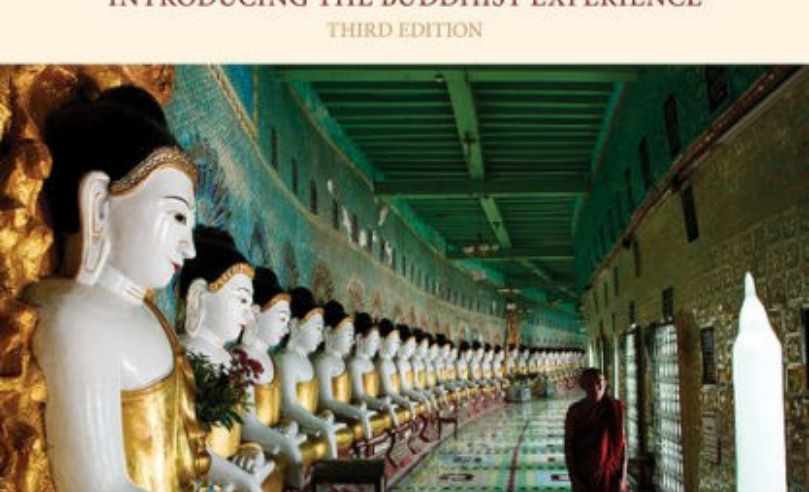
Buddhism

INTRODUCING THE BUDDHIST EXPERIENCE

THIRD EDITION



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Korean Experiences of Buddhism

Starting in the first century B.C.E., clans vied with one another to gain control of different parts of the Korean peninsula. During the first centuries of the common era, the Koguryŏ clan conquered its neighbors and formed the first of what were to become the Three Kingdoms of the peninsula (see Map 6). The Kingdom of Koguryŏ ruled the northern part of the peninsula and the south central part of Manchuria. By the middle of the third century, the Kingdom of Paekche was consolidated in the southwestern part of the peninsula. And by the middle of the fourth century, the Kingdom of Silla was established in southeastern Korea. With the emergence of the Three Kingdoms of ancient Korea, diplomatic and cultural contacts with China increased through which Buddhism found its way into the peninsula.

THE ADVENT OF BUDDHISM DURING THE THREE KINGDOMS PERIOD

In the fourth century, Koguryŏ became allied with north China against the northern barbarian tribes threatening both of their borders. In 372, the emperor of north China sent the Buddhist monk Shundao with some companions to the Koguryŏ court of King Sosurim (ruled 371–384). It is said that Shundao brought with him a number of Buddhist scriptures and statues. While tradition teaches that Shundao's mission was the first introduction of Buddhism into Korea, there is evidence that the Saṅgha was already present in Koguryŏ when Shundao arrived. In any case, the idea behind this mission was to have these Buddhist monks use their prayers and rites to help protect Koguryŏ from its enemies. The king constructed a temple for Shundao's use, and Buddhism was officially welcomed into the kingdom. Soon the aristocratic leaders of Koguryŏ saw Buddhism not only as offering supernatural protection for the nation but also as a force for internal unification and moral guidance. As the common people adopted the religion, they integrated it with the country's indigenous shamanism.

Meanwhile, Paekche had developed an alliance with south China. Legend has it that in 384, the Indian monk Mālānanda, who had been traveling in south China, came to Paekche by ship, where he was also welcomed and supported in propagating Buddhism. As in Koguryŏ, the Buddhism introduced into Paekche was Mahāyāna. Soon after the introduction of Buddhism into Koguryŏ and Paekche, Korean monastics from both of these kingdoms were traveling to China to study with great Chinese masters like Kumārajīva. When these monks returned to Korea, they brought with them some of the teachings of the Chinese schools of Buddhism. There is evidence that at this time in Korea, the study of Sarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika, the *Nirvana Sūtra*, and other Chinese schools such as Sanlun and Tiantai was taking place. Despite this activity in Koguryŏ and Paekche, the introduction of Buddhism into the Kingdom of Silla was protracted compared to the other kingdoms. Silla was the less developed and most isolated of the Three Kingdoms, and the first Buddhist missionaries to Silla were said to have been martyred. It was not until 527 that Buddhism was finally accepted as Silla's state religion under King Pŏphŭng (514–540).

During the sixth century, Buddhism in Koguryŏ and Paekche developed their own traditions. At the same time, the two kingdoms also sent missionaries to Japan. The Paekche king, Sŏng-myŏng, sent a Buddhist statue, ritual implements, and scriptures to the Japanese emperor in 552, with the result that Buddhist doctrine began to spread among the Japanese aristocracy. Eventually, Korean teachers of the Buddhist scriptural traditions, masters of Sŏn (Zen) practice, as well as temple artisans and architects reached Japan from Korea. Indeed, Korean Buddhists were actively involved in the propagation and development of Buddhism in Japan for over 150 years. This mission included not only the training of monks and nuns in doctrinal study and meditative practice but also the transmission of sophisticated Buddhist art and architecture. During this time, not only were Korean Buddhists traveling to Japan but Japanese Buddhists were also going to Korea for further study.

The Silla monk Chajang (fl. 636–645) journeyed to China for study in 636. Returning to the Silla Kingdom, he worked to import Chinese culture and Buddhism, and he also helped spread Buddhism from the aristocratic community to the general population. Chajang reorganized Buddhism in Silla by issuing four rules of monastic discipline: (1) study of the *sūtras*, (2) seminars on doctrine with examinations, (3) a central temple for ordination, and (4) a government department to maintain temples and other Buddhist property. Chajang helped to establish a solid monastic structure in Korea based on his view that monastic discipline plays a central role in the attainment of Awakening. This strong monastic foundation became a key element in the Korean Buddhist experience, contributed to the eventual success of the Saṅgha, and has been an important reason for the vitality of Korean Buddhism over the centuries. The following passages record some of Chajang's contributions to the monastic discipline of the Korean Saṅgha:

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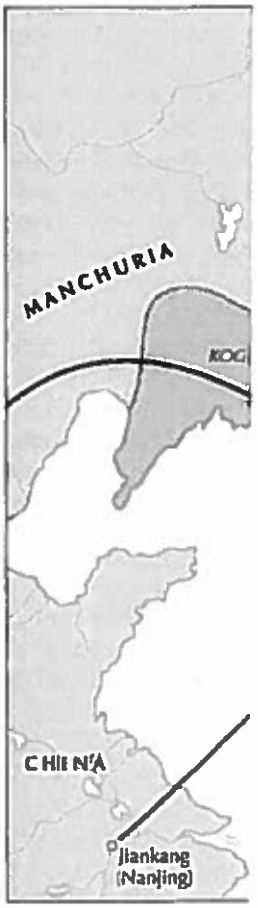

MAP 6. Buddhism in K

The [Silla] court discussed, "Although the eastern journey of Buddhism has been continuing for hundreds . . . of years, there is a lack of rules concerning its monastic structure. Without them, how can the Saṅgha be kept respectable and pure?" So, by royal decree, Chajang was made the Great National Overseer. . . .

