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The Role and Significance of Korean Son in the Study of East Asian Buddhism[

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Summary

The study of Korean Son Buddhism has not been as developed as that directed toward the Ch'an tradition in China or the Zen developments of Japan. This neglect is unfortunate since the history of the Son Buddhists in Korea is essential for an adequate picture of East Asian Buddhism. Korean Son offers us a unique glimpse into the methods of training and study for China in the 8~10th Centuries. From 784~911 a steady stream of important

Korean Son masters went to China for training. When they returned to Korea, they brought the message that meditation was primary and textual study secondary. These decades were quite different than the previous history of Buddhism in China. For the years of 798~983, no new translations were made from Sanskrit into Chinese. Thus the rejection of textual study being taught to the Korean masters came at a particular time when work on texts had been suspended by the courts.

The situation shifted after the establishment of the Northern Sung and by 984 translations started again. The importance of the texts was further emphasized when the new technology of printing was used to preserve and disseminate copies. From the 10th to

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the 13th Century the new interest in translating and printing was reflected in the teachings which Korean monks brought back from China. During these centuries, rather than rejecting textual study, Korean monks sought to harmonize textual work with meditation. However, the local situation in Korea once again changed the attitude toward study of texts. When the Confucian based Choson Dynasty came to power, Buddhism was suppressed. By the 15th century the government stopped printing Buddhist books, rejected Buddhism and denied it a place in the world of learning. As a result, Son Buddhism survived by returning to the ancient teaching of focus on meditation rather than text study. This turn against texts has in the 20th Century began to shift once again as the religion regains a primary position in Korean life. In contemporary Buddhism, education is open to all monastics and textual study is once again accepted as important.

From this review of the changing attitudes toward textual study, we can see that Korean Son gives us both a view of Chinese Ch'an in the Tang as well as reflecting the social and political changes in Korea itself.

關鍵詞：1.Korean Son 2.Buddhist Canon

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I. Introduction

The role of Korean Son Buddhism in the study of East Asian Buddhism has yet to be fully defined or identified. This is, in part, because we are still struggling with the problem of what strategies to use in the study of this religion that spread across vast reaches of the Eurasian land mass. In the process of expansion, Buddhism moved from the land of its origins and transcended linguistic, political, cultural, religious, and physical boundaries. The ability to spread far and wide made Buddhism into a world religion and created a complex history of development which scholars are still attempting to untangle. There are many questions about the nature of our study, the evaluation of the sources to be used for it, and the issues of cultural perceptions which belong to those who do this work.

From the earliest times, the Buddhist traditions have produced their own narratives about the founding, history, and basic teachings of the religion. These accounts have been standardized and put into written form and preserved in all the languages of the Buddhist communities of Asia. Academic study of Buddhism emerged from the institutions of higher education in Asia and Europe. In many ways the field of Buddhist studies has been the results of the interaction between scholars in Europe, Japan, China, South and Southeast Asia, and North America. Unfortunately, the inclusion of Korean Buddhist studies, within this developing scholastic movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, was delayed. As a result, the study of Korean Buddhism has had an entirely different history than that of Chinese or Japanese Buddhism. The lack of comparable study of Korean Son with that of Chinese Ch'an and Japanese Zen has obscured the importance of the history of Buddhism in Korea in relationship to the rest of East Asia. Therefore, as we look at the role of Korean Son in the study of East Asian Buddhism, we must first take note of the academic developments. After seeing the development of the

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field, we can turn our attention to some of the issues which have been overlooked because of the past neglect of the study of Buddhism in Korea.

The study of Ch'an and Zen Buddhism in China and Japan has come about from a complex geopolitical development over the past centuries. European involvement in Buddhist studies was initiated by three groups (1) the colonial administrations in Asia, (2) the mercantile community that went back and forth to Asia, and (3) the Christian missionaries. From these diverse groups of people, European scholars received manuscripts and descriptions of the religious practices of the people in the eastern part of the Eurasian land mass. When we look at the bibliography of published materials in European languages, listed by date of publication, we have one view of the way in which Buddhism was studied. However, bibliographical research often tells us more about the people doing the research than about the reality of the tradition being studied. The earliest academic reports and research on Buddhism came from Russia and Catholic missionaries. Russia was a natural place for research on Buddhism because the eastern borders were inhabited by Buddhists. The pioneering Catholic missionaries first sent back reports from China, then under the control of the Mongols. It's an interesting twist of history that both of these groups first came into contact with the Mongolian forms of Buddhism, at the court of the Khans in Beijing and among the eastern tribes of Russia. Only when the missionaries moved beyond the Mongol court and started to reach out to the Han peoples was there any information about the form of Buddhism that was being practiced by most of the population. The Mongols may have ruled the nation but they were a small minority in terms of numbers. We now know that the practice of the Han Buddhist monastics at the time when accounts were being made to European audiences, was Ch'an. The history of the practice was preserved in lore that described the early introduction of the meditation technique by the Patriarch Bodhidharma.

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II. Early Reports on Ch'an

The first reports to reach Europe concerning Ch'an were made by Catholic missionaries who were competing with Buddhism. Opponents never make the best histories of one another, and these two great world religions were

natural opponents. They had many practices in common, monastic life with celibate monks and nuns, rules of conduct for those who entered the monastery, vows of poverty for ascetics, shaven heads, special dress, reverence for relics of esteemed dead, pilgrimage to sacred sites associated with the esteemed, and use of images. It would seem that the two had enough common ground to stimulate an interest in the practice of the other. Unfortunately, the competition kept the Catholic missionaries from making note of similarities. A study of Christian monasticism by Chinese Buddhists was out of the question since they had no missionaries in Europe at that time and only saw individual monks and priests living in China, an alien environment for the Christians.

