

Article

East Asian Buddhism and Korea's Transnational Interactions and Influences

Kevin N. Cawley

Department of Asian Studies, University College Cork, T12 E138 Cork, Ireland; k.cawley@ucc.ie

Abstract: No one can dispute the significant influence of Sinitic Buddhism in East Asia, but Korean Buddhists were also unquestionably close to the center of the development of different schools of Buddhism in mainland China, particularly in the Jiangnan region, which had historically drawn monks from the peninsula. This article will briefly cover the historical transnational Buddhist interactions between Korea and China, with an emphasis on doctrinal Buddhism, the significance of Ŭisang and Ŭich'ŏn, and the influence of Hangzhou's Buddhist intellectual advancements. Even though the article's main focus is on doctrinal contacts, we will also briefly discuss Chan Buddhism in China and how it influenced the texts and techniques of the Korean Sŏn (Zen) monk Chinul (1158–1210), who made an effort to integrate the doctrinal and meditational traditions, as did Ŭich'ŏn. This process of idea-cross-fertilization led to the *Tripitaka Koreana*, the largest collection of Buddhist texts in East Asia, created by Buddhists during the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), which is discussed below. This will aid in our understanding of these transnational exchanges and highlight the fact that Koreans were not only absorbing new ideas as they emerged in China, but they were also influencing them.

Keywords: Ŭisang; Ŭich'ŏn; Chinul; transnational; doctrinal; Sŏn; Jiangnan; Silla; Koryŏ



Citation: Cawley, Kevin N.. 2023. East Asian Buddhism and Korea's Transnational Interactions and Influences. *Religions* 14: 1291. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101291>

Academic Editors: Albert Welter and Klaus Baumann

Received: 28 June 2023

Revised: 14 September 2023

Accepted: 11 October 2023

Published: 13 October 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

According to *Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms* (三國遺事, K. *Samguk Yusa*), composed by the Buddhist monk Iryŏn (1206–1289), Buddhism had entered the Three Kingdoms of Korea (ca. 57 BCE–668 CE) via China towards the end of the fourth century (Iryŏn 2004, pp. 177–93).¹ In particular, the teachings of the Huayan (華嚴, K. *Hwaŏm*), Tiantai (天台, K. *Ch'ŏn-t'ae*) and eventually Chan (禪, K. *Sŏn*) schools were well-absorbed by Korean monks who travelled to China to study Buddhism. While there is no denying the significant impact of Sinitic Buddhism in East Asia, Korean Buddhists were also undoubtedly close to the hub of the development of various schools of Buddhism in mainland China, particularly in the Jiangnan region, which had historically attracted monks from the peninsula. Korean monks, particularly during the Silla and Koryŏ periods, brought innovative new Buddhist developments back to their homelands, while some, such as Ŭisang (625–702), were influential in the development of new schools on mainland China itself, namely the Huayan 華嚴 school, known in Korea as Hwaŏm, a school that would ultimately influence Confucianism during the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) giving rise to Neo-Confucianism, a new ideology that would have a significant on the Korean peninsula.²

Meanwhile, Ŭich'ŏn (1051–1101), the prince-monk, had spent time in China, which ultimately shaped his vision for Buddhism in his homeland, where he returned having a considerable influence on the printing of Buddhist texts there.³ The historical transnational Buddhist relations between Korea and China will be briefly discussed in this article, with a focus on doctrinal Buddhism and the importance of Ŭisang and Ŭich'ŏn, and the influence of Hangzhou's Buddhist intellectual advances. We will also touch on Chan Buddhism in China and how it affected the beliefs of the Korean Sŏn monk Chinul (1158–1210), despite

the fact that the article's primary focus is on doctrinal interactions, but he also made an effort to combine the doctrinal and meditational traditions. The Tripitaka Koreana, the most extensive collection of Buddhist texts produced by Buddhists during the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), and discussed below, is the result of this process of cross-fertilization of ideas, which will help us better understand these transnational interactions and emphasize that it was not simply a matter of Koreans receiving new ideas.⁴ As Welter notes (Welter 2022, p. 45), "China initiated its own indigenous forms of Buddhism without precedent in India, and these new forms constituted the forces animating East Asian Buddhism moving forward", but Korean monks in China had a significant influence on these forms.

2. Early Development of Sinitic Buddhist Traditions and Interactions with Korea's Three Kingdoms

In his discussion of the undeniable influence of Chinese civilization in East Asia, Hudson (1964, pp. 340–41) states:

The most important distinguishing feature of this civilisation was the use of the Chinese script and the study of Chinese classical literature that went with it. Not only did Korea, Vietnam, and Japan use the Chinese written language as a vehicle of culture much as Latin was used in western Europe in the Middle Ages, but they stocked their own languages with words and phrases borrowed from Chinese [...]. As a result of their acquisition of Chinese written characters, the educated class in these countries [...] was open to the influence of the ideas which it expressed; thus the Confucian conceptions of society and government [...] were spread abroad beyond the borders of China itself.

Confucianism, Daoism (sometimes spelled "Taoism"), and Buddhism, known as the "Three Teachings" of China, were passed down in their Chinese versions, leaving a "indelible imprint on Korea, Vietnam, and Japan", where classical Chinese carried cultural weight and served as a means of setting one's culture apart from that of barbarians (ibid., pp. 341–42). Buddhism became a "serious challenge to the supremacy of Confucianism" (Li 1968, p. 155), whereas Confucianism has frequently been considered as a symbol of China's intellectual elite. Around the middle of the first century A.D., Buddhist ideas began to spread throughout China, but at first they were rejected as being "alien" because they originated in India rather than being the work of Chinese scholars who believed the Middle Kingdom to be the center of intellectual gravity. However, by the Tang dynasty (唐朝, 618–907) it had gained widespread acceptance and had a significant impact on all of East Asia.

