



Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns

Beata Grant

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Women played major roles in the history of Buddhist China, but given the paucity of the remaining records, their voices have all but faded. In *Daughters of Emptiness*, Beata Grant renders a great service by recovering and translating the enchanting verse - by turns assertive, observant, devout - of forty-eight nuns from sixteen centuries of imperial China. This selection of poems, along with the brief biographical accounts that accompany them, affords readers a glimpse into the extraordinary diversity and sometimes startling richness of these women's lives.

A sample poem for this stunning collection:

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 sunlight is cold 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 in the direction of Spring,
But Spring pays no attention to me at all.
Time a galloping colt glimpsed through a crack,
The tap [of Death] at the door has its predestined time.
How should I not know, one who has left the world,
And for whom floating clouds are already familiar?
In the garden there grows a rosary-plum tree:
Whose sworn friendship makes it possible to endure.

- Chan Master Jingnuo

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