

# Pojo Chinul 普照知訥 and the Sudden-Gradual Issue: *Kanhwa* Sŏn and Korean Buddhist Soteriology\*

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## <ABSTRACT>

Chinul was the first Korean Buddhist teacher to write about the *kanhwa* Sŏn technique and to champion its use. The approach to *kanhwa* Sŏn that Chinul outlines in his writings differs in some important respects from that which becomes normative within the Línjì/Imje tradition. The most crucial of these differences is the accommodation Chinul seeks to accomplish between his preferred soteriological approach of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono chŏmsu*) and *kanhwa* practice. The interpretation of

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*kanhwa* Sŏn that is generally accepted by Línjì teachers in both China and Korea views the technique as involving the soteriological stratagem of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono tonsu*). Where *kanhwa* Sŏn is viewed as radical subitism, the technique is claimed to focus exclusively on the enlightenment experience itself, the presumption being that a full and complete awakening would automatically perfect any and all forms of cultivation, thus rendering both awakening and practice “sudden.” In order to reconcile this new system of *kanhwa* Sŏn with his preferred soteriology of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, Chinul must negotiate a quite considerable divide in Chán/Sŏn soteriological approaches. Chinul takes two distinct approaches to this reconciliation. First, he treats *kanhwa* Sŏn as an approach that can be incorporated, albeit hesitatingly, into sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (viz., generating correct understanding constitutes sudden awakening; *kanhwa* Sŏn constitutes the subsequent gradual cultivation). Chinul's distinction between two distinct types of *hwadu* investigation also allows for a way of incorporating *kanhwa* Sŏn into sudden awakening/gradual cultivation: “investigation of its meaning” (*ch'amŭi*) generates the initial sudden understanding-awakening; “investigation of the word” (*ch'amŭi*) overcomes the cognitive obstructions (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) and results in the realization- awakening. Second, Chinul treats *kanhwa* Sŏn as a separate technique that has nothing at all to do with Buddhist scholastic accounts of the different outlines of awakening and cultivation he had examined previously: viz., the *hwadu* was a special kind of “shortcut expedient” that transcends all other soteriological schemata. By tacitly accommodating sudden awakening/sudden cultivation in his late writings on *kanhwa* Sŏn, Chinul undermined his own preferred soteriology and prompted critiques of his signature approach of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation.

• **Keywords:**

Chinul, *kanhwa* Sŏn, sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono chŏmsu*), sudden awakening/sudden cultivation (*tono tonsu*), investigation of its meaning (*ch'amŭi*), investigation of the word (*ch'amŭi*), shortcut expedient.

OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, I have been retranslating all the works of Pojo Chinul 普照知訥 (1158-1210), translations that will be included in a thirteen-volume series “The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism,” published by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, and a new “Korean Classics Library” series that is funded by the Academy of Korean Studies and housed at UCLA. In addition, over the last three years, I have also helped organize at Dongguk University a series of international scholarly conferences and retreats on *kanhwa* Sŏn (*kànhuà Chán* 看話禪), the “investigating the topic” style of meditation that becomes emblematic of much of Korean Buddhism starting in the thirteenth century. These projects have given me a chance to return to my own scholarly roots, since I first started researching both areas nearly forty years ago when I was a young monk at Chinul's monastery of Songgwangsa 松廣寺. Returning to these topics after all these years has given me a renewed appreciation for the contributions that Chinul made to Korean Buddhism (and, indeed, the broader East Asian Buddhist tradition) and the crucial role he played in introducing the new technique of *kanhwa* Sŏn into Korean practice. Chinul was the first Korean Buddhist teacher to write about the *kanhwa* technique and to actively promote its use. Even though *kanhwa* Sŏn was but one among a whole panoply of meditation styles that Chinul taught, his championing of the technique late in his life was crucial to its eventual predominance in Korean Buddhist praxis.

The approach to *kanhwa* Sŏn that Chinul outlines in his writings differs in some important respects from that which becomes normative within the Línjì/Imje 臨濟 tradition, a tradition that comes to have outsized importance in Korea starting late in the Koryŏ dynasty. The most crucial of these differences is the accommodation Chinul seeks to accomplish between his preferred soteriological approach of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono chōmsu/dùn wù jiànxiū* 頓悟漸修)—what I have termed a “moderate subitism”—and *kanhwa* practice. The interpretation of *kanhwa* Sŏn that is generally accepted by Línjì teachers in both China and Korea views the technique as involving what I call “radical subitism,”<sup>1)</sup> that is, the soteriological stratagem of sudden

1) For the evolution of this meditation technique in Chinese Chán Buddhism, see Robert E. Buswell, Jr., “The ‘Short-Cut’ Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Chan Buddhism,” in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese*

awakening/sudden cultivation (*tono tonsu/dùn wù dùn xiū* 頓悟頓修). Where *kanhwa* Sŏn is viewed as radical subitism, the technique is claimed to focus exclusively on the enlightenment experience itself, the presumption being that a full and complete awakening would automatically perfect any and all forms of cultivation, thus rendering both awakening and practice “sudden.” In order to reconcile this new system of *kanhwa* Sŏn with his preferred soteriology of moderate subitism, Chinul must negotiate a quite considerable divide in Chán/Sŏn soteriological approaches, a divide that still exists today within the Korean Buddhist church. How Chinul seeks to accomplish this negotiation is the subject of this paper.

