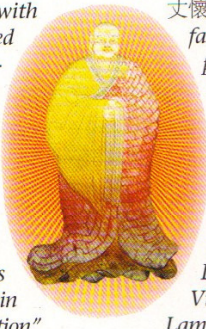


CONFIDENCE IN THE MIND INSCRIPTION XIN XIN MING (信心銘)

By the Great Master Seng Can (僧璨大師). Translated By Adrian Chan-Wyles PhD

Translator's Note: This new translation of the Xin Xin Ming is drawn from the original Chinese text preserved in the Transmission of the Lamp, with introductory material extracted from the Chinese language biography of Seng Can entitled 僧璨. I have retained the original traditional Chinese text, and added the modern pinyin rendering, and translated line for line. The Xin Xin Ming (信心銘) is believed by some scholars to have similarities with a different text entitled "Xin Ming" (心銘), or "Mind Inscription" attributed to Ch'an master Niu Tou Fa Rong (牛頭法融) [594-657 CE]. Chinese sources state that the earliest ascription of the Xin Xin Ming (信心銘) to the 3rd Ch'an Patriarch, the Great Master Seng Can (僧璨大師) [510-606 CE] appears



in the Baizhang Extensive Record (百丈廣錄—Baizhang—Baizhang Guang Lu). Ch'an master Baizhang Huai Hai (百丈懷海) [720-814 CE] was a very famous Tang Dynasty Buddhist practitioner who inherited the Dharma from Ch'an master Ma Zu Dao Yi (馬祖道一) [709-788 CE], and is famous for his association with the development of Ch'an monastic discipline. The text entitled "Jing De Chuan Deng Lu" (景德傳燈錄), or the "Bright Virtuous Transmission of the Lamp Record", accepts the Baizhang Guang Lu ascription of Seng Can as the author of the Xin Xin Ming text. The Transmission of the Lamp can be dated from the Song Dynasty emperor—Jing De—(whose name appears in the title) who ruled between 1004-1007 CE.

Master Seng Can was the 3rd Ch'an Patriarch. He inherited the Ch'an Dharma from the 2nd Ch'an Patriarch Hui Ke (慧可) [487-593 CE], and transmitted it to the 4th Ch'an Patriarch Dao Xin (道信) [580-651 CE]. The Transmission of the Lamp states that Ch'an Master Hui Ke transmitted the Dharma to Seng Can with the following gatha;

*In cultivated causal ground, the seeds of (Dharma) flowers are planted
From cultivated causal ground, the seeds of (Dharma) flowers bloom.
Yet in essence no seeds are planted,
And no flowers are grown.*

Seng Can eventually transmitted the Dharma to the 4th Ch'an Patriarch Dao Xin with the following gatha;



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*Planting good (karmic) seeds prepares the causal ground,
From which (Dharma) flowers can grow.
If good karmic seeds are not planted,
Then no Dharma flowers will manifest.*

These two transmission gatha create a dialectical situation whereby Hui Ke's emphasis upon 'void', is supplemented by Seng Can's emphasis upon 'form'. Taken together, the two gatha exhibit the idea that 'void' can not exist without 'form', and vice versa.

The Xin Xin Ming—as an extended gatha—falls in philosophical content, into the exact middle ground between these two expressions of Dharma transmission. In this respect, the Xin Xin Ming appears to be an elaboration of the these two transmission gatha, placing it squarely within the traditional view that Seng Can composed it as a means to express the true Dharma of the Ch'an School as he both inherited and understood it to be.

During his lifetime there was a great persecution of Buddhism, and Seng Can had to spend many years living deep in the hills far away from the authorities. Seng Can first met Hui Ke when still a layman. When Hui Ke freed his mind, Seng Can was ordained. He trained with Hui Ke for a number of years, and was known to be friendly and compassionate. When he died, the inscription on his tomb compared him with the enlightened layman Vimalakirti.

