lingering, this pure elation is endless,
As I recite my *gathas* to the gurgling brook.

The azure sky in the window gleams pure and clear,
I open the door to let in the blue-green of the hills.
From out of the rosy mists, the lone crane returns,
Circling boulders, soaring through scattered clouds.
A low bed of moss can be used as a meditation mat,
The scattered leaves on the eaves can serve as a robe.
The setting sun has disappeared far into the west,
The weary birds instinctively know their way home.

桂輪偏照野
風氣浦幽林
愛見澈清景
恒持虛白心
苔平跌坐穩
風勁入林深
老衲來相問
焚香一鼓琴

The late autumn moon lights up the forest,
And mountain mists fill the secluded woods.
I love to look at this crystal clear landscape,
It helps me sustain an empty and clear mind.
On the flat moss, I can sit in stable meditation,
As the wind whips its way deep into the woods.
An old nun comes to see how I am getting along,
We light some incense, play a bit on the zither.¹²⁹

猛秋送行

塞鴈多南度
翩翩遠送君
此時看別路
何處共斜曛
調拂關山月
思浮海國雲
尺書如不吝
千里寄殷勤

紅樹霜橋別
青蘿水寺期
去來唯仗錫
得失但稱詩
細雨迷松徑
孤煙結柳絲
好隨梧葉信
莫負落花時

國亂猶飛錫
天邊何處留
朝雲排小閣
夕雨上孤洲
白業飯常住
青燈說浪遊
孤帆歛乃裏
旦暮定中劉

*The First Month of Autumn:
Seeing Someone Off on a Journey*

The border geese flock across toward the south,
Wings flapping, they see you off into the distance.
As I gaze now at the road that will lie between us,
Where will we again together share a setting sun?
Sent away in exile to below the mountain-pass moon,
I think of the clouds over that faraway land by the sea.
If I am not forced to be sparing with my letters to you,
A thousand *li* I will send them, bidding you to take care.

By the red-leaved trees, the frosty bridge, we parted,
By the blue wisteria, the waterside temple, we were
to meet.
Going and coming now with nothing but a walking staff,
Winning and losing apply only to the judging of poems.
A fine rain: I lose my way along paths of pine,
A lone mist: I braid together threads of willow.
It is better to put your trust in the leaves of *wutong* trees,
Who will never abandon you when the flowers fall.

The country in chaos, but still you wander about;
Where at heaven's edge will you finally stay still?
Early morning clouds file before the little pavilion,
Late afternoon rains climb up to the solitary isle.
White karma has led you to take refuge in the
deathless,
Blue lamps have persuaded you to drift like a wave.
A lone solitary sail, the sound of creaking oars,
From dawn to dusk floating within samadhi.¹³⁰

偶然作

短髮蓬鬆披雪裘
長季寂寞臥林丘
松華漫煮青精飯
霜葉寒燒黃檗秋
潦倒世情如蝶夢
仳離時事付春流
砌蛩未識閒情思
早向簷肯訴冷愁

Impromptu Verse

My short hair in disarray looks like a coat of snowy fur,
The entire season I've spent alone resting in the
wooded hills.
Pine seeds thrown in boiling water make a fine green
meal,
Frosty leaves burn away the cold, yellow oak in
autumn.¹³¹
The misfortune of my worldly affairs, a butterfly's dream,
The death of my husband now entrusted to the spring
flow.
The cricket on the stone stairs does not yet understand
my thoughts
And so continues to address the eaves with its
melancholy plaint.¹³²

寫懷

道路崎嶇過傻休
閒觀世事水東流
目窮天際空今古
足躡雲端任去留
泉石主人常並坐
松花道者每同遊
有時得句憑虛嘯
勝與漁樵共唱酬

Expressing My Emotions

The road through rugged terrain, at times easy,
at times obstructed,
In leisure I observe the affairs of the world like
a river flowing east.
I gaze toward the end of the sky, empty of past and
present,
I walk among the clouds, freely coming and going.
I often sit together with a master of stream and
boulder
And occasionally travel with a wayfarer of the pine
flower.
At times I manage to come up with a phrase,
and whistle as I ride the void,
Better even than exchanging poems with the
fisherman and woodcutter.¹³³

竹拄杖頌

儻侗一槪
無枝無葉
硬骨稜層
七凹八凸
其心雖空
針撈不通
凌霜傲雪
不變其容
生荆棘林
長頑石壁
無陰陽地
卓卓安立
用時活潑
能縱能奪
全生即殺
全殺即活
指西劃東
勢若飛龍
挑回明月
撥轉虛空
往往來來
全憑渠力
把住時
聖凡乞命
放行時
瓦礫生色
通身作用
自天然
倒弄橫拈
許誰測

Gatha on the Bamboo Walking Staff

Roughly broken off with a snap,
Stripped of branches and leaves.
Hard as bone, bumpy and uneven,
Holes and knots here and there.
Although its "heart" is empty,
Pricks and blows can't pass through.
It withstands both frost and snow
Without changing its appearance.
When thorns spring up in the woods,
It is as obstinate as a stone wall.
Without being either yin or yang,
Majestically, it establishes itself.
When it is used, it is vital and alive,
Able to both hold on and let go.
When life is complete, then it kills,
When killing is complete, it revives.¹³⁴
Pointing east or pointing west,
Its power is like a flying dragon,
It can pluck back the bright moon
And make the empty skies revolve.
Going and coming, coming and going,
It relies completely on its own power.
When it is laid to rest, both sages and fools
plead for their life,
When it is made use of, even potshards
and tiles are beautiful.
From first to last, its function stems from
its inherent nature,
Flipping over, lifting up—who knows
what it will do next?¹³⁵



JIFU was born in Huzhou in Jiangsu Province to the Li family, and was an extremely precocious young girl. She received Dharma transmission from Chan master Jichu Hongchu (1605–72), who was a Dharma successor of Hanyue Fazang (1573–1635), who was himself a Dharma heir of Miyun Yuanwu but later broke with his teacher over a number of doctrinal issues. In the latter part of his life, Jichu Hongchu served as the abbot of the Lingyan Monastery in Hangzhou, and was known for his close connections with lay literati of the Jiangnan area. Jifu herself served as the abbess of the Miaozhan and the Lingrui Convents, both located in the Hangzhou-Suzhou area. However, we have few details of her life apart from what can be gleaned from her poems, sermons, and other writings. In fact, she left two collections of writings. The first of these is a five-chapter collection of sermons, poems, and other writings compiled during the time she was abbess of Miaozhan Convent, which appears to have been printed and circulated during her lifetime. The second collection, also in five chapters, appears to have been printed after her death.

十二時歌

夜半子

夢裏紛紛不知止
踏破東山西嶺青
翻身原在被窩裏

雞鳴丑

日用頭頭自諧偶
那邊水洗面皮光
這裏啜茶濕卻口

平旦寅

萬象之中觸露身
佛祖到來難著力
唯人自肯乃方親

日出卯

珊瑚樹林色杲杲
不須別處覓瞿曇
丈六金身一莖草

*Song of the Twelve Hours of the Day*¹³⁶

Middle of the night—the first hour

In my dreams, I go here and there and don't
know how to stop myself.

Treading into pieces the green of the eastern
hills and the western peaks,

Then turning over to find one's been nestled
in the bedcovers all along.

The cock crows—the second hour

All the routines of everyday life, each one nat-
urally in accord.

Over there, by the banks of the river, they
scrub their faces until they shine,

Over here, rinsing the mouth with tea then
swallowing it down.

Dawn breaks—the third hour

I am alone here among ten thousand forms
and I can bare my body.

If the Buddha and ancestors came, they'd find
it hard to overpower me,

Only if a person is herself willing can anyone
become intimate with her.

The sun rises—the fourth hour

In the coral tree¹³⁷ groves, the colors are bright
and radiant.

There is no need to look elsewhere for the
Buddha, Gautama,

His sixteen-foot-tall golden body is in a single
blade of grass.

食時辰

別甌炊香玉粒新
喫粥了洗鉢盂去
便道宗師指示人

禺中已

莫向太虛分彼此
風中鈴鐸善宣揚
歷歷分明無一字

日南午

愛閒不打禾山鼓
無事上山走一遭
倦來又上蒲團坐

日昃未

十二部經可知禮
稽首南無上大人
試問如爲秋乙巳

Mealtime—the fifth hour

In the new pot, fragrant, mouth-watering
grains of fresh rice.
When I've finished eating my porridge, I go
wash my bowl
Then tell the Dharma master to correct and
instruct the others.

Midmorning—the sixth hour

Do not split up the great emptiness into “this”
and “that.”
Bells and clappers in the wind are very good at
preaching,
Explaining everything in detail without using
a single word!

The sun shifts south—the seventh hour

Those who are fond of leisure do not pound
on Hoshan's drum.¹³⁸
When there's free time, I climb the mountain
and stroll about,
And when I'm weary, seat myself on
meditation mat once more.

The sun begins to sink—the eighth hour

From the twelve-sectioned canon we can know
how to behave.
With bowed head, I place my trust in the
Great One Above
And venture to ask how to apply it to this
autumn of 1665.¹³⁹

晡時申

會得依狀猶隔津
自怪修行不得力
順成歡喜逆成瞋

日入西

一彎月掛窗邊柳
吹火柴生滿灶煙
頭上青灰三五斗

黃昏戌

老鼠便來頭白蜜
床頭打絮到三更
連累山僧不得息

人定亥

芥子吸乾香水海
衣內摩尼忽放光
露柱燈籠齊唱采

Late afternoon—the ninth hour

My understanding is still on this side of the
river crossing.

I chide myself that my cultivation practice is
not stronger.

When all goes well, I am happy; when it
doesn't, I get angry!

The sun sets—the tenth hour

A curve of moon hangs over the willow by the
window.

I blow on the kindling, and the furnace fills
with smoke.

Four or five flecks of dark ash fly up over my
head.

Golden dusk—the eleventh hour

Time for the mice to venture out to steal the
pale honey.

At the foot of my bed they make a racket late
into the night,

Which disturbs this mountain monk so she
cannot sleep.

Everyone settled—the twelfth hour

The mustard seed drinks dry the Fragrant-
Water Sea.¹⁴⁰

Beneath my robes, the *mani* jewel suddenly
radiates light,¹⁴¹

Singing in unison with the lanterns on the
outside pillars.¹⁴²

荷花

風掠晴荷水閣涼
淤泥不染夜生香
全身如坐車輪大
不必西行覲法王

Lotus Flower

The wind brushes the fine lotuses, the water
pavilion is cool,
Unstained by drifting mud, at night they give
off a fragrance.
If one's entire self is as stable as a carriage with
giant wheels
There will be no need to travel West to meet
the Dharma King.¹⁴³



JIZONG. Chan master Jizong was born into a famous scholar-official family from Zhejiang Province and married into an even more famous family with a long tradition of official service. She was known even as a young girl for her intelligence and love of books as well as for her calligraphy and painting. She appears to have had an early interest in Buddhism and would often go to the Miaozhan Convent, where she would study and practice under Master Jifu. She was widowed, most likely in middle age, after which she went to visit Master Jichu Hongchu at the Lingyan Monastery in Suzhou. She became his disciple, and after completing the mourning period for her husband and settling her family affairs, she took the ordination and went to live in the Miaozhan Convent. Jizong and Jifu seemed to have had a strong spiritual and intellectual connection, and together they compiled a five-chapter collection of poetic commentaries on ancient Chan stories. After her death, one of her disciples also collected her writings, which were printed in 1677.

贈張夫人

浮華轉盼屬雲煙
草座麻衣悟息肩
識病豈煩尋妙藥
解空時復感諸天
獻珠龍女當成佛
搜疏龐婆好學禪
一曲無生堪共語
臨風寄與雁頭箋

To Lady Zhang

This empty show in a blink of an eye reverts
to clouds and mist,
A seat of straw and robes of hemp, knowing
how to rest the shoulders.
When one knows one is ill, why bother to
search for miraculous cures?
When one understands emptiness, one can
move all the gods.
The pearl-offering Dragon Girl was bound to
become a buddha,¹⁴⁴
And the sapling-planting wife of Pang was
fond of studying Chan.¹⁴⁵
The melody of the birthless is something we
can discuss together,
As in the wind I send this letter to you tied to
the leg of the goose.¹⁴⁶



YINYUE. Yinyue was from an elite Shaoxing (Zhejiang Province) family. It is said that from an early age she showed little interest in worldly activities and would often sit in meditation. She was married to a certain Mr. Xie at the age of sixteen, but when she was thirty, she became a disciple and later a Dharma heir of Linji Chan master Linye Tongqi (1595–1652), another of Miyun Yuanwu’s twelve Dharma heirs. It may be that she was widowed; or it may be that she could no longer deny the religious vocation she had felt since she was a child. Yinyue appears to have been of a strongly eremitic bent and in the beginning lived in a small hermitage and called herself “the Crouching Dragon Abbess.” Although her disciples compiled her discourse records after her death, unfortunately none of her writings remain extant today apart from a few poems and scattered accounts of Dharma exchange. Wang Duanshu (1621–ca. 1706), the famous woman poet and compiler of an anthology of women’s writings, remarks that Yinyue’s religious poetry provides evidence for those who need it that “the ability to realize the Great Way has nothing to do with whether one is a man or a woman.”¹⁴⁷

世尊睹明星

*The World-Honored One
Gazes at the Shining Stars*

今古乾坤無變易
何許特地費分疏
而今夜夜明星現
試問諸仁會也無

Present, past, heaven and earth—no more rebirth,
So what need for special analysis and explication?
And yet now night after night shining stars appear;
Is it not perhaps a convocation of the compassionate?¹⁴⁸

山中偶

In the Mountains

伏龍不會禪
問者只粗拳
高臥重岩下
都忘歲與年
堪嗟逐世客
勞勞天地間
愧予百不會
贏得一身閒

This crouching dragon knows nothing of Chan,
The one who asks gets nothing but a fist in reply.
Resting up high beneath the many-layered cliffs,
I completely forget the passing of the years.
Pitiable are all those who chase after the world,
Struggling and toiling between heaven and earth.
Embarrassed that although I don't know much,
I've succeeded in living out my life in leisure!¹⁴⁹



MINGXIU, a native of Jiangsu province, is said to have showed a decided leaning toward the religious life at a very young age, refusing to eat meat even as a child, and when she became a little older, expressing her determination to remain unmarried in order to care for her aging parents. After their deaths, she took the tonsure and became a nun. She is known to have traveled on pilgrimage to many of the famous Buddhist sites in China, including Mount Emei, Mount Putuo, and Mount Wutai. She left a collection of poetry and a collection of discourse records, neither of which, unfortunately, have been preserved.