## I. Chinul's Preferred Soteriology of Moderate Subitism

Chinul discusses the sudden/gradual issue in several of his writings, including his earliest work, *Kwŏnsu Chŏnghye kyŏlsa mun* 勸修定慧結社文 (Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Community), written in 1190, and *Susim kyŏl* 修心訣 (Secrets on Cultivating the Mind), composed between 1203 and 1205 and arguably his most popular treatise. But his most extensive examination of this question appears in his magnum opus, *Pŏpchip pyŏrhaengnok chŏryo pyŏngip sagi* 法集別行錄節要并私記 (Excerpts from the *Dharma Collection and Special Practice Record* with Personal Notes; hereafter *Excerpts*), completed in 1209, one year before his death. *Excerpts* was intended to present a comprehensive accounting of earlier analyses of Buddhist soteriology in Chinese sources. His treatment includes copious quotations from relevant sources on the subject, accompanied by an exposition (his “personal notes”) that sought to resolve the discrepancies in those variant interpretations. Chinul's purpose in *Excerpts* was not solely theoretical, however. Fearing that an improper understanding of the regimen of

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*Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 321-377. I include there references to relevant works in both Japanese and Western scholarship. For *kanhwa* practice in Korea, see Robert E. Buswell, Jr., “Chinul's Systematization of Chinese Meditative Techniques in Korean Sŏn Buddhism,” in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 199-242 and especially pp. 216-226. I draw freely on these and others of my works in this paper.

praxis would hinder spiritual development, Chinul meant for his account of soteriology to serve as a vade mecum for students of meditation. Hence, his explication of this issue was always accompanied by an examination of the practical applications of the theory. Unlike many Chán and Sōn masters, then, Chinul strongly advocated that even Sōn practitioners required a firm grasp of Buddhist doctrine if their practice was to succeed.

As I have discussed at length elsewhere,<sup>2)</sup> the soteriological approach Chinul most consistently advocated in his writings is termed sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono chōmsu/dūnwù jiànxiū* 頓悟漸修). In this approach, which Chinul derived from the Chinese Huáyán 華嚴/ Chán exegete Guīfēng Zōngmì 圭峰宗密 (780-841), practice was to begin with a sudden, initial insight into the structure of the person's relationship with the world. This type of insight was termed an “understanding-awakening” (*haeo/jiěwù* 解悟). The functional equivalent of the “path of vision” (*darśanamārga*) in Indian Abhidharma systems, understanding-awakening grounded the student in a correct intellectual comprehension of the nature and characteristics of both himself and his

2) See my study and translation of Chinul's works in Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Korean Approach to Zen: The Collected Works of Chinul* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 56-61. This book has been reprinted in abridged paperback form as Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen*, Kuroda Institute Classics in East Asian Buddhism, no. 2 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991). A completely revised translation of all of these works (except his magnum opus *Excerpts*) has appeared in Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *Chinul: Collected Works*. Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, vol. 2 (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012). I am also retranslating Chinul's *Excerpts* for the Korean Classics Library series, funded by the Academy of Korean Studies and published by the University of Hawai'i Press. For Chinul's conception of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, see Buswell, “Chinul's Systematization,” pp. 203-207. Zōngmì's preferred soteriology, which so inspired Chinul, has been studied in Peter N. Gregory, “Sudden Awakening Followed by Gradual Cultivation: Zongmi's Analysis of Mind,” in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 279-320. Material relevant to this topic may also be found in Hee-Sung Keel, *Chinul: The Founder of the Korean Sōn Tradition* (Berkeley: Institute of South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), chapter 2. Citations to Chinul's works in this article are to my translation in Buswell, *The Korean Approach to Zen* [hereafter KAZ]. For ease of reference, I also cite the definitive Korean editions of Chinul's works found in An Chin-ho, ed., *Pōpchip pyōrhaengnok chōryo pyōngip sagi* (Seoul: Pōmnyunsa, 1957) [hereafter *Pōpchip*], and followed by page and line number (where relevant); and Pang Hanam, ed. and Kim T'anhō, trans., *Pōjo pōbō*, reprint edition (Chōlla Namdo: Songgwangsa, 1937/1975) [hereafter *Pōjo pōbō*].

universe. Chinul, following the Chinese Huáyán patriarch Chéngguān 澄觀 (738-840), defines this kind of awakening as “the clear comprehension of nature and characteristics [. . . in which one has] clearly apprehended the mind-nature.”<sup>3)</sup> But while the student might at that point have the understanding of a buddha, his practice would still be much too immature for him to consistently act enlightened. Interminable latent propensities (*vāsanā*, *sǔpki/xíqì* 習氣) would continue to buffet his mind, infecting his action and inhibiting his ability to express the enlightenment he now knew to be inherent in his mind. Consequently, while making that initial awakening the basis of his training, the student had then to continue on to develop his awakening through “gradual cultivation” (*chōmsu/jiànxiū* 漸修), counteracting the inevitable defiled tendencies of mind and cultivating wholesome qualities. This would be the equivalent of the Indian “path of practice” (*lokottara-bhāvanāmārga*). Once this cultivation was perfected, there would then be a final “realization-awakening” (*chūngo/zhèngwù* 證悟), the equivalent of the Indian “path of completion” (*niṣṭhāmārga*), in which the student's initial intellectual understanding was confirmed through direct realization. At that stage the person becomes a buddha in fact as well as potential: as Chinul says, again following Chéngguān, realization-awakening is “the mind that reaches the mysterious ultimate.”<sup>4)</sup>

