

PROBLEMS OF DATING AND AUTHORSHIP

This is a complete, annotated translation of the poetry of Han-shan, Han-shan being a T'ang Dynasty (618–907) recluse who lived alone, apparently much of his life, in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in southeast China, and wrote many poems about his life alone in the hills. We know very little about this man other than what we can glean from the three hundred-odd poems that still survive in the collection of verse that bears his name. We do not know his real name¹—a number of different accounts affirm that "Han-shan" (Cold Mountain) or "Han-yen" (Cold Cliffs) is a name that he took from the place where he lived.² We do not know his dates: opinions on that vary from early T'ang or even Sui (605–618) to mid and even late T'ang.

Everyone seems to agree that the place to begin looking into these matters is the "Lü-ch'iu Yin Preface" to the poems, a record whose existence is attested by at least the end of the tenth century in Tsan-ning's *Sung Kao-seng chuan* (comp. 982–988).³ I will not cite here a complete translation of the Preface: an abridged version stands at the head of the *Ch'üan T'ang shih* edition of Han-shan's poems and is translated below (the reader might want to look ahead). Suffice it to say by way of summary that the Preface claims to be written by an official named Lü-ch'iu Yin who, having assumed his post as Prefect of T'ai-chou (modern day Lin-hai County in Chekiang), went to visit two oddball Buddhists named Han-shan and Shih-te at Kuo-ch'ing Temple in the nearby T'ien-t'ai mountains, such a visit having been recommended by the common master of the two, a monk named Feng-kan. Lü-ch'iu Yin tells us that Han-shan lived on Cold Cliff, located seventy li west of the town of T'ang-hsing, and that he—Lü-ch'iu Yin, that is—asked the monk Tao-ch'iao to copy down the three hundred-odd poems that Han-shan had spread about the countryside, written on trees and walls.⁴

The Preface is undated, and it is not until 1189, when Chih-nan wrote a postscript to the poems (entitled *T'ien-t'ai-shan Kuo-ch'ing-ssu san-yin-chi chi*), that we are told that these events took place in the early years of the T'ang. Chih-nan says, "The Zen mas-

ter Feng-kan lived at Kuo-ch'ing Temple on T'ien-t'ai in the early years of the *chen-kuan* period (627–649) of the T'ang.⁵

There are problems with this preface, and the biggest problem is that we can find no contemporary information on any Lü-ch'iu Yin who was a Prefect of T'ai-chou at the beginning of the T'ang. Lü-ch'iu Yin is listed as a Prefect of T'ai-chou during the *chen-kuan* period of the T'ang in the Prefectural Gazetteer of T'ai-chou, published in 1722,⁶ but that is very late. There is a Lü-ch'iu Yin mentioned in early sources, but that Lü-ch'iu Yin, who was in fact a Prefect in early T'ang, was a Prefect in Li-chou, not T'ai-chou.

We cannot simply dismiss as irrelevant this "second" Lü-ch'iu Yin, for Wu Chi-yu, in a well-known article on Han-shan, argued persuasively that this *was* the man who visited Han-shan and that "Han-shan," therefore, was a man named Chih-yen, a man who had served with *this* Lü-ch'iu Yin in the army before becoming a Buddhist and going off to live in the hills.⁷ Our record on these two men does in fact say that Lü-ch'iu Yin, while serving as Prefect of Li-chou—which was apparently sometime in early *chen-kuan*⁸—did pay his former colleague a visit at his mountain retreat. Thus there are elements in the story that seem to accord with what we know about Han-shan, especially since he too appears to have held some minor government jobs before he became a recluse (poem 7 is important in Wu's argument). And Wu Chi-yu is certainly right in pointing out that it is highly unlikely that there were two men with the same, uncommon name (Lü-ch'iu Yin) holding much the same post at this time.

Nonetheless, there are problems with the proposed identification. To begin with, there is no record that Chih-yen wrote any poems at all, and secondly, the Lü-ch'iu Yin of our Preface clearly did not know who Han-shan was before making his visit, while this Lü-ch'iu Yin was Chih-yen's former colleague.

To return to the Preface, the great Sinologist Hu Shih doubted its authenticity as early as the 1920s. For a number of reasons he suggested the dates 700–780 for the dates of Han-shan, noting, for example, that the place mentioned in the Preface, T'ang-hsing, did not go by that name before 675 (the second year of the reign period *shang-yüan*) and that therefore the Preface could not have been written in early T'ang.⁹ Hu Shih failed to note that in reality there were two *shang-yüan* reign periods in the T'ang—the first running from 674–675, the second from 760–761—and the general consensus now is that the change in this place's name from its original name of

Shih-feng to T'ang-hsing was made in 761, not 675, thus presumably pushing the date of the Preface back further into mid or late T'ang.¹⁰ But all this scholarship may be in vain, since two of our early sources on the life of Han-shan say that he lived seventy li to the west of Shih-feng county—not T'ang-hsing—and Shih-feng was the name of this county from the time it was established back in the Chin (i.e., from about 300 A.D.) until it was changed in, apparently, 761 in the T'ang.¹¹

If we set the "Lü-ch'iu Yin Preface" aside and turn to other sources to look for a date for Han-shan, we find little agreement. Tu Kuang-t'ing (850–933), whose *Hsien-chuan shih-i* (cited in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 55) is our earliest record on the life of Han-shan, says that Han-shan retired to the T'ien-t'ai Mountains during the reign period *ta-li* (766–779).¹² Tsan-ning, on the other hand, felt that Han-shan, Shih-te, and Lü-ch'iu Yin all lived during the reign of Jui-tsung (710–712), since it was around that time that Feng-kan died.¹³ And looking further into Sung and Yüan sources, Hu Shih notes that the meeting of Lü-ch'iu Yin and Han-shan is variously placed in 633, 642, 643, 712–713, and right around 800.¹⁴

