

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs

-translated by Bkikshuni Heng Tao



*Thirty-eighth Generational Patriarch
Dhyana Master Tao Ming of Mu Chou*

The Master was a son of the Ch'en family. At the time of his birth, the entire household was lit up with a rare brilliance. The Master had double pupils in his eyes, and seven star-shaped configurations on his face. When he went to K'ai Yuan Temple, he experienced a strong sense of recognition and beseeched his parents to allow him to leave the home-life. Upon receiving the Precepts, he traveled about visiting the different teachers of his day. He meshed with Huang Po's intent, and Patriarch Huang named him Head of the Assembly. Dhyana Master Lin Chi I Hsuan received personal guidance from the Master as did Yun Men Wen Yen. Yun Men came and asked about the Tao (889 A.D.). The Master slammed the door three times in his face, the last time breaking Yen's foot. As a result of that series of encounters, Yen was able to become enlightened. Then the Master directed him to study under Master Hsueh Feng.

Later, the Master went back to K'ai Yuan, strung his own straw sandals, and took care of his parents. When the Huang Ch'ou bandits entered the province, the Master hung a huge straw slipper by the city gate, and no matter how hard the bandits tried, they could not lift the sandal. Thereupon they withdrew and the entire province enjoyed freedom from disturbance due to the Master's grace.

As his own end approached, the Master summoned his disciples to him and said, "My conditions with this area are now coming to an end. It's time for me to go." After making that announcement, he sat in full lotus and entered the stillness. The people from that area cremated his body with fragrant woods. His sharira were as profuse as raindrops. The natives fashioned a statue of the Master and placed it in the temple to commemorate him.

A verse in his praise says:

His potential was swift like lightning;
His functioning was like that of a divine dragon.
There were very strange happenings,
But look for them--they are all empty!
For him it was as easy as letting his two arms fall,
Yet he established two schools.
He hung up a single straw slipper
And the Ch'ou bandits had to run far away from this gentleman.