

The Letters of Hanam Sunim: Practice after Enlightenment and Obscurity

Ven. Chong Go

The letters of the early twentieth century sŏn master Hanam Sunim provide a unique view into his thought about spiritual practice after enlightenment. Surprisingly, they also contain clues that may help explain the lack of interest in Hanam Sunim's life and teachings in the 40 years following his death. This paper explores Hanam Sunim's thought about practice after enlightenment and the role it and other factors may have played in the obscurity that befell one of the greatest sŏn masters of the era. In addition to socio-economic influences, it was observed that Hanam Sunim's views were opposed by the majority of the leaders of the Purification Movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Perhaps not coincidentally, Hanam Sunim's teachings only began to draw attention in the early 1990's as the previous generation of leaders began to pass from positions of influence and power.

Key words: Hanam, Practice after enlightenment, Letters,
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Chong Go Sunim is a Buddhist monk practicing in Korea and is a member of the Hanmaum International Culture Institute.

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I. Introduction

During the end of the Chōsun dynasty and through the Japanese occupation, one of the most outstanding Korean Buddhist leaders was the monk Hanam Chungwōn (漢巖 重遠, 1876-1951). Inexplicably, give the renown and respect accorded him during his lifetime, Hanam Sunim's life and teachings languished in relative obscurity for the second half of the twentieth century.¹

In part this may be due to the loss of much of his writings during a fire at Sangwōn Temple in 1947, and the later destruction of the Korean War. Most of what remains are a few short essays that had been published in Buddhist journals, and, importantly, the letters Hanam Sunim sent to other Buddhist practitioners.

One of these practitioners was the *sōn* master, Kyōngbong Sunim. They enjoyed an unusually close correspondence, exchanging at least 24 letters over the course of two decades. Further, whereas the articles that Hanam Sunim published in Buddhist journals were for a general audience, his letters to Kyōngbong Sunim were directed to an advanced practitioner. In fact, in the very first of these letters, Hanam Sunim writes at length about practice after enlightenment, a topic only hinted at in later letters, and addressed in no other writings.

Using these letters, this article will attempt to examine Hanam Sunim's thought about practice after enlightenment. For Hanam Sunim, central to practice after enlightenment was the continued, diligent effort, where one now went forward from the perspective of understanding one's true, inherent nature.

¹ Apart from being one of the main disciples of the great monk Kyōnghō Sunim, Hanam Sunim had served as the head of meditation halls at important Buddhist centers in both the Myohyang and Diamond Mountains, as well as at Tongdo Temple, Kōnbong Temple, Pongūn Temple, and at Sangwōn Temple. His stature was such that when describing the status of Korean Buddhism, practitioners used the saying, "Hanam in the north, Mangong in the south." He was frequently elected to high leadership positions within Korean Buddhism, usually without his consent. In 1929 he was elected one of the seven patriarchs of Korean Buddhism during the Grand Assembly of Korean Buddhist Monks (Chosōn Pulgyo sūngnyō taehoe). He was elected as vice chairman of the meditation society, *Sōn hakwōn* in 1934, and in 1936 he was elected as the *Supreme Patriarch* of the Jogye Order, and again in 1941, when it was reorganized. He resigned in 1945, but was again elected in 1948 and asked to serve as Supreme Patriarch.

Likewise, the practitioner had to be careful to avoid being led astray by as yet unresolved habits and karma.

Importantly, in Hanam Sunim's advice about practice after enlightenment can be found a clue that may provide some insight into why there was so little written about him after his death. This is his connection with National Teacher Pojo Chinul. For the entire idea of practice after enlightenment, and Pojo Chinul, were to fall out of favor with the generation of monks who led the *Purification Movement* of the 1950's and 1960's, and who remained in positions of influence up through the 1990's.

After examining Hanam Sunim's thought about practice after enlightenment, this paper will explore the reality of Hanam Sunim's connection with Pojo Chinul, together with the factors that may have played a role in Hanam Sunim's obscurity.

II. Practice After Enlightenment

In early 1928, Kyōngbong Sunim sent a letter, now lost, to Hanam Sunim asking how one should practice following an enlightenment experience. For Hanam Sunim the answer was simple: Whereas before one practiced with the *faith* that one's inherent nature was the same as all Buddhas, now one practiced while *knowing* that one's inherent nature was the same as all Buddhas. Although on the outside, one's practice after enlightenment might seem little different than before, now one could proceed grounded in one's fundamental nature, seeing through the conditioned manifestations of language and the phenomenal world. Although this new realm of spiritual practice had opened to the practitioner, it was not without its dangers.

