Wonhyo’s *Ilsim* Philosophy and Mass Proselytization Movement

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1. The Development and Significance of Wonhyo’s Philosophy

Wonhyo (617-686) was one of the foremost Buddhist philosophers as well as the most popular monks throughout Korean history. Through a formidable number of works running to approximately 80 tomes and 150 volumes, he surmounted the then pressing issue in East Asian Buddhism of the conflict between schools favoring old and new translation of Buddhist scriptures and succeeded in establishing his Ilsim (“One Mind”) philosophy. In this respect, he can be said to have contributed greatly to the development not only of Korean but of East Asian Buddhism as well. In addition, he sought to accommodate the ordinary layman’s religious urges within the framework of his philosophy and reciprocate it to the laity, i.e., by actively proselytizing the masses. In this respect, although Wonhyo was just an individual, he was also representative of the age in which he lived.

In Korean history, the 7th century was an era of transition from the Three

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1. For romanizing Korean words, the government-approved McCune-Reischauer system has been adhered to, with the exception of the writer’s name and the more familiar spellings, e.g. Seoul. For personal names, in keeping with the Oriental custom, the last name has been put before the first name without an intervening comma. Likewise, the traditional Wade-Giles and not the Pinyin system has been employed in transliterating Chinese words. [Translator’s Note]

Kingdoms period of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla to Unified Silla period. Wonhyo's main arena, Silla society, was changing as well from the Mid-old Dynasty to the Middle Dynasty. The Middle Dynasty chose Confucianism as its ruling ideology and sought to put Buddhist orders under governmental control while implementing a highly centralized policy. Despite such efforts, however, Buddhism saw much growth during the Middle Dynasty period (654-780). With the unification of the Three Kingdoms, not only did it become possible for the various sects and schools of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla to merge and form a single sphere of Buddhist culture, but the material and human resources which had hitherto been spent in the wars during the unification now could be concentrated on the construction of a new society and culture, therefore enabling Buddhism, the veritable cultural representative of this period, to expand as never before. On one hand, the royalty and nobility wholeheartedly supported Buddhism, which not only legitimatized their worldly privilege but ensured its continuation well into the next world; on the other hand, the masses sought through Buddhism the guarantee of a life of everlasting happiness after one of toil and drudgery in this world. In particular, this period saw the development of Buddhist thoughts such as the Avatamsaka and Yogacara Schools and the activation of popular Buddhism emphasizing faith alone.

The foundation of Korean Buddhism, in fact, may be said to have been laid down during the Middle Silla Dynasty. It was during this era that Wonhyo lived and worked.

The two principles that ruled the land and people of Wonhyo's Silla were the Bone-Rank System (class) and war (power). Wonhyo, born into a non-True Bone family, experienced the inherent contradictions of the two prevailing principles amid the violent wars among the Three Kingdoms, and sought in Buddhism the new principle which could overcome them. With the framework of Buddhism established during the Mid-old and Middle Dynasties crumbling due to its inevitable limitations of serving solely the ruling classes, a movement was emerging among certain Buddhist circles to arouse the ordinary people's religious interest. On the other hand, in the Buddhist orders of Ch'ang'an, the capital of T'ang China, Hsuan-tsang’s new translations of Indian scriptures were raising fierce debates between the

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4 Ch'oe Pyŏng-hŏn, October 1984, “Silla Pulgyŏ Sasang-ŭi Paljŏn (The Development of Silla Buddhist Thoughts),” Yŏksa Tosi Kyŏngju (Historical City Kyŏngju), Yŏlhwadang, pp 365-366
savors of old and new translations, which in turn were blazing all over East Asian Buddhist orders. In order to adjust to such internal and external agitation in the Buddhist world, Wonhyo endeavored to expand his awareness of the whole of the Buddhist canon. With a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist texts, he sought to compromise the different schools from a “Hwajaeng (Harmonization)” standpoint, and in turn to carry out the selfless practice of spreading that awareness to the laity. In this respect, he may be said to have revived the united spirit prevalent during Buddha’s lifetime and bodhi-maga of the seminal days of Mahayana Buddhism. Ilsim philosophy, formed through such a process, is indeed the heart of Wonhyo’s thoughts and a reflection of the age.

Wonhyo’s Ilsim philosophy had its philosophical foundation in Mahayanasaraddhotpada-sastra (“Awakening of Faith of the Greater Vehicle”), obtained its practice from Vajrasamadhi-sutra, and lastly was completed by Avatamsaka-sutra. By incorporating various ideas emphasized by each Buddhist school——Buddhata (“Buddha-Nature”), tathagata-garbha, prajna, alaya-vijnana, amala-vijnana—as a subordinate categories within Ilsim philosophy, he in fact augmented Ilsim as a comprehensive concept. Ilsim is the ultimate origin of everything which transcends both bhava and sunyata. The world does not exist objectively; rather, it is but a prarvitti of Ilsim, from which no man is an exception. In this respect, all men are fundamentally equal. Buddha is a person who has recovered a state of spotless purity, and the layman is a person who is withheld or hidden from Ilsim by avidya and dukkha. Thus by ridding oneself of all avidya and dukkha can one recover the essence of Ilsim, and this is the way to attaining Buddhahood. Although the upaya of attaining Buddhahood may vary from person to person according to his particular situation and station in life, since the final converging point is “One Mind (Ilsim),” there can only be one way (ekamagga), one vehicle (ekayana), one state of enlightenment, and one taste. Because there is but one, Wonhyo sought to transcend the monastic/lay dichotomy and recommended the altruistic practice of matri-karuna rather than conflict and opposition between the different parties. Also, according to Avatamsaka-sutra, because “one” equals “all,” all proselytization activities directed toward each individual, or unhindered practice, is possible. Wonhyo found in the lay believer or at-home bodhisattva the embodiment of the ideal of such unhindered practice. He therefore urged a return to the state of lay believer and an inner awakening regardless of class, regional, and cultural differences, by which Sukhavati or Paradise could be realized on earth.

