

## KWAN SEUM BOSAL'S PATH: New developments in our European school

by Do Mun Sunim, Abbot  
Centre Zen de Paris - Dharma Sah  
and Paul Leu

Dr. Danette Choi's Social Buddhism aims at bringing Buddhism into society: the whole of society, not just people already on the path or searching for it. Her teaching reaches beyond those who come questioning, toward those whose questioning is still latent and needs to be aroused. In particular, Social Buddhism addresses people in their present circumstances. Rather than drawing them into a separate, parallel spiritual life, it helps them to attain their correct situation and function within the actual context of their lives.

"Loose but tight" is one of Dr. Choi's maxims. Another is, "No rule but rules." This means, "live your social life, like your professional and family life, but keep clear from moment to moment and always have a correct human function and relationship." The practice which she teaches aims at achieving this; however everyone is individually responsible for his or her own practice. In contrast to monastic traditions that provide more systematic guidelines and rules, and then seek to accommodate individual needs ('tight but loose'), the focus of Dr. Choi's teaching is on individual situations and needs, with the teacher watching how each student is finding his or her correct relationship, functioning and energy. This—rather than pre-established prescriptions—constitutes the real "rule," the essence of which is being strong "inside."

"Take myself," says Dr. Choi. "I look like an ordinary woman, but inside, what I can give is different [from other women]."

To transform from within, one must be ready to meet people on their own ground. Speaking of the Zen Center in Paris, Dr. Choi says, "Our practice means taking the Zen Center and our teaching into European society and shaking up all those high-class people. That's why I wear high-class clothes and make-up, to be able to help that kind of human being and bring our teaching to all levels of society." In the same spirit, the Bodhisattva Kwan Seum Bosal is depicted wearing jewels and beautiful robes, yet moment-to-moment 100% keeping the correct situation with one great purpose.

If Dr. Choi sometimes cuts a stunning figure in society, far more often she is in an old pink jogging suit, meditating in her small room at our cramped Parisian quarters, where people camp refugee style and

on occasion even use the kitchen to practice. A typical day finds her performing ceremonies and healing in the morning, giving consultations in the afternoon, and leading evening practice. "People don't understand her," says Randy Koseki, Director of Dr. Choi's center in Honolulu, Hawaii, Dharma Sah. "She lives like a nun—always practicing in her room. She hardly ever goes out, and then it is only on Zen Center business."

Among those coming for counseling are Parisians from all walks of life, as well as a shipping tycoon from Norway and businessmen from Saudi Arabia and Poland. Recently the wife of the President of Madagascar arrived with her servants and bodyguards. Dr. Choi greets them all in her simple and direct manner, without regard to rank and status. In Europe, spiritual matters are taken seriously by people at all levels of society, and many who came to practice at the Zen Center are well-established people with jobs and families. Some have deep questions concerning not only their own personal welfare, but also that of society at large.

Recently Dr. Choi met Dr. Jo Jaz from Belgium, chairman of the Science Coordinating Committee of UNESCO. This committee is responsible for international scientific projects sponsored by UNESCO, and its members include several Nobel prize winners. Dr. Jaz was so impressed by his conversation with Dr. Choi that he appointed her as counselor to the committee, which seeks to understand the relation of spirit and matter and the correct use of science in the world.

One of our directors recently introduced Dr. Choi to the Minister of Transportation in the new French government, with the view to creating a business for needy people who cannot find jobs or have difficulty holding them, and who want to practice at the Zen Center. To this end, Dr. Choi has plans to purchase a hotel.

Still more tangible support for the Center has come through Dr. J. Donnars, a famous psychiatrist and director of L'Homme et la Connaissance, an organization which has been sponsoring conferences with spiritual leaders and psychologists for 26 years. At his first meeting with Dr. Choi, Dr. Donnars offered to help the Zen Center. When

photos by Randi Koseki



Dr. Danette Choi

Dr. Choi mentioned that for several months we had been looking for larger quarters, Dr. Donnars offered her an apartment essentially as a gift.

In mid-May the Zen Center moved into the old headquarters of L'Homme et la Connaissance, a spacious apartment with five large bedrooms (potentially ten) and a large meditation room which can hold over 100 people. It is very difficult to find space like this in or around Paris. The apartment is in central Paris and is in the typical high-class French style. The Zen Center is also taking over the running of L'Homme et la Connaissance, as Dr. Donnars wants to retire. The new space will enable more people to live at the Center. Additional classes and programs are being planned outside of daily Zen practice.

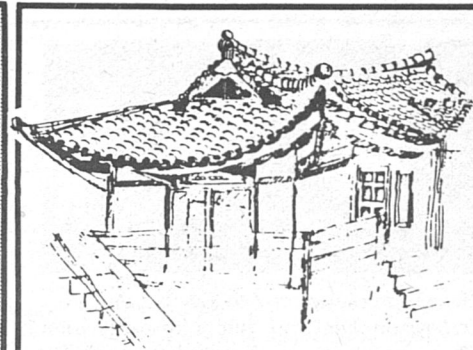
In March and April Dr. Choi gave a special two-months women's course in the evening on energy, healing, human relations and the correct function of life. The course included intensive individual supervision by Dr. Choi of each student's efforts, in addition to talks, special breathing and meditation techniques, healing, group practice and lots of time for questions. It was so successful that a 3-month advanced course will begin in June as well as a second beginner's course. There will also be an important 3-month course for future Dharma teachers, with detailed instruction in Buddhist theory and our practice style. Dr. Choi will give individual attention to each student's meditation practice.

