A Korean Buddhist Response to Modernity: The Doctrinal Underpinning of Han Yongun's (1879-1944) Reformist Thought

Pori Park

Introduction

During the colonial period, Korean Buddhists not only had to overcome the effects of the anti-Buddhist policies of the Confucian Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910), under which Buddhism had suffered institutionally, doctrinally, and socially, they also had to adapt their religion to make it compatible with the new society developing under Japanese rule (1910-1945). The opening of the peninsula to foreign nations after the 1876 Korean-Japanese Treaty of Kanghwa was regarded by most Buddhist clerics as an opportunity for revitalization (*yusin*) and progress (*chinbo*). The old Buddhist ways had to give rise to "enlightened," "civilized" times (*kaemyŏng*/*munmyŏng sidae*).[1] Korean Buddhists accepted a melioristic view of history, sharing the views of the majority of contemporary Korean intellectuals, who were greatly inclined toward Spencerian Social Darwinism,[2] and they viewed the activities of Japanese Buddhist

1. One example of this trend was: O Chaeyŏng, "Pulgyo pogŭp e taehan ŭigyŏn" (My Thoughts on the Promulgation of Buddhism), *Haedong Pulbo* 7 (1914): 562-571.

2. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Korean Buddhists adopted the notion of "modernism" from Western liberalism. Korean intellectuals were heavily influenced by late-Qing intellectuals because of their shared political experiences as victims of colonialism. The "modern" thought of

Pori Park is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University.

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missionaries and Christian missionaries as signs of advanced forms of religion. The arrival of these religions provided them with both new challenges and frames of reference for their idea for modernity.

Korean Buddhists were particularly interested in finding a socially viable form of Buddhism. The Sangha initiated reforms, focusing their efforts on Buddhist institutions. The main areas of the reforms, designed to make the Sangha more receptive toward the lay public, were clerical education and methods of proselytization. The curriculum included secular subjects designed to make Buddhist clerics conversant with society. The Sangha co-opted the social activities of Christian missionaries and attempted to develop a sense of connection among the clerics, the laity, and society. As such, these early reforms were not politically oriented, but rather had the prime goal of insuring the survival of the Sangha and protecting institutional interests.

Han Yongun (sobriquet Manhae; 1879-1944)'s ideas for reform typified those of his age by subsuming other reform ideas. His first reform proposal, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism), criticized the mild and gradual approaches proposed by Kwŏn Sangno, a monk scholar. He instead proposed radical reformation, and his reform ideas became the main source of reference for the Sangha reforms. Manhae shared ideas with other reform minded monks, Paek Yongsŏng (1864-1940) and Pak Hanyŏng (1870-1948), and provided leadership and inspiration to young Buddhist clerics.

In 1932, when the Buddhist magazine *Pulgyo* (Buddhism) had clerics vote for the most outstanding colleague they thought represented the sangha, Manhae received 422 votes, whereas eighteen votes went to Sŏn Master Pang Hanam (1876-1951) and thirteen votes to Doctrinal Master Pak Hanyŏng. He was almost unanimously regarded as the leader of Korean Buddhism.[3] Manhae was a leading figure not only in the field of religion but also in the literary and social arenas. Today, most Korean people remember him as much for being the great poet who authored *Nim ŭi chimmuk* (The Silence of the Beloved) and a nationalist leader of the March First Movement (*Samil Undong*) of 1919, as they

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Yan Fu (1853-1921) and Liang Qichao, especially, had a great influence on Korean intellectuals and particularly Korean Buddhists regarding the notions of "modernization." These Chinese intellectuals advocated the concepts of Spencerian social Darwinism. Liberalism in this context was a movement that would create conditions allowing individuals to fulfill their own interests and perform to their utmost abilities. "Modernism" here meant constant evolution and progress in which only the fittest and the strongest survived. Most of the initial reform ideas of the Korean Buddhists were presented along these lines. Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 42-90.