1. Cautions

The fundamental danger Hanam Sunim perceived was that, although one had realized that one's original nature is the same as all Buddhas, it was still

possible to fall victim to the habits, attachments, and karma that yet remained. Having been accumulated over endless lives, these were not so easily gotten rid of.² Thus, until these were completely dissolved, there was always the danger that one could lose one's way, and even the awareness of one's inherent nature.

Thus, Hanam Sunim's first letter to Kyōngbong Sunim is particularly important because of the number of detailed cautions Hanam Sunim gives about the dangers facing the practitioner even after an enlightenment experience.

The first thing Hanam Sunim warned about was the loss of one's goal:

... you have to be even more careful after enlightenment than before. This is because before enlightenment you knew what you had to do (there was a goal), but after enlightenment, if your practice isn't that thorough, or if you are lazy, then you will be caught again by life and death, and may never be able to escape (HIBL: 228).

Having achieved what one was aiming for, the practitioner doesn't know what to do next. This also implies that there is something next that needs attending to. As will be seen later, in Hanam Sunim's view, part of what came next was dealing with the habits and attachments that had been accumulated over countless lifetimes, but which had not yet been dissolved.

The next thing Hanam Sunim warned the practitioner about was becoming overconfident in one's ability. This included thinking that what remained was easy, and so relaxing one's effort or unconsciously assuming there would be time later to do what needed to be done.

Dahui said, 'Often those people with a lot of ability don't make much of an effort, because they think that it is easy. And so they stop practicing. After not practicing for a long time, they are caught forever by delusions and evil' (HIBL: 228).

² In this especially Hanam Sunim shared the same view as Chinul. This idea will be addressed further in the next section.

This is not the last time that Hanam Sunim warns that even though one has awakened, it is still possible to lose that awakening, and as Hanam Sunim quotes Dahui, “(to be) caught forever by delusions and evil.” Quite a stern warning.

Towards the end of Hanam Sunim’s first letter to Kyōngbong Sunim, he warns about the danger of following one’s urges and impulses:

Yongjia said about people who are satisfied with one enlightenment experience and so stop practicing: ‘Saying that everything is empty while ignoring cause and effect, and behaving badly is inviting disaster.’

Don’t follow the example of those shallow people who misunderstand the meaning, who are too stubborn, who ignore the principle of cause and effect, and who don’t understand that what they receive is the result of their own actions (HIBL: 232).

Often called *unhindered behavior*, this is what Yongjia is referring to when he says, “saying everything is empty and behaving badly.” This is a dangerous stage for the practitioner. Although one has suddenly awakened to the nature of mind, karmic hindrances still remain, and it can happen that one’s dualistic desires and attachments can be mistaken for expressions of this fundamental truth.

The results of this can be catastrophic, for even though one has experienced the nondual nature of reality, as Hanam Sunim warns, the laws of cause and effect still apply. One’s actions will still have consequences. Alcohol will still destroy one’s liver and improper sexual relationships will still bring all manner of painful consequences to oneself and others. Hanam Sunim is warning that even after enlightenment, one is not immune from the results of one’s actions.

Throughout the cautions that Hanam Sunim gave to Kyōngbong Sunim is the warning that although one has awakened there is still work to be done and dangers to overcome. For if one stops practicing long enough, if one’s behavior is out of sync with one’s realization of the truth, eventually the awareness of one’s original nature will be lost. Hanam Sunim gave two

examples of the diligence required to ensure that the practitioner isn't distracted from awareness of one's true nature. He wrote to Kyōngbong Sunim:

It's impossible to list all of the examples that have been left to guide people so that they will not be caught by evil ways. It's not that I think you don't know about these teachings, but you have asked me about this topic Even though you have probably heard these words before, you should not carelessly think that you understand them. Examine them carefully again, and think about them deeply.

A monk asked Guizong Zhichang, "What is Buddha?"

"You yourself are Buddha."

"How should practice after enlightenment be done?"

"If there is even one speck of dust in your eye, you writhe on the ground uncontrollably."

If you thoroughly understand the meaning of "dust" in this Dharma talk, then practice after enlightenment will be taken care of naturally.

Shigong Huizang presented himself before Mazu and after obtaining the Dharma, had his hair shaved off and served as Mazu's attendant. One day while working in the kitchen, he completely forgot about what he had been doing and was just sitting vacantly. Mazu came in and asked him,

"What are you doing?"

"I'm leading a cow."

"How do you lead a cow?"

"If it takes even one step off the path, I take hold of its nose ring and pull it back."

"You know how to lead a cow."

If you understand "take hold of" and "pull" in detail, then there's no need to ask about practice after enlightenment (HIBL: 228-229).