Two of Dr. Choi's students, Jacques and Francik Lucas, have given their house in Bretagne (three hours from Paris) to the Zen Center to be the country retreat center for the Kwan Um Zen School of Europe. Set amid rolling hills and farms in the town of Janze, the old farm house has been lived in and added to for 17 years by Jacques, who is an artist. Called "La Maison Imaginaire," it has a completely sculpted facade and environs. Jacques recently added another bathroom. Our first retreat was held there in April. A retreat with Soen Sa Nim is planned for June.

Many capable people have begun practicing at the Center, devoted to Dr. Choi and the purpose of the Center and working for the Dharma in Europe. Here is a brief introduction to the directors:

Jacques Villet, 53, Masters in engineering from MIT, international business and industrial consultant for the French government. Jacques was a cabinet member under President Pompidou, and is founder of Comete, a foundation bringing together political, business and industrial leaders to find solutions to interdisciplinary problems.

Daniel Friart, 37, Masters degree in engineering, University of Orsay. An engineer doing research on laser fusion, he is sent yearly to California on an exchange of scientists between the French and American government. Daniel has been a student of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism for seven years.



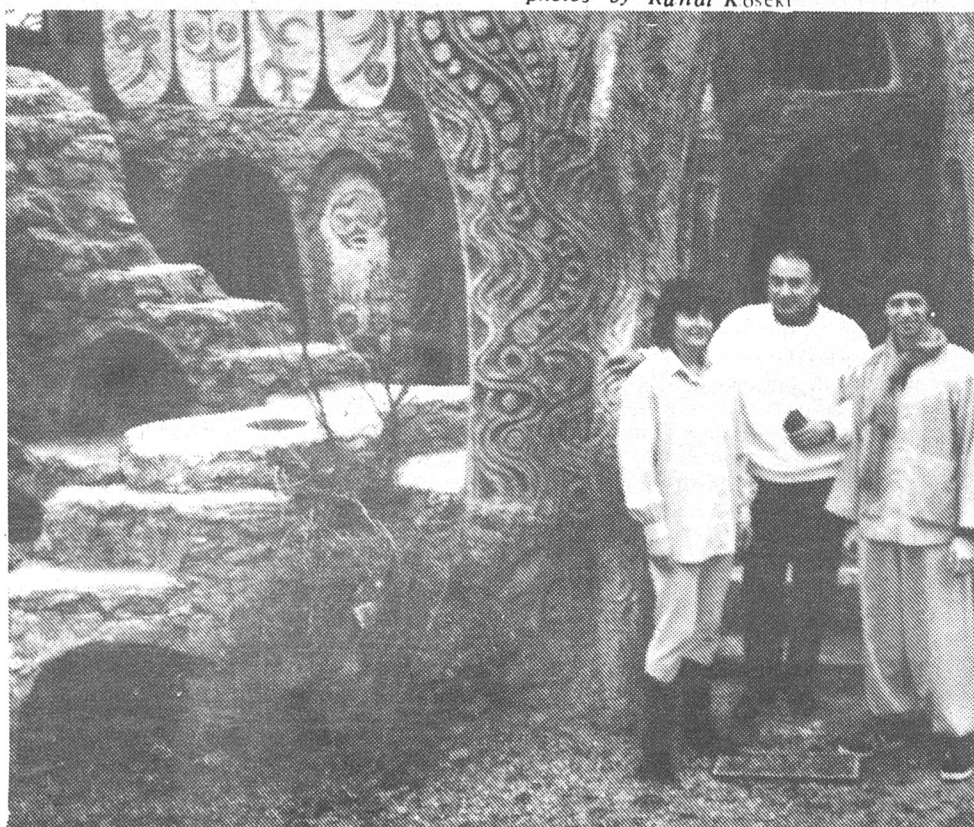
### 19-DAY SUMMER RETREAT DURING AUG. 5-24

This summer the Providence Zen Center is offering its fourth 19-day Kyol Che. The retreat will be led by Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes, who has been practicing with Zen Master Seung Sahn for the past 13 years. The retreat will be held at the Diamond Hill Zen Monastery, located on the grounds of the Center. Conducted in silence, the daily schedule includes eight hours of sitting as well as chanting, bowing and working meditation. Barbara will give interviews and talks on a regular basis.

Registration is open for any number of the 19 days as long as it is a minimum of two days. Entry times are Mon., Wed., and Fri. evening. Costs: 19 days: \$400 non-members (\$300 members); 7 days: \$155 non-members (\$110 members); less than 7 days: \$24/day non-members (\$15/day members). Registration requires a \$20 deposit.

For information and registration contact:

PROVIDENCE ZEN CENTER  
528 POUND ROAD  
CUMBERLAND, RI 02864  
401-769-6464



A "LA MAISON IMAGINAIRE" in Janze, Bretagne, France, a sculptured house being made available for Centre Zen de Paris retreats. (L to R) Jacques Villet, a CZP director; Francik Lucas; and CZP Abbot Do Mun Sunim

### CARVING SHOP

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Paul Leu, 41, novelist and pianist. Born in China, Paul has lived extensively on three continents and is fluent in four languages. He was lecturer in Comparative Literature at Washington University and music critic for the St. Louis Post. He is preparing a book on Dr. Choi's teaching in Europe and is helping get Soen Sa Nim's books translated and published in Europe.