

# National Master Ŭich'ŏn and Huayan Buddhism

Professor of Philosophy and Religion, American University

Jin Y. Park

## Abstract

National Master Taegak Ŭich'ŏn (大覺國師義天, 1055–1101) is credited as the founder of Korean Tiantai (天台 Kor. Ch'ŏnt'ae) Buddhism. He is also recognized as a collector of Buddhist texts, which he was able to gather in part because of his position as a prince, the fourth son of King Munjong (文宗 1019–1083, r. 1046–1083). Despite his fame as the founder of Korean Tiantai, Ŭich'ŏn's writings and activities seem to portray him more of a master of Huayan Buddhism, rather than Tiantai Buddhism.

His writing reveals that Ŭich'ŏn was looking for Buddhist teaching that is more attentive to practice than the doctrinal teaching of his time, but he did not trust the meditational school that began to gain power as a decent form of Buddhist practice. This article examines Ŭich'ŏn's Huayan thought, its characteristics, his relationship with Jingyuan and the position of his Huayan thought in the history of Korean Buddhism.

**Key words: Ŭich'ŏn, Jingyuan, Korean Hwaŏm Buddhism, Sudhana, Entering the Realm of Reality, Dual practice of doctrine and contemplation**

National Master Ŭich'ŏn (大覺國師義天 1055–1101) is credited as the founder of Korean Tiantai (Kor. Ch'ŏnt'ae) Buddhism. He is also recognized as a collector of Buddhist texts, which he was able to gather partly because of his position as a son of King Munjong (文宗 1019–1083, r.1046–1083). Despite the widespread claim that Ŭich'ŏn founded the Ch'ŏnt'ae school in Korea, there have been claims that Ŭich'ŏn was actually a Hwaŏm (C. Huayen) monk-scholar rather than a Tiantai monk. This article examines Ŭich'ŏn's Buddhism in relation to Hwaŏm Buddhism and claims that Ŭich'ŏn was indeed more interested in Huayan Buddhism, showing how his various activities support this assertion. What did Huayan Buddhism mean to Ŭich'ŏn? Which aspects of Huayan Buddhism attracted Ŭich'ŏn, and how did it affect the evolution of Korean Buddhism after Ŭich'ŏn? These are some of the questions that this article addresses.

## 1. Ŭich'ŏn and His Trip to Song China

The fourth son of Munjong, the eleventh king of the Koryŏ Dynasty (928–1392),<sup>1</sup> Ŭich'ŏn joined the monastery under Royal Master Kyŏngdŏk Nanwŏn (王師景德爛圓 999–1076) when he was eleven years old. Kyŏngdŏk was a Huayan master. After his teacher Kyŏngdŏk passed away in 1076, Ŭich'ŏn succeeded him at the young age of twenty-one and lectured on the forty-fascicle version of the *Hwayan jing*, which he would continue for the next twenty years.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that lecturing on the forty-fascicle *Hwayan jing* had a consequential influence on Ŭich'ŏn's view of Huayan Buddhism. We can also say the reverse: Ŭich'ŏn's interest in what is represented in the forty-fascicle *Hwayan jing* inspired him to continue lecturing on this version for decades. The forty-fascicle *Hwayan jing* contains the story of the young truth-seeker Sudhana, who made a journey that led him to encounter fifty-three different dharma teachers to learn about the bodhisattva path. In various places in his writings, Ŭich'ŏn mentions Sudhana and his journey to meet teachers. In a letter whose recipient can be identified only as “dharma brother,” Ŭich'ŏn heavily cites Sudhana's story, reiterating a piece of advice that Sudhana received: “You should hurriedly go and meet the teacher. Don't be lazy, nor raise an arrogant mind. Meeting a person whose wisdom is superb is better than trying to learn by oneself for a hundred

<sup>1</sup> Chŏng Pyŏngsam, trans. & ed., *Chŏngsŏn Hwaŏm* (精選華嚴, “Selected Works of Huayan Buddhism”), vol. 2. (Seoul: Taehan Pulgyo Jogyejong, 2009), p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Po Jeong (普正), “Ŭich'ŏn Pulgyo sasang ŭi hoet'ongjŏk sŏnggyŏk e kwanhan yŏn'gu” (義天佛教事象의 會通的 性格에 관한 研究, “A Study on the Integral Character of Uicheon's Buddhist Thought”). Wonkwang University, Doctoral Dissertation. Iri, South Korea, 2007, p. 12.

thousand years.”<sup>3</sup> The importance of meeting a teacher, for Ŭich'ŏn, was absolute, and this directly relates to Ŭich'ŏn's trip to Song China to meet his respected teacher, Dharma Master Jingyuan (淨源法師 1011 – 1088).