Thus, these cautions underscore the need for continued, diligent practice even after enlightenment. There is an alternative view, however, one which states that any enlightenment requiring further practice cannot be true enlightenment.

2. Sudden versus Gradual Cultivation

In the last few decades a debate has surfaced within Korean Buddhism about whether the nature of the enlightenment process can be characterized as sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation, or rather as sudden enlightenment followed by sudden cultivation.³ The main proponent of this argument was Sōngchōl Sunim, who argued that if continued practice was necessary after an enlightenment experience, then it wasn't a true enlightenment experience. In his argument, the only way to awaken was to overcome the defilements that prevented one from being aware of one's inherent nature. Having done so, where was the need for continuing to try to overcome defilements? Weren't they already overcome? Sōngchōl Sunim felt that the awakening and gradual cultivation of which Chinul, in particular, was writing about was nothing other than an intellectual understanding, followed by the deepening of that understanding. Sōngchōl Sunim was quite adamant that there was no possibility of such an understanding leading to true awakening.

One of the implications of this viewpoint was that if this is the case, then all of the people who taught about the need for practice after enlightenment were themselves apparently not enlightened. Thus, their teachings couldn't be relied upon as guides for practice. Again, the object of this argument was apparently Pojo Chinul, whose writings about gradual practice following an experience of sudden enlightenment⁴ have long been studied by serious practitioners in Korea. Indeed Sōngchōl Sunim stated that monks who wanted to become enlightened shouldn't study the works of Chinul, and he even went as far as to forbid the study of the works of Chinul by any monk at his temple, Haein Temple.

However, Hanam Sunim was quite definite about the need for continued practice after enlightenment, saying:

Often after enlightenment, masters of old would hide all traces of

3 See Sōngchōl (1981). For another view of this argument, see Han (1990).

4 See *Cultivating the Mind* and *Excerpts from the Dharma Collection*, in particular.

themselves. They would conceal their names and go far away, and would spend a long time raising the sacred embryo (聖胎). ... they would spend 30 or 40 years like this, and for the rest of their lives would not leave the mountains (HIBL: 228).

This paragraph by Hanam Sunim resembles a well-known statement by Chinul:

Although he has awakened to the fact that his original nature is no different from that of the Buddhas, the beginningless habit-energies are extremely difficult to remove suddenly and so he must continue to cultivate while relying on this awakening. Through this gradual permeation, his endeavors reach completion. He constantly nourishes the sacred embryo, and after a long time he becomes a saint. Hence it is called gradual cultivation.

This process can be compared to the maturation of a child. From the day of its birth, a baby is endowed with all the sense organs just like everyone else, but its strength is not yet fully developed. It is only after many months and years that it will finally become an adult (Buswell: 144-145).

Ultimately, Hanam Sunim's view of the rationale for practice after enlightenment can probably be summed up in Chinul's quotation of Dahui, "The essence is awakened to suddenly, and enlightenment is attained in that instant. However, phenomena cannot be removed suddenly; they are brought to an end one by one" (Sim: 177).

3. Going Forward while Knowing One's Inherent Nature

Although Hanam Sunim taught that one's spiritual practice must continue after enlightenment, in his view this practice was now fundamentally different. Whereas before one had gone forward on the basis of *faith* that one's inherent nature was inherently enlightened, now one went forward from the perspective of *directly understanding* this. Provided one didn't get distracted and lose awareness of one's inherent nature, one would be able to see through the limitations of the temporal, conditioned world. Hanam Sunim describes this to

Kyōngbong Sunim, saying, "... enlightened people are like a huge ball of fire that burns up whatever they touch,⁵ so what good are words when trying to guide people like you?" (HIBL: 228).

Hanam Sunim described reading and listening from this perspective as understanding the *living* words - understanding the true meaning that underlay the words. It was of the utmost importance that the practitioner attains this level of practice.

If you don't awaken to the living word and see only words and letters, or if you are caught by right and wrong, then you won't be able to gather any strength, and your speech will not be in accord with your actions, so you won't be able to avoid becoming one of those people who overestimate the level of their own practice. Thus you must have very sincere determination (HIBL: 232).

Hanam Sunim spoke about the difference between awakening to the living words, or not, in his sixth letter to Kyōngbong Sunim. Hanam Sunim had been discussing the ten ways that Chinul gave to rest the mind of delusion,⁶ but goes on to say:

If you try to practice spiritual cultivation by clinging to such words (as Chinul's), then words are just words and you are you. Like oil just sitting on water, you won't be able to achieve the level of enlightenment where all delusions are suddenly and thoroughly destroyed. If you would achieve a very clear level of enlightenment, then you must go forward and see from the place that exists before a single thought arises. Seeing like this, if you suddenly forget, then the five-colored threads in your mind will all be naturally cut off (HIBL: 249).

