Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ in the Light of the Greater East Asian Tradition

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The aim of this presentation is to show that while Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ developed certain traits reflecting more narrow local developments in accordance with the country's special cultural and geopolitical situation, it was at the same time part and parcel of a larger pan-East Asian Buddhist development which took place under the Song 宋 (960-1276), the Khitan Liao 遼 (906-1125), the Jurchen Jin 金 (1127-1234), the Tangut Xixia 西夏 as well as late Heian 平安 (782-1185) and Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185-1382) of Japan. Therefore, while Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ on the one hand featured elements that were unique to Korea, on the other hand it shared the over-all concerns for "Nation-protection"(Kor. hoguk pulgyo 護國佛教) through ritual manipulation of the cosmic and earthly forces, as well as a persuasive interest in magic and disease control among the general population.

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The paper has been divided into a number of themes covering what is deemed the most important if not significant aspects of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ. This includes a historical introduction, a discussion of Esoteric Buddhist denominations, their beliefs and practices, the special historical and cultural circumstances due to which the Korean tripiṭakas came about, the court's sponsoring of Esoteric Buddhist rituals and lastly a reconsideration of the concept of "Nation-protecting Buddhism." In addition these themes will also match more directly the rest of pan-East Asian Buddhism that will be discussed here.

Key Words: Esoteric Buddhism, The Koryŏ Dynasty, Hoguk-pulgyo (Nation-protecting Buddhism), Korean Tripiṭaka, Esoteric Buddhist Astrology.

Introduction

In this presentation I shall focus on the role and reality of Esoteric Buddhism (Kor. *milgyo* 密教) under the Koryŏ 高麗 (918-392) in the perspective of the better known Esoteric Buddhist traditions of China (Ch. *mi-chiao*) and Japan (Jap. *mikkyō*). I believe that the study of Esoteric Buddhism in Korea has lagged behind that of other aspects of Korean Buddhism for a variety of reasons. Most probably the fact that the primary sources are relatively few and moreover highly disparate has discouraged an interest in Esoteric Buddhism comparable to that of others forms of Korean Buddhism. We have fx. only a few real Esoteric Buddhism scriptures from the hands of Korean authors, that is if we exclude the many ritual texts from the Chosŏn. Whereas in both China and Japan there are literally thousands of such writings on all aspects of Esoteric Buddhism. Moreover, traditional Esoteric Buddhism - although traces can still be found in contemporary Buddhist rituals of the Chogye 曹溪 and T'aego 太古 schools - has otherwise completely

died out in Korea.[1] In fact this is in line with the general neglect of studies on Esoteric Buddhism in China - and beyond a handful of studies, we still need to understand the nature of the great amount of primary material available, not to forget the related elements of material culture, i.e. images, monuments and ritual paraphernalia, and to look in closer detail on their impact on the Korean Buddhist tradition of the Koryŏ arguably the period in Korean history where Esoteric Buddhism had its "Golden Age."

For the sake of making my arguments easier to follow, allow me first give a brief definition of the phenomena I define as Esoteric Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism is a development of traditional Mahāyāna, in fact a development which had begun long before the distinctively philosophical and devotional schools of that tradition had become established around the 3-4th centuries CE.[2] The signalling features of Esoteric Buddhism is belief in magic forces which are effectuated through spells or *dhāraṇis*. In the early phase the *dhāraṇi* are found as a sort of appendix to a *sūtra*. Eventually hand-gestures (Skr. *mūdra*) were added to the spells, and later sanctified, ritual spheres symbolizing the spiritual world (Skr. *maṇḍala*) of the invoked divinity (or divinities) came about. As the tradition wore on these basic features became increasingly complex and sophisticated eventually giving way to whole systems of ritualized cosmology which signals the mature form of Esoteric Buddhism.

In certain contexts the Esoteric Buddhist tradition will be seen as being directly based on traditional Mahāyāna beliefs and doctrines, in other cases this philosophical/doctrinal foundation is not particularly evident, and one is better served by accepting that certain traditional

1 The two Esoteric Buddhist schools in modern Korea, i.e. the Chinŏn 眞言 and the Chin'gak 眞覺, have absolutely no historical link with the Korean Buddhist tradition *per se* but are late constructs based in large measures on Japanese Shingon Buddhism. This is also borne out in the classical Shingon iconography which dominates their temples. For a information on these schools, see Yi (1986). Rudimentary information can also be found in Mok (1983).

2 Traces of Esoteric Buddhist beliefs crop up in a variety of Indian Buddhist scriptures, mostly of Mahāyāna persuasion, as early as the beginning of the Christian Era. See fx. the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Lankāvatāra*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* etc.

Hindu beliefs and practices provided the greater religious input. Here I should like to note that I distinguish between Esoteric Buddhism and Tantric Buddhism. While the former is a general designation for a wide variety of practices and beliefs that came about alongside the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism as such, the latter arose as a distinct form of Esoteric Buddhism based on a distinct corpus of literature, namely the *Tantras*, which features a distinct interpretation of Mahāyāna doctrines and practices.[3] The defining characteristics of Tantric Buddhism is the way in which the path to enlightenment is defined. Contrary to traditional Mahāyāna where antinomian practices are universally banned due to their conflict with the bodhisattva ideal, they are openly endorsed and encouraged in Tantric Buddhism, although on more advanced levels of practice. Moreover, Tantric Buddhism features a high degree of doctrinal and ritual systematization which is not reflected in the earlier Esoteric Buddhist material.

Hence, Esoteric Buddhism is here used as a general term for the phenomena outlined above, while Tantric Buddhism is the name of a later and distinctive type of Esoteric Buddhism (Snellgrove: 160-176). When this has been said it is also important to note that Tantric Buddhism is the religious and historical inheritor of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition. In other words, many of the diverse practices and types of belief which are found in the earlier tradition in embryonic or partly developed forms eventually found their full expressions in the Tantric Buddhist systems.

When looking at the general history of Esoteric Buddhism in East Asia there are certain features which need clarification. Esoteric Buddhist practices and beliefs entered China as part and parcel of Mahāyāna Buddhism. For which reason Esoteric Buddhism was initially not seen as a distinct tradition, nor was it originally endorsed outside the confines of traditional Buddhism. Furthermore, as the formal carrier of ritual and methods of magic, Esoteric Buddhism found an easy

3 The main Tantras are the *Hevajra*, the *Cakrasamvara*, the *Guhyasamājatantrarāja*, the *Kālacakra* etc. For a general discussion of this class of literature and its doctrines, see Snellgrove (144-159).

acceptance in China, where it blended with certain elements of Daoist practice and lore from early on.[4] And what is perhaps the most interesting thing to note here, is the fact that the Chinese Buddhist canon has maintained and perpetuated early Esoteric Buddhist texts which have long since been lost in India. Historically this has meant that ancient Esoteric Buddhist scriptures and *dāraṇis* have continued to inform the East Asian Buddhist tradition up through the centuries, whereas this material is to a large extent absent from the Indo-Tibetan tradition. From this perspective it is possible to argue - if we detract the indigenous Sinitic elements that have crept into many texts as well as the apocrypha - that the Esoteric Buddhist tradition in East Asia, that of China in particular, is by far the oldest representative of Indian Esoteric Buddhism of the pre-Gupta period.