合江

The River He

合江山色好
耐可雨連綿
欲覓峨眉路
須憑般若船
雲峰呈曉景
仙樹帶秋煙
咫尺趨瞻處
將登第一天

The mountain landscape along the He River is fine,¹⁵⁰
But one must put up with a rain that goes on forever.
If you want to find the way to Emei Mountain,
You must rely on the boat of intuitive wisdom.
Cloud-covered peaks give way to early dawn,
Numinous trees are covered with autumn mist.
And very close by is a spot where one can look up,
As if about to ascend into the first of the heavens!¹⁵¹

泊舟

Mooring the Boat

漁火村鐙兩暗然
暮雲空隙見長天
波平江面光微動
瑞霞輕搖不是煙

The fisherman's fire, the village lights have
both grown dark,
Through a break in the evening clouds,
a glimpse of the long sky.
The waves lie flat, the gleam on the river's
surface stirs slightly,
The auspicious mist gently shimmering in
the air is not smoke.¹⁵²

示眾

妄談般若妄談宗
誤引群聾學我聾
夙契心源性實相
事隨世理顯虛空
人因有執機皆塞
物爲無情道盡通
可是箇中真得處
太陽西去水流東

Instructions to the Congregation

Recklessly speaking of wisdom, carelessly talking of religion,
Mistakenly I entice the deaf to learn from my own deafness.
From the beginning form and substance have been complete,
Affairs follow the pattern of the world manifesting in emptiness.
It is because you are attached that opportunities are blocked;
Beings, once free of emotions, can fully penetrate the Way.
Right in the midst of this is where the truth can be realized,
As the sun heads toward the west and the river flows east.¹⁵³



MINGBEN was from the area around present-day Shanghai. Her mother was childless for many years and spent a great deal of time at the temple praying for children. Finally she gave birth to two daughters. Just before she gave birth to Mingben, she had a vision of a divine being who said to her, “This child will be worthy of transmitting the [Buddhist] lineage.” Mingben turned out to be an extraordinarily intelligent child who loved to read. When she reached the age of marriage, her mother, no doubt because of her vision, placed her in a convent. Eventually, Mingben became a Dharma heir of the famous Linji master Feiyin Tongrong (1592–1660). After this, she traveled extensively and visited all four of the sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism: Putuo, Jiuhua, Wutai, and Emei. She finally ended up in Beijing’s Lingguan Convent, where she gained a reputation for her spiritual attainments and for her ability to write moving religious poetry. She was also known for her painting, not only of Buddhist images but also of landscapes and flowers. Many of her poems were written as inscriptions on her paintings.

自題荊州寓庵求畫西湖

融融麗日洞天幽
一種清華近寶樓
香篆去從朝彩接
白雲來自曉風收
泉流竹葉將成筏
霞復桐枝欲化蚪
瑞氣滿峰花滿麓
值教斗室作神州

*An Inscription for a Painting
of the Stately Pavilion of Zhilin*

Mild and gentle, a fine sun pierces through
the heaven's obscurity,
And there is a kind of pure flower growing
near the jeweled tower.
Patterned incense smoke leaves to meet the
colors of the morning,
And pale clouds arrive gathered in by the
breezes of the dawn.
The bamboo leaves floating on the stream
will turn into rafts,
The *wutong* branches among rosy clouds will
become dragons.
The auspicious air filling the peaks, the
blossoms filling the foothills,
Are enough to transform this small cell into
a realm of the gods!¹⁵⁴

題智林莊嚴閣圖

移將江浙置荊州
咫尺西湖任所遊
神入妙時天地闊
意融通處水山優
雲煙每斂開林道
霞彩頻興擁殿樓
一帶芳堤春正好
三潭印月又堪秋

*An Inscription for a Painting of West Lake
Commissioned by a Convent in Jingzhou*

Jiangsu and Zhejiang have been transplanted
here to Jingzhou,¹⁵⁵
So that in this intimate West Lake one can
wander as one pleases.
When the spirit enters into the mystery,
heaven and earth are vast,
Where thoughts merge and penetrate, rivers
and hills are lovely.
Every time the clouds and mist retreat, the
forest path opens up,
And the rosy dawn colors repeatedly rise to
embrace the halls.
Along the stretch of fragrant hillside, the
springtime is truly fine,
Above the three ponds, the round moon is
as lovely as that of fall.¹⁵⁶



CHAOYAN was born in Hangzhou, in present-day Zhejiang Province, to the Qiu family. She appears to have been raised in a monastery setting, leaving home when she was only three years old—we do not know if this was because of her spiritual precocity, or perhaps because her parents were poor and could not afford to raise her. She was tonsured when she was only eleven years old and subsequently became the disciple of Chan master Benchong Sheng (d. 1671), who was a Dharma heir of Feiyin Tongrong and the abbot of the Huiyun Monastery in Hangzhou. She appears to have been quite famous for her literary gifts: there is mention of a collection of her recorded sayings, which I have been unable to locate. The seventeenth-century woman anthologist Wang Duanshu writes that “When I read all the poems in her recorded sayings, [I find them to be like] fish leaping in the vast sea, [like] birds soaring in the heavens above. They are neither separated from words nor obstructed by words.”

自贊

吳山頂上月輪孤
冷淡清貧一物無
來問頭陀何所事
蒲團坐久自歡娛

A Self-Description

Above the highest peak of Mount Wu, the
round moon is alone,
Cold and bland, pure and poor, it does not
possess a single thing.
If someone should come along and ask what
this nun is doing,
She sits for long hours on her meditation mat
enjoying herself.¹⁵⁷

到九華見溪水偶成

九華別是一諸天
殿宇人傳自晉年
怪低夜來渾未寐
松風不端水涓涓

*Arriving at the Jiuhua Mountains, I Saw the
Creek and Was Moved to Write This*

The Jiuhua Mountains are a different kind
of heaven,¹⁵⁸
Their halls and towers dating back, it is said,
to the Jin.¹⁵⁹
I wonder why when night comes I am unable
to sleep:
The pine wind gusts endlessly, the water
trickles on.¹⁶⁰

大殿

寒色蒼蒼老柏風
石苔清滑露光融
半夜四山鐘磬盡
水晶宮殿月鈴瓏

The Great Hall

Winter colors hoary and pale, the winds in the
old poplars,
The stone moss is pure and slippery, the bright
dew shimmers.
At midnight in the surrounding hills the bells
and chimes grow still,
And the crystal palaces and halls of the moon
are like lustrous jade.¹⁶¹

峰頂

月明如水山頭寺
仰面觀天石上行
夜半深廊人語定
一枝松動鶴來聲

Mountain Peak

The moon as bright as water above this moun-
tain-top temple,
Looking up I gaze at the heavens and wander
among the rocks.
It is midnight and in the deep halls people's
voices have stilled;
The shudder of a pine tree branch brings the
cry of a heron.¹⁶²

蒲團偈

蒲團靜坐閉禪觀
四歲歸來改舊嚴
彈指樛將心事了
青山依舊白雲間

Meditation Mat Gatha

On this mat I've silently sat in solitary meditation
retreat,
Four years come and gone, my old countenance
has changed.
In a snap of the fingers I've seen through the
mind's games,
The blue mountains stand as before among
the white clouds.¹⁶³

夏雨

萬樹搖風驟雨聲
蕭蕭一榻傍初更
翻身涼夢和雲斷
月上西空透隙明

Summer Rains

Thousands of trees are swaying in the wind
and driving rain,
Whistling fiercely by my couch as the first watch
draws near.
Tossing in my bed, a cool dream scatters just like
the clouds
As the moon rises in the western sky in a thin
shaft of light.¹⁶⁴



YUANDUAN was from a scholarly family of Jiading in Jiangsu Province. She became a nun at the tender age of twelve and later received Dharma transmission from Chan master Shanshao Benzhi, a second-generation Dharma heir of Miyun Yuanwu. She subsequently served as abbess of the Mingyin Convent in Hangzhou and of the Crouching Lion Convent in Jiaxing. She was particularly known for her poetry.

書齋偶詠

榻寄閑窗下
相攜話昔遊
烹茶成雅集
開卷足清幽
宿雨花生潤
微風鳥自謳
留將參照影
靜拂素絲幽

My Study: An Impromptu Verse

Leisurely we rest on the couch by the window,
And hand in hand reminisce over past excursions.
We brew some tea and all is elegant and refined,
Perusing books is enough for this pure seclusion.
In the night rain, the flowers begin to glisten,
In the gentle breeze, the birds start to chatter.
As if to detain the shadows of the fading light,
I silently strum the white silk strings in the
dark.¹⁶⁵



MIAOHUI was born in Changzhou, in Jiangsu Province. She later married a scholar by the name of Li Shiyan from Shanxi. Her husband died not long after their marriage, and Miaohui's parents urged her to remarry. She was determined to remain faithful to her husband's memory, however, and refused to do so. After the death of both her parents, she became a nun at the Banro Convent in her hometown of Changzhou. She attracted a great number of disciples and was particularly known for her poetic talent. She died when she was over eighty years old and left behind a collection of writings, unfortunately no longer extant.

般若招提曉坐

夜雨洗山巖
朝來翠獨濕
跏趺坐學觀空
清風滿香積
正因字本無
而我好翰墨
心即等死灰
未了人間孽
窗竹皆虛心
庭松多勁節
體此長青樹
原不在虛實
何況鐘魚間
梵理更無得
坐久聞妙香
慈航如何接

*Early Morning Meditation
at the Banro Convent*

The night rain washes down the mountain cliffs,
When dawn comes, the brilliant greens are damp.
Sitting cross-legged, I learn to contemplate
emptiness,
As the pure breeze fills with accumulated
fragrance.
The buddha-nature is ultimately wordless,
But still I remain fond of brush and ink.
My mind has yet to become as dead as ashes,
I've not yet exhausted all my worldly karma.
The bamboo by the window is completely
hollow of a self,
The pine in the courtyard is extremely deter-
mined and pure.
I intuitively understand that these evergreen trees
Are in essence beyond both emptiness and form;
How could it be then that between bell and
fish-drum
Is where the principles of Buddhism are to be
found!
After a long sitting, I get a whiff of its wondrous
fragrance,
How can one find passage on the ship of
compassion?¹⁶⁶



SHIYAN was from the Hangzhou area, in present-day Zhejiang Province. A precocious young girl, she not only read voraciously, but was also a particularly gifted musician, calligrapher, painter, and poet. She became a concubine in the house of a powerful family but later left to become a nun at the Bizhi Convent in Hangzhou. Although we are not told why she entered the religious life, her poetry would indicate that she was very much drawn to spiritual practice. She gained a reputation not only for her sermons, but also for poetry, which deftly conveyed religious ideas without slipping into dry didacticism.

憶夢

蕉團穩坐好安禪
炯炯金鐙法座燃
慧鳥鳴來深樹裏
亂出飛入瀟窗前
雲鎔碧海暮晴日
露洗空天散曉煙
記得夢中參我佛
色空空色悟真詮

A Dream Remembered

Sitting firmly on the plantain-leaf mat, I can
meditate in peace,
Surrounded by golden lamps flickering by the
Dharma seat.
Wise birds emerge singing from deep within
the woodlands,
A confusion of mountains soars up and into
my small window.
Clouds fuse with the deep blue seas to mold
this glorious day,
The dew washes the empty heavens, scatters
the morning mist.
I recall how in my dream, I had a meeting
with my Buddha;
Form is emptiness, emptiness form: now I
know what it means.¹⁶⁷

春夜與閬音師詠月

皓月輕飛處
經堂寂不嘩
碎光穿竹罅
圓影架松叉
露濕巢喧雀
風流草亂蛙
與師清課後
相對理袈裟

*On a Spring Night, Admiring the Moon
with Master Langyin*

The luminous moon drifts by so lightly,
The sutra hall lies silent without a sound.
Bits of moonlight pierce the cracks between the
bamboo,
Its round refulgence perches in the intersecting
pine branches.
The dew dampens the nests filled with noisy
swallows,
The wind combs the grasses filled with croaking
frogs.
I sit with the master after the ceremony is over
As, face to face, we straighten out our *kasayas*.¹⁶⁸

題達摩像

折葦江流疾似帆
九年枯坐向寒巖
靜中悟得言詮妄
笑把如來大藏緘

On a Painting of Bodhidharma

Plucking a reed, he floated on the river as
swiftly as if he had sails,
Then for nine years sat like a withered tree
facing a cold stone wall.
In the stillness he realized that verbal explanations were nonsense
And with a smile, sealed shut the Tathagata's
Great Storehouse.¹⁶⁹



WANXIAN. Unfortunately, all we know about Wanxian is that she was born in Changzhou (present-day Suzhou in Jiangsu Province) and that her family name was Shi. She married, but it would appear that her family fell on difficult times, and so she retired to a small hermitage in the hills. She left a collection of poetry.

庵中寫懷

禪關畫掩絕塵跡
前有修篁後有松
野鶴去時人少伴
曉雲起處壁添峰
當時自識塵緣淺
今日誰知道味濃
千里赤繩從此斷
超然何用講三從

*Writing of My Feelings from
Within the Convent*

Meditation gates shut all day, keeping out all
traces of worldly dust,
In front, groves of fine bamboo, and in back,
a forest of pine.
Now that the wild cranes have gone, there are
few companions left,
But where the dawn clouds rise, a brushstroke
of dark mountain peak.
Long ago, I came to understand the shallow-
ness of worldly roots,
Today, is there anyone who understands the
pungent flavor of the Way?
The red cord that stretched a thousand *li* has in
a second been cut in two;
In this sublime setting, it is pointless to talk of
the “thrice-following.”¹⁷⁰



KEDU was from Huai'an in Jiangsu Province. Her father, an official, ran into trouble with his superiors and was executed. Kedu was only seven years old at the time, and when she saw her father's corpse, she was said to have expressed her desire to leave the world and become a nun. However, her family responsibilities kept her in the world, and it was not until she was forty years old that she finally decided to visit several eminent Chan masters, including Jie'an Wujin (1612–73), in search of spiritual instruction. Apparently Master Jie'an Wujin was initially unwilling to allow Kedu to take the tonsure. Kedu was so distraught that she began to cough up blood. Jie'an, convinced of her resolute determination, then gave her the tonsure, and she embarked on an arduous practice of koan meditation. Finally Jie'an Wujin gave her Dharma transmission. Kedu spent the rest of her life at the Lianhua Convent in Xiuzhou in neighboring Zhejiang Province.

脫體凡流竟莫窮
堂堂獨露主人公
朝來換水焚香課
盡在尋常日用中

Drop off the body: the river of the world will
never end,
Stately and grand: nothing to show but the
inner master.
When morning comes, change the water, light
the incense,
Everything is in the ordinary affairs of the
everyday world.¹⁷¹

Second Half
of the Qing Dynasty

(1750–1911)



JIZHU was born to a scholarly family from Jiangsu Province but was orphaned as a young girl and subsequently raised by an elderly nun. It would seem that her parents, probably her mother, taught her the art of writing poetry when she was young. In any case, not only did she not give it up, but she cultivated enduring friendships with other well-known literary women from Jiangsu Province, in particular the members of the Clear Brook Poetry Club founded by Zhang Yunzi (b. 1756) and her husband, Ren Zhaolin (fl. 1776–1823). Of the ten women who made up this group, Jizhu appears to have been closest to Zhang Zifan, who was widowed at a relatively young age. Zifan would often visit Jizhu at the Yishou Convent, where they would discuss poetry and Chan Buddhism.