As we have seen, Wonhyo’s Ilsim philosophy contains an anthropocentric world view, an egalitarian view of man, and an altruistic model of human relationships
This is theoretically significant not only in that it is a unique philosophical system founded on a thorough and deep understanding of all Buddhist scriptures, but also in that it is a completely new way of thinking which has overcome the nature- (or god-) oriented world view and the hierarchical view of man espoused by traditional shamanism. Besides Wonhyo stressed proselytization of the masses in addition to textual studies; he himself put great effort into converting members of the working class such as the Kwangdok couple and Omjang. As a result of his activities, the poor, uneducated masses who formed the majority of the laity came to embrace the Buddhist faith. The fact that Wonhyo came to a new understanding of Buddhism from the laity’s viewpoint parallels the Middle Dynasty’s implementation of various policies aimed at the lower classes based on Confucian political ideology. In this respect, the Buddhism of this era differed from the aristocracy-oriented one of the mid-Old Dynasty. Wonhyo’s Buddhism in fact was an answer to the new Unified Silla society’s call and thus may be assessed as the starting point of Middle-Dynasty Buddhism.

2. A Historical Verification of Wonhyo Studies

No less than 500 separate studies have been done of Wonhyo since the earliest days of modern Korean Buddhist studies, and the field covered in each study is as vast as Wonhyo’s thoughts. Indeed, the history of Wonhyo studies may be called an epitome of modern Korean Buddhist studies.


Dongguk University Institute of Buddhist Studies Data and Information Office, June 1933, “Wonhyo Kwan’gye Nounŏ Ch’onghap Saekin (Complete Bibliography of Publications and Theses Related to Wonhyo),” *Tabo (Many Treasures)*, Vol VI

The primary interest of Wonhyo scholars lay in his actual works. Because a Wonhyo bibliography was necessary to elucidating his thoughts, many researchers have been interested in compiling one since the first days.\(^6\) Despite continued arguments over the authenticity of some works cited as Wonhyo's, the entire scope of his works has been more or less clarified, thanks to our predecessors' efforts. The remaining task is that of compiling a timetable for Wonhyo’s works in accordance with the historical development of his thoughts, which above all demands as prerequisite an understanding of his thoughts per se.

The question “What is the essence of Wonhyo’s thoughts?” is in fact the essence of Wonhyo studies. In the beginning, Wonhyo was classified as an Avatamsaka monk.\(^7\) During the 1930s, however, a tendency to view his thoughts as “syncretic Buddhism” while maintaining the sectarian viewpoint grew, which culminated in Dr. Cho Myong-gi’s espousal of the Hwajaeng standpoint.\(^8\) Into the 1940s, at last, Japanese scholars also began to see Mahayana-raddhotpadasastra as the core of Wonhyo’s thoughts regardless of sects or schools, and, based on this, actively pursued the Mahayanasraddhotpadasastra viewpoint in explaining Wonhyo’s relationship with the Avatamsaka or Dharmalaksana School.\(^10\) The

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\(^7\) Kim Yong-ju, November 12, 1918, “Chosŏn Pulyo Ch’ŏngbo (Collection of Buddhist Journals of Korea),” Chosŏn Pulyo Ch’ŏngbo, Vol XIII

\(^8\) Chŏng Kwang-jun, ed., December 1918, “Taes’ing Hwaajaeng-guksa Wonhyo Chóson Illamp’yo (Table of Works by the Great Reverend National Master Wonhyo),” Chosŏn Pulyo Ch’ŏngbo, Vol XIII

\(^9\) Kim Yong-su, 1937, “O’gyo Yangjong-e Taehayŏ (On Five Doctrinal Schools and Two Dhyana Schools),” Chundan Hakpo (Journal of Chundan Society), Vol III, “Wonyungtron (Wonyung School),” [Kwon Sang-no, May 1939, Chosŏn Pulyo Chosŏn (Survey of the History of Korean Buddhism)]—Although there are slight differences, these studies still have not overcome a sectarian viewpoint. These studies, however, are significant in that they defined Wonhyo’s Buddhism as “syncretic Buddhism.”

Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra approach, along with the later Hwajaeng approach, would form the basic frame of understanding for Wonhyo studies.

The Hwajaeng approach, presupposing Hwajaeng as the essence of Wonhyo’s philosophy, endeavored to discover and elucidate concrete examples and the logic of the idea. What the scholars taking the Hwajaeng approach noticed from early on was the Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools, which may be termed the crystallization of Wonhyo’s Hwajaeng philosophy. Important as the Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools is for showing us the overall structure of Wonhyo’s Hwajaeng philosophy, regrettably only a fraction remains. Thus, studies up to now have concentrated on reconstructing the whole Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools. Admittedly, scholars have limited their sources mostly to works by Wonhyo. When

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10 Ocho Enchi, 1940, “Gengyo-no Nijoki-mi Tsute (On Wonhyo’s Summary of Chapter Two),” Toho Gakuhu (Oriental Journal), Vol. 11-1

Takamine Ryoshu, 1976, “Gengyo Oyobi Giso-to Sono Monryu (Wonhyo, Uisang and Their Followers),” Kegon Sisoshit (History of Avatamsaka Philosophy) (1976, restored, Hyakkaken, Kyoto)

Ocho Enchi and Muramatsu, 1979, Shiragi Gengyo Sanrishogi (The Significance of Silla Monk Wonhyo’s Two Chapters), Heiraku Shoten

