Significance of the Foundation of Susŏnsa in the History of Korean Buddhism

Choi Byŏng-hŏn*

Introduction

Chinul, National Preceptor Pojo (1158-1210), was a leading Buddhist monk of Koryŏ dynasty and one of the seminal thinkers of Buddhist tradition in the entire history of Korea. Susŏnsa (The society for cultivation of sŏn), founded by him, represents an effort to reform contemporary Buddhist society and is significant even today as one of the main currents in the history of Korean Buddhism. However, despite the importance of Chinul's thought and Susŏnsa, and the fact that they have attracted greater attention compared with other topics of Korean Buddhist history, their satisfactory and systematic understanding have yet to evolve. One may justifiably ask why the substantial corpus of existing works on the subject has failed to deepen our insight.

Korean Buddhism, from the period of Three Kingdoms onwards up to the Koryŏ dynasty, played a dominant role in shaping the national culture. Besides, as an inexhaustible source of dynamism, it thrust the nation above the quagmire of social contradictions and cultural stagnation whenever the situation so demanded and led the nation to ever newer heights of growth. Chinul's Sousŏnsa marks the summit of such a tradition. However, with the onset of Chosŏn dynasty, Buddhism was deprived of its socio-economic base and as a result this dynamic tradition was replaced by a state of continuous decline. In such a state of atrophy it ceased to formulate creative philosophical thought and could only blindly imitate the past. Worse still, it

*Associate Professor of Korean History, Seoul National University
did not inherit Koryŏ Buddhism intact. In reality, Chosŏn dynasty Buddhism was only a partial representation of the preceding Buddhist tradition of Koryŏ, which in the course of time lost its clan and became obsolete. The Buddhist society of Chosŏn dynasty was incapable of properly assessing the vigor and value of past tradition. In order to enhance our understanding of Chinul’s Susŏnsa, it is imperative to transcend such a short-sighted view of the history of Buddhism prevalent during Chosŏn dynasty and strive to trace further up and correctly comprehend the glorious chapter of Korean Buddhism during Silla and Koryŏ periods.

Korean Buddhism, already emasculated by 500 years of persecution during Chosŏn dynasty, had to face another ordeal when Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Japanese imperialism disrupted the native tradition of Korean Buddhism and, using such tempting terms as modernization, it brought about the phenomena of autocracy of chief abbots of the 36 main temples as well as secularization of Buddhism. In other words, Korean Buddhism was sapped of its innate vitality and made subservient to the Japanese interests. Under those circumstances it was not possible to correctly understand and appreciate the tradition of Koryŏ and pre-Koryŏ Buddhism including Chinul’s Susŏnsa.

The field of the history of Korean Buddhism today needs to overcome the myopic vision with which it was marred during Chosŏn dynasty and the distortion and manipulation to which it fell prey during the Japanese colonial rule in order to assert its position as an academic discipline.

Realization of the above set of problems which marks the point of departure of this essay is crucial to broadening the horizon of our understanding of Chinul’s thought and Susŏnsa.

I. Transformation of Buddhism and Formation of Societies During the Period of Military Rule.

In order to understand Chinul’s thought and the establishment the Society for practising Samādhi and Prajñā (Chŏnghye Kyŏlsa), it is necessary to first possess a broad knowledge of the state of Buddhism during the period of Koryŏ military rule. Most scholars have failed to concretely grasp the historical significance and the role of Chinul’s works and have not sought to analyze his thought in conjunction with the contemporary historical context.

The previous studies have dwelt on two basic changes which occurred during the Koryŏ military rule: first, transition of Buddhist mainstream from Kyo (scholastic) sect to Sŏn (meditational) sect, and second, harmonization of Soñ and Kyo, with Sŏn being the predominant force. But they
are inadequate explanations of transformation which took place in the contemporary Buddhist world, because they missed an important link in the chain of events. Before dealing with the issue of transition from Kyo to Sŏn, it is necessary to throw light on the upheaval which marked all the represeative Buddhist sects of the times, such as Hwaŏm (Hwa-yen) and Pōpsang (Fa-hsiang) sects belonging to Kyo, and Ch'ŏnt'ae (T'ien-t'ai)\(^1\) and Chogyec sects\(^2\) belonging to Sŏn.

Hwaŏm and Pōpsang sects flourished and assumed the leadership of contemporary Buddhism under the patronage of hereditary aristocracy, the ruling class of centralized power structure, in the beginning of the 11th century. But when military officials rose up in revolt in 1170 and seized power, the sects suffered a severe setback. They showed unrelenting resistance against the new military rule, but gradually their leadership became weak and ultimately reorganization of the sects was effected. In the wake of reform Yoil of Hŭngwŏng temple and Kakhum of Yŏngt'ong temple, who

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1. The character of Ch'ŏnt'ae, which Æch'ŏn founded, is an issue of raging controversy. Some categorize it as Kyo, while others consider it as Sŏn. However, unlike Chinese Buddhism, Koryŏ Buddhism indisputably incorporated it in Sŏn. Æch'ŏn was originally a monk of Hwaŏm school. When he founded the Ch'ŏnt'ae order, both Hwaŏm and Ch'ŏnt'ae orders existed side by side. He left Hwaŏm intact, but he accepted in his new order only monks from Kusan Sŏn mun (Sŏn sects at nine mountains), a tradition of Sŏn whose history could be traced to late Silla. As a result, after Æch'ŏn died, his disciples were divided into Hwaŏm and Sŏn orders and were bipolarized. Among Æch'ŏn's disciples Hwaŏm monks accepted graded titles such as Suchwa, Sŏngt'ong, etc., accorded only from Kyo school, whereas monks of Ch'ŏnt'ae school accepted graded titles such as Sŏnsa (Sŏn Master), Taesŏnsa (Great Sŏn Mentor), etc., appropriate only to Sŏn school. It attests to the fact that Ch'ŏnt'ae order had its separate Sŏn identity.