書懷東紫繁女史

花細翠袖久蠲除
靜案繩床意自如
性懶已忘驕慢習
家貧猶惜舊藏書
談空有弟窮禪理
適興從親學蠹魚
更喜蕭疏塵慮少
草衣木食足安居

To Lady Scholar Zifan

Flowery filigree and kingfisher sleeves, I've
discarded long ago,
With sutra table and corded chair, my
thoughts wander unhindered.
Despite my laziness, I've forgotten my old
arrogant habits,
Despite my poverty, I still long for my old
library of books.
For discussing emptiness, I have you who
understand Chan principles,
When in the mood, I study like a bookworm
with those close to me.
I take delight in this solitary life in which
worldly concerns are few,
Grass for clothes, roughage for food: with
this one can live content.¹⁷²



ZIYONG. Ziyong's family was originally from Liaodong Province in the far north, but had followed the Qing armies to Beijing. Later her father settled in what is today Hubei Province, where he and his wife lived a life of farming and study. Ziyong was an only child; her mother was in her late forties when she gave birth to her. A serious child, when she reached marriageable age, she protested vehemently and insisted that she wanted to live a life of vegetarian renunciation, fasting, and embroidering buddhas. Her parents reluctantly agreed. However, Ziyong soon decided that she wanted to further her spiritual knowledge, and she began to seek out many of the eminent Chan masters of the time, and several decades later, received Dharma transmission from a Linji Chan master by the name of Gulu Fan (dates unknown). She later became the abbess of a number of convents in the Beijing area. No doubt many of her devotees were the ladies of the royal family, and in time the Kangxi emperor bestowed upon her the honorary title of Compassionate Vehicle of Universal Salvation. Later, Ziyong took an extended pilgrimage to the south to visit sites associated with past masters of the Linji lineage as well as sacred Buddhist mountains and temples. Along the way, she visited various temples and met with many eminent monks. She so impressed the lay donors of one area in Jiangsu Province that they convinced her to become the head of a convent that they had restored. Ziyong appears to have spent many years in the south, and it is unclear when (if ever) she returned to the capital.

京都引眾送行讚詩十首

昨逢諸子話離情
無限愁腸向外傾
分付庭花休著疾
恐驚珠露占秋英

買得輕舟欲指南
滿懷明月素心慙
嚴前幽鳥頻頻唱
話到南詢五十三

昨夜靈花夢裏分
醒來依舊渺無痕
一天明月清如洗
玉水燕山客意欣

*Ten Verses Presented on the Occasion
of a Gathering in the Capital of My Disciples
to See Me Off*

Yesterday I gathered my disciples and spoke of
the pain of separation
As, heart filled with fathomless sorrow, I head
out to the beyond.
I've ordered the flowers in the courtyard not to
be overly anxious,
Fearful that the pearly drops of dew mean that
autumn has come.

Having purchased a little boat, I am ready to
head southward,
The bright moon fills my breast, my empty
heart is a bit giddy!
In front of the cliffs, hidden birds sing out with
great urgency,
Saying, "When you reach the south, consult the
fifty-three!"¹⁷³

Last night the numinous flower opened up in
my dreams,
But upon waking everything was vast and
unscarred as before.
A heavenful of luminous moon, as clear as if it
had just bathed,
The jade-like waters and hills of Yan all lift the
traveler's spirits.¹⁷⁴

莫嫌懶拙兩無心
雲自無心鳥自吟
風透花明香有韻
何須意外更相尋

惟愛燕山玉水情
情風明月兩相迎
株禽也解知端的
飛近征車作遠盟

扁舟遙泛月明中
薊北南天風景同
諸子漫言情念切
秋來依舊看歸鴻

兩袖春光出禁城
一腔心事向南傾
燕山在念愁雲密
直待秋高色自清

Do not slight the lazy and foolish for having “no mind,”

Clouds emerge from no mind, just like songs do from birds.

When wind pierces the flowers’ brightness, their scent sings,

What need to seek for anything more than beyond all of this?

It is just that I love the hills of Yan and their jade-like waters,

Where clear breezes and bright moon complement each other.

The forest birds are smart enough to know what is going on,

Flying near the traveler’s cart, they make a far-reaching pact.

A skiff of a boat floats in the vastness under the bright moon,

Whether in the north or in the south, the moon is one and the same.

My disciples, do not say that you are overcome by emotion,

When fall comes, you will once again see the returning goose.¹⁷⁵

Two sleevefuls of springtime light as I leave the Forbidden City,

One breastful of anxious thoughts as I head toward the south.

The hills of Yan are on my mind as the grieving clouds thicken,

Only at the peak of autumn will their colors naturally become clear.

輕帆高掛五雲中
千里遵程一望窮
兩岸蘆花天際外
日光超出海門東

柳色裊衣話歲寒
桃紅猶憶別離難
滿囊玉水虛明月
留待金臺仔細看

禪心不觸野雲知
蘆月梅花欲寄誰
離情有意情難遺
道合無心道亦宜

The lightweight sail hangs high among the five-
colored clouds,

A thousand miles of road to travel, as far as the
eye can see.

The river lined with reed flowers extends beyond
the edge of the sky,

The sun's glow rises above us at the gateway to
the eastern sea.

Willow colors suffuse my robes, intimating the
coldness of the year,

Peach russets can still recall the sorrowful feel-
ings of separation.

The void's bright moon is completely encircled
by waters of jade,

Causing one to linger on at Golden Terrace¹⁷⁶
and take it all in.

The Chan mind is not solitary as the wilderness
clouds know,

Reed moon and plum blossom, to whom can I
send them?

The sorrow of parting is real and difficult to
leave behind,

But if the journey is in tune with no-mind, all
will be well.¹⁷⁷

行腳偈

猶憶挑包昔日忘
遊山玩水出雲鄉
揚眉瞬目皆三昧
大地無非般若堂

Traveling Gatha

I still recall how, with my bag on a pole,
I forgot my yesterdays,
Wandered the hills, played in the waters,
went to the land of the clouds.
The lift of an eyebrow, the blink of an eye—
all of it is samadhi;
In this great world there is nowhere that is
not a wisdom hall.

山行

策杖穿林撥落紅
忽聞清磬度秋風
再來只恐無尋處
好記懸岩一古松

Traveling in the Mountains

My bramblewood stick cuts through the
woods, stirs up the fallen reds,
Suddenly I hear the clean sound of chimes
carried by the autumn breeze.
I'm just worried that if I come again, I won't
know how to find this place,
So I try to fix in my mind that solitary old
pine hanging from the cliff.¹⁷⁸



DAOQIAN (d. 1820) was from Jiahe, in Zhejiang Province. At the age of seventeen, she entered a convent in nearby Xiuzhou, where she lived many years in quiet retreat. Later she began to read Chan Buddhist texts and to seek out instruction from various teachers in the area, including Baolin Zhengong from the Guoqing Monastery on Mount Tiantai. Apparently, in her first interview with the man who would become her master, she asked, “What is the face of the great man?” Zhengong’s reply was “Wait until you’ve purified yourself of the five obstacles [standing in the way of a woman becoming a buddha] and then I will tell you.” As it turns out, Zhengong appears to have been testing her, since in the end he gave her both his teaching and, ultimately, Dharma transmission. Later Daoqian acquired a reputation for her spiritual discipline and insight and began to attract many disciples. She also attracted the support of a great many lay donors, which allowed her to build a convent where she lived and practiced for over forty years. Daoqian combined Chan meditation with Pure Land recitation of the Buddha’s name, and it is said that the sound of chanting could be heard day and night coming from her halls.

菴居偈

Convent Life

學道殷勤年復年
從今不著有無邊
歸家莫便家中坐
好爲人耕劫外田

You've been earnestly studying the Way year
after year
And now no longer cling to either existence or
nonexistence.
But having come home, you should not just sit
around
But instead go out and till the fields of merit
for others.¹⁷⁹

八十八年
無貪無戀
歸去來兮
水清月現

Eighty years and eight,
No craving, no attachment.
Let's go on back home,
When the water clears, the moon appears.¹⁸⁰



YINHUI (dates unknown) was a nun at the Jun Convent in Wuling in Jiangsu Province. We know little of her life, apart from the fact that she engaged in Dharma debate with a number of the eminent Chan masters of her time.

四十餘年業識拋
驀然寶劍逞英豪
喝教倒推三千佛
大地全收在一毫

The activity-consciousness of over forty years tossed away,
As suddenly I raise the jeweled sword as if I were a hero.
My shouts cause the three thousand buddhas to topple over
And the great universe to be contained in a single hair!¹⁸¹

食筍偈

久隱深山保聖胎
一聲電動出頭來
層層剝盡蒸來喫
不負親嘗者一回

Gatha on Eating Bamboo Shoots

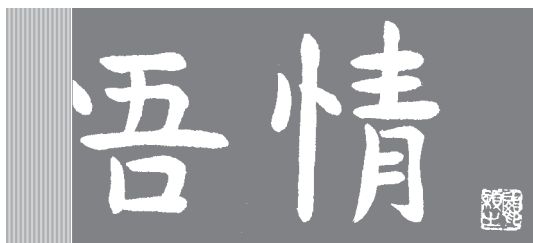
Hidden away in the deep mountains it guarded
its sagely embryo
Until a crash of thunder impelled it to finally
stick out its head.
Layer after layer must be peeled away, then it is
boiled and eaten;
I am not to going miss the opportunity of hav-
ing had a taste myself.¹⁸²



WUWO started out as an attendant in the palace of Shang Kexi, a man from Liaodong in what is today Liaoning Province. In exchange for his service to the Qing court, Shang was given a title and a domain of his own in what is today Guangxi in southwest China. Apparently, Shang had twenty-three sons and seventeen daughters, the youngest of whom, Ziwu, became so upset at the greed and ambition of her father and brothers that she left home and moved to Putuo Island in Ningbo with ten of her female palace attendants, including Wuwo. Ziwu built the Tandu Convent and soon acquired a reputation for her moral discipline and her mastery of the Buddhist scriptures. Wuwo was particularly talented at both poetry and painting and is said not only to have painted a particularly striking portrait of Ziwu (looking more like a lovely princess than an ascetic nun), but to have composed the poem inscribed upon it as well.

六根淨盡絕塵埃
嚼蠟能尋甘味回
莫笑錄天陳色相
誰人不是赤身來

Once the six senses are purified, the dust and dirt
disappear,
Then even in chewing wax one can find the
sweetest flavor.
Do not laugh at the emerald sky for displaying
form and substance,
Which one of us humans did not come pink-
skinned into the world?¹⁸³



WUQING was born in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province. Her parents died when she was just a young girl, and having no one to take care of her, she went to live in the capital with her elder sister, who had become the concubine of a former prime minister. Later, her elder sister committed suicide after the death of her husband. Wuqing was only fifteen or sixteen at the time and was deeply traumatized by the experience. She then returned to the south where she found a home with the woman scholar and poet Luo Qilan (late eighteenth century). The two of them shared an interest in Buddhism, and after Luo's death, Wuqing became a nun.

感懷

清靜而今遍六根
焚香幸作佛前人
已知性海須登岸
且向恆河試問津
口藏誰傳彌勒法
心鐙自照女兒身
癡情一點消難盡
吟到詩篇忘苦辛

蒼茫回首萬緣空
漫說平生塞與通
眼見公候興敗易
命憐姨妹死生同
只留此日袈裟在
不見當年錦繡叢
坐徹蒲團波浪息
心緣穩渡片帆風

Feelings

Cleansed and purified now are all of the six
senses,
Burning incense, I am fortunate to be one of
those before the Buddha.
I already know one must reach the shores of the
Ocean of Suchness,
And so facing the Ganges, I inquire where it is
one can cross.
The oral scripture: who transmits the Way of
Maitreya Buddha?
The mind-lamp automatically illuminates this
woman's body.
The last drop of attachment is difficult to com-
pletely eradicate,
But reciting poems can help one forget all of the
bitterness.
Looking around at the vast expanse, the myriad
conditions are empty,
So do not speak about a lifetime of obstructions
and opportunities.
With my own eyes I've seen dukes and lords rise
and fall in succession,
And for this ill-fated younger sister, life and
death are one and the same.
All that is left today are these dark-colored
monastic's robes,
The brocades and embroideries of yesterday are
nowhere to be seen.
I sit on the mat till it wears through and the
mind-waves are stilled,
As the grabbing mind settles and crosses over
like a sail in the wind.¹⁸⁴



LIANGHAI. We know almost nothing of Lianghai's life apart from the fact that she was for a time the abbess of a large convent (perhaps as many as six thousand nuns) on Mount Lingyan in Suzhou, which by the eighteenth century had become the important center of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism (which it remains today). Judging from her few extant sermons, it would appear that she was particularly concerned with reforming the discipline, spiritual practice, and reputation of Buddhist nuns at a time when Buddhism in general had fallen into considerable disrepute. Lianghai lived during the tumultuous years of the Taiping Rebellion (mid-1800s) and apparently suffered, along with many others, the dislocation and destruction that followed in its wake. Despite the lack of biographical information, there is much to be gleaned from the selection of her writings available to us. An earnest mid-nineteenth-century lay Buddhist named Jiang Yuanliang notes that when he and his Buddhist friends began to compile a collection of religious poetry from Suzhou entitled *The Poetry of the Disciples of the Four Types from Wumen* (*Wumen sizhong dizi shi*), they soon discovered that although they had ample selections from three of the four types—monks, laymen, and laywomen—they were having a hard time finding works by Buddhist nuns. “Could it be that they taught solely through their spiritual presence rather than through words?” He does, however, finally locate a manuscript by the nun Lianghai in the home of a Buddhist layman from Suzhou. This manuscript included not only poems, but also a few essays and sermons. In one of these sermons, she addresses her female disciples as follows:

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the Buddha is compared to a lion among men. Of the fifty-three wise and holy enlightened beings [mentioned in this sutra] there was a single nun who bore the title of “lion.” Thus we can know that the awesome and peerless attainment of the buddhamind is not weakened because of the presence of nuns....Now, when women enter the homeless life, they should abandon all the [negative] habits of their se, and plant the seeds of the peerless and wonderful Dharma. They...should enter into the way of the Buddha with great determination. Their hearts should be filled with repentance, their thoughts should be clean and pure, and they should devote themselves fully to awakening the mind of compassion and fully carry out the work of liberation. Only then will they be looked up to as role models throughout the ten directions; only then will monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen gather around them for inspiration.

What is most striking about Lianghai's poems is their spiritual buoyancy. These are not the poems of a woman who has turned against the world out of weariness and disenchantment but rather of a woman who has clearly found an inner freedom, independence, and joy that she may not have found if she had kept to her place in the inner quarters. Her best poems reflect a conviction of the truth of nonduality, whether between the future bliss of the Pure Land and the eternal present of Chan, or between distinctions of male and female.

淨土詩

能從忍界現西方
只要當人信願強
處處慈尊常接引
即時演出妙蓮香

淨土昭昭在目前
不勞舉步問金仙
樂邦有路誰先到
咫尺家山落照遍

瓦礫荊榛真淨土
見聞知覺古彌陀
但能當處忘分別
扒手啊啊唱哩囉

Poems of the Pure Land (Seven of Forty-Eight)

In this very world can be seen the Western
Paradise,
All that is required is that a person be strong in
faith and resolve.
In every situation the Compassionate One will
receive and guide you,
And in every moment pour forth the marvelous
fragrance of the lotus.

Bright and luminous is the Pure Land right in
front of your eyes,
Don't bother setting out in search of the
Golden Buddha.
On the road to the Land of Joy, who will be the
first to arrive?
So close by: the mountains of home surrounded
by setting sun.

