

# Minutes of Kwan Um School of Zen/ Europe

## Meeting of Members (MoM)

16 - 17 August 2014

Warsaw Zen Center, Poland

### Participants:

#### Teachers:

Ji Kwang SSN, Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN, Muchak (Namhee Chon) JDPSN, Ja An (Bogumila Malinowska) JDPSN, Oleg Suk JDPSN, Arne Schaefer JDPSN, Igor Piniński JDPSN

#### Teachers represented:

Bon Shim SSN by Tadeusz Mięśowicz, Jo Potter JDPSN by Arne Schaefer JDPSN, Koen JDPSN by Igor Piniński JDPSN

### 33 Zen Centers and Zen Groups:

**Poland:** Warsaw ZC, Gdańsk ZC, Łódź ZC, Katowice ZC, Krakow ZG, Płock ZG, Szczecin ZG, Wrocław ZG, Toruń ZG, Rzeszów ZG

**Czech Republic:** Vrazne ZC, Olomouc ZC, Prague ZC, Brno ZC, Liberec ZG

**Germany:** Cologne ZG, Dresden ZC, Berlin ZC

**Slovakia:** Bratislava ZC, Kosice ZC

**England:** London ZC, The Peak ZG

**France:** Paris ZC

**Israel:** Hod Hasharon ZC, Pardes-Hanna-Karkur ZG, Tel Aviv ZG, Haifa ZG

**Austria:** Vienna ZC

**Lithuania:** Kaunas ZC, Vilnius ZC

**Spain:** Barcelona ZC, Palma ZC

**Belgium:** Brussels ZC

**Chairman:** Igor Piniński JDPSN

**Minutes:** Jacek Sikora

**Translation:** Agata Sobiecka (Hae In)

**Corrections:** Peter Voke

### Introduction:

The KUSZ/E Meeting of Members' goal during this meeting is to establish the European Kwan Um School of Zen, endorse its bylaws (with amendments), work out the financial mechanisms for membership fees, elect the Council, discuss the model for organizing long Kyol Che retreats in Europe and discuss the development of our retreat centers.

### PART I

#### Voting rules:

Teachers are eligible to vote with one vote, Zen Centers (ZC) with a total number of members higher than 15 or having more than 3 residents are eligible to vote with two votes, smaller ZC and Zen Groups (ZG) have one vote.

**During Part I of the meeting the total number of votes was 51.**

### **Formalities:**

The chairman declares that the invitation to the meeting fulfils the requirements regulated in the bylaws, which were endorsed by the members during the foundation meeting on March 9th 2013 in Warsaw.

However a short discussion appeared regarding the agenda:

- It was asked not to discuss points, which were not introduced in the MoM agenda.
- Ji Kwang SSN (JKSSN) explained that all points were outlined and that the sangha was informed in time about the agenda. In particular it was announced that we would discuss the bylaws and Council's election.

### **STANDING ITEMS**

#### **1. Vote to elect the Council**

- The chairman suggested moving this item and placing it after evaluation of current Council and EO's actions.

#### **2. Vote to approve the business and treasury reports of the Council and the European Office (EO)**

##### **Documents:**

- Report to the Sangha of the European Board of Trustees (BoT), April 2014
- Financial Overview 2014

**Vote:** for - 47, against - 0, abstained - 4

**Result:** The business and treasury reports of the Council and the European Office (EO) were approved by MoM.

#### **3. Vote to formally approve the Council's and European Office's actions**

##### **Discussion:**

- The Palma ZC proxy read the request from Palma de Mallorca ZC not to make statements to the whole Sangha without first consulting the teachers and right authorities.
- The EO Leader apologized for an unhelpful and unauthorized statement he made on the European Office's behalf.

**Vote:** for - 46, against - 0, abstained - 5

**Result:** The Council's and EO's actions were formally approved by MoM.

#### **4. Vote to approve the amount of the membership contribution**

##### **Documents:**

- Options
- Proposal on banking / use of contributions by the Financial Committee

##### **Discussion:**

- The Polish National Abbot (Warsaw ZC, Wrocław ZC, Płock ZG, Rzeszów ZC proxy) asked about the destination of the membership fees collected.
- Ji Kwang SSN (JKSSN) explained that EO has administrative costs, there are costs of Primary Point distribution, and in the future costs of supporting the School's Head Teacher and monastics. The intention is also to actively support the operation of regional Zen centers.
- What kind of budget is estimated for the year 2015?
- JKSSN: There is no budget at this point, because there is no income. Last estimation of needs comes from year 2009 and it was 15 000 euro minimum. In USA there was a vote to establish 50% central membership fee.