The initial description of Ch'an was through the person of the Catholic missionary Ricci, who was housed at one time in a Buddhist monastery.^[2] Ricci made great contributions to the study of China and involved himself in the cultural and religious debates of that time. However, he was a missionary and his goal was the conversion of the Han to Christianity. It was impossible for him to see Buddhism as anything other than a barrier to his mission. When he explored some of the teachings of Ch'an, he focused on the doctrine of śūnyatā, which he took to be nihilistic. The later community of French Jesuits also complained that the Ch'an monks of China held to the doctrine "a vacūm or Nothing is the Principle

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of all Things, that from this our first Parents had their Origin."^[3] It is not difficult to spot the source for this particular attack against Buddhism. As early as the 11th century, Chang Tsai of the Sung Dynasty had put forward the proposition that Buddhism was a nihilistic teaching. His treatise was well known and the attacks against the doctrine of śūnyatā continued through out the 11th and 12th centuries, with Chu Hsi joining in the fray.^[4] This negative view of the teachings of the Ch'an tradition was Confucian in origin and it was this Chinese position that was transmitted to the Catholics and from them on to Europe. The prejudice against Ch'an was not limited to the early missionaries. Contemporary scholars such as Kenneth Chen have echoed these ancient attacks. In his important and influential study of Chinese Buddhism, Chen states that Buddhism declined in China because of the popularity of the Ch'an and Pure Land Schools during the Sung. This type of statement, still finding its way into print a few decades ago, is a

demonstration of the persistence of certain ideas, however inaccurate or misleading they may be. That we still find reflections of the ancient battles between competing Chinese groups in the literature of the current century, alerts us to the fact that a clear and objective history of Ch'an is difficult to achieve. We are still trying to write this history and it is precisely for this reason that Korean Son, as an integral part of this story, must be studied and included in the mainstream of scholarly research on Ch'an.

III. Search for the Origins of Ch'an

When the Europeans started to discuss the intellectual history of China, they soon heard that there was a distinct difference

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between the Confucian philosophies and the Ch'an teachings. Since Buddhism has originated in India, it was natural to assume that the differences between these two systems of thought reflected the fact that the teachings had been transmitted from South Asia to China. Since this was the case, then it was important for scholars to focus attention on India in order to fully understand the doctrines of Ch'an. One of the early scholars, Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire took this approach and saw Ch'an as a form of Vedanta. However, when he was introduced to the idea of the Koan, he could see that it had no counterpart in Indian philosophy and practice. The missionary scholar Edkins also tried to find the Indian source for the Ch'an Buddhism that he encountered in China, and he concluded that it was from Jainism. The Chinese Confucian community was not adverse to such study of Buddhism, since they considered Indian culture to be inferior to that of China. Chu Hsi saw Ch'an as the teachings of the Indian Bodhidharma, who he described as a charismatic figure. The notion that Ch'an had its roots from India was an old one among the Confucians, it was not a discovery of the missionary scholars. From the opposite side of the equation, Prof. Kalupahana looks at Ch'an from the ancient patterns of South Asia and finds many elements that have precedence in the Indic textual tradition.[\[5\]](#) Dumolin presents the opposite view. He states that Ch'an was a Chinese movement in "their thoughts and feelings. They were Chinese Buddhists, stepped in the spirit of Hua-yen philosophy—very different from the

Buddhist disciples of the Pali canon.”[6] The eclectic nature of Chinese Ch’an makes it difficult to sort out the origin of its various elements.

The source of the Indian elements in Ch’an was understood to be the first Patriarch, Bodhidharma who brought the meditation

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tradition into China. In the study of the founders, whether it is Śākyamuni or Bodhidharma, a problem arises from the interpretations that are given to these individuals by some of the Western scholars. Western approaches to the study of Buddhism has been recently challenged by anthropologists in Sri Lanka. Obeyesekera has coined the word “protestant Buddhism” to describe one of the ways in which the tradition is viewed. Tambiah has joined Obeyesekera in speaking out against “protestant Buddhism.” Prothero in his study of the matter gives us a good definition. “Protestant Buddhism” is the idea that the essence of Buddhism is to be found in the texts and by implication not in the practice.[7] This leads to misunderstandings, since the extraction of textual selections as a way to define a normative Buddhism, can never be fully supported when we look at the religion in a given place at a certain time. Buddhism in local practice may appear in a quite different guise from that described in Sanskrit and Pali texts of past centuries.

A second part of “protestant Buddhism” is the belief that Buddhism is primarily an ethical system and must be defined as such. By seeking for textual evidence, this ethic can be defined. It is usually judged to be a proper ethic when it agrees with the Western system, especially that of the Protestant cultures of Europe. Tambiah and Obeyesekera both feel that this has been a betrayal of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, a cutting away of practices that have been long the heart of the tradition for people. The magical, the rituals of fortune and for the dead, do not get included in “protestant Buddhism.”[8]

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“Protestant Buddhism” creates a number of problems for the study of Ch’an. The emphasis on ethics in society calls into question the value of meditation

as a lifelong career. Monasticism was severely criticized by the Protestants in Europe and the missionaries and scholars were equally strong in directing attacks against this practice in Asia. Not only was popular practice, such as those aspects directed toward health and prosperity, overlooked by the reliance on text study, but so was Ch'an meditation. Another tendency in "protestant Buddhism" was the delight in making all major historical figures into reformers. Buddha was seen as a young Luther, a reformer who spoke out against the establishment of his time; Bodhidharma as one who rejected institutional Buddhism in China, and even Shen-hui gets accolades for being a later reformer of Ch'an itself. Seeing the important figures of Buddhism whether in India or in China, as reformers is often misleading. Bodhidharma and Śākyamuni can be better described as individuals of their own time, expressing values and ideas that were part of the collective perceptions of the era. While they may have helped bring about change, it was not the highest goal of their life. The focus on reformers is a definite sign of "protestant Buddhism."

