

王右丞集卷之十八七 表

17.3

為畫人謝賜表

臣某言。臣猥以賤伎。得備眾工。誤點屏風。乏成蠅之巧。偶持團扇。無事矜之能。徒以職官。不敢貳事。顧惟時論。

⁴ 有慚三絕。伏惟皇帝陛下。撥亂反正。受命中興。俯協龜圖。傍觀鳥跡。卦因于畫。畫始生書。知微知彰。惟聖體聖。

1 Composed after 757.

2 Allusions to two incidents in which painters compensated for their errors. For the first, see note to 6.15.7. When Huan Wen 桓溫 sent Wang Xianzhi a fan and requested a painting, Wang spilled ink on it, then managed to turn the blot into a mottled cow. The speaker is humbly asserting that he makes the same sort of mistakes but lacks the brilliance to compensate for them.

From *Juan 17: Memorials*

17.3

A memorial on behalf of a painter receiving gifts from the emperor¹

Your subject speaks:

I have humbly succeeded in supplementing the ranks of painters due to my lowly talent. Though I have mistakenly blotted screens with my ink, I lack the skill to turn them into flies; and though I have taken up round fans on occasion, I have not had the ability to turn blotches on them into cows.² I have held to my official post, not daring to take on any other tasks. When I consider contemporary discussions of painting, I am shamed in the presence of Gu Kaizhi's "three superlatives."³

I humbly ponder on the fact that the Emperor has now brought order out of chaos and returned the world to the upright, and that he has received the mandate of Restoration. An ancient sage king once stooped to harmonize the Tortoise Diagram and observed the bird tracks around him.⁴ The trigrams of the Changes depend on painting, and it was painting that gave rise to writing. In understanding both the subtle sources of things and their outward manifestation, it is the sage who fully comprehends this wisdom.⁵

3 Gu Kaizhi was said to be superlative in three respects: in talent, in painting, and in foolishness.

4 Both said to be the origins of written Chinese.

5 The speaker is asserting that the emperor, like his ancient sage forebears who invented writing, understands the importance of painting and its role in restoring stability to the world.

臣奉詔旨。令寫功臣。運偶鳳翔之初。

8 無非鷹揚之士。燕領猿臂。裂眞奮鬚。
 發衝鶻冠。力舉龍鼎。骨風猛毅。眸子
 分明。皆就筆端。別生身外。傳神寫照。
 雖非巧心。審象求形。或皆暗識。妍媸無
 12 歪。敢顧黃金。取舍惟精。時憑白粉。
 且如日磾下泣。知其孝思。于禁懷慚。
 媒此忠節。乃無聲之箴頌。亦何賤於丹青。
 宣父之似皋繇。元子之類越石。不待或
 16 人之說。無煩故妓之言。此又一奇。
 誠為可尚。臣得舐筆麟閣。繼踵虎頭。

1 Fengxiang was the temporary headquarters of Suzong when he was leading the struggle against An Lushan's rebels. "Greatest aspirations" is literally "geese spreading their wings."

2 All clichés for an impressive and awe-inspiring appearance.

3 Said to be characteristic of people with particularly clear perceptiveness.

4 Both examples of extreme emotions stirred by paintings. The Xiongnu prince Jin Midi became a minister under Emperor Zhao of the Han. The emperor greatly respected Midi's mother, and had a painting made of her after her death, which he had displayed in one of his palaces. Midi would do obeisance to it every time he passed it and shed tears. The Wei commander Yu Jin was captured by the Shu general Guan Yu after a military disaster, while Yu's co-commander Pang Zheng 麾惠 killed himself rather than surrender. Years later Yu managed to return to the Wei court, and Cao Pi (then emperor) dispatched him on a mission to Wu. Cao Pi commanded him to first visit the tomb of Cao Cao, where there was a painting of Yu's surrender and of Pang's righteous indignation. Yu was so humiliated he fell ill and died.

I received your edict commanding me to paint the portraits of meritorious ministers. Arriving by chance in Fengxiang from the beginning, I found that all of them were gentlemen of the greatest aspirations.¹ With square jaws and apelike arms, bulging eyes and bristling whiskers, their indignant anger caused their pheasant caps to rise, and their strength was capable of lifting a dragon-ornamented tripod.² Their characters fierce and steadfast, with eyes clearly marked between white and dark³ – these qualities issued forth from the tip of my brush and took on a separate life on the outside. In transmitting their spirit and sketching their appearance: though I am without a clever mind, I investigated their image and sought out their form, and managed to come to a dim understanding of them; and I never misrepresented their beauty or their plainness. I never dared think of financial reward, only considering the essence in what I chose to paint, relying in the moment on my pigments.