3. Ko Ŭn, *Han Yongun p'yŏngjŏn* (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1975), 352.

do his being a great Buddhist thinker.[4] He assisted in drafting the Korean "Declaration of Independence" and during his imprisonment in 1919, he wrote "A Discourse on the Independence of Korea," in which he protested against the forced annexation and iterated the reasons for Korean independence.[5]

Academic interest in Manhae's literary work began in the 1960s, and interest in his social and religious involvement began in the 1970s. The six volumes of *Han Yongun chŏnjip* (The Collected Works of Han Yongun) were published in 1973.[6] Chŏng Sunil has summarized the works of Korean scholars on Manhae that were produced between the 1960s and 1980s.[7] According to Chŏng, academic works from the 1960s concentrated mostly on Manhae's literary works. Manhae also became a source of inspiration in the areas of contemporary Korean history and social thought. Works on the social and patriotic activities of Manhae appeared in the 1970s.[8] Scholarly interest in Manhae's Buddhist thought, including his attitudes toward Sŏn (Buddhist meditation training), Kyo (Buddhist doctrinal study), and Buddhist activities also produced significant studies in Korea starting in the late 1970s. He had become one of the most significant figures for understanding Korean religious life during the colonial

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4. Han Yongun, *Nim ŭi ch'immuk* (The Silence of the Beloved), *Han Yongun chŏnjip* (The Collected Works of Han Yongun; hereafter *HYC*) (Seoul: Shin'gu munhwasa, 1974), 1: 42-82. This collection consists of eighty-eight meditative poems composed in modern Korean. Peter Lee, trans. *The Silence of Love: Twentieth-Century Korean Poetry* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980).

5. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn tongnip ŭi sŏ" (A Discourse on the Independence of Korea), *HYC*, 1: 354-360. As one of the thirty-three leaders, Manhae played an important role in planning and organizing the independence movement. Among the thirty-three, only Manhae and a reform-minded Sŏn master, Paek Yongsŏng (1864-1940), were Buddhist representatives while the majority came from the indigenous religion Ch'ŏndo-gyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) and Christianity.

6. The six volumes of the *Han Yongun chŏnjip* (*HYC*) contain the following texts: Vol. 1: The *Silence of Love* and *A Discourse on the Independence of Korea*; Vol. 2: *The Treatise on the Reform of Korean Buddhism* and other essays on Buddhism; Vol. 3: *Great Canon of Buddhism*, *An Exposition on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, and the *Annotated Ten Abstruse Conversations*; Vol. 4: *His translation of Ch'aegŭndam* (Ch. Caigentan, Vegetable Root discourses) and the *Records of Historical Remains in Kŏnbong Monastery and its Branch Temples*; Vol. 5: *Black Wind*, *Remorse*, and *Iron Blood Beauty*; and Vol. 6: *Ill Fate* and *Death*. The sixth volume (395-401) contains an index of all writings included in the HYC. For the complete list of Manhae's work, see Kim Yŏlgyu and Sin Tonguk, eds., *Han Yongun yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1982), 39-42.

7. Chŏng Sunil, "Han Yongun ŭi Pulgyo sasang," in *Han'guk kŭndae chonggyo sasangsa*, *Sungsan Pak Kilchin Paksa kohŭi kinyŏm*, ed. Sungsan Pak Kilchin paksa Kohŭi Kinyŏm Saŏphoe (Iri, Chŏlla-pukto, Korea: Wŏn'gwang University Press, 1984), 417-420.

8. For secondary works on Manhae, see Manhae Sasang Yon'guhoe, ed., *Han Yongun sasang yon'gu* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1980), 305-393; and Kim Yŏlgyu and Sin Tonguk, *Han Yongun yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1982), 43-52.

period. Scholars claim that Manhae was a prophet of his time and his significance in Korean Buddhism was comparable to that of Wŏnhyo (617-686), one of the great Buddhist thinkers of Silla.[9]

Korean Buddhists shifted their reforms in political directions and joined the nationalist march for the restoration of sovereignty after the March First Movement. Buddhist youth launched a youth movement, claiming the separation of religion from politics and the abolition of the "temple ordinance," a measure that they thought the Japanese government had used to strip the Sangha of its independence.[10] They also criticized a bureaucratic Buddhism (*kwanje Pulgyo*, Buddhism for the rulers) that was subservient to the Japanese regime. Along with Manhae, young Buddhist clerics instead promoted *minjung* Buddhism (Buddhism for the masses) as a means to sever the ties of Sangha from the powerful Japanese state and to serve the general public. In this sense, *minjung Pulgyo* was not only a way of socially reaching out to people, but also a way of resisting state intervention.