In Japanese academia, the Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra has become the established point of view in relation to Wonhyo’s philosophy. Recent studies—石井公成, June 1990, “Shiragi Bukkyo-no Okeru Dayo Kishinron-no Igi-Gengyo-no Kashaku-o Chuushin-to Shte (The Significance of Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra in Relation to Silla Buddhism—Especially in Reference to Wonhyo’s Interpretations),” Nyorai-to Dayo Kishinron (Tathagata-garbha and Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra) (Tokyo Shuppansha), 岩井宣英, July 1991, Kegon Ichyo Shuso-no Kenkyu (Study on Avatamsaka Ekayana Philosophy) (Tokyo Dai Toyo Shuppansha), Ch. 7, “Dayo Kishinron Giki-no Senzetsu-to Tenku (Formation and Development of Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra)—testify to this fact. It must be mentioned that while 石井公成 probes Wonhyo’s view of Mahayana-sraddhotpada-sastra in depth as the logical ground for hoet’ong, 岩井宣英, in order to elevate Fa-ts’ang’s Avatamsaka Ekayana philosophy, tends to criticize Wonhyo’s Ekayana philosophy. For Japanese studies on Wonhyo conducted since the 1970’s, vid. An Kye-hwon, 1982, Hanguk Palgyosa Yongu (Study of the History of Korean Buddhism), pp 152-163, “Ilbon-eokh Wonhyo Yon’gu (Wonhyo Studies in Japan)”

11 Cho Myong-gi, 1937, ibid

Yi Chong-ik, 1977, Wonhyo-ui Sipmun Hwajaeng Sasang Yon’gu (Study of Wonhyo’s Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools), Tongbong Sasang Yon’guwon (Institute of Oriental Philosophies)

Kamata Shigeo, 1981, “Jumon Wasorono no Shisoshiteki Igi (The Significance of Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools in the History of Philosophy),” Bukkyogaku (Buddhist Studies), Vol XI

one considers that such theoretical disputes were a common interest throughout East Asian Buddhist circles, however, the ten discrepancies between Yogacara and Buddhahata Schools put forth by Ch'eng-kuan (738-839) of the Chinese Avatamsaka School or the ten contentions put forth by Genei (- 829 -) of the Japanese Yogacara School should also be referred to.

With the accumulation of research from the Hwajaeng standpoint, the key disputes among Buddhist schools of the era and the logic behind Wonhyo, who harmonized them, became clearer.12 A study mentioning Sunyata-mahayana and Bhava-mahayana, the two main ideas of Mahayana Buddhism, as the principal objects of Wonhyo's Hwajaeng philosophy had already appeared in the 1950s.13 In the 1960s, these were narrowed down to the Yogacara and Madhyamika Schools, and the Preface to Addendum to Mahayanarasraddhotpada-sastra was looked into with respect to the logic of Hwajaeng as well.14 Moreover, in the 1970s, Wonhyo came to be understood as having successfully harmonized the conflict between Madhyamika (sunyata) and Yogacara (bhava) through "Ilsim Imun (One Mind and Two Gates: 真如門 and 生滅門)" in Mahayanarasraddhotpada-sastra.15 Such

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12 The Reconstruction of Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools," Wonhyo Yŏn'gu Nonch'ong (Collection of Studies on Wonhyo), National Unification Board

13 O Rŏp-an, 1989, Wonhyo-ūi Hwajaeng Sasang Yŏn'gu (A Study of Wonhyo's Hwajaeng Philosophy), Hongbobjwon

14 Ch'oe Yu-jin, 1992, "Wonhyo-ūi Hwajaeng Sasang Yŏn'gu-Sipmun Hwajaengnon (Study of Wonhyo's Hwajaeng Philosophy-Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools)," Munjok Pulgyo (National Buddhism), Vol II.

15 Munpulsul, like Hwajaeng, is but formal logic; it cannot be the content of Hwajaeng

16 Min Yŏng-gyu, August 1953, "Wonhyoron (Theory on Wonhyo)," Sasanggye (World of Philosophy), Vol. 1-6. However, Dr Min Yŏng-gyu introduced a framework broader than that of Madhyamika vs Yogacara which was put into use more widely later by first dividing Mahayana into Sunyata-mahayana and Bhava-mahayana, then classifying Catuhsaka-sastra, Madhyamika-sastra, Dhvadakakavya-sastra, Mahaparamitavasra-sastra, Prajnaparamita-sastra, and Sadharmapundarika-sutra, all of which deal with 貞相論, within the former, Mahayanarasraddhotpada-sastra, Yogacarahbhumi-sastra, Brahmajala-sutra, Mahayanarasamgraha-sastra, and Avatamsaka-sutra, which deal with Dhvadangapraty-tyasamudpada, within the latter

outlooks reflect the accumulated results of studies which from the *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra* approach have focused on Ilsim as the crux of Wonhyo's thoughts.¹⁶

Wonhyo studies saw great development from the fusion of the approaches on *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra* and the *Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools*. The next major issues in Wonhyo studies were: whether or not he had overcome the Madhyamika vs. Yogacara disputes through the Ilsim Imun structure of *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra*; and what kind of philosophy he had finally come up with through the idea of Hwajaeng. While there were a number of studies which supplemented the results of existing ones while supporting them in assessing these issues,¹⁷ most scholars actually raised opposing opinions. The gist of the first refutation was that there is no ground whatsoever for the harmonization of Madhyamika and Yogacara in any of Wonhyo's works related to *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra*. Secondly, Wonhyo's view of *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra* in the Preface to *Addendum to Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra* is greatly reduced or modified in the Preface to his *Treatise on Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra*. Therefore, a reexamination of the previously widespread idea that Wonhyo attempted to harmonize Madhyamika and Yogacara through *Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra* is inevitable.¹⁸ Since such

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¹⁶ This would apply to a series of studies conducted by Dr Yi Ki-yong on the Ilsim philosophy of *Treatise on Mahayana-sradhotpada-sastra* since the 1960's 1982, Hanguk Pulgyo Yŏn'gu (Study of Korean Buddhism), Han'guk Pulgyo Yŏn'guwon (Institute of Korean Buddhism), thesis 1994, Wonhyo Sasang Yŏn'gu (Study of Wonhyo's Philosophy), Vol I