The Xin Xin Ming is believed to be Seng Can's distillation of Chinese Ch'an doctrine into a single poetical expression that is easy to remember and transmit. It is a fusion of Buddhist and Daoist thought, combined to form a coherent synthesis. The historicity of Seng Can receives support from an ancient inscription unearthed in Hangzhou in 1982. The inscription on brick reads:

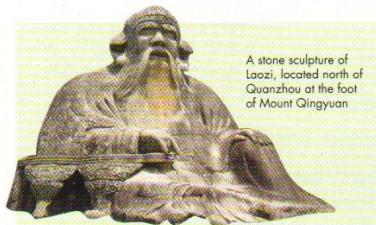
"During the 7th lunar month, of the 12th year of the reign of the Great Sui Dynasty emperor Kai Huang (592 CE), the great master

Seng Can lived in hiding on the peak of the Wan Gong Mountain. A tower was raised as a way to confidently remember this event."
(大隋开皇十二年 (592) 七月僧璨大师隐化于舒之皖公山岫，结塔供养。道信为记。)

The Xin Xin Ming is a Ch'an text that does not rely upon Buddhist teachings as found in the sutras. It says nothing of monastic discipline or stages of meditative absorption; this is a Ch'an text written from the perspective of the mind that is already enlightened and does not compromise the truth of its realization. Like the middle way found throughout the Buddhist sutras, Seng Can advocates a position of attainment that is centred and balanced between all extremes, whilst simultaneously including all those extremes in its expansive harmony. It is a permanent realisation beyond the limitations (and scope) of time and space.

The Xin Xin Ming advocates the ordering of the mind processes, solely through the development of the mind processes, so that all duality is instantaneously transcended in a single moment. Ch'an enlightenment as advocated by Seng Can is nothing less than a complete and radical re-alignment of the functioning of the human mind. It is a developmental procedure not dependent upon the practice of meditation (which is never mentioned), or sutra reading, but is rather a demonstration of a living tradition of trans-

(continued on page 10)



A stone sculpture of Laozi, located north of Quanzhou at the foot of Mount Qingyuan

Difficult things have their origin in that which is easy, and great things in that which is small.

—Laozi



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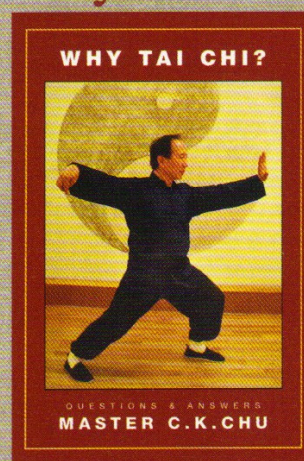
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Xin Xing Ming:

(continued from page 9)

mitted transformation that spreads from mind to mind, from one living human to another, down through the generations. In this respect the Xin Xin Ming is a pivotal Ch'an text that exhibits the pure spirit of Ch'an Buddhism unpolluted by deluded intellect, misplaced faith, or superstitious thoughts and practices. Seng Can gives the distinct impression that enlightenment is merely the product of deciding not to be deluded. Perhaps this is the simple message that lies at the heart of all Buddhism, but which has become obscured through centuries of unnecessary and excessive intellection that has served to make Buddhism more worldlier than transcendental. The proper Buddhist path, according to Seng Can, is that which adheres to the correct Dao, or Way. In this poem is found the Chinese accommodation of Indian thought, as the Great Dao of nature is equated with that of the vast emptiness of Buddhism. Seng Can's Xin Xin Ming sets the record straight.

New Translation of the Xin Xin Ming (信心銘)

至道無難 唯嫌揀擇 但莫憎愛 洞然明白
毫釐有差 天地懸隔

(Zhì dào wú nán wéi xián jiǎnzé dàn mò
zēng ài dòng rán míngbái háolí yǒu chà
tiāndì xuángé)

To reach the Dao is not difficult. Only discrimination between hate and love obscures understanding. The tiniest difference (like the width of a hair) separates the divine sky from the broad earth.

欲得現前 莫存順逆 違順相爭 是為心病
不識玄旨 徒勞念靜

(Yù de xiàn qián mò cún shùnnì wéi shùn
xiāng zhēng shì wéi xīnbìng bù shí xuán zhǐ
túláo niàn jìng)

For reality to manifest here and now, do not distinguish between good and bad. To discriminate in this way is a disease of the mind, which obscures the realization of the mysterious knowledge, and renders the practice of quiet study futile.