The mere adoption of social involvement by Buddhist clerics, however, prompted confusion and posed major challenges. The reforms required that Buddhists seriously reflect on ways to render social engagement congruent with the Buddhist system of thought. Without giving much thought to their fundamental soteriological differences, Buddhists superficially imitated the social welfare activities of Christianity, but never fully incorporated them into the Buddhist thought. More specifically, their changes were regarded as only *upaya* (expedient means), such that the core of Buddhist teachings might remain relevant in Korean society at the time. Accordingly, *upaya* was not a matter of ultimate concern for Buddhist clerics and, despite their sense of urgency about modern change, they showed a lack of interest and passion for this move towards social involvement. Their lackluster pursuit of social engagement in turn produced adverse results, among which was the enabling of the status quo to the point of even collaborating with the colonial regime. More seriously, it created an opportunity for Buddhist clerics to be affected by worldly values, allowing for the increasing violation of monastic rules and an abandonment of the vows of voluntary poverty.

Manhae was a unique figure in Korea in that he attempted to overcome this Buddhist impasse by dealing with the notion of "social salvation." He treated

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9. Pak Nosun and In Kwŏnhwan, *Han Yongun yŏn'gu* (Seoul: T'ongmunsa, 1960), 59.

10. The Japanese regime announced the "temple ordinance" in 1911 and placed the Korean Sangha under its direct control by making each of the 30 main monasteries an independent administration system.

the social involvement not as a temporary cure, but as something fully ingrained into the core of the Buddhist system of thought. He juxtaposed social involvement and the pursuit of the Buddhist awakening with his non-dualist approach of Kyo (doctrinal teachings) and Sŏn (meditation). In this way, the social dimension would no longer be alienated from the minds of Buddhists and clerics would no longer be adrift in their involvement in social activities. This paper examines the doctrinal sources that Manhae utilized to support his reform ideas and resolve the Buddhist impasse in dealing with social salvation.

Reform Buddhism

Manhae had been brought up learning Confucian texts. As a prodigy praised by local villagers, he is said to have mastered Confucian classics such as *Analects, Mencius, Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, Book of Songs, Book of Documents* and others in his teens. In his late teens, he taught at a village Confucian school. Manhae's early social awareness was, according to An Pyŏng-jik of Seoul National University, influenced by Confucian realism and rationalism.[11] Also, his father instilled in him an acute perception of political developments. In the essay, "To Seoul via Siberia," Manhae wrote:

> When I lived in my native place, my father taught me the conduct and teachings of many men of justice and heroes whose names remain immortal in our history and he also gave me detailed explanations on how the world was changing, and of the affairs that faced our nation and society.[12]

Manhae left his village after both his father and brother were killed by the court army while involved in one of the "righteous army" (*ŭibyŏng*) movements, a frequent occurrence following the Tonghak Peasant Uprising in 1894. Manhae recalled the moment he headed for Paektam Monastery on Mount Sŏrak in Kangwŏn Province, where he was ordained as a novice monk and later took the full ordination:

> Isn't our life transient? What could be left when we were to face our final moment after all those days of struggling? Could it be honor or wealth? Couldn't all that

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11. An Pyŏng-jik, "Han Yongun's Liberalism: An Analysis of the 'Reformation of Korean Buddhism'," *Korea Journal* 19, no. 12 (December 1979): 14.

12. Han Yongun, "Siberia kŏch'ŏ Seoul ro" (To Seoul Via Siberia), *HYC*, 1: 254; translation with slight modification from: Mok Chŏng-bae, "Han Yongun and Buddhism," *Korea Journal* 19. no. 12 (December 1979): 19.