During Ŭich'ŏn's time, Koryŏ's relationship with Song China was not smooth. The Koryŏ–Kitan (遼 907–1125) War of 1018 resulted in significant casualties on both sides. In 1020, the two countries established a treaty, which forced Koryŏ to break ties with Song. Koryŏ and Northern Song resumed their relationship around 1068,<sup>4</sup> after around forty years of suspension. The international relation directly affected Ŭich'ŏn's desire to study in Song China.

Ŭich'ŏn made several attempts to receive permission from his father, King Munjong, to travel to Song China, but the king refused to let him due to safety issues, given the geopolitical situation related to Song, Kitan, and Koryŏ. In 1085, his older brother succeeded the kingship and became King Sŏnjong (1083–1094), but he would still not allow Ŭich'ŏn's journey to China—again, for safety reasons, since the delicate issue of the political relationship between China, Kitan, and Koryŏ remained a major issue. Ŭich'ŏn delivered a speech to persuade the king and the cabinet to allow him to make the journey, explaining why it was essential for him to go to Song China to learn from Chinese masters and collect Buddhist books. However, his request was still denied. In 1085, thirty-one-year-old Ŭich'ŏn decided to make the journey anyway without permission from the king. On the night of the Buddha's birthday, Ŭich'ŏn boarded a commercial boat and left with several other people. Belatedly learning of his brother's departure, the king sent several followers to protect the prince.

Before Ŭich'ŏn left Koryŏ without the king's permission, he had submitted a letter of request titled “Memorial Requesting to Enter the Great Song Empire to Search for the Dharma” (請入大宋求法表). In this letter, Ŭich'ŏn compares himself to Sudhana in *Huayan jing*, who “didst question the spiritual mentors of the hundred cities, didst set an example with respect to striving after a master.”<sup>5</sup> He informed the king that “Great Master Tamjin of Ssanggye Monastery and so forth, eleven black-robed and white-robed” will embark on a commercial passenger ship.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Sim Chaeyŏl et al., trans., *Taegak kuksa munchip oe* (Seoul: Dongguk yŏkkyŏngwŏn, 1994), p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Po Jeong, “Ŭich'ŏn Pulgyo,” p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> McBride, trans. & ed., *Hwaŏm II*, p. 335.

<sup>6</sup> McBride, trans. & ed., *Hwaŏm II*, p. 340.

Ŭich'ŏn identified his goal for this journey as meeting Dharma Master Jingyuan: "In the eighth month of last year I received a letter from Dharma Master Jingyuan, ācārya of Huayan tradition in the Lingzhe region."<sup>7</sup> In this letter, Jingyuan clearly characterized his relationship with Ŭich'ŏn as that of a teacher and a disciple and expected the disciple would transmit the dharma teachings.

Once he arrived in Song China, Ŭich'ŏn was welcomed by Emperor Zhezong (哲宗, r. 1086 – 1100) in Kaifeng (開封). Since his main goal in traveling all the way to Song was to meet Jingyuan in Hangzhou, as described in the aforementioned letter of request to the Koryŏ king, Ŭich'ŏn asked Emperor Zhezong to allow him to travel to Hangzhou to meet with Jingyuan.