There are other ways to approach the problem of dating, of course. For example, we ought to be able to date the poems through analysis of their contents. And since Han-shan's poems are filled with Zen symbols and themes, and since we normally date the beginnings of creative developments in the Zen school to the early eighth century and the teachings of Hui-neng (638–713), the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen school, we might readily conclude that Han-shan lived in mid-T'ang, a point already made by V. T. Yang in his review of Burton Watson's translation.¹⁵ But Han-shan does not use any of the technical terms that become part of Zen jargon with Hui-neng's Southern School of Zen (such as *ch'ien-hsing* ["realize" or "see your own nature"], *wu-nien* ["absence of thought"], and *tun-wu* ["sudden enlightenment"]), as we might expect if he lived and wrote after this period.¹⁶ Moreover, recent studies of the beginnings of Zen/Ch'an in China continue to note important developments in the school in early T'ang and before.¹⁷

Another point made by V. T. Yang on the problem of dating is that Han-shan's disdain for "regulated verse" (*lü-shih*) reflected the attitude of late T'ang.¹⁸ Iritani and Matsumura also approve of a mid or late T'ang date, based on the author's knowledge of, and

familiarity with, the *Wen-hsüan* (comp. 501–531) and the fact that his poems reveal common mid-T'ang literary concerns—e.g., he uses many *yüeh-fu* themes; he writes on the plight of the poor; and he delights in nature poetry.¹⁹ Iriya Yoshitaka sees Han-shan as a Buddhist layman living sometime after mid-T'ang, since his conviction that “this very mind is the Buddha” reflects the subjective emphasis in Zen that we find after Ma-tsu (707–786); moreover, his admonishments to common folk and his criticism of Buddhist monks are also characteristic of this late time.²⁰

In the poems themselves there are a number of datable references, and I have listed these in summary form in Appendix I. While the evidence is not unanimously in favor of early, mid, or late T'ang, there are a number of things that point to a time around or after mid T'ang (e.g., see items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 11). But the whole issue of dating Han-shan and/or his poems is complicated—perhaps hopelessly so—by the fact that the Han-shan poems probably do not all come from one hand. Iriya Yoshitaka, in 1958, argued for multiple authorship of the poems based on the varied attitudes and concerns we find in them.²¹ But most important in this regard is E. G. Pulleyblank's article on the “Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Han-shan.”²²

Pulleyblank analyzes the rhyme combinations in the 311 poems and concludes that “while a portion of the poems must clearly be of late T'ang date, another considerably larger portion shows rhyming which points very strongly to an early T'ang or even Sui date.”²³ Pulleyblank distinguishes these two groups of poems by calling the early T'ang group “Han-shan I” and the later T'ang group “Han-shan II,” and he correctly notes that most of the vibrant Han-shan poems belong to group I, while some of the Han-shan II poems (but certainly not all of them) read like dry “didactic sermons.”²⁴ (Of course to the specialist on Buddhism, *all* of the poems are of interest for what they can tell us about the state of affairs in Buddhism at the time. Poems distinguished by Pulleyblank as Han-shan II are noted in this translation by a single asterisk following the number of the poem.) Thus our assumption would be that the real Han-shan lived and wrote at the end of the Sui or in early T'ang, and that later on in mid or late T'ang, a number of poems were added to his collection by one, or several, fellow Buddhist devotees.

The linguistic evidence is persuasive, and I think most literary scholars these days assume the truth of this thesis as a working position; it is certainly possible that counter-theses will be argued later

on. There are a number of very good, and very interesting, poems which unfortunately fall into Pulleyblank's Han-shan II group (see poems 56, 106, 119, 160, 161, 170, 182, 186, 248, and 256). But then Pulleyblank cautions that we cannot know for sure, in individual cases, when a particular poem was written, since "In individual cases . . . poems from the later period might by chance show a narrower range of rhyming than was theoretically possible at the period and hence give a false impression of being earlier." And he adds, "Conversely, since we know that even in court poetry occasional fringe rhymes occur, one cannot insist that every poem that violates the strictest canons of Han-shan I rhyming has to be from the later period."²⁵

I still remain troubled by poems like 120 and 179, which are by rhyme words Han-shan I poems, and which in style and theme correspond to that group, but which seem to contain—clearly in the case of 120—references to things in mid-T'ang (c. 750 A.D.).

ON THE LIFE OF HAN-SHAN

Legends concerning Han-shan recorded in Buddhist biographical sources tell us nothing about the main events of his life. They focus instead on conversations Han-shan had with his friend and fellow monk Shih-te and their common master Feng-kan, the three understood as incarnations, respectively, of the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra and the buddha Amitābha.²⁶ In these accounts, the three men are invariably portrayed, in good Zen fashion, as poor but happy recluses, bordering on the crazy, who constantly do and say nonsensical things, gaily clapping, laughing, singing, and dancing when they are misunderstood. A number of these stories read like *kōans*.

For example, the following story is told of an encounter between Han-shan and Shih-te while the latter was sweeping:²⁷

Shih-te was one day sweeping the ground when the head of the monastery, passing by, questioned him: 'You are called a foundling, because you were found by Feng-kan. However, what is your real name? And where do you live?' Shih-te put down the broom and stood with his hands crossed. When asked once more, he took the broom again and resumed his sweeping. At the sight of this, Han-shan beat his own breast and repeated: 'Good heavens! Good heavens!' Shih-te was

quite amazed. 'Why are you doing this?' he asked. Han-shan replied, 'Don't you know, when a man dies in the east house, the west house neighbors should show their sympathy by groaning.' Both burst into laughter, danced, cried, and left.

With anecdotal literature presenting Han-shan, Shih-te, and Feng-kan as close friends who frequented Kuo-ch'ing Temple, it seems odd that in the 311 poems in the Han-shan collection, Shih-te and Feng-kan are mentioned only once (in poem 40) and Kuo-ch'ing Temple only twice (in poems 40 and 274), one of those poems (274) being by rhyme late. Moreover, even though Han-shan repeatedly laments that people do not understand him, and even though his poems and themes are often quite odd, he notes that others call him a "crackpot" or a "nut" in only four poems—poems 180, 186, 220, and 236—all of them, by Pulleyblank's criteria, belonging to Han-shan II. The Han-shan who left us these poems seems only obliquely related to the Han-shan of later Buddhist tradition.

While it is admittedly dangerous to reconstruct the life of a poet using his poems—and perhaps absurd when "his poems" probably come from more than one hand—what we know about the life of our poet really depends on this one source alone. I will attempt here no more than an outline or sketch of his life, relying entirely on Han-shan I poems (except where noted).