2. Whether Chogyec order was established before Chmul or afterwards is also a matter of intense dispute. So far as the name Chogyec (Chogyæ Order) is concerned, Chmul is not linked with it, for it had been in use even before him. For instance, we can clearly see Chogyec engraved on the stele in Tansoks'a Taegamkuksa-Bi set up as early as in 1172 (2nd year of Myŏngjong's reign of Koryŏ). Æch'ŏn's establishing Ch'ŏnt'ae order as a new sect and bringing into its fold many monks of Kusan Sŏnmun, which was in existence since late Silla or early Koryŏ-period, led to the bifurcation of Kusan Sŏnmun. At this time those Sŏn monks who did not join Ch'ŏnt'ae order stood in opposition to it and established a new order called Chogyæ. Ch'ŏnt'ae order of China was primarily named so because its base of activity was Ch'ŏnt'ae mountain. Similarly, the name of the mountain where the sixth Patriarch Hui-neng propagated dharma was employed to designate this new Sŏn order. Nomenclature of Chogyæ order in the Koryŏ Buddhist world does not have any relation with Chmul's founding of Susŏnsa. When the new Ch'ŏnt'ae order was established, some monks of Nine mountains sect of Sŏn were admitted into it, and the rest who did not join it came to be known as Chogyæ order.
were direct disciples of Ùich’on, were removed, and the mantle of leadership fell on the shoulders of Sugi and Ch’öngi of Kaet’ae temple, who were followers of Kyunyö.

The transition of ecclesiastical authority caused changes in the character and content of Hwaöm school. Kyunyö’s understanding of Hwaöm was based on the early Chinese Hua-yen tradition systematized by Chih-yen and Fa-tsang, who emphasized Söngsang Yunghoe (Syncretic integration San-lun (Söng) Fa-hsiang (Sang)).

But Ùich’on was harshly critical of Kyunyö’s Hwaöm for its lack of meditational practice, and thus excluded Kyunyö’s works when he published Sinp’yön Chejong Kyosang Ch’ôngnok (New Catalogue of Buddhist Sectarian Writings). Unlike the early Koryö period it was not the problem of syncretic integration of Sammon and Pöpsang sects which counted at that juncture of history. The preponderant problem of the age was the unity of Hwaöm and Sön sects and the harmony of Hwaöm and Ch’önt’ae sects. Ùich’on therefore established the theory of Kyokwan Pyöngsa (Simultaneous cultivation of both doctrine and meditation), and with regard to the Chinese Hwaöm he lauded the sects of latter period founded by Ch’eng-kuan and Tsung-mi, who advocated the theory of unity of Sön and Kyö as against the early sect of Chih-yen and Fa-tsang, who espoused the syncretic integration of Sammon and Pöpsang sects. But after the military seized power, Hwaöm of Ùich’on came under severe attack and was replaced by Kyunyö sect, which had meanwhile been bearing the brunt of repression and had retreated to the countryside. During the military rule of Ch’oe family, Sugi, Kyunyö’s direct disciple, was entrusted with the editorial task of Buddhist Tripitaka. He included Kyunyö’s works as supplementary plates which were omitted in Sok Changgyöng (Supplement to the Tripitaka) at the time of Ùich’on. As a consequence, Kyunyö’s Hwaöm sect came into focus and was revaluated, and formed the mainstream of Hwaöm.

In Ch’önt’ae sect also Paengnyöön society of Yose (1163-1245) assumed the leading position and the sect represented by the line of Yikjong, Kyoung, and Döksö who were disciples of Ùich’on, faded. Newly emerged, Yose set himself distinctly apart from Sön, propagated the Lotus Sutra as an object of reverence for Ch’önt’ae followers, and simultaneously

3 The author has dealt with the process of evolution of Hwaöm doctrine in Koryö through bipolarization of Kyuyö sect and Ùich’on sect in his article “Koryö sadae Hwaömhak ûi Pyönh’öon” (Evolution of Hwaöm doctrine of Koryö period), Hau’guksa yöng’gu vol 30, Seoul Hau’guksa yöng’guhoe (1980).

sought to resolve the contradictions of contemporary Buddhism by advocating (the Pureland) meditation and repentance. Formation of the Paengnyŏn society is a concrete illustration of his will to initiate reform in contemporary Buddhism. He founded the society at Mandŏk mountain in Kangjin, Chŏlla province in the year 1211-6. The tradition of Paengnyŏn society was carried forward by Ch’ŏmn (1205-1248) and Ch’ŏnch’aek (1206-?) and exerted influence on intellectuals as well as common people.5

Though Ŭich’ŏn’s formation of Ch’ŏnch’aek sect dealt a crippling blow to the Sŏn sect, it rose up again after King Yejong’s period and asserted its position as the leading force of contemporary Korean Buddhism. Cutting its ties from Ch’ŏnch’aek order, it emerged under the new denomination of Chogyo order. Sagulsan and Kajisan factions formed the mainstay of Chogyo order. Especially Sagulsan faction was its most important constituent, as is represented by its line of succession, Hyejo-T’anyŏn-Yŏnsim. However, when Ch’oe Ch’ung-hŏn seized power, he expelled the dissident forces led by Yŏnsim and his associates to the provinces, and this sect suffered a crushing blow.7 A misconception seems to be prevalent that Ch’oe Ch’ung-hŏn suppressed Kyo and supported only Sŏn, but as is evident from the example of Yŏnsim he ruthlessly cracked down even on Sŏn sects if they were in close alliance with the court or nobles and stood in opposition to him. With the removal of the influential Yŏnsim faction, Chunul’s Susŏnsa, which was also an offshoot of Sagulsan, surfaced. But Chunul did not belong to any particular sect, as we are told “he did not have any permanent master and only followed the Tao.” The above facts, however, suggest that like Hwaŏm and Ch’ŏnch’aek orders, Chogyo order was also undergoing the transition of ecclesiastical authority.

