

## **RETURNING A 1300-YEAR OLD BUDDHA'S HEAD TO MAINLAND CHINA**

On 17 December 2002, Master Sheng-yen led a delegation to return a 1300-year old Buddha's head to China. This Buddha's head sculpture was stolen from a pagoda in eastern China about five years ago. Earlier in the year the Master's lay disciples donated the head, which was stolen in 1997 from the Four Gate Pagoda in the city of Jinan, to the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association. The Master, in returning this Buddha head to China, sets out the purpose and meaning of this event:

- 1) **From a religious perspective:** it is education for the public, by returning the Buddha's head to its original body, we are maintaining the historic value and cultural heritage of an art form, and practicing the wisdom and belief of Buddha Dharma.
- 2) **From a heritage perspective:** we hope to educate others to care for the things around us, by preserving the historical value and cultural heritage of a Buddha sculpture that dates back almost 1400 years.
- 3) **From an academic perspective:** it is an academic exercise as there are and will be publications on the event as well as seminars to be conducted between China and Taiwan.
- 4) **From an international perspective:** we are responding to the 'United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage', to call on people all over the world to respect and value all heritage work, not to steal or damage them so that everyone can enjoy them.