Chajang . . . encouraged each division of the Saṅgha to enhance its training through the following: recite the precepts every two weeks, hold winter and summer examinations, establish an office to make sure the monastics follow the precepts, and send investigators to outlying monasteries to admonish monastics for their faults, and to ensure they carefully and regularly maintain their scriptures and statues. . . . Later, Chajang founded T'ongdo Monastery, where he constructed a Precepts Platform used to ordain those coming from the four directions. (*Samguk yusa*, 4: 192–193)

MAP 6. Buddhism in Korea and Japan: fourth–seventeenth century C.E.

BUDDHISM DURING THE UNIFIED SILLA DYNASTY: INNOVATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Silla conquered Paekche in 663 and Koguryŏ in 668, thus unifying the Korean peninsula for the first time and bringing the Three Kingdoms Period to an end. This unification ushered in the Silla Dynasty (see Figure 8.1), which lasted until 918. During this period, Buddhist scholarship flourished, and major doctrinal developments of Korean Buddhism were made that still define the Korean Buddhist experience today. On the devotional level, the worship of Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, and especially Maitreya Bodhisattva was popular. In regard to Maitreya, the Silla kings claimed to be his emanations to justify their rule, and the common people sought to be reborn with him in the Tuṣita heaven. Within this creative environment, two major figures emerged who made major contributions to the developing uniqueness of Korean Buddhism: Ŭisang (625–702) and Wŏnhyo (617–686).

Ŭisang

Ŭisang traveled to China to study with Zhiyan (602–668), the Second Patriarch of Huayan Buddhism. He also became the lifelong friend of Fazang (643–712), Huayan's famous Third Patriarch and systematizer of the school's doctrines. Fazang greatly respected Ŭisang's understanding of Huayan thought, and corresponded with him after Ŭisang's return to Korea. Ŭisang taught the doctrines of Huayan in Korea, thus inspiring the intellectual development of Korean Buddhism. He founded the Hwaŏm (Huayan) School, which under his guidance became the basis for much of Korean Buddhist doctrinal scholarship. Over the centuries, Hwaŏm has continued to have the greatest influence of the scholastic schools in Korea. Besides this scholarly work, Ŭisang stressed practice and monastic discipline, and also founded many of the most famous Buddhist temples in Korea. His seminal work, *Chart of the Dharmadhātu*, is one of the most important works in Korean Buddhist literature. The following are passages from this early work:

> The Dharma nature is perfectly interpenetrating; it has no duality.
> All *dharmas* are unmoving; they by nature are quiescent, without [the] names or characteristics [we attribute to them]. . . .
> Only by the realization of wisdom is it known, not by any other means.
> True nature is profound and subtle; with no own-being, arising dependently. . . .
> The one is the many, and the many are the one.
> The ten directions are contained in a mote of dust. . . .
> The first arising of *bodhicitta* is the same as true Awakening.
> *Saṃsāra* and Nirvana are always harmonious. . . .
> Śākyamuni Buddha, from his ocean-seal *samādhi* manifesting super-normal powers, rains down jewels benefiting all living beings, filling all space. All living beings benefit according to their capacity.
> Therefore, the one who practices good conduct must also return to the original source, which one cannot attain without ceasing false conceptions.

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> By unconditional skillful means, one attains complete liberation, returns home, and receives food according to one's capacity. . . .
> Finally, one is seated on the throne of the ultimate truth of the Middle Way, from which one has never moved. Thus, one's name is Buddha. (*Ilsŭng pŏpkye to*)

Wŏnhyo

The second famous figure of the Silla era was Wŏnhyo. Wŏnhyo, a friend of Ŭisang, is considered one of the great early Korean Buddhist scholars. He was a prolific writer, author of 240 works, and was considered one of the foremost Buddhist scholars in East Asia during his own lifetime. One of his major contributions to Buddhist studies was his attempt to show how the many Buddhist texts and schools reflect in different ways the One Mind that is their true source of inspiration. In this way, he hoped to unite the Buddhist schools in Korea into a new and more comprehensive form of Buddhism. Wŏnhyo was especially concerned about the sectarian friction between the Buddhist schools that were being imported from China. He wanted to produce a new Korean Buddhist ecumenical harmony that reflects the ontological harmony, or mutual penetration, preached by the Hwaŏm School. His work in this regard inspired later and more successful efforts to unify Korean Buddhism. Scholars also see this desire for religious unification as expressing the same spirit that was behind the political unification of Korea in the unified Silla state.

An example of Wŏnhyo's method of "harmonization of all disputes" (*hwajaeng*) can be seen in his use of the essence-function distinction from Hwaŏm Buddhism. In his commentary on *The Awakening of Faith*, Wŏnhyo says that the many doctrines of Buddhism are manifold forms of "unfolding" or "opening" of the Dharma. When these doctrines are traced back to their source, they are "sealed" in the unifying principle of One Mind, the Buddha-nature that is their ultimate basis. In this way, the many forms of Buddhism are the functioning of the essence of the Dharma, namely, the One Mind. Opening the Dharma in its many expressions does not exhaust the essence, and sealing the Dharma in its one essence of Awakening does not diminish its expressions. Wŏnhyo extends this kind of analysis in his discussion of the Three Refuges. There, he defines the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha in terms of the Three Greatnesses (essence, attribute, and function). The Buddha is the very essence of the One Mind, the Dharma is its attribute, and the Saṅgha is its function in the world.

The following are some of Wŏnhyo's comments about unfolding and sealing the Dharma from his commentary on *The Awakening of Faith:*

> The essence of Mahāyāna is described as completely empty and very subtle. But no matter how subtle, how can it be anywhere but in the world of the myriad phenomena? . . . Although it is nowhere but in phenomena, no eye can see its form. . . . One can call it great, but it enters the interior where nothing remains. One can call it small, but it envelopes the exterior without exhausting itself. One might say it is a thing, but everything is empty because of it. One might say it is

FIGURE 8.1. Pagoda at Pulguk-sa Temple; Unified Silla Period (668–935 C.E.), Kyŏng-ju, Korea.