Philosophy

圓同太虛 無欠無餘 良由取捨 所以不如
莫逐有緣 勿住空忍

(Yuán tóng tài xūwú qiàn wúyú liáng yóu
qǔshě suǒyǐ bùrú mò zhù yǒuyuán wú zhù
kōng rěn)

The rounded void is immense; nothing lacking, nothing excessive. Too much taking and leaving, and it will not be known. Do not chase conditioned reality, nor dwell in the enduring void.

一種平懷 泯然自盡 止動歸止 止更彌動
唯滯兩邊 寧知一種

(Yīzhǒng píng huái mǐn rán zìjìn zhǐ dòng
guī zhǐ zhǐ gèng mí dòng wéi zhī liǎngbiān
níng zhī yīzhǒng)

A unified mind is at peace, with the sense of Self dissolved. Ending movement, to return to stillness; is nothing but continuous movement. Both movement and stillness lose their distinction. It is better to realise oneness of thought.

一種不通 兩處失功 遣有沒有 從空背空
多言多慮 轉不相應

(Yīzhǒng bùtōng liǎng chù shī gōng qiǎn
yǒu méiyǒu cóng kōng bèi kōng duō yán
duō lǚ zhuǎn bù xiāngyīng)

If oneness is not realised, both aspects lose their power. Banishing existence does not transcend it; to chase emptiness does not secure it. With many words and many thoughts, it is obscured from sight. Stop words and halt thought and insight will penetrate all things. Return to the root and obtain the purpose. Attachment to the light loses the Ch'an tradition. Reflect the light for even a moment, and the void is illuminated.

前空轉變 皆由妄見 不用求真 唯須息見
二見不住 慎勿追尋

(Qián kōng zhuǎnbiàn jiē yóu wàng jiàn
bùyòng qiú zhēn wéi xū xī jiàn èrjiàn bù
zhù shèn wù zhuīxún)

The void is transformed, as deluded views cease. Do not seek reality, but cease generating false views. Do not dwell in duality, and be careful not to seek.

(continued on next page)

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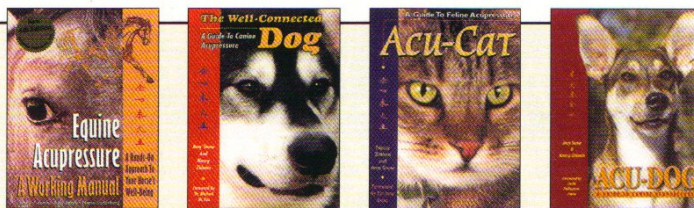
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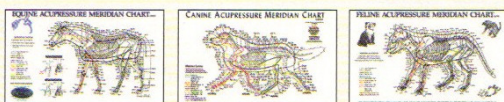
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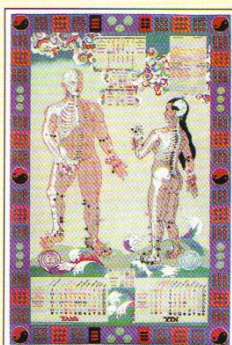
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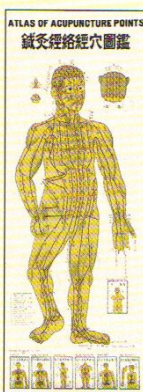
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Philosophy

Xin Xing Ming:

(continued from page 11)

纔有是非 紛然失心 二由一有 一亦莫守
一心不生 萬法無咎

(Cái yǒu shìfēi fēn rán shī xīn èr yóu yī yǒuyī yì mò shǒu yīxīn bù shēng wàn fǎ wú jiù)

If 'yes' and 'no' exist, there is confusion in the mind. Duality arises from the one—but do not be obsessed with the one. The one-mind is unborn, and the ten thousand things are without blame.

無咎無法 不生不心 能隨境滅 境逐能沉
境由能境 能由境能

(Wú jiù wúfǎ bù shēng bù xīn néng suí jìng miè jìng zhú néng chén jìng yóu néng jìng néng yóu jìng néng)

Without blame, all is unborn—unborn is non-mind. Actions are lost in worldly conditions; worldly conditions are obscured by actions. Worldly conditions arise from actions; actions come to fruition through worldly conditions.

欲知兩段 元是一空 一空同兩 齊含萬象
不見精麤 寧有偏黨

(Yù zhī liǎng duàn yuán shì yīkōng yīkōng tóng liǎng qí hán wànxiàng bùjiàn jīng cū níng yǒu piān dǎng)

Understand that duality originates within a unified empty (state of) oneness that contains the ten thousand things. Do not perceive fine and coarse, as this is a bias view.