The formal systematization of Esoteric Buddhism in China did not come about before the mid-Tang (8th cent.) in the form of the Zhenyan School 眞言宗.[5] Some scholars have described this development as the first systematization of Tantric Buddhism, however, I have found little direct connection between it and the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist *Tantras* - ritually as well as doctrinally - except that both traditions endorse deity identification and ritual practices as the path to enlightenment.[6] In the early 9th century the Zhenyan School was formally introduced to Japan and possible Korea as well. The Huichang Suppression of Buddhism (845-6 A.D.) which destroyed most of the established schools of Buddhism in the central provinces, dealt a death-blow to the Zhenyan School which ceased to exist as a separate denomination of Chinese Buddhism. However, despite this significant setback, Esoteric Buddhism

4 This interesting development is aptly treated by Strickmann (1996; 2002). For a review article on the latter, see Sørensen (2004a).

5 One may argue whether this name is historically appropriate. Nevertheless, I believe that there is sufficiently evidence to see the activities of the four *ācāryas* śubhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi (669-741), Amoghavajra (705-774) and Huiguo 惠果 (?-805) as being both historically, doctrinally and institutionally linked. Moreover, the Esoteric Buddhist traditions of the 9th century, including those of Tang, Heian and Silla, certainly saw these *ācāryas* as constituting a lineage, or rather lineages of Buddhist transmission.

6 See the discussion in Orzech (1989).

in China as such did not disappear, nor did it decrease in over-all importance. In actual fact it is possible to see its decline in the central provinces of the Tang empire as the beginning of a new period of popularity in the provinces, in particular in the south-western parts of the realm.

While Tantric Buddhism was present in the border areas of the Chinese empire - such as Dunhuang and Turfan - as early as the 9th century, its formal introduction did not take place until the late 10th century.[7] And even so, there is virtually no evidence for the popularization and acceptance of Tantric Buddhism in China prior to the advent of the Mongols in the 13th century. Hence, the development of Esoteric Buddhism in China and the rest of East Asia took a rather different course than it did in a culture such as that of Tibet where Tantric Buddhism from early on was synonymous with Buddhism as a whole.

This presentation will not only highlight the distinctive Korean features which characterized the Esoteric Buddhist aspect of medieval Korean Buddhism, but shall also seek to place it within the context of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition in East Asia including the Song 宋 (960-1276), the Khitan Liao 遼 (906-1125), the Jurchen Jin 金 (1127-1234), the Tangut Xixia 西夏 as well as late Heian Japan 平安 (782-1185) and the Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185-1382). The aim of the paper will be to show that while Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ developed certain traits reflecting more narrow local developments in accordance with the country' special cultural and geo-political situation, it was at the same time part and parcel of a larger pan-East Asian Buddhist development. Therefore, while Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ on the one hand featured elements that were unique to Korea, on the other hand it shared the over-all concerns for "nation-protection" through ritual manipulation of the cosmic and earthly forces, as well as

7 For an illuminating study of the traces of Tantric Buddhism in Dunhuang the reader is refered to Kenneth Eastman (1983). On the translation of Tantric Buddhist texts during the early Northern Song, see Jan (1966).

a persuasive interest in magic and disease control among the general population.

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I. The Nature of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ and Its Silla Legacy

In order to understand the rise and development of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ, we need first take a brief look at what came before. Even the most unperceptive survey of the extant material of the pre-Koryŏ will reveal that it is highly problematic to establish a historical link between the few known Silla monks who trained in the Zhenyan centres in Tang China with the Esoteric Buddhist tradition which flourished later under the Koryŏ. In other words, while there are basic, historical problems with the nature of the Zhenyan transmission to Unified Silla, the supposed connection between this transmission and the later Esoteric Buddhist tradition of the Koryŏ is even more

problematic.

In a recent article on the two Esoteric Buddhist denominations of the Koryŏ, the Sinin 神印 and Ch'ongji 總持 schools, the origins of which are shrouded in the mist of mythology, this author has argued against the existence of a direct historical connection between these and the Esoteric Buddhist tradition of the Silla (Sørensen 2005a). Despite the fact that most Korean scholars insist that some sort of relationship existed between these later schools of Esoteric Buddhism and the Silla, nobody have so far been able to provide any serious, historical evidence for such a connection.[8] Hence, both the Sinin and Ch'ngji schools would appear to be products of the Koryŏ Furthermore, there are strong indications that the monks associated with them were foremostly ritual specialists working for the Koryŏ court, monks who may have hailed from some of the established Buddhist denominations such as the Hwaŏm 華嚴 or the Pŏpsang/Yuga 法相/瑜伽 schools.

When looking at the other forms of Esoteric Buddhism that existed in the various cultures on the East Asian Mainland, excluding that of Xixia to which we shall return below, we find that it existed mostly as a trans-sectarian movement linked to the performance of rituals of different kinds. As far as I know in neither the Song, Liao nor the Jin did proper Esoteric Buddhist schools exist in the institutional sense, although Esoteric Buddhist practices as such flourished in all three empires. As was the case under the Koryŏ Esoteric Buddhism was foremostly practised within all the established schools including the Huayan 華嚴 (Kor. Hwaŏm), Chan 禪 (Kor. Sŏn), Tiantai 天台 (Kor. Ch'ŏnt'ae), the Faxiang 法相 (Kor. Pŏpsang) and the Lŏ 律 (Kor. Yul).[9]

8 It appears that in this regard most Korean scholars have remained satisfied with referring to information found in the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (*Bequeathed Records from the Three Kingdoms*, HPC.6.245a-69c). I have previously refuted the scholarly use of this collection of myths and folktales as a primary source for the study of Buddhism during the Three Kingdoms period (Sørensen 2000b).

9 There is scattered evidence in the extant sources which may be taken as indications that there existed something akin to Esoteric Buddhist schools in both Song China, the Liao and the Jin empires. See Lü (1995: 432-95). For the Southern Song we have the highly, localized form of

During the late 13th century when the relationship between the Mongol Empire and the Koryŏ had become cordial and even harmonious, scattered attempts at introducing Tibetan Lamaism to Korea took place. Despite the polite reception the various lamas received at the Koryŏ court, it appears that the form of *milgyo* they thaught, i.e. fully developed Tantric Buddhism, did not meet with the approval of the Koreans. Although the available sources only provide hints as to why the Tantric style of Esoteric Buddhism did not appeal to the Koreans, enough can be gleaned to show that it was fundamental differences as regards ethics - Buddhist as well as Confucian - which prevented Lamaism from gaining a foothold on the Korean Peninsula.[10] Despite of this, during a period of three to four decades the court at Kaesŏng and in Dadu 大都 shared - if not exactly the same interest in Tantric Buddhism as transmitted by Tibetan Lamaism - then at least a number of its rituals. Here it is interesting to note that while the same rejection of Tantric Buddhism took place in the states of Song, Liao and Jin, i.e. Chinese or Sinisized empires, the Tangut rulers of Xixia happily embraced Lamaism with its full-fledged Tantrism.[11]

II. Koryŏ Buddhism and the Heavenly Mandate

The essential parameters governing the relationship between the state and Buddhism were already laid down in the so-called *Sip hunyo* 十訓要 (Ten Injunctions) of King T'ejo (r. 918-943) at the very beginning of the Koryŏ.[12] According to the first injunction we find that,

Buddhism advocated by the thaumaturge Zhao Zhifeng 趙智風 (1159-1225) and his followers at Mt. Baoding 寶頂山 in Dazu 大足, Sichuan. See Sørensen (2005b: 242-250). However, in none of the above cases can we really speak of fully institutionalized types of Esoteric Buddhism, as they all incorporated other and significant elements from other forms of Buddhism. Moreover, none of them had any direct historical link with mainstream Esoteric Buddhism of the Tang.

