

Sŏn Buddhist Tradition in Korea

—as represented by Chinul's Pojo Sŏn—

SIM CHAE-RYONG

1. The Scope and Limitations of this Article

The Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism is assumed to comprise almost fourteen millions of Korean Buddhists under its fold. The Chogye Order represents the traditional Sŏn(Chinese Ch'an: Japanese Zen) Buddhism is almost a common sense. This article, as represented by the title alone, is then an attempt to find out the roots of that religious tradition and to depict its characteristics.

I do not have enough time to survey all the historic facts in Korean Sŏn Buddhism, nor do I have the necessary experience in religion training under the master's guidance in that Order. Hence, the limitations in this article. I will briefly outline the historical course of development centering around Sŏn Master Pojo Chinul (1158-1210) from the introduction of Ch'an to its final dominance over the entire Korean Buddhism. But this historic approach is inevitably superficial in the sense that it can only touch upon the development of the Korean Sŏn theories (*sŏnri* or *sŏnhak* 禪理, 禪學), but can never express the so-called 'direct' action of Sŏn masters. (*sŏnhaeng* 禪行)

With those limitations in mind, I will

describe first the Chinese reactions against the Indian Buddhism and how the sinicized form of Buddhism, i.e., Ch'an Buddhism could have survived through many persecutions and established its peculiar religious tenets and its religious order. In the process of transplanting Ch'an into Korean Sŏn, I will point out some idiosyncratic features which were added to Ch'an. I will focus, then, on the role played by Master Chinul by analyzing and reconstructing his reformulations of Chinese Ch'an to suit the needs of the time and the people in 12th century Korea. In order to measure the influences Master Chinul exerted, I will cite seven historical facts and claim that the current Korean Sŏn tradition owes everything to Master Chinul for what it is today.

2. Ch'an: Chinese Expression of and Reaction to Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced to China approximately during the first century A.D. In the beginning Buddhism was a foreign religion known to only a few foreigners residing

SIM CHAE-RYONG (SHIM, JAE-RYONG) is Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Seoul National University.

around the capital Chang-an. Since China had her own cultural background like Confucianism and Taoism, she could not accept Buddhism at its face-value. The first influx of Buddhist missionaries from the first century down to the fifth was concentrated the work of translating Buddhist texts into Chinese; the Chinese were able to understand Buddhism in their own language through the intermediary of the translated texts. Attention was also given, in the preliminary attempt of making Buddhism palatable to the Chinese, to the ancient Buddhist mental exercise called *dhyana*, for it outwardly resembled some of the physical and mental exercise of the Taoists. That coincidence no doubt contributed to the initial acceptance and popularity of Buddhism in the Later Han times when Taoism was in vogue.

Taoism, understood as an organized religious movement, originated in Later Han China. Being far apart from the philosophical Taoism expressed in the *Tao-te-ching* and the *Chuang-tzu*, of which the influence was limited to the intellectual elite in China throughout the ages, the religious Taoism had its basic aim in acquiring bodily immortality through drugs, respiratory techniques, sexual acrobatics, meditation, confession of sins, practice of liberal charity, and frequent ceremonies of an ecstatic or orgiastic nature. Hence, in its earliest phase, Buddhism was regarded probably as another form of Taoism by the Chinese. Buddhism, being grafted to the indigenous Taoist tradition, was able to take its roots in the Chinese population. Later when Taoism, by appropriating Buddhist elements, became an elaborate religious institution equipped with its own pantheon, literature, and monastic organization, it was an arch-rival of Buddhism. Taoist propaganda that the Buddha Sakyamuni was just another incarnation of Lao-tzu for the sake of converting the barbarous Indians, was part of the regular stock of Buddo-Taoist polemic literature down to the thirteenth century. Anyhow, that kind of Buddhism in the garb of Taoist beliefs appealed to the masses than to the intellectual elite to form finally a popular Buddhism, a religious mixture which, in a variety of formulae, permeated the lower strata of Chinese society until modern times.

Besides the popular Buddhism, initially identified with popular Taoism, as carrying the mysterious magic of a foreign country, there was another entirely different tradition of intellectual Buddhism, which appealed to the Chinese intellectuals fettered by classical tradition and mentally confined within the limited horizon of ancient Chinese culture. In the process of introducing the foreign religion to the Chinese elite, there arose a heated debate whether Buddhism, at least in the form of an independent organized body within the state, was permissible in the Chinese way of life. In India the *sangha* had to compete with other religious groups, while in China the Buddhist community came into conflict with the imperial bureaucracy, the government itself. There were various kinds of anti-clericalism prevailing among the gentry class and of course the stereo-typed Buddhist counter-arguments. We will list generally four types of anti-clerical argumentation:

First, the activities of the *sangha* are detrimental to the authorities and to the stability and prosperity of the state (political and economical argument).

Secondly, the monastic life does not yield any concrete results in this world and is, therefore, useless and unproductive (utilitarian argument).

Thirdly, Buddhism is a "barbairan" creed, suited to the needs of the uncivilized foreigners. It has never been mentioned in the ancient classics; the sages in the golden past did not know it nor need it (ethnocentric argument based on feelings of cultural superiority).

Fourthly, the monastic life means an unnatural violation of the sacred canons of social behaviour. Buddhist monks are not supposed to marry and thus cannot have children to support their parents and ancestors. It is therefore asocial and immoral (moral argument).

Against the above, the defenders adduces various arguments to prove that 1) the monks are by no means disloyal even though not subjected to the power of the temporal authorities, and that in fact, the Buddhist *sangha* helps to ensure peace and prosperity in the state; 2) that the monastic life is not useless even if the profit it yields is not of

this world, 3) that the foreign origin of Buddhism cannot be the reason to reject it, for China had often borrowed many foreign things with good results, and 4) that there is no fundamental difference between the moral virtues propagated by the Buddhist community and the basic moral instructions of Confucianism; Buddhism is rather a higher perfection of both Confucianism and Taoism.¹

The above controversies were, however, not related to the philosophical side of Buddhist doctrine. The solution for the above controversies still pending, Buddhism started to penetrate into intellectual circles in the early fourth century A.D. It was successful owing to the fact that there was a drastic change in the field of thought in China after the Han empire had broken down. The sudden revival of non-Confucian schools, notably that of philosophical Taoism, *alias* Dark Learning based on the *Tao-te-ching*, the *Chuang-Tzu*, and the *Book of Changes*, aroused a new interest in abstruse metaphysical speculations. With the help of the Neo-Taoistic scholarship, the Mahayana doctrine of "Universal Emptiness" was almost predestined to merge with the indigenous Taoistic concept of Non-being. The resulting hybrid Buddhist philosophy eventually provided the philosophical background for the most characteristic product of Buddhob-Taoist thought: the system of mental exercises and 'shock-therapeutic' techniques called *Ch'an*. Peculiar to this type of thought we find such notions as the idea that the Absolute, being inaccessible to rational thought, must be realized in a flash of spontaneous insight; the concept of a 'wordless doctrine' as the means to convey the highest truth, all scriptural teachings being regarded as outward trappings, useful at a certain stage but to be abandoned later; the use of paradox, nonsensical statement to awaken disciples; and the emphasis on the contact with nature as a source of inspiration. Seng-chao and Tao-sheng were more articulate and elaborate in explaining these ideas to the cultured public in terms of traditional Chinese thought, only with the help of the abundant and accurate translation of the Buddhist texts at the hands of an Indian monk Kumarajiva.

