

Bodhi Stand

COMPILED BY SHRMANERIKA HENG LIANG



UPASIKA PAO-CHI CHEN

Instructor of Fine Arts in Residence at Dharma Realm Buddhist University since the fall of 1981, Upasika Pao-Chi-Chen feels that she has found an ideal place to work and study the Proper Dharma. She relates:

"During my lifetime I have lived and extensively traveled throughout many countries from Asia to Europe and now to America. I was seeking a quiet place, but everywhere in the world is filled with greed, hatred, and stupidity. I was extremely discouraged until I came to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. This is the most wonderful place in the world, and I am well impressed with it. Although just having arrived here, I feel as though I've lived here for a long time."

Pao-Chi Chen was born in Shanghai, China, where she first began to study traditional Chinese painting at the age of eight. After graduating from the Fine Arts Department of the National Central University in Nanking in 1947, she traveled to Paris to study at "l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts," "l'Académie d'André Lhote," "l'Académie Julian," "l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière," and others. Her studies there gave her a thorough knowledge of the techniques of Western painting. One-person exhibitions of her work have been held at the Galerie au Seuil Etroit in Paris and Tornigallery in Helsinki, Finland in 1958; again in Paris at the Galerie Cigaps in 1960; and in Taiwan, Korea, and Japan in 1969. Her paintings have also been exhibited in such countries as Italy, West Germany, Spain, and New Zealand. She was winner of the International Award in Painting in Deauville, France, in 1957; Award of Youth at Colombes la Garennes, France, in 1959; and Award for Composition at Deauville in 1960.

In 1961, Pao-Chi left Paris for Taiwan, Republic of China, where she took a post as instructor of fine arts and taught oil painting, drawing, water color, general fine arts, and French language until 1973. In 1973 she returned to Paris where she lived and taught privately until 1980. Then, in November 1980, after first hearing about the existence of Dharma Realm Buddhist University, she arrived in the United States, but sought for the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in vain. She visited members of her family in Michigan and Los Angeles before contacting her brother in Taiwan, a faithful Buddhist disciple, who made inquiries leading finally to her introduction to the Venerable Abbot at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Upasika Pao-Chi was born into a devout Buddhist family. Her mother, a pure Buddhist, often brought her to worship the Buddha and as Pao-Chi Chen was the youngest child, her mother would allow her to present the offering, saying, "This is a chance for you to draw near to the Buddha." Recalling that time, she relates:

"When we sing the offering praise before the Buddha here at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, it takes me back to my childhood when my family would perform many Buddhist ceremonies. My sister and I recited Sutras every day, though at the time we didn't understand their principles., The big pine trees here remind me of the temples where we used to take our vacations in Mainland China and Taiwan."

But in later years her inquisitiveness led her to investigate other religions, as well:

"I have looked into many other religions, but I am still most deeply touched by the great compassion that the Buddha has for all living creatures and not just exclusively for human beings. Practicing Buddhism makes me quiet and clear, it guides me to a calm and peaceful state. Of all religions, Buddhism is the most peaceful. Since violence cannot be subdued with more violence, I feel certain that by following the principles of Buddhism, we can save the world."

As well as instructing classes in traditional Chinese brush painting and Western painting and theory at Dharma Realm Buddhist University, Upasika Pao-Chi has recently completed a translation into French of The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra with commentary by Venerable Tripitaka Master Hua.