10 I have described the nature of this encounter in detail in Sørensen (1993b).

11 See Dunnell (1992; 2001). For a discussion of Tibetan Imperial Preceptors under the Yuan, see Franke (1981).

12 *KS*.I.54b-b. For a full translation, see Lee (263-6).

"he success of every great undertaking of our state depends upon the favour and protection of Buddha."[13] Bearing in mind that this is the opening words in the political bequest of the founder of the dynasty, they hardly need any elaboration. It is of course an open discussion to what extent this seemingly strong relationship actually played any role in matters of "Real-politik," but it remains a fact - at least during most periods in the dynasty' history - that Koryŏ politics and Buddhism were indeed closely entwined. There is no need to argue whether the Koryŏ kings were able to rule without Buddhism, as it never happened, therefore it will make more sense to try to understand how the system of mutual benefit for ruler and religion actually worked in practice.

Ritual practice is at the heart of Esoteric Buddhism, hence it should come as no surprise that most of the historical records on that tradition in the Koryŏ actually deal with rituals. Given that our main historical sources for the Koryŏ are the *Koryŏ sa* 高麗史 (The History of the Koryŏ Dynasty; hereafter *KS*) and the *Koryŏ sa chŏ ryo* 高麗史節要 (The Essentials of the History of the Koryŏ Dynasty; hereafter *KSC*) it is inevitable that the documentation found therein is both terse and brief to the point of being note-like. Nevertheless, the information on Buddhist rituals provided by both sources is quite substantial, in fact it is the most dominant type of information on Buddhism we encounter in these historical works. When compared with China and Japan, we find that the number of Buddhist rituals performed by and for the Koryŏ court, i.e. official rituals or state rituals, was nothing short of staggering.[14] For both historical and cultural reasons, Buddhist rituals performed at the bequest of the Song court decreased greatly as the dynasty wore on, partly due to the rise of Neo-Confucianism, whereas Buddhist rituals continued to be part and parcel of dynastic and divine legitimacy in Imperial Japan up to the Meiji Restoration in the second half of the 19th century. Even so, the reported occurrences of Buddhist

13 *Op. cit.*, p. 363.

14 For a lengthy article on the nature of Esoteric Buddhist rituals under the Koryŏ, see Sørensen (Forthcoming, 2007).

rituals, in particular those connected with Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ would appear to have surpassed those performed at the courts of both Heian and Kamakura Japan by far. That is of course provided that the sources can be trusted. This indicates that the connection between the Koryŏ rulers and Buddhism was not only very close, but that the demarcation between secular and religious power was highly oblique indeed. In any case the relationship between the ruling house and Buddhism was intimate to the point of being interdependent. In other words, what was good for the Koryŏ kings and the realm was also good for Buddhism. Here one may make a direct comparison between the manner in which medieval Christianity in Europe supported a given secular power and *vice-versa*.[15] It is when seen from this perspective that the concept of "Buddhism as protector of the nation" should be seen, while bearing in mind that no idea matching that of the modern "nation-state" existed under the Koryŏ. The fortunes of the ruling family, by extension the Koryŏ kingdom and Buddhism were essentially one and the same thing.

The Bestowal of the Bodhisattva Precepts (Kor. *posal kye* 菩薩戒) on the Koryŏ Kings was an important ritual in the royal cult, which foremostly served to cement the relationship between the Koryŏ rulers and Buddhism. Almost all the Koryŏ kings are recorded as having received these precepts and other forms of initiation at least once during their respective reigns, while the more devout rulers had these rites carried out several times during their respective reigns. As were the cases in the other East Asian countries, under the Koryŏ the Bodhisattva Precepts were administered according to the *Brahmājāla sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經).[16] Normally this ritual would take place during the first year of a new ruler's ascension to the throne, but could in

15 In Korea Hŏ Hŭngsik has devoted considerable attention to this issue from the perspective of Buddhist social history and has made a convincing comparison with the relationship between the secular rulers and the Catholic church in medieval Europe. See Hŏ (1994).

16 T.24, No.1484. This apocryphal scripture is still used today in Korea as the basic text for the bestowal of the bodhisattva precepts for both monks and laity. See Buswell (1992). For a study of the *Fanwang jing* in the Japanese Buddhist context, see Groner (1990).

principle occur several times in the course of his reign. The intimate nature of this relationship is further underscored by the fact that most Koryŏ rulers received the Bodhisattva Precepts from royal preceptors (Kor. *wangsa* 王師), i.e. from Buddhist instructors serving in the capacity of personal spiritual (and political) advisors. Later, during the reign of King Ch'ngsŏn (r. 1308-1313) it is known that the precepts were administered by Tibetan lamas, i.e. by Tantric Buddhist specialists. In this connection it is interesting to note that the *KS* also refers to Koryŏ kings receiving the *abhiseka* (Kor. *kwanjŏng* 灌頂), which is an Esoteric Buddhist ritual consisting of sacral anointment and empowerment. In effect it amounted to what can best be explained as a "Buddhist coronation."[17] During the reign of King Injong (r. 1122-1146), the king received *abhiseka* from the notorious monk and *p'ungsu* 風水 specialist Myŏch'ŏng 妙清 (d. 1135).[18] Later, in the reign of Kangjong 康宗 (r. 1211-1213) an *abhiseka* ritual was held in the Sŏn'gyŏng Hall 宣慶殿 of the royal palace (*KS*.I.435a), and when King Wŏnjong (r. 1259-1274) formally ascended the throne in 1260 A.D. his investiture was accompanied by a ritual of empowerment. The *KS* has the following to say:

> On the *muo* 戊午 day in the fourth month the king ascended the Kang'an Hall, and [later] received the *abhiseka* with the bodhisattva precepts in the Kangryŏng Hall (*KS*.I.507b).

I presume that the officiating monk of these *abhiseka* rituals was the current royal preceptor, but unfortunately we do not know whether this was the case or not due to the brevity of the information. However, for the present purpose the important thing to note is that the ritual in question was an Esoteric Buddhist one, which means that

17 For a discussion of the significance of *abhiseka*, see Snellgrove (223-35).

18 *KS*.I.309b. This piece of information also proves that Myŏch'ŏng, in addition to his mastery of geomancy, was an adept of Esoteric Buddhism as well. For a brief note on the life of this monk, see *HPIS* (89ab).

the officiating monks at these events must have been adepts in Esoteric Buddhist practices in one form or the other.

Although only some Koryŏ rulers are recorded as having received the *abhiseka*, we have sufficiently strong evidence that the mandate and spiritual authority of the Koryŏ kings were formally bestowed on them by Buddhism. It can of course be discussed to which extent these rites had a purely formal function, but the fact remains that Buddhism was lending its authority and power to the official sanctioning of the Koryŏ rulers. In other words the Koryŏ kings received the right to rule - at least symbolically - from the Buddhas which must be seen as the equivalent of the Confucian rite for the bestowal of the Heavenly Mandate (Kor. *ch'ŏnmyŏng* 天命). We know that during most of the Song dynasty this practice was not followed, but in Heian Japan similar rites were conducted.

