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## CHAN MAGAZINE

WINTER 2013



“ I also participated in winter Zen retreats held in Hokuriku, Japan. They ate very simple food. There were no heating facilities, and at the corners outside the room were piles of snow at people’s height. The mattress was a simple tatami, and although the blanket was thick enough, it was short and narrow; it would not allow the person to sleep lying down. Once one got into bed, one wouldn’t dare move. If one was afraid of the cold, one could do sitting meditation. In the first few days, I wanted to leave every day. I saw that none of the Japanese monks were leaving and thought it would be a shame for me, a Chinese monk, to leave. As a result, I endured it day by day, until I finally got used to it. I still like that kind of practice.”

—Chan Master Sheng Yen

*A Journey of Learning and Insight*

*Dharma Drum Publications, 2012*

## CHAN MAGAZINE

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CHAN MAGAZINE

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# From the Editor

In this issue we have a few “firsts” and a “last”. For the lead article we present excerpts from a newly published work by Chan Master Sheng Yen. *A Journey of Learning and Insight*, published this year, is the first book in a new series called the *Complete Works Translation Project*. During his long career as a monk, teacher of Buddha Dharma, and founder of monasteries, meditation centers, and educational institutions, Master Sheng Yen (1930-2009) was also a very prolific lecturer, scholar, and author. Over the years his published works in many languages have benefited students and seekers of the Dharma all over the world. To continue and further this blessing Dharma Drum Mountain is committed to a long-term goal of translating selected volumes of the complete works of Master Sheng Yen from Chinese into English. There are more than 100 volumes in the complete works. They cover three broad areas:

1. Scholarly works, consisting of the commentaries on major Mahayana and earlier scriptures, *vinaya* (monastic discipline), and seminal writings by Chinese Buddhist thinkers and Chan Masters;
2. Writings on the practice of Chan meditation for people at beginner and advanced levels; and
3. Discourses on the practice of Chan and daily life with emphasis on a humanistic perspective.

*A Journey of Learning and Insight* does not quite fit into any of the above categories. It is an autobiography and as such repeats some of the material found in Shifu’s other biographies, especially *Footprints in the Snow*. However, none of his biographies in English have the level of detail found in this book about his life in the Army and in Japan. So a lot of it is new even to people who have read his other biographies. Shifu was specifically invited

to write an account of his personal history as an academic; thus it has been called “An Intellectual Autobiography”. While it may not be “useful” in terms of the three categories above it is certainly of interest to anyone curious about how Shifu became the scholar he was, and how his observations of different cultures influenced the development of his methods of teaching. We hope to offer further excerpts in future issues.

Our second “first” is Ven. Chi Chern’s new verse on Silent Illumination, illustrated with his paintings and published here for the first time anywhere. Next we have the first “Pure Land on Earth Pilgrimage”, reported here by organizer and leader Guo Gu and some of his pilgrim students. “Last” but not least we present the final installment of Ven. Chang Wen’s story *Leaving Home*. This was one of the longest-running features we have presented in Chan Magazine. Many readers told us how much they enjoyed it..

While I was preparing this issue we experienced the anxiety of a close election and a “superstorm”. Now only a few weeks later everything seems calm and normal by comparison. But by the time you are reading this we will know whether we fell off the “fiscal cliff”, and people will still be homeless and jobless because of hurricane Sandy.

About a year and a half ago I got myself all worked up over accounts of “union busting” in Wisconsin. I hadn’t paid very close attention to politics before but the behavior of the politicians in this matter caught my attention and I began to watch left-wing news programs every night. I become more disturbed with every story I heard and felt weighed down with anxiety about the polarized and dysfunctional state of things in our county. Around this time I had dinner with an old friend of mine, also a long-time Buddhist practitioner. The conversation somehow came around to poli-

tics and it came out that my friend espoused right-wing views. I was stunned to realize that my dear friend was one of “THEM”, and that she must be equally shocked to learn I was one of “THEM”. In the same moment it occurred to me that *no-one* is “them”; if this person who I love and respect holds these views then I want to open my mind and understand what might be valid in them. So we attempted to have a discussion.

My friend presented concepts I’d heard on right-wing news programs. I began to counter with concepts I’d heard on left-wing programs but I stopped myself because, although I believed the things I’d heard, I didn’t personally know them to be true. There didn’t seem to be any point in discussing things, anyway; my friend was really agitated. Her anger surprised me though I didn’t feel it was directed at me personally. I recognized my own feelings of fear and hatred against “the other side” though I knew I didn’t feel that way about her. There can be so much greed, hatred and ignorance in passionate political views, on either side. Both

of us were keyed up by ideas fed to us by opposing media camps; is this the source of unhealthy nationwide polarization?

Shortly afterwards I cancelled my cable subscription. For the first time in my life I’ve had no television in my home. It’s been over a year now; I feel quite peaceful and increasingly more settled and productive. I can’t say my political views have changed; I still can’t condone any social system that does not resonate with the Bodhisattva ideal of saving all beings equally. I continue to investigate this *huatou*: how can a Buddhist practice politics without falling into the three poisons?

Since the election I am feeling more hopeful. Maybe people are finally sick of polarization and ready to try now and come together. Maybe Superstorm Sandy can be a turning point in people’s willingness to accept the idea of global warming. Harsh realities can sharpen focus and bring necessary change.

Bufe Maggie Laffey  
Editor, Chan Magazine

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Painting by Ven. Chi Chern

# *Views of Japanese Buddhism*

by

*Chan Master Sheng Yen*

In the early 1990's Prof. Fu Weixun of Temple University selected the writings of Chan Master Sheng Yen to represent the Buddhist community in a book series called *The Study and Thought of Contemporary Academics*. Master Sheng Yen called this "a true honor in my life". The book he submitted, *A Journey of Learning and Insight*, has just been translated into English. An intellectual biography, it details the master's personal history as a scholar and an author. Here we present excerpts from a chapter in which he describes his exploration of Buddhism in Japan during the period (1971-1975) when he was earning his doctorate in Buddhist Literature at Risho University.



## Comparing Chinese and Japanese Buddhism

After I completed my master's degree in Japan, the time required for attending lectures was a lot less. I used the time outside of studies to better understand Japan and the Buddhist religious activities in Japan. After the Meiji Era (1868-1912), Japanese Buddhism became completely worldly, but they still kept the systems well and continued to develop steadily. Japan was a very utilitarian country, so there must be reasons why Buddhism was able to stay alive and be respected in that kind of environment. If Japanese Buddhism really were like what the Chinese Buddhists sneered at—having only the core concepts of Buddhism and no real practice—then it wouldn't have been accepted and survived until today.

The Chinese would view other Buddhist systems as not ideal. For example: First, Tibetan Buddhism was called the Buddhism of the buddhas because “living buddhas” could be seen everywhere and anyone could become a buddha in the present life. Second, Japanese Buddhism was the Buddhism of the Dharma because many scholars were doing research on the Dharma, but nobody really practiced, and they didn't believe in the Buddha or the sangha. Third, Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand was the Buddhism of the sangha. In the Buddhism of the Theravada system, sangha members could be seen everywhere. They did not believe that people could become buddhas, and the Buddhist followers only knew about sustaining the sangha, not learning the Dharma.

So all these were not ideal, [from the Chinese viewpoint] only Chinese Buddhism had the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—all of the Three Jewels—intact. Actually, from my point of view, the Buddhism of all three systems had many talents. Not only within their countries where they established high-level Buddhist education, but they also sent talented people to teach the Dharma abroad.

For example, there were twenty or more Buddhist-related universities and institutes in Japan; there were Buddhist universities in Sri Lanka, and there were also two universities founded by the sangha in Thailand. The three major monasteries in Lhasa in Tibet essentially had university organization and content, and monks of the Geluk school must have twelve years of formal education. Therefore, Buddhists propagated the contemporary international Buddhist activities in these three systems.

By comparison, in Chinese Buddhism, the monks were lacking in education standards, their education was not systematic, they received no international language training, and very few of them had expertise in and conducted specialized research. As a result, in terms of practice methods and academic research, Chinese Buddhism fell short of other countries. Not understanding others while saying they are not as good is called “arrogant with a narrow view.” Chinese Buddhists may have thought they possessed all Three Jewels, but actually they were very vain and surrounded by crisis.

As a result, when I went to Japan I didn't dare criticize them, and only wished to observe and learn from them with an attitude of showing neither inferiority nor superiority. I was hoping to have wide contact with all aspects of Japanese Buddhism, to learn from their strengths and make up for our own shortcomings. When my language skills were good enough to converse with Japanese people, I discovered that in their society anyone with secondary education could converse about Buddhadharma for several hours and not seem like amateurs. The reason being that in their elementary and secondary school textbooks, much knowledge related to Buddhism was introduced. At the same time in their newspapers and magazines, you could often find articles by Buddhist scholars or reports of Buddhist-related activities. Whether in the fields of literature, philosophy, arts, religion, or history, all these were affected by Buddhism and Buddhist culture. Therefore, whether they believed



in Buddhism or not, ordinary Japanese would not be so unfamiliar with or widely misunderstand Buddhism as most Chinese would.