In his "Memorial Humbly Requesting to Go to the Place of the Ācārya Jingyuan in Hangzhou in Order to Learn the Dharma" (乞就杭州源闍梨處學法表), submitted to Emperor Zhezong, Ŭich'ŏn describes how he came across Jingyuan's teachings and aspired to become his disciple: "Previously, in my homeland, by chance, I acquired a book by Master Lecturer Jingyuan of the Liangzhe region in which he explains and analyzes the lettered teaching of Patriarch Xianshou. When I opened it, I was very impressed, and reading it, I forgot that I was exhausted. Therefore, it fortified my aspirations for longing for the true meaning, and from afar, I pay respect as his disciple."<sup>8</sup>

With the emperor's permission, Ŭich'ŏn traveled to Hangzhou, where he arrived during early August of 1085 and stayed for six months. He went back to Kaifeng, the capital of Northern Song, to bid farewell to the emperor. During the return trip to Koryŏ, Ŭich'ŏn stayed for another month in Hangzhou.

## 2. Jingyuan and Huayan Buddhism

Ŭich'ŏn's visit to Song was ignited by his admiration of Jingyuan's Buddhism and desire to study under Jingyuan. Even though Ŭich'ŏn met various dharma masters during his visit to Song, it seems clear that Jingyuan was the one whom Ŭich'ŏn viewed as his dharma teacher. Ŭich'ŏn's *Collected Writings* contains nine letters that Ŭich'ŏn sent to Jingyuan as well as four of Jingyuan's letters to Ŭich'ŏn. These communications between Ŭich'ŏn and Jingyuan outnumber any other communications between Ŭich'ŏn and other dharma masters.

<sup>7</sup> McBride, trans. & ed., *Hwaŏm II*, p. 338–39.

<sup>8</sup> Ŭich'ŏn, *Taegak Kuksa Munjip* (大覺國師文集, "Collected Works of National Master Great Awakening,") in *Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ*, vol. 4, p. 534. English translation: Richard D. McBride, trans. & ed., *Hwaŏm II: Selected Works* (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012), p. 342.

Jinshui Jingyuan (晉水淨源 1011 – 1088) is known as the revivalist of Chinese Huayan Buddhism.<sup>9</sup> In 1011, he was born to a gentry family in Fujian Province. He studied Confucianism, but with the realization of the impermanence of things in life, he began studying Buddhism. In 1030, he visited monasteries and decided to enter the priesthood, eventually doing so in 1033.<sup>10</sup> Jingyuan found the *Huayan jing* the most comprehensive among Buddhist texts.

By Jingyuan's time, Huayan Buddhism was still suffering from the aftermath of the persecution that happened in 845. He felt that his role entailed reviving Huayan Buddhism; for that purpose, he devoted himself to collecting Huayan Buddhist texts and writing commentaries on Huayan Buddhist literature.

Heng Sure, an American Buddhist monk-scholar, who wrote a dissertation on Jingyuan, says that Jingyuan's teaching of the *Huayan jing* was an “anomaly in Northern Song Hangzhou's Buddhist community, which was dominated by Chan practice and culture,” adding, “The Avatamsaka teachings survived largely due to Jingyuan's defense and propagation.”<sup>11</sup> Among over five hundred monasteries in Hangzhou at that time, only a few belonged to the Huayan tradition, and they had not been active at all since the Huichang persecution of 845.

One of Jingyuan's major projects involved establishing the practical dimensions of Huayan Buddhism. Jingyuan was well aware of Chan Buddhism's influence on Huayan Buddhism and sought to bring out the practical dimension of Huayan Buddhism. In Jingyuan's Buddhism, one visible aspect of Huayan practice is the use of “repentance liturgy.” Sixteen of Jingyuan's works are listed in Ūich'ōn's Tripitaka; among those sixteen, three are repentance liturgy.

The presence of repentance liturgy also provides a means of recognizing the difference between Jingyuan's Huayan Buddhism and that of earlier masters. Wú Zhōngwěi, a scholar of Huayan Buddhism, describes Jingyuan's Buddhism as a transformation from “the philosophy of consciousness of ‘contemplation of the mind’ to

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<sup>9</sup> 釋法幢, “華嚴中興教主淨源所撰懺儀之略探,” MA Thesis, 大專學生佛學論文集 頁 231–254 (西元 2011 年), 台北市華嚴蓮社 Collections of College Students, Thesis Relating to Buddhism, Taipei Huayen Lotus Society, 232.