Because Jin Midi wept at the portrait of his mother, we recognize his filial longing; and because Yu Jin harbored a sense of shame, he was disgraced before an example of steadfast loyalty.⁴ How can the art of painting be considered of little worth when there are silent admonitions and eulogies such as these? Confucius's resemblance to Gaoyao, or Huan Wen's to Liu Kun – if there had been paintings, one would not have had to wait for the words of some random person, or the speech of an old entertainer.⁵ This is another marvel of painting that is worthy of our respect.

⁵ According to his *Shiji* biography, Confucius (here called Xuanfu, an honorific granted him by the Tang court) once visited Zheng and got separated from his disciples. Zigong 子貢 was able to locate the Master when a man of Zheng described a man standing by the city gate who had the manner of the sage ruler Yao and of Gaoyao 皋陶, a minister who served Shun. The warlord Huan Wen 桓溫 prided himself on his resemblance to great ministers of the past. On a northern expedition he managed to locate an old serving woman of the minister Liu Kun 劉琨 (217–318), who was struck by the resemblance between the two. Unfortunately, she found Huan lacking in each of the ways in which he resembled her old master. The speaker's point is that painting can replace memory and the descriptions of observers by providing a more accurate basis for resemblance and judgment.

頻蒙獎教之恩。益用精誠自勵。勤以補拙。
 雖未仙飛。感而遂通。實因聖訓。況賜
 20 衣服。累問官資。中使相望。屢加宣慰。
 微臣戰灼。無答恩私之至。

17.5

為幹和尚進注仁王經表

沙門惠幹言。法離言說。了言說即解脫者。
 終日可言。法無名相。知名相即真如者。
 何嘗壞相。實際以無際可示。無生以不生
 4 相傳。非夫自得性空。密印心地。
 見聞自在。宗說皆通者。何以證玉毫之光。
 辨金口之義。伏惟乾元大聖光天皇帝陛下。

1 “Lick one’s brushes” is an idiom for taking up painting; the Unicorn Hall was a place in the palace reserved by Emperor Wu of the Han for the portraits of meritorious ministers.

2 Composed ca. 759.

I was able to lick my brushes in the Unicorn Hall,¹ treading in the path of Gu Kaizhi; I repeatedly received the kindness of instruction there and was able to spur myself even more through the sincere assistance I received. I have toiled to compensate for my clumsiness; and though I am not yet able to portray flying Transcendents, I have managed to convey what has moved me. This has truly been due to your sagely instructions. Moreover, I have received gifts of clothing and goodwill presents from various officials, and an unending stream of court emissaries, who have repeatedly conveyed your reassurances to me. Your insignificant subject is anxious, since he has no way to respond to the great extent of your grace and favor.

17.5

A memorial on behalf of His Eminence Huigan, presenting a commentary on the *Sutra of Benevolent Kings*²

The śramaṇa Huigan speaks:

The Dharma is detached from speech, but if one understands speech thoroughly, one is then liberated, and may speak as much as one wants. Dharmas have no *lakṣaṇa* defined by their names, but if you know the *lakṣaṇa* associated with their names, then that is *bhūtatathatā* [real existence].³ So why would one ever do away with *lakṣaṇa*?

Real existence can be demonstrated through the limitless; non-rebirth is conveyed through non-arising. If one did not comprehend for oneself that one's nature is empty and is secretly imprinted on the ground of the mind, so that one's experiences become free and unobstructed and the essential doctrine is comprehended, then how could one then provide proof of the light arising from the Buddha's jade-like brows, or debate the principles that emerge from his mouth of gold?

³ See note to 11.20.7. A typical implied critique of non-duality – the names of things are illusory and conventional but if you recognize their provisional usefulness and do not lodge permanently in them, they can lead to a deeper truth. The speaker is constructing an argument asserting the usefulness of commentary as a way of illuminating ultimate enlightenment.