Another important aspect of the relationship between Esoteric Buddhism and the Koryŏ ruling class is the economic one. Although this aspect is a universal one as far as state-Buddhist relationship goes in all the cultures of medieval East Asia, and indeed one of the historically touchy points as regards excessive Buddhist power, it is abundantly clear that under the Koryŏ the government spent ridiculously large amounts of funds on the Buddhist establishments and the monastic communities in general. If we limit our discussion of the state expenses that went to Buddhism relating to the costs set aside for the performances of Esoteric Buddhist rituals, including meagre feasts, i.e. vegetarian banquets, special donations to monk-leaders etc., all part and parcel of the reality of staging these elaborate and evidently pompous rituals, the financial burden must have been a heavy one indeed.[19] Especially so when we remember that the periods when state-sponsored rituals were performed peaked during periods of natural

19 The *KS* provide us with information on the performance of some Esoteric Buddhist rituals which shows that large sums were spent. Moreover, the mere feeding of as many as thirty thousand monks on the occasion of a single assembly, in any case an accessory to the ritual itself, is a good indicator of how costly these rites actually were. Cf. *KS*.I.159b. See also Lee (1984: 132-3).

disasters and foreign invasions.[20]

These observations would seem to show that the Koryŏ rulers and their ministers, or at least most of them, were greatly devoted to Buddhism, and that this devotion in certain cases may be considered as having gone well beyond any sense of reason and logic. Even under the Heian where the Imperial court spent huge amounts of cash and provisions on Buddhist rituals, we do not find an expenditure even remotely comparable to that of the Koryŏ neither in terms of costs nor frequency. It is likely that these rather extreme expressions of Buddhist devotion on the part of the Koryŏ rulers were partly responsible for the rise of the Confucian anti-Buddhist movement which eventually toppled the dynasty in 1392 A.D. However, we should bear in mind, that the Buddhist ritual-extravaganzas constitute a defining characteristic for the whole of the Koryŏ and not one which only developed during the last century of the dynasty.[21]

As part of the state-Buddhism symbiosis under the Koryŏ mention should also be made of the Indra cult. Although Indra was a well-known deity in the Buddhist pantheon in all the East Asian cultures, there is to my knowledge no Indra cults comparable to that of Koryŏ in neither Song China nor Heian Japan. Indra's assigned role in Buddhism was that of a "mundane" ruler of the heavenly bureaucracy. As to why his cult became so important under the Koryŏ is difficult to say, especially since we do not find any matching practice in the other contemporary East Asian cultures. As one way of coming to terms with this fact, I am of the opinion that the Koryŏ rulers may have identified

20 The entries in the *KS* reveal a clear connection between the frequency of Buddhist rituals held in or for the royal court and various disasters as heralded by the movements of the planets. This relationship has been discussed by Kim (1994). See also Li (1976).

21 This of course leads to another and crucial aspect of the Koryŏ dynasty, namely its overall wealth as a country, which must have been quite substantial given the amount of expenditure it could afford on its support of Buddhism. Also the fact that Koryŏ attracted the interest of Japanese piracy, which often target temples where valuables were known to be found. The wealth of the Buddhist temples and monasteries under the Koryŏ is common knowledge, and was undoubtedly one of the leading factors behind many of the anti-Buddhist decrees that were implemented against the religion during the early Chosŏn. See Yi (1976).

themselves with Indra. In other words, while Indra ruled over the gods in heaven, the Koryŏ rulers served as Dharma kings on the earthly plane.

The importance of the Indra cult under the Koryŏ - specially when discussing the relationship between rulers and Buddhism - can hardly be overestimated. As far as the primary sources go, it was so great that it overshadowed, or at least equalled, many of the more standard Buddhist cults such as that devoted to Avalokiteśvara (Kor. *Kwanseŭm*), Maitreya or even that of the Pure Land. While it is necessary to distinguish between the respective purposes and functions of the various Buddhist cults that flourished under the Koryŏ, there can be little doubt that the Indra cult enjoyed a special status, undoubtedly because it had become fully incorporated into the complex of royal rites.[22]

While these observations clearly need further elaboration and documentation I strongly believe that there is a sufficiently clear and recognizable pattern in the primary material which may serve us as a strong indicator of the synthetic nature of the Buddhism-state relationship under the Koryŏ.

III. The Canonical Significance

The arrival in Koryŏ of the first printed Tripiṭaka from China in 991 CE. was undoubtedly one of the most significant and important events in the history of early Koryŏ Buddhism (*KS*.I.77a). This made with one stroke a whole range of "new" and other, hitherto unknown scriptures available to Korean Buddhists.[23] However, it was not until the Koreans themselves began the undertaking of compiling the texts

22 See Sŏ (1993: 68-114).

23 We have virtually no historically solid information on the nature of the Buddhist canon during the Silla available to us today. What is known is largely based on conjecture and indirect comparison with China and Japan. The Buddhist scriptures were in all likelihood transmitted in the form of handwritten rolls and other media such as stitched booklets and folding books in the concertina format.

and carving the wood blocks for the first Koryŏ Tripiṭaka during the 11th century that a complete and up-dated Buddhist canon for the first time became available in Buddhists centres throughout the Korean Peninsula. This is not the place to go into a discussion of the details surrounding the creation of the first Koryŏ Tripiṭaka, however a few observations on its importance for the subsequent development of Esoteric Buddhism may be in order.

The arrival of the printed Tripiṭaka from Song China gave Korean Buddhism a great stimulus and more easy access to Buddhist texts of any kind, the large corpus of Esoteric Buddhist texts - which previously had only been available to a very small circle of initiates - now became available to all who could read. Moreover, with the printing of the first Korean Tripiṭaka the new translations of Esoteric Buddhist texts done by the monks Dharmapāla (963-1058), Dānapāla (n.d.) and Dharmaraksa (n.d.) during the early Northern Song became available.[24]

There is one striking feature of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ, which has been overlooked by most scholars, namely the absence of an indigenous corpus of Esoteric Buddhist writings. When surveying the East Asian Buddhist canons, we find virtually no original compositions on Esoteric Buddhism by Koryŏ authors. The few existing text-pieces, including some *dhāraṇi*, a handful of epigraphs, a variety of panegyrics and one ritual manual hardly constitute an Esoteric Buddhist text corpus.[25] This fact is noteworthy, since we have a least a handful of extant Esoteric Buddhist texts, including extensive commentaries, written by Silla monks. As we may safely rule out the impossibility that there once was an extensive corpus of Esoteric Buddhist texts written by Koryŏ monks which has somehow disappeared, we are left with the obvious solution to the problem: it never existed! This means that the Esoteric Buddhist canon used by practitioners during the Koryŏ was essentially that found in the *Kaibao Tripiṭaka*. In other words, it was the

24 See Pak (1975).

25 One may consult the excellent bibliography found at the back of the *HMSY* for verification. Cf. ibid., pp. 637-42.

Esoteric Buddhist texts transmitted during the early part of the dynasty and perpetuated by the two Koryŏ Tripiṭakas which formed the backbone of the textual corpus of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition in Korea. This view is at least partly supported by internal evidence found in the only ritual manual from the Koryŏ, the *Pŏmsŏ Ch'ongji chip* 梵書總持集 (Collection of Mantras from Sanskrit Books) from 1219 A.D., the contents of which is based entirely on texts and text-passages lifted from Indian and Chinese Esoteric Buddhist scriptures.[26] As to why no Koryŏ adepts of Esoteric Buddhism wrote or compiled their own texts is anybody' guess. I have no explanation for this curious lacuna, except that it could be that there was no need for them? Surely there were enough Esoteric Buddhist scriptures available to satisfy the demands of even the most compulsive ritual fanatic. Moreover, if we look at the types of Esoteric Buddhist rituals performed during the Koryŏ - list which is both lengthy and detailed - we find indications that the majority of them were indeed based on scriptures originating in the Esoteric Buddhist tradition of Tang China.[27]

