

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs



*VENERABLE CH'AN MASTER TS'UNG NIEN
THIRTY-SEVENTH GENERATIONAL PATRIARCH*

The Master's family name was Hao. He was from Ts'ao Chou Province. In his youth, in his own Province, he served a master who shaved his head, and then went to Ch'ih Yang and visited Dharma Master Nan Ch'uan.

Master Ch'uan asked him, "Who is the host of this Shramanera?"

Master Ts'ung Nien came before him, made obeisance, and said, "The chilling cold of mid winter is overpowering. May the Venerable One take good care of his ten thousand blessings."

Master Ch'uan saw that he was a Dharma vessel and granted that he was a room-entering disciple.

One day the Master asked Master Ch'uan, "What is the Way?"

Master Ch'uan said, "The Way is not something you can know or not know. Knowing is false; not knowing is indeterminate. If you truly penetrate to the Way in which all doubts are gone, it is like the great void--vast and expansive. Why force a name upon it?" As these words fell, the Master was suddenly enlightened. Afterwards he went to

Vaidurya Platform at Sung Mountain to receive the Precepts. Later he traveled to Kuan Yin Academy and his esoteric proclamations spread throughout the world, awakening faith and submissiveness in all who heard them.

On the second day of the fourth lunar month of the Kan Ning Reign Period of the T'ang Dynasty, he knelt on his right knee and entered the stillness. His lifespan was 120 years and his posthumous title was Great Master Chen Chi (True Limit).

A verse in praise says:

A turnip from Chen Chou,
A gourd on the eastern wall.
In the front yard stands a cypress:
The whole earth is befuddled.
I have Chao Chou's password;
And you are not at fault.
Pointing to the south, yet speaking about the north,
We smash the tea kettle!