## II. Problems with Radical Subitism

As a consistent advocate of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, Chinul usually is fairly critical of approaches involving sudden cultivation—e.g., sudden awakening/sudden cultivation (*tono tonsu/dùnwù dùnxiū* 頓悟頓修)—in which cultivation was said

3) Chéngguān's *Huáyán jīng xíngyán pīn shū* 華嚴經行願品疏 (Commentary to the “Original Vows” Chapter of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*), in ten rolls, *Xùzàngjīng* 續藏經 (Supplement to the Canon) 227.5.48b-198a. The passage in question appears in roll 2, section five, XZJ 227:5.64b-64c and is translated in “Excerpts,” KAZ, pp. 287-288 (*Pōpchip*, pp. 45.10-48.2). Chinul always refers to this text as the *Zhenyuan Commentary*, after the Tang dynasty reign-period during which this last translation of the *Huáyán jīng* was made. For bibliographical references to this text, see KAZ, p. 350, n. 92.

4) Chéngguān, *ibid.*

to be perfected instantly along with the insight generated through sudden awakening. In his treatment in *Excerpts* of four representative Chán schools, for example, Chinul criticizes the Hóngzhōu 洪州 school, which is claimed to have advocated a sudden awakening/sudden cultivation approach, for encouraging insouciance among Sōn practitioners. Chinul presumed this to occur because the Hóngzhōu school's exclusive emphasis on the awakening experience might foster the mistaken notion that cultivation had no role to play in spiritual praxis. After all, if, as the Hóngzhōu school claimed, all beings are inherently endowed with the buddha-nature and all the afflictions and discriminatory phenomena present in our ordinary world are inherently void, there then are really no wholesome qualities to be developed (for they are all present congenitally), no defilements to be counteracted (for they are all void), and no liberation to be achieved (for one is already enlightened). Chéngguān's hierarchy of soteriological stratagems, which culminate in sudden awakening/sudden cultivation, implied too that radical subitism was the supreme approach to practice. Indeed, this view of the superiority of sudden awakening/sudden cultivation is prominent also in the later Chán school, especially through the influence of teachers in the Línjì line and its collateral Yángchí 楊岐 and Mì'ān 密菴 branches.

Chinul instead demands that an ideal soteriological stratagem should perfect both passive and sequential approaches to practice. Exclusive attention to passive forms of practice, which emphasized the absolute reality of principle, could lead to complacency and nihilism, resulting in the student grasping at a state of calmness and aloofness. This is the principal danger with radical subitism: no provision is made for counteracting the unwholesome tendencies of mind that, Chinul claimed, will habitually arise even after the initial understanding-awakening. But equally virulent would be the problem created by presuming that negative character traits and mental attitudes must be counteracted and that wholesome states of mind must be developed—positions taken by advocates of what we might call “radical gradualism” (viz., gradual cultivation/gradual awakening). This approach could sustain the mistaken belief that there really were qualities external to oneself that needed be practiced and goals not yet realized that needed to be achieved. Students then would never be able to lessen their grasp on the phenomenal world, for their whole worldview would be founded on the mistaken belief that dharmas do indeed

exist in reality and that enlightenment really is something external to oneself. They therefore would be unable to advert to their own inherent nature, which was considered to be the vivifying source of all those phenomena. The moderate subitism of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, Chinul claims, addressed both concerns.

Perhaps the most devastating critique that can be made of radical subitism, which Zōngmì first raised and Chinul repeats, is that it actually is nothing more than a truncated vision of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation. From the standpoint of the present lifetime only, sudden awakening/sudden cultivation might seem to be the most uncompromising interpretation of practice. From the standpoint of past lives, however, it is clear that people who have successfully followed a sudden awakening/sudden cultivation approach in this lifetime already had experienced the sudden understanding-awakening in a past life. After that initial understanding-awakening, they continued to cultivate their insight gradually through many lifetimes, until finally in this present life they suddenly experienced realization-awakening and their cultivation was apparently perfected instantaneously. But in such a case, sudden awakening/sudden cultivation was in fact nothing more than the maturation of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation; for Chinul, the wide-ranging understanding of the phenomenal world that is accrued through persistent practice could not be suddenly perfected.

This collapse of sudden awakening/sudden cultivation into sudden awakening/gradual cultivation is summarized nicely by Chinul in his *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, where he confirms his previous judgment that virtually all soteriologies ultimately end up being sudden awakening/gradual cultivation:

Although some have advocated sudden awakening/sudden cultivation, this is the access for people of extraordinary spiritual faculties. If you were to probe their pasts, you would see that already for many lifetimes their cultivation has been based on [the insights gained in a previous] awakening. After sustained gradual permeation, now, in this lifetime, these people hear [the dharma] and awaken: in one moment [their practice is brought to a] sudden conclusion. But if we try to explain this according to the facts, then this capacity [for sudden awakening/sudden cultivation] is also the result of an initial awakening and its subsequent cultivation. Consequently, this twofold approach of sudden [awakening]



and gradual [cultivation] is the track followed by thousands of sages.