6 National Preceptor Hyejo is the same person as T’ajun who figures in Koryŏsa. Hyejo seems to the name bestowed on him by the King at the time of his appointment as National Preceptor, whereas T’ajun appears to be his Buddhist name (see author’s “Koryŏ Chunggi Yi Cha-hyŏn ŭi Sŏn kwa Kŏsa Pulgyo ŭi Sŏnggyŏk” (Character of Yi Cha-hyŏn’s Sŏn and Kŏsa Buddhism during the mid-Koryŏ Period), Kim Ch’ŏl-jun Paksa hwagap Kinyŏn Sahak nonch’ŏng, Seoul 1983, p 952
7 Koryŏsa (history of Koryŏ) vol 129, Yŏhŏn 42th, Ch’oe Ch’unghŏn jŏn, Asa munhwasa, Seoul 1972
But advent of Chinul caused a transition not only of dharmatransmission, but also of the content and character of Sŏn thought. At the time of King Yejong the newly emerged Sŏn sect was sequestered and secluded under the influence of Taoism and emphasized individual cultivation. Elements of Pureland school were cast aside, while concentrating on seclusion neglected active propagation of Buddhism among the populace. As a result, Buddhism was isolated from the people, and Koryŏ Buddhism which catered to the tastes of the court and nobles flourished. Kŏsa (gentry) Buddhism was evolved by Yi Cha-hyŏn9 with the help of National Preceptor Hyejo and followers like T'anyŏn.

In contrast Sŏn after Chinul denounced the preceding current of Sŏn, which displayed inadequate social consciousness, for it was formalized and isolated from the practical problems of the times. Simultaneously, it strove to cope with reality. Besides, Sŏn after Chinul emphasized a collective approach of cultivation rather than an individual approach. Buddhism became much more positive and open in its reception of and response to the masses. Hence, there was a considerable hark us between Pre-Chinul and Post-Chinul Sŏn-traditions. This point would be more explicit if we explain the shift of emphasis from Kyo to Sŏn, as well as transformations taking place in different Buddhist sects of the times, especially in the Sŏn sect, because they shed light on the historical significance of Chinul's Susŏnsa.

The former half of the military rule of Koryŏ (1172-1270) was torn by ceaseless and intense rivalry for power. Buddhism, which had forged an intimate nexus with the court and nobles (civil officials), rose in opposition to the military force. But with the downfall of civil officials, Buddhism faced inevitable persecution.

Moreover, after Ch’oe U seized power, he sought to consolidate his authority, which in turn necessitated effecting a drastic reform of Buddhism. In the 17th year of Kojong’s reign (1230) Ch’oe U instructed the governors of five provinces to draw up a list of all the temples belonging to both Kyo and Sŏn orders, specifying in detail the dates of their establishment and their actual conditions.10 Ch’oe U’s instruction was aimed at reforming and reorganizing Buddhism. Transferring the capital to Kanghwa Island as a result of the Mongol invasion served as a catalyst for the reform program of Buddhism. Temples of the capital which were patronized by the court.

9 Ch’oi Byŏng-hŏn, “Koryŏchunggi Yi Cha-hyŏn üi Sŏn kwa Kŏsapulgyo üi Sŏnggyŏk,” op cit., pp 941-960
10 Illyŏn, Sanyuk yusa (Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea) Poyang Yŏnokjo, Sŏmun munhwasa, 1983
and the nobles were crushed and provincial temples were promoted to occupy central position. Shifting the central stage of Buddhism from the capital to the provinces meant much more than a change of location, for it meant a change in the character and content also of Buddhism.

Together with the external environment of the Buddhist world of the times, the internal organization of Sangha was undergoing remarkable changes. For instance, many societies emerged as new religious groups throughout the country. These societies were critical of contemporary aristocratic Buddhism, which began to show anemic signs in the middle of Koryŏ dynasty itself. The awareness by Buddhist followers of the decay of Buddhist dharma was important in that it led to an acerbically critical spirit. Representative religious societies of the times were Susŏnsa of Chogye order and Paengnyŏn society of Ch’ŏnt’ae order. Even in the Kyo school, such societies came into being, as witnessed by the Pallyong society of Yoil (the end of 12th century to the beginning of the next century)11 and Taeho’s Suam society (early 13th century), which belonged to Hwaŏm order,12 and Chımk’s Suchŏng society (1123–1129), which belonged to Pŏpsang order.13 Even though religious societies of Kyo and Sŏn originated in the same provinces, they were markedly different in their character in terms of their base of support.

For instance, while the base of the societies of Hwaŏm and Pŏpsang orders was constituted by civil officials (Yi clan of Inchŏn Origin, etc.) of the central administrative organization, societies of Chogye or Ch’ŏnt’ae orders drew their sustenance and support from petty officials and provincial gentry as well as military officials. In short these societies absorbed their patrons’ perception of social reality and critical attitude towards contemporary Buddhism. Especially Susŏnsa, as noted, stands out among the plethora of existing societies for its philosophical creativity and originality, its practicality and intensity of social consciousness and in addition, for the massive influence it wielded on succeeding generations. But proper understanding of Susŏnsa can evolve only when we seek to evaluate it in juxtaposition with the wide array of societies which had taken form in the contemporary Buddhist world.