IV. Zen Orientalism

Bernard Faure describes the next stage of study as Zen Orientalism, when Zen came to be an object of discourse in the West.^[9] The interest was a result of the work of D.T. Suzuki. He had enormous influence in the introduction of Zen and Ch'an ideas to an English reading public. In Japan he was never part of the major academic community of Buddhist specialists in national or sectarian universities. For this Japanese scholarly community the

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Zen study that attracted the most attention was that of the philosopher at Kyoto University, Nishida Kitaro.^[10] The question which emerged from the work of these two scholars and those who used their works, was whether the teachings of Zen are outside of any historical or cultural context as contrasted with being a part of a historical lineage of masters. Nishida tied Zen philosophy to pure experience. This pure experience is free of cultural context. However, the role of the lineage of teachers in Ch'an and Zen has never been replaced by the philosophical approach.

In China, an important figure among the intellectuals of the first part of the 20th century was Hu Shih.^[11] He had studied in the U.S. and returned to China with his academic training combined with the classical work that he had done within the traditional system of study in his country. Hu Shih had a strong sense of the history of China and he saw Indian Buddhism as a “virus” which had infected the nation. Ch’an was the Chinese correction of the Indian excesses of mysticism. Ch’an was practical. His work in the U.S. may have shown most clearly when he declared that Shen-hui was a revolutionary figure—another reformer. When Hu Shih started to look at the Ch’an documents of the Dunhuang collection, he negated the traditional histories and looked to construct a true history of Ch’an. His attempt to construct a true history pointed toward the importance of the Chinese cultural influences within Ch’an and the turn away from the older Indian forms of the religion.

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V. Choson Period Son Buddhism

When we turn our attention to the Choson period in Korea, we can see how the local situation helped to determine the way in which Buddhism was studied. Each culture of East Asia gave Buddhism a different position at given times and places. The Mongols gave it a very high place in their court life and provided support for the practices which they had inherited from Tibet. Among the Han people, the attitude toward the religion was mixed. There was a bias against the teachings and practices, especially among many of the officials and literati. At the same time, there was a willingness to have a variety of religious expressions existing side by side within the general practices of Chinese religion. Buddhism had a secure place among the people and for certain issues, it was a primary focus. While some of the elite of the learned community considered the teachings to be inferior to the Chinese philosophies, monasteries, where Ch’an was practiced, abounded and received great support from a wide spectrum of society.

Japanese Buddhism had been adopted by the court during the Nara period and thereafter retained a place in the center of Japanese intellectual and religious life. Unlike China, there was no elite community that considered it to be inferior. This meant that Japan was to be the nation with the best scholastic basis for the study of Buddhism. The tradition has been a part of the curriculum of universities for centuries, including the national system of higher education.

How different was the case of Korea. The Chu-hsi School of Confucian thought came to dominate the official life of the Choson Korean court and the leaders in the provinces of the nation. Buddhism, the religion of the previous Koryo Dynasty, was rejected and in many ways the recording of Korean Buddhist history was suspended. The tradition was seen as a decadent remainder of the

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power it had held in the preceding dynasty. Monks and Nuns were forbidden to enter the capital and other major cities, the educational system no longer included the Buddhists, and support from officials ceased. Korean historians who were part of the dominant Confucian supporters, gave scant attention to Buddhism in the national annals. For those who based their understanding of the history of Korea on these records, it appeared that Buddhism was a rejected and minor aspect of the life of the people. This characterization of Korean Buddhism continued into the 20th century and so Europeans and North Americans found little to interest them. Until more recent times, Korean Buddhism was not a part of the research of scholastic endeavor either in universities or colleges of Korea or those abroad.

VI. Contemporary Studies

There has been an improvement in this scholarship during the last quarter of the 20th century, and we have seen the publication of a series of monographs that have advanced our knowledge about Ch'an, Zen and Son far beyond the previous understanding. Paul Demieville was an important person in making the study of all available documents for an understanding of the Ch'an history in China.[\[12\]](#) He followed the French approach to look at the ethnographic as well as the textual sources for a study of the tradition.

This was a reconstruction of the history not totally dependent upon the received tradition of the Ch'an movement. Of great importance was the discovery of Ch'an texts in Cave 17 at Dunhuang.[\[13\]](#) These Dunhuang documents have helped scholars to

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revise the history of Ch'an and to see it as a much more complex and multifaceted movement than was previously thought. Other scholars have pursued similar strategies of looking at the full range of available documentation for the study of particular aspects of the Ch'an, whether it be the teachings of a particular master, the rules of conduct, or the cultural application of the practice. Some of these, and this is not a complete list, include Carl Bielefeldt, Martin Collcutt, Bernard Faure, Luis Gomez, Griffith Faulk, John McRae, Philip Yampolsky and others who are present at this conference. We have moved far beyond the previous understanding of Ch'an.