高登十地。降撫九天。弘濟群生。濡蓮花
 8 之足。示行世法。屈金粟之身。心淨超禪。頂法懸解。廣釋門之六度。包儒行之五常。老僧空空。復何語語。以無見之見。不言之言。淺智勝疑冰之蟲。微戒愈溺泥之象。
 12 以自覺離念。註先聖微言。如人何足盡思。食木偶然成字。豈堪上塵慧眼。仰稱聖心。有命自天。藏拙無地。伏以集解仁王般若經十卷。謹隨表奉進。無任慚惶。然本
 16 註經。先發大願。釋第一義。開不二門。與四十九僧。離一百八旬。六時禪誦。三載懇祈。俾廓祆氛。得瞻慧日。三千世界。悉奉仁王。五千善神。常衛樂土。
 20 今果盪定。無量安寧。緇服蒼生。不勝慶躍。

1 These are all Suzong's formal titles.

2 "To be willing to soak one's legs" is an idiom expressing the willingness to go to some inconvenience to help someone else. "Lotus-like" describes a bodhisattva.

3 "The Gold Seed Tathāgata" is one of the titles of Vimalakīrti. This stresses Suzong's role as a "secular" bodhisattva.

4 Summit dharma: the second of the four virtuous faculties, four stages the practitioner must pass through in achieving a full comprehension of the Dharma. This schema originated in non-Mahayana teachings. The "summit stage" is marked by a spiritual progress that is still part of worldly practice and may result in retrogression. This would again mark Suzong as a "secular" figure.

5 Generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, concentration, and wisdom.

6 Humanity, justice, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness.

7 I.e., an insect who can't understand ice because it dies before the winter months.

8 A metaphor derived from the sutras, indicating beings mired in the suffering of the world and unable to extricate themselves.

I humbly believe: Your Majesty, the Great Primordial Sage who Illuminates Heaven:¹ you have ascended high in the ten stages of development for the Bodhisattva. You look down and nurture us from the highest Heaven, and you deliver sentient beings everywhere. You have deigned to soak your lotus-like legs,² revealing the Dharma to be practiced in this world; you have inclined to us with your gold-seed form,³ your mind purified in the highest meditation, to unbind us with your Summit Dharma.⁴ You have expanded the Buddhist teachings of the Six Perfections,⁵ yet you also embrace the Five Constants of Confucianism.⁶

I, an old Monk, know that emptiness itself is empty; so of what use is talk? Yet with my view that makes use of non-view, and my speech of non-speech, my shallow wisdom is still better than that of an insect doubtful about ice;⁷ and my trivial practice at least surpasses a statue mired in the mud.⁸ Having realized freedom from conceptions, I have annotated the subtle words of former sages. How can someone like me sufficiently exhaust all thought? I am like a bug gnawing on wood that forms characters by chance. How would this be worthy to submit to you and pollute your wise sight, or hope to please your sage's mind? Yet a command has come from Heaven, and I have no excuse for concealing my clumsiness. And so I humbly and sincerely offer up with this memorial a commentary in ten chapters explaining *The Perfection Sutra of Benevolent Kings*. I cannot withstand the shame and fear this act brings me; And yet when I commenced annotating this sutra, I first made a great vow to explicate the most important principle and to open the gate of non-duality. I with forty-nine other monks have put aside all our doubts and have chanted this sutra throughout the hours of the day, offering our prayers for three years, in order to cleanse inauspicious miasmas and obtain the vision of the sun of wisdom. The great chilicosm is offered up to the benevolent ruler;⁹ and five thousand benign deities ever protect the Land of Bliss.¹⁰ Now as a result disorders will be settled, and there will be endless peace, so that both monks and commoners will dance in their unsurpassed felicity.

9 A standard translation of *san qian* or “three thousands,” a Buddhist term meant to incorporate a huge expanse of space. A chilicosm is a world of a thousand worlds, each of those worlds in turn comprising a thousand worlds, and each of those worlds in turn comprising a thousand worlds (a billion worlds in total).