Rubble and ruin, brambles and briars: this is
the true Pure Land,
Seeing, hearing, knowing, feeling: these are the
ancient Amitabha.
All you need to do is stay where you are—
but forget all distinctions,
Clapping your hands with a “Ha! Ha!” and
singing out a “La! La!”

持戒嚴身幅報真
金沙地上玉樓春
但觀自性彌陀佛
歷劫何嘗染一塵

要結西方淨圖緣
是非人我盡顛
腳頭腳底蓮花國
到岸何許便覓船

佛語禪心兩不差
挑紅李白一般花
琉璃地上鋪金粟
瑪瑙階前布玉沙

獨坐幽居萬慮忘
全身混是法中王
休將迷語遮心眼
正覺花開遍界香

Keeping the precepts and discipline, your reward
will be truly good;

On the grounds of the golden sands, the jade
towers are in spring.

All one need do is meditate on one's self-nature,
the Amitabha Buddha,
Who for eons has never been sullied by the
slightest speck of dust.

In order to ensure a rebirth in the Western
Paradise, the Pure Land,
Right and wrong, oneself and other must be
completely overturned.

From toe to heel and heel to toe is the land of
the lotus flower;
What need, having reached the shore, to go in
search of a raft?

Buddha's words and Chan mind: no difference
between them,
Peach blossoms are pink, pear white, both are
blossoms.

Across the floor of porcelain are scattered grains
of gold,
In front of the agate stairwell are spread granules
of jade.

Sitting alone in deep seclusion, the myriad cares
forgotten,
My whole body feels completely absorbed into
that of the Dharma King.
Don't use "delusion" and "enlightenment"
to obscure the mind's eye,
When the flower of true awareness opens,
its fragrance will circle the world.¹⁸⁵

氣省懷詩

驚蟄聞雷萬物蘇
莫從箇裏認榮枯
山前澗水源頭活
徹底澄清不受污

春分紫陌谷鶯啼
一片閒雲伴我棲
明月清風留不住
逍遙自在任東西

大雪繽紛似絮團
高山平地一同觀
頭頭物物無窮意
多少禪流被眼瞞

*The Twenty-Four Solar Periods.*¹⁸⁴

Reflective Verses (Three of Twenty-four)

Early March and the sound of thunder: myriad
creatures stir,

One can't tell from the outside what will flourish or wilt.

The stream in front of the mountain is alive at
its source,

Where, completely pure and clean, it is never
sullied.

Vernal equinox on brushwood paths, the valley
birds sing,

A sliver of leisurely cloud accompanies me
back home.

A bright moon, a clear breeze, I cannot make
them stay,

Feeling expansive and at ease, I let them go
east or west.

The great snow falls deep and full, like fluffy
willow floss,

High mountain and level plain look one and
the same.

Every thing and every creature contains endless
significance,

How many Chan followers are deceived by
their eyes!¹⁸⁷

聚沙庵歌

一粒沙藏世界
無邊刹土不爲大
童子戲莊成佛塔
山僧旋遠忘疲怠
何爲蒼絕繡蓋
樓臺殿閣無障礙
廚灶三門日日新
交飛群燕往來賓
未識庵中誰是主
主中之主沒疏親
沒疏親無用人
莫向個中細討論
八風不動消息盡
覺海圓明心月澄
體似鏡用如神
胡來漢現不留痕
城隍市井如來藏

Song of Collecting Sand Hermitage

In a single grain of sand is stored the entire world,
Universes without boundary cannot be considered huge.
A child's sandcastle turns into a magnificent pagoda,¹⁸⁸
When the mountain nun goes on her alms round, she forgets her weariness.
What need for a convent to get rid of entanglements?
That can be done as well in palatial towers and fancy halls.
The cooking stove and the three gates look newer everyday,¹⁸⁹
Filled with sparrows darting to and fro like guests,
Who are still not quite sure who the owner of this hermitage is.
The host within the host knows neither distance nor intimacy,
When distance and intimacy are one, there is then independence.
No need even to seek out people with whom to discuss and debate,
When the eight winds have all died down, it will be over.¹⁹⁰
The sea of realization fully illumined, the mind-moon clear,
When the body is like a mirror, its skillfulness becomes divine.
Hu barbarians appear and then Han Chinese, none leave a trace,
Whether in city or in village, all is the Tathagatagarbha,

有相身中無相身
屋雖小恰寬舒
恒沙諸佛眾生居
成住壞空幻起滅
基地堅牢本自如
三椽下六窗內
吃飯穿衣無向背
茫茫今古眾英雄
千萬買鄰空自累

The body without form dwelling within this
body with form.
Although the rooms are small, it is spacious and
comfortable,
Housing buddhas and beings numberless as the
Ganges sands.
Forming, existing, destroying, emptying: illu-
sions rise and disappear,
All of them grounded on the stable earth of the
original mind.
Living below the three rafters,¹⁹¹ enclosed by the
six sense windows,
I am not dependent on anyone for food to eat or
clothes to wear.
Limitless are the innumerable heroes of the past
and the present,
What a waste to spend a million cash just for
good neighbors!¹⁹²

一處消融六處閒
夕陽西去月東環
現成公案休題起
高臥北窗門不關

In the one place things merge, through the six
they disperse;¹⁹³
The evening sun heads west, the moon circles
east.
There's no point in raising these ready-made
koans,
Lie up near the north window with the door
open.¹⁹⁴

無題

看他孤獨人
真爲無事客
出入往來間
逍遙無杖策
既無兒女情
亦無妻子迫
偶然樹下坐
則見梅花白

行到樹下坐
坐看雲起處
白雲天際飛
紅日空中住
滄海變桑田
丘陵夷無地
起滅水中漚
眾散小兒戲

石室寒巖客
不知晝與夜
坐來歲月忘
懶把眾生化
真個自了漢
賊虎龍蛇怕
問他廬陵來
如今作麼價

Untitled Verses (Four of Nine)

Look at him, that solitary man,
Truly a man with no commitments!
Between coming in and out, going to and fro,
Easy and free, with not even a walking staff.
He may lack the love of sons and daughters,
But neither does he suffer the nagging of a wife.
On a whim he sits himself beneath the trees
And gazes at the white of the plum blossoms.

He walks until he reaches the mountain top
And sits to watch the place from where clouds rise.
The white clouds sail to the edge of heaven,
The red sun rests in the center of the void.
The blue sea turns into fields of mulberry,¹⁹⁵
The hills level themselves leaving us a place.
Rising and falling like the foam on the waters,
Gathering and scattering like children at play.

The guest of the stone room and cold cliff
Is unaware of the passing of days and nights.
Oblivious to the passing of months and years,
She is too lazy to go out and convert others.
She is truly a person who has realized herself,
Feared by robbers, tigers, dragons, and vipers.
Why don't you ask her about rice in Luling:
What price are they asking for it today?¹⁹⁶

但說世界空
時時行於有
空亦不自空
有亦不自有
空有本來無
無無何須守
論塵野干鳴
談真獅子吼

She'll only say that the world is empty,
Although it sometimes manifests as form.
But its emptiness is not inherently empty,
Nor is its form inherently form.
Emptiness and form are inherently nonexistent,
Lacking existence, what is there to preserve?
Debating about dust is a moose's howl,
Speaking about truth is the lion's roar.¹⁹⁷



DAWU (1854–1927) was born in Nantong, in Jiangsu Province. When the young man to whom she was betrothed died unexpectedly, Dawu refused to marry anyone else and resolved to devote herself to the practice of Pure Land Buddhism. Her family was not at all supportive of her: they did all they could to dissuade her from her decision, and when she finally convinced them that they could not keep her from taking the tonsure, they refused to give her any financial support. In the beginning, her life was very hard, as she struggled to eke out a life of self-subsistence, planting her garden and gathering firewood. She took up residence in a rundown convent called the Dabei or Guanyin Convent. Over time, she inspired the respect of enough lay donors to enable her to restore it to its former condition. Toward the end of her life, she fulfilled a lifelong dream, and went on pilgrimage to various Buddhist sites, such as Mount Jiuhua and Mount Putuo.

世間萬緣都放下
唯有念佛是真心
一念超出娑婆苦
貪瞋癡愛都除盡
寸絲不掛光明臺
參透法身脫苦輪
得滿極樂清靜願
再入娑婆度眾生

The ten thousand conditions of the world have
all dropped off,
All that is left is this true heart-mind invoking
Buddha's name.
With a single invocation I transcend the
bitterness of this world,
Greed, anger, ignorance, and desire are
completely uprooted.
In complete and naked purity I dwell in the
tower of radiant light,
Having realized the *dharmakaya*, I am free from
the wheel of suffering.
Once I fulfill my vow to attain the perfect purity
of the Land of Bliss,
I will return to this world of suffering to liberate
sentient beings.¹⁹⁸



LONGLIAN was born in Sichuan in 1909. While still in her twenties, she became the first woman to pass the government civil service examinations, but when she was only offered a secretarial/editorial job, she decided to enter the religious life instead. At the age of thirty-two, she became a nun at the Aidao Convent in Chengdu, and later at the Tiexiang Convent as well. Given its close proximity to Tibet, esoteric Buddhism was quite popular in the Sichuan area in the early 1930s and 1940s; in fact, Longlian's first teacher was a Tibetan lama. She later became the disciple of the monk Nenghai (1886–1967). As a young nun, before 1949, Longlian often visited the Jinci Monastery, where she studied with Nenghai and attended lectures by various visiting teachers. She also underwent rigorous meditation training. After 1949, Longlian moved to the Tongjiao Convent in Beijing, which remained open until the late 1950s, and then in the early 1960s returned to Sichuan—lying low in a nunnery on Mount Emei during the worst excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Like her teacher Nenghai, she was from the beginning willing and able to work with the government: since 1955, she has been a leading member of the Chinese Buddhist Association. Since the 1980s Longlian has been the abbess of the Aidao Convent as well, and has worked very hard at transforming the Tiexiang si (which was a male monastery before Nenghai named Longlian its first abbess) into the famous seminary for nuns that it is today. Longlian herself has become something of a legend, as is evidenced by a best-selling biography by Qiu Shanshan published by the Fujian Arts Publishing Company in 1997 entitled *Dangdai diyi biqiuni: Longlian Fashi zhuan*

(*Today's Preeminent Nun: The Biography of Dharma Master Longlian*). This book contains a selection of Longlian's poems, many of which are composed in the traditional styles and genres and as such represent a continuation of the poetry of the nuns of the imperial period.

早課

花遶禪房夜氣清
霜鐘隱隱動長鯨
盡鈴不語風幡靜
珠網交羅慧炬明
梵唱欲超三界外
緇衣喜曳五銖輪
楞嚴轉罷渾無事
月晒琳宮萬瓦晴

Morning Service

Flowers encircle the meditation room, the night
air crisp,
The frosty bells deep and dark rouse the great
leviathan.¹⁹⁹
The golden chimes remain silent, the banners
rest still,
The jewel net, the interconnected web of lumi-
nous wisdom.²⁰⁰
Hymns of praise take us beyond the three
worlds of desire,
Dark robes delight in dragging through the five
elements.
After reciting the *Lankavatara Sutra*, a moment
of leisure,
Basking in the moonlight, the convent rooftiles
simply glow.²⁰¹

贈英籍尼師阿旺曲珍拉薩朝聖

孤征萬里歷波濤
愿切何辭跋涉勞
雪嶺青回公主柳
海雲紅印美人焦
九州同夢華胥國
聯袂空行淨檢橋
四海百家通佛語
人間淨土路非遙

*To the English Nun Ngawang Chodron
on Her Pilgrimage to Lhasa*²⁰²

Alone she traverses ten thousand *li* across the
billowing waves,
Her resolve unbreakable, undaunted by the
hardships of travel.
Snowy peaks turning in the blue: the willow of
the princess,
The sea clouds imprinted with red: the plantain
of the beauty.
The Nine Provinces share a dream: the land of
Huaxu,²⁰³
Side by side we practice emptiness: the bridge
of Jingjian.²⁰⁴
A hundred homes within the four seas under-
stand the Buddha's words,
The road to the Pure Land here in the human
world is not so far away.²⁰⁵

SOURCES OF POEMS

- Baochang. *Biqiuni zhuan*. T 50: 2063. I have made use of the reprinted edition in *Biqiuni zhuan quanji*. Taibei: Fojiao shuju, 1988.
- Baochi Jizong. *Baochi Zong Chanshi yulu*. Preface dated 1677. JT 35, 337: 705–13.
- Chaoyong. *Wudeng quanshu*. ZZ 140: 1–496; 141: 1–512.
- Jizong Xingche. *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu*. JT 28, 211: 441–70.
- Lianghai Rude. *Yingxiang ji*. ZZ 110: 341a–344a.
- Qiu Shanshan. 1997. *Dangdai diyi biqiuni: Longlian Fashi zhuan*. Fuzhou: Fujian meishu chubanshe.
- Wang Duanshu. 1667. *Mingyuan shiwei*. Yale University Library microfilm.
- Wanyan Yun Zhu. 1831–36. *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji*. Harvard-Yenching Library microfilm.
- Xu Shichang, ed. 1929. *Wan Qing yishi hui*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996 reprint.
- Yigong Chaoyi. *Fushi Yigong Chanshi yulu*. JT 39, 4351–56.
- Yikui Chaochen. *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*. JT 39, 436: 7–18.
- Zhenhua. *Xu biqiuni zhuan*. I have used the reprinted edition in *Biqiuni zhuan quanji*. Taibei: Fojiao shuju, 1988.
- Zhiyuan Xinggang. *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*. JT 36, 210: 421–40.
- Ziyong Chengru. *Ziyong Ru Chanshi yulu*. JT 39, 456: 819–32.
- Zukui Jifu. *Lingrui Zukui Fu Chanshi Miaozhan yulu*. JT 35, 338: 715–40.
- Zukui Jifu. *Lingrui Chanshi Yanhua ji*. JT 35, 339: 741–60.
- Zukui Jifu and Baochi Jizong. *Songgu hexiang ji*. JT 28, 215565–72.

NOTES

- 1 There have been numerous translations of these poems, and there will no doubt continue to be many more. Just a few published translations include those by Burton Watson (*Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'eng Poet Han-shan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), Robert Henricks (*The Poetry of Han-Shan*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), Red Pine, *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2000), and just recently, Peter Hobson (*The Poetry of Han-shan*, Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003). Such collections as *The Clouds Must Know Me by Now* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998), edited by Red Pine and Mike O'Connor and translated by various authors, introduce the poems of several less well known Chinese monks.
- 2 John Stevens, *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1994). Another excellent study of Japanese Buddhist nun-poets is Edward Kamens, *The Buddhist Poetry of the Great Kamo Priestess: Daisaiin Senchi and Hosshin Wakashu* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1991).
- 3 Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), and Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Women Writers of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, forthcoming).
- 4 Western-language studies on the early female monastic sangha in China include: Kathryn M. Ts'ai, "The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries," *Historical Reflections* 8:3 (1981), pp. 1–19; Kathryn M. Ts'ai, trans., *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to Sixth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994); Hung Lee Lily Hsiao, "The Emergence of Buddhist Nuns in China and Its Social Ramifications," *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 18/19 (1986–87), pp. 82–100; Erik Zürcher, "Religieuses et Couvents dans l'Ancien Bouddhisme Chinois," in *Buddhism, Christianisme et Société Chinoise* (Paris: Julliard, 1990); and Valentina Georgieva, *Buddhist Nuns in China: From the Six Dynasties to the Tang* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden, 2000).