According to Japanese sources like *The Kojiki* (古事記, Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon Shoki* (2006, 日本書紀, Chronicles of Japan), Koreans were already transferring Confucian and Buddhist ideas to Japan by the sixth century. These two manuscripts, both from the first half of the eighth century, recount the teaching of Chinese characters and the Confucian Analects to members of the Japanese royal family by two Korean scholars from Paekche, A Chikki and Wang In (known as Wani in Japan).⁵ However, the contribution to the expansion of Buddhism in Japan was considerably greater, and James Grayson (2002, p. 33) in *Korea-A Religious History* highlights the role Paekche missionaries had in this area. Soon, Korean monks like Chajang (590–658) would help in the transmission of advancements in this missionary religion, originally by traveling to China, just as Buddhist teachings were promoted in Korea by peripatetic monks, mostly from China. There, they would study and practice Buddhism alongside the great Chinese teachers, but later they would exercise their own influence, contributing significantly to the growth and spread of doctrinal Buddhism on the peninsula. Chajang made significant contributions to Buddhism in Korea during this time, according to Grayson (2002, pp. 42–43), who claims that he introduced the study of the sūtras, standardized strict monastic discipline, evaluated monks' adherence to their precepts, and instituted a thorough examination process. Chajang improved the reputation of the Silla Queen Sōndōk (r. 632–647) and gained support for her rule from the numerous Buddhist adherents. Buddhism benefitted from the pres-

tige of its affiliation and alliance with the powerful and prestigious Tang dynasty (618–907) where he had studied, even leading to the introduction of the Tang dress code by the Queen (Mohan 2005, pp. 131–44).

The initial work of Buddhists in China was the translation of the Buddhist canon, also known as the *Tripitaka*. Importantly, famous translators “look at the scriptures as medicine to cure the mental diseases of humans”, and therefore the focus on the “mind” is paramount (BEC 1998, p. 645). The forerunner of these translational scholar-monks, who saw the scriptures as a sort of medicine for our mental detritus, was Kumārajīva (344–413) who is renowned for the translations of the Lotus Sūtra and the Shorter Amitabha Sūtra (ibid., p. 320). The presence of the Koguryan monk Sūngnang (僧朗, ca. 5th century) who Muller (1997)⁶ notes “travelled in China and spent a considerable amount of time and studying Sanlun [三論] and Huayan [華嚴] before returning”, is significant at this early stage of translation.⁷ While these did later become significant schools in Koguryō, along with the Nirvāṇa school (T.-h. Kim 1959, pp. 21–44), Grayson (1985, p. 21) suggests that Sūngnang never returned to Koguryō, and highlights that he studied under Kumārajīva, even contributing to the development to those schools in China. Kumārajīva and these early translational monks were also responsible for the initial philosophical interpretations of the Sanskrit scriptures, a work that was continued by his disciple Sengzhao (384–414). Though Sengzhao died very early, it is widely acknowledged that he was responsible for the initial sinicization of the “imported” texts. He had been influenced by Laozi and Zhuangzi, the great Daoist sages, which is why it is notable that this Sinicization used Daoist language (Fung 1983, p. 260). Additionally, the *Way* or *Dao* (道K. *To*), which had been employed by Confucians, as well as Daoists, was used to represent Indian *dharma* and “*wu-wei*” (non-action) was used to represent *nirvana* (Fairbank and Goldman 1999, p. 75). These first translators likely used many ideologies to make their translations more palatable to the people they were trying to instruct and convert. His earlier readings of Daoist writings had an impact on the vacuity and quiescence found in Sengzhao’s (384–414) treatises, such as *The Immutability of Things* or *The Emptiness of the Unreal*. However, it is also possible that these semantic problems really caused ideas to be misappropriated, which could have caused unforeseen misunderstandings (Chan 1963, pp. 344–56; Magliola 2004, p. 510).⁸

Jizang (549–623), an outstanding Buddhist scholar, “had the advantage of working with the mature Chinese Buddhist vocabulary that had been developed by countless astute Chinese Buddhist scholars over the intervening period and was clearly distinct from Taoist usage and ideas” (Magliola 2004, p. 510). This was not the case with Sengzhao. Jizang is well known for his depiction of the three categories of double truth, which corresponds to the early Tang and is characterized by greatly intensified Buddhist philosophical research (Fung 1983, p. 295). In relation to the translation of texts from Sanskrit to Chinese, Xuanzang (602–664) is considered second only to Kumārajīva. The Yogācāra School emphasized the idea that things exist in “consciousness only”, which was influenced by the texts that Xuanzang, who had studied in India, translated (inspiring the Ming dynasty novel of Wu Cheng’en (Wu 2021), *Journey to the West*, as well as many recent movies and TV series on *The Monkey King*). The end result was the presentation of an intricate eight-level structure of human consciousness, wherein things only exist in our mind, seemingly at odds with the emptiness mentioned above (ibid., pp. 106–7). He is renowned for his elaborate theory of eight consciousnesses, and according to Chan (1963), “no other philosophy has ever analyzed the mind into so many parts”. The Fāxiang school (法相宗) or Dharma-Character School, known in Korean as the *Pōpsang-jong*, developed from the Yogācāra school, and was spread in Korea by the disciples of the Sillan monk Wōnch’ūk (613–696), who never returned from China where he went to study with the famous Xuanzang. Their ideas affirm the centrality of the mind, or more significantly, consciousness, in relation to our inherently illusory perceptions of all things.⁹ Wōnch’ūk, also a significant text translator into Chinese, left a number of commentaries, including one on the renowned “Heart Sutra”, was well known among Tibetan Buddhists for his works (Choo

2006). Furthermore, at this time, many Korean monks had visited China to study with the leading masters there. They were evidently fluent in reading and writing classical Chinese and had adopted Sinitic forms of Buddhism in their own countries.