We know next to nothing about Han-shan's early years—was his family rich or poor? He opens poem 102 by saying "From birth I've been a farmer," and he says in poem 111 that, when he was young, he would "take the classics along when I hoed." So it might appear that his parents were peasant farmers and he knew only the hardships of that kind of life. But the claim that you take the classics along when you hoe is a stylized claim that shows devotion to study and a commitment to eventually succeed in the realm of scholars and officials, so it is unclear just how much stock we can put in these words.

He does say of his parents, "Father and mother left me plenty of books," and he continues, "Fields and gardens—I long now for nothing more" (poem 15). These words, I think, suggest someone raised in an educated family (not by peasants) who was probably groomed for the life of an official, but who—like the father of "Field and Garden" poetry T'ao Ch'ien (365–427)—chose at some point the life of the gentleman farmer over working at some lowly government job (note also the comments below on poem 5).²⁸

There are a couple of poems that might suggest that Han-

shan's parents were not all that poor. In poem 101 he talks of hunting in his youth—"On and on I'd race my white horse; Shout out the hares, release the green hawks." This sounds more like the activity of a young aristocrat than some poor farm boy. Also, in poem 177 he talks of travelling all over China as a young man to visit famed spots of scenic beauty.

Some scholars feel that Han-shan was originally from northern China and that he moved at some point to the south, and Pulleyblank feels there is linguistic evidence to support this.²⁹ I think the *literary* evidence on this is questionable, since it seems to consist of the fact that in some poems Han-shan mentions the northern cities Lo-yang and Ch'ang-an. Ch'ang-an, after all, was the capital of China in the early T'ang, and Lo-yang was a secondary capital for both the Sui and the T'ang. Moreover, the mention of Lo-yang and the royal cemetery there (Pei-mang) are common enough in Chinese poetry of any age and hardly need tell us anything about the home of the author.³⁰

Han-shan was married. He mentions his wife and son a number of times: in poem 5 he alludes to a story in which a wife counseled her talented husband to turn down an offer of official appointment and says, "In turning down the king's carriage, I followed the words of my virtuous wife; For my officer 'Lord of the Cart,' I have my filial son"; in poem 15, as he delights in his "fields and gardens," he observes, "My wife works the shuttle—her loom goes 'creak! creak!' Our son is at play—his mouth babbles 'wa! wa!'" So he clearly indicates a period of time when he farmed and enjoyed country life with his family. Eventually he was to leave his family (though poem 111 implies that it was his wife who left him). He speaks of returning home—having lived in the mountains alone for a while, engaged in his long life and enlightenment pursuits—but claims that when he returned, his wife no longer recognized him.³¹

Did Han-shan take the examinations to become an official? His poetry reveals that he was clearly conversant in the classics and in pre-T'ang literature, as the reader will see. And in at least one poem he speaks of having studied the classics and the histories—even though it was all in vain. There are three poems that speak to the issue of the official exams: they are poems 80, 113, and 120. In 80 he says:

In vain I labored to explain the Three Histories;
Wasted my time, reading through the Five Classics.

As old age comes on, I examine the Imperial Records;
As before, I live as a common man.

Here he seems to hold a position as a clerk or scribe in some government office, but his being a "common man" (*pai-ting*) would normally mean that he held no degree and had no official appointment.

The evidence from poem 113 is somewhat different. There he begins with the words:

My writing and judgment were perfect—they were not weak;
But they detested my looks, so I did not receive an appointment.

And ends by saying:

Certain it is that it's all related to fate;
Still this winter again I'll try and see.

Here Han-shan seems to allude to a "second" examination that was given to men who already held degrees, to determine who in that pool would actually receive appointment as an official (see the notes to this poem below). In this second examination the candidates were examined in terms of their "writing" (*shu*), "judgment" (*p'an*), "appearance" (*shen*), and "speech" (*yen*).

There is another reference to this system in poem 120, which begins:

This is what poor scribe,
Who repeatedly comes to be tested at Southern Court?

Years? Possibly thirty or more;
Already passed through four or five selections.

Han-shan might not be talking about himself here, so we cannot safely conclude much from this about his own case. But the "selections" (*hsüan*) mentioned in the fourth line once again seem to point to someone who by scholastic achievement was *eligible* for appointment to office but did not make it in. (Also arguing in favor of seeing Han-shan as a talented, educated man who had studied for, and perhaps passed, the official examinations but then went "unused" is his adoption of the *Ch'u-tz'u tristia* theme in poems 10, 59, and 69).

At some point, Han-shan left his family and went to Han-shan, where he lived—we assume—for the rest of his life. In poem 300 he comments that he was born thirty years ago but “today” has come home to Han-shan, so we might be able to date his retreat to that age. But the number “thirty” seems throughout his poems to be a stock figure for “reaching adult age” or maybe as equal to one-third of one’s life, so we must treat such figures with care. Remember that in poem 120, the unhappy scholar is already “thirty or more”; in addition, in poem 49, Han-shan speaks of returning home once he’d been gone for thirty years, only to find that more than half of his relatives and friends were already dead. I might add that in two later poems (294 and 196) he speaks of returning home again, having been gone now seventy years, and of his being, late in life, one hundred or more. Once again these numbers—seventy and one hundred—are common figures for a normal old age and may not represent his actual age. Moreover, these two poems—196 and 294—both belong to Han-shan II.

It is safe, I think, to call Han-shan a “Buddhist” recluse, but only with qualification. The symbolism he employs, the technical terms he uses, his general outlook on life (i.e., his belief in *karma* and reincarnation)—in all these ways he is a Buddhist, and specifically he favors Zen. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that Han-shan ever took monastic vows and became ordained as a monk. In fact, one of his great delights is criticizing, making fun of, satirizing establishment clergy. There are two poems in the collection that might suggest that he actually *had* taken vows: these are poems 269 and 274. Poem 269 begins: “Ever since I ‘left home,’” where “left home” (*ch’u-chia*) is the Buddhist term for entering monastic life, for being ordained. And in poem 274, Han-shan speaks of remembering when he had first “entered” (*kuei*, “returned to”) Kuo-ch’ing Temple; again the term *kuei* implies official adoption of the faith. But both of these poems are by rhyme Han-shan II.