IV. Esoteric Buddhist Astrology

When looking at the defining practices and beliefs of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ, one is immediately struck by the consistent and frequent references to astrology including the worship of the heavenly bodies. Astrology is normally considered a "science" in the East Asian cultures, and despite the fact that many of the fundamental aspects of it was shaped in pre-Buddhist China, by the Tang it had become an integrated part of Buddhist beliefs and practices in both China, Korea and Japan. Before proceeding further, it would seem in order to define astrology more clearly as a type of East Asian medieval science which seeks to explain and predict how the movements of the

26 For a detailed study of this ritual manual, see Chŏn (1990).

27 For a list of these rituals, see Chŏng (295-342 , esp. 298-9).

heavenly bodies influence the lives of humans and by extension all in the earthly abode. Furthermore, traditional astrology sets up methods through which the astral influences may be controlled, modified or in extreme cases counteracted. Going beyond mere observation of the movements of the planets, and the forecasting of whatever influences they are likely to enact, Buddhism and Daoism as the main religious traditions in East Asia, went one step ahead in the manner in which they dealt with the planetary movements. Both traditions believed that correctly performed ritual based on the salvific and corrective powers of the respective divinities of Buddhism and Daoism, would enable their adept, ritual specialists in averting whatever unwholesome influences the heavenly bodies might inflict on the world of humans. In time both Buddhism and Daoism created complex and strictly structured ritual programs to deal with the heavenly influences. Eventually medieval Chinese Buddhism became the transmitter of a type of astral lore in which traditional Chinese cosmology and Daoist metaphysics including astronomical observations, *yin-yang* 陰陽 beliefs, *wuxing* 五行 theories, geomancy etc. were integrated into to a coherent system of belief. While this belief system was founded on traditional Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, it was constantly undergoing cultural modifications in the form of a plethora of apocryphal Chinese Buddhist scriptures. It was this multi-facetted and multi-layered system which the medieval Korean inherited through their own Buddhist tradition. And not only did they inherit it, they expanded on it and refined it is accordance with their own cultural needs and preferences.

With this in mind we may proceed directly to a discussion of the nature of Korean astrology in the Buddhist context. Here it is noteworthy that there are certain aspects of Koryŏ Buddhist astrology which would seem to have differed somewhat from that of its neighbouring countries.[28]

28 A highly interesting Liao text recording the astrological teachings of an unidentified national preceptor (*kuksa* 國師) of the Koryŏ including a dialogue with a Khitan diplomat in the late 10th century, reveals that the Koreans were considered as being in possession of a superior

First of all the manner in which the Koryŏ Buddhists envisaged the cosmos and the divinities who lorded over it featured a number of distinctive characteristics as follows:

* All calamities befalling the realm were caused by planetary movements, i.e calamities were caused by some form of cosmic imbalance.
* Calamities could be counteracted by making sacrifices to the proper divinities in charge of the cosmic order.
* Buddhist divinities were believed to be able to correct cosmic imbalance.

The main Buddhist deity to invoke in cases of danger from the movements of the planets across the sky, and especially in cases of comets and shooting stars, was the Buddha Tejaprabha, the Lord of the Golden Wheel. Information on the importance of this Buddha and his cult can be found throughout the *KS*, and the Ritual for the *Removal of Calamities* (Kor. *sojae toryang* 消災 道場), clearly one of the most important and most frequently performed Esoteric Buddhist rites under that dynasty has been ambly documented.[29] When looking at Koryŏ's neighbours, including Song, Liao, Jin, Xixia and Japan, we find that the Tejaprabha cult enjoyed equal popularity in those countries as well.[30]

form of astrology. Cf. *Xingming conggua zixu* 星命總括自序 (Personal Preface Summing-Up the Diviniation of the Planets), *Quan Liaowen* (Complete Texts of the Liao), comp. and annotated by Chen Shu, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982, pp. 92-4. I have briefly discussed this text and its implications in an unpublished paper entitled "New Information on Astrology and Buddhism under the Koryŏ," which I presented at the AKSE Conference in Sheffield, July, 2005.

29 See Sŏ (1993: 157-207). Tejaprabha was by no means the only deity invoked in connection with astrological problems. We also find an array of other divinities including the Daoist god T'iyi 太乙, the gods of the Twenty-eight Constellations, and the gods of the Great Dipper. See also Sørensen (1995: 71-105).

30 A drawn diagram for an altar used in the worship of Tejaprabha, a Chisheng tanyang 熾盛壇樣, can be found among the Buddhist scriptures and materials brought back to Japan by Ennin 圓仁 (794-864). See *Nittō guhō junrei gyoki - Xiaozhu* (Record of Entering Tang in Search of the Dharma - annotated; 1992: 576). Among other things this indicates that a ritual tradition had developed around Tejaprabha Buddha, and was well-established in Tang China by the middle of the 9th century. See also Meng (1996).

An interesting Xixia wall-painting on the northern corridor of cave No. 2 of the Dong Qianfodong 東千佛洞, tentatively dated to the 12th century but which may turn out to be earlier, depicts the standing Tejaprabha with *khakkara* and two monk attendants.[31] Iconographically it is identical to the ink drawing of this Buddha as found in the Japanese copy of the deities of the planets in the *Kyūyō tō zuzō* 九曜等圖像 (Images of the Nine Luminaries)[32] dated to 1164 A.D.[33] This shows that by the 11-12th centuries there was a more or less fixed iconographical model for depicting this form of Tejaprabha in East Asia. However, there can be little doubt that this form ultimately derived from a Chinese original, which in all likelihood came about sometime during the late Tang.

When seen in this light, it is obvious that the astrological tradition of the Koryŏ was part and parcel of a pan-East Asian Buddhist tradition. A fairly large amount of material culture relating to the astrological cults have been documented from Koryŏ's neighbouring countries. While it is possible that similar forms and types were known there as well, but are at the present not able to establish if this was actually so.

V. The Problem of the "Missing" Esoteric Buddhist Art and Iconography

As regards surviving Esoteric Buddhist art from the Koryŏ very little material has actually survived. This means that we can not substantiate some of the claims of modern Korean scholarship which deal with the nature of the Esoteric Buddhism and its ritual practices during the period in question. The reason for this being that in order to better understand these rites and the lore behind them, we need

31 See Zhang (53).

32 *TZ*.7.738. This scroll is presently kept in the Kanji-in 觀智院 of the Tŏji 東寺 in Kyoto. For a similar copy, see also *TZ*.7.749-60.

33 For this dating, see Hayashi (39).

representative pieces of religious art in order to place them in their right context. I shall elaborate on this point in the following.

Vairocana Buddha is a shared deity in Esoteric Buddhism in the whole of East Asia. However, there are significant iconographical differences to be seen between those from found in the Koryŏ and those of fx. Japan and China inclusive those in the material from the Liao and Jin. Again it is evident that the orthodox iconographical forms as transmitted by the Zhenyan School of Tang China, which otherwise continued to influence Esoteric Buddhism in East Asia, Japan in particular, do not appear to have found its way to Korea, whereas it was evidently imported in full to Heian Japan mainly through the efforts of Kūkai and monks belonging to the Tendai School. As it stands this fact is one of the best arguments against the view that a full-fledged transmission of orthodox Zhenyan Buddhism took place to Unified Silla. The surviving Buddhist art of Silla and Koryŏ simply does not substantiate it. Given the almost overpowering importance of icons in Esoteric Buddhist rituals, it seems all but certain that the surviving examples of Esoteric Buddhist iconography from the Koryŏ were introduced after the Silla was dissolved. And that it probably arrived via the states of Liao and Jin. Also there are no examples of a direct influence from Japanese Esoteric Buddhist art to be found anywhere in the Koryŏ material, although parallel iconographical themes have been documented. However, these may be seen as examples of a pan-East Asian Buddhist iconography rather than special imports.