However, it was only around the seventh

century that the Chinese intellectual scholar-monks were able to understand the Absolutes in the Mahayana tradition. The Chinese Buddhist thinkers were forced to be eclectic in understanding the essential teachings of major Mahayana Buddhism, because of the circumstances in which a bewildering variety of scriptures, monastic rules, spells and charms, legends and scholastic treatises, without temporal and spatial perspectives, were poured into Chinese at different ages. Being eclectic in arranging the immense variety of scriptures according to the elaborate classificatory schemes was a characteristic of T'ien-t'ai Chinese Buddhism, while the same tendency towards scholastic elaboration and theological hair-splitting characterized the Consciousness-Only school represented by Hsuan-tsang (602-64) during the so-called Golden Age of Buddhism in China. Translation projects as well as the eclectic classification of Buddhist scriptures by scholar-monks were possible under the wealthy patronage of the Chinese imperial rulers. At the same time the monastic economic power, based upon large land-ownership and various forms of commercial and financial activity, assumed a dangerous proportion, calling for its own destruction. In the meantime Chinese Buddhist scripture, now fully emancipated from the foreign influence, followed its own line of evolution. In that Chinese evolution of Buddhism, the most startling development did not take place in the powerful monasteries of the leading sects like T'ien-t'ai or Hua-yen, but in the small groups of masters and disciples belonging to Ch'an, the ideals of which were inspired by those of the earlier Buddhob-Taoist trend mentioned above.

Chinese Ch'an survived the great persecution of Buddhism in the mid-ninth century. Ch'an could survive because, not only doctrinally, but also institutionally; it stood outside of the main stream of Chinese Buddhism. Unlike the large monasteries of the traditional schools with hundreds of monks supported by the wealthy patrons, loosely bound together based upon non-hierarchical principles, the typical Ch'an community was small and strictly hierarchical. The severe blow in 845 could not do any damage to the Ch'an community, because

about fifty years before the persecution Ch'an master Huai-hai organized the first monastic rules for that new creed and thereby provided a security, tightly holding together both a master and a small number of disciples, leading a life of extreme simplicity, strenuous mental exercises and manual labour, self-supporting spiritually and materially.

The spiritual independence of Ch'an sect is more clearly seen in its doctrinal innovations. In the golden age of Buddhism during the T'ang dynasty, the translations of sacred texts, the construction of imposing temples, and the ritualistic adoration of images were all performed for the sake of merits which the performer hoped, regardless of his or her social status, to reap as a reward for his deeds. Also excessive reliance was placed upon the written word. Furthermore each of the many variegated schools of Chinese Buddhist sects seized upon one text and regarded that as the authoritative word of the Buddha, thus giving rise to the so-called sutra-dogmatism. For example, the T'ien-t'ai school placed its authority on the *Lotus Sutra*, while the Hua-yen venerated the *Garland Sutra*. It was the Ch'an monks who began from the seventh century on to protest against this excessive reliance on the external paraphernalia of religion and argued that the true essence of Buddhism was an inner experience. Ch'an consciously departed from all other schools of Buddhism. It claimed to contain the essential truth of Buddhahood and Enlightenment, and to provide the right method to reach that highest goal 'here and now'. It justified the claim by asserting that the 'wordless doctrine' had been handed down separately outside the normal scriptural tradition, from the Sakya-muni Buddha himself through an unbroken succession of patriarchs down to the time of Hung-jen.

But the origin of this Ch'an sect is shrouded by legends. Traditionally it is held that Ch'an was introduced to China around 520 by the Indian master Bodhidharma, after having been handed down by a succession of twenty-seven earlier Indian patriarchs, the first of whom was Mahakasyapa, the disciple of the Buddha. From the fact that the final version of the lineage of 'Indian patriarchs' was finalized around the tenth century in

China, we can fairly well assume that such pseudo-geneological tables and tales surrounding them about the prehistory of Ch'an were forged in China in order to enhance the prestige of the new movement and to defend it against the attacks of the already established schools.

As an organized movement Ch'an is traced for the first time in the seventh century, when it was split up into two rival groups: a northern branch headed by Shen-hsiu (died 706) and a southern branch under Hui-neng (638-713). While the northern branch, still attaching some importance to scriptural study, never became popular in China, the southern one, emphatically rejecting all scriptural studies and propagating the idea of 'sudden awakening' became very popular and in the course of time it developed all those techniques and practices commonly regarded as the hallmarks of Ch'an as a whole. Attaining great prosperity in the eighth century and surviving the 845 persecution, it diversified into various sects, often only distinguishable by subtle variations in teaching techniques or some doctrinal divergencies. In its period of prosperity and diversification Ch'an was transplanted in Korea through the missionary activities of those Korean Buddhists who studied under the disciples of the famous masters like Matsuo (died 788) and Shih-t'ou (700-90).

The gist of Ch'an tenet can be summarized by the four slogans:

Directly pointing to man's mind,
Seeing his original nature and becoming the Buddha.
An independent transmission outside the doctrine;
Not relying on words and letters.

Two fundamental attitudes characterize Ch'an Buddhism: the 'irrational' and iconoclastic. Both had their roots in the indigenous tradition of philosophical Taoism and neo-Taoism. But the two attitudes have been driven to extremes in Ch'an. Hence, some scholars assert that Ch'an Buddhism is a purely Chinese phenomenon without any Indian counterpart or prototype, although it shares the ideal of liberation from the world with Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism had never advocated that the scriptural teachings be

discarded altogether, while Ch'an monks sought to return to that which was prior to the writing of the scriptures. In that respect Ch'an was much nearer to the spirit of Taoism with its anti-ritualism, and its outspoken aversion for all book-learning and literary culture. Understandably Ch'an is sometimes called, as Dr. Hu-shih puts it, "a revolt against Buddhist verbalism and scholasticism," or the Chinese reaction to Buddhism, rather than a part of it. If we want to treat Ch'an as an integral part of Chinese Buddhism, as the most typically Chinese expression of Buddhism, it is because the basic aim of Ch'an is in line with Mahayana Buddhism as a whole; the experience of awakening or enlightenment is a concept which even in Ch'an formulation is not inspired by any Chinese creed.

Another doctrinal innovation of Ch'an Buddhism is found in the notion of "Sudden Enlightenment." As early as the fifth century this was the topic of heated debate among learned monks and laymen, long before it became the basic tenet of Ch'an. With these early thinkers, Ch'an agrees that Enlightenment cannot be attained gradually, by deliberate intellectual effort, but that it must break out in a single moment. Some would argue that the assumption of 'sudden enlightenment' is a logical consequence of the Mahayana doctrine of 'Universal Emptiness'; at the level of the highest Truth all duality, all distinctions are effaced, including the distinctions between the world of suffering and Nirvana, or between delusion and enlightenment. ...then one must conclude that the traditional path of bodhi-sattva's gradual training and mental discipline loses its ground. In fact everybody is indeed already awakened and freed from the world of suffering and identical with the Buddha and Nirvana. This fact is not something that will slowly dawn in a long period of time, but is realized in a sudden revelation of the unity and totality of all beings.

Granted that the doctrine of sudden enlightenment is not unique in Ch'an but a logical derivation from Mahayana Buddhist metaphysics, Ch'an is original in its development of the means employed to evoke the experience of awakening (*wu* in Chinese, *kkaech'im* in Korean, and *satori* in Japanese);

giving perplexing conundrums for meditation, uttering of paradoxes, non-sensical questioning and even more baffling answers, yelling and beating, all the pedagogic techniques imaginable and available to human capacity were freely employed. Those verbal as well as physical techniques were developed by the Ch'an masters to break the last barrier of the intellect of disciples, probably exhausted by mental and physical exertion, and to plunge them into the undifferentiated state of 'no-mind' where Enlightenment is experienced.²

Against this backdrop we are ready to trace the development of Korean Sŏn Buddhism; how Ch'an was imported from China and survived in the struggle against the strong, state-supported doctrinal Buddhist sects and finally succeeded in remaining the most representative Buddhist denomination in Korea.

3. Korean Buddhism before Chinul

The first generation of Sŏn students were mostly the third generation descendants of Ma-tsu who shared his stylistic de-emphasis of scriptural studies. Being faithful to their Chinese masters, the Korean Sŏn masters chose a course in direct collision with the Hwaŏm (Hua-yen in Chinese) scriptural scholars, for the Hwaŏm was the most prosperous and leading school among the five textual study (*Kyo*) schools already established at the end of the seventh century in Korea. During the ninth century the Korean Sŏn sects were deployed in the so-called Nine Mountains around the Korean peninsula. As rivalry between the Korean Hwaŏm and Sŏn schools developed and as the Hwaŏm school came to be viewed as a "Kyo" sect, the distinction between Kyo and Sŏn came to be more sharply drawn in Korea than it had ever been in China. Perhaps this tension between Sŏn and Kyo is the one single theme discussed among the Buddhist scholar-monks in Korea from the beginning of the Koryŏ (918-1392) period to the end of the Chosŏn (1392-1910) period.

