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Poems Of The Masters: China's Classic Anthology Of T'ang And Sung Dynasty Verse (Mandarin Chinese And English Edition)



Poems of the Masters

千家詩
China's Classic Anthology of
T'ang & Sung Dynasty Verse

translated by RED PINE



Synopsis

The classic Chinese poetry anthology in a handsome English-Chinese format. Poetry is China's greatest art, and for the past eight centuries Poems of the Masters has been that country's most studied and memorized collection of verse. For the first time ever in English, here is the complete text, with an introduction and extensive notes by renowned translator, Red Pine. Over one hundred poets are represented in this bilingual edition, including many of China's celebrated poets: Li Pai, Wang Wei, Tu Fu, Wang Po, and Ou-yang Hsiu. Poems of the Masters was compiled during the Sung dynasty (960-1278), a time when poetry became the defining measure of human relationships and understanding. As Red Pine writes in his introduction: "Nothing was significant without a poem, no social or ritual occasion, no political or personal event was considered complete without a few well-chosen words that summarized the complexities of the Chinese vision of reality and linked that vision with the beat of their hearts . . . [Poetry's] greatest flowering was in the T'ang and Sung, when suddenly it was everywhere: in the palace, in the street, in every household, every inn, every monastery, in every village square." "Chiupu River Song" by Li Pai
My white hair extends three miles
the sorrow of parting made it this long
who would guess to look in a mirror
where autumn frost comes from
"This valuable text will help us appreciate the richness of poetic imagination and experience."
Book Magazine, five-star review "[Poems of the Masters] includes the Chinese originals, along with commentaries on imagery, various social conventions, historical background; all absolutely essential to a full appreciation of the texts... the best way to approach them is to pick one out and let it drop like a pebble into the well of your mind and hear how it resonates."
The Philadelphia Inquirer "The poems in this remarkable anthology speak to us; across an immense distance of time and space; of loneliness, beauty, the consequences of political action, the stillness of autumn. Red Pine's wonderful translations and the clarity of his accompanying notes make these poems accessible and intimate to all of us."
Red Pine and the good people at Copper Canyon deserve a place in the Taoist paradise for bringing us this beautiful book."
Booksense Recommends Red Pine is one of the world's most respected translators of Chinese literature, bringing into English several of China's central religious and literary texts, including Lao-tzu's *Taoteching* (isbn 9781556592904) and *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain* (isbn 9781556591402).

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Customer Reviews

Red Pine's translation of the Ch'ienchiashih is quite impressive. I've found too many translations from Chinese that are overdone, full of themselves; here is a volume of clear, elegant poetry. Even a beginning Chinese language student can follow along and understand the original text, his translation is so well constructed. And yet these 224 poems lose nothing of their poetic quality. The poems are presented with the Chinese facing the English, with biographical and relevant explanatory notes accompanying each. Includes preface (definitely worth reading), map (very helpful for following some of the more prolific poets), and Tang/Song timeline. This has very quickly become my favourite book of translations.

Another gift from Red Pine (Bill Porter) whose love for Chinese verse and the Dharma have shaped him into one of the foremost translators of the old poets. This Chinese classic has been around for eight centuries, but is here finally available in English! The volume offers 123 poets, 224 poems. Adjacent Chinese text and critical notes are provided for each poem. Included at the end are a timeline of the Dynasties from c. 2200 BCE to 1368, a complete index of the poets, and a complete index of the titles. This is a monumental work and an extraordinary gift from the translator. A typical verse from this collection, called In Reply, by a poet called The Ancient Recluse:Somehow I ended up beneath pinessleeping in comfort on bouldersthere aren't any calendars in the mountainswinter ends but who counts the yearsA sincere thank you to Red Pine and Copper Canyon Press for providing these treasures.

Red Pine (Bill Porter) has beautifully translated this important collection of Chinese verse. His

commentaries, too, are well worth reading. This book would be an excellent text for those who wish to learn to read T'ang and Sung poetry, and classical literary Chinese in general. The Chinese and English poems are presented on facing pages. Each poem is sufficiently brief to allow students the opportunity to (begin to) learn a complete work of literature without the intimidation that can accompany larger texts -- and there are 224 such poems in this translation, which gives ample scope for learning in nice, easy steps. (Of course this will have to be done using a dictionary like Mathews', and the student will need some familiarity with looking characters up by radical -- this is not a teaching text with a glossary and explanatory notes about language usage.) Even if one does not desire to use this collection to learn Chinese, the English translations are certainly beautiful poems in their own right, and are worth spending time with. And meanwhile, the Chinese texts are always there, extending a gentle invitation to the curious. Surely every lover of Chinese (and English!) poetry will treasure this book.

Previous reviewers have already summarized the more obvious qualities of this book; I agree with their comments. I found that for the student of Chinese culture, Chinese education, or Chinese thought, the book is a stunning introduction to a way of expressing observations and meaning in compact forms. In particular, the poetry seems both denser and more graceful than similar forms in English poetry, and more complex than the haiku forms descended from it. Chinese speakers I know vouched for the sensitive transliteration. Basho advised a haiku student to "read Chinese poetry" to write better haiku. I came to this work after struggling with haiku for a long time. I found Basho's advice to be good and this book to be a remarkable way to begin. The historical text snippets offered with the poems make further reflection easy without attempting to "define" all that the poem means.

Poetry, it is claimed in the Introduction to this excellent anthology, is China's greatest art form. The poems included in this collection provide strong support for this statement. They date from the Tang and Sung dynasties, from the 600's to the 1200's, and include some of the most famous of all Chinese poems, by some of the most revered poets. Each poem is presented in the original Chinese and then with a facing English translation by Red Pine, the pen name of the American Bill Porter. If you know how to use a Chinese dictionary (on-line dictionaries are available which are more likely to have some of the older characters no longer included in modern dictionaries), you can try your hand at translating these poems yourself. They are all fairly short, so you can look up the characters in about an hour or two. This is an interesting and enlightening exercise, and is

guaranteed to increase your respect for professional translators, especially of these sometimes enigmatically short and terse verses. My favorite concerns a rural village celebrating a traditional holiday, no doubt a welcome pause from what must have been a difficult life of almost non-stop, back-breaking physical labor. The women are shepherding their drunken husbands home at the end of the day. Coming to us across the many centuries from a mysterious foreign land, this poem is so human!

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