¹⁷ Ko Il-jin, 1982, "Wonhyo-ŭi Hwaôm Sasang (Wonhyo's Avatamsaka Philosophy)," Dongguk University Institute of Buddhist Culture, ed., Han'guk Hwaôm Sasang Yŏn'gu (Studies of Korean Avatamsaka Philosophy)


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¹⁸ Ko Il-jin, August 1973, "Wonhyo-ŭi Hwaôm Sasang (Wonhyo's Avatamsaka Philosophy)," Dongguk University Institute of Buddhist Culture, ed., Han'guk Hwaôm Sasang Yŏn'gu (Studies of Korean Avatamsaka Philosophy)

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¹⁸ Kim Chong-sŏn, February 1992, "Wonhyo-ŭi Sasang Ch'egye-e Kwanhan Yŏn'gu (Study of Wonhyo's Philosophical System)," Pusan University Ph D Dissertation
disputes include the philosophical question of how the philosophical essence of Madhyamika, Yogacara, and *Mahayanarasradhaptapada-sastra* themselves are to be viewed, they are very likely to enhance and deepen Wonhyo studies while becoming prolonged at the same time. The current disputes among academic circles have tended somewhat to focus only on whether or not the Preface to *Addendum to Mahayanarasradhaptapada-sastra* is valuable as a research source. In relation to this problem, a reevaluation of the dating of the Preface is necessary.

Hwajaeng is a prerequisite for any Buddhist monk or nun, who must live within the religious community. Then what is the uniqueness of Wonhyo's Hwajaeng philosophy? What kind of philosophy did he seek to establish at the end through Hwajaeng? With respect to these questions, the *Mahayanarasradhaptapada-sastra* philosophy has been taken note of from early on and was viewed as tathagata-garbha philosophy. However, refutations were raised: Fa-ts'ang of the Chinese Avatamsaka School first equated Hwajaeng with tathagata-garbha philosophies, a theory subsequently adopted by Japanese Buddhist scholars as legitimate dogma; however, such retrospective and uncritical application is not possible because Wonhyo actually is Fa-ts'ang's senior. In fact, by limiting the theory of tathagata-

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19 Yi P'yŏng-nae, 1987, "Yŏraejang'sŏl-gwa Wonhyo (Wonhyo and the Theory of Tathagata-garbha)," *Wonhyo Yŏn'gu Nonch'ong* (Collection of Studies on Wonhyo), National Unification Board

20 Ch'oe Yu-jin, 1988, "Wonhyo-ui Hwajaeng Sosang Yŏn'gu (Study on Wonhyo's Hwajaeng Philosophy)," Seoul National University Ph.D. Dissertation

21 Takamine Ryosyu, 1942, *Kegon Shisoshi* (History of Avatamsaka Philosophy). (Kyoto Hyakkaen)
garbha within 生滅門 of Ilsim Imun, Wonhyo specifically stipulates that the idea of Ilsim is superior to that of tathagata-garbha. On the other hand, when one pays attention to the fact that the compiler of Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra and Wonhyo both devote far more interest to 真如門 than to 生滅門, it naturally follows that the theory of tathagata-garbha occupies no small place in the Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra philosophy.

Wonhyo constructed his Ilsim philosophy based on the idea of Hwajaeng. While the concept of Ilsim is one Wonhyo most stressed, it is also the central one to Buddhism. Therefore, in order to place Wonhyo’s Ilsim philosophy within the history of Buddhist thought, its scriptural and textual background must first be clarified. Although some scholars have systemized Wonhyo’s Ilsim philosophy solely on the basis of Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra,22 more and more are coming to emphasize Avatamsaka as well as Mahayanasraddhotpada-sastra philosophies.23

For the first step towards systemizing Wonhyo’s thoughts, many scholars have looked to his Theory of the Four Scriptural Classifications.24 Thus, the contents as

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22 Kim Hang-bae, 1976, “Wonhyo, Ilsim Sasang-ui Pumgil-gwa Kii Ironŭk Kujo (The Essence and Theoretical Structure of Wonhyo’s Ilsim Philosophy),” Tongguktae Nonmunyp (Dongguk University Collection of Theses), Vol XV

23) Yi Ki-yong, 1975, Pulgyŏng Inyong-e Nat’anan Wonhyo-ui Tokch’angsŏng (Wonhyo’s Uniqueness as Seen Through Quotations from Buddhist Sutras), Sungsan Pak Kil-hong Paksa Hwaqap Kinyŏm Nonmunyp-Hang’guk Pulgyo Sasangsa (Festschrift for Dr Pak Kil-hong-History of Korean Buddhist Philosophy), 1982, Hangguk Pulgyo Yŏng’gu (Studies on Korean Buddhism), reprinted

Ch’oe Yu-jin, 1975, “Wonhyo-ui Hwaqap Sasang Yŏn’gu (Study of Wonhyo’s Hwaqap Philosophy),” Seoul National University Ph D. Dissertation


24 Yi Ki-yong, 1974, “Kyop’an Sasang-essŏ Pon Wonhyo-ui Wich’i (Wonhyo’s Place in the Philosophy of Scriptural Classification),” Yi Sŏn-gin Paksa Kohŏ Kinyŏm Nonmunyp (Festschrift for Dr Yi Sŏn-gin)

Kim Ch’ang-sok, 1978, “Gengyo-no Kyobankan (Wonhyo’s View on Scriptural Classification),” Komasaawa Daigaku Daigakun Nempyo (Chronology of Komasaawa University Graduate School), Vol XIII

Pak Sŏng-bae, 1980, “Kyop’an-on-ul Chungsim-ŭro Pon Wonhyo-wa Ŭisang (Wonhyo and Ŭisang as Seen From Their Theories on Scriptural Classification),” Silla Ŭisang-ui Hwaŏm Sasang (Avatamsaka Philosophy of Silla Monk Ŭisang) [presented at the Third International Buddhist Studies Seminar, sponsored by Institute of Traditional Korean Buddhism]
well as the place and significance of the Theory of the Four Scriptural Classifications within the history of scriptural classification have become almost completely clarified. The task of systemizing Wonhyo’s thoughts, however, has only begun. Because the Theory of the Four Scriptural Classifications itself is very concise, in order to unravel it and systemize Wonhyo’s thoughts, it is necessary to apply the categories stipulated in the theory to Wonhyo’s works in general. Of particular interest are Wonhyo’s understanding of Avatamsaka-sutra, which is accorded the highest place in the Theory of the Four Scriptural Classifications and the placement of Mahayana-sraddhotpadasstra, which goes unmentioned in the theory.

