

News from the Dharma Realm

Trip to China

Earlier this summer, a group of monks representing the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association went to Shanghai to help administer a Higher Ordination Ceremony at Dragon Flower Monastery. While in China, the monks had an opportunity to visit Buddhism's four holy mountains. After they returned to the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in late June, they gave a series of talks to share their experiences in China with the assembly. This talk was given by Dharma Master Sure in Wonderful Words Hall on July 2, 1990.

We had an opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the four holy mountains, the traditional four holy mountains, but we added one at the end of the trip which was, in fact, perhaps the holiest of the mountains, because there is genuine cultivation still going on. It's Jung Nan Shan, the ancestral temple (Dzu Ting 祖庭) and the original source of the Vinaya School in China.

In the Tang dynasty, Pure Karma Monastery was where the Ven. Dau Sywan cultivated and perfected his *gung fu*. So, I would like to say a little about our experience at Jung Nan Shan, tell about some of the stories we heard and some of the sights we saw, and to share our experiences with everyone at what we consider the fifth holy mountain.

We started out from Xian (西安) in the afternoon on what the Chinese call a "bread bus" (because it's a van shaped like a loaf of bread), and it was raining. We went for miles out into the countryside and stopped beside what looked like a pile of rocks beside the road. Otherwise there was nothing very distinguishing; it was just an old crumbling wall.

The guide said, "This is it, everybody out!" So, we took umbrellas and started hiking up in the rain. He told us to go up about a mile—actually it was three kilometers—and we hiked up and up and up.

The scenery of the surrounding mountains was awesome. The rocks are layered in folds, just like the ribs of a person. In the rain, with the lush vegetation that grows there, every plant seemed to be putting forth a different kind of fragrance. All the way up everyone was constantly commenting on the scent of the plants and the flowers. The environment was not at all like Wu Tai Mountain, which is very dry and very harsh.

On Jung Nan Shan the *ling chi*, the efficacious energy, was extremely rich and full. We walked up a trail paved with stone steps that weighed over two-hundred-pounds, slabs that had been hewn out of rock, probably centuries ago, and they made the hiking very easy. They had been pulled and cut by hand with great effort by patriarchs in the past.

Jung Nan Shan is a very long belt of mountains. It's a section of the Chin Ling Range; it's not just a single peak. It is said that there may be thousands of square kilometers within

the perimeter of the range called Jung Nan Shan. Nobody really knows quite how many peaks there are.

Accesses into the mountain are called *shan kou*—passes. There are seventy-two that surround it in all. It's oblong shaped; you can go many, many miles before you come to the end of the Jung Nan region. The locals say there are cultivators in hermitages in every one of these passes, every one of the seventy-two.

Our trail led up to Jing Yeh Lü Sz—Pure Karma Vinaya Monastery, which was the Way-Place of Ven. Dau Sywan. Not only did the Ven. Master Dau Sywan make this mountain his *aranya*, his quiet hermitage, but in recent times, the Ven. Syu Lau lived in Lion Hermitage (獅子茅蓬), for two or three years. This was the place where he entered samadhi for so long that the yams he was cooking for lunch grew an inch-long mold.

Also, Master Yin Gwang of the Lotus School, of the Pure Land School, also lived in Jung Nan Shan for a long time. The Ven. Master Hung Yi, when he came to reinstate the Vinaya school in this last century, stayed at Jung Nan Shan in a "*maupeng*" hermitage and the Ven. Ch'an Master Lai Gwo also lived there for three years. The Lion Hermitage, Master Hsu Yun's "*maupeng*," his hermitage, is still being used at present by a young cultivator who is now in seclusion reading the Tripitaka.

It is said that the wild boars go to Lion Hermitage because of the many potato patches. The cultivators in the mountain grow their own food for the most part, and the potatoes are especially good, so the wild boars, being fond of potatoes, come as they used to when Ven. Syu Lau cultivated there.

Not only are the flora, the trees, the grasses very lush on Jung Nan Shan, but the animals that live there also testify to a very natural and a very efficacious atmosphere.

to be continued...