> remains be ephemeral? Everything, after all, becomes empty, intangible, and nothing. My skepticism worsened and left me deeply troubled. I concluded that I should first find out the meaning of life and then do some worthy work [for the troubled nation]. I changed my route to Seoul and headed instead to Paektam Monastery on Mount Sŏrak, a place where I had heard a renowned Buddhist master resided.[13]

Manhae engaged in Buddhist training to explore the meaning of life and to prepare himself for devoting his life to society. This complementary life purpose provided a continuous tension throughout his Buddhist career.

As a Buddhist reformer, Manhae first explained why human beings turned to religion as a last resort, pointing out their religious instinct.[14] He believed that people were bound to have fear and dissatisfaction because human existence was confined by time and space. Humans seek comfort and safety from these existential limits and exhaust their minds in an effort to overcome their psychological anxiety, the physical dangers inherent in the struggle for survival, and their fear of death. People get easily entangled in suffering and affliction due to these facts of human life. Misery and social conflict, however, cannot be eased simply by the advancement of science, law enforcement, social charity, or the Socialist ideal of economic equality. As such, Manhae believed that people needed religion.

He then singled out Buddhism as a religion par excellence for leading the future civilization of humanity. Buddhist practice enables people to overcome such afflictions and to attain the ultimate joy of truth by teaching that human beings are endowed with every faculty needed to expand their minds, such that they are able to become one with the universe and to realize the universe inside their own minds.[15] Manhae thus argued that the strong point of Buddhism was in its religious aspiration for the awakening of an innate Buddha-nature and its self-reliant practices.

He went further in his attempt to display the relevance and prominence of Buddhism in modern life by using Western concepts of religion and philosophy. As a religion, Buddhism gives people hope in life by leading them to a state beyond birth and death.[16] He contrasted Buddhism with Christianity, claiming

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13. Han Yongun, "Siberia kŏch'ŏ Seoul ro," *HYC*, 1: 255.

14. Han Yongun, "Pan chonggyo undong e taehayŏ" (On the Anti-religious Movement), *HYC*, 2: 278-79.

15. Han Yongun, "Nae ka minnŭn Pulgyo" (Buddhism That I Practice), *HYC*, 2: 288.

16. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism), *HYC*, 2: 36-38.

that the former was a religion of wisdom and the latter, one of superstitious belief. Christianity, according to Manhae, forces devotees to have a blind faith in God and heaven while Buddhism urges them to become awakened to their own minds. In his thinking, there is nothing apart from the mind, and forced faith thus puts unnecessary limits on people's wisdom. Manhae also advocated Buddhism as a philosophy.[17] He defined philosophy as a discipline that tries to attain universal knowledge by inquiring into the nature of things. Buddhism was philosophical, he argued, because it leads people to omniscience once they have been awakened to the mind. He claimed that both Eastern and Western philosophies were but footnotes to Buddhist teaching. He concluded that Buddhism would be necessary for the future ethics and culture of human society.

Manhae embarked on his journey of Buddhist reformation as a means of preparing the religion to fulfill its function for the Korean people; he related Buddhist reformation to national identity. He argued in 1931 that Buddhist reforms would be a preliminary step necessary for the reformation of the nation as a whole:

> Buddhism is inseparable from the lives of the Korean people. Therefore, in order to correct or reform the mindset and the ways of life of the Korean people, one has to start with Buddhism, which has been deeply imbued [in Korean people's lives] throughout history. In other words, before exploring new horizons for Koreans, Buddhism has to reform itself first, because Buddhism has been the spiritual foundation of the life and mind of the people.[18]

Manhae considered Buddhism as the backbone of Korean tradition and rationalized that Buddhist reformation was a way to enhance national prestige.

Manhae believed that it was through reformation that the Sangha could actively intervene in people's lives by restoring the religious prestige of Korea. The long period of stagnation and deterioration of its religious status, due to the oppression of Buddhism in the Chosŏn dynasty, had daunting negative effects on Korean Buddhism. Chosŏn persecution left Buddhism lacking a major function in society. Buddhist monasteries were hidden and scattered in the mountains and members of the Sangha were frustrated in many of their attempts to increase their social status.