- JDPSN: The budget plan will be presented at the next MoM.
- Toruń ZC rep: If we establish 10% central fee, regional Zen centers might lack resources to cover the rent and their own needs.
- JKSSN suggested the solution according to which during the first year Zen centers with financial difficulties can offer only a donation for KUSZ/ Eu.
- Where will the money be gathered?
- Warsaw ZC rep suggested that in order to minimize transfer and currency exchange costs we could gather them in local accounts, administered by EO.
- Suggestions:
  - the fees are collected annually not monthly;
  - in case of using local accounts EO has access to the account or to the information on it;
  - the legal situation of the banks have to be examined and check the costs of operating an international account;
  - opening one European account (Euro zone) would simplify operating it

**Vote:** 10% from the local membership revenue: 44  
 2 or 3 Euro per member: 1  
 Abstained: 6

**Result:** MoM approved the amount of the membership contribution: 10% of the local membership revenue.

After the vote it was asked not to add any points to the Agenda. If there are important matters to discuss, this information should be given to EO and it will be discussed during next MoM.

## **PART II**

One more person with 4 votes, representing also Bon Shim SSN's vote joined the meeting. Votes were counted and it was established that from this point there are 55 valid votes in the MoM.

### **STANDING ITEMS**

#### **5. Vote to approve the power of the votes of the members.**

- European Council established the document (annex to the bylaws) establishing the weight of votes, which has to be approved by MoM. Only the main body of the bylaws have been endorsed so far, therefore there need to be a vote to endorse the anex.

**Vote:** for – 48, against – 0, abstained - 7

**Result:** MoM endorsed the power of the votes of the members.

#### **6. Vote to decide amendments of the bylaws**

##### **A) Proposed change: Election of Council and clarifications of voting**

“§ 9 The meeting of Members

(5) endorses the Council elected by the BoT.”

“§ 10 The Council

(1) consists of three (or more) teachers elected by the Board of Trustees every three years.

The Council shall be endorsed by the Meeting of Members. If the Meeting of Members rejects the elected Council the BoT shall elect alternative teachers to the Council. “

**Discussion:**

- The number of candidates to Council and the consequences of their election were discussed.
- It was stated that if someone is not working closely with Council, he or she will not know how a teacher to be elected works. Students do not know administrative skills of the teachers. Maybe teachers should be elected by teachers, who know both their Dharma teaching skills and the other abilities they have, including administrative skills.
- Our school develops and maybe in a couple of years there will be more teachers and more students. If we stick to the primary vision of election to Council, maybe it will be more alive.
- We choose best administrators to Council, not best teachers.
- Perhaps we should look at this point during the next change of bylaws.
- We can have both systems working simultaneously. Then choosing Council by BoT would be only an emergency solution but generally a more democratic rule of choosing Council by MoM would apply. This would additionally mobilize more members.
- It was mentioned that students generally do not have any competence to choose teachers for administrative tasks, therefore choosing Council by BoT seems more reasonable.
- Additionally the way to evaluate teachers by teachers and teachers by MoM was discussed as well as the way of replacing the teacher in Council in case he or she has to leave Council.

**Vote:** for – 33, against – 10, abstained – 12.

**Result:** Since the required majority to change the bylaws is 2/3 of the votes, this vote did not reach the right threshold. Therefore propositions of the changes were not endorsed. Due to the lack of information about the required majority of votes and about the consequences of abstaining from voting, which are in fact equal to voting against, there was a request to repeat the vote:

**Vote:** for – 42, against – 5, abstained – 8

**Result:** MoM decided to repeat the vote on endorsing the changes in the bylaws.

**Vote:** for – 40, against – 10, abstained – 5

**Result:** MoM approved the bylaws changes in § 9 and 10 with the required 2/3 majority of votes.

**B) Proposed change: Power of votes****Discussion:**

- References to national sanghas and national corporate bodies to be made clear throughout by bylaws with respect to voting power. (National corporate corporate bodies do not have separate votes independent of their constituent centers and groups.)

**Vote:** for – 46, against – 3, abstained – 6

**Result:** MoM approved suggested changes with the required majority of 2/3 votes.

**C) Proposed change: Proxies (representatives) for the teachers****Discussion:**

- It has to be made clear that teachers can appoint proxies to vote for them in the MoM. Also to make clear that guiding teachers/resident teachers can be appointed as representatives of centers / groups in exceptional circumstances (if no student can attend MoM).
- It was decided that there will be a vote to determine the right of the teachers to vote during MoM through their proxies but under the condition that one proxy can represent only one teacher.