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> not a thing, but the myriad phenomena arise because of it. Not knowing how to describe it, I call it the Mahāyāna. . . .
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> Although what is discussed [in *The Awakening of Faith*] is vast, it can be summarized in the following words: By revealing [the suchness and causality] of the One Mind, it comprehends the [many] jewels of Māhāyana doctrines. . . . When the treatise is unfolded, there are innumerable meanings found in its doctrines. When it is sealed, the principle . . . of the One Mind is found as its essence. . . . Therefore, it freely unfolds and seals without obstruction. . . . (*Kisillon so*, 1, 3–4)

Toward the end of his life, Wŏnhyo traveled around the countryside practicing meditation in the mountains and living close to the common people preaching hope in Pure Land devotion. Thereby, Wŏnhyo was instrumental in Buddhism spreading to the general Korean population and the popularity of Pure Land piety in Korea. Wŏnhyo also felt that meditation practice and Pure Land devotion were complementary in Buddhist experience. This view, that both meditation and chanting can contribute to the Buddhist journey to Awakening, became the general opinion in Korean Buddhism. Besides influencing Hwaŏm doctrine and defining the place of Pure Land devotion in Korean Buddhist practice, Wŏnhyo is also considered the founder of the Haedong sect of the Hwaŏm School.

While Wŏnhyo spread Buddhism among the general Korean population, Ŭisang established its centers of scholarship and culture. In many ways, these two Silla monks gave the Korean Buddhist experience its special character of intellectual study, meditative practice, monastic discipline, and personal devotion. Although, as we shall see, there has been tension between these aspects of Buddhism in Korea, they have all played crucial roles in forming the Korean experience of the Buddha Dharma. Also in the writings of Wŏnhyo, we can see the beginnings of the Korean desire to fashion a harmonized form of Buddhism that could unite the Buddhist Saṅgha, as well as contribute to a more united Korean society.

The Five Buddhist Schools

During the Silla Period, the Five Buddhist Schools emerged in Korea. These schools became the orthodox scholastic Buddhist tradition in Korea from the Silla Period onward. Of these Five Schools, three were derived from Chinese schools of Buddhism, and two were unique to the Korean scene. The first variation of a Chinese school was the Kyeyul (*Vinaya*) School. Kyeyul was the Korean version of the Chinese Lu School that propagated the *Vinaya* teachings. As in China, Kyeyul taught that Buddhism is not just a set of doctrines or meditative practices, but must entail a Saṅgha that adheres to monastic precepts. Kyeyul helped in the formalization of monastic education, ordination, and organization throughout Korea. Following the inspiration of Chajang, this school's emphasis on building a well-disciplined monasticism contributed to the vital and enduring Korean monastic Saṅgha that has lasted until the present day.

The second school was the Hwaŏm School, founded by Ŭisang. This rich vein of Chinese Huayan Buddhist thought generated another school in Korea that did not have any counterpart in China. This third school of Korean Buddhism was the Haedong School, based on the teachings of Wŏnhyo. Because Wŏnhyo wanted to produce a unified form of Buddhism in Korea, while this school taught the importance of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, it did not insist on the exclusive use of this *sūtra*. Wŏnhyo, with his desire for unity between the schools, taught that although the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was the greatest of all Buddhist *sūtras*, others could also be used to lead a person to Awakening. Both of these early schools show the importance of Ŭisang's and Wŏnhyo's groundbreaking work.

The fourth school was the Pŏpsang ("Characteristics of the *Dharmas*") School. A pioneer of this school was Wŏnch'ŭk (613–696), a Korean monastic scholar who studied and lectured on Yogācāra in Chang'an, the capital of China. While Wŏnch'ŭk espoused Paramārtha's views concurring Yogācāra, he also respected Xuanzang's interpretations. Wŏnch'ŭk's disciples returned to Korea, where they inspired Yogācāra scholarship. From this doctrinal study, the Pŏpsang School was born. This school taught that all phenomena are formed by the mind. Thus, the world *as we experience it* is not the way the world really is. The true nature of all things is found in transcending the duality between mind and phenomena. The Pŏpsang School developed a Buddhist psychology and a theory of knowledge for Korean Buddhism. It also contributed to the Korean Buddhist method of mental purification.

The last of the Five Schools was the Yŏlban (Nirvana) School, based on the *Nirvana Sūtra*. There was no counterpart to this school in China, and it emerged from the popular study of the *Nirvana Sūtra*. The major teaching of this *sūtra* that impressed the Koreans was the *Tathāgata-garbha* doctrine that all beings have Buddha-nature. This doctrine as presented in the *Nirvana Sūtra* strengthened Korean Buddhist faith that all persons can, in fact, experience the happiness of the Buddha through the practice of Buddhist spirituality.

While these Five Schools were being founded, Chinese Tiantai Buddhism also existed in Korea, but not as an independent school. Known as Ch'ŏnt'ae, its first appearance was during the sixth century when Hyŏn'gwang (fl. 539–575) brought it back to Korea after studying with Huisi, the Second Patriarch of Tiantai in China. However, this school did not become fully autonomous until, as we shall see, Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101), who was considered the real founder of the Ch'ŏnt'ae School.

Tantric Buddhism was also practiced during the Silla Period, especially by the ruling family. A number of Tantric masters in Korea were known for their esoteric powers. Tantra in Korea emphasized ecstatic states of union with celestial bodhisattvas and the use of powerful *mantras* for protection, this-worldly benefits, and healing of diseases. This tradition, based on the Chinese Chenyan School, never became a formal school in Korea and died out with the fall of the Silla Dynasty. Pure Land Buddhism, known in Korea as Chŏng-t'o, was quite popular with the common people, especially due to

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Wŏnhyo's influence. Pure Land chanting and piety influenced all the schools of Korean Buddhism and was often expressed in Korean art and literature.

Sŏn (Chan/Zen) Buddhism had appeared just prior to the Silla Dynasty through a Korean monk named Pŏmnang (fl. 632–646). Pŏmnang studied Chan in China under Daoxin (580–651), the person designated as the Fourth Chan Patriarch. Pŏmnang returned to Korea and taught the Chan doctrines and practices as they existed in China prior to the split between the Northern and Southern schools. However, this first phase of Sŏn in Korea did not leave any strong and lasting school. Then in the ninth century, other Chan lineages arrived in Korea. By the tenth century, these lineages had organized themselves, and the Nine Mountains Sŏn School of Buddhism was established. Each of these nine schools took its name from the mountain where its central temple was located (see Figure 8.2). All but two of the nine Sŏn sects were founded by disciples of the successors of the great Chinese patriarch, Mazu.