One aspect of the study of Sinitic Buddhist traditions that we cannot ignore is the rise of “the massive presence of the Hua-Yen [Huayan] and T’ien-T’ai [Tiantai] traditions in Chinese culture” (Magliola 2004, p. 505). Both schools focus on great concentration and insight and had a significant impact on how *The Four Books* of Confucianism were dissected and reinterpreted by Neo-Confucians.¹⁰ Their metaphysical philosophies were especially important in Korea (see Cawley 2022). The doctrine of universal salvation is the Tiantai school’s most notable characteristic, “Since everything involves everything else, it follows that all beings possess Buddha-Nature, and are therefore capable of salvation” (Chan 1963, p. 397). But what is Buddha-Nature exactly? It is sometimes referred to as “the internal cause or potential for attaining Buddhahood, also called the seed of Buddhahood” (BEC 1998, p. 78). According to Tiantai doctrine, The Method of Concentration and Insight, a truly Chinese method, developed by Zhiyi (538–597), is essential for achieving Buddhahood, and was one of the first Chinese schools to focus on meditation (see Chan 1963, pp. 397–405). This discourse holds that the “nature” of the mind is initially pure, and that the task of focus and insight is to work toward regaining this “originally pure mind”. Huayan philosophy, according to Chan (1963, p. 406), “represents the highest development of Chinese Buddhist thought”. The Huayan school also developed the “all-in-one and one-in-all theory”, which was particularly influential in Silla due to monk Ŭisang’s close friendship with Fazang (643–712), who is thought to be the most significant exponent of Huayan philosophy.

Fazang’s older friend and highly renowned colleague, Ŭisang, studied with him in China under the famous Huayan master Zhiyan (602–688), and it is undoubtedly via Ŭisang that some of Fazang’s intellectual depth can be traced. Despite being overshadowed in Korea by contemporary scholarship on his friend Wŏnhyo (617–686), it is important to note that Ŭisang too was a great thinker. However, though there are not many of his own writings left, his influence on Wŏnhyo should not be understated given that Wŏnhyo had never visited China and most likely received the texts available there from monks who had brought them back, like Ŭisang.¹¹ The depth of Ŭisang’s philosophy is reflected in his “Seal-diagram Symbolizing the Dharma Realm of the One Vehicle (一乘法界圖合, K. *Ilſŭng pŏpkŷe to*)”.¹² McBride (2012, p. 5) describes this insightful text as follows:

“[a] Great Poem” (*pansi* 槃詩) that combines the “Gāthā on the Dharma Nature” (*Pŏpsŏng ke* 法性偈), which is a poem of two hundred ten logographs in thirty lines of seven logographs each, with a “Seal-diagram Symbolizing the Dharma Realm” (*Pŏpkŷe toin* 法界圖印). In other words, it is a combined poem in the shape of a seal-diagram symbolizing the dharma realm of the one vehicle (*Ilſŭng pŏpkŷe to hapsi irin* 一乘法界圖合詩一印).”

As a result of monks from the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods contributing their own commentary to the text’s numerous editions, it has had a significant impact on Korea.¹³ The original “poem” is succinct and to the point, summarizing and elaborating the main teachings of the Hwaŏm School: “True nature [...] is not attached to self-nature and is achieved in accordance with conditions. Within one, there is all, and within many, there is one, the one precisely all, and the many are precisely the one” (ibid., p. 104). Ŭisang is well renowned for being an exceptional teacher, earning the honorific title of “State Preceptor of Perfect Teaching” (圓教國師, K. *Wŏn’gyo kuksa*) after his passing. He wrote a text encouraging “practice” rather than merely exegetical examination because the practice of the Buddhist teachings was his main focus. *Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms* also includes a biography of Ŭisang that recognizes his contributions to advancing the teachings of the Hwaŏm school in Silla, and which also includes a letter from Fazang, who praises his wisdom and requests that he make corrections to a commentary on the Flower Garland Sūtra that he sent to Silla (Iryŏn 2004, pp. 308–12). This story also describes how,

despite their alliance being utilized to aid Silla's conquest of Paekche and Koguryŏ, the Tang Emperor Gaozung (r. 649–683) was preparing a surprise attack on Silla. The Unified Silla period came about because King Munmu (r. 661–681) was prepared to battle the Tang forces occupying Paekche with the help of Koguryŏ soldiers and was able to protect his sovereignty after Ŭisang warned him, having swiftly returned to his homeland. In this instance, a Buddhist monk had potentially saved the fate of his country. Ŭisang's reward, having the ability (and funds) to build monasteries around the peninsula, such as Pusŏk-sa, founded in 676, allowed him to spread ideas to a new generation of Silla monks.

