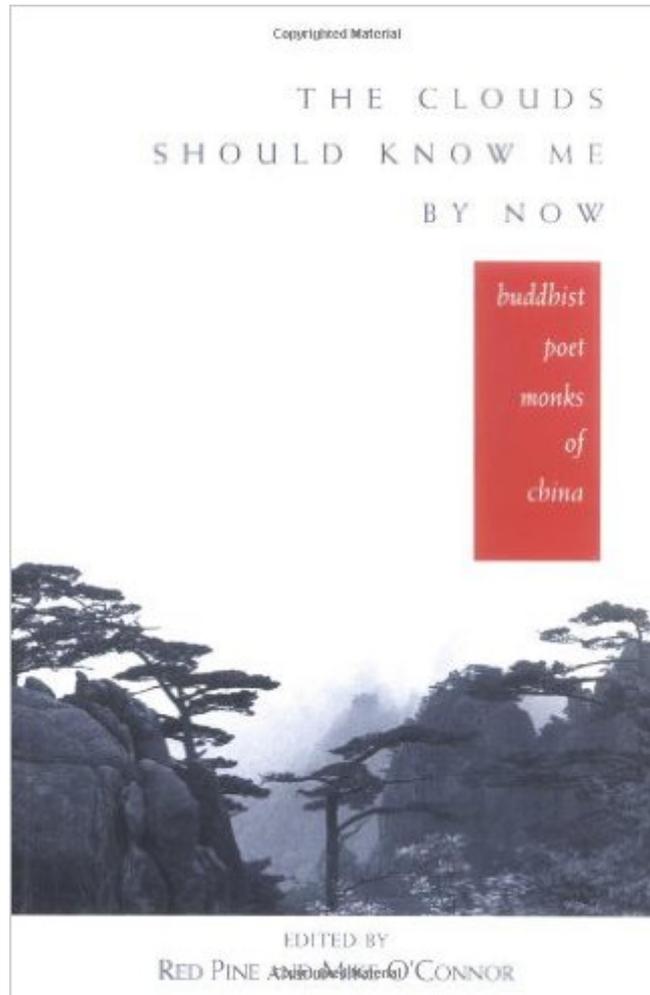


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The Clouds Should Know Me By Now: Buddhist Poet Monks Of China



Synopsis

This unique collection presents the verse, much of it translated for the first time, of fourteen eminent Chinese Buddhist poet monks. Featuring the original Chinese as well as English translations and historical introductions by Burton Watson, J.P. Seaton, Paul Hansen, James Sanford, and the editors, this book provides an appreciation and understanding of this elegant and traditional expression of spirituality. "So take a walk with...these cranky, melancholy, lonely, mischievous poet-ancestors. Their songs are stout as a pilgrim's stave or a pair of good shoes, and were meant to be taken on the great journey."--Andrew Schelling, from his Introduction

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

this collection is an excellent introduction for people who get turned on by the idea of monks living in the mountains, writing poetry, sleeping, drinking wine, writing poetry, sleeping, drinking wine et al. i highly recommend it to people who love buddhism, poetry, or chinese culture. the added bonus is the chinese text. i've been so impressed with anything associated with bill porter a.k.a. red pine that i've bought all of his translations. the translations included here are better and in many cases vastly superior to anything else out there.

Red Pine, Mike O'Connor, and four other translators have opened for us the world of the literary descendants of Han-Shan, poet monks who are most at home in misty hills, wandering with the rivers, enjoying tea over a fire of leaves. Like Japanese haiku, Chinese Zen poetry evokes

imagination and layers of depth with the sparest of poetic structures. The poets' Buddhism is not put on show or even obvious; it quietly underlies their love of nature, their deep connectedness, their insight into the human experience of being alive. A ten page introduction by Andrew Schelling provides the historical, cultural, religious, and philosophical backdrops for these poets. Then you let your imagination meander through the poems of Chia Tao (779-843), Chi-chi (864-937), The Nine Monks and Chih Yuan (late 10th century), Han-shan Te-ch'ing (1546-1623), Shih-shu (late 17th century) and Ching An (1851-1912). Each section is comprised of an introduction to the poet and his context, the poems, and helpful notes. I appreciate the very helpful Index of First Lines provided at the end of the book, as well as the information about the contributors.

When a Zen Master writes, "A bird sings and the mountain is more quiet," he is summarizing the demeanor of a mind both stirred and stilled by a repose found only in what Buddhists call "mindfulness." This is an anthology stretching millennia linked by the recurrence of such moments of awakening and intactness. These poems are part of a daily bread of peaceful perception and disciplined sentience. Like all such bread, they are meant to be shared. You want to know how fishes and loaves multiplied on a hillside, these poems are part of such a multiplication. I can only sing this book's praises. Find out for yourselves what it is about and how it is organized. And remember as you read these glorious epiphanies, they were the only property of the men who wrote them and then left to the care of our delighted reading as a legacy.

Wisdom Publications has done it again: another lovely book that brings out the best in an Eastern tradition. The tradition this time is the poetry of Chinese Buddhist monks, and in this volume there are a number of moving and sublime examples of their craft. The poems are presented with visual elegance and an unobtrusive scholarship that makes the volume even more noteworthy. My only objection stems from the organization of the book, wherein six different contributors each choose a poet or group of poets to translate and present. I am not knowledgeable enough to know whether it is the fault of the original poets or that of the translators, but the poems in one section really fall flat, and another section is also somewhat below the high state of excellence achieved by the others. But really, this is a minor complaint. The vast majority of these poems will appeal greatly to those who are attracted to this sort of poetry, and the volume over all is very pleasing.

While I loved the title and the premise of the book, I found the selections of poetry a bit disappointing in scope and substance. With so many wonderful Buddhist poets and verses to

choose from, those presented did not, unfortunately, live up to the promise of the title. Nevertheless, this is a nice collection, but not quite what the title intimates.

This is a wonderful and interesting compilation - I love the translations and the background information about each poet and the time he lived in. The poems themselves are different and compelling. It was exactly what I was looking for - several different individuals with unique voices and historical perspectives.

A wonderful selection of Taoist and Buddhist poets. Features individual commentary for each poet. Timeless and uncluttered prose. Gets right to the center of existence. By turns sentimental, warm, cold, witty and humorous. Beauty as well as suffering and angst...but always well distilled and mature.

This book represents the not-so-usual suspects in the genre of buddhist poetry. precise, yet delicate images, dynamic voices, translators who practice the way, this combination results not merely in translated verses, they are verses translating lives, works of art, acts of reverence.

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