## Traditional Religious Groups

When in Japan I took part in the traditional as well as the newer Buddhist activities. For the traditional, I went to the Eiheiiji Temple in Fukui Prefecture, which was the head temple of the Japanese Soto sect. I also went to their Sojiji Temple in the Tsurumi District of Tokyo, as well as the Engakuji Temple and Kenchoji Temple of the Kamakura Rinzai sect, the Toshoji Temple of the Ryutakuji school in Tokyo, and the Myoshinji Temple of the Rinzai sect in Kyoto. I also stayed overnight for several days in Koyasan of the Shingon sect, and visited the Enryakuji Temple in Hieizan of the Tendai sect. I also had very close contacts with Tendai monks who practiced the 12-year program in the mountains (called *juni-nen-rozangyo*) at the Enryakuji Temple. The Nichiren sect in today's Japan could be counted as traditional Buddhism. Since I was studying at Risho University, which was founded by their sect, of course most of my friends were monks from that sect. As a result, I went several times for meetings and practice to the mountain of their head monastery, Minobusan in Yamanashi Prefecture.

I visited and took part in the activities of some newly formed Buddhist communities such as the Soka Gakkai Society, which belonged to the Taiseki Temple in Fuji Mountain of the Nichiren Shoshu sect, [and several other societies]. At various times, I spent from a day to several weeks participating in and observing their activities. They didn't keep any secrets and were very friendly to Chinese monks from Taiwan, offering free meals, living accommodations, and transportation. Through making such quick tours, I could only learn some of their strengths, concepts, and read some of their historical process and methods of operation. The differ-

ence was that I saw them with my own eyes, and being there in person was not quite the same as just reading books.

Historically, Japanese Buddhism was really quite traditional and conservative. In their mountains and monasteries, they kept the rules passed on from the patriarchs. Although the rules were not that strictly followed today, they were not abandoned, and they would at least appear to keep them. For example, in the front door of many old monasteries, there were stone tablets set up by the patriarchs with the inscription "No meat and alcohol." Although they indeed drank alcohol and ate meat, they still had not removed or destroyed the stone tablets. Another example would be the inner mountain of Koyasan, which was originally the monk's area for practice, where no woman was allowed to enter. At the front of the mountain there was a structure with a sign that said, "Woman Stop" meaning that females must not enter. Although women were already having babies and raising children in the mountains, the "Woman Stop" structures were still there. They would not easily destroy or discard old monuments.

In the monasteries of the Zen sect that specialized in holding Zen retreats, the lifestyle was still very rigid. Of course alcohol and meat were not allowed, or sexual affairs. Even if there were women, they were there to practice, not to be the wives of the monks. The Zen teachers of course had a family when they were in their youth and middle age, but after age 50-60, they would leave the family and live in the monasteries. They basically followed the practice of leading a life of purity. Their practice may appear to emphasize formality more than essence, but to a person new to the path, the restrictions on formality would be more important than the essential teachings of the mind. As a result, they were able to maintain the order relatively well and smoothly. The ordinary young monks would have to go through group practices two to four times, each time for one or two or even up to three

months. Afterwards, they would appear differently in terms of their disposition, concept, faith, and manners. They would still get married and have children, drink alcohol and eat meat, but when they were in charge of ceremonies, socializing with the lay followers in various occasions, you would see them as well-mannered monks.

Japanese Buddhism, just the way it was, I could not say it was good, nor could I say it was bad. Of course it would be bad for the monks to live a conventional life, but you couldn't say that was wrong for lay people to take on religious duties and responsibilities after going through such training. Generally speaking, all the schools of traditional Japanese Buddhism paid much attention to the nurturing of future talents. Whether it were the eldest or a younger son that was appointed to succeed the abbot of the monastery, the abbot would make sure he trained the successor well. On one hand they could send them to the Buddhist department of the universities founded by various sects to complete the basic university degree. On the other hand they could send the successor to mountain monasteries of various sects for periods of education through daily living practice, to enhance their faith, and to teach them demeanor. The process of the practice and training was very strict. For example, the Mino-

busan of the Nichiren Sect held a special training for young people in the winter. It was a kind of ascetic practice called aragyō, which began at one in the morning, under temperatures below zero degrees Celsius. The young monks would be naked, bare



Master Sheng Yen's quarters in Tokyo. Above him hangs an admonition by Venerable Master Dong Chu which says "Be a great religious teacher instead of a mere scholar of religious studies."

footed, with only shorts on; everyone would carry a water bucket, go to the well to fetch water, and then pour it from head to feet. They would pour 15-30 buckets of water consecutively. In the beginning, their teeth would chatter, and they would cry out loud, "Hoh! Hoh!" The mighty sound would echo through the valley. After splashing with the icy well water, the whole body would turn red. Yet strangely enough, the body did not turn purple and nobody caught a cold. This was how they trained their willpower and spirit of selflessness.

Once when I went there, they were training young people with this method. The abbot was sixty or more years old and wore thin clothes. He asked me whether I would like to give it a try, but after he saw me heavily wrapped up in my clothes, he shook his head and simply asked me to sit by the window and watch. I also participated in other winter Zen retreats held in Hokuriku, Japan. They ate very simple food—rice porridge with yellow pickled radish for breakfast, rice and miso soup with one small side dish for lunch. There were only snacks in the evening and no formal meals. According to ordinary standards, it was not nutritious enough; especially in such a freezing winter, the calories were insufficient. What was even more interesting was that they slept at ten o'clock and got up at four in the morning; there were no heating facilities in the room, and at the corners outside the room were piles of snow at people's height. Luckily, there were two layers of wallpaper, so the cold wind outside would not enter the room directly. The mattress was a simple tatami, and the blanket was short and narrow. Although the blanket was thick enough, it [was not big enough to] allow the person to sleep lying down. Once one got into bed, one wouldn't dare move. If one was afraid of the cold, one could get up and do sitting meditation.

In the first few days, I wanted to leave every day. I saw that none of the Japanese monks were leaving and thought it would be a shame for me, a Chinese monk, to leave. As a result, I endured it

day by day, until I finally got used to it. I still like that kind of practice.

One day, I told the master leading the retreat, "This place is so cold!" His reply was: "Didn't your Chinese patriarchs have a saying, 'Without enduring the chilling cold, how would you smell the fragrance of plum blossoms?'" I felt so ashamed. The Japanese followed through with the teachings of the Chinese patriarchs. However, the ancient Chinese Chan practitioners would live such a life every day, every year, and for their whole life. The Zen practitioners in modern Japanese society would only come to participate in this way of living occasionally, so there was still a difference between them.

## New Religious Groups

I also participated in the activities of the new religious groups, such as the National General Meeting of the Members of the Rissho Koseikai Society. They used closed circuit television and big screens to make possible the meeting of tens of thousands of people in the same large building both indoors and outdoors. I was treated as their honored guest, because the eldest son of their president Niwano Nikkyo was the appointed successor, and he was our classmate at Rissho University. They allowed us to take part in the entire meeting, and afterwards led us to visit the meeting room, guest room, and their kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and professional school.

They almost constructed their society as an independent kingdom. The fortunate followers were taken care of by their society from birth to death. They had many methods to attract, nurture, and care for their followers. One most coherent method would be the small group discussions known as the Dharma Seat. In every district and area they would use this method to communicate, following the methods taught by Niwano Nikkyo: the words distributed to them were used as the guideline for them to help each other; every one of them would

speak their views or their difficulties and confusions. If they didn't have any difficulties, they could stand up and present an objective view, or what they had seen or heard through their own experience, to help the other members of the same group. Some of them knew each other and some of them met for the first time, but they would all interact like old friends. Under the care of the wisdom and compassion of Buddhism, they would help each other and take care of each other. Such a Dharma Seat was utilized in every district and area, and even during their National General Meeting. This kind of event allowed all the participating members to feel much fulfilled, and they would return home full of joy.

## Memorial Services

I also participated in the Japanese Buddhist ceremonies for redeeming the dead, which they called Hoyo, a memorial service. The concept was similar to the Chinese belief that reciting the sutras could help redeem the souls of the dead and allow them to become a buddha sooner. They would usually read the large sutras such as the Lotus Sutra or Avatamsaka Sutra. What was clever was they would only read one chapter or one section of the sutra. Nevertheless, the whole sutra would be put on the table, and after reading one chapter they would open up the remaining unread sections, and then flip through the rest of the pages as if pulling an accordion. They counted that as if they had read through them. If this happened in China, the donors who paid for the monks and nuns to recite the sutras would complain, "That's called cheating the ghosts!" However, in Japan that was just normal custom.

Since Japanese Buddhism originated in China, I initially thought that their monasteries would use the same sutras and texts of repentance as those we had in China. However, I later discovered that they were quite different; they didn't have the Liang Emperor Repentance, the Samadhi Water Re-

pentance, the Great Compassion Repentance, or the Amitabha Repentance. As for the ceremony of offering food to the hungry ghosts, it was even more unheard of; the reason being that these things were gradually formed after the Song Dynasty (960-1279) in China, and the establishment of the ceremony for offerings to the hungry ghosts happened even later in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Japanese Buddhism absorbed the format of Chinese Buddhism from the Sui (581-618), Tang (618-907), and Song dynasties, so they didn't have these things. This made me realize that the current Chinese Buddhism was not the same Chinese Buddhism learned by the Japanese. The Chinese Buddhism brought back by the Japanese was not the kind of Chinese Buddhism modern people had in mind. The Chinese people often said that the Japanese forgot their roots, that they forgot about the Chinese people, and developed their own style of Buddhism. However, that was actually a normal phenomenon, because even the modern Chinese people forgot about the original face of Chinese Buddhism from the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties.