- 5 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, 1:9.
- 6 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, 1:9.
- 7 Ts'ai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p. 33.
- 8 Ts'ai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p. 21.
- 9 Yang Hsüan-chih, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, trans. Wang, Yi-t'ung (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 51–52.
- 10 Yang, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, p. 56.
- 11 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, 1:10.
- 12 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, 1:9.
- 13 The Eight Special Rules, or *gurudharmas*, were imposed on nuns only and were in addition to the regular precepts. They stipulated that (1) nuns, no matter how senior, must always defer to monks, regardless of how junior; (2) nuns must not speak ill of monks; (3) nuns must not rebuke monks, although monks may scold nuns; (4) nuns must receive full ordination from both the male and the female sangha; (5) if they have violated a vinaya rule, nuns must confess fortnightly in the presence of both the male and the female sangha; (6) nuns must seek Dharma instruction from monks on a regular basis; (7) nuns must not spend the summer retreat season where there are no monks; and (8) after the summer retreat, nuns must make their confession in the presence of the male sangha.
- 14 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, 2:11–12.
- 15 Georgieva, *Buddhist Nuns in China*.
- 16 Georgieva, *Buddhist Nuns in China*, p. 193.
- 17 Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 2:25.
- 18 Li Yuzhen, *Tangdai de biqiuni* (Taiwan: Xuesheng shuju, 1989), p. 14.
- 19 Li, *Tangdai de biqiuni*, pp. 22–23.
- 20 For a discussion of these women, both historical and legendary, see Miriam Levering, “The Dragon Girl and the Abbess of Mo-shan: Gender and Status in the Ch'an Buddhist Tradition,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5:1 (1982), pp. 19–35, and E. Ding-hwa Hsieh, “Images of Women in Ch'an Buddhist Literature of the Sung period,” in *Buddhism in*

- the Sung*, edited by Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 148–87.
- 21 E. Ding-hwa Hsieh, “Buddhist Nuns in Sung China (960–1279),” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 30 (2000), p. 75.
 - 22 Hsieh, “Buddhist Nuns in Sung China (960–1279),” p. 77.
 - 23 Hsieh, “Buddhist Nuns in Sung China (960–1279),” pp. 81–82.
 - 24 Hsieh, “Buddhist Nuns in Sung China (960–1279),” p. 92.
 - 25 On women of the Song, see the excellent study by Patricia B. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also Beverly Bossler, “Women’s Literacy in Song Dynasty China,” in *Qingzhu Deng Guangming jiaoshou jiushi huadan lunwenji* (Shijiazhuang, PRC, 1997), pp. 322–52.
 - 26 It is in a compendium entitled *Liandeng huiyao* (*Outline of Linked Lamps*) compiled in 1183 that we first find several bona fide biographical entries for female Chan masters. The *Jiandai pudenglu* (*The Jiandai Universal Record of the Lamp*) compiled in 1204 contains fifteen such biographical accounts, out of a total of more than one thousand.
 - 27 Miriam Levering has done extensive research on both of these women. See her “Miao-tao and Her Teacher Ta-hui” in *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), pp. 188–219; and “Women Ch’an Masters: The Teacher Miao-tsung as Saint” in *Women Saints in World Religions*, edited by Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 180–204.
 - 28 Cited in He Xiaorong, *Mingdai Nanjing shiyuan yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000).
 - 29 There is now a significant number of important studies in English on women’s writing of this period. The best general introduction is Dorothy Ko’s *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China, 1573–1722* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994). For the eighteenth century, see Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China’s Long Eighteenth Century* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).
 - 30 See Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao*.
 - 31 See Beata Grant, “Who Is This I? Who Is That Other? The Poetry of an Eighteenth-Century Buddhist Laywoman,” *Late Imperial China* 15:11 (1994), pp. 1–40.

- 32 See Miriam Levering, "Women, the State, and Religion Today in the People's Republic of China," in *Today's Woman in World Religions*, pp. 171–224; Qin Wen-jie, "The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China: Women Reconstruct Buddhism on Mt. Emei" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2000); and Barbara Reed, "Women and Chinese Religion in Contemporary Taiwan," in *Today's Woman in World Religions*, pp. 225–43.
- 33 See Miriam Levering, "Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch'an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism in the Ch'an Buddhist Tradition," in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 137–56.
- 34 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:54.
- 35 See Ruth Fuller Sasaki and Yoshitaka Iriya, trans., *A Man of Zen: The Recorded Sayings of the Layman P'ang* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1992).
- 36 Baochang, *Biqiuni zhuan*, in *Biqiuni zhuan quanji* (Taipei: Fojiao shuju, 1988 reprint), 3:32.
- 37 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 1:6.
- 38 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 1:25.
- 39 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:47.
- 40 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:32. This poem was composed as a commentary to a story involving the Tang-dynasty Chan master Yantou Quanhuo (828–887), who for a time took up the occupation of ferryman. One day, an old woman appeared carrying a child in her arms and challenged the master, saying, "Ply your oars and make them dance. And since you haven't asked, then tell me where this child I have in my arms came from?" The master's response was typically Chan: he did not say a word—he just hit her. The old woman then said, "I have given birth to seven children: six of them did not understand anything; now this one too appears not to know anything," and taking the child, she threw it into the lake. This rather cryptic, and somewhat horrifying, story is clearly meant to be read metaphorically and understood intuitively. It may help to keep in mind that in Buddhist thought, the sufferings of life and death, or *samsara*, are often compared to a river, and the Buddhist teachings, a raft with which to cross this river. The ferryman, therefore, would be someone who helps others to cross the river of suffering and attain enlightenment. In Chan literature, old women are often actually quite wise, and serve to test those who call themselves Chan masters. In this story, the children may possibly refer to the illusions, in par-

ticular the illusion of a permanent self, that people create from their own thoughts, and which keep them in a state of suffering. Thus Yantou's response to her question, which is not a verbal one, seems to both answer the old woman's query and also allow her to get rid of her last illusion and attain enlightenment. Miaocong's poetic response to this story, not surprisingly, given her interest in Daoism, makes use of the famous story in the *Zhuangzi* in which the master, upon waking from a dream of a butterfly, wonders if he is a man dreaming he was a butterfly or whether he is a butterfly dreaming that he is a man. However, the central hypothesis—that maybe the self as we mentally conceive it may not be what we think it is—is the same. Note that in Miaocong's poem, Zhuang Zhou never wakes up from his dream, which may perhaps be interpreted as a state of consciousness (enlightenment) that has transcended even the duality of man and butterfly.

- 41 The Second Patriarch refers to Huike, the sixth-century Chinese monk who is said not only to have stood in the snow for days on end, but also to have cut off his arm to show his determination to become Bodhidharma's disciple.
- 42 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:33.
- 43 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:36.
- 44 In Chinese Buddhist poetry and prose, the "West" either refers to India and Central Asia, from whence Buddhism arrived in China, or to the Western Paradise of the Amitabha Buddha.
- 45 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:36. "The wondrous meaning without words" refers to the wordless mind-to-mind transmission exemplified by the famous story of how the Buddha, during one of his assemblies, suddenly fell silent and lifted up a white flower. Only one of his followers, Kashyapa, understood his meaning; the rest were left bewildered. This was said to mark the beginning of the special transmission exemplified by Chan Buddhism, and Kashyapa has been traditionally regarded as the First Patriarch. The gold dust refers to the Buddhist teachings, which are useful but should be taken only as a means rather than as an end unto themselves.
- 46 Silla is the name of an early kingdom in what is today Korea (57 B.C.E.–935 C.E.). The kingdom reached its cultural apogee in the ninth century, also a time when Buddhism flourished there. The image of a sparrow hawk flying through Silla is used in Chan Buddhist texts to refer to the swift and sudden manner in which an opportunity for enlightenment may present itself and, if the disciple is not sufficiently alert, be lost.

- 47 The reference here is, of course, to the lotus flower.
- 48 This refers to a famous exchange found in the discourses of Zhaozhou. A monk comes to the master for an interview and asks a big metaphysical question: "What is my self?" Zhaozhou replies with a more down-to-earth question: "Have you had your breakfast yet?" When the monk replies in the affirmative, Zhaozhou says simply, "Then go wash out your bowl." See James Green, trans., *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), p. 98. Joshu is the Japanese pronunciation of Zhaozhou.
- 49 In the famous chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* entitled "Expedient (or Skillful) Means," we find the following lines: "even if little boys at play/should collect sand to make a Buddha tower,/then persons such as these/have all attained the Buddha way." (Burton Watson, trans., *The Essential Lotus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 17).
- 50 "One true original face" is one of many Zen metaphors for one's original buddha-nature. To know one's original face is to experience enlightenment.
- 51 Puji, ed., (1179–253). *Wudeng huiyuan*, In ZZ, 138:385. During the Song dynasty, it was forbidden to travel by night. The paradox of not traveling by night and yet still arriving at dawn is one that is often found in Chan Buddhist texts. The last lines of these poems describe the psychic and spiritual double-bind confronted by a student struggling with seeming paradoxes of this kind.
- 52 Zhenhua, *Xi biqiuni zhuan*, 2:31.
- 53 The *Eight Yang Sutra* refers to a jumble of a text that not only makes no sense, but is three thousand fascicles or chapters in length! Here Zhenru is expressing a typically Chan Buddhist claim that the scholastic study of scriptures and sutras is irrelevant to the quest for enlightenment.
- 54 This disregard (if only rhetorical) for the technicalities of traditional Chinese poetic styles harks back to a poem attributed to Hanshan in which the poet responds to a certain "Graduate Wang" who has ridiculed him for being ignorant of the rules of poetry writing and making repeated use of "common words." Hanshan's retort is simply: "I laugh at the way *you* write poems/Like a blind man singing about the sun!" See Robert H. Henricks, *The Poetry of Han-shan*, p. 384.
- 55 In 1124, Dahui Zonggao had accepted an invitation to live at a newly built monastery called Yunmen (Cloud Gate), which was located in Fuzhou in what is today the southern province of Fujian. This is presumably where

- Zhenru went to meet him, and where her delusions were completely “defeated” under the guidance of the master.
- 56 There are several variants of this image in Chan literature. In the *Blue Cliff Record*, for example, we find “When oxen in Huai Province eat grain, the bellies of horses in Yi Province are distended.” (Cleary and Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 528.) It refers, among other things, to the interrelationship of cause and effect over space and time.
- 57 Zhenhua, *Xu biquuni zhuan*, 2:31–32.
- 58 Zhenhua, *Xu biquuni zhuan*, 2:36. In the twenty-eighth case of the *Blue Cliff Record*, we find the following: “One by one they all face south and see the northern dipper.... The dipper is hanging down. You still don’t know where it comes down. Where is it?” (Cleary and Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 184.) The idea seems to be, to modify the metaphor a bit, that unless you are headed in the right direction, you will not reach your destination. These last two lines could also be read as “If you tipped over the northern dipper, then you would be facing south.” In traditional China, those in authority, such as emperors and abbots, always sat facing the south.
- 59 Here again, the reference is to the original buddha-nature which is, of course, beyond either description or depiction.
- 60 Zhenhua, *Xu biquuni zhuan*, 2:37. Nostrils figure in various different ways in Chan Buddhist literature. One of the most common is the notion of piercing someone’s nostrils, which means mastering or being in control of them (as of ox when a ring is placed through its nose). If one’s nostrils are in someone else’s hands, one is under the control either of someone else, or of external circumstances. In this case, it would seem that the nostrils are where they should be: above the mouth.
- 61 Literally, the second of the ten bodhisattva stages or *bhumis*, characterized by a transcendence of all passion and impurity.
- 62 Zhenhua, *Xu biquuni zhuan*, 2:29. The story of the bathing bodhisattvas originally comes from the *Surangama Sutra*. *The Blue Cliff Record*, which was compiled by a contemporary of Chitong’s, Yuanwu Keqin (1063–135), and based on a collection of koan collected by Xuetou Zhongxian (980–1052), includes a case titled “Sixteen Bodhisattvas Go in to Bathe.” The commentary to this case asks, “Since they didn’t wash off the dirt, and they didn’t wash their bodies, tell me, what did they wash? If you can understand, then, at peace within, you realize the absence of anything existing.” (Cleary and Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, p. 428.)

- 63 Vairochana Buddha represents the *dharmakaya*, or the universal essence of buddhahood.
- 64 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:29. Water, of course, refers to the unchanging nature of intrinsic reality or buddha-nature, while the waves refer to the changing and unstable nature of thoughts, phenomena, etc.
- 65 The net of Indra is a famous image used to convey the notion of the interpenetration and interconnection of all things. The image is of a cosmic net, at each knot of which is embedded a multifaceted jewel that reflects each and every other jewel.
- 66 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:29.
- 67 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 2:28. This poem was supposedly written just before Fahai's death; thus, the letter from home refers to the "summons" to leave the world.
- 68 The lamp here refers to the light of the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma. The two trees may be an indirect allusion to the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, who, as he lay dying in the shade of two *sala* trees, instructed his disciples to be "lamps unto themselves."
- 69 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:48.
- 70 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:49.
- 71 The custom of leaving poems inscribed on walls was not uncommon in earlier periods, although often they were poems about the beauties of nature or thoughts inspired by a day's excursion in the wilds left by famous (or in some cases anonymous) male poets on the walls of temples or ruins. During the last years of the Ming dynasty, when women as well as men were often forced to flee the invaders or, in some cases, surrender their lives, poems written on walls by women in desperate straits became more and more common.
- 72 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:53.
- 73 Guanyin is the Chinese name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. In a number of Mahayana scriptures, including the *Lotus Sutra*, the bodhisattva, who is theoretically beyond all gender, is described as being able to assume as many as thirty-three different forms, both male and female, in order to be of benefit to as wide a range of sentient beings as possible. See Chün-fang Yü, *Kuanyin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 45–50.