In the early disputes masters Toŭi (died 825) and Muyŏm (799-888) were particularly visible. Toŭi emphasized the realization of

one's own mind without depending upon any scriptural teachings, especially those of the *Hua-yen Sutra* or that formulated by the Hua-yen scholars. For example, the quintessence of the Hua-yen philosophy, i.e., the *dharmadhātu*, is simply brushed aside and replaced by the radical tenet of emptiness. Furthermore, the long and arduous process of the Hua-yen method of gradual cultivation through faith, understanding, practice, and realization is rendered unnecessary, Toïi claimed, by the direct method of non-thought and non-cultivation. Lastly, Toïi saw the five divisions of Buddhist teachings to be a mere listing of expedient means as compared with the Minddharma that can be directly realized by Ch'an masters. These differing approaches of the two opposing sects of Buddhism were generally considered unreconcilable, at least until we come to Chinul's attempt at harmonizing the two in an adroit and expert way.

Meanwhile, Master Muyōm was probably the first to draw a sharp line between Sōn and Kyo, modeling the distinction after Chinese Ch'an master Yang-shan Hui-chi (807-883). Yang-shan had divided Ch'an into that of Patriarchs and that of Tathagatas, implying the superiority of the former over the latter due to its different approach to achieve the enlightenment experience. Muyōm proceeded to make this division apply to Buddhism in general in that he viewed Buddhism to be divided into two sects: Sōn and Kyo. Thus, Muyōm used the viewpoint of Yang-shan to make a distinction that Yang-shan himself had never made. That is, in any existing Ch'an records, we cannot find Yang-shan ever differentiating *Ch'an* and *Chiao* (Sōn and Kyo). In neither Toïi nor Muyōm, however, do we find a distinctively *philosophical* defense of Sōn over Kyo.

To add further fuel to the sectarian disputes, another first generation Korean Master, Pōmil, actually seems to have concocted his own story on the Buddha's enlightenment. He claimed that after leaving his kingly life,

(Gautama) eventually attained enlightenment while looking at the bright star. However, he thought it was not the enlightenment with regard to the ultimate truth. Therefore, he went to visit a

Patriarch Chinkwi and received the mind-seal from him. This was an essential special transmission aside from the scriptural teaching. (from the *Sōn-mun Po-chang-nok*. *Zoku Zokyo* 113, 495 c-d.)

There are no similar references to Master Chinkwi in any of the Buddhist *sūtras*. Yet, this legend of Sakyamuni's relation to Great Master Chinkwi persisted in Korean Buddhism down to the turn of this century. Historical authenticity aside, this legend reflects a major shift of emphasis among the followers of Sōn Buddhism regarding the perception of objective truth embodied in the teachings of sacred scriptures *vis-a-vis* the subjective approval transmitted from master to disciple. What matters most then for the truth-seekers is not the truth itself but the authenticity of the transmission of such truth. Behind the legend of Chinkwi lies a tacit assumption that the direct transmission of mind is most important in the matter of awakening to truth. From another angle, we can see the legend arising from the position originally stated by Chinese master Yang-shan Hui-chi, namely, Patriarchal Ch'an is superior to that of the Tathagatas. This legend of Master Chinkwi is another attempt on the part of Sōn Buddhism to emphasize the 'special transmission outside the scriptural teaching,' epitomizing the character of the first influx of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism, into Korea in the ninth century.

Gradually, however, the Sōn school lost much of its vitality and spiritual following. In the tenth century, Fa-yen Ch'an, with its dual emphasis on Ch'an meditation along with recitation of the Buddhas' name (念佛 *nien-fu*, *yōmbul* in Korean), was introduced. As in China, where this caused the discontinuation of the school of Fa-yen as well as the disappearance of Ch'an Buddhism in general, the Korean Sōn followers also dwindled in number and in spiritual vigor. Furthermore, in the eleventh century, Taegak Ŭich'ōn (1055-1101) imported Chinese T'ien-t'ai and revived Hwaōm sects by recruiting Sōn monks into the Kyo sects. With the help of imperial support the schools of doctrinal studies—Hwaōm and Ch'ōnt'ae (the Korean counterpart to Chinese T'ien-t'ai sect)—flourished

at the expense of Sŏn.³

4. Chinul's Contribution to the Philosophical Foundation of Korean Sŏn Buddhism

Against this backdrop we are prepared to see the role played by Pojo Chinul (1158–1210) and the position that he occupies in the whole history of Korean Sŏn Buddhism.

His efforts to revive the Korean Sŏn were recognized even by his contemporaries as is evident from their naming his brand of Korean Sŏn as “Chogye” or “Pojo” Sŏn. While arguing Sŏn to be the primary requisite for Buddhist practice, he treated Hwaŏm doctrine as a supporting intellectual basis for the practice of Sŏn. Hence, we witness a successful synthesis of Sŏn and Hwaŏm doctrine that served as the foundation for the development of an indigenous form of Korean Sŏn, namely, *Chogye-jong*. (曹溪宗) Through Chinul's efforts, Korean Sŏn came to have its own proper method of instruction and distinctive style. Many of his works on Sŏn as well as on Hwaŏm are still used as the required texts among the current Korean Buddhist monks.

Let us then examine critically Chinul's philosophical synthesis of Kyo and Sŏn by way of his interpretation of the Hua-yen understanding of the structure of practice and enlightenment. Korean Sŏn required a philosophical foundation that could stand on its own beside the complex and sophisticated analyses and speculations of the Hua-yen school. To develop this philosophical position, Chinul diverged from the earlier Korean Sŏn tradition in two respects. First, he undercut Muyŏm's strict distinction between Kyo and Sŏn and in so doing, opposed Toŭi's pejorative evaluation of the importance of Hua-yen doctrine. Secondly, he placed a unique emphasis on *dharma* as contrasted with the direct, personal, transmission from a master. The biographer Kim Kun-su (1216–1220 fl.) wrote of Chinul's educational background in two sentences;

In learning he had no constant teacher; he followed whoever possessed Tao (Way).

In Buddhist terminology “Tao” means enlightenment. A man of Tao is then, an enlightened person, a fully awakened master in the Way of spiritual liberation. But why did the biographer not mention even a single teacher as having been Chinul's spiritual guide? Instead, he says, Chinul made the *Platform Sutra* his distant teacher and the *Recorded Sayings of Ta-hui* his intimate friend. Moreover, Chinul himself taught:

When a man preaches *dharma*, do not make light of the preacher, whoever he is. The attitude of the listener who slights the preacher is an obstacle in reaching the hoped-for goal of the Way. With that frame of mind nobody can progress in the arduous way of cultivation. It is said in a *sastra*: “Suppose a gentleman walking in the dark night, has a sinful man hold a lantern so as to light the road. Because the lantern-holder is a man of sin, let us suppose, the gentleman rejects to accept the help of light and finally falls into a pit.” Please be mindful about this.

The word that I translate as a ‘preacher’ is *chu-pŏp-in*, (主法人) literally, ‘a man who makes *dharma* his master,’ or ‘one who regards *dharma* as first principle.’ Ideally speaking, a preacher must be a practitioner himself who sets a model for the listeners to emulate. But in the time of spiritual decadence in which Chinul felt himself to live, a fully awakened master was hard to come by. Hence, he exhorted his disciples, especially beginners in the Sŏn training, to follow the *dharma* regardless of the man who speaks of it, even if he cannot live up to the ideal of the true *dharma*. If Chinul had had access to the early discourses of the Buddha, preserved in Pali Nikaya and Chinese Agamas, he might well have quoted the parting remarks of the Buddha to Ananda, a disciple who worried about the future of the Order after the death of his master the Buddha Sakyamuni:

If, Ananda, it occurs to you: “The doctrine is such that it is rendered teacherless; we are without a teacher,” you should not consider it so. Ananda, whatever doctrine (*dharma*) I have taught and discipline (*Vinaya*) I have

instituted, that will be your teacher after my death.