This is a very interesting statement, because Hanam Sunim is implying that the same text can be both living words and *dead words*, depending upon the reader. Chinul himself says something similar in his *Admonitions to*

5 An alternate reading would be "their enlightenment like a huge ball of fire that burns up all defilements and delusions."

6 These are found in *Straight Talk on the True Mind*.

Beginning Students, “A snake drinks water and produces poison; a cow drinks water and produces milk” (Buswell: 137).

In his forward to *The Dharma Teachings of Pojo*, Hanam Sunim said something comparable. Addressing the complaint that by publishing this collection he had led people away from the truth that transcends words and letters, and instead only deepened their ignorance, Hanam Sunim wrote:

If someone clings to speech and the written word without diligently investigating (the fundamental issue), then even though they read the entire Tripitaka, their efforts will still amount to nothing. However, to someone who has grasped his foundation and so understands the meaning before the words, whose true eye has suddenly opened, then, to such a person, even market place gossip and the prattling of children become outstanding Dharma talks. How much more so is this true, then, for the liberating teachings of our patriarch Pojo? (HIBL: 332).

Thus, the issue of living words or dead words depends upon the reader: is he or she operating from a clear experience of his or her fundamental nature, or is he or she operating from the basis of their intellectual concepts and received knowledge?

This also neatly solves the problem of whether Chinul’s teachings about practice after enlightenment were correct, or whether Chinul himself was enlightened: it doesn’t matter. The diligent practitioner, going forward while grasping the living words, would naturally overcome any supposed deficiencies in Chinul’s teachings.

Even if Chinul’s works had some limitations, Hanam Sunim, and also Kyōnghō Sunim,⁷ apparently felt that they were safe for beginners and were correct enough to sustain and guide the beginning practitioner to the point where they could go forward from the perspective of the fundamental Buddha-nature and grasp the living words.

⁷ In Kyōnghō Sunim’s *A Collection of Sōn Teachings*, he included several major works by Chinul. These were, in order, *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*, *Straight Talk on the True Mind*, *Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samadhi and Prajna Community*, and *Resolving Doubts about Observing the Hwadu*.

It is only the practitioner still unable to see beyond the dead words who would be caught by any deficiencies in the texts. But even if Chinul's works were perfect, they would still be of no use to such a practitioner, for he would still be unable to perceive the living words.

III. Hanam Sunim and Pojo Chinul

As will be seen in the next section, it may be that Hanam Sunim's connection with Pojo Chinul played a role in the obscurity that befell him after his death. This section will explore the reality of this connection.

Even today, Hanam Sunim is closely linked with Chinul in many Korean sunim's and scholar's minds.⁸ On the surface this is somewhat curious: Why should Hanam Sunim alone be linked with Chinul, and not the other great monks of early twentieth century? After all, the works of Chinul were studied by monks long before Sōngchōl Sunim raised his objections. Even Kyōnghō Sunim included several works by Chinul in the 1908 edition of his influential *A Collection of Sōn Teachings*. So why was Hanam Sunim in particular so closely linked with Chinul? Further investigation reveals that this impression is the result of Hanam Sunim's writings and scholarship.

For example, in 1930, in the first article Hanam Sunim published, *About the First Patriarch of Korea*, he asserted that the correct lineage of the Jogye Order was one that started with the 8th century Korean master Toūi and passed through Pojo Chinul. This was quite a radical departure from the official position, which had the lineage passing from the Chinese descendants of master Linji Yixuan to the 14th century Korean master T'aego Pou.

The idea that the lineage of the Jogye Order was a Linji lineage that started with T'aego Pou was an old one. However, it only gained strength after the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910 and their attempts to merge the Korean Buddhist orders with the Japanese Soto Order in 1911. It is only after this point that a strong emphasis on a Linji lineage can be seen.

8 In particular, see Kim, Ho-sōng's "Modern Developments of Compacts" (1995b).

Apparently the argument for this was that, since the Korean Buddhist orders were part of a Linji lineage, i.e. Rinzai, they couldn't be expected to merge with the Soto Order. Thus, it appears there were strong nationalistic reasons underlying the insistence on a lineage starting with T'aego Pou.

The problem with this lineage is that it effectively amputates 500 years of Korean Buddhist history along with a Korean sŏn lineage that proceeded from Toŭi and the other second-generation Korean disciples of the great Chinese master Mazu. Thus, with *About the First Patriarch of Korea* Hanam Sunim made a very strong, public, statement for a Jogye Order lineage that included Chinul while predating T'aego Pou.