雖曰頓悟頓修 是最上根機得入也 若推過去已是多生 依悟而修 漸熏而來 至于今生 聞即開悟 一時頓畢 以實而論 是亦先悟後修之機也 則而此頓漸兩門 是千聖軌轍也

[Chinul: *Collected Works*, p. 213; cf. KAZ, p. 143 (*Pojo pōbō*, p. 41b)]

Sudden awakening/sudden cultivation is therefore relevant only for those few advanced practitioners whose spiritual faculties—the wholesome roots (*kuśalamūla*)—have already fully matured. For the great majority of Buddhist adepts, sudden awakening/gradual cultivation is the only viable approach to practice.

### III. The *Kanhwa* Technique

*Kanhwa* meditation is a uniquely Sōn form of practice that comes into ascendance during the Song dynasty in China, about one generation before Chinul, in which the student is taught to contemplate (*kan/kàn* 看) the “topic,” “critical phrase” or “keyword” (*hwadu/huàtóu* 話頭) of a Sōn “precedent” or “case” (*kongan/gōng’àn*; Jpn. *koan* 公案). In the Chinese Línjì school of Chán, which became the major proponent of this meditative technique, *kanhwa* Sōn is presumed to follow a sudden awakening/sudden cultivation approach to soteriology, because it focuses exclusively on the awakening experience, not on such progressive practices as morality (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). Through the disentanglement from the conceptual processes of thought created by investigating the *hwadu*, the student recovers his enlightened source of mind and is thereby able to act out his enlightenment spontaneously. Hence, Línjì Chán adepts of the *kanhwa* technique claim that cultivation is perfected simultaneously with awakening. One of the most trenchant summaries of this Chinese view of *kanhwa* meditation appears in a verse by the Yuan-dynasty monk Zhōngfēng Míngběn 中峯明本 (1263-1323), writing two generations after Chinul:

Investigating Chán (*ch’amsōn/cānchán* 參禪; viz., *kànhuà* Chán) does not involve any progression,

The ultimate essence is free from all extremes and representations.

It is difficult to use the limited mind,

In cultivating the unconditioned path.

In one realization, all is realized.

In one flash of cognition, all is cognized.

參禪非漸小 至體絕邊表 難將有限心 來學無為道 一證一切證 一了一切了

[Zhōngfēng Míngběn 中峯明本, *Tiānmù Zhōngfēng héshàng guānglù* (1965), 1 jì 輯, 10 jí 集, 75 cè 冊, p. 32168b25-26 (*juàn* 卷 17). Zhōngfēng Míngběn, *Tiānmù Zhōngfēng héshàng guānglù*,

Pinqie edition (1977), roll 17, p. 96b]

Because of this emphasis on generating an instantaneous awakening instead of developing a sequential series of practices, *kanhwa* Sŏn is therefore termed a “short-cut” (*kyŏngjŏl/jìngjié* 徑截) to enlightenment.

#### IV. Sudden Awakening/Sudden Cultivation and the *Kanhwa* Technique

In the context of *kanhwa* meditation, Chinul is much more favorably disposed toward the radical subitism of sudden awakening/sudden cultivation. Although Chinul's funerary stele mentions that the master had his third and final awakening (during a three-year long sojourn from 1197 to 1200 at Sangmujuam) as a direct consequence of reading the *Discourse Records* of Dàhuì Zōnggāo 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163), a seminal figure in the development of the *kànhuà* Chán technique in the Línjì school, Dàhuì hardly registers in Chinul's earlier writings and there is no mention whatsoever of *kanhwa* practice. There is, for example, not a single citation to Dàhuì's writings in Chinul's first composition, *Encouragement to Practice* (*Kwŏnsu Chŏngnye kyŏlsa mun* 勸修定慧結社文), written in 1190; only two in *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind* (*Susim kyŏl* 修心訣), written between 1203 and 1205, one a quotation (KAZ, p. 148), the other a quotation from a scriptural passage that Dàhuì also cites (KAZ, p. 143, n. 10); and none in his *Admonitions to Beginning Students* (*Kye ch'osim hagin mun* 誡初心學人文), written in 1205. These data suggest that Chinul had not yet been exposed to Dàhuì's *Records* or its treatment of the

*kanhwa* Sŏn technique until sometime between 1190 and at least 1197 (and perhaps as late as 1200). It is only in the concluding portions of his 1209 magnum opus, *Excerpts*, that *kanhwa* Sŏn is first recognized as a unique system of meditative training and given detailed explication. Even there, however, Chinul is hesitant to prescribe the technique to any but the most exceptional of meditators. Indeed, the coverage of *kanhwa* Sŏn in *Excerpts* is hardly in keeping with the remainder of that treatise and, as I have suggested elsewhere, looks somewhat incongruous.<sup>5)</sup> Chinul almost implies as much in his brief introduction in *Excerpts* to his section on *kanhwa* Sŏn, where he states that his detailed examination of different soteriological strategies demonstrates that Zōngmì's approach of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation is adequate for the needs of most students. To guard against students becoming too attached to Zōngmì's words, however, Chinul decides to present at the end of the treatise some brief excerpts from Dàhuì's writings about *kanhwa* Sŏn, which show how this new meditation technique can lead beyond words to liberation. Perhaps tellingly, this section includes none of the trenchant analyses Chinul offered in all earlier portions of his treatise: here he merely strings together without comment a few quotations from the *Records* of Dàhuì Zōnggāo. The structure leaves the reader with the distinct impression that Chinul had still not fully reconciled himself to the *kanhwa* technique and had yet to fully work it into his preceding analysis of Sŏn soteriology.<sup>6)</sup>