## Writing Articles for Taiwan

When I was studying in Japan I didn't have a fixed sponsor, so I was concerned about having money for food and tuition. As a result, in the first few years I would recite sutras or speak the Dharma for the Chinese people in Japan. Although the pay was limited, it was better than taking off the monk's robes and working in the restaurants. Occasionally some Chinese Buddhists from Southeast Asia would visit Japan, and I could earn some fees by being their tour guide. Since I was constantly troubled by financial problems and could be forced to end my student life abroad at any time, I hoped to quickly learn and absorb the various current aspects of Japanese Buddhism, and report them back to Taiwan as soon as possible. At the time Taiwan was still an underdeveloped country while Japan

had already become a world-leading economic and cultural nation. I hoped to at least bring back some new experience to facilitate the development of the Buddhist culture in Taiwan.

With such intention and ideology when I was in Japan, I started writing down what I saw and heard before fully understanding Japanese, and mailed my impressions to Taiwan to be published in Buddhist magazines. In the past, there were many monks and lay people who studied in Japan, but few of them introduced the modern Japan. As a result, people who had been to Japan would sympathize with them, while the people who had not been to Japan would misunderstand them. Those who returned after studying abroad, due to their sympathy with Japan, would be called “foreigner’s slaves,” “boot-lickers for Japan,” and “Chinese traitors.” This was actually caused by the opposition between both parties due to the estrangement from each other.

As a result, when I arrived in Japan, I recorded what I saw or heard with a more objective attitude and wrote down their strengths to report them back to Taiwan. I was not advocating for the Japanese, I was just hoping to learn something from them; “the stone on the other mountain can be the grindstone to sharpen our knife (someone else has something worth learning).” As a result, besides studying diligently to complete the theses for my degrees, I also used as much spare time as possible to collect resource materials to write articles to send to Taiwan. Six years later when I left Tokyo, I collected the various magazines in Taiwan, and found that I had written articles on Japan totaling over 300,000 words. Therefore, in 1979, I compiled them into a book named *From East to West*. It was published in Taiwan the second year after I went to America, but the constitution and formation of its ideology were implemented when I was in Japan.

In the 70’s, the people in the Chinese Buddhist community who could write articles and books mostly still followed the traditional way of study.

For example, when they quoted from the sutras, they would only tell you that a certain sutra or shashtra said this and that, but they wouldn’t indicate the chapters, and surely not the page numbers. If they quoted from the views of modern people, they would only tell you that a certain person said this, but very few people would tell you which book the quote was from, and certainly would not footnote on the page number. They were also too lazy to use quotation marks, and would let the readers figure out themselves sections that were quoted from other people’s words and the parts that were the author’s own opinions. This was because they were used to the classical works, which were all like this. The most outstanding thinker in modern China, Master Yinshun, was also not an exception. Not until he had accepted the opinions for taking on the modern ways of study and research did he complete the *History of Chinese Chan* and that was in the 70’s. Afterwards, the works of Master Yinshun all met the common formats and ways of expression of international academic community standards.

## Academic Conferences

In the Japanese Buddhist academic community the competition was quite fierce. If one were not a genuine talent with solid learning, there was no place for him in the academic community. As a result, once one entered a university’s master program, if one wished to have a seat in their academic community in the future, one must work diligently with full effort. Not only had one to share the administrative work, one also needed to study hard and work for opportunities to present the thesis papers. If one could write, there was no need to worry about having a place to present them. If one’s writing skills were poor, then don’t even think about having the opportunity to present. There were many large and small academic conferences in the Japanese Buddhist academic community. If you participated in all kinds of academic

conferences, you would often meet master-grade scholars as well as the later-risen new scholars. If you presented your theses very often and your works had good content and reason, then after the conference you would be able to publish it in their journal. You would also be recognized as one of their familiar scholars.

If a scholar completed a thesis for the doctoral degree, but the academic community never heard of his or her name, this would be one with no reputation. No matter how well the thesis was written, there was not much probability for it to be passed. For more than six years in Japan, I participated in various conferences, from small ones to large ones of several hundred people and attended over twenty of them. The purpose was to listen to other people's presentations and to show my face to others, and let others know about my existence. It was not a problem if one did not present any thesis and simply went there to listen to other people's opinions.

It was also not a shame if the theses one presented in the conferences were not selected for publishing. It would be nice for people to know you cared about academics, and were diligently doing research. I was such a person—I would go to the conferences but was unable to write something, and I would present thesis papers but not get them published. Actually, to be a scholar in Japan you must let people have a solid impression that you were doing research on a certain text, in a certain specialized field or subject. Every time you wrote a thesis, it should correspond with the topic of the doctoral thesis you were currently working on.

In order to attend the various academic conferences, I traveled to many places in Japan. I often traveled with Japanese classmates and didn't need to worry about anything besides paying for long distance carfare. Classmates of Rissho University have acquaintances almost everywhere. There were a total of around 80,000 monasteries in Japan. Therefore, we could find monasteries to stay at

overnight that would provide us food and drinks. Or we would stay in the homes of the classmates' friends, and accept their hospitality for food and accommodations, as well as transportation. Besides Shikoku, I went south to Okinawa, north to Hokkaido, and I visited almost every prefecture. However, I went to the areas around Tokyo more frequently. It was better to stay in the Japanese monasteries than the hotels. Regardless of the size of the monasteries, their places were all clean and tidy, and the people were very kind and friendly. It was most thoughtful that they considered providing me with vegetarian cuisine.

Among the Japanese graduate students working for the master's degree, some had no plan to become a scholar and only wanted the honor of having studied in the university. However, there were also many who studied very diligently; they completed their thesis long before they would attend the academic conference, and handed it to their advising professor for proofreading again and again. They would prepare for the conference in the car on their way to the conference. When they checked in for accommodations, they would wake up early and stayed up late to prepare for their presentation. This was similar to the pupils in the ancient Chinese tutorage schools, who would read the books out loud before they memorized it early in the morning. They would read their papers out loud, in fear of stage fright or not being able to read them smoothly or even going overtime in their presentations. This spirit of striving for excellence was really moving.

# A Verse on Silent Illumination

by Venerable Chi Chern



- (一) 止靜中用功  
專注所緣境  
覺照境清楚  
已含默與照
- (1) *Practicing in stillness  
concentrate on an object  
have clear awareness of the object  
This already involves silence and illumination*
- (二) 動態中用功  
覺照動中境  
專注所照境  
亦含默與照
- (2) *Practicing amidst movement  
Be aware of the objects within movement  
Concentrate on the objects of awareness  
This also involves silence and illumination*
- (三) 專注安穩住  
默然不動搖  
覺照心敏銳  
清楚能照見
- (3) *When concentration is stably abiding  
silent and unwavering  
the mind of illumination is sharp and precise  
It's clearly able to perceive*



(四) 專注與覺照  
本一而分二  
應用禪修法  
合二而為一

(4) *Concentration and awareness  
are fundamentally one yet separated into two  
Use Chan practice methods  
to unify the two into one*

(五) 先從局部緣  
而後緣整體  
默然心平衡  
覺照心平等

(5) *Begin by focusing on parts  
then focus on the whole  
Silent, the mind is balanced  
Illuminating, the mind is impartial*

(六) 默照非造作  
是故無方法  
因無方法故  
一切法可行

(6) *Silent illumination does not come from contriving  
therefore, there's no method  
Because there's no method  
all methods can be used*



禪



(七) 默照心本然  
是故一切行  
皆得依默照  
方與心相應

(7) *The mind of silent illumination is our basic nature  
therefore all activities  
must rely on silent illumination  
to be in accordance with the mind*

(八) 無法中用法  
有法中不執  
用法而不執  
不增亦不減

(8) *Amidst no method, use a method  
Amidst a method, don't attach to it  
Using a method without attachment  
There's no gain or loss*

(九) 默照需同時  
能所即統一  
能所統一時  
尚非為悟境

(9) *Silence and illumination must be simultaneous  
with subject and object unified  
when object and subject are unified  
this is not yet the state of enlightenment*



(+) 能所統一境  
照見能所空  
諸法皆因緣  
本性即為空

(10) *When subject and object are unified  
perceive the emptiness of subject and object  
as all phenomena are causes and conditions  
their fundamental nature is empty*

(+-) 因心有雜染  
故分別諸相  
若見本性空  
清淨無分別

(11) *Because the mind has pollutants  
it discriminates all phenomena  
If it perceives the basic empty nature [of phenomena]  
then [the mind] is pure, without any discrimination*

(+-) 默照非悟境  
心本來具足  
默照心清淨  
常樂常在

(12) *Silent illumination is not a "state" of enlightenment  
as the mind fundamentally possesses it  
The mind of silent illumination is pure  
Always joyful and free*

July 23, 2012

Dharma Drum Retreat Center, NY, USA

## *Pure Land on Earth Pilgrimage*

Guo Gu (Jimmy Yu) began his training with Chan Master Sheng Yen in 1982, while still quite young. He was the personal monastic attendant and assistant to Master Sheng Yen for almost nine years. In 1995, he was given permission by the Master to teach (inka) Chan. He has led retreats in various parts of the United States, Europe, and Asia. In 2008 he received his doctorate in Buddhist Studies from Princeton University. Currently he is an Assistant Professor at Florida State University, and the guiding teacher of the Tallahassee Chan Group which meets regularly at the Tallahassee Buddhist Community in Florida. This past Spring he led a group of practitioners on a pilgrimage to Dharma Drum Mountain. Here we present several short reports of that trip.