In 1937 Hanam Sunim also published the first edition of the works of Chinul with a vernacular Korean, i.e. *hangŭl*, translation. Hanam Sunim included all of the texts contained in Kyŏnghŏ Sunim's work, *A Collection of Sŏn Teachings*, and added one more work by Chinul, *The Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood*. Hanam Sunim then added *hangŭl* particles to the sino-Korean texts, while Chiam Sunim, the abbot of Wŏlchŏng Temple added a complete *hangŭl* translation for each work. This was a major event: for the first time works by Chinul were available to people who didn't have a substantial education. It's also easy to overlook the fact that Hanam Sunim's edition of the works of Chinul was only the third time, ever, that major works by Chinul had been gathered together into one volume.

In addition to being known as a great sŏn master, Hanam Sunim also appears to have been outstanding in his education and literary ability. Even today, experts will comment on Hanam Sunim's writing ability, but they will also notice that he occasionally uses grammar and vocabulary normally found only in the works of Chinul. Likewise, while Hanam Sunim was well-known for the extent of his reading, from the choices of the material he quotes, it appears that he was first introduced to many writings through the extensive quotes that appear in the works of Chinul.⁹

Thus, it appears that Hanam Sunim really was drawn to Chinul more than most sunims of his day, and his public activities reinforced the general

⁹ See Kim, Ho-sŏng's *Panghanam sŏnsa* (1995: 158-159).

perception that Hanam Sunim did indeed strongly approve of the teachings of Pojo Chinul.

IV. Hanam Sunim's Obscurity

How did one of the most famous Buddhist teachers in Korea fall into near obscurity in the years after his death? For 40 years, there was no attempt to collect and publish his works, not one thesis or dissertation was written about him, and barely a handful of articles about him appeared in journals or magazines of any type. Beyond the 1947 fire at Sangwŏn Temple that destroyed much of his writings, there seem to be three main causes: Hanam Sunim's views fell out of favor, the poverty of the years following the Korean War, and he had relatively few disciples.

Perhaps one of the major reasons for Hanam Sunim's obscurity is that his views ran afoul of the leaders of what was called the *Purification Movement*. Following Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, conflicts arose between the traditional celibate monks and those who had embraced the Japanese style of Buddhism and gotten married. Essentially they were fighting for control of temples that had once belonged to traditional monks but were now occupied by married priests.

Hanam Sunim had urged restraint, saying that these problems needed to be resolved with harmony and compassion (Pang 1949). Likewise, in his letter to the layman Chaebyŏng Lee, Hanam Sunim says, "the pillar of all work on behalf of Buddhism is harmony" (Lee 1946). Further, it appears that Hanam Sunim was also concerned about the families of the married monks, and the difficulties they would suffer if they were forced to leave the temples (Kim, Kwang-sik 2006: 200-201).

In 1955, after Hanam Sunim had passed away, the Korean courts gave legal title to the vast majority of the temples in Korea to the celibate monks. There were two problems with this: first, the married monks greatly outnumbered the celibate monks. Second, the legal system in Korea had no

provision for evicting someone. Whereas in most western cultures, courts of law will issue an eviction order and the police will carry it out if necessary, in Korea the parties involved were left to sort it out themselves. Meanwhile, the courts continued to switch sides in related rulings, one time ruling for the celibate monks and next ruling for the married monks. Thus, the monks of the Purification Movement spent the next five or six years trying to forcibly remove the married monks.¹⁰ Their leaders appear to have had little use for Hanam Sunim's views on harmony.

Further, one of the foremost leaders of the Purification Movement was Sŏngchŏl Sunim, who would later serve as the Supreme Patriarch of the Jogye Order from 1981-1993. From this position he severely criticize the idea of practice after enlightenment, and tried to ban the study of Chinul's works.¹¹ Sŏngchŏl Sunim and many other sunims also still emphasized the idea of a Jogye Order lineage that came from China through T'aego Pou, again in contrast to Hanam Sunim who emphasized a lineage from Toŭi.¹² Thus, Hanam Sunim's views on the lineage of the Jogye Order, practice after enlightenment, Pojo Chinul, and dealing with the married monks all put him in opposition to the monks who would lead the Purification Movement.

These monks would go on to control the Jogye Order well into the

10 This process continued until around 1961. Afterwards, many in the Buddhist community began to suspect that the courts' continued reversals were orchestrated by high-ranking Christians in the government for the purpose of inflaming conflicts in the Buddhist community. There may be some truth in this, because the cessation of the courts' conflicting rulings closely followed the May 1961 military coup, led by general Park Chung-hee, himself a nominal Buddhist. He seems to have quickly put an end to the disputes between the married and traditional monks. For more on this movement see Kim, Kwang-sik (2002).