In response to this deprecated state of Buddhism at the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, Manhae first called for a reformation by publishing the *Chosŏn Pulgyo*

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17. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 38-43.

18. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo ŭi kaehyŏk an" (Record on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism), *HYC*, 2: 161.

yusillon in 1913, three years after he had finished a first draft. The treatise consists of seventeen chapters that cover various aspects of the Sangha reforms. Throughout his life, Manhae maintained the ideas proposed in this treatise and expanded them further in his later article, *Chosŏn Pulgyo kaehyŏk an* (Record on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism) written in 1931.

Despite the strong points that he had elucidated within the Buddhist tradition, Manhae contended that the religion had accumulated a number of wrong practices over its long history.[19] Old Buddhist practices that could not be resonant with a new era should thus be abandoned. He thought that any religion that could not satisfy the development of human intellect and human civilization was destined to die out.[20] Any established religion should willingly reform those practices that could not meet the expectations of human development. His remedy was to reform Buddhist practices so as to function fruitfully within society, developing a socially conscious Buddhism.

The *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* reveals how Manhae was exposed to the thoughts of such Western philosophers as Rene Descartes, Francis Bacon, and Immanuel Kant through the writings of Liang Qichao (1873-1929).[21] He learned about Western civilization from *Yinbingshi wenji*, Liang Qichao's encyclopedic book on Western knowledge of political thought, history, and philosophy.[22] The early Japanese Buddhist experiments with Western ideas must also have provided him with a frame of reference for his reformist thought. For example, in 1908 Manhae had an opportunity to go to Japan, a culture that he believed had emerged as a new center of modern civilization at that time. He was assisted by monks of the Sōtō sect during his stay at Sōtōshū (now Komazawa) University from May through August, 1908. He also made a tour to various Japanese cities, such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Shiminoseki, and Nikkō, returning to Korea eight months later.[23]

Manhae was also sympathetic to the Socialist goal of social equality, a point reflected in his advocacy of *minjung Pulgyo* (Buddhism for the masses). In a 1931 interview in the magazine Samch'ŏlli, he said that he was planning to write about Buddhist Socialism.[24] He asserted that Buddhism does not support the

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19. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 47.

20. Han Yongun, "Pan chonggyo undong e taehayŏ," *HYC*, 2: 279.

21. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 38-42.

22. Ko Ŭn, *Han Yongun p'yŏngjŏn* (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1975), 140-141; the *Yin-ping-shih wen chi* influenced Manhae in his writing of *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*.

23. Yu Beongcheon, *Han Yong-un & Yi Kwang-su* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1992), 182.

24. Han Yongun, "Sŏkka ŭi chŏngsin" (The Spirit of the Buddha), *HYC*, 2: 292.

possession of personal wealth and economic inequality, yet he did not develop any further aspects of Buddhist Socialism. Despite this sympathetic attitude, he simultaneously emphasized the importance of religion in the face of the Socialist attack on religion.[25] Because religion was the only means for the oppressed Proletariat to receive comfort in their economic suffering, he thought that religion should be an important part of their lives. He further believed that since people are innately endowed with a religious mind, a temporary ideological or belief system could never replace religion.

Manhae regarded Buddhist practices as products of historical developments, contexts that were thus subject to change. He offered the following rationale to support his proposal for Buddhist reformation: "It is said that if one returns to the way of ancient times while living in the present, disasters will inevitably prevail. Today's stage is not that of the past; one can no longer dance properly without changing the long-sleeved dress to the short-sleeved one."[26]

The main purpose of *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* was to reform the Sangha. He used his critique to assess the present situation of the Sangha and criticized practices that he thought had contributed to Buddhism's decline. He also provided a detailed blueprint for the kind of changes that were needed for the enhancement of Buddhism in society. As such, the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* was the first and most comprehensive systematic writing on Buddhist reformation that appeared in Korea during this time. The purview of his reforms was broad based, in that he addressed clerical education, proselytization, rituals, and the Sangha's policies regarding monasteries and clerics. He proposed reforms in order to engender the Sangha's easy access to the laity and the general public. These ideas can be divided into four major groups: unification of the doctrinal orientation of the Sangha, simplification of practices, centralization of the Sangha administration, and reformation of Sangha policies and customs.