FIGURE 8.2. Gautama Buddha Statue in the earth-witnessing posture completed in 774 at Seokguram Grotto in Bulguksa Temple Complex, Gyeongju, South Korea.

By the end of the Silla Period, there was a social and economic decline in Korea, and the more intellectual schools of Buddhism were no longer so attractive to the general population. People were looking for a spirituality that helped them deal with hard times. Therefore, both Pure Land and Sŏn Buddhism increased in their appeal. Sŏn Buddhism emphasized that one must remove himself or herself from society to pursue quiet meditation for the attainment of Awakening. Given the social decay at the end of the Silla Period, this message was attractive to many Koreans. However, this approach to Buddhist practice was not appreciated by the more scholastic schools of Korean Buddhism. At odds with these schools, Sŏn attacked its opponents. The following is a dialogue between a Hwaŏm master and a Sŏn master that characterizes this division:

> The [Hwaŏm master] asked National [Sŏn] Master Toŭi, "What other *Dharmadhātu* is there besides the four *Dharmadhātus* taught by the Hwaŏm School?" . . . Toŭi responded, "When the four *Dharmadhātus* you . . . have mentioned are suddenly brought up in the [Sŏn] School of the Patriarchs, their essential principle [Buddha-nature] is experienced directly, just like ice melting [on a hot stove]. When this essential principle of all things is brought up, you cannot find the characteristics of those four *Dharmadhātus*. In the Patriarch's mind of Sŏn, in the original wisdom that cannot be cultivated, no characteristics of those four *Dharmadhātus* can be found." (*Sŏnmun pojang nok*, 2)

In the previous chapter, we saw that the four *Dharmadhātus* are the four ways of experiencing existence according to the Huayan (Hwaŏm) School. They not only provide this school with a way of analyzing experience and existence but also define a gradual growth toward the enlightened vision of the mutual identification and mutual penetration of all phenomena. Here, Master Toŭi is claiming that the original wisdom of the Buddha-nature cannot be cultivated in any such gradual way but actually melts the distinctions so important to Hwaŏm textual study. So, as the Silla Dynasty came to an end, Korean Buddhism was split between the scholastic schools that emphasized textual study and gradual spiritual growth and the Sŏn tradition that stressed meditation and sudden Awakening. Addressing this division would become the primary theme of the next chapter of the story of Buddhism in Korea.

BUDDHISM DURING THE KORYŎ DYNASTY: SEARCHING FOR UNITY

The Silla Period ended with the founding of the Koryŏ Dynasty, which reigned from 918 to 1392. From the beginning of the Koryŏ Period, the kings supported a strong connection between the government and the Saṅgha, maintaining Buddhism as the state religion. The rulers were confident that by so doing, they could ensure the security and prosperity of the nation. The government also instituted a set of examinations for the Buddhist

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Box 8.1

The Body and Gesture of Life

The core of Korean *Sŏn* Buddhism is the *mom-momjit* paradigm. *Mom* means "body" in Korean, and *momjit* means "gesture," or more broadly, uses of body. The *mom-momjit* paradigm is complex, but in its simplest form, *mom* is a metaphor for the ultimate and concrete reality, often called "suchness" in Buddhist literature, while *momjit* is the world of karma consisted of thought, language, culture, and history. Our present world is the terrain of *momjit* culture. We live our lives in the world preconceived through language and given rules and values, and we often overlook the "body" that precedes and underlies all words and gestures. The preoccupation with performing and imitating socially accepted *momjit* stifles our awareness of *mom*. Our efforts and worries are mainly geared toward acquiring or bettering certain *momjit*.

Over the course of my life, I experienced the importance of regaining the sense of *mom* in this predominantly *momjit-oriented* culture. For me, breaking this tight reign of *momjit*, recovering the sense of *mom*, and embodying its Life is the heart of Sŏn Buddhist teaching. Here is how I first learned this lesson.

In 1975, I lived through a period of personal crisis. I was a doctoral student at Berkeley and was under a great deal of pressure to finish my dissertation. I had difficult times with my professors since I had different views on certain theoretical matters. At the same time, my wife, who was our sole support at that time, fell ill and couldn't continue working. We had two teenage daughters, and suddenly there was no money coming in.

My emotions were in such turmoil that I made little progress with my thesis, and I became genuinely afraid that I would never finish. Would six years of hard work at Berkeley go down the drain, and would I have to return to Korea a failure?

I had spent years studying Buddhist theory, but nothing I had learned in books helped calm my mind. Without realizing what I was doing, I started to pray, and then an experience I had almost a decade earlier when I was an acolyte living in a Buddhist monastery in Korea suddenly came to life again. In 1966, while a monk at Haeinsa, I spent a year living under a vow of silence. Neither speaking nor communicating by writing, I focused all my energy on meditation, concentrating on the *kongan (kōan* in Japanese) given to me by my teacher. I definitely had a strong feeling during that year that I was drawing closer to a sense of *mom*, the source of Life itself that underlies all life forms.

Experiencing once again the feeling I had at Haeinsa restored me to a larger, more complete sense of myself, and my panic started to subside. I experienced that we are *mom* and the integrity of *mom* is untouched whether we are rich or poor, whether we get our Ph.D. or not, whether we are a success or failure. This is not to say that the world of *momjit* is unimportant. However, when we live our lives in reverence to the workings of *mom*, rather than trying to impose certain "gestures" onto it, the demands we place onto ourselves to fit into certain standards of "gestures" lose their weight.

As my mind cleared, I was able to study again, finish my Ph.D. work, and get a teaching position. I have spent the past thirty years as a professor, teaching and writing about Buddhism. The core of Buddhist practice for me has always been to live from the sense of *mom*, as I experienced during that year of silence in the monastery.

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priests, thus ensuring that there was always a well-educated Buddhist leadership in Korea. The king could make two important appointments to leading members of the Saṅgha: "the teacher to the nation" and "the teacher to the king."