10 I.e., the Pure Land or Western Paradise, presided over by the Buddha Amitābha and a goal for future rebirth.

17.6

為舜闔黎謝御題大通大照和尚塔額表

沙門僧某等言。伏蒙聖札題二大師塔額。及度僧抽僧等並畢。伏喜天心。俯從人欲。恩光至重。抃舞難勝。臣聞聖者正也。

4 住正法者為聖人。佛者覺也。得覺滿者入佛慧。伏惟光天文武大聖孝感皇帝陛下。登滿足地。超究竟天。入三解脫門。過九次第定。見聞自在。不住無為。理事
8 皆如。終非有漏。復皇國而御宇。尊白法以教人。百穀順成。六氣時若。不加兵而賊破。不擾物以人和。縉侶勝緣。蒼生厚幸。昨蒙書額度僧等。龍騰金榜。

17.6

A memorial for the Ācārya Shun, thanking the emperor for his tablet inscription for the pagoda memorializing Their Eminences Datong and Dazhao¹

We, the *śramaṇa* monks speak:

We have humbly received the inscription Your Majesty has made for the tablet at the pagoda of the two Masters, as well as participating in the completion of the ordination and selection of new monks. We delight in your celestial mind, which has stooped to follow the desires of others. The light of your grace is of the strongest, and we cannot contain our delight.

We have heard that “sagely” means “to be correct,” and that one who resides in the correct Dharma is a Sage. “Buddha” means “to awaken,” and one who can enlighten others as well as himself enters into the wisdom of a Buddha. Now Your Majesty, the Great Civil and Martial Sage who Illuminates Heaven and is Responsive to Filiality: you have ascended to the perfect realm and have surpassed the highest of the Heavens. You have entered the three gates of liberation and surpassed the ninth stage of meditation. Your vision and hearing are free and unobstructed, and you do not abide in the unconditioned. Affairs you manage are in accordance with true reality, and in the end you have no karmic residue. You have restored the state and now govern the cosmos; you honor the purest Dharma in teaching others. The hundred grains accordingly ripen, and the six climates harmonize with the seasons. Bandits are destroyed without needing to increase the military; and people are brought in accord without disrupting affairs. Monks produce good karmic conditions, and the common people are richly blessed.

¹ Probably composed in 758. Ācārya: Sanskrit for teacher; sometimes used as a polite title for a Buddhist monk. Datong was a posthumous title granted the early Chan figure Shénxiù 神秀 (606?–706); Dazhao was the posthumous title granted to his disciple Pǔjí 普寂.

12 凤轉銀鉤。河漢昭回。煙雲飛動。韋誕恥其遺法。梁鵠慚為古人。降出天門。
升于寶塔。玉繩綴于重級。珠斗掛于露盤。以方宸翰。實多慚德。又宿修梵行。願在
16 法流者。覆以慚媿之衣。落其煩惱之髮。冀成寶器。仁王為琢玉之因。廣運佛心。
聖主受恒沙之祐。沙門等叨承禪訓。幸偶昌期。御札賜書。足報本師之德。
梵筵邀福。願酬大聖之恩。不勝戴荷之至。

Recently you bestowed on us the tablet with your calligraphy and assisted with the ordination of new monks. Dragons leaped on the golden plaque, and phoenixes turned about in silver hooks.¹ It seemed as if the Heavenly River turned in its brilliance there, and that mist and clouds came drifting by. Wei Dan would be humiliated by the models he left for us, and Liang Hu would be ashamed to be an Ancient.² The plaque descended to us from the celestial gates and then was lifted up to this jeweled pagoda. The Jade Rope constellation ornaments its many floors, and the Dipper hangs from the wheels on its roof.³ These stars would imitate the imperial brush, and yet truly are ashamed before its virtuous power.

The newly ordained monks are predisposed to practice the Buddhist way, vowing to dwell in the traditions of the Dharma. They have donned the robes of shame and have shed the hair of annoyance, and they hope to transform themselves into precious vessels. The Prince of Benevolence has broadly deployed his Buddha mind to carve this jade.⁴

The sagely ruler has obtained help as great as the sands of the Ganges, and we *śramanas* have humbly accepted instruction in meditation. Having the good fortune to encounter an age of prosperity, we have received this gift of the imperial writing. This is enough to repay the virtue of our original teachers. We pray for good fortune on our meditation mats, vowing to requite the grace of the great sage, expressing the vastness of our gratitude.

1 Metaphors for the imperial calligraphy.

2 Two famous calligraphers of antiquity. The speaker is claiming that the two men would be ashamed not to be “moderns” if they could see Suzong’s writing.

3 Pagodas were traditionally mounted with a wheel ornament, symbolizing the wheel of the Dharma.

4 “Prince of Benevolence”: the Buddha. His teachings transform the monks like a jade carver transforming a piece of jade.