**Vote:** pro – 39, against – 6, abstained - 10

**Result:** MoM has approved the change of bylaws with the required 2/3 majority of votes stating that teachers have the right to vote during MoM through proxies under the condition that one proxy can

represent only one teacher.

### **PART III**

**During the Part III of the meeting the total number of votes was 55.**

#### **STANDING ITEMS**

**7. Igor PSN: During supper the Board of Trustees elected the Council and would like to obtain MoM's approval of its members: Ji Kwang SSN, Andrzej JDPSN, Ja An JDPSN.**

**Vote to endorse the new Council**

**Vote:** pro – 46, against – 0, abstained – 9.

**Result:** The new Council was approved by MoM.

**Discussion:**

- JKSSN thanked the meeting for their trust and endorsing the new Council's members.
- A JDPSN asked us to thank the previous Council's members and their work.

**8. Duty to inform the local or national Sanghas about all decisions through the Guiding Teachers and representatives.**

- EO Leader: Council is bound by bylaws to fulfill their duty of informing the Sangha.
- JKSSN: Council is sending all information to teachers and teachers send them on.
- A JDPSN: MoM is being minuted and the information about the meeting will be given to sangha members.

**9. The issue of dissolving the association pursuant to § 14 of the bylaw**

- EO Leader pointed out that MoM is the only body able to dissolve KUSZE. No other body can do it.
- It was noted that this point does not require any discussion nor decision right now, and hopefully not for many years.
- It was established that this point became part of the agenda by a mistake and should not be discussed.

**10. Future European Retreat Center (ERC) and the Kyol Che retreats committee**

- **ERC/long retreats: Proposals**
- **ERC/ long retreats: Emails**

**Discussion:**

- The future of European Retreat Center (ERC) was presented by the EO Leader, who stated that all teachers held a consensus to continue the practice of long retreats like Kyol Che. Everyone was asked to focus what we share: the will for the School to thrive and continue the retreat tradition. There are two ways in which we can continue this tradition:
  1. The model worked out during Teacher's Meeting in Berlin – European Retreat Center. Teachers stated that they would like to build a new place, which would serve as a central retreat place. Falenica according to them does not meet the requirements for ERC, which questions the sense of investing further in this place.
  2. The model worked out during a Zen center leaders meeting in Vrazne – decentralized / distributed retreat model. This model grows out from the natural tendencies we observe in

Europe: new Zen centers or retreat centers are growing in Vrazne, Bori Sa (Spain) and other places like Lithuania, Bratislava, Kosice, and England. A central retreat place would take away resources and most of all energy from these local initiatives, which would in turn pose a real threat for the existence of local centers. Zen center leaders want to cooperate with each other in order to create a network of places of practice, which will not compete with each other, but work together creating practice places which are closer to the students but also continuing the tradition of longer Kyol Che retreats.

- A JDPSN: The teachers would like to build one central retreat place, but they do not want to doom local centers and diminish their activity. It's about avoiding the situation, in which we create two or more antagonized places of practice, which compete – it is not good for our practice. Teachers propose to keep 13 weeks of Winter Kyol Che and a minimum of 4 weeks of Summer Kyol Che, which enables other centers to have their retreats in their regions. There is also no intention to direct 100% of resources and energy to build one place. In the teacher's model there is no will to limit local Zen centers.
- Polish National Abbot, (Warsaw ZC rep, Wrocław ZC, Płock ZG, Rzeszów ZC proxy): He likes the idea to open up the possibility to organize longer retreats in many other centers. We would like to share the Dharma and we do not want to be perceived as a Zen center that is fighting for keeping the role of a central retreat place. We will be in favor of supporting the existing networks of retreats and we cannot imagine building a new central retreat place in a new place.
- JKSSN: Teachers of course also want to support local centers, but looking at them we face the fact that none of them is able to serve as ERC. Also the Wu Bong Sa (WBS) Abbot mentioned that because of the need to preserve the residential training and life of the center, WBS does not want to host two long retreats per year. We need also to remember that the city of Warsaw and its industry are coming closer and closer to Falenica. This place additionally does not have a legalized status regarding the building permits, which creates a very unclear situation. That is why we decided that developing Falenica as a ERC should not be focused. At this point it seems reasonable to keep one half of the property, where the Dharma Hall stands and sell the other (forest) part, which does not have and which will not get any building permit. The money from selling this property could be invested in a new European retreat place (ERC). The rest of the Falenica property can serve as the Polish Retreat Center. Other sanghas can build centers, where they can practice. We want to investigate the possibility of using European Union funds to build the ERC for the entire European Sangha. But our idea does not equal to limiting Falenica as a place of practice.
- Ja An JDPSN: We would like to continue Kyol Che here, this is our tradition.
- Warsaw ZC rep: I would like to make clear couple of views presented here. We have invested time and energy in getting to know the legal status and financial possibilities of this place. Falenica is a self-funding center, which does not require any financial backup from outside. We also learned that in fact there are no legal obstacles to rebuild and develop this place. We actively develop the residential function of Falenica, which was very strongly recommended by Seung Sahn SSN. We have residents, who live here thanks to the proximity of the city, where they can commute to work every day without losing their practice. The requests to live here appear one after another. This closeness to the city can help us become independent and survive regardless of the length of the retreats organized here. We can not only preserve our practice here, but also develop it thanks to our infrastructure and the city. We also see potential in rebuilding Falenica's infrastructure. At the same time I want to stress that we are open to the propositions made during this meeting.
- Paris ZC rep: What kind of resources – money and people – do you have in the project of the new European Retreat Center?
- JKSSN: We can find the people. If a place like this develops, for sure it will attract people and new practitioners.