Pure Land Pilgrimage group walking to the “Life Garden” where Chan Master Sheng Yen’s ashes are buried.

## By Guo Gu (*Jimmy Yu*)

Our Shifu, Chan Master Sheng Yen, established Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) as a sanctuary for humanity. It is an embodiment of his vision for a Pure Land on Earth. It is a place that all of us have put our hearts and efforts into making a reality. It is our home away from home. Shifu's corporeal form is no longer there, but his life's work and teaching is thriving there. Understanding his teaching is to understand ourselves and the deeper significance of the Dharma.

From May 17th to the 28th, 2012, I led the first "Pure Land on Earth Pilgrimage" to DDM. Our aim was to recharge ourselves spiritually to continue Shifu's legacy, to be the bridge that brings Chinese Chan to the rest of the world, wherever we may be, whether in the United States, Europe, or other parts of Asia.

We paid our respects to Shifu at DDM's Life Garden where his ashes are scattered. We did a 5-day intensive retreat and had a dialog with DDM's monastic sangha. We visited two DDM branch monasteries, as well as the National Palace Museum, a Ceramic Museum, a night market, and many other places. It was a meaningful trip for all. I will be leading another pilgrimage trip in May 2014, so keep checking Chan Magazine for upcoming news

## By Fran Berry (*FSU professor*)

The sound of the morning boards cuts through the dormitory air at 4AM. Time to get up. Thus started my five-day Chan retreat at Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) in Jinshan Taiwan, the first retreat DDM has ever conducted in English only. Joining me were 45 people from Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, St. Louis, Singapore and Taipei as well as the fourteen Sangha members from my home Chan Group in Tal-

lahassee, FL. For most of us it was our first time to be immersed in Chinese culture. Everything was fresh.

Before and after the retreat, we visited several of the DDM properties to learn about their history and the philosophy Master Sheng Yen promoted: Tian Nan Monastery, Zhaiming Temple, Yunlai Monastery, and the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture. The simplicity and beauty of their spaces and materials made positive first impressions. The warmth and gentleness of the monks and nuns touched my heart. The enormous energy generated by celebrating Buddha's birthday in two different temples with families and community inspired me.

Learning more details about Master Sheng Yen's forward looking vision of spiritual environmentalism, and of his priority to improve the education of monastics and laypeople about Chan Buddhism deepened my commitment to help support these Buddhist education centers to flourish. Chan Buddhism walks a fragile path between 1,500 year old traditions, and modern challenges to adjust to new cultures and technology while keeping the heart of the teachings intact.

The retreat for me was about healing myself, absorbing the teachings, renouncing my selfishness and ignorance, staying on my koan, and being mindful. I had flashbacks to past lives, and wept over past emotions and tragedy. I experienced causes and conditions arising and changing, and felt grateful that we have free choice for ethical behavior and helping others. I experienced leg pains and mind boredom and rising vexations. I tried different methods to stay alert and present in the moment.

Guo Gu taught me that pain and suffering are choices, and I can choose to experience pain as only a sensation, and to offer my discomfort to the dedication of others, that their suffering be relieved. Though my legs wobbled, I did more prostrations and was grateful for their healing powers. I learned I can endure pain and be cheerful. I found out I do not need eight hours of sleep to be alert. I discov-

ered that daily structure such as we followed on the Chan retreat can reduce vexations by limiting the choices we need to make. The food excited my palette and satisfied my hunger. Everything was administered so well. The volunteers and monastics embodied the selflessness and generosity of the teachings.

Contentment and gratitude exist in every moment, every act. Sadness is only an attitude. Lightness lifts up our spirits. Suffering and joy depend on each other. Both are fleeting thoughts. Dharma teachings are blessings even when they sting like a stick. We pledged to return to DDM in two years on another retreat, and until then, to work to deepen our Chan practice. We left Taiwan with new friends, new knowledge, new habits and a deep affection for Chinese culture.

### **By Estelle Gerard** (*retired botanist*)

At the start of a retreat, Master Sheng Yen always told us to leave our past and future outside the front door; not to compare ourselves with others; and not to contrast our little Chan Center with other Zen places we may have known. However, immediately upon first seeing the DDM complex, I could not help but be transported back in time. Here, in Taiwan, the monastery's magnificent grand buildings and imposing plazas and statues are surrounded by lush, deep green forests of various broadleaf trees and bamboos, with gurgling stony brooks and waterfalls, and charming trails up the hills with thoughtfully-placed stepping-stones for the ease of pilgrims. How totally different from the surroundings of my first retreats with Shifu, over 30 years ago [*in a small storefront in noisy Queens NY!*]. Here we were, at Dharma Drum Mountain, sitting in the deepest quiet, except for the gentle tap-tap of the rain, and the occasional morning bark of native frogs. A highlight of our retreat was our ascent to

the Memorial Life Garden where Shifu's ashes, as well as those of others since his death, are buried. Here, there are no plaques with names, no incense burning, no statuary—just a small grassy field, tilled every few months to mix ashes and soil; a perfect little spot for a humble monk who simply let the Dharma work through him. We circled the site several times, silently, solemnly, and then bowed. If I have one concern for the future, it is that, unless carefully watched, Master Sheng Yen could become deified, an object of adoration by the masses who already flock to the Monastery by the thousands. This kind of worship is most certainly not what he worked so hard to accomplish.

### **By Martha Lang** (*FSU grad student*)

Master Sheng Yen was omnipresent during our time at DDM and on the retreat, as the pilgrimage was in honor of his life and teachings. I read his *Tea Words* on the plane and was inspired to have faith in mind and determination in method. Admittedly, my mind wavered on day three, wanting to be exploring outside instead of sitting indoors. Thankfully, Guo Yuan Fashi guided us in relaxing stretching, coupled with words of wisdom. Outside, we did slow-walking meditation, followed by prostrations on the grass. This reinvigorated and reminded me that I could do even more to connect with and help the Earth once I took the time to work thoroughly on my own mind. Being seated in stillness on the cushion with gently determined concentration was necessary; there was work to be done in the cultivation of a clarified mind purged of obstacles and vexations. Guo Gu's advice helped me to see the extent to which fear, in its numerous forms, is an obstacle to liberation.

Chan asks us not to be idle but to dedicate ourselves to helping ourselves as well as others, beginning with our individual minds. A vow to “cut off

endless vexations” provides a lifetime of practice, which becomes easier and more natural the more we become acquainted with how our minds work. This requires time for stillness in order to observe and clear the mind, but it also requires interaction with others so that we can create well-functioning relationships and communities. The retreat supports both isolation and community at once, so that we become sufficiently self-reliant in the context of others’ needs as well as our own.

**By Will Evans** (*biology engineer*)

This was by far the best, most complete and all-encompassing retreat I have attended. The practitioners were given the opportunity to experience all aspects of life in a Chan monastery. This included extensive meditation, working in the fields, do-

mestic chores within the Chan Hall, Noble Silence, yoga, strictly keeping the precepts and traditional morning and evening chanting ceremonies as well as the wonderful vegetarian meals eaten in the long-established Chinese tradition of using chop sticks and cleaning one’s own bowls. This was all under the excellent guidance of Venerable Guo Yuan which included his daily

Dharma teachings of Chan articulated with compassion and humor. Not only were we were totally immersed as Chan practitioners, the grounds and buildings were highly functional, modern and breathtaking, the monks, nuns and staff all exceptionally helpful and friendly and the daily logistics flowing and flawless. Although I have read many of Master Sheng Yen’s books and teachings, the trip to DDM allowed me to experience on a personal level his wisdom, heart and vision. I left DDM emotionally and spiritually uplifted, determined to take my practice to a higher level.



5-Day intensive retreat at Dharma Drum Mountain, May 25, 2012.





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# Leaving Home

## David Kabacinski Becomes Chang Wen Fashi, Part Seven



by

### Ven. Chang Wen



Chang Wen Fashi is a Western monastic disciple of the late Chan Master Sheng Yen. Formerly known as David Kabacinski, he was ordained as a novice in 2004,

received his monastic education at Dharma Drum Sangha University in Taiwan, and received full ordination in 2006. He currently serves as Director of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY. The following is the seventh and final installment of his autobiographical account of becoming a Buddhist monk. It was originally published in *Humanity Magazine* in Taiwan, and was edited for *Chan Magazine* by David Berman.

### Counselor Monk

The more engaged I became in service at our Sangha University, the more I became aware of the importance of monastic education. I saw why Shifu and our lineage ancestors had placed so much importance on it, saying, “Without [a system of] education, Buddhism has no future.” If Buddhists, especially monastics, are not educated properly, it will be very difficult for them to have a solid understanding and practice of the Dharma. They will not be able to share proper Dharma with others, Buddhism will fall into decay, and will not be able to benefit humanity. During the past two centuries, Chinese Buddhism had been facing just such a crisis.