The Buddha requested the monks to consider the doctrines and disciplines to be their guide and led his disciples to concentrate their attention on the problem of determining the nature of the doctrine and the discipline. Likewise, Chinul deemphasized the direct transmission from master to student and highlighted the relationship between the practitioner and the true teachings (*dharma*) of the Buddhist tradition. In this respect, Chinul is more than a religious devotee, more than a Sōn master, he is a Sōn *philosopher*. The critical evaluation of the philosophical aspect of Chinul's writings will be summarized in the following.

Chinul can be said, in a bare outline, to have struggled to find a way out of the philosophical dead-end epitomized by the Sōn tenet: non-dependence on words, not by merely resorting to the traditional non-philosophical techniques of *Hwadu* exercise and physical striking or shouting, but by a careful scrutinizing of the philosophical *raison d'être* behind such Sōn activities.

According to Chinul, his contemporary Buddhist practitioners in Korea could be grouped into two camps: (1) the Hwaōm scholars who were closely affiliated with the royal family, proud of their scholarly understanding of scriptures, and (2) the Sōn followers who were secluded in mountainous retreats, indulged in soporific meditation. While the Hwaōm scholars tended to adhere to the orthodox interpretation of the *Hua-yen Sutra* along the line of the Chinese Patriarch Fa-tsang, the Sōn practitioners kept a strict distinction between Sōn and Kyo as they simply waited for a sudden flash of awakening by means of idle sitting in meditation. Scholars with knowledge on the Hua-yen theory of four *dharmadhatus* were cognizant of the intimidating theory of innumerable *kalpas* required to attain Buddhahood and consequently placed themselves among those of lower capacities, while, on the other extreme, the Sōn meditators, committed to the apparently simple formula of "attaining Buddhahood by seeing one's nature," were convinced that they belonged to those of the higher

capacities.

Chinul diagnosed the psychological fixation of the Hwaōm scholars as self-abasement and that of the Sōn meditators as self-aggrandizement. Observing these symptoms of spiritual illness, Chinul felt the need to give a firm grounding to the religious practice of the bodhisattva's vows, a grounding that would ultimately be independent of sectarian affiliation. Even though Chinul was initiated by a Sōn Buddhist and officially passed the Sōn clerical examination, he set himself apart from the tradition by opposing their pejorative evaluation of the importance of the Hua-yen doctrine. Obliterating the strict distinction between Sōn and Kyo, Chinul embarked on an intellectual journey in search of the *Dharma* (ultimate doctrine) instead of the direct, personal transmission from a certain master. This distinctive quest made Chinul a philosopher, not just a Sōn practitioner. But we must not lose sight of his primary motivation for his theoretical investigation of Sōn philosophy. Chinul was stunned particularly at the overhasty conclusion drawn from the Sōn tenet that one can become a Buddha when he sees his own nature

As I see the contemporary Sōn Buddhists, they claim that the actual accomplishment of the bodhisattva's vows to save and help others comes to pass naturally after one has seen clearly one's own Buddha-nature (*myōnggyōn pulsōng* 明見佛性).

Ox-herd vehemently denies this. That can never happen naturally. To see clearly one's own Buddha-nature means merely to have an insight into the fundamental identity of sentient beings with the Buddhas; there is no difference between the Buddha and I. And yet unless one develops an ardent aspiration to save the suffering, one falls, I am afraid, into an entrapment of nihilistic tranquility. Hence, in the *Commentary on the Hua-yen Sutra* (by Li T'ung-hsüan), we read, "The nature of *prajna*-insight is tranquil and calm; only with the bodhisattva's vows can we protect this intuition (from falling into nihilistic tranquility)."

The upshot of Chinul's observation of his contemporary Buddhists was that they misunderstood the basis and purpose of their religious practice. To fill the gap between theory and practice became Chinul's task. But he had to wage a battle on two fronts, since both the spiritual inadequacy of the Hwaŏm scholars and the intellectual inadequacy of the Sŏn meditators were equally misdirected. The theory was empty without the proper practice; the practice was misguided without the proper theory.

First, to Hwaŏm scholars, Chinul had to show what went wrong with their orthodox reading of their basic text. In addition to his discovery of the key passage in the *Hua-yen Sutra* which conformed to the tenets of the Sŏn school, Chinul had to compare and analyze critically the orthodox interpretation of the *Sutra* by Fa-tsang and another, entirely different interpretation by Li T'ung-hsuan. Since the primary aim of Fa-tsang's metaphysical speculation on the mutual non-obstruction among events—the culmination of Fa-tsang's logical analysis of the four *dharmadhatus*—lies in the intellectual verbalization of the Buddha's accomplished state of enlightenment, it leaves little room for the practical aspect of cultivation and the role of an ordinary individual who sets his mind on the attainment of Buddhahood.

Li's reading of the *Hua-yen Sutra* emphasized Sudhana's personal entering into the *dharmadhatu*; this emphasis is manifest in four ways. First, Li's idea of faith, as the prerequisite of the bodhisattva's career, was a resolute conviction that one is already identified with Buddhahood instead of Fa-tsang's conception wherein one has faith merely in the possibility of becoming a Buddha through the step-by-step procedure of faith, understanding, practice and realization. Second, Li emphasized "unmovable wisdom" to be the content of faith and thus logically fulfilled the orthodox Hua-yen doctrine of "faith perfected is Buddhahood attained." Since every stage of spiritual progress is not separate from unmovable wisdom, the cause and the result of one's cultivation is not distinct from unmovable wisdom. With regards to the traditional time requirement of three rebirths as being prerequisite to attaining final enlighten-

ment, Li removed entirely this conventional diachronic time-element from the religious domain of cultivating unmovable wisdom. Third, while Fa-tsang made no conscious effort to make the *Hua-yen Sutra* accessible to everyone, Li boldly declared that this text is written for ordinary people so that they may be initiated into faith and ultimate realization. Fourth, no amount of scholarly elaboration was necessary to become a Buddha; Li maintained that one can accomplish Buddhahood with one thought by the fundamental experience of the self-transformation from ignorance to unmovable wisdom.

Having found the Sŏn viewpoint in Li's radical interpretation of the *Hua-yen Sutra*, Chinul made one of Li's basic ideas into the fundamental presupposition for the theoretical basis of Sŏn practice: ignorance is one and the same with Buddha wisdom. Furthermore, Chinul reconstructed his Sŏn philosophy based on Li's insight by way of criticizing the orthodox Hua-yen philosophy of interdependence and interpenetration.

We can say that Chinul's argument has three steps. First, Chinul presents various possible objections against his own position. Secondly, Chinul showed that, contrary to those possible objections, his own position was consistent with the Hua-yen position, at least as presented by Li. Lastly, Chinul analyzed two basic Hua-yen ideas: nature-origination (緣起) and conditioned origination (性起), and claimed that although orthodox Hua-yen emphasized the latter, the former is more logically consistent with the rest of the Hua-yen position.

Chinul's frequent appeal to Li's *Commentary* and the *Hua-yen Sutra* itself to support his position in the above steps shows Chinul's debt to his predecessors in formulating his own theoretical basis for Sŏn practice. It is apparent that Chinul considered himself to be clarifying rather than rejecting the Sŏn and Hua-yen positions. For Chinul, philosophical analysis was not an end in itself; it was essential, however, in revealing and clarifying the basis and purpose of religious practice. Thus, when Chinul reached a certain philosophical conclusion in his affirmation of nature-origination, he made himself a true disciple of his temporally and geographically

remote predecessors. Instead of the conventional practice of Sōn Buddhists to search for a personal, direct transmission of the truth from a master, Chinul achieved a philosophical transmission of the truth by means of the first two steps of his argument. Hence, Chinul's use of the rich history of Chinese Hua-yen Buddhism was not an unnecessary embellishment, but an essential part of his philosophical argument and a distinctive sign of his discipleship to those who made that argument possible for him.