11 As of this writing, Sŏngchŏl Sunim's views on sudden versus gradual practice have been largely rejected, while Hanam Sunim has, in a sense, been rediscovered and become the object of study by both monks and scholars. This seems to have begun with Kim Ho-sŏng, who, starting in 1988 with "Hanam's Proposal of a Toŭi - Pojo Linage," continued to publish a series of articles about Hanam Sunim over the next three years. Sŏk, Myŏngjŏng Sunim's 1991, *The Collected Works of Hanam* inspired interest in the teachings of Hanam Sunim and in gathering scattered and lost works by Hanam Sunim. This led to the more complete collection, 1996's *Hanam ilballok*. Other important works about Hanam Sunim are Kim, Ho-sŏng (1995); Zingmark (2002); *Hanam Sasang Yeongu* (2006); Kim, Kwang-sik (2006); *Hanam Sasang* (2007); and Uhlmann (forthcoming).

12 However, after several years of debate about this, in 2004 the Jogye Order held a memorial service honoring Toŭi as the first patriarch of the Jogye Order. This ceremony has been held every year afterwards on the lunar date of May 2. On July 23, 2007 the Jogye Order also approved erecting a stele in honor of Toŭi, confirming him as the founder of the Jogye Order.

1990's. Moreover, they were the leaders and teachers of the meditation halls, where they influenced an entire generation of sunims. They were well known for emphasizing sitting meditation above all, and strongly discouraging textual studies, whereas Hanam Sunim had encouraged both.

It also appears that Hanam Sunim was vulnerable to grumblings of having been an active Japanese collaborator (Kim, Kwang-sik 2006: 148). Those who wished to disagree with Hanam Sunim apparently used the label of collaborator, claiming as proof his emphasis on dealing harmoniously with the married monks, who were essentially remnants of the Japanese occupation, together with his having served as Supreme Patriarch during the years of the Japanese occupation.¹³ Hanam Sunim's view of a Jogye lineage that rejected the T'aego Pou origin, which had a strong anti-Japanese basis, probably didn't help.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to refute these accusations in detail, but they are patently false to anyone who has carefully considered Hanam Sunim's writings and actions, although it is unclear how much damage, if any, they did to Hanam Sunim's reputation in the years after the Japanese occupation.

A second possible cause of Hanam Sunim's obscurity may have been the economic hardships following the Korean War. Hanam Sunim passed away in 1951 during the Korean war, and the ten years that followed are recalled as times of extreme poverty and hunger. During the military dictatorship of the 1960's the economic situation had begun to improve, but the country was still poor and people had to work very hard just to eat. It wasn't until the second half of the 1980's that Korea could be seen as an economic success story, and perhaps not coincidentally, that was when people began to think about collecting the works of Hanam Sunim.

Ironically, Sangwŏn Temple wasn't even well-off before the Korean War, and in this may be the final element in Hanam Sunim's obscurity: For

¹³ Additionally, during the years of the Pacific War, the Jogye Order headquarters wrote several articles that essentially urged support for the war effort and put Hanam Sunim's name on them. These were then published in Buddhist journals and newspapers. See Uhlmann's (forthcoming) interesting notes about this.

someone of his standing, Hanam Sunim had few close disciples. One of the reasons for this was almost certainly the hardships of life at Sangwŏn Temple. Located deep in the mountains of Kangwŏn Province, Sangwŏn Temple has long, cold winters and was very remote. During the later years of Hanam Sunim's life, the temple received only enough rice to support two people per year.¹⁴ As for rest of the food, what wasn't donated had to be grown by the sunims themselves. Year after year the sunims ate only two meals a day, and the first one was nearly always a thin rice porridge. In his 23rd letter to Kyŏngbong Sunim, Hanam Sunim essentially rejects a monk who wanted to practice with him at Sangwŏn Temple:

Although I was very happy to see Ch'angsu Sunim, life here is quite impoverished. In the warm months there is a lot of work planting and harvesting potatoes, along with a lot of other communal work, so it's quite hard to endure here. Thus I think that if he wants to learn the Way, then Kŭngnak Hermitage (where Kyŏngbong Sunim lived) would be better for him. I hope you will understand (HIBL: 285).

Kŭngnak Hermitage was near Tongdo Temple and Busan, and was the type of temple that attracted, and could support, many more sunims than places such as Sangwŏn Temple. It was supported by Tongdo Temple, which was then perhaps the wealthiest temple in Korea, with vast holdings of farmland, and a mild, warm climate. Even if many monks had wanted to stay at Sangwŏn Temple and learn from Hanam Sunim, the practical realities would have made it difficult to endure such an atmosphere for long.