For the first few months after returning from the full ordination ceremony, I was involved mostly in class planning and indirectly helping the Dean and other faculty in the Student Affairs Office take care of our monks. In late summer, however, things changed. The dean asked my Dharma brother and I to take roles as counselors. I was surprised that they asked me: “Aren’t there any other elder monks to do the job?” But at the time the elder monks were handling their own positions in various other departments. Having just been ordained, I was still a fledgling monk and felt that I wasn’t really suited for the task. My Chinese was not yet up to par, and a counselor has to hold classes, give talks, and lead discussions. Nevertheless, I accepted. Despite my misgivings, I felt a responsibility to help

educate our monastics. It was an opportunity to let go of self-defeating views and excuses, and I knew I would learn and grow because of it. Thinking in the long term, if I were to someday help establish a monastic education system in the West, this would provide me with a great experience.

In September 2006, I was appointed counselor for male students of the newly-created Chan Meditation Studies Department. This group consisted of 10 students, including novices and postulants. Many of them were older than I, some by almost 20 years. I was quite nervous about the whole arrangement, yet excited. I felt it was something really special, to be involved in helping to train and guide future monks to become Chan teachers. Chan Studies students specialize in learning the Dharma Drum lineage's approach to Chan, which they will use as future teachers and retreat leaders. I was very happy to be a part of it all, and very enthusiastic—possibly overly so.

Having received full ordination just a few months earlier, I felt strongly committed to the bhikshu precepts and way of life. I had a sense of increased diligence and determination to sever all my habit energies. I felt very alert to any moment of laziness on my part, and was determined to be diligent. For example, right after the morning meal, I would head straight for the tool room and do my chores. Even if I was busy with school administration work, I felt obliged to be a role-model for my Dharma brothers, and so couldn't miss a day of chores. During these months, I talked much less. I felt that most of the talking that we did with others was a waste of time. It all seemed like idle chatter. I wanted to keep my mind on the method all the time, hoping that all my brother monks would do the same. I wished that we all could "work as we would were our heads aflame." This attitude, which at first seemed to generate power, actually exhausted me. The self-generated pressure to overcome laziness and vexation was itself an excessive use of energy, and it made me physically uncom-

fortable, mentally tense, and irritable. Actually, this attitude had been an undercurrent in my practice since I was a novice. It took me quite a while to realize that this was not Right Diligence as taught by the Buddha. I wasn't really aware of it until I had to take on the role as counselor.

In my enthusiasm I ended up stressing myself and my students. If, after breakfast, someone sat around chatting instead of going to the tool room, I would scold him. If someone wasn't heading to bed right on time, I would say, "It's time for bed. What are you doing reading?" If I saw someone was having a snack before bedtime, I would scold, "What are you eating now for? It's time for bed." Wanting so badly for everyone to be diligent, I was angry at anyone I saw out of line.

Of course, they didn't react well to this. At first, everyone seemed to accept that being Chan Studies students, they had to be extra diligent. But after being harassed and scolded, they became resentful. And I became perplexed: "Why doesn't anyone want to practice? Don't they want to be diligent?" I angered easily and didn't know how to resolve my frustration. Eventually, I came to doubt that I could help myself or my students. Over time, after realizing that my attitude was extreme, and that opposing vexations can't resolve them, I began to see the light. Although I knew that wisdom was essential in resolving vexations, I began to see that compassion must equally be present. When seeing our own vexations, we should be gentle with ourselves. We merely need to be aware of the vexation, and it will vanish, or at least weaken. We don't need to add a layer of pressure or expectation. When dealing with our habit energies, we must be aware of them, and take measures to adjust ourselves, but we don't need to use a violent attitude toward them. And when dealing with others, the same applies.

If we want to help people, we need to understand their problems and their difficulties. Sometimes, we merely need to be present and be their

mirror. But we also need to give them space and time to work on their difficulties. A counselor's duty is not to "fix" people or make them perfect; rather, it is to remind others and to be a spiritual friend. A Dharma friend listens to another's difficulties, provides direction, yet is understanding when they are not able to improve. After all, countless lifetimes of vexation will not vanish in an instant. Practice means continuously shining the light of wisdom and compassion on ourselves and others. In time, vexations gradually fade. This is Right Diligence as taught by the Buddha. As the ancient masters often said, "Diligence is like a fine stream of water, flowing continuously and

steadily." Eventually that stream can penetrate the hardest stone.

Of course I had heard the word "compassion" countless times, but I had thought that compassion was not as important as wisdom, that without wisdom we wouldn't be able to be compassionate. Then I realized that compassion and wisdom must be cultivated simultaneously. Essentially, they are one and the same function of mind. Thanks to the opportunity of having to take care of a group of fellow monks, I was faced with the challenge of seeing my habit of perfectionism, expectation, and anger. Seeing it clearly, I was able to learn to change. My efforts were affirmed when one student said,



Venerable Guo Ru and Master Sheng Yen, 49-day retreat at Dharma Drum Mountain, June 2007.

“Yeah, we noticed that Chang Wen Fashi has changed. Before we thought you had good demeanor and were really diligent, but were a little afraid of you. Now, we’ve seen that you’ve become much more compassionate.”

Through this period of one-and-a-half years, I felt less expectation and anger; I also sensed a growing harmony within myself and among my Dharma brothers. I began to see that talking and interacting was another kind of “method.” Talking is skillful means, when done with compassion and wisdom; talking to help others feel happy and to relieve their suffering is the bodhisattva way. Talking became joyful, and my mind was no longer as disturbed by the talking of others. I began to see speech as a tool for helping others, not as a vexation. During one retreat that I attended, one of Shifu’s Dharma talks made a very deep impression on me. He said, “You need to activate your mind. Just don’t activate the mind of vexation.” Chan practice is not about having no thoughts or reactions; rather, it is about having no deluded thoughts—self-centered mental activities such as anger, craving, and views that busy the mind and make it scattered and agitated. We need to put those down, and not generate them. “No-thought,” according to Master Huineng, is a mind not polluted by self-attachment, yet fully functioning to help sentient beings. This is the core teaching of Chan. Realizing this, I felt even more happy to engage with others in a harmonious manner. Although it’s not easy to simply put down the self and deluded thoughts, it’s an ongoing practice to put aside vexatious thoughts, and generate the mind of compassion.

## 49 Days in the Intermediate State

In late June of 2007, I heard the news that our Chan Hall would hold a 49-day huatou retreat. Soon after, I was told that Shifu had instructed that I attend the full 49 days. I was very happy to be able

to do the whole retreat and to have the concern of Shifu. Despite being incredibly busy and ill, he seemed to always remember me, and make sure I was on the path that he designated very clearly to the sangha: “Chang Wen Fashi’s main purpose will be to propagate Chan practice in the West.” He was making sure that I continued in my Chan training, so that in the future I would be capable of teaching Chan.

This 49-day retreat was a monumental event, the first to be held in the DDM Chan Hall. Shifu would give the Dharma talks, and Guo Ru Fashi, one of his elder disciples and Dharma heirs would direct the retreat. In addition, the team of monastic teachers included the head instructors Guo Yuan Fashi and Guo Qi Fashi. There were over 218 participants, 56 men and 162 women; most would be there for part of the retreat, some for the whole 49 days. A day or so before the retreat, while I was preparing to transfer my Sangha University work to my substitute, I was given another piece of news from my supervisor: “The sangha is thinking of stationing you at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center” (in Pine Bush, New York). I was surprised to hear that: “So soon?” It seemed I’d just begun my training. I hardly felt ready to be one of the representatives of Dharma Drum Mountain in the States. Yet the chance to go back and share what I had learned was an exciting idea. My mind raced in multiple directions, and I went to retreat full of wandering thoughts. “What does the sangha want me to do? Who will I go with? What position do they want me to hold? Do they want me to go and start teaching already? I’m not qualified for that...” I hadn’t even started “looking into” a huatou, and I was already looking into the distant future.

I reported to Guo Yuan Fashi, expecting that I would be assigned some tasks during retreat. Right away he said, “You’re very fortunate, you know. You’re the only monk who will be attending the whole retreat. And Shifu said we shouldn’t

even give you any work. You'll be here purely as a participant." I acknowledged that and felt very grateful. Another Dharma brother sitting nearby said, "You know, if you don't get enlightened this time, it's 'off with your head!'" and we all laughed. But deep inside, I already had the idea: "I'll be on retreat for 49 days... maybe I will have an enlightenment experience!" I knew that this kind of thinking would be a major obstruction and would keep me from being able to plunge into the method, but the thought continued to lurk in my mind. There was also a sense of added pressure as the idea of big responsibility in the future hung over my head. It all made me more determined to practice hard, but these states of mind—shifting between great determination, great pressure, great expectation, and great curiosity—it was like being in the intermediate state, or bardo—like having died and not yet moved on to the next body and life. I was neither here nor there.

Once the retreat started, my body was there in the first seat of the Chan Hall, but my mind wasn't. I wasn't so interested in the method of huatou. For years, I had been studying and practicing Silent Illumination. I had started with that method as a layperson, and as a monk I continued to put all my efforts into understanding it conceptually and practically. I was very grateful to be on a 49-day retreat, but I honestly felt it would be better if it were 49 days of Silent Illumination. This made it difficult to fully immerse myself in the huatou method. I listened intently to the instructions and lectures, but I kept thinking, "I don't get this huatou thing. Let me just relax and sit here. Tomorrow I'll use huatou."