In most instances contemporary study of Ch'an has developed in Japan and these scholars were strongly influenced by contacts with the important Japanese scholars who looked to the Chinese material. There was no comparable study to this Chinese work for Korea among the Japanese scholars. A few good works were done such as those of Prof. Kamata, but no critical mass of scholarship has ever developed in Japan for the Korean tradition. The Japanese approach to Ch'an has also had some limitations. Because Zen in Japan is sectarian with separate ordination from other Buddhist groups, Ch'an in China is viewed as the forerunner of what happened in Japan. It is the history of Ch'an which was of interest and not the practice or the fact that Ch'an had a widespread and continuing pattern of development. After the introduction of Ch'an into Japan, and the establishment of the institutions of the Zen monasteries, less attention was paid to the subsequent developments in China. Japanese scholars have produced few studies of contemporary Ch'an or even Ch'an of the period after the Sung. Once the transmission was complete, attention was turned to Japan itself and not to the continuing developments of other forms of the tradition in China and Korea. This is one of the reasons why the study of Ch'an has seldom been extended to the contemporary practices and development.

The work of breaking through to a new era of study for Korean

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Buddhism and the Son tradition has come from a small group of scholars. In the 1960s and 70s, dissertations were written that provided the first substantial information on the history and practices of Son. The first was done by Seo Kyong-bo who made a study of the Chodangjip in 1960[14] and nearly two decades later Shim Jae Ryong[15] followed this up with a first introduction to Chinul and in the same year Sung-bae Park[16] dealt with the role of Wonhyo in the development of Korean Buddhist schools and Hee Sung Keel[17] investigated the role of Chinul. Work on Chinul continued with the publications of Robert Buswell.[18] This group of scholars received their training in Korea and North America. They were not part of that group of North American and European scholars who did part of their graduate research in Japan. This small band of scholars had to develop their own approach, and they have pioneered in the creation of the literature that has allowed students to begin the discovery of the importance of Korean Son. We owe them a debt of gratitude for providing the scholastic entry into the study of this aspect of Korean Buddhism. The publications of these scholars gave a dimension to the study of Korean Son which had never been known in Europe or North America. This focus on those who published in English is not intended as a judgement of the work that was beginning to appear in Korean.

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Without the editions, translations, and histories that were published in Korean language volumes, the international community would not have been able to make the advances that they accomplished. Scholars such as An Chi-ho, Rhi Ki-young, Kim T'an-ho, Han Ki-du, Yi Chong-ik, and others have given us invaluable aid in the hard task of mastering the textual material related to Son.

From these works done in the last half of the 20th century, we have a description of the history of the Son movement. Robert Buswell has pointed out that the early introduction of Ch'an to Korea came before the Sixth Patriarch or the battles which followed between the Northern and Southern Schools. If this history is correct, then Pomnang received his study under the

Fourth Patriarch Tao-hsin. His student studied in the linear of the Second Patriarch of the Northern School. While the Korean Son group of the Chogye Order now traces its origins to the Southern School of Ch'an, the teachings were being transmitted in Korea at an earlier date than the time when this school came to dominate. The study of the ancient documents and the reconstruction of history based on all available sources has brought about a new understanding of how Korean Son developed.

VII. Korean Son

This brings us to the main point of our inquiry: the significance of the Korean Son for the study of the Ch'an tradition in China. I would like to make a few observations and suggestions for future work. The thrust of these comments will be to examine the history of the introduction of the Ch'an approach to Korea. As we consider the materials coming from those early practitioners, it should at the very least provide us with supporting documentation for the studies that center on China. In order to follow through with this type of research, we can note that there were eight famous Korean masters

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who went to China during the Tang Dynasty and returned to Korea to start their own lineages in mountain monasteries. These masters are of interest to us, not only because of their activities in Korea, but also because they were trained in China. Receiving the instruction of Ch'an monks, the Korean Son masters represent one way of looking at the ideas and methods that were contemporaneous in the Tang Dynasty. As we look at the biographies of the eight Silla Dynasty Son masters, we have the following information about them:[\[19\]](#)

The first one to go to China was Toui. He stayed in China for 34 years returning to Korea in 818. His teacher was Hsi-t'ang Chih-tsang from the lineage of Ma-tsu. He studied with this master for 20 years. When Toui returned to Korea, he lived for seven years and during that time started his training of local disciples, who established a center at Porim Sa more than three decades after the master's demise. At the same time that Toui was working with Hsi-t'ang Chih-tsang, two other Korean disciples went to be

trained. Hongch'ok arrived in 810 and Hyech'ol in 814. Hongch'ok stayed in China for 16 years and Hyech'ol for 25. Only after the death of Hsi-t'ang Chih-tsang in 814 did any of them leave China. When Hongch'ok had returned to Korea in 826 at the age of 54 he soon established his center at Silsang Sa.

After the three Koreans had gone to study with Hsi-t'ang Chih-tsang, a fourth followed them to China in 821; Muyom went to work with Ma-ku Pao-ch'e. Muyom stayed in China for 24 years, going home in 845 and setting up his center of mediation at Songju Sa in 847. Three years later Hyonuk set out for China and was to stay for 13 years doing study with Chang-ching Huai-hui. After his homecoming in 837, he lived and taught for 32 years and his disciples established a center for the continuation of the school in

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897 at Pongnim Sa. The year following the departure of Hyonuk for China, Toyun arrived in the Tang kingdom and chose Nan-ch'uan P'u-yuan to be his master. He also had a long stay—22 years—before going back to Korea in 847 and establishing a center in 850 at Hungnyong Sa.