<sup>10</sup> For the biography of Jingyuan, see Heng Sure, *Sacred literature into liturgy: Jingyuan (1011–1088) and the development of the Avatamsaka liturgy in Song China*. PhD Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union 2003, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Heng Sure, *Sacred literature into liturgy: Jingyuan (1011–1088) and the development of the Avatamsaka liturgy in Song China*. PhD Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union 2003, 20.

the philosophy of action of ‘practice’” (行法).<sup>12</sup> That is, the contemplation of the mind is realized through the practice of repentance.<sup>13</sup>

Jingyuan also tried to establish Huayan Buddhism as a school by verifying its lineage. In that effort, he proposed what is known as “Seven Huayan Patriarchs” (華嚴七祖說). The expression “Huayan School” (華嚴宗) was first used by Chengguan (澄觀, 738–839) in *Huayan jing shu* (華嚴經疏, “Commentary on the Huayan Sūtra”).<sup>14</sup> In “Commentary on Entering the Realm of Reality” (*Zhù fǎjiè guān mén*, 註法界觀門), Zongmi (宗密, 780–841) first listed Dushun (杜順, 557–640), Zhiyan (智儼, 602–668), and Fazang (法藏, 643–712) as three patriarchs of Huayan Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> During the period of the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhipan (志磐, 1220–1275) listed five patriarchs by adding Chengguan and Zongmi.<sup>16</sup> Jingyuan traced the origin of Huayan Buddhism back to the Indian tradition and added two Indian masters, Āśvaghōṣa (馬鳴, fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> C) and Nāgārjuna (龍樹, 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> C), to the lineage of Huayan Buddhism. For Jingyuan, Huayan Buddhism is not just one school in Chinese Buddhism. Rather, Huayan Buddhism represents Mahāyāna Buddhism, which presents the supreme teachings of Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> The dual study of doctrine and contemplation (教觀並修), which has also been known as a major characteristic of Ŭich’ŏn’s Buddhism, lies at the core of Jingyuan’s Huayan Buddhism.

### 3. Ŭich’ŏn and Hwaŏm Buddhism

Korean Buddhism considers Ŭisang (625–702) the founder of Korean Hwaŏm Buddhism, while Ŭich’ŏn is known as the founder of Korean Ch’ŏnt’ae (C. Tiantai). This generalization tells only part of the story of Ŭich’ŏn’s Buddhism.

<sup>12</sup> 吳忠偉 “從「觀心」到「禮懺」——晉水淨源與北宋華嚴的「行為哲學」轉向,” 2013 華嚴專宗國際學術研討會論文集, 317.

<sup>13</sup> For details of Jingyuan’s Huayan practice through liturgy, see Sure, *Sacred literature into liturgy*. Also see 吳忠偉 “從「觀心」到「禮懺」.”

<sup>14</sup> Chengguan, *Huayan jing shu* (華嚴經疏, “Commentary on the Huayan Sūtra”), T35.1735, 529b.

<sup>15</sup> Zongmi, *Zhù fǎjiè guān mén* (註法界觀門, “Commentary on the Entrance to the Realm of Reality”), T 45, 684c.

<sup>16</sup> Chang KyeHwan, “Ŭich’ŏn ūi Hwaŏm sasang,” *Pojo sasang* 11 (Feb. 1998): 11–42, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Even though Ŭich’ŏn was a great admirer of Jingyuan, he did not follow Jingyuan’s belief in the seven patriarchs of Huayan Buddhism. Instead, Ŭich’ŏn proposed nine patriarchs of Huayan Buddhism. An interesting aspect of Ŭich’ŏn’s nine patriarchs is that he excluded Zongmi, the fifth patriarch in Jingyuan’s list, from his own list of the patriarchs. One can only guess the reason for this choice. Kye Hwan, a scholar of Korean Buddhism, interprets the omission of Zongmi in Ŭich’ŏn’s list as more evidence that Ŭich’ŏn favored Hwaŏm. It was not that Ŭich’ŏn did not think highly of Zongmi. Ŭich’ŏn evaluated Zongmi as an impressive Huayan thinker. Rather, Zongmi’s attempt to give Huayan and Chan equal value in his synthesis was not proper, from Ŭich’ŏn’s perspective, Key Hwan explains. Kye Hwan, “Ŭich’ŏn ūi Hwaŏm sasang 의친의 화엄 사상,” Yi Byŏnguk, ed., *Ŭich’ŏn 義天* (Seoul: Yemun seoweon, 2002), p 447.