大道體寬 無易無難 小見狐疑 轉急轉遲
執之失度 必入邪路

(Dàdào tǐ kuān wú yì wú nán xiǎo jiàn hú yí zhuǎn jí zhuǎn chí zhí zhī shī dù bì rù xié lù)

The Great Dao is vast and void, nothing easy—nothing difficult. A narrow mind with suspicious thoughts, moving too slow or too fast, and attaching itself to the world, has entered a heretical path. To release everything is natural and correct; then in essence there is no coming or going. Let essential nature unite with the Dao, and be free from all worry. Attachment to clever thought obscures the truth—as if in a daze.

**Don't let ancient knowledge
become a thing of the past!**

Philosophy

不好勞神 何用疏親 欲取一乘 勿惡六塵
六塵不惡 還同正覺

(Bù hǎo láoshén hé yòng shū qīn yù qǔ yī chéng wù è liù chén liù chén bù è hái tóng zhèng jué)

Do not belabour the spirit; the familiar and unfamiliar has no purpose. To discover the one vehicle, do not reject the six senses. If the six senses are not rejected, then they equate to complete enlightenment.

智者無為 愚人自縛 法無異法 妄自愛著
將心用心 豈非大錯

(Zhìzhě wúwéi yúrén zìfù fǎ wú yì fǎ wàng zì' àizhe jiāng xīn yòngxīn qǐfēi dà cuò)

The wise are non-active, whilst the ignorant tie themselves up. All Dharmas are distinct, and yet the deluded self desires them all. The mind seeking the mind as an object, how can this not be a great error?

迷生寂亂 悟無好惡 一切二邊 良由斟酌
夢幻空華 何勞把捉

(Mí shēng jì luàn wù wú hào wù yī qiè èr biān liáng yóu zhēn zhuó mèng huàn kōng huá hé láo bǎ zhuō)

Delusion generates silence and chaos; enlightenment is not good or bad. Dualistic existence arises within delusion. Dreams of empty splendour can not be grasped.

得失是非 一時放卻 眼若不眠 諸夢自除
心若不異 萬法一如

(Déshī shìfēi yīshí fàng què yǎn ruò bù mián zhū mèng zì chú xīn ruò bù yì wàn fǎ yī rú)

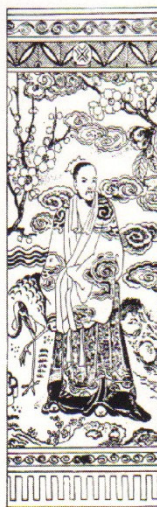
Gain and loss, right and wrong, must be dropped here and now. If the eyes do not close in sleep, all dreaming ceases. A mind that does not discriminate unifies the ten thousand things.

一如體玄 兀爾忘緣 萬法齊觀 歸復自然
泯其所以 不可方比

(Yī rú tǐ xuán wù ěr wàng yuán wàn fǎ qí guān guī fù zì rán mǐn qí suǒ yǐ bù kě fāng bǐ)

Oneness is a profound mystery that transcends worldly circumstance, and reconciles the ten thousand things. Each thing returns to its natural essence and each is extinguished. This is beyond compare.

(continued on page 14)



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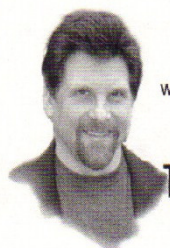
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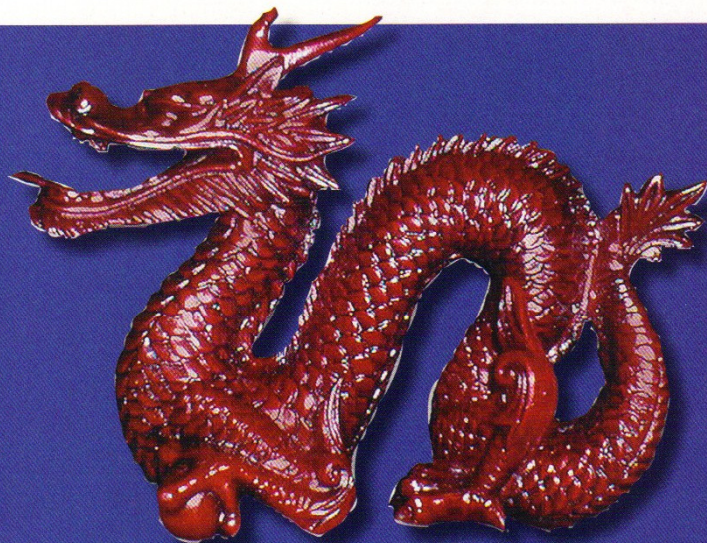
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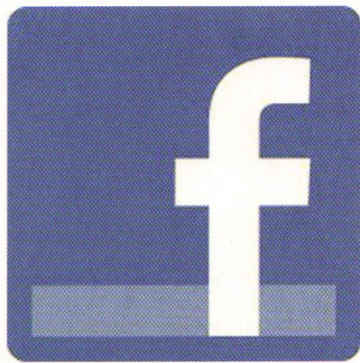