The doctrine of nature-origination was a Chinese conceptual reformulation of the basic Mahayana ontology of *dharmasunyata*. From this common premise of Yogacara and Madhyamika, the Hua-yen masters deduced logically the doctrine of nature-origination. If this doctrine is a logical consequence of the conditioned origination, however, there seems to be no reason why we must favor one doctrine over the other. But, according to Chinul, the theory of nature-origination was not intended to provide an explanation of the origin of the phenomena: the thrust of the doctrine of nature-origination lies in its practical implication in the soteriological concern for spiritual liberation.

Chinul put his argument against the orthodox emphasis on the doctrine of conditioned origination this way: while the doctrine of nature-origination does not require any mediating step to identify principle and phenomena (*dharma*), that of conditioned origination must require an intermediary, conceptual apparatus of identity and difference in order to bridge the gap between the delusion of sentient beings and the enlightenment of Buddhas. Underlying the theory of conditioned origination is a tacit assumption that there are different substances like numerous jewels of Indra's net, whereas the nature-origination denies all relations among numerous events by realizing that the apparently different and numerous phenomenal events are but functions originating from the selfsame substance, the mind-ground. In order to ensure the spontaneous arising of enlightenment from one's own nature or originally pure mind, the Hua-yen doctrine of nature-origination must be given priority over that of conditioned origination which conceives the

attainment of Buddhahood as something extrinsic to one's essential nature. What Chinul wants to articulate is the practical potency of the doctrine of nature-origination over against that of conditioned origination. Although on the level of theory alone, the two can be construed as being roughly equivalent, their implications for practice are radically different. The concept of nature-origination is capable of merging practice and theory in a way that conditioned origination cannot.

By securing this firm practical postulation for the Hwaōm scholars, Chinul was all the more delighted to discover a fundamental identity between the Hwaōm and Sōn Buddhists' theoretical bases for their religious practices. In other words, Chinul did not have to provide a different theoretical basis for the Sōn practitioner, for he demonstrated that the doctrine of nature-origination is none other than the Sōn doctrine of mind-ground. By his clarification of the Hua-yen philosophy of identity, in which he was influenced by Li's doctrine of sameness, Chinul could strengthen and deepen his own Sōn insight. Consequently the historical Sōn-Kyo opposition was solved by Chinul in his careful coordination of Li's radical reorientation toward faith and Hui-neng's radical approach to cultivation through no-thought. It was relatively easy for Chinul, therefore, to criticize Tsung-mi for his enterprise of evaluating hierarchically the various doctrines of the differing schools of Sōn. Chinul again utilized Tsung-mi's interpretations of the four major schools of Chinese Ch'an so as to show that they really converge into one and only one doctrine.

In Chinul's justification for the idiosyncratic methods of practice in Sōn, we are able to identify two premises. The first premise—the sameness of sentient beings and Buddhas—can be easily clarified in terms of Li's idea of faith. The second premise—that defilements on the Buddha-mind are acquired extrinsically—emphasized pragmatic, rather than theoretical concerns. That is, from the purely theoretical point of view, this doctrine does not succeed in solving the problem of the origin of defilement and its factual presence in the lives of sentient beings; it merely affirms that

defilements on the naturally pure mind are adventitiously acquired. However, this doctrine does have a pragmatically positive effect on practice. In this respect enlightenment is a natural growth, a maturation of inherently pure humanity. This fundamental trust of essential human nature posits the mind as being pure and illuminating; the pure mind is not an object of some purposive exercise but the very support of such exercise, not an end to achieve but the very ground where all dualistic differentiations like subject-object, means-end, defilement-enlightenment, are grounded. From the above practical postulation comes the Sŏn dictum "Mind is the Buddha."

Nonetheless, for Chinul's interpretation, the achievement of Buddhahood is not automatic. Chinul vehemently denies the "natural happening of the bodhisattva's altruistic act." One can easily say that one sees his own nature and therefore he is Buddha, but in so doing, one overlooks the crucial point of the Sŏn doctrine that all theories are practical postulates for the actual cultivation of mind. Seeing one's own nature is awakening-in-understanding; it is only an intellectual basis for the ensuing process of gradual cultivation, just like the Hua-yen idea of faith must be the supporting motive power behind the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood. Chinul insisted that the nature of mind must reveal itself in its functioning. The non-duality of nature and function thus become the final answer to the apparent gap between theory and practice, but as we mentioned earlier, this non-duality is not a uniquely Sŏn idea, but, it is, in fact, the practical aspect of the Hua-yen doctrine of nature-origination.

Sŏn Buddhism, like any religion, is not a philosophy *per se*, yet it does have a philosophical underpinning. At many points in its development, Sŏn practice has been effective and vigorous. At such times, the theoretical basis of the practice is left relatively unexamined. In times of transition, at times when the practice seems ineffectual and contrived, however, that theoretical basis comes to the surface for philosophical scrutiny. That philosophical ingenuity of Chinul's synthetic approach to the theoretic formula-

tion of Sŏn practice made Nukariya Kaiten, the author of *Chosen zenkyoshi* (History of Korean Sŏn, Tokyo, 1930), to declare:

Since Toŭi of Silla, the way of the Patriarch (i.e., Sŏn in Korea had been a mere extension of Chinese Ch'an. But coming to the time of King Sinjong (of Koryŏ dynasty), *Chinul established with world-famous great ability an independent school of Sŏn.* (*Ibid.* p. 181.)

Chinul is then the first clearly identifiable personality to emerge with an idiosyncratic thought system in the history of Sŏn Buddhism in Korea. In breaking a new path for an independent Sŏn tradition, Chinul sought to reorient both Sŏn and Kyo toward the common goal of emancipation. In those efforts to reintegrate Sŏn and Kyo, Chinul was a true representative of the indigenous spirit of Korean Buddhist tradition that had already been clearly demonstrated by Wŏnhyo and Ŭich'ŏn. In terms of the details of the content of his synthetic theorization of Sŏn, Chinul was surely indebted to the Chinese masters in many ways, but the basic ethos that drove him to its creation he shared with the masters before him. The non-sectarian unified Buddhism was and is the goal of every Korean Buddhist. This tendency to unify or synthesize various thought-elements in the Korean Buddhist tradition is, in the case of Chinul, an integration of Sŏn and Kyo in a single order: One enters into the world of Sŏn by way of Kyo, but one has to finally erase the very trace of entering, what Chinul calls "the intellectual disease of understanding," through the *kanhwa* or *hwadu* Sŏn. For the broadness and catholicity of Chinul's system, readers are referred to the biography of Chinul attached to the end of this article. It is time now to take a look at the course Korean Buddhism took after Chinul and see what traces of Chinul's Pojo Sŏn are left. By bringing together the diverse elements of Buddhist thought under one roof, Chinul was able to give birth to a new powerful breed of Sŏn in Koryŏ dynasty at the turn of the twelfth century.

5. Chinul's Influence on the Subsequent Development of Korean Sŏn Tradition

In order to examine the legacy Chinul left to the following Buddhism in Korea, we have to make a brief historical review of the course Buddhism took in Korea after Chinul. Disregarding Chinul's accusation against the pursuit of worldly "fame and gain," Koryŏ Buddhists continued to follow their secular course. According to tradition, Susŏn-sa, now Songgwang Monastery, founded by Chinul, produced sixteen national preceptors consecutively. But that only meant a recognition of its spiritual authority, not an institutional one. Susŏn-sa was simply one of the many influential monasteries in Koryŏ, financially supported by the court, nobles, and the local magnates.

During the Mongol dominion, some notable figures in Sŏn appeared such as T'aego and Naong, both of whom went to Yüan China to seek confirmation from Chinese Sŏn masters, even though they had already experienced enlightenment in Korea. But in terms of their approaches to Sŏn, they showed nothing new.

