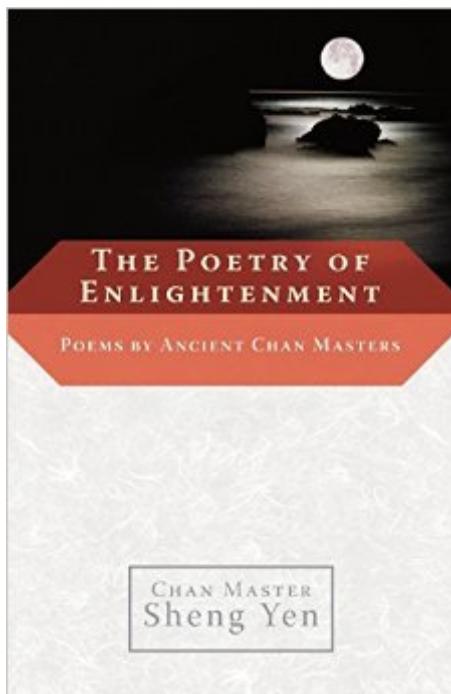


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The Poetry Of Enlightenment: Poems By Ancient Chan Masters



Synopsis

For the masters of the Chan tradition, poetry was a form of creative expression, but even more than that, it was a primary vehicle for teaching. Here a modern master presents ten teaching poems from the ancient masters, with illuminating commentary. *These poems flow directly from the minds of the enlightened Chan masters.* • Master Sheng Yen says. *We get a glimpse into their experience at the time of, and after, their enlightenment. It is my hope that this collection of poems will give those who are interested in the practice a new way of looking at Chan.* •

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Customer Reviews

Many people will enjoy reading these Ch'an gathas (verses). However, in places, I felt certain misgivings about the commentary material. For instance, I wondered if the dismissive remarks (p. 45) about Yung-chia's (Jpn. Yoka Daishi) T'ien-tai (Jpn. Tendai) background were justified, as if the merits of the 'Cheng Tao Ke' or 'Song of Enlightenment' had to be seen wholly as the fruit of Yung-chia's Ch'an training. *True, Yung-chia confessed that he had formerly devoted excessive attention to sutras and shastras etc. However, like a number of early Ch'an masters, Yung-Chia embraced a joint T'ien-tai/Ch'an practice. The T'ien-tai 'triple insight' and 'combined triple insight' (a Chinese adaption of samatha-vipasyana) refers to a dynamic practice, complementary to Ch'an. Hence, while Yung-chia certainly extolls Ch'an in his famous gatha, the 'Song of Enlightenment' could equally well be seen as a reflection of T'ien-tai based insight.* Tao-yuan's

'Transmission of the Lamp' (Chuan Teng Lu) - technically a Ch'an school document, included several T'ien-tai masters. The picture here is not quite so black and white as we might suppose. The more 'formal' aspects of T'ien-t'ai are another matter. Again, I was puzzled by the remarks about the Ts'ao-tung school's 'wu-wei' or 'Five Ranks' (p. 74) suggesting that they 'all have the same basis in enlightenment.' What is that supposed to mean? Though the Ts'ao-tung teaching alludes to 'five ranks,' what it boils down to, in practice, is a 'three way interplay' between - the 'guest' position, the 'host' position - and the host-in-host.' These are distinct phases of insight, and it is only in the final stage - that the distinctions, hitherto coined in the teaching - dissolve away.

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