

Taiwan Hosts Outstanding Buddhist Women Award Ceremony for First Time

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For the first time, Taiwan hosted a ceremony to honor outstanding women in Buddhism, with awards given to 14 women. The event was held on the afternoon of March 8 in Jing Si Hall of the Tzu Chi Foundation in Hualien. The hall was full of nuns from Thailand, Malaysia and Taiwan, as well as Buddhist believers, in an atmosphere of joy and happiness.

"The 15th Anniversary Outstanding Women in Buddhism Awards" was jointly organized by the Outstanding Women in Buddhism Awards and the Chinese Young Buddhist Association, with the help of the Tzu Chi Foundation. Of the 14, six were from Taiwan -- Bhiksuni Pu Hui, Bhiksuni Wu Yin, Bhiksuni Huang An and Bhiksuni Ti Zheng. In addition, Ms. Liu Ban Mei-Jung and Ms. Liu Chin-Tsai each received a special award.

One of those giving the awards was Ms. Huang Li-Hsin, Chief Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior of Taiwan. In her speech, she said: "According to statistics of the ministry, there are more than 20,000 Buddhist clergy in Taiwan, of whom nuns account for 80 per cent -- about 15,000 people. The women of Taiwan are giving a shining example in religion and politics. As a Taiwanese woman, I feel very proud."

The awards were established by two nuns, Bhikkhuni Rattanavali of Thailand and Bhikkhuni Dr. Lee of the United States. The concept came from an award for outstanding women in Thailand. On International Women's Day in 2001, Bhikkhuni Dr Lee made a speech on the topic at the United Nations. The aim of the award is to recognize the outstanding contribution of Buddhist women in many sectors of life.

In her speech, Bhiksuni Ming Yu, chairwoman of the award committee and of the Chinese Young Buddhist Association, said: "Today, the award ceremony is being held on United Nations Women's Day. It is extremely significant for the women who are receiving the award. Through these activities that reward these women, it is showing the role of women in society and the positive influence resulting from their status. This will draw attention to these outstanding women in different sectors and promote international exchanges in Buddhist culture, gender equality and the interests of women."

Bhiksuni Ming Yu went on to say: "Since the awards were established in 2002, 208 outstanding women from 24 countries have received them. Each year the award ceremony has been held in Thailand. This year, in 2016, the event is being held for the first time in Tzu Chi Jing Si Hall in Taiwan. This shows the international respect and affirmation for the Buddhist nuns and lay women for their contribution to society."

The organizer said that this year 14 people received the award. "Each one in her own country or region has cultivated herself and made use of her potential to serve other people. They have worked hard and endured hardship. They have influenced other people to bring out their

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wisdom and goodness and served as a fine example for society and women."

The award recipients are:

1. Bhiksuni Pu Hui, Taiwan
2. Bhiksuni Huang An, Taiwan
3. Bhiksuni Ji Zun, Malaysia
4. Bhiksuni Ti Zheng, Taiwan
5. Bhiksuni Wu Yin, Taiwan
6. Bhikkhuni Uppala Vanna Magga Panna, Thailand
7. Dr. Hea Ai Sim, Malaysia
8. Maechee Boonlome Phuakthet, Thailand
9. Maechee Opasini Sorntiraj, Thailand
10. Maechee Sukantam Kamyong, Thailand
11. Sutham Vironhaman, Thailand
12. Yaowapha Patarateeranon, Thailand
13. Chin-Tsai Liu, Taiwan
14. Mei-Jung Liu Pan, Taiwan