In the Chinese Línjì school of Chán, which, as we saw above, became the major proponent of this meditative technique, *kanhwa* Sŏn is typically presumed to follow the soteriological schema of sudden awakening/sudden cultivation. In *Excerpts*, however, Chinul still tries to fit *kanhwa* meditation into his preferred soteriological stratagem of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation. Chinul notes at the conclusion of *Excerpts* that *kanhwa* meditation is actually intended only for the most advanced of practitioners. For the average person to succeed in practice, he must instill in himself correct understanding of nature and characteristics and of truth and falsity—in other words, generate the

5) See Robert E. Buswell, Jr. "Chinul's Ambivalent Critique of Radical Subitism in Korean Sŏn Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12-2 (1989): pp. 20-44.

6) For this section, see KAZ, pp. 334-338 (*Pŏpchip*, pp. 125.2-135); the introductory comments appear at KAZ, p. 334 (*Pŏpchip*, p. 125.2).

understanding-awakening. Only after such a sudden awakening should the *hwadu* then be used [KAZ, pp. 338-339 (*Pōpchip*, pp. 135-136)]. In this interpretation, generating correct understanding constitutes sudden awakening, while *kanhwa* Sōn would be the subsequent gradual cultivation. Hence, in *Excerpts* Chinul continues to advocate his preferred soteriology of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, despite his new interest in *kanhwa* Sōn.

In *Excerpts*, Chinul even raises some suspicions about the true efficacy of *kanhwa* meditation. Although a gifted meditator might be able to gain sudden awakening through investigating the *hwadu*, awakening for him would merely mean that he was totally absorbed internally and thus free from any conceptual understanding. While he was in that state he might appear to be fully enlightened, but as soon as he withdrew from his meditation and began to use his mind he would once again become immersed in conceptualization. His sensory contacts would be colored by value judgments (*saṃjñā*), producing in turn passion and anger, and in all respects he would show himself to be still subject to the defiling tendencies of mind. Hence, his awakening remains deficient in the understanding that should precede cultivation according to Chinul's preferred stratagem of moderate subitism. This deficiency occurs because *kanhwa* practice was not based initially on the correct doctrinal understanding generated through the sudden understanding-awakening, which should have initiated the meditator's training. Such mastery of doctrine would have familiarized the student with the true nature of the conditioned world, so that defiling tendencies would not pressure him after the rejection of conceptualization that occurs through *hwadu* practice. Hence right view as generated through the initial understanding-awakening was a crucial factor even for meditators investigating the *hwadu*. In fact, Chinul is so intent on incorporating *kanhwa* practice into sudden awakening/gradual cultivation that he recommends the more conventional techniques of the dual cultivation of *samādhi* and *prajñā*, which he had discussed earlier in *Excerpts*, to *kanhwa* meditators who find themselves still subject to the afflictions. Although investigating the *hwadu* may thus be a more refined technique than such conventional approaches, those approaches could just as readily lead to the same rarified stages of the path as were achieved through *kanhwa* practice [KAZ, pp. 338-339 (*Pōpchip*, pp. 135-136)].

But *Excerpts* posits still another way of interpreting the soteriological process followed in *kanhwa* practice. Chinul suggests that the *hwadu* may also be viewed as a special kind of “shortcut expedient,” [KAZ, p. 334 (*Pŏpchip*, p. 125.10)] which transcends all the soteriological schemata discussed previously in *Excerpts*. *Kanhwa* Sŏn specifically targeted “accomplished meditators . . . who have the capacity to enter the path after leaving behind words,” who would then come “to know the one living road that leads to salvation” [KAZ, p. 334 (*Pŏpchip*, pp. 125.8-9, 126.1)]. *Kanhwa* Sŏn was a supplementary technique, designed to help skilled meditators overcome the conceptual understanding based on their knowledge of dharmas and their attributes, understanding that was a product of the sudden awakening/gradual cultivation approach taught by Zōngmì. While especially adept meditators may be able to work directly on the *hwadu*, in their case the so-called “shortcut” constituted an entirely separate approach from the radical subitism presented in the soteriological schemata treated previously in *Excerpts*. *Hwadu* investigation was just too advanced for most people, who would still need the correct understanding developed through sudden awakening/gradual cultivation if they were to have any chance of overcoming attachment and defilement. Only “truly an outstanding person . . . [who is] not pressured by words and speech or by intellectual knowledge and conceptual understanding” would be able to succeed while using just the *hwadu* [KAZ, p. 339 (*Pŏpchip*, p. 136.8-9)]. Hence, despite the affinities Chinul has for the *kanhwa* technique, he concludes in *Excerpts* that Zōngmì's approach of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation still remains the most appropriate soteriology.