Finally, though we might safely call Han-shan a Buddhist recluse—or Zen Buddhist recluse—he was never a purist. That is to say, his “Buddhism” did not preclude reading Taoist books or doing “Taoist” things that might lead to long life (i.e., breathing exercises, calisthenics, eating long-life minerals and herbs). As the reader will see, Han-shan’s attitude about the viability of all of these things is mixed: sometimes he approves, sometimes he expresses his doubts. It is certainly possible that this ambivalence on Taoist views is yet another sign of multiple authorship,³² then again, ambivalent attitudes are often just part of life.

THE POETRY OF HAN-SHAN

Han-shan does not rank with the great poets of the T'ang, people like Li Po (701–762), Tu Fu (712–770), Wang Wei (699–761), and Po Chü-i (772–846). In fact his poetry, until modern times, has been largely ignored by Chinese literary historians, the assumption being, I think, that there is little of literary value in his work. I hope that my analysis of some of his poems will correct that impression.

In the *Ch'üan T'ang shih* and *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* editions of the poetry of Han-shan there are 311 poems.³³ Most of the poems have eight lines and are written in five-word verse (five characters per line). Of the 311 poems, 285 are in five-word verse, twenty in seven-word verse, and six in three-word verse. (But note that in poem 270, Han-shan [if it is Han-shan speaking] says that he wrote a total of six hundred poems: five hundred in five-word verse, seventy-nine in seven-word verse, and twenty-one in three-word verse.)

Han-shan is best known for what we might call his "Han-shan" poems, poems in which he describes the place where he lived and speaks of the difficulties of reaching the top of that mountain. Many of these are no more than description, and as such, they are beautiful landscape poems; yet many of these poems are more than that, for they symbolize the spiritual quest for enlightenment and the difficulties and obstacles one encounters along the way.

But Han-shan wrote all kinds of poems, and one of the virtues of having a complete translation of the poems is that Han-shan's varied themes can in this way be known and appreciated. There are many poems on standard Chinese poetic themes; poems describing lovely court ladies out for a stroll; poems noting loneliness when apart from family and friends; poems despairing over the shortness of life and the longness of death. (In Appendix III, I attempt a breakdown of the poems by theme.)

But all in all, Han-shan is a very odd poet. First of all, as is well known, on occasion he uses colloquial expressions and phrases in his poems, which would rarely be done in "good" verse. (Though, in my opinion, too much has been made of his use of the colloquial: many—I would say most—of his poems are written in good, classical Chinese.)

Moreover, in some cases his "poems" are not poems at all. Rather, they are simply sayings, parables, or aphorisms—many of them quite clever—that happen to be written in metric, rhymed lines. For an example we might look at "poem" 45:

Now all things have their use
And in using them, each has what is fit.

If in using something, you use what is out of place,
It will be totally lacking, and what's more, completely deficient.

A round chisel with a square handle;
How sad! In vain it was made.

To use Hua-liu to catch mice
Can't compare with using a lame cat!

This seems to make the good Taoist point that values are relative. We would all value the prized steed over the lame cat, but the true value of something depends upon the situation. In any event, we would hardly think of this as a poem in normal terms. (Explanatory notes to this poem can be found in the Translations below.)

More important in terms of Han-shan's uniqueness as a poet is the fact that he often employs fresh, striking, and dramatic images, which really stand out in a tradition of poetry that uses stock symbols in set situations (e.g., if you are seeing a friend off to a new government post, your "lapels" must always be stained with your tears).

For example, at the end of poem 113—and these dramatic images are normally found at the end of a poem where they make the strongest impression—Han-shan decides that even though success in the examinations is really a matter of fate, he will try one more time this year, because:

After all, with a blind boy shooting at the eye of a sparrow
A chance hit is also not hard!

A poignant way to say the chances are slim.

There is another good illustration of this technique at the end of poem 13, a poem which is well written in terms of poetic technique. That poem goes:

At the hall of jade hangs a curtain of pearls;
Inside is a beautiful maid.

In appearance surpassing immortals and gods,
Complexion glowing like the peach or the pear.

At the Eastern inn spring mists collect;
At Western lodge fall winds arise.

And when the seasons have changed thirty years,
She too will look like pressed sugar cane!

The poet could have said she will be “wrinkled,” but the image of “pressed sugar cane” makes that point very well. Note how this poem develops. The first line, speaking as it does of jade and pearls, introduces the idea of something beautiful that is also eternal and pure; jade and pearls have those associations in Chinese symbolism—they are incorruptible. The second line then ties those ideas of eternal beauty to the woman by association; she is not only beautiful but has a beauty that will not fade. That this association is intended is confirmed by line 3—“In appearance surpassing immortals and gods”—so she is like, or superior to, the gods and the immortals. The poem continues: “Complexion glowing like the peach or the pear.” Peaches are the fruit of immortality to the Chinese; peaches are eaten by the immortals and the gods. But while this line continues the theme of immortality and beauty, it also introduces the possibility of change, since peaches and pears, though they might be the fruit of the gods, are living and changing, seasonal things. The next couplet accordingly moves into the realm of plant life and change: “At the Eastern inn spring mists collect; At Western lodge fall winds arise.” Plants come to life in the spring and die again in the fall, and Chinese count their years in terms of springs and falls. Thus the penultimate line now talks in terms of the years: “And when the seasons have changed thirty years”—yes, what? the reader asks—“She too will look like pressed sugar cane!”³⁴

For yet another illustration of the graphic images Han-shan used, we might look at poem 70, which also introduces one of Han-shan’s common themes. As the reader will see, Han-shan is morally indignant about a number of things that people in the world commonly do. He dislikes the greed of the rich; he has no time for old men who marry young women and for those who do the reverse; he continually berates corrupt clergy; and he speaks out strongly against those who eat fish and meat. In poem 70 his disgust at this practice is clear:

Pigs eat the flesh of dead men,
And men eat the guts of dead pigs.

Pigs don't seem to mind human stench,
And men—to the contrary—say pig meat smells sweet!

When pigs die, throw them into the water;
When men die, dig them a hole in the ground.