- 74 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:54.
- 75 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:48.
- 76 Here, the West refers to the Western Paradise or the Pure Land.
- 77 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 3:50.
- 78 The lineage air, or custom, is a reference to the practice style associated with a particular Chan Buddhist lineage. Here Daoyuan seems to be saying that although she has left the inner quarters of the palace for the inner quarters of the convent, the secular melodies in which she no doubt once excelled still make themselves heard in her religious and ritual chanting.
- 79 That is, she has wept so much that her tears have turned to blood.
- 80 In other words, when one gazes in the mirror—a common occupation for palace ladies—by the light of *dhyana* (*chan*) or meditation, one will realize the emptiness of all appearances. Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:5b. See also Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 36:9b–10a.
- 81 Shenyi's biography can be found in Zhenhua, *Xu Biqiuni zhuan*, 5:86. This poem, however, is found, among other places, in Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:1b–2a.
- 82 The allusion here is to the famous “Rhapsody on Roaming on Tiantai” by Sun Cho (ca. 310–97), which describes a Daoist rather than a Buddhist mystical journey. See Richard Mather, “The Mystical Ascent of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains: Sun Ch'o's *Yu-T'ien-T'ai-Shan Fu*,” *Monumenta Serica* 20 (1961). Mather translates a Chinese editorial comment on “Stone Bridge” as follows: “On the Stone Bridge of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains the path is not a full foot in width but several tens of paces long; every step is extremely slippery, while below it looks down on the Utter Darkness Stream” (p. 239, notes 71–74). In a poem by Han Shan, who lived in the Tiantai Mountains, we also find the lines “In my dreams I go off to wander at Golden Gates/As my soul returns, it crosses Stone Bridge.” See Robert Henricks, *The Poetry of Han-shan*, p. 86. There are nine major peaks in the Tiantai range, the highest of which is called the Lotus Peak; together the nine peaks are said to resemble a lotus flower.
- 83 Wooden lads and stone maidens, metaphors for the paradox of form and emptiness, can be found in many Chan Buddhist writings. The various positions of host and guest (host as host, guest as guest, host within guest, and guest within host) are used in Chan Buddhist writings to illustrate the

- relationship of subject and object, noumenon and phenomenon. They were first made famous by the Tang-dynasty Chan master Linji Xixuan.
- 84 This poem can be found in Xu Shichang's *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:1b.
- 85 Here again, the "West" refers to the Western Paradise, the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. Zaisheng's biography can be found Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:87. This poem is found in Wanyan Yun Zhu, *Guixiu zhengshiji fulu*, 10a.
- 86 I have been unable to identify Master Shengchuang, but given the reference to the inner chambers, she was clearly a woman.
- 87 Jingwei's biography can be found in Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:86. This poem can be found in Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:24a. Iron-Grinder Liu was a female disciple of Tang-dynasty master Guishan Lingyou (771–853). Her name reflects her reputation for being as fierce a contender in Dharma battle as any of her male counterparts. The famous Chan master Zhaozhou Congshen (778–897) is said to have asked two new novices whether they had ever been to the monastery before. The first answered that he had, the second that he hadn't. To both of them Zhaozhou simply replied, "Go have some tea." When Zhaozhou's head monk asked him about this, the master simply told him to "Go have some tea." See James Green, trans., *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*, p. 146.
- 88 An allusion to the legend that the Han-dynasty emperor Wu (r. 140–87 B.C.E.) was visited in 110 B.C. by the Queen Mother of the West together with her entourage of heavenly maidens. The emperor was alerted to her coming by her messenger, a blue bird, which gave him time to prepare the palace for his mystical encounter with her on the seventh day of the seventh month. See Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 54–55.
- 89 Legend has it that during the Jin dynasty (256–420), a famous prince retreated to the Hou Mountains (in Henan Province) where he mounted a white crane and became a Daoist immortal.
- 90 This poem can be found in Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:24b.
- 91 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:63.
- 92 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 36:429. In traditional Buddhist cosmology, in addition to the world most familiar to us, there are countless worlds or universes floating in space. One thousand of such worlds

- make up one small chiliocosm, one thousand small chiliocosms make up one medium chiliocosm, and one thousand medium chiliocosms make up one great chiliocosm.
- 93 A reference to the Great Vehicle, or the Mahayana.
- 94 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:33a.
- 95 For more on Xinggang and her disciples, see Beata Grant, “Female Holder of the Lineage: Linji Chan Master Zhiyuan Xinggang, (1597–654),” *Late Imperial China* 17:2 (December 1996), pp. 51–77.
- 96 An allusion to the traditional Linji Chan Buddhist teaching methods made famous by the great Chan masters Linji Yixuan (d. 866) and Deshan Xuanjian (780–865). The former used shouts and the latter blows in order to shock their students out of their mental ruts.
- 97 The “days” and “months” can also be read as the “sun” and the “moon.”
- 98 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 36:429.
- 99 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:429.
- 100 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:429. The first Buddhist monks in India used to carry a small whisk with which they would lightly sweep the paths upon which they walked in order not to step on any living creatures. In Chinese Chan Buddhism, the fly whisk, a short staff of wood with a horse or yak tail attached, was carried only by the master. It was regarded as the symbol of mind-to-mind transmission, and along with alms bowl and monastic robes, was passed down from master to Dharma heir.
- 101 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:429. Mazu Daoyi (709–88) was the Dharma heir of Nanyue Huairang, the first of the lineage to which Xinggang belonged. He was a powerful teacher, known for his use of nonverbal teaching methods such as the shout, the unexpected blows from his staff, and wordless gestures with his fly whisk.
- 102 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:429. Attaching a handle to an alms bowl is an image often used in Chan writings to refer to the tendency of many seekers to believe that enlightenment is something that is found outside of oneself and added on, whereas, say those who know better, “the kingdom of heaven is within you.”
- 103 An allusion to the enlightened state.
- 104 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:430.

- 105 Zhiyuan Xinggang, *Fushi Zhiyuan Chanshi yulu*, 39:429. The word “sit” in this translation is *zuoduan* in the Chinese original (Jpn. *zadan*), which literally means “sitting to cut through,” that is, sitting in meditation in order to cut through the ordinary dualistic view of the world, which discriminates between the way of the ordinary person and that of the sage.
- 106 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, JT, 39:12.
- 107 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:10
- 108 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:10.
- 109 The traditional summer rains retreat—which dates back to the time of the Buddha—in China traditionally began on April 16 and continued until July 15. During this time, monks and nuns were not allowed to leave the monastery. The term for this period is *anju* (Jpn. *ango*), which means “dwelling in peace.”
- 110 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:12.
- 111 According to legend, Bodhidharma (ca. 470–543?), popularly regarded as the First Patriarch of Chinese Chan Buddhism, after spending nine years at Xiaolin Temple, decided to return home to India. Before doing so, however, he decided to test the realization of his three senior disciples. In response to the first disciple’s answer to his question, Bodhidharma said, “You have grasped my skin,” and to the second disciple (a nun) he said, “You have grasped my bones.” However, to the third disciple, who answered Bodhidharma’s question not with words but with silence, he said, “You have grasped my marrow.” This third disciple, Huiko (487–593), is considered to have been Bodhidharma’s Dharma successor and is known as the Second Patriarch of Chan Buddhism.
- 112 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:12. Normally, of course, Buddhist monks and nuns kept their heads shaved. However, for those whose spiritual attainments and complete internalization of the religious discipline have taken them beyond mere appearances, shaving the head might well seem superfluous.
- 113 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:12. The mirror, normally an important accessory in the boudoir of a gentry woman, here comes to signify the nonduality of an enlightened mind, which reflects things as they are, whether they be “barbarian” or Chinese, and makes no distinction between them.
- 114 “Dongyun” means “caves and clouds,” both of which are associated with hermits and the life of contemplation.

- 115 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:12.
- 116 Yikui Chaochen, *Cantong Yikui chanshi yulu*, 39:11.
- 117 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:18a/b.
- 118 The use of calibrated incense to keep time appears to have originated in Buddhist monasteries; later the “incense-seal” became a widely-used time-keeping device. See John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 278.
- 119 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21b.
- 120 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21b.
- 121 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21a.
- 122 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21a.
- 123 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21b.
- 124 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21b.
- 125 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21b.
- 126 Mount Heng, or Nanyue, is a range of mountains composed of seventy-two peaks, five of which are considered to be major, the highest of which rises 1290 meters above sea level. These mountains have long been a favorite place for those seeking spiritual seclusion, poetic and artistic inspiration, or, in some cases, political refuge. Many of China’s most famous poets, including Li Bo and Du Fu of the Tang dynasty, traveled to Mount Heng and left poems in praise of its beauties. Xingche, as far as I can tell, is the only woman whose poetry about the mountain is not only mentioned but highly praised in various gazetteers. The poems in this series are clearly influenced by other poets of reclusion, especially the fourth-century poet Tao Yuanming and the eighth-century Buddhist poet Hanshan.
- 127 The four terms or phrases refer to the famous Buddhist tetralemma: to exist, to not-exist, to neither exist nor not-exist, and to both exist and not-exist.
- 128 Literally, the odds as slim as that of a mustard seed tossed from a great distance landing on (and adhering to) the point of a needle.
- 129 Jizong Xingche, *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu*, JT 211, 4:1–4.
- 130 Jizong Xingche, *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu*, 4:4.

131 The translation of this line is a tentative one. The inner bark of yellow oak, or *huangbo*, is used to make a bitter brew said to relieve hunger and thirst, among other things. There is also a Mount Huangbo located in Fujian Province in southern China, which was the home of the great Chan master Huangbo Xiyun (d. 850). Later, Huangbo moved to a mountain in Jiangxi Province, which he renamed Mount Huangbo after leaving his old mountain home.

132 Jizong Xingche, *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu* 4:12.

133 Jizong Xingche, *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu*, 4:10.

134 The reference here is to the techniques (including, when necessary, blows and shouts) used by the Chan masters to “kill” ego-driven delusion even as they trigger an awakening to the life of one’s buddha-nature.

135 Jizong Xingche, *Jizong Che Chanshi yulu*, 4:37.

136 The Chinese hour is equivalent to two Western hours. (The Chinese word for the Western hour, *xiaoshi*, means “little hour” as opposed to the larger double hour.) Thus the first hour refers to 1–3 A.M., the second, to 3–5 A.M., etc. One of the most famous poems (and perhaps the model for this type of poem) describing the twelve hours is by the great Tang-dynasty Chan master Zhaozhou (Jpn. Joshu, 778–897). Zhaozhou’s poem is somewhat more cantankerous than Zukui Jifu’s. His first verse, which, unlike Zukui Jifu’s, begins with the 3 A.M. to 5 A.M. hour, reads as follows in the translation of James Green (*The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), p. 171):

The cock crows. The first hour of the day.
Aware of sadness, feeling down and out yet getting up.
There are neither underskirts nor undershirts,
Just something that looks a little like a robe.
Underwear with the waist out, work pants in tatters,
A head covered with thirty-five pounds of black grit.
In such a way, wishing to practice and help people,
Who knows that, on the contrary, it is being a nitwit.

137 Another name for the *parijata* tree, known as the king of heavenly trees, said to grow in front of the palace of Indra.

138 An allusion to the forty-fourth case of *The Blue Cliff Record*, which tells the story of Hoshan’s (or He Shan, 890–960) drum. Cleary and Cleary’s translation reads as follows:

Ho Shan imparted some words saying, “Cultivating study is called ‘learning.’ Cutting off study is called ‘nearness.’ Going beyond these two is to be considered real going beyond.” A monk came forward and asked, “What is ‘real going beyond?’” Shan said, “Knowing how to beat the drum.” Again he asked, “What is the real truth?” Shan said, “Knowing how to beat the drum.” Again he asked, “‘Mind is Buddha’—I’m not asking about this. What is not mind and not Buddha?” Shan said, “Knowing how to beat the drum.” Again he asked, “When a transcendent man comes, how do you receive him?” Shan said, “Knowing how to beat the drum.” (Cleary and Cleary, p. 365).

This poem would seem to indicate the uselessness of asking questions, even very subtle ones. From the perspective of an abbess, it describes the simple joy of a quiet couple of hours walking in the hills, not having to reply to persistent students with the phrase “Knowing how to beat the drum.”

- 139 The translation of these last two lines is a tentative one. We do not have any exact dates for Chan master Zukui Jifu, but we do know that she lived in the middle of the seventeenth century, thus the translation of *qiu yisi* as “the autumn [of the year] [1665–66].”
- 140 According to Buddhist cosmology, Mount Sumeru, the *axis mundi*, is surrounded by eight mountains and eight seas, each of which, aside from the eighth sea (which is filled with salt water), is filled with the fragrance of the eight merits.
- 141 The *mani* jewel, like the mirror, reflects all the colors of the world without itself having any color. And like the mirror, it is symbolic of complete and perfect liberation. It is also symbolic of the buddha-nature within all beings.
- 142 Zukui Jifu, *Lingrui Chanshi Yanhua ji*, JT 339, 5:8–9. The exposed pillars outside the Dharma or Buddha hall. Along with other inanimate parts of the monastery, including walls, tiles, lamps, and lanterns, it belongs to the category of inanimate objects. In Chan terminology, the term is used to refer to the absence, in a positive sense, of emotional attachment.
- 143 Zukui Jifu, *Lingrui Chanshi Yanhua ji*, 5:8.
- 144 In the *Lotus Sutra*, the eight-year-old daughter of the Dragon King is said to have presented a precious pearl to the Buddha; his acceptance of the pearl testified to her enlightened state, after which she changed into a male form and took her place among the great bodhisattvas.
- 145 Both the wife and the daughter of the famous Chan Buddhist lay practi-

- tioner and poet Pang Yün or Layman Pang (b. ca. 740), were known for their spiritual attainments. Although Lingzhao (the daughter) is more often referred to in the various writings associated with Layman Pang, his wife was clearly also very accomplished. The family supported themselves by farming, especially after Pang's decision to throw away their money and possessions into the river in order to live a life less encumbered by material goods.
- 146 Baochi Jizong, *Baochi Zong Chanshi yulu*, JT 2:15.
- 147 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:1b.
- 148 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:1b.
- 149 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 36:2b–3a. See also Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:85.
- 150 The He River is in Sichuan Province, the location of the Buddhist holy mountain, Mount Emei.
- 151 In traditional Buddhist cosmology, the first of the heavenly realms begin along the upper reaches of Mount Sumeru. This poem is found in Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:62. See also Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:31a.
- 152 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:31b.
- 153 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:31b.
- 154 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:93.
- 155 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:93. Jingzhou traditionally referred to the area composed of the entirety of what is today Hunan Province, a large part of Hubei Province, and a part of Guizhou Province.
- 156 The reflection of the moon in the three ponds of Gushan, or Orphan Hill, was one of the “twelve sights of West Lake.”
- 157 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:3b.
- 158 The Jiuhua (Nine Flower) Mountains are located in Anhui Province. They are so named because they consist of nine major peaks, which to the poetic eye resemble nine petals of a lotus flower. They are considered to be one of the five sacred Buddhist mountains. Chaoyan's poem would indicate that she had traveled to Jiuhua on pilgrimage. The place referred to in this poem may well be the Jiuzi Monastery, which was known not only for its elegant buildings, but also its many streams and springs, the soothing sounds of which could be heard from the monastery.