Further, in addition to the physical hardships of life at Sangwŏn Temple, Hanam Sunim had high standards and expected a lot of the monks who came to study under him. He required that the sunims adhere to the Vinaya, the traditional rules for monks. He also required the monks to attend

¹⁴ The regional head temple, which was supposed to manage lands entrusted to Sangwŏn temple, sent only 5 sŏk of rice per year to the temple. 1 sŏk equaled 5.12 U.S. bushels and it was calculated that one person ate 2.5 sŏk of rice per year. Thus, as the number of people at Sangwŏn temple increased, the rice would have been stretched very thin (Ven. Hye-gŏ Sunim, personal communication, May 14, 2002).

the morning and evening ceremonies; meditation retreat sessions included lectures on the sutras, and liturgical specialists were invited to teach the monks how to perform all of the ceremonies that might be required of a sunim.¹⁵ Thus, Hanam Sunim tended to attract as disciples only those people who were very serious about spiritual practice.

Although 40 sunims are listed as Hanam Sunim disciples, it appears that few of them stayed at Sangwŏn Temple for more than a year or two (Kim, Kwang-sik 2006; Hyedam 2002).¹⁶ Kim, Kwang-sik and Yoon, Chang-hwa both agree that although a number of sunims received ordination as Hanam Sunim's disciples, there were only four who spent more than one or two years with Hanam Sunim.¹⁷ These were Tanhŏ, Nanam, Pomun, and Posan. Of these, Pomun Sunim died in 1956; Nanam Sunim moved to Japan before the end of WWII and spent the rest of his life involved in North Korean politics, dying in the early 1970's; Posan Sunim died in the 1960's, and Tanhŏ Sunim died in 1983. It appears that there just weren't many people in a position to make the works of Hanam Sunim more widely known.

With Hanam Sunim overseeing the meditation hall at Sangwŏn Temple, most of the serious meditation monks in Korea tried to spend at least one retreat season there. So, although a great many sunims studied under Hanam Sunim, nearly all of them were disciples of other teachers. It appears that the relatively few, close disciples Hanam Sunim had may provide the final key to explaining why one of the most revered sŏn masters in Korea virtually disappeared from the written record after his death.

15 See Uhlmann (forthcoming) for an excellent treatment of this in English.

16 Many of the sunims who ordained under Hanam Sunim were already sunims, and were now reordaining as Hanam Sunim's disciples. How many of Hanam Sunim's disciples fall into this category is unclear. Of sunims claiming Hanam Sunim as their ordination teacher only seven had two or more disciples of their own. A further three disciples only had one student each, while 30 sunims had no students of their own. While some undoubtedly practiced as monks until the end of their lives, it is unclear how many disrobed, reordained under other sunims, or were killed during the Korean War. Further, while 40 disciples may seem like a lot, it isn't considered a large number, given Hanam Sunim's position within Korean Buddhism (Yun and Kim: note 19); (HIBL: 521-531).

17 Personal communications, November 5, and November 8, 2007, respectively.

V. Conclusion

Hanam Chungwŏn was one of the most important Buddhist monks in Korea during the first half of the twentieth century. A disciple of the great sŏn master Kyŏnghŏ Sunim, he was a well-known sŏn master in his own right, who oversaw meditation halls across Korea. Hanam Sunim was also elected as Supreme Patriarch of Korean Buddhism three different times, in 1936, 1941, and 1948. He passed away in 1951, but inexplicably, he nearly disappeared from the written record for the next 40 years.

Among his remaining writing are the series of 24 letters he sent to the sŏn master Kyŏngbong Sunim. Their correspondence lasted for 20 years, and was initiated by a letter from Kyŏngbong Sunim asking about how one should practice following an enlightenment experience. Hanam Sunim replied at length about how to practice after enlightenment, and in the nature of his reply can be found a clue that may partially explain the obscurity that befell him. This was his connection with National Teacher Pojo Chinul. Starting with an examination of Hanam Sunim's views of practice after enlightenment, this article attempted to explore how this and other factors may have contributed to apparent lack of interest in Hanam Sunim after his death

For Hanam Sunim, central to practice after enlightenment was diligently continuing forward from the perspective of one's awakening, without losing sight one's true nature. If one could continue to see and act from the awakened awareness of one's true nature, one would be able to see through the conditioned, limited aspects of this world. However, although one had instantaneously awakened to one's true nature, the habits and karma that had accumulated over eons could not be so immediately dissolved. Thus one had to be careful not to become distracted. For, if one ignored the awareness of one's true nature, it was possible to lose that awareness, and so regress to the level of an unenlightened being.