From these examples of Son masters who studied in China, we see that there was a steady stream of Korean monks going and returning from China with contacts among a variety of Ch'an masters from 784~911. They lived in China and studied until after the death of their Chinese masters. They had a protracted stay in China, all for more than a dozen years and some for three decades. When these monks returned to Korea, they were themselves mature people. For example Hyech'ol was 54 on his return, Hyonuk 50, Toyun 50, Iom 42. We see that the Son monks of Korea usually went to masters who were well known and already aged. The first three Korean students of Hsi-t'ang came to him in his later life. Toui joined Hsi-t'ang when he was 50, Hong Ch'ok when he was 75 and Hyech'ol during his last year of life at 79. Pomil joined his master when Yen Kuan was 81, and Toyun met Nan Ch'uan when the master was 77. This means that Korean Son monks were being taught by mature and revered masters of the Tang Ch'an tradition. They sought after the established leaders.

The impact of the group was great for Korea. Within a 50 year period, seven of the Nine Mountain Son monasteries were established as places where their heritage was continued by generations of disciples. Thus the Chinese Ch'an was transplanted in the 9th century into the main fabric of Korean Buddhist institutions. While the older scholastic schools of the Unified Silla had been the center of Korean life during the 7th and 8th centuries, Son carried the day in the 9th and Korean Buddhism was never the same.

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(A) Transmission of the Dharma

It is important that we understand the importance of these monks in looking at the history of the Tang Buddhist developments. The teachings of the eight Korean Son monks constitute a major source for our study of Ch'an, but one which has been little used by Chinese scholars. During the 9th century, we can track the developments in China which must have been part of the experience of the Son monks. There were five distinct groups of the Southern School of Ch'an. Shen Hui the founder of this school had been victorious over the so called "Northern Schools".^[20] The disciples of Shen Hui held to the principle that the transmission of the Dharma was one of the most important and sacred moments in Buddhism. Without a clear understanding of the way in which this transmission occurred there could be no assurance about the authenticity of it. There is some indication in the older Indian tradition of the transmission of the teaching from one teacher to another. We have the example of the Sakyamuni giving the dharma over to his disciple Mahākāśyapa. But even in the Indian materials, the idea of single transmission is eroded when we look at the Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra, where the transmission for that text is given from Śākyamuni to Aananda, not to Mahākāśyapa. For the newly emerging Southern School, there was the idea that transmission could only be given to one individual in a generation. They used the analogy of kingship, saying that a nation could not have more than one king, and Ch'an could not have more than one master in one generation.

The Venerable Taiwanese Master Yin Shun has challenged this view of a single transmission. Yin Shun recognizes that a major issue was over the

idea of whether there was one transmission of

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the Dharma in every generation. This would mean that it was crucial to know exactly which disciple received the transmission from Hui Neng in order to decide on the authentic passage of the teaching. But as Yin Shun shows in his research, the idea of one transmission in each generation was not a central practice before the school of Shen Hui made it so. He reminds us that there are many expressions found in inscriptions and texts that indicate the multiplicity of the transmissions. Hung Jen, the Fifth Patriarch, is quoted as saying: "I have taught many people in my life—the ones who transmit my dharma become masters in their own places." Fa Hai, another famous master, is said to have had ten disciples who received the transmission. The study of Korean Buddhism shows us that as the tradition of Ch'an was being passed into the peninsula, it came from a number of sources and transmissions. Once we see the Korean along side the events of China and Japan, we can begin to spot just how multiple the transmissions were. The fact that the Korean Hung-chou School of Son had as its founder Nan Yue Huairang (677~740), a little known disciple of Hui Neng immediately alerts us to the fact that there was no one single transmission in the generation following Hui Neng, just as Yin Shun points out that there was no single transmission before Hui Neng's time. Two of Hui-neng's disciples Nanyue Huairang and Qingyuan Xingsi, who died in the 8th century had formed the major transmissions. Two were linked to Nanyue Huairang (Yumen and Caodong) and three to Xingsi (Weiyang, Linji, and Fayan). While the idea of single transmission was put forward by the followers of Shen Hui, the idea did not take hold. It is an example of a concept that appears in the writings but not in practice.

Korean Son history is a good way to investigate the reality of how transmission was accomplished in the 9th century. It shows us that Buddhist history records multiple leaders, and a group of masters, all living and practicing at one time. Without multiple transmissions, it is hard to see how Ch'an could have been spread

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to Korea or Japan. There was no feeling that the transmission from Hui

Neng had to come through Shen Hui. Huairang and other disciples received and passed along the Dharma. As Yin Shun points out, Hui Neng was just one of the many who received the transmission from Hung Jen the fifth Patriarch.

Huairang was of great importance to the development of Chinese Ch'an. From his lineage came the Weiyang, Linji and Fayan schools, all dominant in the Southern Sung. The Fayan school kept close ties to the court and thus when the dynasty shifted, they were pushed aside as belonging to the past. Ven. Yifa in her dissertation from Yale indicates that the Linji came to the fore because they had no ties to the government and thus were free to spread. Once again, the fact that Huairang is so important in the development of the Ch'an in China and that his tradition spread to Korea, means that the Korean Son is a valuable tool to looking backward to China to see the heritage that came to Korea in the Hung-chou school.

(B) Anti-Textual Positions

If we accept the idea that the words of the Korean Son masters who trained for many years in China in the 9th century must accurately reflect the teaching that was being given at that time, then the words of Toui and Muyon are of importance.[\[21\]](#)

Toui confronted Chiwon, a scholastic, with the statement:

Hence, separate from the five scholastic teachings, there has been a special transmission of the dharma of the patriarchal mind-seal. . . . even though one recites in succession the Buddhist sutras for many years, if one intends thereby to realize the dharma of the mind-seal, for an infinitude of kalpas it will be difficult to attain.