Manhae attempted to awaken a Sangha that had in many ways been left in a state without much structure or regulation. He tried to establish a hierarchy, both in doctrine and practice, so that a sense of religious identity could emerge. To do this, he proposed drastic changes in many aspects of Buddhist practice. But the primary focus of the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* was reform of Sangha practices; it was not concerned with the laity. Only in Manhae's later writings, such as *Pulgyo taejŏn* (The Great Canon of Buddhism), would he address this oversight. Also, the treatise lacked a sense of contemporary political awareness in that the draft was completed before Korea's annexation, and thus we are left

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25. Han Yongun, "Pan chonggyo undong e taehayŏ," *HYC*, 2: 278-81.

26. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 119.

waiting for his later writings to investigate his attitudes concerning the colonial political situation. Yet another oversight emerged later. In order for Buddhism to overcome its state of isolation, Manhae emphasized the opening and outreach of the Sangha to society, proposing that monasteries be moved into cities and villages, clerics become engaged in productive activities, and the adoption of clerical marriage. But this proposed social contact did not enhance Buddhist influence in society as much as he expected. To the contrary, the Sangha rapidly came under the influence of secular society. Thus, in this treatise, Manhae showed himself to be not fully aware of, nor helpful to the prevention against, the dangers inherent in the task of combining the existential orientation of Buddhism with the process of social engagement.

The reform ideas proposed in the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* provided the main frame of reference for the subsequent reformation of the Sangha. The Sangha adopted Manhae's ideas on education and proselytization in particular, revitalizing the education system for clerics and systematizing the policies for religious propagation. As Manhae suggested, the Sangha became interested in providing clerics with a general education and in establishing a teacher's college. Young clerics were sent to foreign countries, primarily Japan, to study. Branch temples (*p'ogyoso*) were built in villages and towns to increase contact with the people. The Conference Office of the Abbots of the Thirty Main Monasteries (*Samsip ponsa chuji hoeŭi-so*) decided to convert Chanting Halls (*yŏmbultang*) of all monasteries to Meditation Halls (*sŏndang*), with the exception of Kŏnbong Monastery.[27] Nevertheless, the Sangha still faced many difficulties in implementing these reform ideas, among which financial limits and state control were the most prominent.

Manhae himself worked as a propagator (*p'ogyo-sa*) around 1916 at the Central Propagation Office of Korean Sŏn Buddhism (*Chosŏn Sŏnjong chung'ang p'ogyo-dang*), an institution built in 1912 as one of the central propagation temples in Seoul. He published his own magazine *Yusim* (Mind Only), but this lasted only a short period of time, from September to December of 1918, due to lack of funds.[28] He later served as editor-in-chief of *Pulgyo* (Buddhism) from 1931 to 1933 and contributed articles to both *Pulgyo* (*Sin*) (Buddhism: New Edition) from 1937 to 1940 and Sŏnwŏn (Sŏn Collection) from 1931 to 1935.[29] In each of these venues, he presented his reform ideas and

27. *Haedong Pulbo* 4 (1914): 325.

28. For the table of contents of *Yusim*, see Minjok Pulgyo Yŏngu so, ed., *Pulgyo kwangye tosŏ nonmun mongnok* (Seoul: Taewŏnjŏngsa, 1986), 258-259.

29. For the list of the titles and contents of Buddhist journals published during the Japanese

analyses of Buddhist thought.