The Founding of the Chosŏn dynasty was a real turning point for the Korean Buddhism, for it had been so closely identified with the established system of the previous dynasty and had to suffer losses. All denominational monk examinations were abolished except for Sŏn and Kyo during the reign of Sejong. The notorious despotic Yŏnsan'gun put an end to whatever official relationship the state had with Buddhism: he abolished the monk examination altogether, destroyed the two headquarters at the capital and took other extreme measures. In the midst of all that drastic measure, we do not witness any sign of serious protest from monks and monasteries. As a result, Buddhism came to lose its social respect and honor which it had enjoyed for almost a millenium and was pushed deep into mountains to become the concern for only of women and the low classes in general. Despite the external flourishing under the protection of the state in the past dynasties, Buddhism had no real support from the common people. Why would not anyone stand against the state in order to maintain

and protect the Buddhist monasteries, which had been traditionally linked with the state and functioned just like any other big landlords? The only activity through which Buddhism gained a small amount of respect during the subsequent period of Chosŏn dyanasty was the remarkable mobilization of monk-soldiers under the leadership of master Sŏsan (1520-1604) and his disciples at the time when Japanese invaded Korea at the end of the sixteenth century. The attitude of the court toward Buddhism after Sŏsan was at best neglect and at worst harassment and extortion of whatever material assets it had. Despised by the literati of the Neo-Confucian tradition and the Buddhist communities had to survive on their own, secluded in the deep mountain areas. In the mean time due to the absence of any consistent policy of the court toward the Buddhist monasteries, we witness all sorts of people, mostly mean and low but sometimes with exceptional qualities came to join the *sangha*. The minimal existence of the *sangha* was maintained by means of two groups of leadership in the monastery: one group called "*ip'ansung*" were primarily engaged in spiritual cultivation and teaching and the other, "*sap'ansung*" took care of the daily activities with all its hardships.

With the opening of the country to the foreign powers in 1876, a new situation began to develop for the then slumbering community of Buddhism as well. The law prohibiting monks from entering the capital Seoul, was removed in 1895. In 1941, after much ups and downs among the Buddhist leaders in their efforts to curb the complete control of the Buddhist communities by the Japanese authority, a new name Chosŏn Pulgyo Chogye-jong was established with T'aego Monastery as the central headquarter under the leadership of the first spiritual leader, the Sŏn Master Pang Han-am. It is still controversial whether the name Chogye represents the Susŏn-sa tradition founded by Chinul. But by tracing the influence of Chinul's Sŏn style in the Buddhism of the Chosŏn dynasty, we can say affirmatively that Korean Sŏn owes what it is today to the master-plan Chinul made a thousand years ago. We will glean seven significant facts to support our claim.

First, we can point out that the monastic

rules and practices that Chinul devised for the Susŏn-sa, were the guiding principles all the Buddhist monasteries in the Chosŏn dynasty adopted. When Hŭngch'ŏn Monastery was established by Yi T'aejo, the founder of the dynasty, its abbot Sangch'ong presented a memorial to the king saying that all the Sŏn monasteries should base their rules and practices upon those of Songgwang Monastery, namely Susŏn-sa. After the prolonged period of laxity during the latter half of the Koryŏ dynasty by adopting the Chinese Lin-chi Ch'an practice or the custom of Lamaism, Sangch'ong called for the return to the old indigenous rules formulated by Chinul proven to be effective in the Susŏn-sa. Takahashi Toru comments as follows on that memorial:

Upon this, the rules and practices of the Sŏn Order of Korea, we can observe, ceased their imitation of the Chinese Lin-chi and came back to their original rituals. Later on, when Sŏn and Kyo were cultivated in combination and practised in confusion, the rituals and rules of the monasteries became mixed with those based upon the doctrines of Sŏn, Hwaŏm, Esoteric Buddhism, Yŏmbul (Pure Land), and Pŏpsang; and these became the rules and practices of the present Korean Buddhism. Yet, since among them Sŏn was the most prevalent, most of the practices of Hŭngch'ŏn Monastery formulated at that time can be said to have been transmitted until the present day. (*Richo Bukkyo*, pp. 53-54).

Secondly, we have to cite Chinul's characteristic approach to Sŏn that has permeated the subsequent development of Korean Sŏn tradition. Chinul urged that one must first grasp a clear intellectual understanding of the ultimate truth on the basis of the genuine teachings in the scriptures, and then remove the intellectual disease by the *hwadu* exercise. This basic attitude was adopted by most eminent monks in the Chosŏn dynasty. For example, Pyŏksong Chiŏm, Sŏsan's grandfather of Dharma, taught his students of Sŏn to have first a genuine intellectual understanding of the Buddhist Dharma by

reading such books as Tsung-mi's and Chinul's treatises, and then to let them cleanse the disease of intellectual understanding by studying Ta-hui's method of "market-place Ch'an." Chiŏm also used to lecture on such *sutras* as Hwaŏm, Pŏphwa (Lotus), and Nŭngŏm. This combination of both Sŏn and Kyo clearly indicates the measure of influence left by Chinul.

Thirdly, Chinul's theory of Sŏn is best reflected in that of Sŏsan, the towering figure in the whole of Chosŏn dynasty Buddhism. In his *Sŏn'ga kwigam* (Mirror for the Students of Sŏn), we find Sŏsan's indebtedness to Chinul, in that he used almost verbatim phrases to warn the students of Sŏn from inadvertently falling into the pitfall of intellectual ratiocination. Takahashi makes the following observation about Sŏsan:

... Sŏsan's view of Buddhism which emphasizes the combined cultivation of Sŏn and Kyo, when we examine its origin, dates far back to the three paths established by the National Preceptor Pojo (Chinul) who had revived the Chogyŏ Order in Koryŏ; and there is no doubt that more recently it succeeds to the teaching of his grandfather of Dharma Pyŏksong Chiŏm and of his father of Dharma Puyong. (*Richo Bukkyo*, pp. 389-90)

Fourthly, we can cite P'yŏnyang Ŏn'gi, one of the most prominent disciples of Sŏsan who made the following statement regarding his approaches to Sŏn:

The gate of Sŏn clearly shows the truth. But for the sake of those with low capacity, it borrows Kyo; the so-called three schools of Nature (*sŏng*), Characteristic (*sang*), and Emptiness. However, Kyo has still the path of reasoning and verbalization which involves hearing, understanding, and ratiocination, it becomes the dead path of the Round-Sudden path, and thus it is called 'Sŏn of Meaning and Reason'. It is different from the supra-normal Sŏn (Kyŏgoe-sŏn). But there is no fixed meaning in the above two terms (i.e., between Sŏn of reason and meaning and the supra-normal Sŏn); it depends on the

varying capacity of each student. . .
(*Richo Bukkyo* p. 458)

Takahashi correctly points out the origin of Pyönyang's Sön:

Since the master attributes the three gates of Sön, Kyo, and Yömbul to the gate of One Mind, and decides that the true gate to cultivate mind is Sön, we could observe that he integrated Kyo and Yömbul into Sön. This exactly dates back to the three paths of the National Preceptor Pojo of Koryö, and this is the reason why he surely is the successor of Sösan's Dharma. (*Richo Bukkyo* p. 460)

As a fifth item of evidence to prove the great influence of Chinul in the Chosön day nasty Buddhism, we have to trace the lineage of Pyögam Kaksöng (1575–1660), who was a disciple of Puhyu Sönsu, who in turn, together with Sösan, was one of the two disciples of Puyong Yönggwän. Pyögam had many disciples closely related to Sönggwang Monastery, which seemed at that time to have regained some of its old prominence. In 1678 Paegam Söngch'ong reconstructed the memorial stele of Chinul with the inscriptions on it, calling Chinul "the great saint of the Eastern Land (Korea)."