In addition to an analysis of the theory of scriptural classification, a systematic analysis and synthesis of Wonhyo’s philosophy itself has also been attempted. The task of systemizing Wonhyo’s philosophy itself, however, has just begun. A definition of Ilsim is not an adequate explanation. Therefore, a systemization of the infrastructure of Wonhyo’s philosophy, with Ilsim at the apex, may be said to be one of the most urgent tasks. In addition to a philosophical inquiry with Ilsim at the center, Wonhyo’s mass proselytization must also be dealt with in no small measure. First, as the theoretical ground of his mass proselytization, his view of both vinaya and Sukhavati merits attention. Although vinaya is the daily regulations a Buddhist must abide by, in the case of Wonhyo, it is more a set of practical rules specifically for mass proselytization. According to a series of studies, the core of Wonhyo’s

Ko Ik-jin, 1982, "Wonhyo-ŭi Hwaŏm Sasang (Wonhyo’s Avatamsaka Philosophy)," Dongguk University Institute of Buddhist Studies, ed, Han’guk Hwaŏm Sasang Yŏn’gu (Study of Korean Avatamsaka Philosophy)

Kim Chun-ŭng, 1985, "Wonhyo-ŭi Kyop’an’gwan Yŏn’gu (Study of Wonhyo’s View of Scriptural Classification)," Dongguk University Ph D Dissertation

Kam, Dong-ŭm, 1988, "Wonhyo-ŭi Kyop’an’gwan-gwa Kŭ Pulgyosasŏk Wich’i (Wonhyo’s View of Scriptural Classification and Its Place in the History of Buddhism)," Han’guksa (Theory of Korean History), Vol 20

25 Ko Ik-jin, 1975, "Wonhyo Sasang-ŭi Sŏlch’ŏn Wŏlli (The Practical Principle of Wonhyo’s Philosophy)," SungSan Pak Kil-jun Paksa Hwagap Kinyŏm Han’guk Pulgyo Sasangsa (Festschrift für Dr “Sungsan” Pak Kil-chun History of Korean Buddhist Philosophy), pp 254-255, stipulating that Wonhyo’s works, theory (Treatise on Mahayana-sraddhotpadasstra), practice (Vajrasamadhisutra-sstra), and faith (Pure Land Buddhism) all maintain a consistency, defines the philosophical system as “Chinsok Wonyung Muæ philosophy.” On the other hand, Kim Chong-son, February 1992, “Wonhyo-ŭi Sasang Ch’egye-e Kwanhan Yŏn’gu (Study of Wonhyo’s Philosophical System),” Pusan University Ph D Dissertation, through a conceptual analysis, defines Wonhyo’s philosophical structure as “a world of Muæ built on Ilsim”
vinaya is Mahayanabodhisattva-sila, and the fact that he accommodated Yoga-sila with the spirit of Brahmajala-sila as the foundation has been pointed out as a characteristic. In comparison with other fields, however, studies on Wonhyo’s view of vinaya is still inadequate. To accomplish this task, it is necessary to determine the relationship between Wonhyo’s vinaya and the laws implemented by the contemporary Silla government with its policy on Buddhism in addition to understanding vinaya in general.

Pure Land faith applies to the content of Wonhyo’s mass proselytization movement. From early on, Wonhyo’s view of Sukhavati has been one of the favorite subjects of Japanese academia. Inquiring deeply into his doctrine on Pure Land Buddhism, they have uniquely categorized Simnyōmsōl, one of the major tasks of studies in the history of Pure Land Buddhism, into ŭnmilmun and


________, 1967, “Wonhyo-ŭi Posałgyegwan (Sok) (Wonhyo’s View of Bodhisattva-sila) (Supplement),” Pulgyo Hakpyo (Buddhist Journal)

Ch’ae In-hwan, 1977, Silla Pulgyo Kyeyul Sasang Yǒn’gu (Study of the Vinaya Philosophy Silla Buddhism), Tokyo Tosho Kankokai, pp 273-351


27 Mochuzuku Shunko, 1942, Shina Jodo Kyorîshu (History of the Doctrines of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism), Tokyo Hozokan, Ch 17 “Goso Gengyo Gûkâ-ranjo Jodo Ronhei-ni Junenetsu (Simnyömsol on the Pure Land Buddhism Doctrines of Ūisang, Wonhyo, and Ŭyŏk)”

Yaotani Takayasu, 1937, “Shiragi Shakai-to Jodokyo (Silla Society and Pure Land Buddhism),” Shacho (The Wave of History), Vol 7-4


Ocho Eunju, 1939, “Jodokyo-ni Okeru Seimon Shiso-no Hatten (The Development of Sarvaka Philosophy in Relation to Pure Land Buddhism),” Shina Bukkyôshigaku, Vol 3-4, 1977, Chosen Bukkyôshin-no Kenkyu (Studies on Korean Buddhist History), Tokyo Tosho Kankokai, reprinted


Hara Hiroyuki, 1973, “Shiragi Jodokyo-no Tokushoku (Characteristics of Silla Pure Land Buddhism),” Kim Chi-gyǒn and Ch’ae In-hwan, eds, Silla Pulgyo Yǒn’gu (Studies on Silla Buddhism), Sunhôdangpusûrm
Hyŏllyomun and verified that it belongs to the doctrines of Hui-yuan of Chingung Temple in Korean scholars have conducted and produced many studies since the 1960s, from which we have had substantial results. Following these studies, it has been elucidated that because Wonhyo emphasized Amitabha-sukhavatī over Maitreyasukhavatī, he tried to loosen the criteria for being reborn into Amitabha-sukhavatī. The biggest disputes among scholars trying to clarify Wonhyo’s view of Sukhavatī arose over whether or not he had actually authored *The Way of Bringing Troubled Minds to Rest*; the current verdict prevalent throughout academia is that he did not. Therefore, existing studies which were based on the assumption that Wonhyo had indeed written *The Way of Bringing Troubled Minds to Rest* should be reexamined.