17.7

為僧等請上佛殿梁表

僧某言。天地之大。未滿法身。紺殿朱宮。豈云光宅。陛下尊崇像教。大捨外財。白法利人。黃金布地。不役一人之力。

4 不費一家之產。崇崇寶坊。雲構將畢。所營某寺。以某月日上佛殿梁。伏望天恩。內賜一繖。庶使大千世界。悉入蓋中。六合人天。共歸宇下。然後以無礙慧。

8 大化羣物。將使四生皆度。豈惟比屋可封。則中天之臺。才留幻士。畫雲之觀。徒候神人。以古況今。前王何陋。謹詣右銀臺門。奉表陳請以聞。

1 See note to 7.32.6.

2 I.e., Buddhist monastery. “Magenta Hall” or “magenta garden” is a standard locution for a monastery.

3 Buddhism.

4 See note to 12.8.1.

17.7

A memorial written for monks requesting the construction of a Buddha Hall

The monks state:

The greatness of Heaven and Earth would still not fill up the expanse of the *dharmakāya*¹ – so why would one say that magenta halls and vermilion palaces are spacious?² Your Majesty honors the teaching of images³ and has expended great wealth; the purest Dharma has benefited the people, and gold has been spread on the ground.⁴ You have not merely employed the strength of a single man, nor have you merely spent the wealth of a single household; and so this jeweled precinct has risen in its majesty. The cloudlike edifices are almost completed: in keeping with our designs, the such-and-such monastery will raise the rafters of its Buddha Hall on the X day of the X month. We humbly hope that your celestial grace will present us with a single canopy that will bring the great chiliocosm within its shelter, and the gods and men from the six directions to seek refuge there.⁵ Only then will you greatly transform all things with your unobstructed wisdom and bring salvation to the four classes of living beings – not merely households worthy of the nobility. Only then will a terrace reaching to the sky succeed in detaining the magician; only then will this lodge of painted clouds await the godly man.⁶ How inferior then these former kings will seem in comparison to things now! We respectfully attend on the West Silver Terrace Gate at the imperial palace and offer up this memorial, relating our request so that it may be heard.

⁵ See 17.5, p. 217n6. Wang Wei alludes here to the first chapter of the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, when the Buddha takes all the parasols of the visiting laypeople and turns them into one cosmic canopy that shelters all of existence.

⁶ In the *Liezi*, King Mu 穆 of Zhou encounters a Transcendent. The Transcendent only agrees to stay at the king's palace when the king builds him a towering building (named the "Sky Reaching Terrace"). Emperor Wu of the Han was persuaded by the magician Gongsun Qing 公孫卿 to construct halls within his palace for the occupation of future Transcendents.

17.8

責躬薦弟表

臣維稽首言。臣年老力衰。心昏眼暗。
 自料涯分。其能幾何。久竊天官。
 每慙尸素。頃又沒於逆賊。不能殺身。
 4 負國偷生。以至今日。陛下矜其愚弱。
 託病被囚。不賜疵瑕。累遷省閣。
 昭洗罪累。免負惡名。在于微臣。
 百生萬足。昔在賊地。泣血自思。
 8 一日得見聖朝。即願出家修道。及奉明主。
 伏戀仁恩。貪冒官榮。荏苒歲月。
 不知止足。尚忝簪裾。始願屢違。
 私心自咎。臣又聞用不才之士。才臣不來。
 12 賞無功之人。功臣不勸。有國大體。
 為政本原。非敢議論他人。竊以兄弟自比。

17.8

A memorial castigating myself and promoting my brother¹

Your subject Wei prostrates himself and speaks:

I am old now; my powers are failing, my mind grows muddled and my eyesight dim. I expect that my allotted span will not continue much longer. For long I have usurped a position in your court, and I have always been ashamed of these empty sinecures. Moreover, I recently fell into the hands of the rebels; unable to end my own life, I betrayed my country to save myself. Yet until today Your Majesty has continued to pity my folly and my frailty. Because I feigned illness at that time and was imprisoned,² you did not mete out punishment but instead promoted me repeatedly to positions in the central ministries, thus washing me clean of my many offenses and allowing me to avoid evil repute. From my own humble perspective, this has been a blessing beyond all my hopes.

In the past, when I was in rebel territory, I wept blood and thought to myself, “If I ever manage to see His Majesty’s court once again, I vow I will leave the household and cultivate the Way.”³ But when I was received by my enlightened lord once more, I cherished his kindness and mercy and so became covetous of the prestige of officialdom. As the months and years slipped by, I did not know how to halt my excesses and continued to dishonor the hatpin and robe of office. I repeatedly betrayed my earlier vow, and I reproached myself for my selfishness.