For the sixth piece of evidence, we will investigate the traditional curriculum of the monastic school. Pyöksong Chiöm (1464–1534) had already formed the so-called Four Collections curriculum (*sajip*). During the seventeenth and eighteenth century the curriculum was expanded and more systematized. In scanning through the monastic curricula in terms of textbooks, we can immediately notice that most of the texts are closely related to Chinul's thought and most often quoted by him. In addition, two of Chinul's own works, *Kye ch'osim hagin mun* and *Chöryo*, are included in the curriculum; the former is used as an elementary manual for novices, the latter, for more advanced students in the curriculum of the Four Collections. Chinul is definitely one of the most influential masters that present-day Korean Buddhist monks, from the time of their initiation into the order, aspire to emulate in their behaviour and intellectual progress.

Lastly, when we survey catalogues of old books in Korea, we can immediately find the fact that the works of Chinul, particularly *Chöryo*, have been the single most widely published and circulated category of Buddhist literature of any kind during the Chosön dynasty. In the *Sönmun ch'aryo* (Essentials of Sön), recently published by Kyöngghö (1849–1912), generally credited with the revitalization of Sön Buddhism in modern times, we find five works of Chinul contained. From the popularity of the *Sönmun ch'aryo* among Korean monks today, we can be again assured that Chinul played an important role in revitalizing the long slumbering Sön Buddhist tradition at the turn of the present century. Under Kyöngghö, the leading masters like Song Mangong, Pang Han-am, and Sin Hye-wöl appeared to rekindle the light of Buddhist truth up until very recently.

From the above examination we can demonstrate that Chinul's Sön has occupied the mainstream of the Korean Sön tradition. Since Sön Buddhism in Korea is not one of the many sects of Buddhism, but it represents the totality of Buddhism, we can say that Chinul's Pojo Sön represents Korean Buddhism.

NOTES and REFERENCES

1. See for detail regarding the spread and adaptation of Buddhism in early medieval China, E. Zürcher's *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden, 1959). *Sinica Leidensia* Vol. XI.
2. For the literature on Ch'an Buddhism in Western languages, D. T. Suzuki's popularizing accounts are still the best and reliable, though over-enthusiastic in his emphasis on the irrational aspect of Zen.
3. Korean Sön prior to Chinul is well documented in Sö Kyöng-bo's doctoral dissertation: *A Study of Korean Zen Buddhism through the Chodangjip*. Temple University, 1960.
4. For the philosophical ramifications of Korean Pojo Sön founded by Chinul, see the author's articles in two installments in the *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* No. 50 and 51 (Dec. 1979 and June 1980) under the title:

The Philosophical Foundation of Korean Zen Buddhism: The Integration of Sōn and Kyo by Chinul (1158–1210).

5. For the comprehensive system of Chinul's Pojo Sōn and its influences on the subsequent

development of Korean Sōn, see Keel Hee-Sung's doctoral dissertation, *Chinul: the Founder of Korean Sōn (Zen) Tradition*. Harvard University, 1977.

Appendix

Biography of Chinul

Sōn originated from Mahakasyapa; (Bodhi-) Dharma obtained it and came to China to convert people. He transmitted it with no-transmission; people cultivated it with no-cultivation. It succeeded from leaf to leaf; the lamp was succeedingly brightened. How marvelous it is!

It has been a long time since the Sage (Gautama Buddha) passed away; the Dharma was accordingly dimmed. Scholars were keeping the age-old words—they did not understand the secret meaning. They threw away the root and kept the branches. Thus the Way to enlightenment by sustained practice was closed. Those engaged in the proliferation of theories and bickering over letters swarm like bees; the treasury of the correct Dharma-eye has almost fallen to the ground.

Here is a man, who alone cast aside the false way of the people and respected the correct, fundamental doctrine. In the beginning he grasped the principle according to the truthful verbal doctrine, yet in the end he displayed *prajna*-wisdom by cultivating meditation (*dhyana*). Once he realized it for him-

self, he instructed others. Revitalizing the slumbering Sōn, and relighting the darkened lamp of the Patriarchs, he is surely the rightful successor of (Maha-) Kasyapa and (Bodhi-) Dharma. Great is our National Preceptor!

His name was Chinul, a native of Tongju in the Kyōngsō district (presently Sōhūng County, Hwanghae, Korea). He self-styled himself as Moguja (Oxherd). His secular name was Chōng, his father Kwang-u having been a professor in the royal academy; his mother, Lady Kaehūngkun was from the Cho clan.

From the time of his birth, our National Preceptor was not healthy and no medicine could help him recover. His father prayed before the Buddha, promising that if he were

* From the commemorative inscription to the stele built for National Preceptor Puril Pojo (the Universally Illuminating Buddha Sun) at Songgwang Monastery, Chogyo Mountain, Sūngp'yōng Prefecture (presently South Chōlla, Korea).

This inscription was commissioned by the royal court and composed two years after Chinul's death by Kim Kun-su.¹

healed, his son would become a monk. His son recovered.

At eight, he had his head shaved by Sŏn Master Chonghwi, the ninth generation dharma-son in the Chogyŏ (Ts'ao-chi Hui-neung) lineage. He received the full precepts. In learning he had no constant teacher to follow; he simply set his mind on the Tao. Firm in his will, he made a fine appearance.

At twenty-five, in the twenty-second year of the *ta-cheng* reign (Chin 金 Shin-tsung, A. D. 1182) he passed the monk-examination. Before long he went south and stayed at Ch'ŏng'wŏn Monastery. One day he happened to read the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and found the following passage:

The original nature of Suchness gives rise to various thoughts. Although the six faculties are active in seeing, hearing, and recognizing things, the original nature is not tainted by them, but remains forever free from them.²

He was surprised and overjoyed at gaining what he had never experienced before. He got up from the seat and walked around the hall memorizing and thinking of the passage. His heart was greatly at ease. From then on his mind was turned away from worldly fame and gain; he only wanted to dwell in seclusion in the mountain ravines to seek the Tao in peace while exerting every effort. He never cast aside the Tao even for a split second.

Later, in the twenty-fifth year of *ta-cheng* (1185), he went to Mt. Haga and stayed in Pomun Monastery, reading the scriptures. He was awakened in his faith when he read Elder Li T'ung-hsuan's *Commentary on the Hua-yen Sutra*. Groping for the secret meaning of the *Sutra*, he perused it in order to find its essence. His understanding deepened; he was steeped in the Perfect and Sudden Gate. He decided to enlighten the scholars of the Latter-day period with his understanding of the (*Hua-yen*) *Sutra*.

An old friend of his, Tŭkchae, a wayfarer in Sŏn, was staying in Kongsan Monastery, Mt. Kong. At the earnest request of Tŭkchae, Chinul went there and spent several years instructing scholars and monks of all denominations, who wanted to renounce their fame; he encouraged them to practice diligently

meditation and wisdom.

In spring of the second year of *ch'eng-an* (1198) he went to Mt. Chiri, Sangmuju Hermitage, leading a secluded life with a couple of Sŏn practicing friends. The place was deep and tranquil, one of the beautiful spots in the world best suited for learners in meditation. Discarding all the external relations and concentrating only on his mind, he cultivated his mind to produce wisdom from the deep source of his being. The author (of this inscription) does not have to write the strange happening related to the Master's final authentication of Dharma. National Preceptor himself once said:

"I stayed in the Pomun Monastery for more than ten years. I never had idle time; I have always cultivated myself diligently. Yet I was not able to be free from discriminations and emotional disturbances. There was something stuck in my heart; I felt as though I were living with one of my enemies. Then when I stayed in Mt. Chiri, I could read the *Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Ta-hui P'u-chiueh*, where I could read the following passage:

Sŏn does not lie in a silent place, nor in a noisy place, neither in the everyday activities nor in the discriminating thought. However, you must not seek for it apart from the silent or noisy place, nor in the everyday activities nor in the discriminating thought. If your eyes are opened up suddenly, then can you know that Sŏn is no business that happens outside of your home.³

I was awakened by this passage; nothing was stuck in my heart as an enemy from then on. I felt at ease and peaceful."⁴ People respected him all the more because of the heightened brilliance of his wisdom.