Ŭich'ŏn's *Collected Works* shows that he considered Hwaŏm as the supreme teaching of Buddhism. To improve access to diverse literature of Huayan Buddhism, Ŭich'ŏn had *Newly Compiled Literature of the Perfect Tradition* (新集圓宗文類) compiled and wrote a preface to this collection of twenty-two scrolls, among which only several exist today. Ŭich'ŏn begins his preface by saying, "The teachings of the Great Hwaŏm tradition fully and magnificently manifest the subtle principle of the dharma realm of complete truth."<sup>18</sup> In the preface, he traced back the dharma lineage from Dushun to Qingliang and suggested that he himself was the descendent of Ŭisang, the founder of Korean Hwaŏm. He lamented the lack of Hwaŏm teaching for the past 400 years since the time of Ŭisang to underscore the need to create the compiled body of literature. Ŭich'ŏn took it his mission to carry the dharma that was kindled by Ŭisang who went to China, studied under Zhiyan, and founded Korean Hwaŏm Buddhism.

In the preface to the *Newly Compiled Literature of the Perfect Tradition*, Ŭich'ŏn says that his time saw the emergence of a group of people who "eschewed the fundamentals [of Hwaŏm Buddhism] and see after nonessential tenets,"<sup>19</sup> which made him feel obliged to compile Hwaŏm literature. In another piece in the *Collected Writings*, "Instruction to the New Disciple Ch'isu" (示新參學徒緇秀, *Si sinch'am hakto Ch'isu*), Ŭich'ŏn identifies Kyonyŏ (均如 923-973), Pŏmun (梵雲), Chinp'a (眞派), and Yŏngyun (靈潤) as spreading "unsound writings [about Hwaŏm]": "Their language is uncultured and their meaning lacks versatility. They make a desolate waste of the Way of the patriarchs: for bedazzling and seducing future generations there are no writings worse than these."<sup>20</sup>

Kyonyŏ (均如 923–973) is considered a descendent of the Hwaŏm lineage from Ŭisang, but Ŭich'ŏn's criticism here clearly shows that he not only did not agree with whatever interpretation Kyonyŏ et al. had of Hwaŏm Buddhism; he also considered their works as unworthy of being considered descendants of the great founder of Korean Hwaŏm. Ŭich'ŏn, however, does not elucidate the basis of his accusation and what Kyonyŏ's Hwaŏm Buddhism is lacking. If he was not drawn to Kyonyŏ's Hwaŏm, what was it about Huayan Buddhism that attracted him so much? One of the most frequently mentioned points of Ŭich'ŏn about Huayan teachings pertains to the "doctrinal teaching and visualization techniques," or doctrinal teaching and contemplation (教觀), of Huayan

<sup>18</sup> Richard D. McBride II., trans., *Hwaŏm II: Selected works* (Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012), 284.

<sup>19</sup> McBride II., trans., *Hwaŏm II*, 292.

<sup>20</sup> McBride II., trans., *Hwaŏm II*, 444. *Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ*, vol. 4, 556.b

Buddhism. His *Collected Writings* clearly articulates the importance of Jingyuan in this context.

Two points deserve to be mentioned to understand the nature of Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm Buddhism. The first is the importance of practical dimension of Huayan Buddhism, and the second is the necessity of having a mentor in one's practice as I mentioned earlier by using the case of Sudhana.