13 Kwŏn Chŏk, “Chitsan Suyŏngsag,” Tongmuwaŏn No 3 (Tongmuwaŏn ch 64), Seoul, T’achaksa, 1975, pp 65-67
II. Succession of lineage in Susŏnsa and its Social Background

Though much light has been shed on the process of formation and the underlying objective of Susŏnsa, not much effort has been made to understand its development-process after Chinul, thus obfuscating an integrated perspective of its historical significance. It is not adequate to give a chronological account of the 16 national preceptors who led the society in succession during the whole course of its evolution and to confine our discussion to their mutual relation. It is important to trace the aspects of continuity and change in the content and character of the society in the process of succession.

As already pointed out, Chinul, the founding father of Susŏnsa, gave it a theoretical framework. He underscored the practical problem of cultivating both Samādhi and Prajñā, the two cardinal prerequisites of the practice of Buddhism, and thus promoted the movement for the establishment of society for the cultivation of samādhi and prajñā. To quote Chinul:

Nevertheless, when we reflect on the motivation of our conduct from dawn to dusk, we realize that we rely on the Buddha dharma while adorning ourselves with the signs of self and person. Engrossed in our pursuit of fame and fortune, we do not cultivate virtue but only squander food and clothes. Although we have left home, what virtue does it have? How regrettable it is! We want to leave the Triple world (Three levels of a world system, desire, subtle form, formless) but we do not practice freeing ourselves from sensual objects. Our male body is used in vain, for we lack a man’s will. Above us (to the Buddha) we fail in the propagation of dharma, below us, we do not benefit sentient beings and in the middle (world of our own lives), we betray our four benefactors (parents, King, teachers and friends/supporters). It is truly shameful, and I have deeply lamented this for long already.

As is evident, Chinul deplored the Koryŏ Buddhist world for its abettation and pursuit of material gains and felt disturbed at the intensifying mutual antagonism among various sects. His exhortation to retire to the solitude of the mountains and advocacy of equal cultivation of both samādhi and Prajñā represented an ideal cure of the malaise of contemporary monks hankering after mundane interests. Chinul himself was an illustration of his ideal. He received precepts by Sŏn master Chonghwŏ of sagulsan sect but he did not have any direct relation with any particular sect, as he achieved


15 ibid
spiritual enlightenment by dint of his independent cultivation. Despite his success in the examination for monks, he never held any state clerical position.\textsuperscript{16} He called himself Samun (śramana), which emphasized his spiritual quest. He wrote his works under the name of Haedong Chogyesasan Samun (śramana of Korea's Chogye mountain sect), or Haedong Chogyesasan Susōnsa samun (śamana of Korea's Chogye mountain's society for the cultivation of Sōn). Susōnsa of Chunul initiated a revolutionary movement in the contemporary Buddhist world with its emphasis on purity, and it carried immense significance.

However, Hyesim, the second heir to Susōnsa, rose to high ranks as Soōsa (Sōn mentor) Taesōnsa (Great Sōn mentor),\textsuperscript{17} and Honwōn (1191-1271), the fourth heir, who succeeded Mong Yǒ the third heir (?-1252),\textsuperscript{18} was given the title of Wangsa, the Royal Preceptor\textsuperscript{19} which together with that of Kuksa, the National Preceptor, was the greatest honor that monks could achieve. He participated positively in the ecclesiastical structure of the nation. Besides forging a close affinity with the Ch'oe family, the holders of political power, the society compromised the purist ideal which had inspired its foundation. However, prosperity of Susōnsa and its rise as the leading society of the times once again accentuated the factionism of Sakulsan.\textsuperscript{20}

On the other hand, Susōna, especially under the leadership of Ch'ōnyōng, played a great role in resisting the Mongol invasion. After the transfer of the capital to Kanghwa Island in June 1206, he established in 1235 Tačangdogam (Directorate for Tripitaka) to undertake woodblock printing of the Buddhist scriptures, which was a kind of prayer to repel the Mongol invaders. When Ch'oe U built Sōnwōnsa temple for the sake of praying for his own secular prosperity, monks like Hon wón, Ch'ōnyōng (1215-1286) maintained it as an annex of Susōnsa. In the process, its ties with the state got further cemented. It assumed the leadership of Koryŏ Buddhism and took an active part in the anti-Mongol crusade.

But during the period of Ch'ungti (1226-1293), the sixth heir, Yuan interfered with and influenced Korea's domestic administration. The role

\begin{enumerate}
\item Kim Kun-su, \textit{op cit}
\item Yi Kyu-bo, "Chogyesan Chese Ko Tansoksa Juji Susōnsaju Jūngsi Chingakkuksa pimyŏng," \textit{Tongmuonsŏn} vol 4 (Tongmuonsŏn ch 118), Seoul T'ahaksa, 1975, pp 278-280
\item As the stele of National Preceptor Ch'ongjun is not extant and only scattered record about him are available, it is not possible to know about his career in detail
\item Kim Ku, "Warōngsan Chanunsa Wangsa Jūngsi Jimmyŏngkuksa Pimyŏng," \textit{Tongmuonsŏn}, vol 9 (Tongmuonsŏn ch 117), pp 226-268
\item \textit{Ibid}
\end{enumerate}
as well as influence of Susŏnsa declined. A characteristic feature of Susŏnsa at the time was that it laid stress on the Sŏn of the pre-Chinul period. According to Hyeokukaseumun and Chŏnghye upwŏnch'ukpôpsbo of Ch'ungu, Hyejo's merit as the founder of Chŏnghyesa was extolled and his Sŏn style appreciated, which was transmitted to him through Mong Yŏ and Hon Wŏn. Sŏn of Hyejo during King Yejong's reign showed a tendency of being sequestered and transcendental and emphasized individual practice. These details testify that the tradition Sŏn Ch'ungu upheld and emphasized was degenerate compared with that of Chinul.

Because of scarcity of material, it is difficult to conclusively document the process of evolution of Susŏnsa after Ch'ungu. Still it is essential to make its close scrutiny by relating it with the circumstances of the contemporary Buddhist world.

