



# The Late Poems of Wang An-Shih

*Wang An-Shih*

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**The Late Poems of Wang An-Shih** Wang An-Shih

**A selection of poems by the ancient Chinese poet and statesman Wang Ah-Shih, translated by David Hinton.**

Wang An-shih (1021-1086 C.E.) was a remarkable figure—not only one of the great Sung Dynasty poets, but also the most influential and controversial statesman of his time. Although Wang had little interest in the grandeur of high office and political power, he took the responsibility of serving the people seriously. He rose to become prime minister, and in this position he instituted a controversial system of radically egalitarian social reforms to improve the lives of China's peasants. Once those reforms were securely in place, Wang retired to a reclusive life of artistic and spiritual self-cultivation.

It was after his retirement, practicing Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism and wandering the mountains around his home, that Wang An-shih wrote the poems that made his reputation. Short and plainspoken, these late poems contain profound multitudes—the passing of time, rivers and mountains, silence and Buddhist emptiness. They won him wide acclaim in China and beyond across the centuries. And in Hinton's breathtaking translations, Wang feels like a major contemporary poet with deep ecological insight and a questioning spirit.

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