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Muyon echoed this distinct difference between the scholastic schools and Son:

As the [Son teachings] are not overgrown by the weeds of the three types of worlds, they also have no traces of an exit or an entrance. Hence they are not the same [as the scholastic teaching].

From these Son masters, we have an indication that the Ch'an of the 9th century was making a distinction between the two approaches. While this is usually explained as part of the spiritual understanding of the Ch'an practitioner, I think it is important to take a look at the history of Buddhism at that time. In particular, the role of textual work in monastic life needs to be examined for that period. One significant element stands out when we review the events.

During the 9th century, there were no translations being made of Sanskrit texts into Chinese.[22] The recorded dates for the translated texts contained in the Koryo Canon tell us that translations came to a halt in 798. This endeavor was not reestablished until 983, when the Northern Sung court, aware of a number of Sanskrit texts that were not in Chinese, set up a bureau to continue the work. Our histories of Chinese Buddhism pay little attention to this 185 year period when new translations were no longer appearing. No effort was made to continue the activity which had been a major part of court and monastic strategy since the middle of the second century. For more than six centuries, missionary monks from Central Asia and Chinese pilgrims had been devoted to the task of finding all available Sanskrit Buddhist texts and making them available in Chinese. As long as the translation work continued, the focus of attention was directed toward the new

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discoveries and the fuller picture of the words of the Buddha. The thousands of texts that came into China and the ones being written in China claiming to be from Sanskrit originals, dominated the scholastic side of the religion. From the great volume of texts which were appearing in translation, monasteries had to give attention to the written word. Schools were developed to handle the flow of manuscripts and ideas that were being constantly supplemented with new discoveries. It was an exciting time, a time for Buddhists to collect every single work that contained the words from the "Golden Mouth of the Buddha." The so called "Textual" schools were a direct result of the centuries of focus on translations.

When the Silla monks went to China to be trained in the rising Ch'an school of meditation, textual translation was no longer an issue. As the translations came to an end, it left room in the Buddhist monastic life for a focus on practice rather than the texts. The window of opportunity for Ch'an development came in part because of this shift in emphasis within the Buddhist community. The many schools that were based on textual study had arisen in China primarily in the 6th century, with the Fa Hsiang in the 7th and the Tantra in the 8th centuries. These were the years when the translations were being made in large numbers and catalogues compiled to handle the housing of so many volumes. The cessation of the translations in 798 was a very major change in Buddhist life and efforts. It reflected some of the political changes that were occurring. First, in 755 the An Lu Shan rebellion had weakened the Tang Dynasty and was a symptom of shifts in society that would plague the successive rulers of that era. The government suppression of certain aspects of foreign religions in 845, indicated an unwillingness to have closer contacts with Central Asia. The Parthians were a menace and there was no desire to see them have an impact on the religious life of China. When we look at our group of Silla monks, it is interesting to note that three of the eight returned to Korea at the time of the suppression. Minyon went

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home in 845, Pomil in 846 and Toyun in 847. Since their masters were dead and the religious climate in China had changed, it was not surprising to find them deciding to return to their native land. Of the founders of Silla Son, only Iom went to China after the 845 events. His trip in 895 was long enough after the hard times to indicate that once again monks could find a place to study in the Chinese environment.

From this point of view, I am suggesting that the rejection of a textual basis for Buddhist thought, could occur in a time when there was a break in the translation work. This is not to say that the Ch'an masters were dependent on the cultural environment for their insights. However, when the insights were being put forth at a time when interest in the continuation of the translations had fallen to a low ebb, it is understandable that the selection of Ch'an meditation over scholastic textual reading would be more acceptable.

(C) Harmonization of Texts and Meditation

At the time when the great masters of the Korean Son tradition were studying in China, that is the 9th century, we can note that there was already a concern about the role of mediation in relationship to texts. One of the individuals who attempted to address this problem was Tsung-mi.[\[23\]](#) Tsung-mi died in 841, at a time when eight of the Silla monks had already arrived in China. He had entered the Buddhist monastic life in 807 as a disciple of the Ch'an master Tao-yuan. Later he also studied with a Hua-yen master and in his training indicates that Chinese monks were able to train in more than one group. He is associated with a movement to find common ground between the Ch'an and Hua-yen schools. When we look at the Korean Son tradition, Tsung-mi's approach

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does not seem to be reflected in the Silla developments. It is not until the time of Chinul, some two centuries later that we have the work becoming important. If the assumption is correct that the Silla masters brought back the dominant paradigms of Tang Ch'an, then the harmonization movement was a marginal one. T'oui's comments about the supremacy of Ch'an transmission over textual study, are strong statements. He does not give a focus to the idea that this transmission must be matched with the recorded words in the sutras.

There were many changes which swept through East Asia in the 10th century. The Tang rule came to an end in 907 and for more than 50 years there was a chaotic political situation. It is understandable that erudite occupations such as translations came to a standstill. The Khitan Empire followed the downfall of the Tang and they also were to have influence on the Korean world. When the Northern Sung finally was able to establish central authority for the Han peoples, the court gave unprecedented support to the Buddhists. First, they had a xylography collection carved for the entire canon. It is thought that this took place from 971~983. After completing the project in Sichuan, the court had created a standard set of texts that could be distributed as rubbings to the copy centers around the nation. The new technology of reverse image printing gave new interest to Buddhist textual study. The government then turned its attention to the problem of Sanskrit manuscripts which were available but had no counterpart in the printed edition. Therefore, in 983 the year when the

printing blocks were delivered to Kaifeng, the work of translation was resumed after nearly two centuries of neglect.