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, the second longest in the Buddhist canon, is the foundation of Huayan teachings, which focus on the theme of enlightenment (BEC 1998, p. 48). The Chinese name Huayan is derived from the Sanskrit term Avatamsaka, which is typically translated into Flower Garland in English. As Muller (1995) points out, it identifies the concept of principle “li” (理) with the mind and acknowledges the interpenetration of all things signified by the term *t'ung-ta* (通達, K. *T'ongdal*). Muller (1997, note 16) also emphasizes that Wŏnhyo's commentaries, which also emphasized the interpenetration of all phenomena, had an influence on Fazang. This is especially true for Fazang's *Dasheng qixin lun yi ji* (大乘起信論義記) (Commentary on the Meaning of Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna), which demonstrates the impact of Wŏnhyo's commentaries in China. Due to their heavy reliance on textual study, the Huayan and Tiantai schools both came to be known as the “schools of doctrine”. A rival to the textual school's influence, the Chan meditational school—also known as Sŏn in Korean and Zen in Japanese—emerged.¹⁴ With the return of the Silla Monk Pomnang (632–?), who had studied in China during the reign of Queen Sondŏk, Chan ideas had begun to reach the peninsula (Grayson 2002, pp. 69–70). After spending 37 years studying and practicing in China, the monk To'ŭi (d. 844) returned in 821 and established one of the first temples that emphasized the Southern Chan tradition's teachings at Chinjŏn temple on Sorak mountain.¹⁵ As Cho (1977, p. 208) explains, “After this time, [monks] of Silla who studied in China brought back Southern Chan in successive journeys while domestically, a group of nine large temples came to occupy a focal position in the promulgation of the Chan sect”. Supporters of Sŏn in Korea were frequently Hwaŏm Buddhists who had also been influenced by Tiantai (K. *Ch'ŏnt'ae*) texts and were deeply intellectual. This *Hwaŏm*-cum-*Ch'ŏnt'ae* doctrinal-influenced variation of Sŏn Buddhism had grown in popularity and would later develop and shape Buddhism in Korea during the following Koryŏ period. It would also influence two of its great Buddhist masters, Uich'ŏn and Chinul, who would make various attempts to unite the doctrinal and Sŏn schools.

3. Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101) and Buddhist Interactions between China and Koryŏ

The first two of King T'aejo's Ten Injunctions (訓要十條, K. *Hunyo sipcho*), issued by the first king of the newly united Koryŏ Dynasty (918–1392), acknowledged Buddhism's preeminent position as the foundation of the kingdom and emphasized the importance of doctrinal and Sŏn schools of Buddhism. As it had been throughout the Silla period, Buddhism persisted in being considered a means of national defense and was referred to as “*hoguk-bulgyo*” (護國佛教, state-protecting Buddhism). The Confucian scholars had their own state civil examination system, but under King Kwangjong (949–975), the Buddhists would soon have their own, known as *sŭng-gwa*. Senior monks could also hold two highly significant positions, known as *kuksa* and *wangsa*, which mean “Teacher of the Nation” and “Teacher of the King”, respectively. Unsurprisingly, the Confucian scholars felt that their domain was that of education, especially that of the king, and that such close contact to him by senior Buddhists was inappropriate. Additionally, the dispute between the many schools of Buddhism was a significant problem for monks early in the new dynasty (Cawley 2019, pp. 52–54; Grayson 2002, pp. 83–84; Su 1995, pp. 133–52).

The fourth son of King Munjong (文宗, r. 1046–1083) and “the most famous and well-remembered Korean to visit China during the crucial Northern Song period”, when Buddhism flourished in Hangzhou, was Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101), who is regarded as one of the

most significant monks of this time period (McBride 2017, p. 14). According to McBride (ibid., p. 3), “he compiled and published the first collection of purely East Asian exegetical materials”, which means that he put together collections of commentaries on Sūtras without the Sūtras themselves, showing how interpretations of texts had come to be just as significant as the texts themselves. Ŭich’ŏn is a representative of the sophisticated Pan-East Asian Buddhist world of the eleventh century. In his collection, *Sokchanggyŏng* 續藏經 (Supplement to the Tripitaka), he was careful to include the commentaries of imminent Korean monks who would have been familiar to his Chinese counterparts, as well as the commentaries by Khitan and Japanese monks, a greatly inclusive undertaking that avoided any form of Buddhist sectarianism. These writings served as a supplement to the *Koryŏ Tripitaka*,¹⁶ also known as the *Koryŏ Kyojang*, which was finished in 1087 and was considered to be one of the most thorough collections of Buddhist texts in East Asia during the eleventh century. The Song Chinese had also compiled their own Buddhist canon (開寶藏, C. *Kaibao zang*) in the tenth century, which had a great influence on the Korean version.¹⁷ Even though Ŭich’ŏn had made significant contributions, he was “all but forgotten until the early twentieth century” (Ibid., p. 4), when he gained prominence primarily as the founder of Ch’ŏntae-jong (C. Tiantai) in Korea.¹⁸

This reputation is partly attributable to how Ŭich’ŏn was portrayed in Yi Nŭnghwa’s *Comprehensive History of Korean Buddhism* (朝鮮佛教通史, K. *Chosŏn Pulgyo t’ongsa*; Yi 1919) compiled in 1918.¹⁹ In contrast, McBride’s study paints a more nuanced picture and emphasizes Ŭich’ŏn’s close association with the Northern Song (960–1127) Huayan master Jinshui Jingyuan (晉水淨源, 1011–1088), who had encouraged the Koryŏ monk to come to study with him at Huijin Monastery in Hangzhou (See, McBride 2020). Ŭich’ŏn left in secret with a group of disciples and travelled to Song where he was welcomed by Emperor Zhezong (哲宗, r. 1086–1100), who would have been aware that the monk was himself a member of the Koryŏ royal household, after his petitions to his father, King Munjong, and then to his brother, King Sŏnjong (宣宗, r. 1083–1094), were rejected. Ŭich’ŏn would spend fourteen months in China, first immersing himself in the thriving intellectual scene of Hangzhou before making his way to Mount Tiantai, the former residence of master Zhiyi, mentioned above. This experience inspired him to disseminate the teachings of this doctrinal school in Koryŏ (McBride 2017, p. 6). Ŭich’ŏn’s vow to spread Tiantai teachings in Korea has been translated by McBride (2017, p. 67), but it highlights how the school used to be prominent in Korea and that it had deteriorated. In an effort to rebuild its reputation, he recognized similarities between some of the Huayan school’s teachings and those of the Tiantai school, and he hoped to spread the full range of Buddha Dharma in Koryŏ. In fact, Ŭich’ŏn encountered many monks from various traditions including Huayan, Tiantai, Chan, Weishi,²⁰ as well as Indian monks. These encounters helped him develop a deep appreciation for Buddhist teachings, which he then incorporated into his writings, which encapsulated the East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhist intellectual traditions that were percolating up in the Hangzhou area. The letters written by Jingyuan to Ŭich’ŏn show the influence Ŭich’ŏn had on his Chinese instructor, but they also show the cross-cultural and international exchanges between the two of them that influenced Ŭich’ŏn commentaries.²¹ He also took care to include the teachings of the revered Silla Masters Wŏnhyo and Ŭisang. He praised Wŏnhyo’s spiritual insights and noted that his fame had spread to China and India, illuminating the interactions between cultures in Asia. (McBride 2017, p. 23).²²