If they never ate one another,
Lotus blossoms would sprout in water that bubbles and boils.

It perhaps helps to understand line 4 if we note that the Chinese word for sausage is *hsiang-ch'ang*—literally, “fragrant bowels.” (I think the point at the end is that it will never happen.)

Poems against the greed of the rich are identified in Appendix III. One of the best of the lot is 104, where the niggardliness of the rich is clearly shown. That poem reads:

The young rich meet in high halls;
Colored lanterns, how dazzling and bright.

Now arrives one who owns not a candle,
Hoping to sit off to one side.

He'd not expected to be forced to leave,
To return to the dark, to stay there and dwell.

Helping others—is your brightness decreased?
Hard to believe! That you'd begrudge surplus light.

Finally, by way of illustrating Han-shan's moral indignation, he condemns the practice of old men marrying young girls in what is again, poetically, a well-structured verse. The poem is 115, and it reads like this:

“Young” Mr. Liu—he's eighty-two;
“Old” Mrs. Lan—she's all of eighteen!

Man and wife together for one hundred years;
Mutual affection—their feelings chaotic and unrestrained.

Playing with jade, he's nicknamed “the tiger”;
Tossing down tiles, she's called “chubby cheeks.”

One frequently sees, with the shoots put out by withering poplars;
They meet with death [at the hands of] Blue Maid!

In lines 5 and 6, "the tiger" means a new baby boy, and "chubby cheeks" is a term of endearment for a baby girl. But we only understand the significance of the last two lines if we know that the *liu* of Mr. Liu means "willow" or "poplar" and that the *lan* in Mrs. Lan is a word that means "blue." "Blue Maid" (*ch'ing-nü*) in the last line is, on the one hand, the Goddess of Frost that kills young new shoots in the fall and at the same time "Mrs. Lan," who will, by implication, do the same to Mr. Liu and his "shoots."

At the end of Burton Watson's introduction to his translation of one hundred poems by Han-shan, he notes that one of the striking things about Han-shan's poems is that, contrary to what we might expect, Han-shan the Buddhist in search of enlightenment is not always blissfully content: at times he expresses frustration and despair. In Watson's words: "Commentators have been forced to resort to some drastic wrenching in their interpretations of the poems by the fact that Han-shan, though at times speaking from a pinnacle of calm and enlightenment, just as often seems to be profoundly involved in the misgivings and anxieties that enlightenment is supposed to dispel."³⁵

In what is perhaps the most painful poem in the collection, Han-shan reflects on the fact that his sorrows are always with him. This is poem 33:

I've heard it said that sorrows are hard to dispel;
These words, I've said, are not true.

Yet yesterday morn I drove them away,
And today I'm encumbered again.

The month comes to an end, but my sorrow doesn't end;
The year starts afresh, but my sorrows are also renewed.

Who is to know that under this cap of cane
There is fundamentally a man who's been sad a very long time.

Let me stay with the theme of sorrow and frustration, even as I begin to look at some of the "Han-shan" poems, poems that de-

scribe Han-shan's life as a recluse on a desolate mountain while saying something at the same time about the spiritual quest in the symbolism employed.

Throughout Han-shan's poems, the top of the mountain—being "up there," up above (or sitting with) the white clouds, up where we can see the clear sky, the sun, or the full moon—represents in some ways salvation, the realization of truth and the experience of purity, tranquility, and transcendence that comes with it. When we are "down" in the valleys, underneath the clouds (of ignorance), we wander around lost, looking for a way to the peak, slipping and falling and encountering obstacles in our way. If for Han-shan to *see* the bright sun or the full moon or the clear sky is to realize the truth, then failing to see those things—try as he might to glimpse a view—is equivalent to disappointment and despair. For example, look at poem 67, paying special attention to the last couplet.

Here in the mountains—so very cold;
It's been this way from of old; it's not just this year.

Peak piled upon peak—constantly clotted with snow;
Dark, secluded woods—every day spewing forth mist.

Here things start to grow only after "Grain is in Beard,"
And the leaves are coming down, even before the "Beginning
of Fall."

And here—here is a traveller hopelessly lost,
Who looks and looks but can't see the sky.

Poem 31, which ends much the same way, is very interesting in that Han-shan starts each line with a reduplicated, descriptive binome (e.g., *yao-yao*, *lo-lo*, *chiu-chiu*; the complete romanization for the poem is given in the Translations). I try to indicate this in my translation by setting those first phrases off from the rest. The poem reads in this way:

Dark and obscure—the way to Han-shan;
Far apart—the shores of the cold mountain stream.

Chirp, chirp—constantly there are the birds;
Silent and still—in addition there are no men.

Whisper, whisper—the wind blows in my face;
Whirling and swirling—the snow piles up all around.

Day after day—I don't see the sun,
And year after year—I've known no spring.

Throughout his poems, as he does here, Han-shan claims that the "way" to Han-shan is lost or obscure, making the Zen point that there is no set "way" to realize enlightenment; one cannot be sure, whether one reads the scriptures or practices meditation or studies with a master, that that will necessarily lead him to the enlightened state of mind. That the shores of the cold mountain stream are "far apart," in this poem, emphasizes the Buddhist understanding of life, that the shores of "ordinary existence" (*samsāra*) and "enlightened existence" (*nirvāna*) are separated by a large river or sea. Here Han-shan claims not only that day after day he does not see the sun but that year after year he has known no spring. I would also understand "spring" here in a symbolic way—he has yet to feel that new surge of life, the fullness of life, that enlightenment brings.

The contrast between "valleys" and "peaks" in the spiritual quest comes out clearly in poem 28, where once again the point is made that there is no set path or road that will lead to the top of Han-shan—or rather here, that such paths "never end"—i.e., do not lead to the goal Buddhists seek. At the end of the poem, Han-shan has somehow reached the top by simply "transcending the cares of the world" and sits there with his only companions the white clouds.

Climb up! Ascend! The way to Han-shan;
But on Han-shan the roads never end.

The valleys are long, with boulders in heaps and piles;
The streams are wide, with grasses both wet and damp.

The moss is slippery—it has nothing to do with the rain;
The pines sigh and moan, but they don't rely on the wind.