A key to Hanam Sunim's obscurity may lie in the very fact that he was emphasizing that one had to continue to practice even after enlightenment. For the idea of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual cultivation, and its

most prominent advocate, the National Teacher Pojo Chinul, were to fall out of favor with the monks who would go on to lead the Purification Movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Hanam Sunim was probably further associated with Chinul through his efforts to publish a modern version of the works of Chinul and his proposal of a Jogye Order lineage that included Chinul.

Hanam Sunim likewise alienated himself from the leaders of the Purification Movement, when following the end of the Japanese occupation, he repeatedly urged the harmonious reconciliation between the traditional monks and those who had embraced the Japanese system of Buddhism and married. The monks who led the Purification Movement had advocated the forceful expulsion of the married monks from the temples and the end of every remnant of the Japanese occupation. It was these monks who would go on to lead both the Jogye Order and the meditation halls of Korea through the end of the twentieth century.

Another possible factor in Hanam Sunim's obscurity may have been the economic hardships that befell Korea in the decades after the Korean War.

The final key to Hanam Sunim's obscurity probably lies with the fact that he actually had very few close disciples. He had high standards for meditation monks, requiring them to also learn sutras, and ceremonies. Further, his temple was very poor, remote, and had long, cold winters. The effects of these were that it was difficult for monks to stay and study with Hanam Sunim for more than a few retreat seasons.

Thus, it appears Hanam Sunim's absence from the written record for almost 40 years is due to several factors: the rejection of his views by the generation of leaders who arose after his death, the poverty of the decades after the Korean War, and the small number of Hanam Sunim's close disciples. These all seem to have contributed to the obscurity that befell one of Korea's most renowned sŏn masters.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

(K=Korean, C=Chinese, J=Japanese)

A collection of sŏn teachings 禪門撮要

About the first patriarch of korea 海東初祖에 對하여

Admonitions to beginning students 誠初心學人文

Ch'angsu (K) 昌守

Chiam (K) 智菴

Chŏnglyang mountains (K) 清凉山

Compilation of examinations of and verses on ancient precedents
禪門拈頌集

Dahui Zonggao (C) 大慧 宗杲

Dead words 死句

Diamond mountains 金剛山

Encouragement to practice: the compact of the samadhi and prajna community 勸修定慧結社文

Excerpts from the dharma collection and special practice record with personal notes 法集別行錄節要並入私記

Guizong Zhichang (C) 歸宗 智常

Haein temple (K) 海印寺

Hanam Chungwŏn (K) 漢巖 重遠

Ilbalkok (K) 一鉢錄

Jogye order (K) 曹溪宗

Kangwŏn province (K) 江原道

Kŭngnak hermitage (K) 極樂庵

Kyŏngbong Chŏngsŏk (K) 鏡峰 靖錫

Kyŏnghŏ Sŏng-u (K) 鏡虛 惺牛

Linji order (C) 臨濟宗

Linji Yixuan (C), Rinzai Gigen (J) 臨濟 義玄

Living words 活句

Mangong Wŏlmyŏn (K) 滿空 月面

Mazu Daoyi (C) 馬祖 道一

Myohyang mountains (K) 妙香山

- Myōngjök Toŭi (K) 明寂 道儀
 Nanam (K) 暖庵
 Pojo Chinul (K) 普照 知訥
 Pomun (K) 普門
 Posan (K) 寶山
 Purification movement 淨化運動
Resolving doubts about observing the hwadu 看話決疑論
 Sacred embryo 聖胎
 Sangwŏn temple (K) 上院寺
Secrets on cultivating the mind 修心訣
 Shigong Huizang (C) 石鞏 慧藏
 Sŏn (K), Chan (C), Zen (J) 禪
 Soto school (J), Cao-dong school (C) 曹洞宗
 Sudden enlightenment / Gradual practice 頓悟漸修
 Sudden enlightenment / Sudden practice 頓悟頓修
 Supreme patriarch 宗正, also 教正
 Suwŏl Ŭmgwan (K) 水月 音觀
 T'ŏiong Sŏngchŏl (K) 退翁 性徹
 Taego Pou (K) 太古 普愚
 Tanhŏ T'aeksŏng (K) 吞虛 宅成
The complete and sudden attainment of buddhahood 圓頓成佛論
The dharma teachings of Pojo 普照法語
 Tongdo temple (K) 通度寺
 Unhindered behavior 無礙行
 Way 道
 Wŏljŏng temple (K) 月精寺
 Yongjia Xuanjue (C) 永嘉 玄覺

Abbreviation

HIBL *Hanam ilballok* (漢巖 一鉢錄: *The One Bowl of Hanam*) Pang, Hanam.

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