It has already been pointed out numerous times, as a characteristic of Silla Pure Land Buddhist doctrines, that the contemporary Silla Pure Land Buddhist scholars, as represented by Wonhyo, tried to loosen as much as possible the conditions for rebirth. However, recent studies have redefined such a characteristic as the establishment of a new view of man which reflects the socioeconomic change then taking place within Silla society, which deserves attention. Such attempts, which even take chronology into consideration, need to take both a microscopic approach to Buddhist philosophy and a macroscopic approach, which includes an understanding of the relationships between Buddhism and traditional folk religion and between Buddhism and Confucianism as well as of general socioeconomic

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Yi Ki-yong, 1982, “Wonhyo-ŭi Miruk Sinang (Wonhyo’s Maitreya Faith),” *Han’guk Pulgyo Yŏn’gu (Study of Korean Buddhism)*, Han’guk Pulgyo Yŏn’guwon (Institute of Korean Buddhism)


history, at the same time

An aspect also not to be omitted from any study of Wonhyo’s thoughts is his place in the history of Buddhism. Although the development of Wonhyo’s thoughts took place against the background of Silla Buddhism macroscopically, they were closely related to the trends in the contemporary East Asian Buddhism macroscopically. In relation to his place in Korean Buddhism, the preservation and development of his Avatamsaka doctrines in Silla Buddhism and the rediscovery of his thoughts in Koryo Buddhism have been noted. With respect to the history of Chinese Buddhism, it has been clarified that Wonhyo was greatly influenced by the three Sui Masters Hui-yuan (523-592), Chih-i (538-597), and Chi-ts’ang (549-623)33 and that his thoughts on Buddhism left an indelible mark on the compilation of Avatamsaka doctrines by Hsuan-tsang (643-712), his successor.34 In addition, various attempts are being made to explicate how Wonhyo perceived Confucianism and Taoism.35


33 Ch’oe Pyong-hun, November 1987, “Koryo Pulgyogye-ecoii Wonhyo Ilhae-UCH’ON-gwa Iryon-il Chungsim-doro (Understanding of Wonhyo in Koryo Buddhist Orders—Especially in Relation to UCH’ON and Iryon),” Wonhyo Yon’gu Nunch’ong (Collection of Studies on Wonhyo), National Unification Board

34 Kim Sang-hyun, 1994, “Koryo Sidae-Ui Wonhyo Insik (Awareness of Wonhyo During Koryo Dynasty),” Ch’ongsan Munhwasa Yon’gu (Academy of Korean Studies Journal), Vol. 54


34 Ch’oe Pyong-hun, November 1987, “Koryo Pulgyogye-ecoii Wonhyo Ilhae-UCH’ON-gwa Iryon-il Chungsim-doro (Understanding of Wonhyo in Koryo Buddhist Orders—Especially in Relation to the Synthetic Form of Wonhyo and Fa-ts’ang),” Kankoku Bukkyogaku (Korean Buddhist Studies) SEMINAR, Vol. II

35 Kim Hun, Ch. 6, Yuvanshao Szuhsang Yenchu (Study of Wonhyo’s Buddhist Thoughts), Peking University Ph. D. Dissertation, June 1995
Lastly, there remains the question of historically evaluating Wonhyo's philosophy. While South Korean academia highly praises Wonhyo's ideas as having contributed to the establishment of order in post-unification Silla, Northern academia has vehemently attacked his tenets as "a reactionary and ideological philosophy that reflects the feudal exploitative relationship." Such opposing evaluations are caused by differing views of history; this holds true for assessments of Buddhata also. Recently, South Korean academia has begun to judge favorably Wonhyo's theory of Buddhata, from the historical perspective that it announced the emergence of an entirely new view of man; Chinese scholars, on the contrary, dismiss it as merely an ideology of the feudal ruling classes. In order to assess Wonhyo's philosophy from a historical viewpoint, the actual historical situation of the times must be taken into consideration.

3. The Remaining Task and Prospects of Wonhyo Studies

We have hitherto examined the existing fruits of Wonhyo studies by research

36 Ko Il-um, *Han'guk Kodaeg Pulgyo Sasangsa (History of Ancient Korean Buddhist Philosophy)*, Ch 4, "Silla Chungdae Hwa'im Sasang-un Chöngac-wa Kū Yonghyang (The Development and Influence of Mid-Silla Avatamsaka Philosophy)," p 380, 1989


The historical assessment of Wonhyo in North Korea has vacillated slightly according to each era. During the 1960's, Wonhyo was seen as the representative of "a progressive clique within the feudal exploitative class", in the 1970's, an emphasis on the Juche ideology brought about a vehement criticism of Wonhyo, and in the 1980's, a philosophical analysis was greatly strengthened while restraining a class-oriented assessment.

