

Isaiah Broomfield
Reflection 4
22 May 2012

(5/22) I woke up to a world filled with strange energy around 3am. I considered wandering away from the temple in search of a comfortable place to sit and meditate, perhaps on a nearby mountain, near the river, or in some woods. My thoughts discouraged this for several reasons, particularly because of the wind-- it blew with an incessant and unsettling urgency; it reminded me of the winds that herald a furious summer storm in the States. The wind seemed to focus its wrath on a fish chime hanging from the temple's eaves-- the bell rang out balefully, begging me to seek shelter lest the wind turn its wrath towards me. I obeyed the signs of the universe: I was thankful to take shelter in the main Dharma hall when the temple doors opened for me. What a fitting place to meditate, I thought. I did my bowing and sat to meditate at the front of the hall.

There I stayed in silence and solitude for about an hour before the first monk entered. I watched as he did his bows and set to work preparing the temple for the morning's rituals. He lit candles and poured what I assumed was tea in front of the various altars around the hall before taking up his wooden gong and heading for the door to do his morning rounds, summoning the conscious to come and pray. I followed him at some distance as he slowly walked the premises, chanting and striking the gong. Sometimes I let him take such a lead that he seemed to melt into the cool morning darkness. Sometimes I feared I was too close and might interrupt in the ritual. The busy monk paid me no mind.

Upon returning to the hall, I was thankful to see Dr. Yi-- I wouldn't be alone at the ceremony with my ignorance this time! She motioned for me to take a mat near hers, which is where I observed the wonders of the morning chants. The sounds were what struck me-- whether I was kneeling or bowing; whether my eyes were open or closed, the gorgeous sounds

of the gong filled my consciousness. Although I did not understand a word of what the monks chanted, their five strong voices blended together to form one of the most genuinely beautiful sounds I have ever heard. Everything was so gorgeous to my ears; the sounds were incredible , especially after such a silent morning before.

When I walked out of the hall after the ceremony's conclusion, I was struck by how silent the morning had become. The sun was beginning to color the sky behind the mountains, and the wind and the fish chime were both silent. So too was my mind.