

Micro-poem co-translations of the Korean Buddhist monk Ch'oŭi (1786-1866)

Translated by Ian Haight and T'ae-yong Hŏ.

Excerpts from *Homage to Green Tea*

When sweet green fragrant tea
enters the Court of the King,
brilliance extends in all directions
and every pathway opens.

Your divine roots
grow on the Mountain of True Wisdom—
an Immortal's jade bones
distinguish you
from all trees.

A sip of Jade Flower
rises like wind—
the body lightens
as if walking high heavens.
The bright moon, a candle, and one's lone friend—
white clouds
form your surroundings.

To become young again
like a dried tree sprouting anew—
an eighty-year-old
will have a smooth face
like a heavenly red peach!—
one can attain
this miraculous effect.

I have a wellspring
and draw water pure as jade.
I boil the water in a stone kettle,
but sometimes I over-boil it—
how can I then bring this water
to a Seoul-city gentleman?

A T'ang court dinner
served 100 delicious dishes—
we only remember
Chinyuan's Purple Corolla Tea.
Since then, traditions
for early-picked tea leaves
have grown commonplace—
those who are pure, wise, and prominent
admire such tea's lingering flavor.

The dead buried in the earth
show gratefulness
for their families offering tea
by blessing them with wealth.

Tea is better
than the six accompaniments
for courtly banquets;
how the first Emperor cured his pains
is a mysterious story.

People once adored Startling Thunder—
Freshly Sprouted Purple
is now favorite.

Ian Haight's collection of poetry, *Celadon*, won Unicorn Press' First Book Prize. He is the editor of *Zen Questions and Answers from Korea*, and with T'ae-yong Hŏ, he is the co-translator of *Borderland Roads: Selected Poems of Kyun Hŏ* and *Magnolia and Lotus: Selected Poems of Hyesim*—finalist for ALTA's Stryk Prize—all from White Pine Press. Other awards include *Ninth Letter's* Literary Award in Translation, and grants from the Daesan Foundation, the Korea Literary Translation Institute, and the Baroboin Buddhist Foundation. Poems, essays, interviews, reviews, microfiction and translations appear in *Barrow Street*, *Writer's Chronicle*, *Hyundai Buddhist News*, *Full Stop*, *MoonPark Review* and *Prairie Schooner*. For more information please visit ianhaight.com.

Ch'oŭi (1786-1866) was a Korean Buddhist monk given a traditional Confucian education, making him a uniquely trained scholar of his period. Ch'oŭi is considered one of the first pre-eminent experts on the subject of green tea in Korea.

T'ae-yong Hŏ has been awarded translation grants from the Daesan Foundation and Korea Literature Translation Institute. With Ian Haight, he is the co-translator of *Borderland Roads: Selected Poems of Kyun Hŏ* and *Magnolia and Lotus: Selected Poems of Hyesim*. Working from the original *hansi*, T'ae-yong's translations of Korean poetry have appeared in *Agni*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Atlanta Review*.