Shifu's Dharma talks were beyond excellent; he came in four or five times a week to talk on Xuyun's "Essentials of Chan Practice," one of the first texts I had ever read about Chan. These were teachings from the great master whose image inspired me on the monastic path. Guo Ru Fashi's talks were very moving and motivating, yet it was difficult

getting accustomed to his way of speaking, which contained lots of technical terms and references to Chan stories. Despite the wonderful teachings, I still wasn't very clear about how to use a huatou. On top of that, all participants were required to use the huatou "What is wu?" This huatou is one of the most abstract and difficult-to-grasp. I was not at all interested in this huatou and couldn't relate it to my own life. The huatou "What is my original face?" seemed more connected to my own concerns about life and the mind. But we had to stay with "What is wu?" I internally rebelled against this huatou and couldn't gain momentum with it. New method, new ideas, and new teacher...

The Chan Hall had new cushions too, which were so hard it was like sitting on stone. In every meditation period, within minutes of sitting down, both my legs fell asleep and throbbed in pain. I was surprised, because I hadn't had this experience for years—I was usually able to sit for a couple of hours without feeling any pain or discomfort. For the first ten or twelve days, I was frustrated with the discomfort. I rocked myself back and forth on the cushion now and again to relieve the pain, only to feel the incense board come whacking down on my shoulder as a reminder to sit still. I was tired, but we weren't allowed to rest after lunch. At best, we were allowed to sit with our backs against the wall.

During walking meditation we were pushed to run until we couldn't run any more. It was a physical challenge. I felt surges of energy and the strength of a diligent mindset, but I was exhausted. I ate a lot to try to replenish this energy, but it seemed that the food wasn't giving me any nutrition at all. After lunch, the walk up the stairs felt like a grueling hike up a mountain. The whole first quarter of the retreat was wrought with physical and mental discomfort, as I failed to adjust to everything.

And in addition to my obstructions of body and mind, there was the unsettling environment. Guo Ru Fashi's style of leading Chan retreats was

quite strict and intense. He was known for scolding, hitting, and creating an environment of pressure. Students were pushed to their limits, pushed to plunge their minds into the huatou. I was on the outskirts of the method, and my mind was steadily agitated by all of this. When Guo Ru Fashi exhorted the group as a whole, it did little more than agitate my mind. Then Fashi stood in front of us one night, and said in a foreboding tone, “Dear bodhisattvas, it’s time for us to ‘test your skill.’ You’ve had many days to practice and plunge yourself into the method. Now we’re going to test you, and push you, so you can really get a sense for what huatou and ‘doubt’ refers to.” He explained that basically, everyone was about to get a good scolding and beating. He walked up to each participant as they sat, and one-by-one, hit them with the incense board and questioned them.



Now, the blow is not a mere physical rebuke—being struck with the board forces one to be completely aware of the present moment. With this awareness, as if one were faced with a life-and-death situation, the right huatou can generate the sense of doubt. Or, if a practitioner already has a strong sense of doubt, this stimulus can help them break through it, and shatter any remaining self-attachment. The proper pressure applied by a master to a student who is ripe, can lead to great benefits in the student’s practice. However, for a student who’s mind is agitated and completely “outside the gate,” it may do no more than cause fear.

At that time, my mind was like the latter student—just agitated. As I was sitting in the first seat, I was first up. I was very nervous as he stepped in front of me—excited to be under this intense pressure, but clueless as to what to do. So I just took a beating. He shouted: “Chang Wen, look at me! Does a dog have buddha-nature?!” I said, “I don’t know.” Whack! He hit me with the incense board so hard, my whole body and mind was shocked into a moment of surprise. “Wow, he really hits hard,” I thought. But that was it. I didn’t feel much else. He moved on to pressure the other participants, and I was relieved.

As for other people, it seemed there were a few with certain unique reactions. But I could only hear and not see them, as I was in the first seat facing the Buddha statue. Some people were crying, screaming, shouting, throwing things, running around, and some were even putting on performances trying to imitate what they had read in Chan stories. Some seemed really into the method and replied to Fashi’s strikes and questions with immediate and powerful reactions.

Amidst all this, my mind wasn’t able to get into the method; instead it was just disturbed by the variety of things happening around me. The compassionate help that Guo Ru Fashi and the other monastics gave us seemed to just irritate me and unsettle my mind. And despite all the interviews and





Dharma talks, I couldn't wrap my mind around the huatou. Instead of asking myself "What is wu?", I wondered: "Why do we have to use huatou? Can't we just use Silent Illumination? What's the use of asking if we can just let go and perceive the nature effortlessly? Do I really have to learn this method?"

By the second segment of retreat, some obstructions began to lessen. My cushion became softer after being used for a couple of weeks. And although the pain and numbness in my legs were still there, I didn't care. One day, I gave up trying to get away from the discomfort, and sat until the pain was excruciating. But I stopped paying attention to it. At some point the pain suddenly vanished, and I could feel my legs again. But this time they were comfortable. My whole body felt comfortable and

relaxed. This was a very good experience of how the body and mind can adjust itself if we don't get obsessed with its physical condition. With a mindset of ignoring everything, the mind and body relaxed and felt at ease.

During this period, Guo Ru Fashi had to leave the retreat for a medical appointment and so the Chan Hall quieted down. We all sat in silence. It was relaxing, and there was no more shouting, crying, or explosive reactions. But it seemed like a room full of sitting corpses. The silent atmosphere allowed us to slacken. I dozed off, and no one hit me with the incense board. We were allowed to sleep in the afternoon, and I wasn't concerned with maintaining a sense of doubt. I was happier to be able to sleep. No one was pushing us anymore, and I felt my practice become weak and lifeless. I then began to appreciate Guo Ru Fashi's efforts. I had gained strength from his scolding: "How could you sit there dozing off? Are you a dead person, or alive? Don't waste your life! Don't waste the precious teachings of Shifu. How could you not work hard, when Shifu is dragging his poor body here every day to give us teachings? You should be ashamed!" And just as I was getting used to the shouting and pressing, it all disappeared into silence.

I still struggled with the method but continued to adjust how I applied it. One day, Guo Yuan Fashi called me for interview. He asked me how I was doing. I explained that I still couldn't get a hang of the huatou method, and I really didn't want to use it anymore. He gave me a very stern look and said, "It's your duty to learn this method. You're a monk, and training to be a teacher of Chan. You have to learn this method, as it's part of our tradition. How else can you teach others the practice of the Dharma Drum lineage?" I took his words to heart and completely accepted this fact. He then explained more how to use the method, and how to generate a sense of doubt. He pointed out that I already had a sense of doubt, but that it was weak and often distracted by deluded thinking. With a renewed sense

of energy and enthusiasm, I returned to the Chan Hall, grateful for Guo Yuan Fashi's guidance, and continued to ask "What is wu?"

One day when we had free practice time, Guo Ru Fashi instructed us to drop the method. He asked us to use whatever method we liked—look around, listen, walk, sit, lie down. I chose to sit on the grass near the waterfall. I just sat. I put aside the huatou and just enjoyed sitting there. I had an experience of great calmness and brightness, as well as lightness and ease of body and mind. When it was time to finish, I got up from my seat and picked up the huatou. Suddenly, the method felt natural. I got a better grasp of how to fully relax body and mind, and just use the huatou. I let go of everything and asked, "What is wu?" As Shifu taught, "Relax the body and mind, apply continuous effort." As Master Xuyun taught, "Let go of all conditions" and "look into [the] huatou."

I realized that there was no need to apply artificial effort. Trying too hard only disturbs the mind. It just requires that you be clear about what you're doing, let go of all concerns, and pick up the question. Naturally, asking "What is wu?" gained momentum. I didn't know who I was, I didn't know where I came from, and I didn't know the reality of the world and the nature of my very own mind. What is it? "What is wu?!"

From that point on, until the end of retreat, I was able to gain faith in the method, and see how this question—although it itself is a deluded mentality—is a necessary medicine to combat all delusions. It's a unique tool developed by the Chan masters to help us let go of all conditions and plunge ourselves into the question of our very own existence. I began to appreciate this method and the wonderful tradition that we've inherited as students in the Dharma Drum lineage. What fortune to learn two Dharma gates, and have two treasures to share with everyone! I was happy to use the method, and to have an "indestructible king of swords" to wield in the face of vexation.

Throughout the retreat, I learned a lot about my deeper obstructions, countless vexations accumulated over who knows how long. Pressure from the outside, pressure on myself, and struggles with the method and my body provided the ingredients for stirring up vexations. Eventually, I had only one option—to generate greater determination to resolve this problem of birth and death. Thanks to my many teachers and virtuous friends—Shifu, Guo Ru Fashi, Guo Yuan Fashi, Guo Qi Fashi and all those who put all their efforts into guiding us during the retreat—I had the opportunity of a lifetime. Although I didn't have any great experiences, I gained a great momentum in the practice. And when it was over, I still had my head.