What little does survive of Esoteric Buddhist material culture from the Koryŏ indicate that its art may have differed rather significantly from its Chinese and Japanese counterparts on a number of aspects even though certain ritual objects such as vajras and bells are near identical.[34]

34 For such items, see the collections of Tongguk University Museum, Hoam Museum and Museum of Korean Buddhist Art. Here it should also be remembered that some of these ritual objects traditionally considered from the Koryŏ may in fact have been produced outside Korea. Some of them may even have been made during the Tang.

Despite the many missing pieces in the jiksaw puzzle of Esoteric Buddhist art of the Koryŏ, we are able to come up with the following generalizations: While the tradition of the Dual Maṇḍalas, i.e. the Dharmadhātu and Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, clearly was adhered to by Esoteric Buddhist practitioners in Koryŏ, the surviving material does not reveal in which way and exactly how this was done. A few *maṇḍala of the bija*-type (i.e. with the deities represented by either Siddham or Chinese Characters), drawn or printed in red on paper, have been found as part of the votive material placed inside Buddhist images and *stūpas*.[35] However, large ritual paintings comparable to the later *t'aenghwa* of the Chosŏn period have not been found. Here it must also be borne in mind that painted maṇḍalas similar to those transmitted by the Japanese Shingon 真言宗 tradition have also not been found in the extant Buddhist material from the Song, Liao and Jin, even though we do know that maṇḍala-based practices we wide-spread there.[36]

VI. *Dhāraṇī* Pillars

As regards belief in the escape from rebirth in the unwholesome destinies, i.e. as *preta*, dweller in hell or as an animal, the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī sūtra* (hereafter *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼)[37] is undoubtedly one of the most important Esoteric Buddhist scriptures in the whole of East Asian Buddhism.[38] It

35 I am here refering to pokchang 腹藏 material kept in the University Museum of Tongguk University, Seoul, and in the Temple Museum of Ssangye Temple 雙溪寺, Mt. Chiri 智理山, South Chŏlla province. See also the discussion in Hŏ (193-169). Unfortunately the author has not seen it fit to include a proper pictorial documentation.

36 The absence of main-stream Esoteric Buddhist ritual paintings dating from these three dynasties is conspicious and difficult to explain. Presumably such material was created to accompany the many Esoteric Buddhist rituals performed at their respective courts in addition to monastic performances. Remnants from the Southern Song have been found at Mt. Baoding 寶頂山 in Dazu 大足, Sichuan province. However, this material is both highly provincial and highly unorthodox and can only indirectly reflect the earlier Zhenyan iconography. See Chongqing et al. (1999).

37 T.968, No.10. See also T.967, No.19; T.969, No.19; T.970, No.19 and T.971, No.19. These translations were all done between the years 679-710 CE.

teaches the escape from rebirth in the Buddhist hells through the utterance of a particularly powerful *dhāraṇī*. By reciting the *dhāraṇī* as little as twenty-five times, the worshipper is secured rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Moreover the scripture promises that those who carve this *dhāraṇī* on a special, stone pillar, will receive divine protection.[39] In the Sinitic cultural sphere we find that the *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī* received great attention and popularity from the late 7th century onwards with literally thousands of such pillars being raised throughout China (Lü 1995: 356-62). The existence of numerous engraved stone pillars with the *dhāraṇī* in question from the Liao and Jin dynasties have been documented as well.[40] Although the *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī* was also popular in Japan, I am unsure whether or not the tradition of having the *dhāraṇī* carved on pillars ever became widespread there. Likewise, when looking for evidence of the importance of this canonical *sūtra* in the Koryŏ material, it is encountered with some frequency.[41]

A perusal of extant stele inscriptions reveal that engraved stone columns with the *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī* were also raised by the Koreans during the Koryŏ in the same manner as it was done in Song, Liao and Jin. However, due to the relatively few extant examples, it is not known how important this tradition actually was under the Koryŏ. What can be established is that all the known examples have been found in the northern provinces, i.e. in the territory now governed by the DPRK.

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38 For a study and translation of a later Tibetan Tantric version of this scripture, see Skorupski (1983).

39 See Liu (1996; 1997). This excellent work is the most informative and comprehensive study of the *dhāraṇī-pillars* to date.

40 For readily available material on the *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī*, see *Quan Liao wen* (Complete Literature of the Liao; hereafter *QLW*). comp. and annotated by Chen Shu, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982, pp. 68, 73, 81-2 (2), 82, 105-6, 115-16, 170-1, 174 (2), 176-7 (*dhāraṇī-stūpa*), 177, 180-1, 186-7 (2), 196-7, 211-12, 219 (*dhāraṇī-stūpa*), 220, 230, 236, 239-40 (*dhāraṇī-stūpa*), 242-3, 243-4, 245-6, 246-7, 278, 280, 284, 287 (2), 297, 305-6 (2), 307 (*stūpa*-pillar), 307, 314, 315-16, 316-17 (?), 318, 333-4, 343, 348, 358, 369. All these inscriptions are indexeret on pp. 390-2.

41 Given the extraordinary importance of this *sūtra* and its *dhāraṇī* in Tang China, I presume that the *Usṇīsavijaya-dhāraṇī* was popular in Korea under the Unified Silla as well, but no evidence is presently at hand with which to substantiate this.

a) Hexagonal column with the text of the *dhāraṇī* written in both Siddham script and in Chinese. Below the title of the *dhāraṇī* in Chinese is engraved the large *root-bīja Ā* in Siddham script. North P'yŏngan province (*CKS*.I.540-46).

b) Hexagonal column with the *dhāraṇī* written in both Siddham and in Chinese. Hwanghae province (*CKS*.I.547-48).

c) Fragment with *dhāraṇī* written in Siddham and Chinese, and dedication/eulogy in Chinese. Kaesŏng, Kyŏnggi province (*CKS*.I.548-50).

d) Fragment only with *dhāraṇī* written in Siddham and dedication in Chinese. South P'yŏngan province (*CKS*.I.550).

Of these four documented examples, the eulogy of a) is the one which yields the most interesting information. This source abounds in references to Esoteric Buddhist practices such as the combined "holding of mantras and nirvanic quietude." Interestingly the text also mentions the *Shou lenyan jing* 首楞嚴經 (*Pseudo-Śūrangama sūtra*, T.944, No.19), an apocryphal scripture that enjoyed great popularity under the Koryŏ across the sectarian spectrum.

A survey on Buddhist temples in North Korea contains a short section on *dhāraṇī*-pillars, and it reveals that five different *dhāraṇī*, the *Usṇīśavijāya* 佛頂尊勝, the *Nīlakaṇṭhaka* 大悲心, the *Sitātapatra mahāpratyangirā* 白傘蓋,[42] the *Mahāpratisarā* 大隨求 and the *Śrimahādevī* 大吉祥,[43] were engraved on such pillars.[44] The use of these *dhāraṇī* are consistent with what we know from findings in the territories of the

42 *Sitātapatra mahāpratyangirā-dhāraṇī sūtra*, T.976, No.19. As this sūtra was first translated into Chinese during the Yuan. Hence its presence in Korea must necessarily be dated to the late 13th century at the very earliest. See FDC.3.2724a.