Ŭich'ŏn says, "The doctrinal teachings established by the saints esteemed the development of practice. It should not merely be proclaimed by the mouth, but should, in fact, be practiced by the body."<sup>21</sup> Here lies the importance of Jingyuan's role in the evolution of Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm Buddhism. Ŭich'ŏn confessed that Jingyuan's teaching made him realize the importance of the dual practice of both doctrinal teaching and contemplation:

My teacher [Dharma Master Jingyuan] taught me, "If one does not study contemplation [觀] and one studies only sutras [經], even though one hears the 'five circuits of causes and effects' [五周因果] [of Huayan Buddhism], one won't be able to reach the triple virtues possessed by nature [三重性德]. If one studies only sutras and does not study contemplation, one might realize the triple virtues possessed by nature but won't be able to distinguish the five circuits of causes and effects. This is why one should study contemplation and also study sutras." It is because this teaching deeply impressed me that I make every effort to study both doctrinal teachings and contemplations.<sup>22</sup>

Ŭich'ŏn considered Huayan the superior form of Buddhism and the practice of Huayan through "contemplation" (觀) an essential aspect of Huayan Buddhism. Ŭich'ŏn considered "contemplation" so fundamental to Huayan Buddhism that he said, "If someone was familiar with *Huayan jing* but still had not learned contemplation, I wouldn't trust that person even if that person were the head lecturer."<sup>23</sup> Ŭich'ŏn thought that Fazang's emphasis on unobstructed interpenetration among phenomena does not

<sup>21</sup> McBride II., trans., *Hwaŏm II*, 445.

<sup>22</sup> *Teagak Kuksa Ŭich'ŏn munchip, Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ*, vol. 4, 556 b–c.

<sup>23</sup> Kye Hwan, "Ŭich'ŏn ūi Hwaŏm sasang," Yi Byŏnguk, ed., *Ŭich'ŏn 義天* (Seoul: Yemun seoweon, 2002), 442.

explain how sentient beings enter into the Dharmadhatu, whereas Chengguan tried to embrace Chan in Huayan Buddhism.<sup>24</sup>

And here came Ŭich'ŏn's dilemma. Ŭich'ŏn was not a great supporter of Chan, but like Jingyuan, he seemed aware of the rising power of Chan as well as the legitimacy of its claim, since he noticed the impotence of monastics who exclusively focusing on doctrinal teachings. In his *Collected Writings*, we find more than one instance of his severe criticism of scholars exclusively oriented toward doctrinal teaching: "I observed those doctrinal students of the present generation who study all day long and do not know why—and such students are many: some are lost in prejudiced heterodoxies, others are lost in pursuit of fame and fortune; some are prideful, others are lazy."<sup>25</sup> He aimed to lead the doctrinal scholars to both study doctrinal teaching and practice contemplation, as voiced in this statement: "If . . . you dive into and concentrate your energies on the doctrinal teachings and visualization techniques and are careful that your ending is just like your beginning, then will the Way to enlightenment be far away?"<sup>26</sup>

In the context of Ŭich'ŏn's emphasis on the practical dimension of Hwaŏm Buddhism, one sees the power of Sŏn at the time of Ŭich'ŏn. In response to Sŏn, Ŭich'ŏn wanted to enhance the practical dimensions of Hwaŏm Buddhism, and by so doing, Ŭich'ŏn wished to bring Hwaŏm and Sŏn, or doctrinal teaching and meditation, together. Ŭich'ŏn's synthesis, however, did not emphasize Hwaŏm and Sŏn equally. Ŭich'ŏn did not accept the Sŏn practitioners' claim that Sŏn is a special transmission occurring outside of the text.

The second point I'd like to propose, regarding Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm Buddhism, is the importance of Sudhana's pilgrimage to search for a dharma teacher. Ŭich'ŏn highly values "Sudhana's determination to search for the Dharma" as it appears in *Huayan jing*.<sup>27</sup> Early on, I mentioned that Ŭich'ŏn compared himself to Sudhana when he submitted a request to the king to travel to Song China. I also mentioned that in a letter to a certain dharma brother, he heavily referenced Sudhana and emphasized the importance of meeting the

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion on Ŭich'ŏn's position on Fazang and Chengguan, see Ch'oe Byŏnghŏn 崔柄憲, "Han'guk Hwaŏm Sasangsa e itŏsŏui Ŭich'ŏn ŭi wich'i" (韓國華嚴思想史上에 있어서의 義天의 位置, Ŭich'ŏn's position in the context of the history of Korean Hwaŏm Thoughts.) *Pulgyo munhwa yŏn'guso*, ed., *Han'uk Hwaŏm Sasang Yŏn'gu* 韓國華嚴思想研究 (Seoul: Dongguk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1986, 179-210, pp.187-190.