Who can transcend the cares of the world
And sit with me in the white clouds?

Much is made of the fact that Han-shan sometimes ignores—perhaps intentionally breaks (see poem 286 below)—the rules of

“regulated verse” (*lü-shih*) that were so important during the T’ang. It is worth noting, therefore, that this poem *is* in regulated verse form: note that the two inner couplets—lines 3 and 4 and then 5 and 6—are strictly parallel, and the tonal sequence of the characters in every line is as it should be (see the comment on poem 28 in the Translations).

The key doctrine in Zen is that we already possess the enlightened mind that we seek: all beings possess Buddha-nature, and thus the only way to become enlightened is to realize one’s true nature inside. That the state of one’s mind is the key thing, not the path that one takes, is made clear in poem 9:

People ask the way to Han-shan,
But there are no roads that get through.

In the summer, the ice not yet melted,
And though the sun comes up, the fog is still thick and dense.

How has someone like me arrived?
My mind and yours are not the same.

If your mind, sir, were like mine,
You too could come right to the center!

Although most of Han-shan’s “Zen” poems are easily understood in terms of general Zen themes (that there is no set “way,” that the Buddha is on the inside not on the outside, and so forth), there are a few that require a bit more explanation. Let me close with one of those poems, poem 277.

In front of a cliff, all alone I silently sit;
The round moon brightly beams in the sky.

The ten thousand forms, as vague shadows appear in its midst,
But that one wheel—fundamentally, there is nothing on which
it shines.

Free, empty, unbounded—my soul in itself it is pure;
Embracing the Void, I penetrate the mysterious and profound.

By using a finger we see the moon;
The moon is the hinge of the mind.

Behind this poem—and indeed behind a number of Han-

shan's poems—is a metaphysical understanding of things shared by the T'ien-t'ai and early Zen schools (during the seventh and eighth centuries). That is, that in reality there is only one thing, the one mind. That one mind is in its true nature pure, undifferentiated, eternal, unchanging, forever enlightened—it is the true mind, it is Buddha-nature. But although in itself it is devoid of differentiation, it contains within itself all possible differentiation—all things that are seen, heard, sensed as existing outside of the subject, but also all feelings and perceptions experienced within (i.e., the ten thousand forms). But it contains them as a mirror contains all things it reflects—in its true nature, in its true substance (the glass), it is untouched by these things.³⁶

Here seeing the moon—in itself, pure, complete, unchanging, undifferentiated, but something that seems to contain things in some shadowy way—this experience occasions “reflections” (if the reader will pardon the pun) on the nature of the true mind—his soul—for Han-shan. (Note how the fourth line moves Han-shan from the outside to the inside.) “Using a finger to see the moon” is a set phrase in Zen Buddhism meaning that *sutras* and the teachings of masters should point the way to the experience of enlightenment: but we must *use* the finger to see the *moon*, without making the finger the final goal. Here Han-shan uses the moon as a “finger” to point to the mind. “The moon is the hinge (or pivot—*shu*) of the mind.” It is the door that opens into the experience of the really real.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation is based on the *Ch'üan T'ang shih* edition of the poems (using the CTS published in Taiwan by Ming-lun in 1971): with the exception of a few variant characters, this is essentially the same as the *Han-shan-tzu shih-chi* in the collection *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an (ch'u-pien)*, which prints a Sung dynasty text from the collection of a Mr. Chou of Chien-te. I have also used the *Tse-shih-chü ts'ung-shu ch'u-chi* (Chang Chün-heng, comp. 1926) edition of the *Han-shan shih-chi*, which prints a copy of another Sung text stored at the Keifukuin (in Japan). The *Tse-shih-chü ts'ung-shu* text appears to be identical with the *Kunaichō* (Imperial Library) text in Japan. The *Tse-shih-chü/Kunaichō* text is the earliest extant version of the Han-shan poems,³⁷ and it serves as the base text for two recent annotated editions of the poems—Iriya Yoshitaka's *Kanzan* (Vol. 5 in *Chügoku shi-*

jin senshū [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958]), and Iritani Sensuke and Matsumura Takashi's *Kanzanshi* (Vol. 13 in the series *Zen no goroku* [Tokyo: Chikuma Shoten, 1970]).³⁸

For help with annotation, I have mainly relied on the excellent notes in Iritani and Matsumura's *Kanzanshi*. In addition, I have found useful comments and notes in the following works: (1) Hakuin's *Kanzanshi sendai kibun* (Vol. 4 in *Hakuin oshō zenshū*),³⁹ (2) Ch'en Hui-chien's *Han-shan-tzu yen-chiu* (Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu, 1984); and (3) Tseng P'u-hsin's *Han-shan shih-chieh* (Hua-lien: Tung-ching Temple, 1971).

For documentation, I have used concordanced editions wherever possible. Page numbers for the following texts refer to the Harvard-Yenching Index Series editions: *Chou-i (I ching)*; *Chuang-tzu*; *Ch'un-ch'iu ching-chuan (Tso chuan)*; *Hsiao ching*; *Lun-yü*; and *Mao-shih (Shih ching)*. For the *Ch'u-tz'u*, page numbers refer to the Taiwan version of Takeji Sadao's *Soji Sakuin*, which is published with the SPPY text (*Ch'u-tz'u so-yin: Ch'u-tz'u pu-chu* [Taipei: Chung-wen, 1979]). Page numbers for the *Wen-hsüan* refer to the text that matches the *Wen-hsüan so-yin* (Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1985).

All references to the dynastic histories (*Shih-chi*, *Han shu*, *Hou Han shu*, *San-kuo chih*, *Chin shu*, and *Hsin T'ang shu*) are to the Chung-hua shu-chü punctuated editions done in Peking. For the *Yüeh-fu shih-chi*, I have used the recent Chung-hua shu-chü edition (Peking, 1979). For Six Dynasties poets and poems, I have used the standard Ting Fu-pao edition, *Ch'üan Han san-kuo Chin nan-pei-ch'ao shih* (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1969). All references to Buddhist scriptures are to volumes and pages in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (Tokyo: 1924–29) herein abbreviated as T.