38 Kim Yong-mi, 1994, Ch 3, "Amita Sinang-ŭi Sasangsagŏk Ŭnŭi (Philosophical Significance of the Amatabha Faith)," *Silla Pulgyo Sasangsa Yŏn'gu (Study of the History of Silla Buddhist Philosophy)*, Minjoksa, 1994

39 The reason the ruling classes of the Northern-Southern Dynasties in China favored the doctrine of Nirvana through Buddhata during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period lay in its social significance by pacifying the masses with a faith which claimed they could all attain Buddhahood through enduring the injustices and toils of this life and pursuing eternal happiness in a fictitious world, the ruling classes could ensure the feudal social order Jen Chu-yu et al., eds., 1988, *Chungk'ou Fochhuosshih (History of Chinese Buddhism)*, Vol III, Peuching Shehui Kuahsueh Ch'upanshe, pp 392-393
topic. At this point, we will address several problems discovered from our examination and assess the prospects of future studies. First, it must be pointed out that a comprehensive and systematic understanding of Wonhyo's works and philosophy is greatly lacking. It was because of his deep interest in and knowledge of each and every contemporary Buddhist thought and school that Wonhyo was able to establish a unique philosophical system of his own. By focusing mainly on parts, however, research conducted up to now has failed to elucidate Wonhyo's tenet as a whole. In the future, scholars should strive for a more comprehensive and systematic interpretation of Wonhyo's doctrine, based on a full assessment of studies up to the present. A historical arrangement of some 500 studies and treatises on Wonhyo, above all, is in order. A historical organization will enable us to reflect on the past Wonhyo studies and predict a future direction.

Secondly, it must be stressed that studies of Wonhyo need to be conducted from a historical standpoint. While Wonhyo's philosophy may be timeless in that he tried to overcome the philosophical and religious contradictions of his times, the fact that he lived in 7th-century Silla announces the fact that his ideas cannot but reflect that era. Therefore, if Buddhist scholars, stressing the former aspect, endeavor to elucidate the dogmatic and religious significance of Wonhyo's tenets, historians, on the other hand, should try to assess their historical importance. Studies up to the present, however, have been conducted by Buddhist scholars.

Of course, studies conducted from a historical viewpoint have not been entirely absent. But their primary interest lay in the life of Wonhyo. Although Buddhist scholars mentioned his life in their studies as well, there was a tendency to glide over it. It was historians who earnestly inquired into Wonhyo's life within the larger context of 7th-century Silla society for the first time. Following the findings of

40 Even within Buddhist academia, there have been opinions emphasizing the importance of a historical standpoint. Dr. Yi Ki-yŏng stressed the necessity of conducting research on Buddhist religious doctrines from a historical standpoint [1975, "Han'guk Pulgyo Yŏn'gu-ŭi Hyŏnsil-gwa Kwaje (The Reality and Tasks of Korean Buddhist Studies)", Han'guk Hakpo, Vol. 1, 1982, Han'guk Pulgyo Yŏngu, p. 297]. The late Prof. Ko Ik-juin tried to reconstruct the ancient Korean Buddhist history by adapting a historical viewpoint [vid Nam Dong-shim, 1991, "Samguk Mit T'ongil Sillagi Pulgyosa-ŭi Instik-kwa Pangbopnon (Recognition and Methodology of the History of Buddhism During the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla Periods)", Han'guk Kodaesa Nonch'ong, Vol. II


Yi Chŏng-ik, 1960, "Wonhyo-ŭi Saeng'ae-wa Sasang (The Life and Philosophy of Wonhyo),"
these studies, much important information related to Wonhyo’s biographical data—
social class, process of initiation and ascetic training, attempts to study in T’ang
China and his enlightenment, secularization and mass proselytization, later periods’
general outlook on Wonhyo, etc.—has already been confirmed. The studies put out
by historical circles, however, pale in number when compared to those of the
Buddhist scholars and hitherto have concentrated mostly on reconstructing
Wonhyo’s life.

The first reason for the slack in Wonhyo studies among historians is the absolute
inadequacy of Wonhyo’s biography and of detailed historical documents on the
contemporary Buddhist scene Although Kosonsasodanghasang-β, a stone
monument dedicated some 100 years after his decease, is important in that it is the
oldest of the three main biographical materials on Wonhyo extant, due to damages
only half of the inscriptions are legible. One of the Chinese materials, Book Four
“Yuanhsiao-chuan (Life of Wonhyo)” of Sung Kaosung-chuan (“Lives of Eminent
Monks of Sung China”), is limited in that it was compiled 300 years after his
demise and in that the legend of how Vajrasamadhi-sutra came to be takes up two-
thirds of the content. In addition, despite the fact that it gives us the most colorful

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Han’guk Sasang (Korean Philosophy), Vol III, 1975, Tongbang Sasang Nonch’ong (Collection of
Treatises on Oriental Philosophy), Poryŏngak

Wonhyo),” Otam Gakuho (Otam Scholastic Journal), Vol 41-1, Yang Ŭn-yong, ed., 1979, Silla Wonhyo
Yŏn’gu (Study of Wonhyo of Silla), Wŏnkwang University Press

Kim Yong-t’ae, 1980, “Chŏn’guk-wa Sŏhwu-ŭl T’onghan Wonhyo Yŏn’gu (Study of Wonhyo through
Biographies and Folk Tales),” Pulgyo Hakpo (Buddhist Journal), Vol X VII

Taehak Nommunyip (Masan University Treatise Collection), Vol 4, 1987, Wonhyo Yŏn’gu Nonch’ong
(Collection of Theses on Wonhyo Studies), National Unification Board

Buswell, Jr., Robert E., 1985, The Korean Origin of “The Vajrasamadhi-Sutra”: a case study in
determining the dating, provenance, and authorship of a Buddhist, University of California, Berkeley,
pp. 140-162

Chŏn Mi-hŭi, December 1988, “Wonhyo-ŭi Sinbun-gwa Kŭ-ŭi Hwalwong (The Social Status and
Activities of Wonhyo),” Han’guksa Yŏn’gu (Studies on Korean History), Vol 63