In the fifth year of *ch'eng-an* (1200) he moved to Kilsang Monastery, Mt. Songgwang, and stayed there for eleven years teaching his disciples in performing the Buddha-dharma. He commented on the Tao, practicing meditation. He abided by the strict rules of conduct set by the Buddha in both summer training and begging. Hearing of him, monks and common people and even house-wives become monastics, recommend-

ing their friends to follow. Hundreds of royal relatives and aristocrats came to Susŏn (later called Kilsang) Monastery and registered themselves as his disciples.

Our Master, however, was solely concerned with keeping the Tao; he was not moved by the praise or slander of others. His personality was kind and persevering. Even when one of his disciples went astray, he always led him to the correct path out of a deep love and commiseration like that of a loving mother.

He recommended the *Diamond Sutra* for recitation. When he needed to explain the principles (of Buddhism), he used the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, utilizing both Li T'ung-hsüan's *Commentary on the Hua-yen Sutra* and the *Recorded Sayings of Master Ta-hui* as references.

He opened up the three Gates (approaches to Sŏn practice): first, the Gate of Balanced Maintenance of Alertness and Calmness (*sŏngjŏk tŭngji mun* 惺寂等持門, namely, the practical method of cultivation through simultaneous practice of meditation and wisdom, *chŏnghye ssangsu* 定慧雙修); second, the Gate of Faith in and Understanding of the Perfect and Sudden Teaching (*wŏndon sinhae mun* 圓頓信解門, namely the theoretical understanding of Sŏn practice through the Hua-yen doctrine); and third, the Gate of the Direct Shortcut (*kyŏngjŏl mun* 經截門, namely, the paralogical technique of leading people directly to the experience of "awakening" through the *kongan* or *hwadu* 公案, 話頭 exercise). Many people were led to believe in Dharma through those Gates, based on their solid cultivation. Through Chinul, unprecedented success was achieved in Sŏn study.

Our master was well balanced in his behavior; when alone, he was careful and diligent with the pace of an ox and the alertness of a tiger. Furthermore, when there was a hard labor needed, he was always at the front of other people. The Paegun Training Hall, the Chŏkch'wi Hermitage at Mt. Ōkpo, the Kyubong Monastery, and the Chowŏl Hermitage at Mt. Sŏsŏk were built by our Master. He frequented them to cultivate meditation.

When still a prince, our present king respected the Master. When he became king, he issued an edict to rename Kilsang

Monastery to Susŏn and changed the surrounding mountain name from Songgwang to Chogyŏ. The king himself wrote a name-plaque and conferred an embroidered robe on the Master. The royal respect and patronage showered upon him were unequalled.

When our Master first set his feet to the south, he asked his companions in the Way, "I would like to hide myself and make a society for the practice of meditation and wisdom as a daily activity. What do you think?" They replied, "This is the Latter-day period of the degenerate Dharma. Your idea would not suit the time of the present situation." Our Master sighed deeply, saying, "Time changes; the nature of our minds never changes. Flourishing and degeneracy in the Dharma are the opinions of the provisional teaching of those belonging to the three lower vehicles. How can you, men of wisdom, have such opinions?" Then his companions were convinced and agreed with him, saying, "You are right." Our Master decided and said, "Our society will be named 'Chŏnghye' (定慧 Meditation and Wisdom)."

Later when he stayed in Kŏjo Monastery, he formed the Society of Meditation and Wisdom, the Chŏnghye-sa and wrote the *Exhortation to Join the Society for the Practice of Meditation and Wisdom* (*Kwŏnsu chŏnghye kyŏlsa mun* 勸修定慧結社文). Thus he finally accomplished his initial wish. After he moved the Society to Mt. Songgwang, he used the same name. It so happened that hereby there was a monastery named Chŏnghye. He then changed the name of the Society to Susŏn-sa 修禪社 (Society to Cultivate Meditation or Sŏn) by royal order. Names vary, but they mean the same; he always set his mind on meditation and wisdom.

In the second month of the second year of *ta-an* (1210), he gave a series of lectures for more than ten days in order to lead his deceased mother to a better place (among the Six Paths of Rebirth). Then he told his listeners, "Before long I will not be able to lecture on the Dharma. Strive for yourselves to attain the truth." Then on the twentieth day of the third month he showed signs of illness and died in eight days; he must have known the coming of his death. The night before he died, when he went to the bath, his

attendant asked him for a poem (*gatha*) and inquired about doubtful points to which Master replied in a natural and easy manner. Late at night he retired to his quarters and engaged in a question and answer session as before. Towards dawn the Master asked, "What day is it today?" Someone replied, "It is the twenty-seventh of the third month." The Master washed his face, rinsed his mouth, donned a ceremonial robe, and said,

"These eyes of mine are not my ancestor's; this nose of mine is not parents'; this mouth of mine is not that given birth to by my mother; neither is this tongue of mine that given birth to by my mother."

He ordered the Dharma-drum beaten and called all of his disciples. Carrying his six-feet stick, he walked to the lecture hall. He lit the incense and took his seat. Striking the lectern with his stick, he continued the sermon he had left unfinished during the previous night's interview.

"The spiritual reality of the Sŏn Dharma is beyond thought. For your sake I will tell you everything about it from the inside of the source of that spirituality. If you ask me without attaching yourself to the words, I will also answer you without any unilluminating points remaining."

He turned his eyes to his left and right; rubbing his chest with his hands, he said;

"The life of this poor mountain-monk is entirely in your hands. You are free to drag me aside or to pull me down. I completely render this life of mine to you. Let anyone with bones and tendons come forward."

Then he stretched his legs, sitting on his chair. He answered every question put to him. His words were precise and his thought detailed; nothing obstructed him. The detail is described in the *Imjong-gi* (臨終記, Records of the Deathbed).⁵

At last a certain monk came out and asked, "In the old days Vimalakirti (of Vaisali) showed his sickness. Today an Oxherd in Mt. Chogye shows his illness. I would like to inquire: Are they the same or different?" The Master immediately replied, "You have learned only similarity and difference."

Thereafter he struck his stick twice and

said, "The ten thousand things exist in this."

Holding his stick, sitting immobile on his chair, he quietly passed away. Seven days after death his complexion was the same as before. His hair and whiskers grew as usual even while his disciples burned incense and made offerings. When his body was cremated, his bones issued forth five colors. About thirty big *sariras* and many more small ones were collected and enshrined in a pagoda to the north of the Susŏn Monastery. The king, lamenting his death, bestowed on him the posthumous title National Preceptor Puril Pojo (the Universally Illuminating Buddha Sun) and named his pagoda Kamno, (Sweet Dew).

He was fifty three years old when he died, thirty six years after he was ordained.⁶

He authored the *Kyŏlsamun* (Exhortation to Join the Society), the *Sangdangmun* (上堂文 Sermons), the *Pŏbo* (法語 Lectures), and the *Kasong* (歌頌 Songs and Hymns), each of one volume. All of his books clarify the fundamental tenet of Sŏn and are well worth reading.⁷

NOTES to APPENDIX

1. For the life of Kim Kun-su, see the *Koryŏ-sa, chŭan* 98, 171. *Kukko ch'onggan* Series I (Seoul, Yonsei University: Tongbang-hak yŏn'gu-so, 1955). He was famous for his literary skill. As a grandson of the noted historian Kim Pu-sik, his name is listed as one of the dharma-heirs to Hyesim. See Min Hyŏn-gu, "*Wŏllam-sa chi Chingak kuksabi ūi ūmgi e taehan il koch'al*," in the *Chindan Hakpo* 36 (Oct., 1973), 5-38.
2. cf. T 2008:48. 353b4-5. and T 2007:48. 338c19-20.
3. T 1998:47. 893c28-89492.
4. I cannot locate this quotation from among the existing works of Chinul. Probably from one of those lost books.
5. This work is also lost in transmission.
6. This means that Chinul was officially ordained at 16.
7. Except *Kyŏlsamun*, other are lost.