## Preparing to Return to the U.S.

After the retreat, Shifu called me. He was too sick to see me in person, but hoped to talk about my retreat, how it was for me, whether I had any special experiences. I said, "I'm sorry Shifu, I feel ashamed. I didn't have any real experiences. Nothing really happened." Shifu asked, "Well do you at least feel very stable now?" "Yes, I feel calm and stable. And actually, I now know how to use huatou." I continued to relate some experiences and thoughts about retreat, and he listened and responded with encouragement. I felt very comfortable sharing with Shifu; it seemed like talking with a close friend. He asked me what I thought about the strict way in which Guo Ru Fashi led the retreat. I said I liked it. I then asked him what approach he used when he personally led huatou retreats. He then explained his method of guiding practitioners with huatou. I understood clearly, and had great confidence in his guidance.

Shifu then asked me if I knew that I was going to be stationed back in the U.S. at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center. I said, "Yes, the sangha told me. But I haven't heard any details yet." He apologized, saying that he had hoped that I could receive more



training, but that causes and conditions required that I go to DDRC very soon. I understood completely, and had no problem with going. Whether it was sooner or later, I knew my duty was to share Chan teachings with the West. He said some encouraging words about my progress over the past four years of training and service at the Mountain. I was happy to hear his words and felt even more fortunate to have had the training and care of the sangha. It was a short four years, but it felt like a decade of experience. "Although it seems a little early for you to go, and there's no big sangha to take care of you in the U.S., I'm confident that you can take care of yourself." These words were the biggest encouragement I had ever received from someone in my life. To this day, when I encounter difficult situations, I remember these words and

they give me strength. When we ended the conversation shortly after, I felt a great relief and surge of determination and confidence.

The five months after retreat were spent preparing to return to the U.S., while still taking care of my students. It was a very busy time, but I felt very at ease. The effects of the 49-day retreat were very obvious. I noticed that my mind remained stable in various challenging situations. And when it was my time to lead Chan practice, such as being chosen to be the supervisor for the Sangha University's entrance exam retreat, I found it very natural. It seemed as if a load of obstructions were

dropped from my mind. I still had vexations, but wasn't overwhelmed by them. And I had the confidence to express myself in situations that previously were frightening, like dealing with interpersonal conflicts. My study of Chinese seemed easier; I just talked without much self-consciousness. I had greatly benefited from huatou practice.

The direction of my life and journey as a monk were clear—it was my duty to sentient beings to



Gerard and Margaret Kabacinski with their son.

share the Dharma and the practice. Conditions had matured so that I would focus on sharing Chan practice in the West. Although I did feel somewhat unprepared to teach and unsure of what lay ahead, I was sure that all I could do was my best. With this attitude, I packed one suitcase of what clothes I had, packed a box of books, and got on the plane with the future abbot of

DDRC, Guo Xing Fashi. Although I was an American returning to the West, it felt as if I were going somewhere completely new. And as Shifu's words echoed in my mind, I knew that I could only rely upon myself. Without a teacher close by to rely on, without the monastic sangha's protection, I only had the Dharma and the method—the keys to opening the gateless gate of Chan. Although I had had the care and support of the sangha for those few years, and would still have the support of the monastic and lay community in the U.S., fundamentally, I know that one must walk the path towards buddhahood alone.

# The Past

News from CMC, DDRC and DDMBA Worldwide

## Abbot President Visits CMC

On October 28 the Abbot President of Dharma Drum Mountain, Ven. Guo Dong, paid a visit to the Chan Meditation Center. He gave a talk titled "Healing Vows, Transforming Lives" in which he shared how to use positive power to handle our daily conflicts; how to make vows instead of making complaints (an audio file is available at the CMC website.) After the talk there was a Dharma Gathering and an ice cream party. Dharma friends enjoyed spending an informal time with the Abbot President. However, meetings that had been planned for after the festivities had to be cancelled

due to the approach of superstorm Sandy. Indeed all activities for the following few days were also cancelled. Thankfully, CMC did not suffer any power outages or damage from the storm.

## Superstorm Sandy

In the city, CMC members did what they could to aid storm victims. Dr. Rikki Asher took her class of college art students to a shelter set up for 500 people who lost their homes. They made puppets with the children and taught them how to put on their own puppet shows, for entertainment during the difficult time of staying in the shelter. Other



members traveled to hard-hit areas and helped with the removal of storm debris.

Upstate in the Shawangunk Mountain area hurricane Sandy's powerful winds knocked down countless trees. The region was without power for four days. However, the Dharma Drum Retreat Center was able to continue normal operations using several backup generators which were installed last year (thanks to generous donors). During the outage DDRC opened its dormitory facilities to local residents who had no power, so they could take hot showers.

Like most of its neighbors, DDRC had decorated the premises for Halloween, but decorations were hurriedly taken back in before they could become missiles in the gale-force wind.



## Ven. Guo Jun Visits NY

Ven. Guo Jun, Abbot of Mahabodhi Monastery in Singapore, visited the New York area in November. At CMC he gave a talk on “Chan in Modern Life” (an audio file is available at the CMC website.) At NYIT he gave a talk titled “Heart of Chan”, in

which he discussed the nature of the world (*samsara*), the nature of enlightenment (*nirvana*), Chan practice (*marga*) and bringing Chan to life (*phala*). Afterwards he visited DDRC (where he served as Abbot from 2005-2007.) While there he was interviewed and filmed for a video documentary. Ven. Guo Jun is a Dharma heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen. His new book is called *Essential Chan Buddhism: The Character and Spirit of Chinese Zen*.

## DDMSWCF News

The Dharma Drum Mountain Social Welfare and Charity Foundation (DDMSWCF) set off on October 7, 2012 for a five-day mission to Haiti, which suffered a deadly earthquake in January 2012, killing approximately 270,000, injuring over 3 million and destroying 90% of buildings in the capital Port-au-Prince. This is the DDMSWCF's third mission to Haiti to inspect DDM's post-earthquake construction projects, set up to oversee humanitarian relief and rebuilding soon after the earthquake occurred. DDM has been organizing relief material allotment and medical support for local orphanages and hospitals in collaboration with Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Spanish for “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”, a Christian mission) Deutschland.

DDMSWF has successfully brought its seven-year relief programs in southern Leyte Province, Philippines to an end. The programs helped thousands of victims in both material and monetary terms after the mud sliding disaster of February 2006 that killed more than two thousand people. Soon after the disaster, DDMSWCF, with the help of local Chinese business societies, initiated relief programs for victimized orphans. With this long-term material support, children were able to continue their studies, with some soon to graduate from university.

## *Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund*

Dear Friends, Amitofo!

Hurricane Sandy slammed the East Coast of America on October 29, 2012 and caused power outages for more than eight million residents. At the same time, the storm whipped torrents of water over the coastal areas and destroyed thousands of homes. The damages are extensive and devastating.

Feeling the pain of the hurricane survivors, DDMBA North America is now launching a fundraising campaign to assist the residents of New York City and New Jersey impacted by the hurricane. With the funds raised, we will provide the survivors with basic necessities and medical supplies. Hopefully our tokens of loving-kindness will meet their urgent needs and bring relief to their frustration.

If you are interested in helping the hurricane survivors, your donation is greatly appreciated. You may send a check to your local DDMBA Chapter and indicate the donation is for Hurricane Sandy Relief. You may also send a check to DDMBA, 90-56 Corona Ave. Elmhurst, NY 11373. For more information, please call 718-592-6593. We will do our best to promptly deliver your loving-kindness to the hands of the hurricane survivors.

Together, let's pray for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. May they quickly recover from this devastating disaster.

Sincerely,  
DDMBA North America

# *The Future* Retreats, classes and other upcoming events

*Schedule is subject to change. Please check the website for updated and detailed information, or to register for activities online.*

## *“Zen & Inner Peace”*

Chan Master Sheng Yen’s  
weekly television program  
Now on ICN Cable  
Channel 24.2 in NY  
Fridays 6:45 pm - 7:00 pm



### *Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Bush, NY* (845) 744-8114 - [ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org](mailto:ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org) - [www.dharmadrumretreat.org](http://www.dharmadrumretreat.org)

#### REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Thursday Evening Meditation	7:00–9:00 pm	Sitting, walking, moving meditation, Dharma talk.
Sunday Service	9:00 am–12:00 pm	Sitting, walking, moving meditation, Dharma talk, chanting.