Susŏnsa came in the limelight again during the period of King Kongmon when Pokku (1270-1355) succeeded as its 13th heir. He was appointed Royal Preceptor in the first year of King Kongmon's reign. Pokku stayed for around 40 years in Wŏllam temple and Songkwang temple and continued the tradition of Chinul with about 1,000 disciples including such outstanding figures as Sŏnwŏnpaekhwam, Kajunakok, etc. His adherence to Chinul's tradition at the time when Imje (Linchu) sect of China was the predominant trend testifies to the phenomenon of resurgence of Susŏnsa. But the issue of Susŏnsa in the post-Kongmon period needs to be dealt with from a different standpoint. In other words, we need to relate it with the reform politics of King Kongmon, Sindon, T'acko Pou (1301-1382) and Naong Hyegun (1320-1370) and examine it on a broad canvas. The 20th year of the reign of King Kongmon marks the end of Chinul's direct line of succession when the 15th heir, the National preceptor Hongin died, and Naong Hyegun or Hwanam Honsu (1320-1392) and followers of Pou such as Sangch'ong, Sŏkkoeoeng etc. became in succession the head monks of Songkwang temple (previously named Susŏnsa). We need to examine in more concrete terms the circumstances of Sangha and the content of the contemporary Buddhist world.

In order to deepen our understanding of the historical significance and

21 Ch'ungu, Wŏngannok, Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ, Op cit., p 396, 398
22 Yi Tal-ch'ung, "Wangsya Tac Chogyeoongsa Ilkong Chŏngnyŏng roe ūm Pyŏnhac Hongin Kwangje do Taesŏnsa Kakŏn choju Jūngsa Kakŏnkuksa Pyunyŏng," Tongmunson, No. 9 (Tongmunson ch 118), pp 291-292
23 It is surmised that Sŏnhyŏn, who was appointed Royal Preceptor to replace Po-u by Sin Don in 1367 (16th year of King Kongmon's reign), was the 15th National Preceptor Hongin
the process of the development of Susŏnsa, it is also important that we discuss the social background of Susŏnsa and its relation with the contemporary political forces. Extant researches on Susŏnsa have sought to highlight only its alliance and affinity with the ruling Ch’oe family, which can by no means be called a sufficient exegesis of the topic for the social background of Susŏnsa included not only the ruling Ch’oe family but also local functionaries. Next, Susŏnsa’s relations with the emergent political forces after the downfall of the Ch’oe ruling family needs also to be investigated.

First, if we look at the familiar background of the heads of Susŏnsa, including Chinul, we find that most of them their identity and background can be confirmed belonged to the Confucian-scholar class holding the ranks of local functionaries. Some of them had made their way even to central administration. These heads were as follows. Chinul (Chŏng clan of Sŏhŭng) Honwŏn (Yi clan of Suan) Chŏnyŏng (Yang clan of Namwŏn) Ch’ungji (Ui clan of Changhŭng) Manhang (Pak clan of Kongju), and Pokku (Yi clan of Kosŏng). Besides, Hyesim and Ch’ungji studied Confucianism at the state college called T’ae hak, passed civil service examinations and worked as officials before they became Buddhist monks. In this context it is worthy of note that the character of the gentry class of the same provinces changed though three different periods, military rule, Mongol invasion and late Koryŏ after King Kongmin. Broadly speaking, they were distinct from civil officials of mid-Koryŏ period and can be regarded as precursors of the literati of late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn dynasty.

If we look at the patrons of Susŏnsa, we find that their character also underwent alteration in different periods. First, it appears that in the early phase of its foundation, i.e. the period of Chinul, it did not have direct relations with the military officials of the capital Ch’oe Sŏn’s work Taesŏng Sŏnhong Chogyesa Susŏnsa Chungch’anggi,24 composed in October 1207 (3rd year of Huijong’s reign), furnishes us with the names of persons who were associated with the establishment of Susŏnsa. This list facilitates our understanding of the issue.

The persons associated with Susŏnsa’s establishment can be broadly classified as monks and patrons. The most outstanding patrons were Chin Chik-sŏng, the influential magistrate of Kŏmsŏng (Naju) county, and his wife Chin Ŭl-gŭm. They donated 10 gŭn (pounds) of platinum for the establishment and maintenance of the temple and later financed the publication of three volumes of Hwaŏnmun Chŏryo (Excerpts from the exposition

24 Im Sŏk-jin, Susŏnsa Chungch’anggi (compiled), Chogyesa Songkwangsa Sago, Asia munhwasa, Seoul 1977, pp 183-188
of the Avatamsaka sutra) written by Chun in addition to Chun Chik-sung, many other rich people of Southern provinces donated their wealth, whereas the poor offered their services. Ch’oe Sôn writes that the establishment of Susönsa owed to positive assistance and support of people from the neighbouring areas, especially the local functionaries. He further says that though Ch’oe U, an influential figure of the central administration, entrusted Chungch’anggi with the task of engraving Wang Hsi-chih’s calligraphy on a stone stele, he did not seem to have a direct link with Susönsa at the time of its establishment.

It was during the period of Hyesim, the second heir of Susönsa, that Ch’oe U became directly involved in course of time association of the court (including King Kangjong, military officials including Ch’oe U and high-ranking Confucian scholar-officials including Ch’oe Hong-yun) with Susönsa led to its tremendous advancement. Especially Ch’oe U took keen interest in it, as is evident by the fact that he made his two sons Manchong and Manchön disciples of Hyesim. Besides, he tried several times to invite Hyesim to Kaesoeng, the then capital, and sent him regularly such items of necessities as tea, incense, medicine and monks’ robes. He gave unstinted support to Susönsa, as is testified by his donation of ricefield and saltfield under the name of Ch’uksöng yuhyangbo, Kuktaebun Songssi kulbo, Tong-saengmaessi kulbo etc. As is discerned from the correspondence between the two, Hyesim regarded Ch’oe U as an outstanding person and lauded his administration. But, as his repeated refusal of the invitation to visit the capital shows, at the same time he did not want to take undue interest in politics.