43 Most probably taken from the *Da jixiang tuoluoni jing* (*Śrimahādevī-dhāraṇī Sūtra*), T.1381, No.21.

44 See *Pukhan sach'al yŏn g'u* (379-81).

Song, Liao, Jin and Yuan. Although the exact dating of the North Korean pillars are somewhat obscure, stylistic and structural features indicate that they were made at different times during the Koryŏ.

VII. A Reconsideration of the Meaning of "Nation-Protecting Buddhism"

As a final aspect of Esoteric Buddhism let take a brief look at the issue of *hoguk pulgyo*, the much discussed and criticized concept of "nation-protecting Buddhism." Before doing so, let us recapitulate some of the points that have led to the unduly negative view of *hoguk pulgyo* in recent years. The idea that the main function and reason for Koryŏ Buddhism was to serve as "nation-protecting Buddhism" is a time-honoured theme in modern Korean Buddhist scholarship, a theme which has seen its time of glory followed by a sharp decline. In a recent article on Buddhism under the regime of Park Chunghee (1961-1979) I discussed this issue from the perspective of modern Korean history and the special role it played in Korea' lengthy rule by military dictators in the post-Liberation period.[45] There can be no doubt that "nation-protecting Buddhism" was implemented as a special, political doctrine with the purpose of forging a solid link between the then government of the R.O.K. and the country' Buddhist population. This was done for two reasons: Firstly it was aimed at cementing the Park government' control over a sizable part of the Korean people. By upholding Buddhism, thus making it serve as a guarantee for the government' policies, Park was able to muster loyal political support from a large segment of Korean society. Secondly, the state-Buddhism link harnessed the Korean people ideologically as a serious force against the looming spectre of Communism. As part of this process, the Park regime also utilized the country' Buddhist scholars, making sure that their scholarship reflected the government' own view. What this

45 See Sørensen (2004b).

amounted to was not just an up-dated version or modern version of *hoguk pulgyo*, but in practice it made Buddhism a protector and supporter of military dictatorship in the first order.[46] The primary motive for writing on *hoguk pulgyo* was therefore not always done in order to shed light on "nation-protecting Buddhism" as a historical phenomena of medieval (and later) Korean Buddhism, but it was done in a purely ideological manner to bolster the current military regime and to foster a strong sense of nationalism and patriotism in the Korean population at large. Hence, the picture of Buddhism as a protector of the nation that Korean scholarship presented during the 1960's and 70's was in many ways a distorted and tendentious one. It most certainly did not reflect the historical reality of *hoguk pulgyo* as it had unfolded in the dynastic periods, but was to a large extent a purely artificial reconstruct made to serve contemporary political ends. After the collapse of the Chun Doo-hwan regime in the late 1980's, a new mood, and indeed a new type of Korean scholarship emerged. It goes without saying that a "political swing" to the left was inevitable.

While the politicizing of scholarship on Buddhism by the Korean government has abated to the point of disappearance, there has been - and still is - a growing tendency towards writings with well-defined political views, i.e. writers who have a special political angle to their scholarship. In the course of this process which can partly be seen as a reaction to the form of scholarship that existed under the military regimes, the issues of *hoguk pulgyo* and "patriotic Buddhism" has reappeared. This time with opposite effect.[47] While both are correctly

46 I am not sure to what extent and in what manner Korean scholars of Buddhism were coerced to politicize their writings, but the fact remains that during the Park regime numerous books and articles on Buddhism were written in such a way that they fully accommodated themselves to the government's position. No matter what, it remains a fact that a large number of scholars, who undoubtedly shared the government's political views, were only too happy to lend their writings to serve it. Hence, I am of the view that much of what was written on *hoguk pulgyo* during this period, may even have been done on commission from the Korean government.

47 For a representative of the extreme, revisionist view, see Kim (2001). An earlier and shorter version of this study has appeared in English under the title, "Buddhist Rituals in the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392)," in *A Collection of Theses on Korean Studies* (Kim 1995). For a more

seen as political constructs in the manner in which earlier scholarship presented them, the revisionist writings have unfortunately tended to obfuscate the concrete issue of state-protecting Buddhism in the historical continuum.[48]

The fact remains that during the Koryŏ Buddhism DID serve as a supporter of the kingdom and its ruling families in its capacity as spiritual mediator between the kings and the divine powers represented by Buddhism. There can be no doubt of this phenomena historically speaking.[49] The *modus* through which this reciprocal relationship has been maintained was primarily by having Esoteric Buddhist rituals performed at important temples, and indeed inside the royal palace. Anybody who cares to look at the abundant, primary material contained in the *KS*, most of which is directly connected with the royal house, as well as a substantial amount of the extant epigraphical sources, will immediately acknowledge this fact. Moreover, if we remove the overt political aspirations of some of the Korean scholarship on *hoguk pulgyo* from the Park era, we shall find that most of the sources they used, do hold water.[50] Their main problems are chiefly related to the manner in which they transferred/transposed the Koryŏ reality unto the political context of 1960's Korea.

When comparing Koryŏ with its neighbours in regard to *hoguk pulgyo*, it is immediately clear that Buddhism served as the spiritual guarantor for national security there as well. While it is not sufficiently clear to which extent Buddhism was equally important in the respective state apparatuses of the Liao and Jin states due to lacking primary

moderate revisionist view, see Nam (2003).

48 A good example of this can be found in the writings of Kim (1995).

49 For a useful comparison with the Song dynasty see the findings of Halperin (1999).

50 Most of the 14th issue of *PH* from 1977 was devoted to the issue of *hoguk pulgyo*, and many of the articles appearing there are, despite their political tendencies, based on authentic scholarship. I do not wish to ignore the fact that the scholars in question were actively participating in the propaganda of the Park regime. However, my intention is simply to point out that we need to implement a more critical and discerning view on their writings and the historical period in which they were produced.

sources - although I strongly suspect it was - [51] we do know that under the Xixia, the role of Buddhism equalled that of Koryŏ in importance.[52] In late Heian Japan, the Buddhist presence and influence at court was obviously very extensive, while it was substantially less important, although by no means negligible, at the two Song courts.[53] Again we find that Esoteric Buddhism was the dominant form of Buddhism in connection with rituals held on behalf of or at the various courts in connection with protection from a variety of disasters, both natural and man-made ones. Hence *hoguk pulgyo* in the meaning of Buddhist practises and beliefs harnessed on behalf of the realm and its ruler was a historical reality under the Koryŏ as it also was in the rest of the East Asian empires and countries where Buddhism played a leading cultural role.

As to whether *hoguk pulgyo* was important enough to variant being identified as the most salient feature of Koryŏ Buddhism (or Korean Buddhism as such) is another matter. In my view it should not, not because it was not sufficiently important - I have already stressed that it was very important - but because it would limit our understanding of Koryŏ Buddhism as a whole and indeed of Esoteric Buddhism. However, *hoguk pulgyo* as a functional aspect of Koryŏ Buddhism was undoubtedly the main factor in the relationship between the Koryŏ rulers and Buddhism. Here it is also of significance to understand that Buddhism' place in the *Ten Injunctions* of King T'ejo, as indeed has been pointed out many times by various scholars. Most certainly it was no coincidence that the religion received so prominently a place in this important series of edicts setting forth the founding principles for the guidance and ruling of the kingdom. On the basis of this document

51 It is know, however, that Buddhist rituals for the protection of the Liao and Jin empires were held. See Lü (463-95).

52 See the several important studies by Ruth W. Dunnell (1992; 1996; 2001).

53 While Buddhist influence was noticeable at the Northern Song court, it was marginal at that of the Southern Song. The reason for the steady decline in Buddhist influence at the imperial Song courts can be directly linked to the growing dominance over court functions by Confucians scholar-officials.

alone one is justified in seeing Buddhism as one of the central, supporting pillars of the Koryŏ state.