- Vrazne ZC rep and Olomouc ZC proxy: We are not against one central place. But we do think that now is not a good time for building one new central place. Let's allow for new local Zen centers to grow and if the sangha is strong enough we can think of such place. I was living in Providence Zen Center and I have experience observing a large center that consumes the finances and energy of people to the point everything is exhausted. USA has much bigger resources to invest and nonetheless they could not avoid serious mistakes related to keeping one central retreat place.
- JDPSN's proxy: This school was created to practice and each center is a place for practice of people. Falenica has people, Vrazne has people – but the project of an abstract place in a unknown place has no people, no practice and no concrete plan. I would like to concentrate on the immediate future instead of creating dreams to realize in the undefined future. Who will live there and practice?
- We need not only longer retreats but also shorter, weekend retreats.
- JDPSN: How many people are interested in longer retreats? This is a basic question. Less and less people participate in long retreats. We should not build a big Zen center, where five people will come for a long retreat. Perhaps we need to research how many people want to take part in long retreats. I also dream about a big Zen center, but I have a feeling it is easy to get burned on such dreams.
- Wu Bong Sa Abbot: This place has full potential to develop. The works to examine how it can develop were slowed down due to unexpected events. But now we know that Falenica is self-sufficient and there are European (EU) Funds for further investments. Developing the place based only on retreats is not possible, it is an illusion. This is not a monastery. You can function based only on retreats if you have a strong sangha of supporters and donors. People who live here work so they can practice. During an audit we have found out that the first source of the Zen center's finances are membership fees, second are the profits from long retreats and third, the resident's training fees from people who live here and can commute to work. Only localities like Falenica allow residents to work in the city. The last funding source is the dharma shop and dharma events. Now, for the first time, we can invest in the center's infrastructure. Two three-month long retreats would make such functioning of the center impossible, because no residents could live here. We would like to keep long winter Kyol Che, which will not collide with the current Zen center's life. We only need the green light to develop this place.
- Vilnius ZC rep, Kaunas ZC proxy: Lithuania is a small country, we do not own any properties, but we rent a place to practice. We are afraid of a new big central center, where the energy and practice would focus, but maybe we simply don't know how to imagine it.
- Barcelona ZC proxy: Barcelona has a beautiful place, where they can organize retreats. For them traveling to Poland is difficult and expensive. The local center helps them to open up the practice to more people from the region. That is why a natural solution seems to develop local places for practice. None of us is asking for financial help.
- The Peak (England) rep: In England we have built a place which can host 4-6 long term residents, has a big dharma hall and the situation is open for future development. This is a self-funding place. England also wants to become part of our existing network.
- Palma de Mallorca ZC proxy: For Palma members travel become more and more difficult and they need to support their own Sangha, therefore the vision of transferring larger resources for the new place brings anxiety. People expect the possibility to practice closer to the place where they live.
- WBS board member: We have made Kyol Che statistics and found out that progressively smaller number of people are coming for long practice. During last two years only two people on average were sitting whole Kyol Che apart from staff like the Head Dharma Teacher and Housemaster.
- JDPSN: I am glad that [WBS Abbot] said that Falenica is interested in keeping the Kyol Che tradition. When we make plans about a new central place we do not abandon the old places, but we also outline a direction. I feel there are no controversies between us. We all want to keep the long

retreat in winter and a shorter retreat in summer. But we do not want to lose the vision that in the future we can build one European Retreat Center.