Finally, note that the symbols following poem numbers (i.e. *, †, **, and §) indicate the following:

*Classed by Pulleyblank as Han-shan II.

†Missing from the *Tse-shih-chü ts'ung-shu* and *Kunaichō* Library editions.

**Written in seven-character lines.

§Written in three-character lines.

NOTES

1. Unless Wu Chi-yu is right with his identification: see below in the text.

2. Tu Kuang-t'ing's (850-933) *Hsien-chuan shih-i*, cited in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, chapter 55, says that Han-shan "retired to live on Kingfisher-green Screen Mountain in the T'ien-t'ai range. This mountain is deep and far away: even in summer there is snow. It is also named Cold Cliffs. As a result, he called himself Master Cold Mountain" (see Vol. 1, p. 338 in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* [Taipei: Wen-shih-che, 1981]). The *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (compiled in 1004), chapter 27, has "Seventy li west of Shih-feng county there are two cliffs, one called Cold and the other called Bright. Since he lived on Cold Cliff, it is from this that he took his name." Finally, Chih-nan, in his postscript of 1189, says that "Cold lived and dwelt on a cold cliff, 70 li to the west of T'ang-hsing county, and from this he took his name."

3. See the end of his biography of Shih-te, Vol. 3, p. 521, in the edition *Kao-seng chuan san-chi* (Taipei: Yin-ching ch'u, 1961). Tu Kuang-t'ing, however, does not seem to know of this preface and records that a preface had been written by the Taoist Hsü Ling-fu (c. 760-c. 841), who had made the first collection of the poems. Tu says, "Hsü Ling-fu collected them [Han-shan's poems] and wrote a preface, the whole being divided into 3 *chüan*. It circulated about among men. But after ten or so years, it was suddenly no longer seen."

4. The text of the Lü-ch'iu Yin Preface stands at the head of the *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* edition of the poems (pp. 1a-2a in SPTK, *ch'u-pien*). For a translation, see, for example, Wu Chi-yu, "A Study of Han-shan," *T'oung Pao*, XLV (1957), pp. 411-414.

5. For the Chih-nan postscript, see pp. 58-64 in *Han-shan shih-chi* (Taipei: Han-sheng, 1976). This is also found at the end of the text in the *Tse-shih-chü ts'ung-shu* edition.

6. See Ch'en Hui-chien, *Han-shan-tzu yen-chiu* (Taipei: Tung-ta t'u-shu, 1984), pp. 10-11.

7. See Wu Chi-yu, "A Study of Han-shan," pp. 392-403. The biography of Chih-yen is the source for this information: that biography is found in Tao-hsüan's *Hsü Kao-seng chuan*, Ch. 25, pp. 718-719 in *Kao-seng chuan erh-chi* (Taipei: Yin-ching ch'u, 1970).

8. Wu Chi-yu ("A Study of Han-shan," p. 406, note 4) says that Li-chou was only a Prefecture from 621-625, and that it was located in southern Chekiang.

9. See Hu Shih, *Pai-hua wen-hsüeh shih* (Taipei: Wen-kuang, 1983), pp. 173-178. Hu Shih also feels that Han-shan comes after, and imitates, the poet Wang Fan-chih, whom he dates to mid-T'ang.

10. On this point, see, for example, Wu Chi-yu, "A Study of Han-shan," p. 397, and Roberta Stahlberg, "The Poems of the Han-shan

Collection" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1977), pp. 12–13.

11. Tsan-ning (*Sung Kao-seng chuan*, chapter 19, p. 519) says of Han-shan, "He retired to the T'ien-t'ai mountains, 70 li west of Shih-feng where there are two cliffs called Cold and Dark." The *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (chapter 27, p. 159), again, has: "Seventy li west of Shih-feng county there are two cliffs, one called Cold and the other called Bright. Since he lived on Cold Cliff, it is from this that he took his name."

12. *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, chapter 55, Vol. 1, p. 338.

13. *Sung Kao-seng chuan*, chapter 19, Vol. 3, p. 521.

14. Hu Shih, *Pai-hua wen-hsüeh shih*, p. 175. See also Huang Po-jen, *Han-shan chi ch'i shih* (Taipei: Hsin wen-feng, 1980), p. 4.

15. For V. T. Yang's review, see the *Journal of Oriental Studies* 6, no. 1–2 (1961–64): 253–274. On p. 261 Yang notes that Han-shan "could not have lived before the middle of the T'ang dynasty when Ch'an Buddhism became popular."

16. For Buddhist terms used in the poems, see Appendix IV, part A. The phrase *chien tzu-hsing* ("see your own nature") does occur in poem 238, but that poem appears to be late. Also, *wu-hsin* ("without mind" or "absence of mind"), which probably means much the same as *wu-nien*, occurs in poem 226.

17. See, for example, John McRae's *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986) and the articles in Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster, ed., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 264. But note that Patrick Carré (*Le Mangeur de brumes: l'oeuvre de Han-shan* [Paris: Phébus, 1985], p. 37 and then p. 75) feels that Han-shan's preoccupation with "regulated verse" rules of prosody reflect the concerns of late Sui.

19. See Iritani Sensuke and Matsumura Takashi, *Kanzanshi* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shoten, 1958), pp. 489–490.

20. See Iriya Yoshitaka, *Kanzan* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958), pp. 15–17.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

22. In Ronald C. Miao, ed., *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Politics*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco: CMC, Inc., 1978), pp. 163–185.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

24. Ibid, p. 174.

25. Ibid, p. 173. It is worth noting that Pulleyblank has also looked at the rhymed passage that occurs at the end of the Lü-ch'iu Yin Preface and concludes that it is "clearly of late T'ang vintage" (p. 174).