- 159 A twelfth-century northern Chinese dynasty.
- 160 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:3b.
- 161 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:3b–4a. This poem may well have been written at Jiuhua.
- 162 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:4a.
- 163 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:4a.
- 164 Wang Duanshu, *Mingyuan shiwei*, 26:4a–4b.
- 165 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:88. See also Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:19a.
- 166 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:89. See also Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:20b.
- 167 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:20a.
- 168 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:19b. The *kasaya* is an item of monastic clothing worn over one shoulder and covering only half of the upper body. In China it is normally worn primarily for temple ceremonies.
- 169 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:20a. The Indian monk Bodhidharma, traditionally known as the first Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, is said to have come up the Yangzi River floating on a reed. After a famous interview with the Emperor Liang of Wu, he is said to have gone to Shaolin Mountain in Central China, where he spent the next nine years sitting in silent meditation facing a wall. The “Great Storehouse” refers to the Buddhist canon, or *Tripitaka*. Chan Buddhism, as is well known, claimed to represent a teaching beyond words, exemplified by Mahakashyapa’s smile when the Buddha wordlessly raised a flower into the air.
- 170 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:29a. According to Chinese folkloric belief, couples karmically destined to be together are bound together with a cord of red silk. The “thrice following” refers to the traditional assumption that as a daughter, a woman should submit to her father, as a wife, to her husband, and as a mother, to her son.
- 171 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:72.
- 172 Xu Shichang, *Wan Qing yishi hui*, 199:21a. See also Wanyan Yun Zhu, *Guixiu zhengshiji fulu*, 14a.
- 173 Sudhana, the main protagonist in the next-to-last and longest chapter of

- the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, known in English as the *Flower Garland Sutra* and in Chinese as the *Huayan jing*, goes on a pilgrimage during which he visits and studies with fifty-three accomplished spiritual teachers.
- 174 Yan was another name for the area around the capital city, Beijing.
- 175 Here, Ziyong seems to be promising her disciples that, with the migrating geese, she will return to them in the autumn.
- 176 Golden Terrace was another name for the capital city of Beijing.
- 177 Ziyong Chengru, *Ziyong Ru Chanshi yulu*, JT, 39:819.
- 178 Ziyong Chengru, *Ziyong Ru Chanshi yulu*, 39:821.
- 179 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:101. What is described here is, of course, the Mahayana bodhisattva ideal whereby, having achieved a certain measure of realization for oneself (“returned home”), one should dedicate oneself to the liberation of all other sentient beings.
- 180 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:101.
- 181 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:80.
- 182 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:81. This poem can clearly be read as an analogy for the process of spiritual cultivation, especially in retreat. The layers of “self” are peeled away until one finally obtains a “taste” of the buddha-nature within.
- 183 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 4:66.
- 184 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 5:91. See also Xu Shichang, *Wan Qin yishi hui*, 199:28b–29a.
- 185 Lianghai Ru’de, *Yingxiang ji*, ZZ, 110:341a.
- 186 The Chinese traditionally divided the year not only into twelve lunar months, but also into twenty-four solar periods.
- 187 Lianghai Ru’de, *Yingxiang ji*, 110:341a.
- 188 In the chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* entitled “Expedient (or Skillful) Means,” we find the following lines: “even if little boys at play/should collect sand to make a Buddha tower,/then persons such as these/have all attained the Buddha way” (Burton Watson, trans., *The Essential Lotus*, p. 17).
- 189 The “three gates” symbolize purity of body, speech, and mind, and are also used to refer to a monastery or convent.

- 190 The eight winds refer to the influences that fan the passions: loss and gain; slander and eulogy; ridicule and praise; sorrow and joy.
- 191 Traditionally, monks and nuns were allotted the distance between three rafters—approximately three feet—in the meditation hall.
- 192 An allusion to a story about a man who spent a considerable amount of money to purchase a house. When asked how much he had paid, he replied that he'd spent ten thousand for the house, and a million for the neighbors.
- 193 The six windows are a metaphor for the six senses.
- 194 Lianghai Rude, *Yinxiang ji*, 110:341a/b.
- 195 A common poetic metaphor for the impermanence of all things.
- 196 A monk once asked Master Qingyuan Xingsi (660–774), “What is the primary meaning of the Buddhadharma?” His reply was “What is the price of rice in Luling?”
- 197 Lianghai Ru'de, *Yinxiang ji*, 110:341a/b.
- 198 Zhenhua, *Xu biqiuni zhuan*, 6:130.
- 199 The great leviathan is Makara, a legendary sea-monster said to dwell in the depths of the sea where, some say, he guards the wish-fulfillment gem.
- 200 A reference to the net of Indra.
- 201 Qiu, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni*, p. 372.
- 202 Bhikshuni Ngawang Chodron is a Western nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who received ordination in Hong Kong in 1987. She lives at Shechen Tannyi Dargyeling Monastery in Nepal, where she is engaged in establishing a nunnery for Tibetan women.
- 203 Huaxu is the name of a land said to have been visited by the Yellow Emperor in his dreams; subsequently it became a term used to refer to the land of sleep and dreams.
- 204 Jingjian, the reader will remember, is the name of the fourth-century woman traditionally regarded as being the first full-fledged Chinese Buddhist nun.
- 205 Qiu, *Dangdai diyi biqiuni*, p. 356.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bianchi, Ester. 2000. *The Iron Statue Monastery: Tiexiangsi: A Buddhist Nunnery of Tibetan Tradition in Contemporary China*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki.
- Bossler, Beverly. 1997. "Women's Literacy in Song Dynasty China," in *Qingzhu Deng Guangming jiaoshou jiushi huadan lunwenji*. Shijiazhuang: Publisher. pp. 322–52.
- Cahill, Suzanne. 1993. *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cai Hongsheng. 1996. *Nigu tan*. Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe.
- Chang, Kang-I Sun, and Haun Saussy, eds. 1999. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cleary, Thomas, and J. C. Cleary, trans. 1992. *The Blue Cliff Record*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Ebrey, Patricia B. 1993. *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Faure, Bernard. 2003. *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Georgieva, Valentina. 2000. "Buddhist Nuns in China: From the Six Dynasties to the Tang." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden.
- Grant, Beata. 2001. "Through the Empty Gate: The Poetry of Buddhist Nuns in Late Imperial China." In *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 73–86. Edited by Marsha Weidner. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

- . 1996. “Female Holder of the Lineage: Linji Chan Master Zhiyuan Xinggang, (1597–1654).” *Late Imperial China* 17: 2, pp. 51–77.
- . 1994. “Who Is This I? Who Is That Other? The Poetry of an Eighteenth-Century Buddhist Laywoman.” *Late Imperial China* 15: 11, pp. 1–40.
- Green, James, trans. 2001. *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*. Boston: Shambhala.
- He Xiaorong. 2000. *Mingdai Nanjing shiyuan yanjiu*. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.
- Henricks, Robert H. 1990. *The Poetry of Han-Shan*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hong Beimou. 1995. *Zhongguo mingni*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.
- Hsiao, Hung Lee Lily. 1986–87. “The Emergence of Buddhist Nuns in China and Its Social Ramifications.” *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 18, 19, pp. 82–100.
- Hsieh, E. Ding-hwa. 1999. “Images of Women in Ch’an Buddhist Literature of the Sung Period.” In *Buddhism in the Sung*, pp. 148–87. Edited by Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.
- Hsieh, E. Ding-hwa. 2000. “Buddhist Nuns in Sung China (960–1279).” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 30, pp. 63–96.
- Hu Wenkai. 1985. *Lidai funu zhuzuo kao*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Kieschnick, John. 2003. *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ko, Dorothy. 1994. *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China, 1573–1722*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Levering, Miriam. 2000. “Women Ch’an Masters: The Teacher Miao-tsung

- as Saint." In *Women Saints in World Religions*, pp. 180–204. Edited by Arvind Sharma. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1999. "Miao-tao and Her Teacher Ta-hui." In *Buddhism in the Sung*, pp. 188–219. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- . 1997. "Stories of Enlightened Women in Ch'an and the Ch'an Buddhist Female Bodhisattva/Goddess Tradition." In *Women and the Goddess Traditions in Antiquity and Today*, pp. 137–76. Edited by Karen L. King. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- . 1994. "Women, the State, and Religion Today in the People's Republic of China." In *Today's Woman in World Religions*, pp. 171–224. Edited by Arvind Sharma. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1992. "Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch'an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism in the Ch'an Buddhist Tradition." In *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, pp. 137–56. Edited by Jose Ignacio Cabezon. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1982. "The Dragon Girl and the Abbess of Mo-shan: Gender and Status in the Chan Buddhist Tradition." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5: 1, pp. 19–35.
- Li Jung-hsi, trans. 1981. *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns: Pao-chang's Pi-chiu-ni chuan*. Osaka: Tōhōkan, Inc.
- Li Yiliang. 1997. *Zhongguo mingni*. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe.
- Li Yuzhen. 1989. *Tangdai de biqiuni*. Taiwan: Xuesheng shuju.
- Mann, Susan. 1997. *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mather, Richard. 1961. "The Mystical Ascent of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains: Sun Ch'o's *Yu-T'ien-T'ai-Shan Fu*." *Monumenta Serica* 20.
- Qin, Wen-jie. 2000. "The Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China: Women Reconstruct Buddhism on Mt. Emei." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University.

- Reed, Barbara. 1994. "Women and Chinese Religion in Contemporary Taiwan." In *Today's Woman in World Religions*, pp. 225–43. Edited by Arvind Sharma. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Sasaki, Ruth Fuller, and Yoshitaka Iriya, trans. 1992. *A Man of Zen: The Recorded Sayings of the Layman P'ang*. Tokyo: Weatherhill.
- Ts'ai, Kathryn M. trans. 1994. *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to Sixth Centuries*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Ts'ai, Kathryn M. 1981. "The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries." *Historical Reflections* 8:3, pp. 1–19.
- Zürcher, Erik. 1990. "Religieuses et Couvents dans l'Ancien Bouddhisme Chinois." In *Buddhism, Christianisme et Société Chinoise*. Paris: Julliard.

INDEX

- Aidao Convent 157
- Amitabha Buddha 148, 149
- Anhui Province 60
- Avatamsaka Sutra* 147
- Bamboo Grove Convent 3
- Ban Zhao 2
- Banro Convent 121, 122
- Baochang 3, 5, 13, 15
- Baolin Zhengong 139
- Baoning Monastery 42
- Beijing 58, 113, 134, 157
- Benchong Sheng 116
- Benming 36
- Biographies of Pious Women, The* 13
- Biqiuni zhuan*. See *Lives of the Nuns*
- Bizhi Convent 123
- Blue Cliff Record* 32
- Bodhidharma 26, 33, 125
- buddha-nature 122
- buddhamind 147
- Buddhism, decline of 11
- Buddhist canon, Jiaxing edition 15
- cainü* 2
- Cantong Cloister 78
- Caotang Shanqing 36
- Chan 7, 17, 26, 41, 45, 92, 132, 139, 147
- Chan in verse 33, 39, 73, 107, 109, 133, 137, 149, 150
- Chan meditation 45, 82
- Chang'an 7, 26
- Changming Convent 48
- Changzhou 41, 121, 126
- Chaoyan 116
- Chaoyi 69
- Chaoyong 15
- Chengdu 10, 157
- Chinese Buddhist Association 157
- Ciguang Convent 7, 28
- Clear Brook Poetry Club 132
- Cloister of Investigating Commonality. See Cantong Cloister
- Cold Mountain. See Hanshan
- Compassionate Vehicle of Universal Salvation. See Ziyong
- Complete Poetry of the Tang Dynasty* 14, 28. See also *Quan Tang shi*
- Complete Records of the Five Lamps, The*. See *Wudeng quanshu*
- Concubine Qiao 38
- Confucianism 10, 11, 13, 32, 45, 92
- Confucianism and women 5, 6, 13, 14, 17
- Continuation of Correct Beginnings: Poems by the Women of Our Dynasty*. See *Guochao guixiu zengshi xu ji*
- Continuation of the Lives of the Nuns*. See *Xu biqiuni zhuan*
- Crouching Dragon Abbess. See Yinyue
- Crouching Lion Convent 72, 78, 79, 120
- Cultural Revolution 157
- da zhangfu* 16
- Dabei Convent 155
- Dahui Zonggao 10, 32, 36, 38
- Dangdai diyi biqiuni: Longlian Fashi zhuan* 158
- Daoism 32

- Daoist women poets 7
 Daojian 9
 Daoqian 139
 Daoyi 4
 Daoyuan 60
 Daren Mountains 66
 Dawu 155
 death 88
 Deying 41
 Dharma debate 141
 Dharma masters 18
 Dharma sisters 18
dharmakaya 156
dhyana 61
Diamond Sutra 17, 54
 Dongyun 83
 Dragon Girl 17, 107
 Dragon king's daughter. *See* Dragon Girl
 dual ordination 8
 Eight Special Rules 5, 8
Eight Yang Sutra 39
 Eminent Master Baoci Zhengjue. *See* Qingyu
 enlightenment 57, 149
 Fadeng 7
 Fahai 45
 Fan Zhen 11
 Fan Zuyu 10
 Fayuan 26
 Fayun Convent 34
 Fazhen Shouyi 41
 Feiyin Tongrong 113, 116
 female sangha 5, 14
 Feng Yuan 6
 Forbidden City 136
 Fujian Arts Publishing Company 157
 Fuzhou 9
 Ganges 145
Gathas 95, 96, 119, 138
 Georgieva, Valentina 6
gong'an. *See* *koan*
 Grindstone Liu. *See* Liu Tiemo
 Guan Daosheng 48
 Guangling 69
 Guangxi 143
 Guanqi Zhixian 7
 Guanyin 17, 55
 Guanyin Convent. *See* Dabei Convent
 Guishan Lingyou 7
 Gulu Fan 134
Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji 14
Guochao guixiu zhengshi xu ji 14
 Guoqing Monastery 139
 Haiyan 34
 Haiyin 7, 28
 Hangzhou 60, 70, 85, 101, 116, 120, 123
 Hanshan 1, 95
 Hanyue Fazang 101
 He River 111
 Henan Province 60
 Hengzhou 92
 Hou Dongceng 62, 67
 Hou Mountains 68
 Hou Yan 65
 Hsieh, Ding-hwa E. 8
 Hu Rihua 72
 Hu Wenkai 12
 Huading 67
 Huai'an 128
 Huanglong 42
huatou meditation 128
 Hubei Province 134
 Huiguang 10
 Huikuo 5
 Huixu 4, 22
 Huiyun Monastery 116
 Huizong 10

- Hunan Province 45, 92
 Huo Tao 11, 12, 52
 Huo'an Shiti 40
 Hutong Convent 4
 Huzhou 101
 India 136
 Iron-Grinder Liu 67
 Jiading family 120
 Jiahe 139
 Jiajing emperor 11, 12
 Jiang Yuanliang 146
 Jiangnan 41, 93
 Jiangsu Province 42, 69, 72, 101,
 110, 120, 121, 126, 128, 132,
 134, 141, 155
 Jiangsu Province in verse 115
 Jiangxi Province 9, 58
 Jiankang 22
 Jiaying 13, 72, 120
 Jichu Hongchu 101, 106
 Jidu Convent 26
 Jie'an Wujin 128
 Jifu 101, 106
 Jinci Monastery 157
Jingang jing. See *Diamond Sutra*
Jingde chuandeng lu 7, 15, 41
 Jinghui Convent 41
 Jingjian 3, 5, 159
 Jingluo Convent 4
 Jingming 70
 Jingnuo 85
 Jingwei 67
 Jingzhou 115
 Jinling 42
 Jiuhua Mountains 117
 Jixing 56
 Jizhu 132
 Jizong 17, 106
 Jueqing 52
 Jun Convent 141
 Kaifeng 10
 Kangxi emperor 134
 karma 97
kasayas 125
 Kedu 128
 koan 16, 32
 Lady Zhang 107
 Langyin 125
Lankavatara Sutra 91, 158
 laywomen 13
 Lhasa 159
 Li family 101
 Li Jilan 7
 Li Shiyan 121
 Liang dynasty 3, 4, 26
 Lianghai 146
 Lianhua Convent 128
 Liaodong 143
 Liaodong Province 134
 Liaoning Province 143
 Lingguan Convent 113
 Lingrui Convent 101
 Lingshou 4
 Lingyan Monastery 101, 106
 Lingzhao 18
 Linji Chan 10, 13, 32, 72, 92, 108,
 113, 134
 Linze Tongqi 108
 Liu Tiemo 7
Lives of the Nuns 3, 15
*Longitudinal Canon of Poetry by Note-
 worthy Women*. See *Mingyuan shi-
 wei*
 Longlian 14, 157
 Lotus Convent 9
 lotus silk 9
Lotus Sutra 17, 50
 Loyang 3, 4, 5, 6
 Lu Jia 45
 Lu You 10