Under this royal patronage, Koryŏ Buddhism grew in influence and wealth. Some monasteries became huge landowners with many serfs. Others started commercial enterprises such as noodle making or tea production. As happened in China, the government became concerned about this worldly power and its corrupting influence on the Saṅgha. However, the Korean reaction was more moderate than the Chinese. In the tenth century, the government set restrictions on the Saṅgha's involvement in worldly affairs. In the twelfth century, it ruled that any monastic who broke their precepts be laicized.

Ŭich'ŏn

By the eleventh century, there was a clear and pressing need to restore high standards to the Korean Saṅgha. Given the continuing strident controversy between the Sŏn and scholastic (Kyo) schools, there was also the need to restore the spirit of unity within the Saṅgha. This dual task was undertaken by Ŭich'ŏn, another of Korea's great Buddhist scholars. Ŭich'ŏn, a son of King Munjŏng (1046–1083), entered a Hwaŏm monastery at the age of eleven. In 1085 at the age of thirty, he traveled to China, where he studied under renowned teachers of Huayan, Tiantai, Pure Land, Chan, and *Vinaya*. Ŭich'ŏn continued to be influenced by Huayan, but saw in Tiantai a balance between meditation and study that would be ideal for tie Korean situation. Upon his return to Korea, Ŭich'ŏn attempted to bring unity to the Saṅgha by merging Sŏn meditation with the doctrinal study of the scholastic schools in a new and expanded Ch'ŏnt'ae (Tiantai) School. As mentioned earlier, he is considered the real founder of the Korean Ch'ŏnt'ae School.

In addressing the sectarianism of the Korean Saṅgha, Ŭich'ŏn criticized both the Sŏn and the scholastic schools for their reluctance to understand the importance of each other's positions:

> While the Dharma is devoid of words and appearances, it is not separate from words and appearances. If you reject words, you can fall into wrong views and defilements. If you are attached to words, you will not find the truth. . . . Students of the *sūtras* often neglect their inner cultivation and become attached to external pursuits. Sŏn practitioners just ignore helping the world and simply look within themselves. Both positions are biases at two extremes. (*Kang Won'gak kyŏng palsa*, in *Taegak kuksa munjip*, 3, 4–5)

Ŭich'ŏn opposed these biases by teaching the need for *sūtra* study to understand the goal and path of Buddhism and for meditation practice to follow the path and realize the goal. He taught, following Wŏnhyo, that there is an essential unity behind the diversity of Buddhist teachings that is adapted to

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the capacities and temperaments of disciples. This unity is variously called Buddha-nature, the One Mind, or the *Dharmadhātu*. Sectarian conflict, Ŭich'ŏn concluded, was caused by those who had not realized this essential unity. It would be, he taught, through a combination of study and practice that one could realize this unity and build a more united Saṅgha. Being more influenced by the tradition of study, which he preferred because of his own study of Hwaŏm and Ch'ŏnt'ae, Ŭich'ŏn sought to achieve this unity by incorporating Sŏn into the scholarly side of the Saṅgha. His efforts to merge the various schools of Korean Buddhism in this way were supported by the ruling family and were respected by Saṅgha leaders of all persuasions. Soon, his new school was gaining disciples from all schools of Korean Buddhism. However, his early death brought an end to this experiment with Buddhist ecumenism and added one more school to the Korean Saṅgha.

Chinul

Perhaps the greatest reformer and unifier of Korean Buddhism lived during the twelfth century: Chinul (1158–1210). When Chinul was a child, he had a serious illness and his father vowed to the Buddha that if his son lived, Chinul would become a monk. The child did live, went on to enter a monastery at the age of seven, and received the Buddhist novice precepts at the age of fifteen. Chinul's preceptor was a Sŏn master. But because Chinul did not have a close relationship with him, he did not have a permanent teacher. Lacking personal instruction, Chinul studied the *sūtras* and practiced meditation himself, combining the two sides of the division between Sŏn and Kyo in his own experience. In 1182, he traveled to the capital city to take the Sŏn Saṅgha examinations. He passed the exams but was disillusioned by the worldly state of the Saṅgha. He decided not to pursue a career in the city hierarchy but instead to return to the country to follow the monastic life. In discussing this choice with some fellow students, they decided to form a retreat society in the mountains dedicated to the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

In attempting to create such a society, Chinul and his friends faced difficulties in finding a site, and Chinul's fellow students went to different monasteries. Chinul decided to travel down the peninsula, and he eventually settled in a monastery in the far southwest region. While there, Chinul had the first of three Awakenings, each of which would affect his teachings about Buddhist practice. Reading the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* while in the study hall one day, he found a passage that said, "The self-nature of suchness gives rise to thoughts. But . . . it is not tainted by the many images. The true nature is always free and self-reliant." Chinul's reading of this passage brought him to Awakening, and "his heart was satisfied."

After this experience, Chinul continued to study and reflect on the *Platform Sūtra* as well as writings of other Sŏn masters. He became convinced that while he had attained an "initial Awakening" into Buddha-nature, he needed

to continue to cultivate both concentration and wisdom to attain "full Awakening." This insight led to his teaching of "sudden Awakening and gradual cultivation," which he adopted from the Chinese Chan patriarch Zongmi (779–840). Chinul taught that in sudden Awakening, one discovers Buddha-nature, one's innate potential for full Buddhahood. This sudden Awakening, Chinul says, is not just a static insight but a realization of a dynamic reality: the *Tathāgata-garbha*, or "embryo" (*garbha*), of full Buddhahood (*Tathāgata*). Growth of this initial realization into the fullness of Buddhahood entails a gradual process of cultivation because of continuing habitual patterns of unwholesome thoughts, words, and actions. In his *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, Chinul explains the need for this ongoing cultivation process:

> If in one thought moment a person can trace back the luminosity [of his or her mind] and see his or her original nature, that person will discover that the ground of this nature is innately free of any defilements. . . . It is originally endowed with a . . . wisdom that is not a hair's breadth different from the wisdom of all the Buddhas. Therefore, this is called sudden Awakening.
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> Even if a person is enlightened to the fact that his or her original nature is not different from that of the Buddhas, beginningless habit patterns are hard to remove suddenly. So, while one relies on this Awakening, one must continue cultivation. Through the gradual permeation of one's whole being by this Awakening, one's cultivation reaches completion. After one constantly nourishes the holy "embryo" [*garbha*] for a long time, one becomes a saint.
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> While a person must practice cultivation, he or she has already suddenly awakened to the fact that deluded thoughts are originally empty and that the nature of the mind is originally pure. Therefore, one eliminates what is unwholesome without eliminating anything; and one cultivates what is wholesome without cultivating anything either. This is true cultivation and true elimination. (*Susim kyŏl*, Q/A 3, 7)