Why is there this ambivalence in *Excerpts* as to how to analyze the soteriological program of *kanhwa* Sŏn? *Excerpts* is the culmination of a series of treatises by Chinul providing analytical treatments of Sŏn, which go back to his earlier *Encouragement to Practice* and *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*. In that series of works, written between 1190 and 1205, Chinul sought to prove the superiority of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation as a soteriological stratagem and to vindicate the Sŏn school's approach to praxis. When, for the first time in his writings, Chinul treats in *Excerpts* the technique of *kanhwa* meditation, he simply appends passages from Dàhuì's *Records* to this complex soteriological discussion with little *esprit de synthèse*. While Chinul reveals obvious sympathies in *Excerpts* with this new style of Sŏn practice, he has yet to synthesize it

fully with his treatment of Buddhist soteriological systems. Hence, he treats *kanhwa* Sōn in two different ways in *Excerpts*: as 1) an approach that can be incorporated, albeit hesitatingly, into sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, or 2) as a separate technique that has nothing at all to do with previous Buddhist scholastic accounts of the different schemata of awakening and cultivation.

This ambivalence is almost resolved in Chinul's posthumous work, *Kanhwa kyōrūiron* 看話決疑論 (Resolving Doubts about Observing the Hwadu; hereafter *Resolving Doubts*), the first account of *kanhwa* Sōn written by a Korean. In this treatise, Chinul accepts normative Chinese views about the *kanhwa* technique, portraying it as a sudden cultivation/sudden awakening approach that produces the realization-awakening. The second attitude toward *kanhwa* Sōn still inchoate in *Excerpts*—viz., *kanhwa* Sōn as a technique completely separate from earlier accounts of Sōn soteriology—is fully formed in *Resolving Doubts* and justified conceptually. This interpretation is upheld because meditators who are investigating the *hwadu* need not “pass through their views and learning, their understanding and conduct” [KAZ, p. 250 (*Pojo pōbō*, p. 134b)] before achieving realization, as does one who follows other soteriological approaches. Instead practitioners of the “shortcut” approach of *kanhwa* Sōn, from the very inception of their meditation, are

unaffected by acquired understanding in regard to both dharmas and their attributes. Straight off, they take up a tasteless *hwadu* and are concerned only with raising it to their attention and focusing on it. Consequently, they remain free of ratiocination via mind or consciousness along the road of speech or the road of meaning and stay clear of any idea of a temporal sequence in which views, learning, understanding, or conduct are to be developed. In a moment, they unexpectedly activate one instant of realization concerning the *hwadu*, and, as discussed previously, the *dharmadhātu* of the one mind becomes utterly perfect and radiant.

無法義聞解當情 直以無滋味話頭 但提撕舉覺而已 故無語路義路心識思惟之處 亦無見聞解行 生等時分前後 忽然話頭 噴地一發 則如前所論 一心法界 洞然圓明故

[Chinul: *Collected Works*, p. 346; cf. KAZ, p.250 (*Pojo pōbō*, p. 134b)]

*Resolving Doubts* was compiled by Chinul's successor, Chin'gak Hyesim 眞覺慧諱

(1178-1234), from material remaining after Chinul's death in 1210, and was first published in 1215. As I have suggested elsewhere, ["Chinul's Systemization," pp. 218-219] Chinul's thought seems to have rapidly crystallized around *kanhwa* practice toward the end of his career, a process we see beginning one year before his death in the concluding portions of *Excerpts*, but which is only fully realized in *Resolving Doubts*. In this last work, Chinul no longer acts as the Sŏn apologist, attempting to defend the Sŏn school by demonstrating its parallelisms with the teachings of the Buddhist scriptures. Here he fully embraces the Línjì presentation of Chán, as enunciated by Dàhuì, and points out its superiority to all other forms of Buddhist praxis in purity of technique, speed of consummation, and orthodoxy of outlook. In scant few other places in his oeuvre does Chinul display such vehement displays of Sŏn partisanship as found in the following quote, cited in *Resolving Doubts*: "The separate transmission outside the teaching [viz., Sŏn] far excels the vehicle of the teachings. It is not something with which those of shallow intelligence can cope" (教外別傳 迥出教乘 非淺識者 所能堪任) [*Chinul: Collected Works*, p. 346; cf. KAZ, p. 250 (*Pōjo pōbō*, p. 134b)].<sup>7)</sup>

Even in this most polemical of his treatises, however, Chinul has not entirely abandoned his interest in incorporating *kanhwa* Sŏn into the moderate subitism of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation. Unwilling to jettison his preferred soteriological schema, he backs away from claiming that *kanhwa* Sŏn perforce is exclusively a sudden awakening/sudden cultivation approach by also interpreting *kanhwa* practice in such a way that it would be appropriate for students at all levels of meditative development, not simply for advanced meditators. That is, *kanhwa* Sŏn too could be placed within the framework of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation, as is the case with all other approaches to meditation taught by Chinul. This task Chinul is able to accomplish by distinguishing between two distinct ways in which the *hwadu* may be observed: investigation of its meaning (*ch'amŭi/cānyì* 參意) and investigation of the word (*ch'amŭi/cānjù* 參句).<sup>8)</sup>

7) One of the few other displays of Sŏn partisanship appears in *Excerpts*, where Chinul discusses some of the shortcomings of doctrine and notes laconically that "the separate transmission [of Sŏn] that is outside the teachings is not subject to the same limitations" (若教外別傳者 不在此限) [KAZ, p. 296 (*Pōpchip*, p. 2.1-2)].