#### RETREATS (Pre-registration advised)

1-Day & Children’s Program	Saturday Jan 5	9:00 am–5:00 pm Led by Ven. Chang Wen
	Saturday Feb 2	
	Saturday Mar 23	
3-Day Retreat	Feb 15-17	Led by Ven. Chang Wen
3-Day Beginner’s Mind	Mar 1-3	Led by Nancy Bonardi and Rikki Asher
7-Day Chan Retreat	Mar 9-16	Led by Guo Gu (Jimmy Yu)

#### CLASSES (Pre-registration advised)

Beginner’s Meditation Class	Saturday Jan 12	9:30 am–4:00 pm Led by Ven. Chang Wen
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#### SPECIAL EVENTS

Passing on the Lamp of Wisdom	Sunday, Feb 3	11:00 am–12:30 pm Special Dharma Talk
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# Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens, NY

(718) 592-6593 - [chancenter@gmail.com](mailto:chancenter@gmail.com) - [www.chancenter.org](http://www.chancenter.org) - [www.ddmba.org](http://www.ddmba.org)

## REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Monday Night Chanting	7:30–9:15 pm	Last Monday of each month: Recitation of the 88 Buddhas' names and repentance.
Tuesday Night Sitting Group	7:00–9:30 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma sharing, recitation of the Heart Sutra.
Saturday Sitting Group	9:00 am–3:00 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, video teachings by Master Sheng Yen
Saturday Night Movies	6:30–9:30 pm	With Dr. Peter Lin; screenings and discussions of films. Check website for dates and film description.
Sunday Open House	10:00 am–4:00 pm	See below

## CHAN MEDITATION CENTER (CMC) SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE

Sunday Schedule	10:00 am–11:00 am	Sitting Meditation
	11:00 am–12:30 pm	Dharma Talks
	12:30 pm–1:00 pm	Food Offering and Announcements
	1:00 pm–1:45 pm	Vegetarian Lunch
Dharma Study Group	1:45 pm–3:00 pm	(Every 2nd and 4th Sunday) Led by Harry Miller and Bill Wright
Chanting and Recitation	1st Sunday 2-3:30 pm	Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
	2nd Sunday 2-4:00 pm	Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony Dharani
	3rd Sunday 2-4:00 pm	Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra Chanting Service
	Last Sunday 2-3:30 pm	Bodhisattva Precept Recitation Ritual
	(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the month, there will be a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service on the 4th Sunday.)	

## RETREATS (Pre-registration advised)

One-Day Retreat	Saturday Jan 26	9:00 am–5:00 pm
	Saturday Feb 2	9:00 am–5:00 pm Lamp of Wisdom Led by Ven. Abbot Guo Xing
	Saturday Feb 23	9:00 am–5:00 pm
	Saturday Mar 30	9:00 am–5:00 pm

## CLASSES (Pre-registration advised)

Beginner's Meditation Parts I & II	Saturday Mar 9 Saturday Mar 23	9:30 am–12:00 pm Led by Dr. Rikki Asher
Intermediate Meditation	Saturday, Apr 13	9:30am – 3:30pm Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
Taijiquan	Thursdays on-going 7:30-9:00 pm	Led by David Ngo \$25 per 4-week month, \$80 for 16 classes First Thursday of the month free for newcomers

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Passing on the Lamp of Wisdom	Sunday Feb 3	11:00 am–12:30 pm Special Dharma Talk by Ven. Abbot Guo Xing
New Year's Eve Repentance Chanting	Saturday Feb 9	9:30 pm–12:10 am
Welcoming the New Year With Mindful Prayers	Sunday Feb 10	10:00 am–3:00 pm Special Dharma Talk and Universal Buddha Dharma Assembly

# *Chan Meditation Center Affiliates*

NEW YORK - USA HEADQUARTERS			
<b>Chan Meditation Center (CMC)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA)</li> <li>• Dharma Drum Publications</li> <li>• Chan Magazine</li> </ul>	90-56 Corona Avenue Elmhurst, NY 11373	(718) 592-6593 Fax: (718) 592-0717	ddmbausa@yahoo.com www.chancenter.org www.ddmba.org
<b>Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC)</b>	184 Quannacut Road Pine Bush, NY 12566	(845) 744-8114 Fax: (845) 744-4753	ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org www.dharmadrumretreat.org
TAIWAN - WORLD HEADQUARTERS			
Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education	No.14-5, Lin 7, Sanchieh Village, Chinshan, Taipei	02-2498-7171 02-2498-7174 Fax: 02-2498-9029	webmaster@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
Dharma Drum International Meditation Group	Contact: Antonio Saturdays, 2:00 – 5:00 pm Jiantan Practice Center	02-2893-4646 ext. 6504	contact@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
Nung Chan Monastery	No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road Peitou, Taipei	02-2893-3161 Fax: 02-2895-8969	
NORTH AMERICA - CANADA			
<b>Toronto DDMBA Ontario</b>	Angela Chang	(416) 855-0531	ddmba.toronto@gmail.com www.ddmba-ontario.ca
<b>Vancouver DDMBA Vancouver Center</b>	8240 No.5 Road, Richmond, BC, Canada V6Y 2V4	(604) 277-1357 Fax : (604) 277-1352	info@ddmba.ca www.ddmba.ca
NORTH AMERICA - MEXICO			
<b>Mar de Jade Oceanfront Retreat Center Chacala, Nayarit, Mexico</b>	Laura del Valle MD Daily meditation; regular retreats	(800) 257-0532 01-800-505-8005	info@mardejade.com www.mardejade.com
NORTH AMERICA - UNITED STATES			
<b>California</b>	Los Angeles	Ashley Chiang (626) 350-4388	bluebean88@earthlink.net www.ddmbala.org
	Sacramento	Janice Tsai	ddmbasaca@yahoo.com
	San Francisco	Kyle Shih (650) 988-6928	ddmbasf@gmail.com www.ddmbasf.org
<b>Colorado</b>		Yun-tung Chu	tomchu100@gmail.com

Local organizations affiliated with CMC and DDMBA provide a place to practice with and learn from other Chan practitioners. If you have questions about schedules, activities or publications you may find useful information at one of our affiliates near you.

NORTH AMERICA - UNITED STATES			
<b>Connecticut</b>	Fairfield	Ming-Mei Peng	contekalice@aol.com
	Hartford	Linyung Wang	cmchartfordct@gmail.com
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	Miami	May Lee (954) 432-8683	
	Orlando	Chih-Hui Chang	chihho2004@yahoo.com
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	Tampa	Nancy Kau	skau@tampabay.rr.com
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<b>Washington D.C</b>	.	Jack Chang	chiehhsiungchang@yahoo.com



# Chan Meditation Center Affiliates

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	Sydney	Agnes Chow 61-4-1318-5603	agneschow323@hotmail.com
<b>Hong Kong</b>	Kowloon	Cheung Sha Wan 852-2865-3110 Fax: 852-2591-4810	Alexandra Industrial Building Room 205, 2/F BLK B, 23-27 Wing Hong St.
<b>Malaysia</b>	Buddhism Information Centre Block B-3-15 & B-3-16, 8 Avenue Pusat Perdagangan Sek. 8 Jala Sg. Jernih 46050 Petaling Jaya, Selangor	603-79600841 603-7319245 Fax: 603-7331413 Fax: 603-79600842	kahon@pc.jaring.my www.media.com.my/zen
<b>New Zealand</b>	Auckland	64-9-4788430	No. 9 Scorpio PL. Mairangi Bay
<b>Singapore</b>	Singapore Liaison Office No. 10 Second Avenue Singapore 266660	Ms. Yeh Yin Shia Tel/fax: (65) 6469 6565 Cell: 9745 6565.	ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw
<b>EUROPE</b>			
<b>Belgium</b>	Luxemburg	352-400080	15, Rue Jean Schaack L-2563 Bonnevole GD.DE
<b>Croatia</b>	Zagreb Dharmaaloka Buddhist Center Dordiceva 23, 10000	Zarko Andricevic Tel/fax: 385 1 481 00 74	info@dharmaloka.org www.dharmaloka.org
<b>Poland</b>	Warsaw Zwiazek Buddystow Czan ul. Promienna 12 05-540 Zalesie Górne	Pawel Rosciszewski 48 22 7362252 Fax: 48 22 7362251 GSM +48601224999	budwod@budwod.com.pl www.czan.org.pl
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	Bern Haus Sein Bruungasse 16 CH3011	Hildi Thalmann 31 352 2243	hthalmann@gmx.net www.chan-bern.ch
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Western Chan Fellowship 24 Woodgate Avenue Bury Lancashire, BL9 7RU	Alysun Jones	secretary@westernchanfellowship.org www.westernchanfellowship.org

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**Dluzew, Poland, March 05-15, 2013**

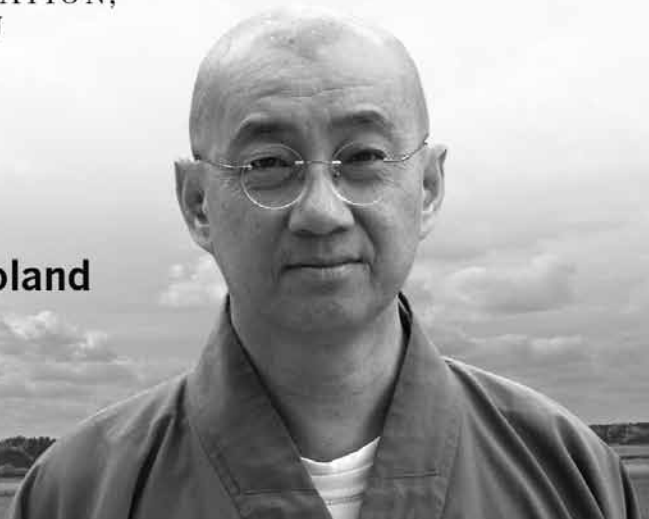
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Date: **August 1-11, 2013**

Location: **Dluzew near Warsaw, Poland**



**Contact:** Pawel Rosciszewski, ul. Promienna 12, 05-540 Zalesie Gorne, Poland, **e-mail:** budwod@budwod.com.pl  
**mobile phone:** +48601224999, **phone** (48) 22 7362252, **fax** (48) 22 7362251 **http://www.czhan.org.pl**