Ŭich’ŏn acknowledged the significance of the meditational or Sŏn schools and drew them into his doctrinal schools, representing a true confluence of traditions. He also believed in the compatibility of the doctrines of the major doctrinal schools, which Wŏnhyo himself had been eager to reconcile, evidenced in his *Hwajaeng* (和靜) compositions—literally, “harmonisation of disputes”, concepts that are very pertinent to us in the modern world.²³ Ŭich’ŏn made Kukch’ŏng monastery (called after Zhiyi’s Guoqing Temple (國清寺) at Mt Tiantai in Zhejiang province) the center of this new consolidated Buddhism and urged prominent Sŏn monks to unite and assist him in achieving his epistemological and spiritual goal of “*kyokwan kyŏmsu*” 教觀兼修—concurrent cultivation through doctrinal

study and meditation—to create a new intra-traditional pathway of self-cultivation among Korean Buddhists (Keel 1984, p. 4). According to McBride (2017, p. 10), Ŭich'ŏn sought to establish an “integrated monastic complex” rather than one that was primarily devoted to the Ch'ŏnt'ae school's doctrines.

Unfortunately, both the original *Koryŏ Kyojang* and Ŭich'ŏn's vast supplemental collection to it were destroyed by fire, along with many other temples and their treasures, with the arrival of the Mongol invaders in 1232 (Ahn 1982, pp. 81–87). Monks from the doctrinal and Sŏn orders began the enormous process of recarving the Tripitaka and its ancillary texts onto birch-wood blocks, finished in 1251, creating the now-famous *Tripitaka Koreana*. In Korean this is referred to as the *Koryŏ Taejanggyŏng* (高麗大藏經), where *Taejanggyŏng* is the term for Tripitaka (or Great Buddhist Scriptures), or *P'alman Taejanggyŏng* 八萬大藏經, whereby *P'alman* (80,000) refers to the number of woodblocks carved for the collection rounded off (there are actually over 81,000 blocks), and these woodblocks contain approximately 52 million Chinese characters—carved backwards—in order to print the right way (Ahn 1982, pp. 87–91). The blocks are currently stored at Haein monastery and its depository has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This attests to the scientific ingenuity of the monks and builders who were able to establish the ideal atmosphere to keep the woodblocks, which are still well-preserved today.²⁴ The accuracy with which the characters were carved, as shown by the prints still being made now, is quite impressive. In 2007, the *Tripitaka Koreana* was also inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, which celebrates the world's documentary heritage (see: [UNESCO.org: Koreana Tripitaka n.d.](https://www.unesco.org/koreana-tripitaka)).

4. Chinul and Intra-Traditional Consolidation in Koryŏ

The most significant monk of this period, after Ŭich'ŏn, who once more attempted to bring the many sects together was Chinul (1158–1210), who has become known also by his posthumous title State [National] Preceptor (*kuksa*) Puril Pojo (佛日普照). It is important to remember that Chinul was “very much indebted to Zongmi, the ninth century Chinese Hua-yen [Huayan] and Ch'an [Chan] patriarch who wanted to harmonise Ch'an with doctrinal Buddhism” (Keel 1984, preface). Chinul sought to unite both schools, but unlike Ŭich'ŏn, who was primarily a doctrinal school patriarch, Chinul gave primacy to Sŏn. Chinul reached a conclusion as Zongmi who remarked “Sūtras are the word of the Buddha, whereas Ch'an is the mind of the Buddha; the mind and the mouth of the Buddha should not be divergent” (ibid., pp. 60–61). Additionally, Chinul was acutely aware of the poor reputation the Buddhist monastic community had developed. He saw that, until this was addressed, Buddhism would inevitably face a crisis, which, in his opinion, was inextricably related to state sponsorship. The works Chinul left behind and his emphasis on a retreat community, away from the comforts of life, with his concentration on the requirement of practice (an idea also emphasized by the Confucians and Wŏnhyo), started to come together in his first text written in 1190, *Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Concentration [Samadhi] and Wisdom [Prajñā] Society* (勸修定慧結社文, K. *Kwŏnsu Chŏnghye kyŏlsa mun*), composed not long after he founded his retreat community at Kŏjo temple (Cawley 2019, p. 56).