- Luo Qilan 144
 Madam Tang 70
 Madam Tao 72
 Mahaprajapati Gotami 5
 Maitreya Buddha 145
 Manchus 62, 65, 67, 134, 143
 Manjushri 17
 Mazu 75
 meditation 74, 82, 117, 119
 Meixi 72
 Miaodao 10
 Miaohui 121
 Miaohui Convent 10
 Miaoyin 3, 4
 Miaozhan Convent 48, 101, 106
 Miaozong 10, 32
 Ming dynasty 11, 12, 60, 62, 65, 70
 Ming loyalists 62, 65, 67
 Mingben 113
 Mingshi. *See* Benming
Mingxin lu. *See* *Record of Mind Illumination*
 Mingxiu 110
 Mingyin Convent 60, 120
Mingyuan shiwei 14, 60
Mirror of the Tang, The 10
 Miyun Yuanwu 13, 72, 92, 93, 101, 108, 120
 monastic code 3, 4, 8
 Moshan Liaoran 7, 13
 Mount Emei 110, 111, 113, 157
 Mount Guan 58
 Mount Heng 92, 93
 Mount Jiuhua 113, 155
 Mount Lingyan 146
 Mount Putuo 110, 113, 155
 Mount Tiantai 64, 139
 Mount Wu 117
 Mount Wutai 110, 113
 Nanjing 11, 42, 52
 Nanjing Board of Rites 11, 52
 Nantong 155
 Nanyue 94. *See also* Mount Heng
 Nenghai 157
 Ngawang Chodron 159
nianfo 78
 Ningbo 143
 Old Zhou. *See* Huixu
 One-Eyed Jingang 17, 54
 Pang Yün 18
 Peng Shaosheng 13
 People's Republic of China 14
 Plum Blossom Nun 29
Poetry of the Disciples of the Four Types from Women, The 146
 Pure Land 14–16, 58, 139, 146, 147, 155
 Pure Land in verse 148, 149, 159
 Putuo Island 143
 Qiao, imperial concubine 38
 Qing dynasty 12, 13, 14, 17, 62
 Qingyu 9
 Qiu family 116
 Qiu Shanshan 157
Quan Tang shi 7
Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang 4
Record of Mind Illumination 42
 Ren Zhaolin 132
 Rengetsu 1
 samadhi 58, 80, 97, 138
 samsara 57
 Shariputra 17
 Second Patriarch 33
 Sengjian 5
 Shanci Tongji 92
 Shandong Province 50
 Shang Kexi 143
 Shanghai 113
Shannüren zhuan. *See* *The Biogra-*

- phies of Pious Women*
- Shanshao Benzhi 120
- Shanxi 121
- Shaoxing 108
- Shengchuang 67
- Shenyi 62, 65, 67
- Shi family 126
- Shiche Tongsheng 72
- Shiyan 123
- Sichuan Province 7, 28, 157
- Singhalese nuns 8
- Six Dynasties 13
- Sixin 42
- Song dynasty 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 36
- songgu* 10
- Southern Peak. *See* Mount Heng
- Southern Song dynasty 11
- Sri Lanka 5
- Su Song 32
- Suzhou 41, 42, 93, 101, 106, 126, 146
- Suzhou in verse 91
- Taiping Rebellion 146
- Taiwan 14
- Taizong 9
- Taizu 8
- Tandu Convent 143
- Tang dynasty 5–9, 13, 26, 28
- Tang jian*. *See The Mirror of the Tang*
- Tanmojie 5
- Tao Shan 14
- Tathagatagarbha 151
- ten precepts 3
- thrice-following 17, 127
- Tibet 157
- Tiexang Convent 157
- Tiexiang si 157
- Today's Preeminent Nun: The Biography of Dharma Master Longlian.*
See Dangdai diyi biqiuni:
- Longlian Fashi zhuan*
- Tongjiao Convent 157
- Transmission of the Lamp of the Jingde, The.* *See Jingde chuandeng lu*
- Vajrayana 50
- vegetarianism 22, 58, 78, 134
- vinaya* 5, 8, 22. *See also* monastic code
- Wang Convent 63
- Wang Duanshu 14, 60, 108, 116
- Wang family 38
- Wang Shizhen 69
- Wanli period 12
- Wanru Tongwei 93
- Wanxian 17, 126
- Wanyan Yun Zhu 14
- Weiji Xingzhi 85, 86
- West Lake 115
- West Mountain 10
- Western Paradise. *See* Pure Land
- Wife of Pang 17, 18, 107
- Women in Buddhism 2, 17
- Women in Chan 7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 85, 106
- “Writing of My Feelings Within the Convent” 17
- Wudeng quanshu* 15
- Wudi 26
- Wulian 50
- Wuling 141
- Wumen sizhong dizi shi.* *See Poetry of the Disciples of the Four Types from Wumen, The*
- Wuqing 144
- Wuwei 58
- Wuwo 143
- Xia Shuji. *See* Shenyi
- Xia Wanchun 62
- Xia Yunyi 62
- Xiaoshan 58

Xiaoyi Convent 70
 Xingche 92, 93
 Xinggang 72, 78, 79
 Xingsheng Convent 7
 Xiuzhou 128, 139
 Xizhu Convent 42
Xu biqiuni zhuan 15
 Xuanchang 22
 Xuanzong 6, 7
 Xue family 7
 Xue Tao 7
 Xuedou Chongxian 32
 Yan, the hills of 135, 136
 Yang I 41
 Yang Xuanzhi 4
 Yao Ximen 65
 Yigong 78, 79, 80
 Yikui 78, 79
 Yinhui 141
 Yinyue 108
 Yishou Convent 132
 Yongle emperor 50
 Yu Xuanji 7
 Yuan dynasty 11
 Yuanduan 120
 Yuanwu Keqin 32, 36
yulu 10
 Yunqi Zhuhong 70
 Zaisheng 63, 65, 67
 Zhang Yunzi 132
 Zhang Zifan 132, 133
 Zhaozhou 67
 Zhejiang Province 13, 34, 58, 106,
 108, 116, 123, 128, 139
 Zhejiang Province in verse 115
 Zhengjue 34
 Zhenhua 15
 Zhenru 38
 Zhilin 114
 Zhitong 42
 Zhou family 22
 Zhuang Zhou 33
 Zhuming Convent 41
 Zilin 78
 Ziwu 143
 Ziyong 134



When I Find You Again It Will Be in Mountains

The Selected Poems of Chia Tao

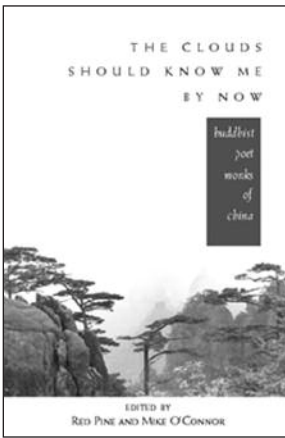
Translated and edited by Mike O'Connor
160 pages, ISBN 0-86171-172-6, \$15.95

Chia Tao (779-843), an erstwhile Zen monk who became a poet during China's T'ang Dynasty, recorded the lives of the sages, masters, immortals, and hermits who helped establish the great spiritual tradition of Zen Buddhism in China.

Presented in both the original Chinese and Mike O'Connor's beautifully crafted English translation, *When I Find You Again, It Will Be in Mountains* brings to life this preeminent poet and his glorious religious tradition, offering the fullest translation of Chia Tao's poems to date.

"An unusually happy meeting of poet and translator, one that will please poetry lovers and students of Chinese culture alike."

—Burton Watson, translator, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*



The Clouds Should Know Me By Now *Buddhist Poet Monks of China*

Edited by Red Pine and Mike O'Connor
224 pages, ISBN 0-86171-143-2, \$15.95

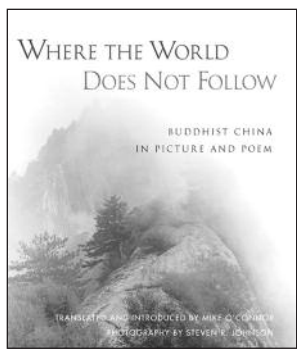
"Here is a breathtaking millennium of Buddhist poet-monks...This valuable anthology is further enhanced by the original Chinese texts, plus excellent notes."

—*Inquiring Mind*

"Indispensable."—Sam Hamill, Copper Canyon Press

"These translations will stand alongside those of Pound, Rexroth, Snyder and R.H. Blyth...a valuable addition to collections of Buddhist poetry."

—*Choice*



Where the World Does Not Follow

Buddhist China in Picture and Poem

Translated and introduced

by Mike O'Connor

Photography by Steven R. Johnson

Foreword by William Neill

128 pages, ISBN 0-86171-309-5, \$24.95

"The genius of this book is the timelessness that emerges from juxtaposing modern photographs with T'ang Dynasty Buddhist poetry. The photos or the poetry alone

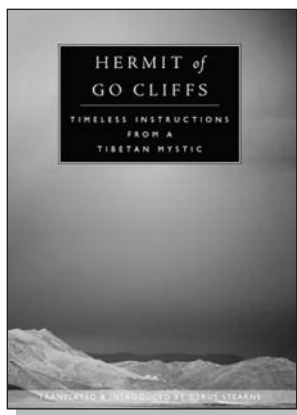
would make this a wonderful text. The two together are something truly special."—*Shambhala Sun*

"The poetry and photographs, equally captivating, take the reader on a guided tour of China."—*Foreword*

"O'Connor and Johnson provide dual glimpses of Buddhist culture in ancient and modern China. From a row of teacups to misty cliffs to a hermit's retreat, here is a literary and visual tribute to a land where religion and daily life are inseparable." —*Tricycle*

"*Where the World Does Not Follow* is splendid. Not only is it aesthetically beautiful and elegantly laid out but I feel that it allows us to experience the world of Joshu and Rinzi as never before. That, surely, can only enhance our grasp of their profound teaching."—Janet Jiryu Abels, Sensei, Still Mind Zendo, New York City

"A beautiful marriage of word and image."—*Publishers Weekly*



Hermit of Go Cliffs: Timeless

Instructions from a Tibetan Mystic

Translated and introduced

by Cyrus Stearns

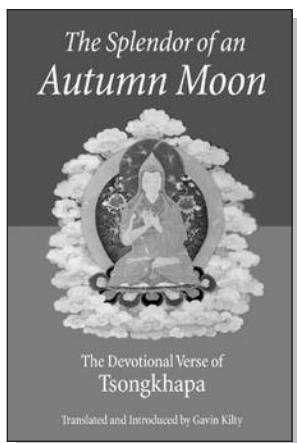
224 pages, ISBN 0-86171-164-5, \$19.95

The great Tibetan meditation master Gyalwa Godrakpa (1170–1249) practiced and taught a nonsectarian approach to realization. *Hermit of Go Cliffs* is the first English translation of *The Collected Songs of Godrakpa*, presented here with the original Tibetan text and with Cyrus Stearns' com-

prehensive introduction to Godrakpa's life, legacy, and poetry.

Like the songs of Tibet's great saint Milarepa, Godrakpa's songs are uniquely beautiful and accessible. These songs express what Godrakpa emphasized in his life—a no-nonsense approach to the practice of meditation.

“An inspiring collection and an exceptional resource.” —Janet Gyatso, Harvard University



The Splendor of an Autumn Moon

The Devotional Verse of Tsongkhapa

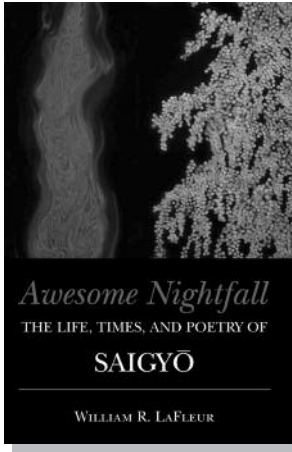
Translated by Gavin Kilty

224 pages, ISBN 0-86171-192-0, \$16.95

The Tibetan saint Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the founder of the Dalai Lama's tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, was renowned for his vast learning, meditational achievements, influential writings on practice and philosophy, and reform of tantric religious practices. A deeply humble and religious man, he expressed himself in exquisite verse.

Here, presented in both the original Tibetan and in translation, are twenty-one devotional poems by Tsongkhapa. Each verse illuminates some aspect of the Buddhist path. Gavin Kilty's careful, artful translations will appeal to anyone with a love of poetry

“Some of the most inspiring verses ever written.” —Geshe Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., founder, Institute for Tibetan Classics



Awesome Nightfall

The Life, Times, and Poetry of Saigyō

William R. LaFleur

192 pages, ISBN 0-86171-322-2, \$14.95

“Bill LaFleur’s translations of Saigyō’s poetry have opened up a window on twelfth-century Japan, providing us with first-hand glimpses of the Buddhist religion, the valuation of nature, and the specific spirit of the times.”

—Mircea Eliade

“Most extraordinary. This fascinating work is equal parts biography, history, poetry, and even mystery as it traces the life and mind of an elusive and complex figure in Japanese culture. ...This book is one of the rare works that leaves the reader overflowing with satisfaction in knowing something important and wonderful was achieved in the trip through its pages.”

—*New York Resident*

“This remarkable life and poetry of Saigyō is essential reading: essential to understanding Japanese literary tradition, and essential to understanding the role of Japan’s most influential poet in the history of its Buddhism. *Awesome Nightfall* is a classic.”

—Sam Hamill, Copper Canyon Press

“Saigyō’s poems are masterful mind-language challenges. LaFleur’s deeply understanding translations present us with the snake-like energy of the syntax, and the illuminated world that was called out by one man’s lifetime of walking and meditation is again right here.”

—Gary Snyder

Wisdom Publications

Wisdom Publications, a nonprofit publisher, is dedicated to making available authentic Buddhist works for the benefit of all. We publish translations of the sutras and tantras, commentaries and teachings of past and contemporary Buddhist masters, and original works by the world's leading Buddhist scholars. We publish our titles with the appreciation of Buddhism as a living philosophy and with the special commitment to preserve and transmit important works from all the major Buddhist traditions.

To learn more about Wisdom, or to browse books online, visit our website at wisdompubs.org. You may request a copy of our mail-order catalog online or by writing to:

WISDOM PUBLICATIONS
199 Elm Street
Somerville, Massachusetts 02144 USA
Telephone: (617) 776-7416
Fax: (617) 776-7841
Email: info@wisdompubs.org
www.wisdompubs.org

The Wisdom Trust

As a nonprofit publisher, Wisdom is dedicated to the publication of fine Dharma books for the benefit of all sentient beings and dependent upon the kindness and generosity of sponsors in order to do so. If you would like to make a donation to Wisdom, please do so through our Somerville office. If you would like to sponsor the publication of a book, please write or email us at the address above.

Thank you.

Wisdom is a nonprofit, charitable 501(c)(3) organization affiliated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT).