When we look at the time of the first group of Ch'an Silla monks in China, we can note that they came at a time when the textual tradition was at its lowest ebb. When they returned to Korea, it was to carry the message that texts were not as important as the practice of meditation. The rejection of the textual approach

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mirrored the times. We can understand better the larger view of Chinese Buddhist life during the 9th century, if we study the teaching which these monks has received.

When we consider the experience of Iom who went to China in 895 and stayed until 911, then we have a monk who witnessed the final years of the Tang Dynasty and the upheavals of the Wu-tai period (907~960). As things began to change after the establishment of the Northern Sung Dynasty, Ch'an again reflected in its development the issues of the time. Printing brought an exciting new dimension to Buddhist textual tradition. New translations open up the possibility of seeing the final innovations of the religion in India. It was in this environment that the talk of harmonization of Ch'an and texts came to be an issue. Yen-shou (904~975) was one of the early proponents of the attempt to make use of the texts alongside meditation.

In Korea, we can follow this attempt at harmonization. In the first decade of the 11th century, a set of rubbings from the Northern Sung block print edition of the Chinese canon was brought to Korea. The importance of this printing technology was not lost on the Koreans and they were to excel in the later development of movable type. They made a set of printing blocks for themselves, apparently by making a tracing of the Sung prints. In 1063, the Liao court send another set of rubbings made from their own printing blocks and based on manuscripts that were different than those of the Northern Sung. Other prints arrived over the years from the Northern Sung representing the additional new translations that were being made. In other words, the 11th century was a revival of interest in Buddhist texts. It was at this time that Koreans began to think about the integration of texts with

meditation practice. Uich'on (1055~1101) was one of the first in that century to speak of this reunion of the two aspects of Buddhism. One century after Uich'on birth, one of Korea's most outstanding monks was born, Chinul. While Uich'on was seeking

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for harmony as one who stood firmly in the scholastic camp, Chinul worked for the same goal from his position within the Son tradition. We know that the printing of the canon remained important to Korea, because when the Mongols invaded in 1231 and burned the printing blocks, the exiled court made the replacement of them a national priority.

This review of history tells us that the Koryo Son masters moved away from the fierce rejection of the scholastic schools that had been a characteristic of the Silla masters. The work with texts that emerged after the introduction of printing, gives us an indication that while religious ideas may not be generated by events outside of the training, these ideas may well be intensified by trends and innovations. Thus we can see a parallel between translation projects, printing technology and the rise and fall of the importance and prestige of texts in the Ch'an and Son traditions.

(D) Korean Son and Religious Suppression

Up to this point we have mainly discussed the ways in which Chinese patterns can be studied by looking at the Korean Son masters. There is another aspect of Korean Son which is unique and deserves attention. The story of Korean Buddhism during the Choson period is quite different from that of China or Japan. It is unique in the shift from significant government support to the opposite situation of extreme government repression. The result of the Neo-Confucian rejection of Buddhism was devastating to the established order of the religion. Monasteries were closed, lands confiscated by officials, serfs removed from the work force, ordination restricted, donations from wealthy followers limited, and public rituals no longer allowed to be performed. As the 14th century came to a close, the Buddhist were not just fending off attacks, the struggle for the very survival of the tradition had begun.

If we look at the situation in spatial terms, the Confucian group has appropriated social and family structure, leaving no room for

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any other approach. One definition of orthodoxy is the total control of a certain space in religion or society. Being orthodox means that no other system can share the same space in religion or society. Once such orthodoxy is in place, the rejection of any alternative is necessary. In the Choson, once the Neo-Confucians had established an orthodoxy for society, there was no possibility for the Buddhists to claim that they could share the social space.

The question for the Buddhists was what to do in these circumstances. With fewer resources, it was quite natural that the conflicting claims of supremacy of the scholastic and meditation schools would be put forward. Even as this matter of how to deal with the two aspects was still being debated in the monasteries, the collapse of urban Buddhism swept away much of the support for the scholastics. In 1471, the court stopped printing Buddhist books and all publication of doctrinal materials moved to monasteries.

The only monasteries that were open and managing to stay so, were located in rural areas. The remaining centers were not even in the villages and towns of the provinces, they were in the mountains. Away from communities that might give donations, at first glance it would seem that the surviving monasteries were too remote to attract followers. Life was difficult and the monks and nuns were required to farm and gather food in the forests. In these mountain monasteries, a form of Buddhism persisted that was quite different from that of the Koryo or the earlier times of the Choson. The scholastic schools were for all practical purposes gone and only the Son was left. The Son schools preserved in the mountain monasteries had an agenda and a strategy of practice that differed from the past centuries. The masters of that practice hoped to achieve in one moment of thought, the freeing of the mind from all attachments. When this occurs, then they believed there would be the revelation of the principle of the One Original Mind. In order to enter into this true meditative state, it was necessary to forsake the study of doctrine. We find the ideal being expressed in the Simbop

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yocho, where the Original Reality was described:

Heaven and earth cannot cover its body, mountains and rivers cannot hide its light. Nothing of it accumulates on the outside or the inside. Even the 80,000 texts cannot contain or make a record of it. No scholar can describe it, the intellectuals cannot know it, the literati and writers cannot recognize it. Even to talk about it is a mistake, to think about it is an error.