In 1205, Chinul composed his important text, *Admonitions to Beginning Students* (誠初心學人文, K. *Kyech'osim haginmun*), soon founding his “Society for Cultivating Sŏn” (修禪社, K. *Susŏnsa*), changing the name of the Meditation and Wisdom Society to focus on Sŏn meditational practices, which fell in line with his attempt to consolidate Sŏn in Koryŏ. It was also established at Chogyŏ Mountain, one of the reasons why Chinul is considered the founder of the order of the same name today, which dominates Korean Buddhism, the Chogyŏ (Jogyŏ) Order. Although the influence of Wŏnhyo's work is reflected in Chinul's *Admonitions* text, it was greatly influenced by Changlu Zongze's (長蘆宗頤, ?–ca. 1107) *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* (禪苑清規, C. Chanyuan qinggui), which was composed in 1103. However, Chinul only engaged with *gong'an* (sometimes written as *kung-an*) (公案, K. *kongan*, J. *kōan*) and its associated contemplative practices in his later

years, even though his writings and teachings on the subject would have a significant impact on his followers and Korean Buddhism in general up until the present.²⁵ In Korea, this technique became known as *Kanhwa Sŏn* 看話禪, though originally derived from the teachings of the great Chinese Chan master Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163) of the Linji School (Cawley 2019, pp. 56–59). The Linji school, as described by Ching (1993, p. 141), aimed to achieve “sudden enlightenment through the use of shouting, beating, and riddles called *kung-an* [*kongan* in Korean] to provoke an experience of enlightenment”, adding that the *kung-an*, “by posing an insoluble [seemingly illogical and idiosyncratic] problem to reason and the intellect [...] is supposed to lead to the dissolution of the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious in the human psyche”, ultimately revealing the true nature of the mind. Chinul promoted Master Dahui’s practice, derived from the study of *kongan*, literally meaning “public cases”. Buswell (1991, pp. 68–69) describes how in Korea, this evolved into “the predominant technique cultivated in meditation halls, and almost all masters advocate its use for students at all levels”²⁶.

One of Chinul’s most successful disciples, Hyesim (1178–1234), would develop his master’s ideas, especially the meditational *kanhwa* practice. Hyesim amassed well over a thousand *kong’an*, which are published in his *Collection of the Meditation School’s Explanatory Verses* (禪門拈頌集, K. *Sŏnmunyŏmsong-chip*), one of the largest collections in East Asia, demonstrating how thorough their research was for the Korean Buddhist tradition. Times were changing though, and the Buddhist hierarchy was the only thing stopping the dominance of the Neo-Confucian elite and it still had significant power despite Buddhism’s decline, which began in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, progressing toward the end of the Koryŏ Dynasty. However, the Buddhist church had grown wealthy, and when paired with governmental clout, this excess income brought about serious corruption. As a result, a movement to end Buddhist supremacy had started long before the end of the Koryŏ dynasty (Cawley 2019, pp. 60–63). Confucian scholars sought to “offer a cosmology that could compete with the Buddhists” in response to criticism that their ethical codes had a crude metaphysical foundation, and as a result, they developed a more complex ontocosmological perspective on their own tradition, now known as Neo-Confucianism (Creel 1971, p. 205). Neo-Confucianism first developed in China during the Song dynasty (960–1279), but as a result of Korea’s incorporation into the Mongol empire (1271–1368), ideas that originated in China would once more blossom in Korea as Korean scholars, some of whom were residing in Beijing, would eventually spread them in their homeland. Soon after, the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) would establish Neo-Confucianism as its official ideology and Buddhism would meet its decline until the start of the twentieth century (see Cawley 2022).

5. Concluding Remarks

The transmission of early Buddhism into the Three Kingdoms, which took root relatively quickly, soon produced a number of important missionaries who spread these ideas to Japan, not unlike Irish missionaries who were sending Christian missionaries to Europe at the same time. In transmitting Sinic culture to Japan, these monks—especially those from Paekche—brought more than Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, but also Chinese writing, and the art and architecture that were traditionally associated with Buddhist temples. The intellectual history and cultural identity of Japan were clearly shaped by this. As Albert Welter (2022, p. 35) underscores, “The story of East Asian Buddhism has not been told”, largely due to an over-emphasis on Indian Buddhism and Japanese Zen in the West, and this article hopes to contribute something to that story, where Korean monks of the past deserve special recognition because East Asian Buddhism would not exist without them.

This is evidenced by the various transnational interactions of peninsular Korean monks who studied in China, such as Ŭisang and Ŭich’ŏn, who, respectively, were influenced by and also impacted famous Chinese masters like Fazang and Jingyuan. The vibrant Buddhist culture of the Jiangnan region contributed to the blending of the Huayan and Tiantai