The linkage between Susönsa with the ruling force centered on Ch’oe U got further strengthened during the period of the fourth and fifth heirs. Their close alliance is also attested by the fact that when Songwonsa temple was built by Ch’oe U in the 32nd year of Kojong’s reign on Kanghwa island, leaders of Susönsa such as Honwôn, Ch’onyông served as its head priests.

25 Yi Kyu-bo, Jigung Kuksa Pumyông.
26 Im Sök-jin Kuksa dangsi Taegung Kup Yujibi, Chogyeseon Songkwangsa Sago op. cit., pp. 401-404
27 Hyesim, Tap Ch’oe Sangsö U, Hanguk Palgyochonsö vol. 6, pp. 42-44
28 According to an inscription of the stele of National Preceptor Jigung, everyone from the King down to the common people admired his heir. Officials as high as master of ceremony, aristocrats and provincial leaders from far and wide became his disciples. Thus we can guess how strong the influence of the temple might have been. Moreover, if we look at the inscription carved into the back of the stele, we can see the names of many dignitaries, such as Secretary of Scriptures, Master of Ceremonies, governors,
However, as a result of the downfall of the military rule and the interference of Yuan dynasty, the base of support for Susōnsa underwent tremendous transformation. It was the time when Ch’ungji was the heir, and if we cast a glance at people who had interaction with Ch’ungji (such as Yi O, Pak Hang, Kim Hwōn, Yi Chon-bi, Hong Cha-pōn, Kwōn Ui, Yōm Sōng-ik etc), we find that all of them emerged as influential aristocrats after Yuan intervention. They either belonged to the royal family or were high-ranking officials. This point needs to be analyzed from yet different angle of vision, relating it with the degeneration of Susōnsa Buddhism.

III. Chinul’s Thought and the Significance of the Foundation of Susōnsa

In order to understand Chinul’s thought and the historical significance of the establishment of Susōnsa, it is imperative to first treat the issue of unity of Sōn and Kyo and the harmony of Buddhism and Confucianism. Though substantial research has been done on the unity of Sōn and Kyo, the issue of harmony of Confucianism and Buddhism has yet to be fully explored. As a consequence, proper understanding of the importance of Susōnsa in the history of Korean thought as a whole has not so far evolved.

As mentioned earlier, the foundation of Susōnsa was motivated by the idea of balanced cultivation of both samādhi and prajñā. This twofold

magistrates, and women of the royal family as well as of Ch’oe Ch’ung-hān’s house. It also testifies to the respect and recognition of court and nobles it enjoyed and the strong linkage it forged with the political forces of the capital.

29 The chronology of Chinul’s plan to found the society for cultivation of Samādhi and Prajñā together is as follows: Chinul passed the monks’ examination at the age of 25 in the year 1182 (12th year of Myongjong’s reign). He went to Kaesōng, the then capital, and appeared at the examination held in Poje Sōn temple. A day after the examination was held, he discussed with the other examinees the plan to found a society and obtained their promise of support. Afterwards, Chinul continued on the path of cultivation. In 1191 (21st year of Myongjong’s reign) when he was 33 he gathered 4 or 5 of his like-minded friends at Kajo temple, P’alkong mountain, and founded the society which he called society for Samādhi and Prajñā. He practiced meditation there altogether for 8 years. Gradually, hundreds of people joined the society. The small size of the monastery site and ever-increasing number of disciples necessitated the construction of new facilities for the society. Kilsang monastery at Songgwang Mountain was reconstructed and Chinul moved to the new site at the age of 42 in the year 1198 (1st year of King Shinjong’s reign) and stayed there for 12 years till his death, cultivating and discoursing on dharma to the populace. Even though the society moved to Songgwang mountain, it continued to use the same name, Ch’hawŏnsa (Samādhi and Prajñā Society). However, as there existed another monastery in the vicinity called Ch’hawŏnsa (the Chinese word for both society and temple is pronounced sa), and as the homonym was a source of confusion,
training in Samādhi and Prajñā was based on Tōnochōmsu-zōd (Theory of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation). Sudden awakening means complete identity of sentient beings with Buddha in the state of awakened true mind. Gradual cultivation connotes that even after the initial sudden awakening, one must continue to cultivate the true mind because (habit-energy-Vasana) can not be eliminated all of a sudden. Chinul called this method of twofold training in Samādhi and Prajñā which was based on the theory of sudden awakening and gradual cultivation Sōngjok Tāngji (the path of parallel keeping of quiescence and wakefulness). But introducing yet another doctrine of Hwaöm thought, i.e. Wondon Sinhae Mun (path of complete sudden faith and understanding) he proved that there is no basic difference between Hwaöm and Sŏn. This path connotes that enlightenment of one’s mind is nothing else but the immutable wisdom of all the Buddhas, and emphasizes faith and understanding of this fact as well as dependence on Buddha-nature and cultivation of Sŏn.