Chinul defined this cultivation after initial Awakening as the simultaneous development of concentration and wisdom. Concentration in the absolute sense, according to Chinul, is the very essence of one's true nature, the Buddha-nature realized in Awakening. Wisdom in the absolute sense is the very functioning of that *essence*. When one realizes Buddha-nature in initial Awakening, one finds that these aspects of innate suchness are not separate. In the context of cultivation subsequent to initial Awakening, through the gradual permeation of one's whole being by the essence and functioning of Buddha-nature, ignorance and craving are more and more rooted out and the embryo of Buddhahood develops into the full life of Buddhahood. Because this subsequent practice is based on one's prior Awakening, one does not fall into the practice of the gradual school that cultivates concentration and wisdom to gradually attain Awakening. Here again are Chinul's words from his *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind:*

> [F]rom the [absolute] standpoint of the self-nature, [concentration and wisdom] are called essence and function. . . . Concentration is the essence, and wisdom is

the function. . . . Since wisdom is in concentration, concentration is calm yet always aware. Since concentration is in wisdom, wisdom is aware yet always calm.

On the other hand, even if a person may have initial sudden Awakening, if he or she is affected by defilements, and negative habit patterns are deeply engrained . . . then he or she should use relative concentration and wisdom . . . as countermeasures. . . .

Even if one borrows these countermeasures to bring the negative habit patterns under control, he or she has had sudden Awakening to the fact that the true nature of the mind is fundamentally pure, and that all defilements are empty. Therefore, one will not fall into the degraded practice of . . . the gradual school. . . . In the case of an enlightened person, although one uses these expedients, in every moment he or she is free from any doubts and does not become polluted . . . because one never leaves the true self-nature. (*Susim kyŏl*, Q/A 8–9)

In 1185, Chinul traveled to another monastery, this time on a mountain in the southeastern part of Korea. At that time, it seems that he was especially concerned about the division within the Saṅgha between those monastics dedicated to the practice of meditation (Sŏn) and those dedicated to the study of doctrine (Kyo). Although committed to Sŏn, Chinul was convinced that the experience of Sŏn could also be found in the *sūtras* used by the Kyo schools. So he retired into the mountains to read the scriptures looking for a passage that would indicate something of the Sŏn experience. One day Chinul found what he was looking for in a Hwaŏm commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. This commentary discussed, among other things, the nature of pure wisdom and the interpenetration of phenomena in Indra's net, which we introduced in the previous chapter. Setting aside the text, Chinul breathed a long sigh and reflected:

> The teachings are what the world-honored One said with his mouth. Sŏn is what the patriarchs have transmitted with their minds. The Buddha's mouth and the patriarch's minds certainly cannot be contradictory. How can [disciples of Sŏn and Kyo] not reach the fundamental source, and instead be complacent in their training and ferment disputes, wasting their time? (*Hwaŏmmon chŏryo*, Preface)

From this second Awakening, Chinul understood that the unity of Sŏn and Kyo resided in their common experience of what the Buddha taught and what the Sŏn masters realized. This conviction of Chinul's became the basis for his work to unify the Saṅgha in a comprehensive system of Buddhist spirituality. For Chinul, sudden Awakening and gradual cultivation are possible in the Kyo schools. As the scholastic doctrines of Hwaŏm and the other Kyo schools point the disciple toward Awakening, they can be skillful means to promote enlightened experience. It is just that in the end the doctrines must be set aside in order for Awakening to take place. Although he was a Sŏn master, in his writings Chinul referred to Kyo concepts to explain Sŏn experience. For example, in his *Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood*, Chinul says that the sudden Awakening of Sŏn entails the realization of

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what Hwaŏm calls the mutual identification and mutual penetration of the *Dharmadhātu*, or what Wŏnhyo calls *Dharmakāya:*

> We know that the transmission of Sŏn beyond thought is the sudden realization of the *Dharmadhātu*. . . . If . . . sitting quietly in a private room, you can empty your heart and purify your thoughts, then you can trace back the radiance of your mind, returning to its source. You can consider the purity of the sublime mind that appears in that sudden moment of thought to be either original Awakening involved in defilements, or original Awakening of one's pure nature, or the unobstructed *Dharmadhātu*, or the Buddha of complete wisdom, or Vairocana Buddha. . . . [A]ny of these alternatives is acceptable.
>
> The original wisdom of universal brightness [spoken of by the Sixth Patriarch] is the very essence of all living beings and Buddhas. In it, suchness and phenomena . . . are all complete and have faded away. It is likened to the one great *Dharmakāya* taught be Wŏnhyo. . . . [F]rom the standpoint of the meaning of interdependence involved in dependent arising . . . we understand from Awakening that all living beings and Buddhas perfectly interpenetrate in the wisdom of universal brightness. (*Wondon sŏngbullon*, Q/A 3–4)

In 1190, Chinul and some of his fellow monastics who had made the pledge with him to found a Concentration and Wisdom Society finally began their reform experiment. They welcomed all people who were serious about cultivating concentration and wisdom in a secluded environment. By 1197, the community had gained widespread recognition and a large membership. It was said that Chinul's reform was so successful that the number of people who followed him grew so large that his retreat center became "like a city." Needing a larger site for his community, Chinul sent followers to the southwest of the peninsula where a new location was found. Later, the mountain on which this new monastic center was built was renamed *Chogye* (see Figure 8.3), after the mountain on which the Sixth Patriarch lived in south China. Therefore, the order that Chinul's society became was named the Chogye Order.

On his way to this new center in the spring of 1197, Chinul stopped for a time at a monastery for some quiet and solitude. There, he attained his third and final Awakening while reading a passage from the *Records* of the famous Chan master Dahui (1089–1163). Chinul said,

> [Before this Awakening,] I had not yet let go of passions and views, it was like there was something blocking my chest, or like I was living with an enemy. . . . [After this Awakening,] naturally, my chest was not blocked by anything again, and I never again lived with an enemy. I was always at peace from that moment on. (*Pojo kuksa pimyŏng, Pulgyo t'ongsa*, III, 338.9–12)

Dahui was a Chinese Chan master in the Linji lineage and a famous popularizer of the *huatou* (Korean: *hwadu*) method of practice. Something of this practice must have been behind Chinul's final Awakening, as Chinul became the first Sŏn master to adopt the *hwadu* method. Through his influence, it

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FIGURE 8.3. Songgwang-sa Temple; founded in 1190 by Chinul on Mt. Chogye, Kwangju, Korea.

remains a central practice in Sŏn today. The term *hwadu* literally means "head of speech" and refers to the "critical phrase" in a *kongan* (Chinese: *gong'an;* Japanese: *kōan*). For example, one of the most popular *kongans* in Korea is the following: Once a monk asked Zhaozhou, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature, or not?" Zhaozhou replied, "No!" In this case, the *kongan* would be the whole exchange between the master and disciple. The *hwadu* would be the single word "no."