Moreover, I have heard that if the ruler employs talentless scholars, then talented ministers will not come to him; and if he rewards men without merit, then ministers who possess it will become discouraged. This is a cardinal principle of rulers, and a fundamental rule of governance. I dare not deliberate on other men; rather, I am using my brother and myself as examples.

1 Composed ca. 761. Suzong responded to this plea by appointing Wang Jin a Chancellery Policy Advisor. There exists a brief report (*zhuang* 狀) from Wang Wei thanking the emperor (18.3).

2 When An Lushan attempted to force Wang Wei into his service, Wang feigned illness. The rebel then had him imprisoned and sent him to his capital in Luoyang.

3 Become a Buddhist monk.

臣弟蜀州刺史縉。太原五年。撫養百姓。

盡心為國。竭力守城。臣即陷在賊中。

16 苟且延命。臣忠不如弟。一也。縉前後歷任。所在著聲。臣忝職甚多。

曾無裨益。臣政不如弟。二也。臣頃負累。

繫在三司。縉上表祈哀。請代臣罪。

20 臣之于縉。一無憂憐。臣義不如弟。

三也。縉之判策。屢登甲科。眾推才名。

素在臣上。臣小言淺學。不足謂文。臣才不如弟。四也。縉言不忤物。行不上人。

24 植性謙和。執心平直。臣無度量。

實自空疏。臣德不如弟。五也。臣之五短。

弟之五長。加以有功。又能為政。

顧臣謬官華省。而弟遠守方州。外媿妨賢。

28 內慙比義。痛心疾首。以日為年。

My younger brother Jin, the Prefect of Shuzhou, was in Taiyuan for five years, where he fostered the people, exerted his mental powers to the full in the service of his country, and exhausted his strength in defending the city.¹ Meanwhile, I was captured by the rebels and was intent on any temporary means to extend my own life. Loyal dedication is the first way in which I am inferior to him.

In every office that he has held, Jin has achieved outstanding fame; whereas I have disgraced my many duties and have never once benefited anyone. Competent governance is the second way in which I am inferior to him.

When I recently accepted my guilt and was bound over to the judicial agencies, Jin memorialized on my behalf, praying for mercy, and requested to be punished in my stead. Compared to Jin, I have no sense of concern or affection for others. Righteousness is the third way in which I am inferior to him.

Jin's written decisions and strategies have won him first rank in the examinations a number of times,² and everyone has recognized his reputation for talent; yet he has always been below me in rank. On the other hand, you cannot really call refined the kind of petty language and shallow learning in which I indulge. Talent is the fourth way in which I am inferior to him.

Jin never expresses ill will towards others in his speech and he never treats others arrogantly. He is modest and amiable in nature and is upright in character. I have no sense of tolerance and am actually rather shallow. Virtue is the fifth way in which I am inferior to him.

These five flaws of mine, and my brother's five virtues: add to this the merit he has accomplished, and his ability in administration. Yet I fraudulently hold office in the central ministries, while my brother is far away at a regional posting. In terms of appearances, I am ashamed that a worthy man's career is hampered; but I am also ashamed within when I think of the relative injustice of it.

1 During the rebellion, Wang Jin assisted the general Li Guangbi 李廣弼 in the resistance in northern Shanxi.

2 *Pan ce*: two of the formal compositional forms required on the Tang examinations, usually asking the candidate to address an issue of public policy.

臣又逼近懸車。朝暮入地。闋然孤獨。

迥無子孫。弟之與臣。更相為命。

兩人又俱白首。一別恐隔黃泉。儻得同居。

32 相視而沒。泯滅之際。魂魄有依。

伏乞盡削臣官。放歸田裏。賜弟散職。

令在朝廷。臣當苦行齋心。弟自竭誠盡節。

並願肝腦塗地。隕越為期。葵藿之心。

36 庶知向日。犬馬之意。何足動天。不勝私
情懇迫之至。

And so I have passed the days and years with grieving heart and aching head. And now it will soon be time for me to hang up my official carriage;¹ any day now I will be buried in the ground. I am all alone in the world and have fathered no offspring. My brother and I depend on each other, and the two of us are now white-haired old men. Every time we part, we fear we will be separated by the Yellow Springs. If we could manage to live together, we could look after each other until our deaths; then at the moment that we perish, our souls would have something on which to rely.