Conclusion

When trying to understand the many similarities and indeed virtually identical beliefs and practices shared by the followers of Esoteric Buddhism in East Asia, one feature is especially important: Namely that of scriptural homogeneity brought about by the transmissions and diffusions of printed editions of the Tripiṭaka. Given that the successful performance of Esoteric Buddhist rituals depend on the correct or orthodox explications and guidelines, it goes without saying that a fixed canon of Esoteric Buddhism texts served as a great impetus for the perpetuation of a uniform and extended transmission of Esoteric Buddhism lore. Under the Koryŏ this happened twice in the form of the two large-scale Korean Tripiṭaka carving-projects of the 11th and 13th centuries. In addition numerous, small-scale printing and copying projects were undertaken as private or semi-private enterprises throughout the dynasty. At least one such case dealt solely with a text corpus of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures.

On the basis of the KS and various epigraphical sources we know that the Koryŏ kings received the Bodhisattva Precepts. Likewise in the case of the royal *abhiseka* the kings were anointed and empowered through a Buddhist ritual. In both cases this meant that the Koryŏ kings bowed not only to the Buddha but to the Buddhist functionaries, the officiating monks, as well. Symbolically this may be understood as the Koryŏ monarchs ruling through Buddhist sanctioning. Whether this was what actually took place or not is another matter which I have not attempted to answer here.

Astrological practices transmitted within the context of Esoteric Buddhism was a dominant feature of Koryŏ Buddhism, and an important factor in the relationship between temple and state. Although

Esoteric Buddhism was the chief vehicle in handling the functional aspects of this "science" including the taking of omens, divination and performing the correct rituals, the belief-system underlying Koryŏ astrology was a mixture of classical Chinese systems of belief consisting of a variety of philosophical and pseudo-scientific traditions which were integrated with a seemingly undefined blend of Buddho-Daoist beliefs. While these beliefs may have been shared by the majority of learned Buddhists, it seems all by certain that they were mainly transmitted within the context of Esoteric Buddhism. At this stage in the research on Koryŏ astrology and related beliefs it is difficult to determine to which extent the Koreans had added elements of their own invention to what was essentially a product of Chinese culture. However, without being too certain of the details, I tend to consider that they had indeed done so. Bearing in mind the great importance the Koryŏ kings ascribed to Tosŏn's theory of *p'ungsu* which was part of the same complex of beliefs, it would appear that a special Korean astrology had already come about during the second half of the Unified Silla period.

The Indra cult was a strong and persistent element in the relationship between the Koryŏ rulers and Buddhism. And as such it was unique to the Koryŏ. Moreover, I tend to believe that the Indra cult practised at the Koryŏ court throughout most of the dynasty was a sort of "cult of proxy" in the sense that the Koryŏ kings, as Dharma Kings in the human realm exercised a parallel function to that of Indra, the King of the Gods in heaven. Here we should not forget that there existed chapels for Indra worship both outside and inside the royal palace in Kaesŏng which would have given the cult a special status within the larger concept of *hoguk pulgyo*.

Another distinctive feature of Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ was its existence as a trans-sectarian and hence unifying current in Buddhism. While Esoteric Buddhism may have been officially recognized by the Koryŏ kings and their courts as represented by the Sinin and Cho'ngji schools, the actual practice of Esoteric Buddhism went far

beyond limited sectarian confines. The fact that Esoteric Buddhism was practised within the contexts of virtually all the major Buddhist schools from the middle of the dynasty and onwards, indicate that its doctrines and practices can best be understood as part and parcel of general Buddhist beliefs. Undoubtedly it was its rich ritual tradition which made Esoteric Buddhism especially attractive to Buddhists throughout the country. As far as we know Esoteric Buddhism did not exist as a separate school under the Song, but its practices functioned as a under-current in Buddhism as a whole much like it did in Koryŏ. It is unclear how the situation was under the Liao and under the Jin, but in Heian and Kamakura Japan, the Shingon School of Esoteric Buddhism existed as a distinct and separate Buddhist denomination, and only shared some of its practices with the other schools of Buddhism.

No matter the type of Esoteric Buddhism which flourished under the Koryŏ, we have noted a curious absence of Esoteric Buddhist iconography in the surviving objects of Buddhist art from the period. The meagre evidence that exist suggest that Esoteric Buddhist iconography was not particularly widespread if indeed well-known on the Korean Peninsula during the Koryŏ. In any case it is sufficiently clear that the Esoteric Buddhist art of the Koryŏ was not like that of Heian Japan in which a very rich tradition with roots in the late Tang dynasty existed.

Extant data on the *dhāraṇī*-pillars and related material indicate that under the Koryŏ beliefs and practices based on a series of powerful *dhāraṇī* were widespread, and that Korean Buddhists at that time shared this belief with Buddhists in the other East Asian as well. This is a good example of a continental pan-East Asian form of Buddhist practice in which the Koreans also participated.

Hoguk pulgyo understood as Buddhism functioning on behalf of the ruler and the kingdom was clearly a reality under the Koryŏ. It should not be read as “nationalist” or even “patriotic Buddhism,” but that one of the roles of the religion was to carry out special services on behalf

of the king and the kingdom. In other words, Buddhism was seen as a sort of spiritual safeguard for the country. While *hoguk pulgyo* obviously took on special and distinctive features in the East Asian cultural context, we should not forget that this concept originated in India. As such it is an integral part of traditional Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the light of what has been presented here, let me conclude with the assumption that the transmission of Esoteric Buddhism to Koryŏ was chiefly a transmission of books rather than a human one. In other words, the type of Esoteric Buddhism which developed and flourished during the Koryŏ was in many ways the product of local initiative and invention and not so much the result of an institutional import from Song China or the other neighbouring countries. This would also go a long way in explaining why virtually no remains of orthodox Zhenyan iconography have been found in the Buddhist material culture of the Koryŏ. Furthermore, it would be a convenient way of explaining why Esoteric Buddhism under the Koryŏ was in large measure non-sectarian, consisting of a series of chiefly ritual practices which could be performed within the context of any Buddhist school, as indeed they were.

Abbreviations

CKS	*Chōsen kinseki sōran*
FDC	*Foguang da cidian*
HMSY	*Han'guk milgyo sasang yŏn'gu* 韓國密教思想研究 (Studies in the Thought of Esoteric Buddhism in Korea). Comp. by Pulgyo Munhwa Yŏnguwŏn, Seoul: Tongguk Taehakkyŏ Ch'ulp'anbu. 1986.
HPC	*Han'guk pulgyo chŏnsŏ* 韓國佛教全書. Comp. by Han'guk pulgyo chŏnsŏ p'ŏnch'an wiwŏn hoe. Seoul: Tonguk T'ehakkyŏ Ch'lp'nsa. 1984.
HPIS	*Han'guk pulgyo inmyŏng sajŏn.*
KJ	*Korea Journal*
KS	*Koryŏ sa*
KSC	*Koryŏ sa chŏryo*

PH *Pulgyo hakbo*
QLW *Quan Liao wen*
S *Stein Collection, British Library*
T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*

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