From the Sŏn perspective, all living beings, including dogs, are said to have Buddha-nature. So, the question is, why did Zhaozhou say "no"? To understand his answer, one has to enter the mind of Zhaozhou at the time he made the remark. In practice, the practitioner can penetrate into the mind of Zhaozhou through the *hwadu* "no" by concentrating on this single word in all sifuations: meditating, walking, eating, working, and so forth. The *hwadu* focuses the mind and its paradoxical content bringing the mind's conceptual functioning to a stop. Behind this progression into the depths of the mind is the force of the questioning "doubt" produced by the *kongan* and intensified in the *hwadu*. When one reaches the innate nature of the mind shared by the practitioner and Zhaozhou, then there can be a "mind-to-mind transmission" of Awakening.

Chinul drew on his three Awakenings in developing his teachings and system of practice. His life and work have done much to define the Sŏn experience in Korea and to unite the Korean Buddhist Saṅgha. Finally, it is also important to note that Chinul wrote a book entitled *The Essentials of Pure Land Practice*. During the Koryŏ Dynasty, Pure Land Buddhism was gaining general popularity with the laity, and Chinul helped ensure that Pure Land piety would continue to be an important part of Korean Buddhism. It is said that Pure Land devotional experience has added a personal dimension to Korean Buddhism that enriches meditation experience and keeps doctrinal study from becoming dry and impersonal. During the Koryŏ Dynasty, this piety also inspired great works of art and the building of many temples around the country.

The Korean Tripiṭaka

One of the greatest feats of Korean Buddhism took place during the Koryŏ Dynasty. In 983, the Chinese completed a Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* that contained not only the early Pali material but also Mahāyāna *sūtras*, scriptural commentaries, and philosophical texts from both the Abhidharma and Mahāyāna traditions. These texts were sent to Korea in 991. Then in 1010, the Khitans invaded Korea, forcing King Hyŏnjong (ruled 1009–1031) to flee his capital. When he did so, the king vowed to carve the whole Buddhist canon in Korean on wooden printing blocks if the invading forces were driven from Korea. It is said that ten days later, the Khitan army withdrew voluntarily. Hyŏnjong therefore initiated the enormous project to ensure continued protection of Korea from foreign invasion. The Korean *Tripiṭaka* was completed decades later and included more than 80,000 wooden blocks.

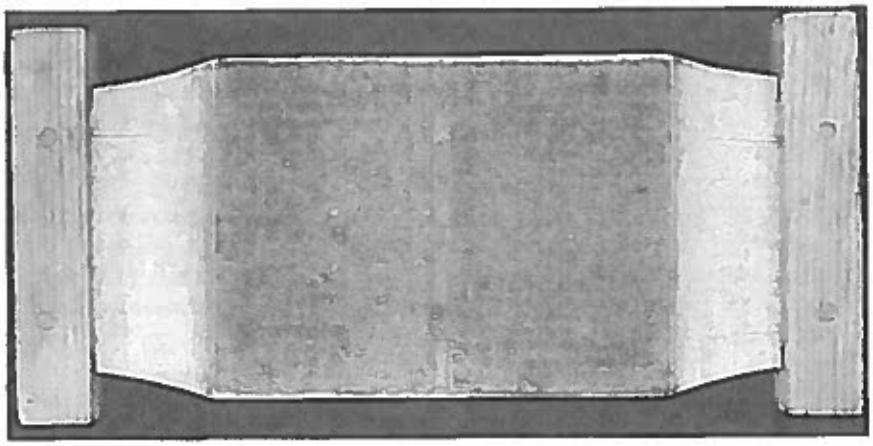

FIGURE 8.4. One of 81,000 wooden blocks of the Korean *Tripiṭaka*, completed in 1251. Haein Monastery.

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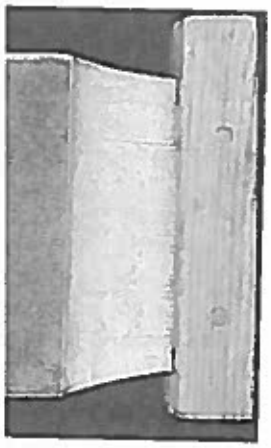

piṭaka, completed in 1251.

Unfortunately, whatever protection was afforded by the *Tripiṭaka* was short-lived. The Mongols invaded Korea in 1231, and the ruling family was again forced to flee the capital. The Mongol invaders burned the wooden blocks of the *Tripiṭaka*. However, in 1236, the carving of a new set of blocks was ordered by royal decree. This second set was completed in 1251, and again contained some 1,512 titles carved on over 80,000 blocks. This second *Tripiṭaka* is still preserved today at the Haein Monastery, where it is rightly considered a national treasure (see Figure 8.4). Both the Chinese and Korean *Tripiṭakas* were "open canons" in that they permitted the inclusion of any materials deemed to be appropriate representations of the "word of the Buddha." This methodology allowed East Asians continually to insert new materials. Given its accuracy and comprehensive nature, the Korean text was adopted by the Japanese for their edition of the *Tripiṭaka*, produced from 1922 to 1934.

REPRESSION DURING THE CHOSŎN DYNASTY

By the end of the Koryŏ Dynasty, Buddhism had achieved immense power throughout Korea. Its network of mountain monasteries and city temples became centers where thousands of monks and nuns pursued spiritual and intellectual life and ministered to the needs of the common people. The monasteries were awarded tracts of land that were worked by serfs, who were also given to the monasteries by the government. Some of the monastics developed commercial businesses. However, this power and affiliation with the government was held against the Buddhist religion when the Koryŏ Dynasty fell and was replaced with the Chosŏn (or Yi) Dynasty (1392–1910).