teachings with those of other doctrinal schools whose views were influenced by Silla and Koryŏ monks. Eventually, doctrinal teachings and meditational techniques would be fused and supported by monks such as Ŭich'ŏn, but more so Chinul, who helped to ferment the teachings of various doctrinal and Sŏn schools in Koryŏ. This fully integrated style of Buddhism is being practiced in Korea today, a testament to the creativity and moral courage of the Buddhist masters who sought to enlighten our minds—a goal that is even more crucial in the chaotic world we now inhabit.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The Three Kingdoms consisted of Koguryŏ (高句麗), Paekche (百濟) and Silla (新羅).
- ² See Cawley (2022) for an overview of the influence of Buddhist ideas on Neo-Confucian ideas in Korea. For a translation of Ŭisang's works with classical Chinese, see Richard D. McBride (2012).
- ³ For a study on Ŭich'ŏn's Pilgrimage to China see, Huang (2005).
- ⁴ For a study on transnationalism in relation to East Asia, see Cawley and Schneider (2022).
- ⁵ An online translation of the Kojiki by Chamberlain (1919). References to A. Chikki and Wang In appear in volume II, Section CX. An online translation of the Nihon Shoki with original text, is available at: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/jhti/cgi-bin/jhti/select.cgi?honname=1> (accessed on 28 June 2023). For details on and references to Korean scholars from Paekche, see: 卷第 10 (応神天皇): Ojin Tenno, Chp. 10, paragraph 633.
- ⁶ See Muller's text at <http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/koreanbuddhism-overview.html#note-2-3> (accessed on 28 June 2023).
- ⁷ For an overview of Sanlun Buddhism, which draws on the ideas of the Indian Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (known as *Longshu* 龍樹 in Chinese), see Magliola (2004).
- ⁸ For translations of Sengzhao's ideas, see Thompson (2008).
- ⁹ For a detailed overview of Wŏnch'ŭk's importance in China, see Cho (2005).
- ¹⁰ The Four Books consisted of: *Lunyu* (論語) [The Analects], *Daxue* (大學) [The Great Learning], *Zhongyong* (中庸) [The Doctrine of the Mean], and *Mengzi* (孟子) [The Mencius].
- ¹¹ S. J. Kim (2022, p. 171) highlights how Wŏnhyo "is the most frequently researched Buddhist monk in modern scholarship", noting the overtly nationalistic narratives that have been woven around him, especially as he never left Korea, unlike Ŭisang, yet his commentaries were apparently known in China and Japan. De Bary and Bary (2008, vol. 1, p. 518) discusses this international reputation of Wŏnhyo, suggesting that he had influenced Fazang (though this is not mentioned in the *Samguk Yusa*). Wŏnhyo, it should be noted, was writing commentaries on translations of texts that had become available to scholars such as Ŭisang.
- ¹² For a full translation of Ŭisang's text and an analysis, see: McBride (2012, pp. 101–88).
- ¹³ Some of these commentaries have been translated in *The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism*, Vol 4. *Hwaŏm I: The Mainstream Tradition*.
- ¹⁴ The meditative Chan school owes its name to the Chinese phonetic transliteration of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* (ध्यान), which means "meditation" and "is one of the 3 major components of the Buddhist way, the other two being *morality* [...] and *wisdom*, which is reached as a result of meditation" (BEC 1998, p. 364).
- ¹⁵ For an overview of the emergence of Southern Chan, see Cawley (2019, pp. 49–50).
- ¹⁶ The term "Tripitaka" comes from the Sanskrit word *Pitaka*, literally means "the three baskets", describing how the Buddhist teachings had been divided into three parts: (i) the sutras (經, K. *kyŏng*); (ii) the vinayas (律, K. *yul*), which consisted of the commandments and rules of the Buddhist order, and (iii) the sastras (論, K. *non*), commentaries.
- ¹⁷ For a discussion on this topic see, Wu et al. (2015).
- ¹⁸ *Jong* means order, or school in Korean.
- ¹⁹ For Yi Nŭnghwa's depiction of Ŭich'ŏn, see *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa*, Vol. 3, pp. 297–99 (Yi 1919).
- ²⁰ Weishi (唯識) is translated into English as the Consciousness-Only School, known as *Chaŭn* in Korean.
- ²¹ See McBride (2017, pp. 54–62) for a translation of several of these letters that reflect the reciprocal relationship between these monks.

- ²² Ŭich'ŏn's praise of Wŏnhyo can be found throughout *The Collected Works of State Preceptor Taegak* (大覺國師文集, K. Taegak kuksa munjip, Ŭich'ŏn 1974) roll16.
- ²³ Wŏnhyo set out to resolve multiple doctrinal disputes in his very ambitious text, *Ten Approaches to the Harmonization of Doctrinal Disputes* (十門和諍論, K. *Simmun hwajaeng-non*). Available online, see Muller (2016). For an analysis of Wŏnhyo's ideas on *Hwajaeng*, see Muller (2012, pp. 17–30).
- ²⁴ Ŭich'ŏn wrote a poem depicting Haein monastery as “superior” to the monastery on Mount Lu in China, which was founded by Huiyuan (慧远, 334–416), the first patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism. See McBride (2017, p. 91).
- ²⁵ For an in-depth study on *kōan* and Zen Buddhism, see Heine and Wright (2000).
- ²⁶ To see the collected writings of Chinul (original with translation) see (Buswell 2012).