But Chinul’s Sŏn does not end at parallel keeping of quiescence and wakefulness and the path of complete sudden faith and understanding. These paths do not lead to annihilation of traces of language and the intellectual disease of understanding. As perfect cultivation requires complete emancipation from the filter of intellect, Chinul advocated study of living phrases of the path of Sŏn, i.e. hwadu. The last stage of Chinul’s Sŏn, Kyŏngchŏlmun (The path of direct cutting) indicates the study of Hwadu. It is also called Musim Hapdo Mun (the path of unity with the tao through no mind). It denotes the highest realm of Chinul’s Sŏn, liberated from discrimination of intellect and not bound by Samādhi and Prajñā either. So, the structure of the practice of Sŏn which Chinul built is composed of three paths, the path of parallel keeping of quiescence and wakefulness, the path of complete sudden faith and understanding, and the path of direct cutting. It was highly original thought. Intellect, an anathema to Sŏn, was repudiated in its tradition from the very beginning. Chinul referred to it positively and besides displayed his exceptionally catholic spirit by introducing the related theory of Shen-hui and T’ sung-mi who belonged to the Ho-tse sect and not to the sect of the sixth patriarch Hui-neng, founder of the Sŏn sect. Besides, Chinul did not embrace Hwaöm thought of Fa-tsang and Ch’eng-

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kwan, considered orthodox in the history of Chinese Hwaŏm, but he turned instead to Li Tung-hsuan, representing a collateral sect. He laid the foundation of the unity of Sŏn and Kyo and furthermore accommodated Kanhwawa Sŏn of Ta-hui, who belonged to the Linchi sect of Song dynasty and popularized traditional Sŏn thought. Thus Chinul’s Sŏn thought was instrumental in developing the Kanhwawa Sŏn of the Linchi sect and added a new chapter to Koryŏ Buddhism.

After Chinul, Hyesim the second heir inherited Chinul’s Sŏn thought, promoted Kanhwawa Sŏn and ushered Koryŏ Buddhism into a completely new phase. Some scholars seek to put Chinul and Hyesim’s Sŏn respectively but such an assumption is not grounded in reality. Hyesim could succeed in promoting Kanhwawa Sŏn only because Chinul had already given it a philosophical framework and foundation. An attempt was made in Chosŏn-dynasty to trace Korean tradition of Kanhwawa Sŏn to Sŏkok Ch’ôngkong and P’yŏngsan Ch’ŏrim of the Chinese Linchi sect, repudiating Chinul and Hyesim’s pioneer roles, but such a misgiving originated from the lamentably inadequate understanding that the Chosŏn dynasty Buddhist world possessed of Koryŏ Buddhism.

Besides, Hyesim strove not only to promote Kanhwawa Sŏn but to syncretise Confucianism and Buddhism. His theory of basic unity of Confucian and Buddhist thought is remarkable for its philosophical originality. As already mentioned, Hyesim passed the civil service examination and studied at a state college (T’aehak). And even after he was initiated into the Buddhist order he did not sever his ties with Confucian scholar-officials. The most representative Confucianist he maintained a relationship with was Ch’oe Hong-yun. In one of the replies to Ch’oe’s letters Hyesim forcefully con-


33 The predominant issue which Koryŏ Buddhist society faced was the unity of Sŏn and Kyo, but when we compare in this context of Sŏn/Kyo unity Ch’ŏnt’ae thought of Uich’on and Sŏn thought of Chinul, we find that Uich’on emphasized an eclectic and transitional process of unity, whereas Chinul transcended an eclectic stage and formulated the philosophical structure of complete unity of Sŏn and Kyo and fully resolved the issue of harmonization of Sŏn and Kyo. Based on such an attitude his attempt to develop Kanhwawa Sŏn of the Linchi sect can be regarded as a new height or growth of Koryŏ Buddhism.

34 Kwŏn Ki-jong, “Hyesim ūi Sŏn Sasang Yŏn’gu” (Study of Hyesim’s Sŏn Thought), Pulgyo habbo 19, Tongguk Tachakkyo Pulgyo Munhwa Yŏnguso, 1982, pp 201-218.
tended that Confucianism was not different from Buddhism. He quoted dictums from Confucian Analects such as

If one hears the way in the morning and dies in the evening, it is good
I have no desire
I have no selfish ego I do not possess strong obstinacy
My way is pierced by one thread

and give their Buddhist explanation. He argued that Buddhism and Confucianism differed only in their names and not in their essences. Besides he quoted Kisegye kyŏng, in which the Buddha said, “I sent two saints to China to edify people,” and explained that one saint was Laotse (Kasyapa bodhisattva) and another Confucius (Yudong bodhisattva). Thus he traced the source of Confucianism and Taoism to Buddhism.

He said that though their method of conversion is different, their essence is the same. He concluded his letter with an exhortation to study the Hwadu of Matsu Tao-t'ae such as Mind itself is Buddha or it is neither mind nor Buddha and to consider complete awakening as the ultimate in spiritual exercise. Thus Hyesim sought to harmonize Confucianism and Buddhism and asserted the predominance of Buddhism. Hyesim's thought of the harmonization of Confucianism and Buddhism was profound and positive compared to similar theses presented by the Chosŏn dynasty Buddhist world.

Kihwa, Hyujo, etc. are the representative figures of Chosŏn dynasty who made attempts to harmonize Confucianism and Buddhism, but as their endeavor lacked in substance and strength they did not make much impact and do not carry much significance in the history of Korean thought. In the mid-Chosŏn dynasty, at the time Neo-Confucian literati emerged from the Neo-Confucian structure which was the spiritual mainstay of the state, Sŏsan Hyujo made his advent on the national stage as a leading personality of the Buddhist world. Though he lacked dynamism, he was cognizant of the real circumstances of Buddhism. Hyujo could not formulate any original thought. However, he strove to uphold and promote Sŏn tradition by urging Buddhist society to abandon Kyo and embrace Sŏn. He also sought to bring about harmonization of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In reaction to the Tot'ongwan (concept of the lineage of Confucian Way) he presented Pŏpt'ongwan (concept of the lineage of Buddhist Way). He emphasized the Sŏn tradition of the Linchi sect. In one of his writings about Master Pyŏksong Chiŏm, his teacher, he quoted the Master's words,