<sup>25</sup> McBride II., trans. *Hwaŏm II*, 447.

<sup>26</sup> McBride II., trans. *Hwaŏm II*, 454.

<sup>27</sup> McBride II., trans. *Hwaŏm II*, 444.

teacher in person, as Sudhana did in his journey. In sum, Ŭich'ŏn's comparison of himself to Sudhana affirmed the importance of finding and working with spiritual mentors. His belief in the value of traveling all the way to Song China, despite all the barriers standing in front of him due to the international geopolitics of the time, stemmed from his belief that a spiritual mentor is absolutely crucial in one's journey to embody wisdom. In this context, Ŭich'ŏn cites Zongmi's statement: "Those seeking the Way to enlightenment must nurture the eye of wisdom (dharma eye). The eye of wisdom cannot open by itself. You must seek a master in order to scratch open its lid."<sup>28</sup> Ŭich'ŏn repeatedly emphasized the importance of "the Way of masters and disciples" as "a great causal connection," citing a passage from Nanshan, to highlight that Buddha dharma is possible because of "the mutual cooperation of masters and disciples."<sup>29</sup> To Ŭich'ŏn, making a journey to meet and study with Jingyuan was itself a way of embodying the teachings of Huayan Buddhism in his own life.

#### 4. Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm Buddhism in Korean Buddhism

Ŭich'ŏn's interest in Sudhana gives us leverage to think about the characteristics of Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm Buddhism. It seems that Ŭich'ŏn was especially attracted by the story of Sudhana's pilgrimage and wanted to make the same type of journey, which he accomplished in his trip to Song China, particularly as he met and learned from Jingyuan. To Ŭich'ŏn, pilgrimage itself represented the embodiment of searching for truth and dharma, as the traditional meaning of religious pilgrimage does.

In the context of Korean Hwaŏm Buddhism, different Hwaŏm teachers had different emphases with regard to their approach to Sudhana. Ŭisang (625–702), the founder of Korean Hwaŏm, did not mention Sudhana. As a disciple of Zhiyan (智儼, 602–668) and a colleague of Fazang (法藏), he probably was trained in the orthodox understanding of *Huayan jing* that did not pay much attention to the "Entering the Realm of Reality" chapter.

Not until Li Tongxuan wrote *Exposition on the New Huayan jing* (新華嚴經論) did Sudhana, or "Entering the Realm of Reality," emerge as the main teaching of Huayan Buddhism, since the orthodox Huayan masters considered it only a dissemination chapter. It does not seem that Ŭich'ŏn read Li Tongxuan's work; he makes no reference to Li in

<sup>28</sup> McBride II., trans. *Hwaŏm II*, 445.

<sup>29</sup> McBride II., trans. *Hwaŏm II*, 449.

his *Collected Writings*. Can we then assume that he developed his interest in Sudhana through his lecturing on the forty-fascicle *Huayan jing*? One can only guess.

Pojo Chinul is credited as being the founder of Sŏn Buddhism, but Huayan Buddhism had a consequential influence on his Buddhist thought. In *Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood* (圓頓成佛論), which is Chinul's major work on Hwaŏm Buddhism—despite the dispute about its authorship—Chinul heavily cites Li's *Exposition*. Chinul even created his own *Excerpts from the Exposition on the New Huayan jing*, which provides selections from Li's *Exposition*. In terms of its length, Chinul's *Excerpts* is longer than the combination of all other writings he left behind. In *Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood*, Chinul mentions Sudhana only once, which appears in his citation of Li's *Exposition*.<sup>30</sup> His *Excerpts* heavily excerpts the sections of Li's *Exposition* dealing with his interpretation of the story of Sudhana. However, it remains unclear whether Chinul mentions Sudhana because he saw the “Entering the Realm of Reality” chapter as the main teaching of *Huayan jing*, as Li did, or because Li had seriously invested in the story of Sudhana in his *Exposition*. The latter appears more likely, but it still reveals Chinul's main concern and his attraction to Huayan Buddhism.