References

- Ahn, Kai-hyon. 1982. Publication of Buddhist Scriptures in the Koryo Period. In *Buddhist Culture in Korea*. Edited by the International Cultural Foundation. Seoul: Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., pp. 81–95.
- BEC (Buddha Educational Committee). 1998. *The Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism*. Taipei: Buddha Educational Foundation.
- Buswell, Robert, Jr. 2012. *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism*, Vol. 2. *Chinul, Selected Works*. Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism.
- Buswell, Robert, Jr., ed. 1991. *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Way of Korean Zen*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Cawley, Kevin N. 2019. *Religious and Philosophical Traditions of Korea*. New York: Routledge.
- Cawley, Kevin N. 2022. Mindful Interactions and Recalibrations: From Chinul to Toegye. In *Approaches to Chan, Sŏn, Zen: Chinese Chan Buddhism and Its Spread throughout East Asia*. Edited by Albert Welter, Steven Heine and Jin Y. Park. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 263–88.
- Cawley, Kevin N., and Julia Schneider. 2022. *Transnational East Asian Studies*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Chamberlain, Basil Hall. 1919. *The Kojiki*. (古事記) [Record of Ancient Matters]. Available online: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/shi/kj/index.htm> (accessed on 17 June 2023).
- Chan, Wing-Tsit. 1963. *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ching, Julia. 1993. *Chinese Religions*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Cho, Eunsu. 2005. Wŏnch'ŭk's Place in the East Asian Buddhist Tradition'. In *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influence on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*. Edited by Robert E. Buswell Jr. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 173–216.
- Cho, Myong-gi. 1977. Ch'an Buddhist Culture in Korea. In *Korean and Asian Religious Tradition*. Edited by Yu Chai-sin. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Choo, B. Hyun. 2006. An English Translation of the Banya Paramilda Simgyeong Chan: Wonch'uk's Commentary on the Heart Sutra (Prajnaparamita-hridayasutra). *International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture* 6: 121–205.
- De Bary, Wm Theodore, and William Theodore De Bary. 2008. *Sources of East Asian Tradition: Premodern Asia*. New York: Columbia University Press, vol. 1.
- Creel, Herrlee. 1971. *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fairbank, John King, and Merle Goldman. 1999. *China, A New History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fung, Yu-lan. 1983. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. I. Translated by Derk Dodde. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Grayson, James H. 1985. *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Emplantation of Religion*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Grayson, James H. 2002. *Korea: A Religious History*, revised ed. London: Routledge.
- Heine, Steven, and Dale S. Wright, eds. 2000. *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huang, Chi-chiang. 2005. Ŭich'ŏn's Pilgrimage and the Rising Prominence of the Korean Monastery in Hang-chou during the Sung and Yuan Periods. In *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influence on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*. Edited by Robert E. Buswell Jr. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 240–76.
- Hudson, Geoffrey Francis. 1964. China and the World: A Summary of Intellectual and Artistic Influences. In *The Legacy of China*. Edited by Raymond Dawson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 340–63.
- Iryŏn. 2004. *Samguk Yusa*. Translated by Ha Tae-hung, and Grafton K. Mintz. Seoul: Yonsei University Press.
- Keel, Hee-sŏng. 1984. *Chinul: The Founder of the Korean Sŏn Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Kim, Tong-hwa. 1959. 'Koguryŏ sidae-ŭi pilgyo sasang' (高句麗時代 佛教思想) [Buddhist Thought in Koguryŏ. *Asea yŏn'gu* (亞世亞研究) [Asian Research] 2: 1–46.
- Kim, Su Jung. 2022. Flesh in the Closet: The “Secret Wife” in Korean Buddhism. In *New Perspectives in Modern Korean Buddhism*. Edited by Hwansoo Imlee Kim and Jin Y. Park. New York: SUNY Press, pp. 157–80.
- Li, Dun J. 1968. *The Ageless Chinese*. London: Aldine House, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd.
- Magliola, Robert. 2004. Nagarjuna and Chi-tsang on the Value of ‘This World’: A Reply to Kuang-ming Wu's Critique of Indian and Chinese Madhyamika Buddhism. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 31: 505–16.
- McBride, Richard, II. 2017. *Doctrine and Practice in Medieval Korean Buddhism: The Collected Works of Ŭich'ŏn*. Translated, annotated, and introduction. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- McBride, Richard, II. 2020. Ŭich'ŏn, Jingyuan, and Ritual Repentance in the Revival of Huayan Buddhism in the Northern Song period. *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6: 49–80. [CrossRef]

- McBride, Richard, II, trans. 2012. *Hwaŏm 1, The Mainstream Tradition, Collected Works of Korean Buddhism*. Seoul: Sem Vermeersch, vol. 4.
- Mohan, Pankaj. 2005. The Uses of Buddhist and Shamanistic Symbolism in the Empowerment of Queen Sondok. *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 5: 131–44.
- Muller, Charles. 1997. Korean Buddhism: A Short Overview. Available online: <http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/koreanbuddhism-overview.html#note-2-3> (accessed on 26 June 2023).
- Muller, Charles. 2016. Ten Approaches to the Harmonization of Doctrinal Disputes by Wonhyo. Available online: www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/simmun_hwajaeng_non.html (accessed on 28 June 2023).
- Muller, Charles, ed. 2012. *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Vol. 1: Wonhyo Selected Works*. Translated by A. Charles Muller, Jin Y. Park, and Sem Vermeersch. Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, p. 1.
- Muller, Charles, trans. 1995. The Key Operative Concepts in Korean Buddhist Syncretic Philosophy; Interpenetration and Essence-Function in Wŏnhyo, Chinul and Kihwa. *Bulletin of Toto Gakuen University* 3: 33–48.
- Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀) [Chronicles of Japan]. 2006. Berkeley: University of California. Available online: <https://jhti.berkeley.edu/Nihon%20shoki.html> (accessed on 28 June 2023).
- Su, Yun-kil. 1995. The History & Culture of Buddhism in the Koryŏ Dynasty. In *The History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea*. Edited by The Korean Buddhist Research Institute. Seoul: Dongguk University Press, pp. 117–68.
- Thompson, John M. 2008. *Understanding Prajna: Sengzhao's Wild Words and the Search for Wisdom*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Ŭich'ŏn. 1974. *Taegak kuksa munjip* (大覺國師文集) [The Collected Works of State Preceptor Taegak] roll16. Seoul: Konkuk University Press.
- UNESCO.org: *Koreana Tripitaka*. n.d. Available online: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/737/> (accessed on 28 June 2023).
- Welter, Albert. 2022. The Hangzhou Region and the Spread of East Asian Buddhism. In *Approaches to Chan, Sŏn, Zen: Chinese Chan Buddhism and Its Spread throughout East Asia*. Edited by Albert Welter, Steven Heine and Jin Y. Park. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 35–67.
- Wu, Cheng'en. 2021. *Monkey King: Journey to the West*. Translated by Julia Lovell. New York: Penguin.
- Wu, Jiang, Lucille Chia, and Chen Zhichao. 2015. The Birth of the First Printed Canon: The Kaibao Edition and Its Impact. In *Spreading Buddha's Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon*. Edited by Jiang Wu and Lucille Chia. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 145–80.
- Yi, Nŭnghwa. 1919. *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa*, (朝鮮佛教 通史) [A Comprehensive History of Korean Buddhism]. Seoul: Sinmun'gwan, vol. 3.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.