The Chosŏn government turned its support to Confucianism and severely limited Buddhist organizations. The number of monks and nuns in the Saṅgha was restricted, and at times there was a complete ban on ordination. The number of temples was first reduced to 242, but eventually only 36 temples of any importance were allowed to stay open. Monastic lands and serfs were confiscated by the government. The ordination examination system was eliminated, all the city temples were closed, and Buddhist monastics were forbidden to enter urban areas. This meant that the Saṅgha was pushed into the remote countryside, where monastics were isolated from the intellectual and cultural life of the nation. On the other hand, at times conditions did improve for the Saṅgha. During one such period, King Sejong (ruled 1419–1450) united the Sŏn and Ch'ŏnt'e schools into a unified Sŏn School and united the various scholastic schools into one Doctrinal (Kyo) School.

Hyujŏng (1520–1604) was an influential Buddhist monk during the Chosŏn Period. Hyujŏng advocated the use of the doctrinal approach to Buddhism taught by the Kyo School in combination with Chinul's practice of sudden Awakening followed by gradual cultivation as taught by the Sŏn School. In fact, he was appointed director of the Kyo School after taking his monastic examinations, and later was appointed director of the Sŏn School as well.

The following are passages from his *Mirror for Meditation Students* that reflect this ecumenical spirit:

> Here, there is only one thing [the One Mind]. From the very beginning it is clear and holy. It was never born, nor has it ever disappeared. It cannot be grasped by either names or forms. . . . The Dharma has different meanings, and people have different capacities. Therefore, it is necessary to present skillful teachings. [In these teachings,] different names are given, such as "mind," "Buddha," and "living beings." But one must not be attached to names and try to correct each other about them. If their essence is [the one thing/One Mind] right here, then that is what is truly correct. If thoughts are stirred up in the mind, then that is a mistake.
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> The transmission of mind by the Buddha . . . is the reason for Sŏn. What the Buddha said during his life is the way of Kyo. Therefore, it is said that Sŏn is the Buddha's mind, and Kyo is his words. . . . The Gate of Kyo only transmits the Dharma of the One Mind. The Gate of Sŏn only transmits the Dharma of seeing one's true nature. The mind is one's true nature, and one's true nature is the mind.
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> Therefore, the students of the [Buddhist] path must first discern through the true words of Kyo that the two principles of suchness and causality are the innate nature and the characteristic of one's own mind. Then they must understand that the Two Gates of the beginning and end of their [Sŏn] practice are the gate of sudden Awakening and the gate of gradual cultivation. Only following this can they set aside the Kyo principles and take hold only of the one thought [*hwadu*] that appears in their mind. Then they can realize what is already right here to be attained. This is called the living path to liberation. (*Sŏnga kugam*, in *Hanguk pulgyo chŏnsŏ*, 7: 619–621)

Hyujŏng also taught that Pure Land recitation and *mantras* from the Tantric tradition could be used in the practice of gradual cultivation. Following Chinul's views about how gradual cultivation can heal negative habit patterns, Hyujŏng especially held Pure Land practice in high regard. He considered it indispensable alongside Sŏn practice. In part as a consequence of the teachings of Hyujŏng and his students, Pure Land practice became quite popular in Korea in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and its practice became the norm in Sŏn monasteries. Another master in the line of Hyujŏng, Sŏngch'ŏng (1631–1700), went so far as to say that in most cases the burden of past karma is so heavy that the vast majority of Sŏn practitioners will end up being reborn into *saṃsāra*. Therefore, Pure Land practice is also important in that it can enable one to be born into Amitābha's Pure Land where there is a greater promise of full liberation.

Toward the end of the Chosŏn Period, Sŏn Buddhism gradually regained prominence, thanks in part to new Sŏn scholarship and the fact that there was a growing collaboration between Confucian intellectuals and Buddhist monastics. Also, there were individual monastics who worked to modernize the Saṅgha and reach out to the laity. One such Sŏn master who was known for his reform work at this time was Kyŏnghŏ (1849–1912). After his Awakening,

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he encouraged the growth of Sŏn by rebuilding old training centers; offering retreats for monks, nuns, and the laity; and founding Buddhist societies for all people who wanted to take up Sŏn practice. Another reform-minded monk was Han Yŏgun (1879–1944). Han was very concerned with what he saw as the shortcomings of Korean Buddhism after traveling to Siberia and Japan. He proposed a thorough revising of the religion from the education of the Saṅgha to the particulars of temple management. Han also believed that if Buddhism was to contribute to the modern world, it must balance the search for Awakening with a social consciousness. Monks and nuns should not be attached to their religious life in the mountains, but should come down to care for the common people and teach them the Dharma. Here, Han appealed to the bodhisattva ideal that teaches a unity between the attainment of wisdom and the compassionate living of *bodhicitta*.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Chosŏn Dynasty fell when the Japanese annexed Korea in 1910. The new government removed restrictions on Buddhism, and monastics were allowed to enter the cities for the first time in 300 years. At first, this pleased the Buddhist leaders in Korea. However, in the Temple Ordinance of 1911, the Japanese placed control of all Korean Buddhist institutions in the hands of the Japanese governor-general. It soon became clear that the Japanese were planning to place the Korean Saṅgha under the control of the Japanese Sōtō Zen School. Also, the reform proposals of people like Han Yŏgun had included the replacing of the celibate Saṅgha with a married priesthood. The Japanese supported this idea because it would fit the Korean Saṅgha into their own tradition, which accepted married priests. The Japanese leaders in Korea pressured Korean monks to marry and offered Saṅgha leadership positions only to married monks. Gradually, married monks became the majority in the Korean Saṅgha. In 1926, when the Japanese required the Korean monasteries to remove any rules against marriage, there was a serious division in the Korean Saṅgha between its celibate and married members.

In the midst of this crisis and in response to the Japanese threat to control the Korean Saṅgha, the Kyo and Sŏn schools began a series of negotiations in 1928. Seven years later, they reached an agreement and the Korean age-old dream of a united Saṅgha was realized. In 1935, the two schools were united into what was named the Chogye Order. Note that this new order took the name of Chinul's Order that had been founded centuries ago. However, this unity within the Saṅgha was short-lived. When Korea won independence in 1945, the order was split between the minority of monastics who had preserved their celibacy during the Japanese occupation and the majority who had not.

It was not until 1954, after the end of the Korean War, that the South Korean government stepped in to support a celibate order. This led to violent confrontations between members of the two factions. Finally in 1962, a South Korean Buddhist Council recognized two distinct orders in the Saṅgha. First is the Chogye Order, which had been originally founded in 1935 and professes