In both *Excerpts from the Exposition on the New Huayan jing* and *Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood*, Chinul's main concern is the idea that the buddha and the sentient beings are equipped with the same wisdom, which enables sentient beings to attain Buddhahood. His understanding of Huayan Buddhism is guided by Li Tongxuan's dictum that the sentient being is the buddha. To Chinul, the Buddha of the Unmoved Wisdom (不動智佛) is the reality of both sentient beings and the buddha; the only difference is that the latter is fully aware of it and realizes it, whereas the former is not.

In the case of Ŭich'ŏn, in spite of his frequent references to Sudhana, he rarely mentions Sudhana in connection with the sentient being's capacity to attain Buddhahood—not to mention in relation to the identity of the buddha and the sentient being. Since the term “sentient being” refers to an unenlightened being, Ŭich'ŏn himself is a sentient being as well, but his repeated focus was on Sudhana's search for a teacher—which, again, Ŭich'ŏn himself realized through his journey to Song China. As mentioned, one of the main facets of Huayan Buddhism that attracted Ŭich'ŏn involved its practical dimension, represented by the emphasis on contemplation and visualization (觀). However, in the case of Ŭich'ŏn, this effort to bring forth the practical dimension of

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<sup>30</sup> Chinul, *Wŏndon song Pul ron* (圓頓成佛論), Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ (韓國佛教全書), vol. 4.732a.

Buddhist practice does not seem to have been extended beyond the elite class. His was a Buddhism for aristocrats for the benefit of the state, and perhaps here lies the limitation of Ŭich'ŏn's efforts to bring together doctrinal teaching and practice.<sup>31</sup> With a keen awareness that the buddha and the sentient beings have the same capacity—which Chinul confirmed in the *Huayan jing*, and which Li then reconfirmed in his *Exposition*—Chinul moved on to Chan/Sŏn practice to reveal how sentient beings can in fact realize the capacity to attain Buddhahood. Ŭich'ŏn's Buddhism, however, remained in the realm of the elite class of Buddhism that supported the state, which remained a limitation of Ŭich'ŏn, who lived as a royal family member, despite his dedication to Buddhism.

Ŭich'ŏn's Buddhism raises the question of Huayan Buddhism's position with regard to the state, the community, and the general public. His emphasis on the practical dimension of Huayan practice seems to remain abstract. To bring out the practical dimensions of Huayan Buddhism, Jingyuan addressed the repentance liturgy. Ŭich'ŏn did include Jingyuan's works on liturgy in his *Newly Compiled Literature of the Perfect Tradition*, but the actual practice of either repentance or liturgy does not seem to be a main emphasis of Ŭich'ŏn's Huayan Buddhism. Chinul turned to Sŏn practice in order to complement the practical dimension, but Ŭich'ŏn was not sympathetic to Sŏn practitioners, whom he considered to be idling away their time. How then would Ŭich'ŏn's Hwaŏm practice take shape? His *Collected Writings* do not tell us much about this, and the lack of a more concrete plan for practice remains a limitation of Ŭich'ŏn's Buddhism.

During the question and answer session at the conference, the question was raised why it is important to address the practical dimensions of a teaching. Would it be a problem, the questioner asked, if a theory or a metaphysics remained just a theory or a metaphysics without any development of how it could be practiced? A theory or a metaphysics is a condensed version of reality. This means that it is generated from reality and not vice versa. When a theory stops at the level of theorization and is depleted of the details of reality, assuming an independence from reality, it cannot but stagnate. Reality in the life world is not fixed or unchanging. That is especially the case in the Buddhist world, where things exist through causes, and conditions and changes are the first principles of reality. When a theory or metaphysics stays away from reality, it risks distorting reality, or in the worst case justifying the status quo.

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<sup>31</sup> See for example Pak Noja (Tikhonov Vladimir), "Ŭich'ŏn ŭi Hanguk Pulgyo sa ŭisik" (義天의 韓國佛教史 意識), *Pojo sasang* 11 (1998): 103-133.

Engagement or practice means pitting theory against reality, which on the one hand reveals the benefits and limitations of a theory but on the other hand brings hope for reality. The hope for reality obviously needs to be dissected—whom it might benefit, and how it might be realized. Ŭich'ŏn's Buddhism might have fallen short of detailing these dimensions of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

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