I humbly request that you strip me of my own office and allow me to return to my fields, and grant my brother some vacant position that would allow him to stay at court. Then I can engage in my ascetic austerities while my brother can employ his integrity to the utmost.

We are both willing to stain the ground with our livers and brains, and the time of our deaths is nigh.² May the heart of the sunflower know how to face the sun.³ How can the thoughts of a horse or dog such as my myself cause Heaven to act? I cannot bear to express fully the selfishness of my request.

1 Old age will soon force Wang to retire.

2 Both idiomatic expressions for the willingness to die for one's lord.

3 I hope that I understand the loyalty I owe the sovereign.

17.9

請施莊為寺表

臣維稽首。臣聞罔極之恩。豈有能報。

終天不返。何堪永思。然要欲強有所為。

自寬其痛。釋教有崇樹功德。宏濟幽冥。

4 臣亡母故博陵縣君崔氏。師事大照禪師三十餘歲。褐衣蔬食。持戒安禪。樂住山林。志求寂靜。臣遂于藍田縣營山居一所。草堂精舍。竹林果園。並是亡親宴坐之餘。8 經行之所。臣往丁凶釁。當即發心。

17.9

A memorial requesting the donation of my estate for a monastery¹

Your subject Wei prostrates himself to you:

I have heard that the limitless favor of a parent can never be repaid; and when they have departed for the edge of the sky, never to return, how can we bear the endless longing for them? And yet our essential desire is to carry through with our actions, in order to console ourselves in our pain. The Buddhist teachings have a method for establishing great merit by bringing salvation to the spirits of the underworld.²

My late mother, Madam Cui, the Lady of Boling County, took the Meditation Master Dazhao as her teacher for over thirty years.³ She dressed in homespun, kept to a vegetarian diet, held to the precepts and quiet sitting; and she delighted in dwelling in the hills and woods, her will set on seeking out stillness. I then built a mountain residence in Lantian County – a thatched hall serving as a *vihāra*, with bamboo groves and orchards.⁴ This too could provide ample space for my mother's meditation practice, both sitting and walking.

1 Composed around 758.

2 Wang Wei is touching on the argument often made in Chinese Buddhism that dedicating acts of merit to the spirits of one's deceased parents is a supreme act of filiality.

3 The Chan master Puji, disciple of Shenxiu. See also 17.6.

4 See note to 6.14.18. Wang Wei uses the first meaning here to suggest the appropriate nature of his proposed donation.

願為伽藍。永劫追福。比雖未敢陳請。
終日常積懇誠。又屬元聖中興。羣生受福。
臣至庸朽。得備周行。無以謝生。

12 將何答施。願獻如天之壽。長為率土之君。
惟佛之力可憑。施寺之心轉切。効微塵于
天地。固先國而後家。敢以鳥鼠私情。
冒觸天聽。伏乞施此莊為一小寺。兼望抽
16 諸寺名行僧七人。精勤禪誦。齋戒住持。
上報聖恩。下酬慈愛。無任懇款之至。

Then when I had the misfortune to lose her, the idea came on me to turn the place into a monastery, where fortunate merit could be pursued for endless kalpas. Although at first I did not dare to convey my request, in the end my sincere intentions constantly increased. Moreover, the Primal Sage then brought about a restoration,¹ and all sentient beings received good fortune. Though exceedingly mediocre and decrepit, I was able to join your rank of officials, though I had no means to thank you for sparing my life. How could I repay what was bestowed on me? I wanted to present a lifespan as long as the Heavens in eternal service for the lord of our domain. Yet only the power of the Buddha can be relied upon, and my desire to bestow a monastery grew even more acute. For me to contribute some trivial speck of dust to Heaven and Earth would certainly be putting the country before my own family.²

How dare I disturb your celestial hearing with the selfish feelings of a bird or a rat? Yet I humbly beg to bestow this estate of mine and turn it into a small monastery, I hope to choose seven monks from various monasteries known for their practice, who will diligently meditate and chant sutras, observe the prohibitions and maintain the facilities. Then I can repay the grace of my sagely ruler above and requite the compassionate love of my mother below. I offer the utmost of my deepest sincerity.

1 I.e., Suzong's suppression of the An Lushan rebellion.

2 I.e., since the monastery's merit would ultimately contribute to the well-being of the emperor and the state, its bestowal would allow Wang Wei to repay Suzong to some degree for the mercy shown to him.