- The idea of one central retreat is different from local initiatives, because it will be governed by the international team of teachers and residents.
- JKSSN: I would like to thank you for your shared opinions. This discussion proves that together we have more wisdom. We would like to support local retreats but without forgetting our shared vision of a new European Zen center. This vision should be pursued. Nonetheless we need to coordinate the calendar of the retreats in our existing local European Centers.
- EO Leader: Summarizing, our goals are to organize Kyol Che retreats and other retreats, supporting the existence of local Zen centers and researching the possibility of building a European Retreat Center.
- Torun ZC proxy: It is most important to support existing Zen centers, because everything starts from the people and not from the ideas.
- JDPSN: We are not able to start work on building a new place, but due to the long term character of such project we should not forget about it. Work on this project should not affect the current functioning of existing places until we reach the decision we want to start some real work on the ERC.
- Ja An JDPSN: Two years ago an ERC committee was formed and it worked out many solutions, but was abandoned. However, we still could bring it back to life.
- JDPSN: It is most difficult to find teachers who will lead retreats. From my part I can say that having a choice to either support short a retreat like YMJJ or Kyol Che I will always choose Kyol Che.
- JKSSN thanked everyone for engaging and working together and for the financial input. He reminded that the teachers should decide about organizing retreats.
- EO Leader wrote down the conclusions for further discussion:
  1. Recommend to establish a KUSZ/E committee to:
    - support the development, renovation and use of the network of existing and future local retreat centers;
    - investigate and develop a plan for a European Retreat Center, focusing on residents, staffing and project team, teaching provision, location and access, funding and resources.
  2. Ask the Council and EO to:
    - coordinate the Kyol Che retreats and longer (two weeks+) retreats, ensuring that we avoid competition and clashes of retreats.
- JDPSN: This discussion has been happening for many years. Many people pointed out the need to have a better place, the need to invest. Keeping the status quo will not help us to grow. If we do not have goals, nothing will change.
- Warsaw member 1: We focus on a dream that a new place will change everything. If a change is to happen, it has to happen right here and right now and the place does not matter. Many people follow their dream losing from sight what we have here and now. We did not ask if any people will go to the new place and if they will practice there. Maybe they will choose an old mat in Falenica, practice in Vrazne or other places. Focusing on a goal 20 years ahead of us will take away our insight into here and now. Let's practice and see if there is a real need for a new place, let's not make any projects in hope that the need appears in the future.
- Warsaw member 2: Let's see, what kind of actions we could take if we had any money. Saving a certain share of the membership fee from all European members will let us gather a big sum. 10 000 zł per month is a big sum of money.
- JKSSN: Please do not go into details, it will be the task of a future committee.
- A member: European Retreat Center is a waste of time...
- JKSSN: Tomorrow (Founders Day Ceremony for ZM Seung Sahn) we will celebrate a person who had a dream and realized it on a large scale. Today the Kwan Um School of Zen is present in the whole

world. Then the same person went back to Korea to realize a new dream, a dream about a Zen center – a monastery. In the beginning they had no budget but now Mu Sang Sa is a fact and a beautiful large temple. Let's not kill our dreams. We have decided to focus on a certain vision and made decisions accordingly. Let's try. Everyone has the right to their own opinions, but let us stick to our decisions we made together today.

**Results:**

MoM recommended to establish a KUSZ/E committee in order to:

- support the development, renovation and use of the network of existing and future local retreat centers;
- investigate and develop a plan for a European Retreat Center, focusing on residents, staffing and project team, teaching provision, location and access, funding and resources.

MoM asks the Council and EO to:

- coordinate the Kyol Che retreats and longer (two weeks+) retreats, ensuring that we avoid competition and clashes of retreats.

**11. Dharma Teachers Compact**

- It took years to prepare this document.
- JKSSN: This document is required to be signed by all new Dharma Teachers; current DTs are not required to sign it, but are encouraged by teachers to follow it. If someone does not want to follow these guidelines, perhaps he or she should not apply to become a Dharma Teacher.

**12. New Guiding Teachers announcement**

After the closing circle Ji Kwang SSN informed the sangha that Jo Potter JDPSN becomes the Guiding Teacher for Vrazne ZC and Igor Pininski JDPSN for Łódź Zen Center.

He also mentioned at the end that he has two more items of news, one good and one bad: "We did a great job, this is good, but the bad news is that we have to do it every year!"

October 2014

Written by  
Jacek Sikora

Approved by  
ZM Ji Kwang, Andrzej Piotrowski JDPS, Bogumila Malinowska JDPS  
European Council