Buddhism has been put into a marginal position in the Korean society, where it had once been a major force. Treated with disrespect, criticized as destructive elements in society, the ordained members of the Buddhist order has little or no access to the social institutions of the time. While this was a dark moment in Korean Buddhist history, it was not without solutions. The answer for the monks and nuns was meditation. It was meditation that could be practiced by all, even those with little or no education. Meditation allowed practitioners in the mountains to achieve states of mind which could sustain them and their tradition. The practice did not need any of the government institutions; it did not require learning. Even the words of the Buddha, written in Chinese characters and difficult to read and understand, could be bypassed. One could proceed by meditation to achieve the same state as that of the Buddha and therefore have the highest experience. Had the Korean Buddhist attempted to maintain a scholastic Buddhism in the face of government proscriptions, it would have been impossible to compete with the learning of the secular world. Only in the practice of meditation could these despised practitioners find something that was beyond the control of officials. It was meditation that sustained the spirit of Buddhism during those dark centuries of the Choson period. There were many problems with the remnant of the monastic tradition during the last century of the Choson period, but it has survived one of the longest religious persecutions of all times. Rather than assuming that the Son

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tradition of the late Choson was a weak and beaten institutions, we perhaps should look for the strength which had allowed it to remain a part of the culture and to revive as conditions improved.

By making a more careful study of the Choson Son tradition, I believe that we will have ways of seeing Ch'an in China with new perspectives. There are many issues which need to be considered in both China and Korea. Since it is the Son school which survives in Korea and it is the Ch'an that dominates Chinese monastic life, we must consider the role of this meditation school in recent centuries. The Buddhism of East Asia traces its roots back to the Ch'an groups, whether in China or Korea. If we are to understand and deal with the contemporary situation, we must give thought to Son. The rejection of the textual tradition among many of the late Choson masters, has been influenced by political and social events. The role of meditation for a rural religion, whether in China or Korea, is worth careful consideration. The Son tradition of the Choson Dynasty when studied in this way can be of great importance for our understanding of Korean life and society and it can give us a clearer picture of East Asian developments over the centuries.

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韓國禪在東亞佛教研究裡的角色與地位

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提要

學界對於韓國禪（Son）的研究，始終不及中國禪（Ch'an）與日本禪（Zen）。這項忽略令人遺憾，因為韓國的禪宗史對於理解東亞佛教發展的全貌非常重要。韓國禪提供了一個檢視八至十世紀中國修行與研究方法的獨特視野。西元 784~911 年不斷地有重要的韓國禪師到中國接受訓練。他們回到韓國後，帶回重禪輕經的訊息。這段時間中國佛教迴異前期，793~983 年間，沒有任何梵文經典被翻譯成中文，在這段朝廷停止翻譯的特殊時期，韓國法師們被教導不須研究經典。

北宋立國後，於 984 年又開始翻譯，於是情況有了轉變；其後隨著印刷術的發明，書籍的方便保存與傳佈更進一步增加了經典的重要性。十至十三世紀間對翻譯與印刷的新興趣，也反映在韓國法師從中國帶回來的教法裡。在這段時期，韓國法師不再拒絕經典研究，他們轉而尋求禪修與讀經並重之道。但是隨著局勢的轉變，經典研究的情況又有了新的變化。崇儒的李朝（Choson Dynasty）興起後，佛教開始受到壓抑。十五世紀起，朝廷禁止印刷佛書，拒絕佛教傳法，並否認它的學術地位。於是韓國禪宗爲了生存，再度回到重禪輕經的傳統教法。這種輕視經典的情況，到了二十世紀佛教重回韓國主流地位後才又轉變。當代佛教對一切僧眾開放教育，經典研究再度受到肯定。

從上述對經典研究態度轉變的情況可以看出：韓國禪不僅呈現了中國唐代禪宗的情況；同時也反映出韓國本身社會及政治的變遷。

關鍵詞：1.韓國禪 2.佛經

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[2] Paul Rule, “Jesuit and Confucian? Chinese Religion in the Journals of Matteo Ricci,” *Journal of Religious History* 5: 105-124. 1968.

[3] See Louis Daniel Le Comte, *Un Jesuite a Paris: Nouveaux memoires sur l’etat present de la Chine 1687~1692*. Paris: Phebus. 1990.

[4] Faure *Chan Insights* (1993) p.48.

[5] David Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 1976.

[6] Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism*. Random House: New York, 1963.

[7] See Prothero’s article in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 21 1:73-92, 1991.

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[9] Faure, *Chan Insights* (1993), p.53 ff.

[10] Kitaro Nishida, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*. Translated by David A. Dilworth. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu. 1987.

[11] A good example of his approach can be seen in the article “Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method: Is Ch’an (Zen) Beyond Understanding?” *Philosophy East and West* 3, 1:3-24.

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[17] Hee Sung Keel “Chinul: The Founder of Korean Son (Zen) Tradition.” Ph.d. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977.

[18] Robert Buswell “The Korean Origin of the Vajrasamadhi-sutra: A Case Study in Determining the Dating, Provenance, and Authorship of a Buddhist Apocryphal Scripture.” Ph.d. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1985.

[19] A brief description is found in Chae Taeg-su, “The Unified Shilla Period: The Golden Age of Buddhism”, in *The History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea*, Dongguk University: Seoul, 1993, pp.77-115.

[20] See *Studies in Hua-yen and Ch’an Buddhism*. Edited by Robert Gimello and Peter Gregory, Honolulu, 1983.

[21] See this discussion in Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu *Assimilation of Buddhism in Korea: Religious Maturity and Innovation in the Silla Dynasty*, Asian Humanities Press: Berkeley, 1991.

[22] The following information on the dates of the translations is taken from Lewis Lancaster and Sung-bae Park, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1979.

[23] Kenneth Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1964, p.248.