8) I have discussed these two types of *hwadu* investigation in Buswell, "Chinul's Systematization," pp.

In the case of the famous topic “no” (*mu hwadu/wú huàtóu* 無話頭) ascribed to Zhàozhōu Cóngshěn 趙州從諗 (778-897), for example, the student is to start his investigation by examining the question: “With what intent in mind did Zhaozhou say ‘no’ (lit. [a dog] “does not have” [buddha-nature]) (*mu/wú* 無)?” The purpose of this type of investigation of the meaning (*ch'amŭi*) is to generate intense inquiry into the *hwadu*. Such inquiry is possible because this type of investigation has “taste” (*mi/weì* 味)—that is, intellectual interest. But while such intellectual interest helps the student to maintain enthusiasm for his practice, it also impedes him from abandoning altogether discriminative processes of thought. Hence, students who investigate the meaning of the *hwadu*

are the same as those in the complete and sudden approach who gain insight through right understanding. When these sorts of people use their minds in contemplative practice, they still retain some semblance of views and learning, understanding and conduct.

與圓頓門正解發明者一般矣 如是之人 觀行用心 亦有見聞解行之功

[Chinul: *Collected Works*, pp. 352-353; KAZ, p.252 (*Pojo pōbō*, p.137b)]

In other words, investigation of the meaning generates the understanding-awakening, which retains an element of conceptual understanding that must be overcome if the student is to progress toward the ultimate realization-awakening.

Such conceptual understanding is surmounted through the more advanced approach of *kanhwa* meditation: investigation of the word (*ch'amŭi*). The student finally recognizes that to make any further progress in his practice he must abandon all latent concern he may have with Zhàozhōu's motives in saying “no” and just investigate directly the word “no” itself. Since this nondiscursive form of meditation no longer includes the conceptual component present in the investigation of the meaning, the student is ultimately able to overcome the cognitive obstructions (*jñeyāvaraṇa*), resulting in the realization-awakening. Chinul thus leaves us with a progressive regimen of *kanhwa* Sŏn, starting with the understanding-awakening catalyzed through the investigation of the *hwadu*'s meaning and culminating in the realization-awakening that results from investigating the word.



This approach, of course, parallels the regimen posited by sudden awakening/gradual cultivation. But even though Chinul lauds the investigation of the word in the *Kanhwa kyōrūiron*, he despairs at the ability of present-day practitioners to cultivate that style of meditation and at the end of the treatise comes out in favor of the investigation of the meaning:

Those in whom this realization-wisdom has appeared are seldom seen and seldom heard of nowadays. Consequently, these days *we should value the approach that investigates the meaning of the hwadu* [emphasis mine] and thereby produces right knowledge and vision [viz. sudden awakening/gradual cultivation].

此證智現前者 今時罕見罕聞故 今時但貴依 話頭叅意門 發明正知見耳

[Chinul: *Collected Works*, p. 353; cf. KAZ, p. 253; Pojo pōbo, p. 137b]

Elsewhere in *Resolving Doubts*, Chinul reiterates this accommodation between *kanhwa* Sōn and sudden awakening/gradual cultivation through his doctrine of the three mysterious gates (*samhyōn mun/sānxuán mén* 三玄門), a hermeneutical principle developed by Chinul to clarify the connection between *kanhwa* Sōn and the synthesis between Chán and the scholastic schools (especially Huáyán) found in Zōngmì (and most of Chinul's own works as well). To summarize these gates briefly, Chinul posits that the most basic level of Sōn discourse uses rhetoric similar to that found in the doctrinal schools of Buddhism, such as Hwaōm/ Huáyán, to explain the fundamental identity between enlightened buddhas and ignorant sentient beings. This first mysterious gate Chinul terms the “mystery in the essence” (*ch'ejung hyōn/tǐzhōng xuán* 體中玄). In order to disentangle the student from the doctrinal concepts employed in the first gate, Sōn next pushes the student toward *kanhwa* Sōn, which keeps the meditator from stagnating at a purely intellectual level of understanding. This second gate Chinul calls the “mystery in the word” (*kujung hyōn/jùzhōng xuán* 句中玄). Ultimately, however, even the words of the *hwadu* must be abandoned in favor of completely nonconceptual forms of pedagogy, such as striking, beating, and pregnant pauses. These peculiarly Sōn forms of expression Chinul terms the “mystery in the mystery” (*hyōnjung hyōn/xuánzhōng xuán* 玄中玄).<sup>9)</sup>

9) See my earlier treatments of the three mysterious gates in Buswell, “Chinul's Systemization,” pp.

These three mysterious gates thus portray *kanhwa* Sŏn as a natural outgrowth of the mystery in the essence—for our purposes here, Zōngmì's approach to Chán, as followed closely by Chinul in all his previous works—and culminating itself in the still more profound pedagogical styles personified by such classical Chán masters as Mǎzǔ Dàdōyī 馬祖道一 (709-788) and Línjì Yìxuán 臨濟義玄 (d. 867). Hence, despite the polemical character of much of this posthumous treatise, Chinul continues to treat *kanhwa* Sŏn both within his preferred system of moderate subitism and as a new and truly innovative form of radical subitism, as do later Chinese Línjì exponents.