26. For the collected "legends" about Han-shan and his two companions Shih-te and Feng-kan, the reader should consult the following: (1) the biographies of the three (Shih-te and Han-shan are subsumed under Feng-kan) in Tsan-ning's *Sung Kao-seng chuan* 19 (pp. 517–521 in *Kao-seng chuan san-chi*); (2) the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*, chapter 27 (Feng-kan, p. 158; Han-shan-tzu, p. 159; Shih-te, pp. 159–160); (3) P'u-chi's (Sung) *Wu-teng hui-yüan* (using the Taipei, Hsin wen-feng, 1983 edition) 2:50a for Feng-kan, 2:50ab for Han-shan, and 2:50b for Shih-te; and (4) Chü Ju-chi's (Ch'ing) *Chih-yüeh lu* (using the Taipei: Hsin wen-feng, 1983 edition), 2:29b–30b for Feng-kan, 2:30b–31b for Han-shan, and 2:31b–32a for Shih-te. In the *Wu-teng hui-yüan* and the *Chih-yüeh lu*, the biographies of the three are listed in the category "Incarnate Sages and Worthies" (*ying-hua sheng-hsien*).

27. The translation here is by Wu Chi-yu, "A Study of Han-shan," p. 420. All of the stories concerning Han-shan that survive in various sources are translated into English in one form or another by Wu Chi-yu (pp. 411–422). In addition to the sweeping story cited here and the story of Lü-ch'iu Yin's visit, there are tales in which: (1) In 871 Han-shan, dressed like a beggar, visits Li Ho and is sent away, but when he returns a week later dressed as a rich man, he is hospitably received; (2) Ling-yu (771–853) meets Han-shan, who correctly predicts that Ling-yu will become a Buddhist and take orders at Kuo-ch'ing; (3) Han-shan asks Feng-kan how an old mirror will shine if it isn't polished and receives an enigmatic reply; (4) Feng-kan asks Han-shan (and sometimes Shih-te as well) to go to Wu-t'ai shan with him to see Mañjuśrī, but he refuses to go; (5) Han-shan takes a slice of eggplant that a monk is roasting and hits the monk on the back with it, asking him, "What is this?"; and (6) Han-shan and Shih-te are visited by the Zen master Chao-chou (778–897), and they exchange clever banter in which the Five Hundred Arhats are identified as five hundred water buffaloes.

28. There are a number of allusions to T'ao Ch'ien's poems in Han-shan's poems, and a few that reflect T'ao Ch'ien's style and themes. All this is documented below.

29. Pulleyblank, "Linguistic Evidence," p. 165.

30. See poems 32, 47, 60, and 124. The "Streets of Lo-yang" was a *yüeh-fu* theme: see the notes to poem 47.

31. See poems 39 and 134.

32. See Iritani and Matsumura, *Kanzanshi*, p. 117, for their comment on poem 79.

33. For the number and sequence of the poems in other extant editions, see the "Translator's Note" below.

34. For allusions in the poem, see the discussion of the poem in the translations. "Pressed sugar cane" is one of a number of images that Han-shan borrows from Buddhist texts, specifically from the *Niroāṇa-sūtra*.

35. Burton Watson, *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'ang Poet Han-shan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 14.

36. For more on the basics of T'ien-t'ai philosophy, see, for example, Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. II, translated by Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 360–384. The one mind (or true nature) that contains all possible things remains key in *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (attributed to Hui-neng, d. 713). See especially sections 23–25 of that text, pp. 147–147 in Philip B. Yampolsky, translator, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

37. The earliest printed edition of the poems was the Chih-nan text published in 1189 by Kuo-ch'ing Temple. Chih-nan's postscript to this text survives; the text itself does not. It would appear that before this, two other editions had been in circulation. Tu Kuang-t'ing tells us that the Taoist Hsü Ling-fu collected the poems and wrote a preface but that this text disappeared after ten or so years (see note 3 to the "Introduction"). Also, Tsan-ning, in his biography of Pen-chi of Ts'ao-shan (*Sung kao-seng chuan*, chapter 13, p. 327), one of the founders of the Ts'ao-Tung school of Zen, says that Pen-chi (840–901) "wrote a commentary called 'In Response to the Poems of Master Han-shan'" (*Tui Han-shan-tzu shih*). This too is no longer extant. Tsan-ning again mentions Pen-chi's commentary in his biography of Han-shan (chapter 19, p. 519), where he says that "the poems he [Han-shan] wrote down on the house walls of country folk came to over 200 *shou*." The number is intriguing. But the Chinese here is virtually the same as we find at the end of the "Lü-ch'iu Yin Preface," where it says over 300 *shou*: I suspect that the "two (*erh*) in 200 is just a mistake for "three" (*san*).

38. The *Tse-shih-chü/Kunaichō* text differs in a number of ways from the CTS/SPTK text of the poems. There are quite a few variant characters, and poems 91, 164, 198, 211, 237, and 263 are omitted. Moreover, the inner couplets in 192 are omitted; what is poem 196 in CTS is two poems (195 and 186) in TSC; poems 233 and 234 in CTS are combined in TSC (in that count, poem 231); and the last ten lines of poem 159 are omitted. Finally, the sequence of the 305 poems in the *Tse-shih-chü/Kunaichō* edition is different than that of CTS/SPTK. Using the numbers of the following translation—

i.e., the sequence of the poems in the *Ch'üan T'ang shih*)—the order of the poems in the *Tse-shih-chü/Kunaichō* text is as follows: 2, 1, 3, 20, 51, 67, 14, 21, 295, 277, 4–13, 15–19, 163, 22–25, 27–50, 52–66, 68–76, 78–90, 92–115, 117–120, 116, 122–129, 272, 299–300, 167, 130–158, 160–162, 165–166, 168–185, 195, 196 (lines 5–8), 197, 186–188, 194, 192 (lines 1–2, 7–8), 193, 199, 196 (lines 1–4), 189–191, 200, 206–208, 201–205, 209–210, 212–236, 238–243, 159 (omits last ten lines), 26, 244–262, 264–271, 273–276, 278–294, 296–298, 77, 121, 301–311.

39. In Hakuin's text, the five-, seven-, and three-word poems are grouped together, and a number of poems are shifted around. The order of the poems in that edition is as follows: (five-word poems) 1–37, 39–83, 85–88, 90–122, 124–132, 165–168, 133–159a, 297, 160–164, 169–180, 182–191, 206–210, 212–269, 271–296, 159b, 298–303, 270; (seven-word poems) 38, 84, 89, 123, 181, 192–193, 195–205, 194, 211; (and three-word poems) 304–311. Poem 275 is here two poems, and the last eight lines of poem 159 are also treated as a separate poem that occurs between poems 296 and 298.