Mun Kyŏng-hŏn, February 1990, “Wonhyo-ŭi Sudochi’-e Taehayo (On Wonhyo’s Meditation
Sites),” Sanguk Yusa-ŭi Hyŏnyangŏk Yŏn’gu (An On-the-Spot Research on Memorabilia of the Three
Kings’oms) [Silla Munhwajae Haksl Pal’yohoe Nommunyip (Collection of Treatises Delivered at the
Silla Cultural Festival Symposium) Vol II, sponsored by the Silla Munhwa Sonyanghoe (Silla Culture
Promotion Society)]

Kim Sang-hyŏm, February 1994, Yŏksa-ro Ingnın Wonhyo (Reading Wonhyo as History), Koryŏwon.
and popular version of Wonhyo’s life, Book Four “Wonhyo Pulgi-jo (Section on Wonhyo Unfettered)” of Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms leaves much doubt as to its veracity because it depends heavily on non-extant biographical materials for details of his ascetic training and mass proselytization and because of the fact that it was compiled 600 years after his decease. Therefore, in order to overcome the defects in Wonhyo biography, data and materials from contemporary Chinese and Japanese Buddhist circles, which had close ties with that of Silla, must be actively sought out. While reinterpreting such data with respect to the history of the era, one needs to pay special attention to the relationship between Wonhyo and the masses, and that between him and the ruling classes; then, he should once again be compared and contrasted with the Buddhist monks of Old and Middle Silla Dynasties—e.g. Wongwang or Chajang. It is only through the accomplishment of such tasks that the history of Wonhyo’s life may become clearer.

The second reason that has kept historians out of Wonhyo’s life and thoughts is the burden of having to read Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist works read and written during Wonhyo’s era, including his own, are far more numerous and plentiful than other existing historical documents. In order to analyze Wonhyo from a historical viewpoint, it thus becomes necessary to make full use of these original sources as historical data. In making use of Buddhist scriptures as historical texts, scholars should, by separately comparing and analyzing Wonhyo’s commentaries and the sutas he commented on, elucidate his view of sutas and its significance as well. Taking a step further, by interpreting Wonhyo’s works in relation to his actual words and deeds, scholars may also account for the social significance of his thoughts. “Wonhyo and his thoughts” understandably is one of the most important research topics in modern Korean Buddhist studies. It is necessary not only for understanding ancient Korean Buddhist philosophy but valid also for discovering the Buddhist roots within the modern Korean psyche. In addition, not only Korean but Chinese and Japanese, even American scholars are becoming more and more interested in Wonhyo’s philosophy. This is because Wonhyo’s era, the 7th century, saw unhindered growth of Buddhism in East Asia, and Wonhyo was one of the handful of figures of his times whose philosophical level, popular appeal, and international influence reached the apex. Wonhyo studies, therefore, are a step toward understanding the fundamentals of Buddhism. In this respect, Wonhyo studies will be carried out even more actively in the future.

(Translated by Kim Yoo-seok, S.N.U.)
GLOSSARY

Addendum to Mahayanaasraddhotpadasastra 大乘起信論別記
Alaya-vijñana 阿賴耶識
Amitabha-sukhavat 彌陀淨土
Avatamsaka-sutra 華嚴經
at-home bodhisattva 在家菩薩
Avatamsaka School 華嚴宗
Avidya 無明
Bhava 有. 众生
Bhava-mahayana 有大乘
Bodhi 菩提, 本覺
Bodhi-magga 菩薩道
Bone-Rank System 骨品制度
Brahmajala-sila 梵網戒
Buddhata 佛性
Ch’an’an 長安
Chajang 慈藏
Ch’eng-kuan 澄觀
Chi-ts’ang 吉藏
Chih-i 智顗
Chinging Temple 淨影寺
Dharmalaksana School 法相宗
Dukkha 煩惱
Ekamagga 一道
Ekayana 一乘
Fa-ts’ang 法藏
Genei 玄敟
Hinayana 小乘
Hsuan-tsang 玄奘
Hui-yuan 慧遠
Hwajaeng 和諧
Hyöllyumun 顕了門
Il’um 一心
Il’um Imun 一心二門
Iryôn 一然
Koguryô 高句麗
Koryô 高麗
Kosônsasôdanghwasang-bi 高仙寺營壇和上碑
Kwangôk 廣徳
lay believer 居士
Madhyamika 中觀
Madhyamika School 三論宗
Mahayana 大乘
(Mahayana)bodhisattva-sila (大乘)菩薩戒
Mahayanaasraddhotpadasastra 大乘起信論
Maitreya-sukhavati 彌勒淨土
Matri-karuna 慈悲
Middle period 中代
Mid-old period 中古期
New period 下代
Norther-Southern Dynasties 南北朝
Omqang 嚴莊
Paekche 百濟
Prajna 般若
Pravritti 流轉
Pure Land Buddhism 淨土宗
Rupa 色
Samgukyusa 三國遺事
Sila 戒
Silla 新羅
Simnyôomsöl 十念説
Sui 隋
Sukhavati 淨土
Sung Kaosung-chuan 宋高僧傳
Süngnang 僧朗
Sunyata 空
Sunyata-mahayana 空大乘
Syncretic Buddhism 通佛教
T’ang 唐
Tathagata-garbha 如來蔵
The Way of Bringing Troubled Minds to Rest
遊心安樂道
Theory of Four Scriptural Classification
四教判論
Three Kingdoms 三國
Treatise on Mahayanaraddhotpadasatra
大乘起信論疏
Treatise on the Harmonization of Disputes Among the Ten Schools
十門和諧論
True Bone 真骨
unhindered practice 無礙行
Unified Silla 統一新羅
ünchenmum 隱密門
Upaya 方便
Vajrasamadhi-sutra 金剛三昧經
Vajrasamadhisutra-sastra 金剛三昧經論
Vinaya 戒律
Wonch’uk 圓剔
Wonhyo 元曉
Wonhyo Pulgi-jo 元曉不窮條
Won’gwang 圓光
Yoga-sila 瑜伽戒
Yogacara School 唯識宗
Yuanhsiao-chuan 元曉傳