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Xin Xing Ming:
(continued from page 13)

止動無動 動止無止 兩既不成 一何有爾
究竟窮極 不存軌則
(Zhǐ dòng wú dòng dòng zhǐ wú zhǐ liǎng jì
bùchéng yī hé yǒu ěr jiùjīng qióngjí
bù cún guǐ zé)

When movement comes to an end—there is no more stirring (in the mind). When movement ceases, movement is no more. As duality is not manifest, how can there be a state of oneness? When the ultimate is searched for, it has no discernable path.

契心平等 所作俱息 狐疑淨盡 正信調直 一切不留 無可記憶
(Qì xīn píngděng suǒzuò jù xī húyí jìngjìn
zhèngxìn diào zhí yīqiè bù liú wú kě jìyì)

Manifest the mind of equality, and all duality ceases. As all doubt ceases, true confidence is established. When all is abandoned, there is nothing to remember.

虛明自照 不勞心力 非思量處 識情難測
真如法界 無他無自

(Xū míng zìzhào bù láoxīn lì fēi sīliang chù
shí qíng nán cè zhēnrú fǎjiè wú tā wú zì)

**Manifest
the mind of
equality, and
all duality
ceases. As
all doubt
ceases, true
confidence is
established.**

The empty brightness shines forth, without any effort of mind. It can not be measured through thought, or comprehended by the use of knowledge or emotion. Such is the true state of Dharma, free from notions of self and other.

要急相應 唯言不二 不二皆同 無
不包容 十方智者 皆入此宗

(Yào jí xiāngyīng èr jiē tóng wú bù bāoróng
shí fāng zhìzhě jiē rù cǐ zōng wéi yán bù èr bù)

Strive to behold it, and all that can be said is that it is 'not two'. All things are reconciled in this state of 'not two', and nothing is excluded. The wise people in the ten directions have all gained entry to this lineage.

宗非促延 一念萬年 無在不在 十方目前
極小同大 忘絕境界

(Zōng fēi cù yán yīniàn wànnián wú zài bùzài
shí fāng mùqián jíxiǎo tóng dà wàng jué jìngjiè)

This lineage is beyond time, and the ten thousand things are reconciled into a single thought. It is not

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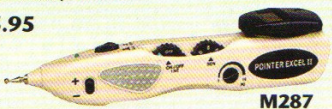
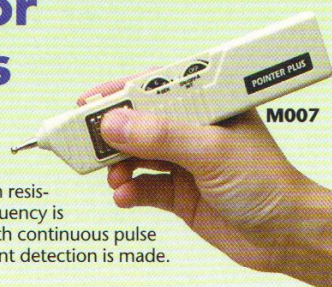
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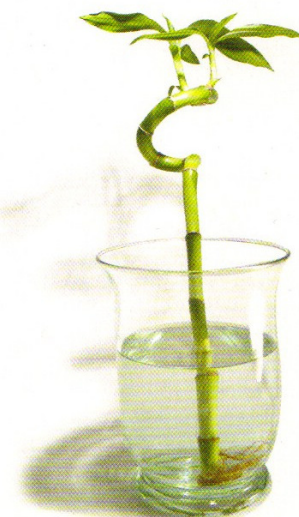
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found in existence or non-existence, but the eye sees it in the ten directions. The smallest is equal to the greatest, and there are no boundaries.