35 Hyesim, “Tap Ch’oech’amchŏng Hongryun,” Han’guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ, op cit, pp 46-47
36 Sŏsan, “Pyŏk Songtang Tacs'a Haengjŏk,” Han’guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ, vol 7, pp 752-753
“In the fall of 1508 (the 3rd year of King Kojong’s reign) I went to Myokilsang hermitage located at Kŭmkang mountain. There while I was reading Ta-hui. I doubted the hwadu, ‘A dog does not have Buddha-nature’ Observing this hwadu, I was soon greatly awakened. Again while I was reading Kao-feng. I was completely rid of the evil of intellect with which I was bound till then.” Hyujong added that Master Pyŏksong ceaselessly adhered afterwards to the Sŏn style of Chinese masters Kao-feng and Ta-hui. Monk Ta-hui was the 17th direct heir of the 6th Partarch, and Kao-feng was the 18th direct heir of Linchi. Pyŏksong faithfully continued the tradition, even though it had been expounded by foreign masters 500 years before. It was similar, he argued to Cheng-teu and Chu-hsi’s inheriting and transmitting the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, even though they were born 1000 years later. He concluded that so far as transmission of the Way is concerned, Buddhism and Confucianism were the same.

Hyujong revived the Pŏpt’ong idea which was inherited by his master Chiŏm from Kao-feng and Ta-hui. He even cited the examples of Chengtze and Chu-hsi who continued the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius and justified his own Tot’ong idea.

Primarily the Tot’ong of Neo-Confucianism owed its origin to the influence of Pŏpt’ong of Sŏn order, but at the time of Hyujong the situation was the other way round, as he was inspired by Tot’ong of Neo-Confucianism to emphasize his Pŏpt’ong. Needless to say, it was because of the passivity of Buddhism which must acknowledge the preponderant position of Confucianism37.

To conclude, the thought of Susŏnsa is of course significant in the Buddhist world, as it represented an attempt to harmonize Sŏn and Kyo. But beyond that it crossed over to Neo-Confucianism and played an important transitional role also. In other words, before Pak Yi-chŏng, Kwŏn bu, Yi Che-hyŏn, etc. disseminated related books about Neo-Confucianism, Susŏnsa had built an ideological base to facilitate the general understanding of Neo-Confucianism. But in the wake of the Mongol invasion and the establishment of its dominance, the socio-economic contradictions of Buddhism became glaring and its ideological growth inconspicuous. Besides, the issue of harmony of Confucianism and Buddhism did not make for any further development. Neo-Confucianism established its position as the superior doctrine and assumed leadership in the debate of the harmonization of Confucianism and Buddhism, so the Neo-Confucian concept of

37 Choi Byŏng-hŏn, “Chosŏnsidae Pulgyo Pŏpt’ong sŏl ū Munc’i” (Issue of Chosŏn dynasty’s Pŏpt’ong Theory), Han’guk sauron vol 19, Seoul National University, Department of Korean History, 1988 p 285
the harmonization of Confucianism and Buddhism nurtured in Buddhist philosophy gained ground. Battered by the assault of newly-organized Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism followed a steep path of degeneration and decline. 
(Translated by N. M. Pankaj)
GLOSSARY

Ch'eng-kwan 漱觀
Ch'oe Hong-yun 崔洪胤
Ch'oe U 崔燦
Chuh-yen 智巖
Chun Chik-sung 陳直升
Chun Ui-gum 珍衣金
Chunok 晉儒
Chunul 知諱
Ch'oe Ch'ung-bon 崔忠範
Ch'oe Son 崔誠
Chogye 曹溪
Ch'onggyeipwon ch'uk-pōn-so 定慧入院祝法籌薈
Ch'onggye Kyōsa 定慧結社
Ch'ông 天其
Ch'ôngch'aek 天鎮
Ch'önn 天因
Ch'öntae(T'ien-t'ai Ch 天台
Ch'önyōng 天英
Dōko 德素
Fa-tsang 法藏
Hong Cha-p'în 洪子藩
Hongmun 弘慕
Hongwûn 混元
Hüngwang temple 興王寺
Hünamam HonSU 幻庵民修
Hua-ûn (Huia-yen Ch) 華巖
Huaûnam Hon Chôryô 華巖論範要
Hyego 聖照
Hyesokukse chaemun 譯訳國師詣文
Hyesim 譯師
Hyûng 休靜
Kaet'ae temple 開泰寺
Kaji Makok 迦智靡谷
Kajusan (Kaji mountain) 迦智山
Kakjun 覺訓
Kanghwa Island 江華島
Kangjung 康宗
Kanhwa Sôn 看話禪
Khûwa 己和
Kim Hwôn 金煥
Kisegye Kyông 起世界經
Kôsa 居士
Kuktaehum Songssì Kulbo 國大夫人宋氏忌日賓
Kwôn Bu 欽篤
Kwôn Ui 欽宜
Kyo 敎
Kyôkwan gyôngsu 敎觀井修
Kyong 敎雄
Kyunyô 均如
Manchôn 萬全
Manchong 高宗
Mandôk mountain 麥德山
Mongyô 麥如
Naong Hyegûn 懶翁惠勤
Paek Yi-chîng 白頭正
Paengnyûn society 白蓮社
Pak Hang 朴恒
Pâllyang society 盤龍社
Pokku 復丘
Pôpsang(Fa-hsüan ch) 良相
Pôpt'ong 法統
Pyûksong Chûm 碧松智巖
P'yongSAN Chôrûm 平山處林
SagsulSAN(Sagul mountain) 隱嵎山
Sangch'ong 尚聰
Samm 士林
Sindon 辛田
Sîm'p'yôn Chejong Kyojông 新編諸宗教圍總錄
Ch'ongnok 近觀
Sokyanggyông 線藏經
Sôkôk Ch'ôngkong 石壁清溪
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