

The Bodhi Seal of the Patriarchs



*The Thirty-fourth Generational Patriarch
Ch'an Master Hui Fang from Nyu T'ou*

The Master was of the P'u family in Ren County, Yen Ling Province. He went to K'ai Shan (OPENING GOODNESS) Monastery to leave the home-life and receive the Complete Precepts. He soon gained a thorough understanding of the Sutras and Shastras. Later he went to pay homage and bow to Ch'an Master Yen and asked about the secrets and essentials of Dharma. Master Yen looked carefully at him and found him to be a true vessel of the Dharma, capable of shouldering the responsibility of the Proper Dharma. Thereupon he revealed for him the Mind Seal. The Master was instantaneously led to enlightenment. Later he transmitted the Dharma to Fa Chih (Upholding Dharma) Ch'an Master. Then he went to live alone in a mountain hut. When the time of his extinction drew near, he saw an assembly of more than five hundred beings with their hair piled high and flowing--Bodhisattvas, it seemed, who each held a banner and flowers as they requested the Master to lecture. He also moved a mountain spirit to manifest as a great python who appeared before his chamber and seemed on the verge of tears.

In the first year of the T'ien P'eng reign period of the T'ang dynasty, on the first day of the eighth month, he manifested the stillness, whereupon the mountains and groves turned white. The waters ceased to flow. Both those of the Way and commoners mourned, for his renowned moved mountains and valleys. He lived seventy years and was a precepted Sanghan for forty of them.

A verse in his praise says:

One mark is no mark,
 who can fathom him?
One body is many bodies
 and the myriad things all become true
His movements were like those of clouds
 on a mountain peak.
His stillness was like the sounds of
 a spirit of the deep valleys.
He responded to opportunities like
 the moon in a thousand streams.
His intent and his verbal expression
 perfectly meshed.

Another verse in his praise says:

He was a capable Dharma vessel and could
 take up the Thus Come One's responsibilities.
Suddenly he opened enlightenment and
 exclaimed, "How rare indeed!"
He dwelt in seclusion in a mountain cave
 until his Nirvana.
Then suddenly he saw a multitude
 of sages--an exhausted vision.
A mountain spirit became a python
 and wept out of regard for him.
The waters in the streams stopped flowing
 in expression of their sorrow.
The grass and trees turned white
 --an extraordinary event.
Heaven and earth both cried
 at the passing of this Pillar of Virtue.



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