極大同小 不見邊表 有即是無 無即是
即是有 若不如是 必不須守
(Jídà tóng xiǎo bùjiàn biān biǎo
yǒu jí shì wú wú jí shì yǒu ruò bùrú
shì bì bù xū shǒu)

The greatest is the same as the smallest, and no division can be found. Both 'is' and 'is not' are the same, and that which contradicts this is not the true path.

一即一切 一切即一 但能如是 何慮不畢
信心不二 不二信心

(Yī jí yīqiè yīqiè jí yī dàn néng rúshì hé lǜ
bù bì xīnxīn bù èr bù èr xīnxīn)

The one contains all things and all things are contained in the one. If understanding is already like this, then what further can be attained? Trust the mind to be non-dual, understanding that this non-dual state is the essence of the mind.

言語道斷 非去來今

(Yányǔ dào duàn fēi qù lái jīn)

This Dao cuts off all need for speech, and has no past, present, or future. ■

Both 'is' and 'is not' are the same, and that which contradicts this is not the true path.

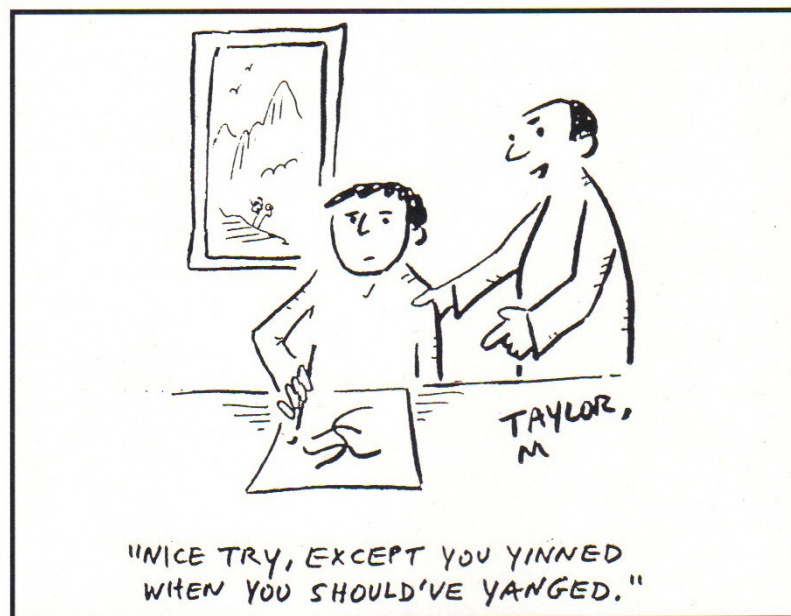
Adrian is an independent scholar (and published author) living in the UK. He has been a 'work scholar' for Dr. Rupert Shel-drake of Cambridge University, and holds a Philosophy of Mind Certificate from Oxford University. He is the custodian of The Richard Hunn Association for Ch'an Study (<http://wenshuchan-online.weebly.com>), and has written for "The Middle Way"—the journal of the Buddhist Society, London. He holds a PhD in (spiritual) Metaphysics, and writes extensively upon the subjects of Chinese history, philosophy, the paranormal and martial culture.

As a Ch'an adept, he continues the lineage of master Xu Yun (1840-1959), as handed down to Charles Luk (1898-1978), and conveyed by Richard Hunn (1949-2006).

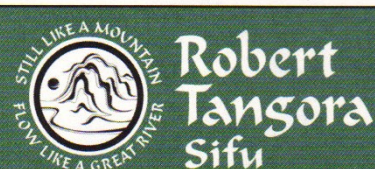
1. For alternative translations see:

Luk, Charles, *Practical Buddhism—The Application of Ch'an Teaching in Everyday Life*, Rider, (1988), Part II The Story of the Third Ch'an Patriarch of China and Gatha "Have Faith in the Mind" (Hsin Hsin Ming) Pages 33-38.

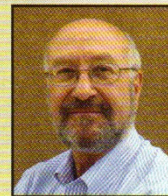
Ferguson, Andy, *Zen's Chinese Heritage—The Masters and the Teachings*, Wisdom, (2000), Appendix—Faith in Mind, Pages 461-465.



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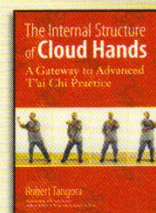
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