I personally think there is little doubt that the intensity with which Chinul champions Sŏn in this posthumous work *Resolving Doubts* reflects the editorial hand of his successor, Chin'gak Hyesim 眞覺慧謚 (1178-1234), who was a strong advocate of *kanhwa* Sŏn and who brought it into the mainstream of Korean Buddhist practice. Even so, it is clear that Chinul was himself moving toward a more sympathetic appraisal of the sudden awakening/sudden cultivation regimen and its iconoclastic use of language as advocated by the Línjì school. By the time Hyesim succeeded Chinul as abbot of Susōnsa 修禪社/寺 (the present-day Songgwangsa 松廣寺), this new leader had all but abandoned the other meditation techniques taught by his predecessor, such as the dual cultivation of *samādhi* and *prajñā*, in favor of *kanhwa* meditation, with its implicit agenda of radical subitism.<sup>10</sup> This growing emphasis on *kanhwa* Sŏn during the mid- to late-Koryŏ period led to an increasing domination of Korean Buddhism by Línjì Chán views on philosophy and praxis. Soon after Chinul's time, Korean Sŏn practice came to be based almost entirely on the *kanhwa* technique. Chinul's eclectic approach to Buddhist training could readily accommodate variant styles of thought and practice, including both Hwaŏm and Sŏn. But the coalescence of Korean Buddhism around the Línjì Chán technique of *kanhwa* meditation resulted in a drastic narrowing in the scope of the tradition. As a byproduct of this process, the more accommodative attitude toward language found in the “mystery in the essence” and the “mystery in the word” are eclipsed in favor of the

223-226 and Robert E. Buswell, Jr., “Chan Hermeneutics: A Korean View,” in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), pp. 245-246.

10) How much of this emphasis on *kanhwa* Sŏn came as a direct result of Chinul's influence is unknown. Since Hyesim left Susōnsa in 1208, however, returning to assume the mantle of leadership only after his master's death, Chinul may not have played much of a personal role.

radical iconoclasm of the “mystery in the mystery.” Ultimately, it is a matter of some irony that, by tacitly accommodating radical subitism in his late writings, it is Chinul himself who undermined his own preferred soteriology and led to the ongoing critique of his signature approach of “sudden awakening/gradual cultivation” in contemporary Korean Buddhism.

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## 〈요약문〉

## 보조 지눌과 돈-점 논쟁: 간화선과 한국불교의 수증론

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지눌은 간화선이라는 명상 기법에 관하여 기술하고 그것의 사용을 지지한 최초의 한국 승려이다. 지눌이 그의 저작에서 대략적으로 설명한 간화선에 접근하는 방식은 임제종 내에서 표준이 된 그것과는 몇 가지 중요한 점에서 다르다. 이러한 차이점들 중 가장 중요한 것은 지눌이 자신이 선호한 돈오점수라는 수증론적 방식과 간화선 수행 사이에서 조화를 추구했다는 점이다. 중국과 한국에서 임제 선사들 사이에 일반적으로 수용되는 간화선에 대한 해석은 이 명상 기법을 돈오돈수라는 수증론적 체계를 반드시 수반하는 것으로 보는 것이다. 간화선을 극단적인 돈오지상주의로 볼 경우 이 기법은 깨달음의 체험 그 자체에만 집중하는 것으로 간주되는데, 이는 완전한 깨달음은 어떠한 수행의 형식이 되었건 그것들을 모두 저절로 완벽하게 만들어 버릴 것이라는 가정에 근거한 것으로서 깨달음과 수행 양자를 ‘즉각적’인 것이 되게 한다. 이러한 새로운 간화선 체계를 그가 선호했던 돈오점수의 수증론과 조화시키기 위하여 지눌은 선 수증론의 접근 방법에 있어서의 상당한 간극을 극복해야 했다. 첫째로 그는 비록 신중한 태도를 보이긴 했지만 간화선을 돈오점수의 틀 안에 통합될 수 있는 접근 방법으로 취급한다(다시 말해 바른 이해는 즉각적인 깨달음[돈오]을 낳고, 간화선은 이어지는 점진적 수행[점수]을 구성한다는 것이다). 지눌이 화두를 두 가지 유형으로 구분한 것 또한 간화선을 돈오점수의 틀에 통합하기 위한 방안을 제공한다. ‘뜻을 탐구함’[參句]을 통해 처음의 즉각적인 해오(解悟)를 일으키고, ‘말을 탐구함’[參句]을 통해 인식의 장애[所知障, jñeyāvaraṇa]를 극복하여 증오(證悟)를 얻는 것이다. 두 번째로 지눌은 간화선을 그가 이전에 검토한 깨달음과 수행을 설명하는 갖가지 불교 교학적 설명들과는 전혀 관계가 없는 별개의 기법으로 다룬다. 곧 화두는 모든 다른 수증론의 틀을 초월하는 특별한 ‘경절의 방편’[徑截門]인 것이다. 은밀히 돈오돈수를 간화선에 관한 그의 저작 중에 수용함으로써 지눌은 그가 선호했던 수증론의 토대를 무너뜨리고 돈오점수라는 그의 독특한 방법론에 대한 비판을 야기하기도 하였다.

• 주제어

지눌, 간화선, 돈오점수, 돈오돈수, 참의, 참구, 경절문.

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