While the *Chosŏn Pulgyo* yusillon focused exclusively on reforms of the Sangha without mentioning state policies, Manhae later developed his reform ideas in response to Japanese policies on Buddhism.[30] He shared his insight with Buddhist youth, providing them with his leadership to them. In the 1920s young Buddhist clerics began to raise their voices against the "temple ordinance" and embarked on the Buddhist youth movement. In 1920, they formed the Buddhist Youth Association along with its branch associations in local monasteries. They also formed the Buddhist Reformation Association as advocates of the Buddhist Youth Association in December 1921. During this time, from 1919 to 1922, Manhae was incarcerated for his involvement with the March First. After his release, the Buddhist Youth Association elected Manhae to be its director in 1924, but by this time this association had become inactive. The secret Buddhist society *Mandang* also sought advice and inspiration from Manhae by having him as its figurehead leader. Manhae embraced the major goals of these youth associations: the separation of religion and the state with the abolition of the "temple ordinance"; centralization of the Sangha administration; and the practice of *minjung Pulgyo*.

When Manhae took the job of editor-in-chief of the combined 84th/85th edition of *Pulgyo* in 1931, the content had changed drastically. The magazine contained articles that criticized the administration of the Sangha and the colonial regime's intervention in Buddhist affairs. The frequent contributors were young clerics, most of whom had studied in Japan, such as Kim Pŏmnin, Kim T'aehŭp, Hŏ Yŏngho, Im T'aekchin, Kim P'ogwang, and Cho Chonghyŏn. The special centennial edition of 1932, in particular, was a comprehensive review of the primary issues facing Korean Buddhism, including government policies towards religion, analysis of education and propagation reforms, financial reviews, Buddhist identity issues, and internal conflicts. Manhae also involved himself in the operation of the magazine, since the central administration office, Kyomuwŏn, refused to run it.[31] He ran *Pulgyo* until the 108th edition, issued in July 1933. After the 108th edition, *Pulgyo* was discontinued from 1933 to March 1937 because of financial difficulties and the disfavor taken upon it by the colonial regime due to its unfavorable content, critical of the policies of both

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occupation, see ibid., 207-279.

30. This is because the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* was completed in 1910 before the Japanese developed its religious policies.

31. Han Yongun, "Pulgyo sokkan e taehayŏ" (About the Continuation of Publication of *Pulgyo*), *Pulgyo* (*Sin*) 1 (1937): 3.

the Sangha and the Japanese.[32] The clerics of Kyomuwŏn did not approve of the criticism contained in the articles of *Pulgyo*. The new edition of *Pulgyo*, *Pulgyo* (*Sin*), succeeded in 1937, and Manhae continued to contribute articles until 1940, but to a lesser degree.

Manhae considered the "temple ordinance" to be a major obstacle to Korean Buddhism and insisted on the self-management of the Sangha. The "temple ordinance" forced the entire Sangha system, along with the administration and management of all Sangha properties, to be under the Japanese regime's control. Manhae stressed that this violated the principle of the separation of religion and state and ran counter to the spirit of the constitutions of many foreign countries. Even within the peninsula, only Buddhism was under this law, such that the Buddhist community was subjected to suspicion and disgrace. He further pointed out that the general public and other religions disdained Buddhism, as seen in the use of the term *kwanje Pulgyo* (bureaucratic Buddhism).[33] This term was used in a negative sense to mock the close ties between the Sangha and the colonial regime. He insisted in 1920 that Buddhism should reorganize itself through and towards the *minjung*.

> Does Buddhism reside in monasteries? No. Does Buddhism reside in clerics? Not here either. Does Buddhism reside in its canons? The answer is also "no." Buddhism resides precisely in every individual's mental awareness. There are many ways to recognize the dignity and insight of each individual. I sincerely wish for Buddhism to reflect this great truth and make connections with the *minjung* and live with the *minjung*.[34]

Manhae argued that everything had to be changed for the *minjung*, including the doctrine, system, and properties of the Sangha.[35] Buddhist doctrines and canons should be made easy to learn, so as to be accessible to the *minjung*.[36]

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32. Han Yongun,"Pulgyo sokkan e taehayŏ," *Pulgyo* (*Sin*) 1 (1937): 3-4.

33. Han Yongun, "Chŏng-gyo rŭl pullip hara" (Separate Religion from Politics), *HYC*, 2: 144-145; *Pulgyo* 87 (1931): 425.

34. Han Yongun, "Pulgyo yusinhoe: Pulgyo ŭi chach'i wa sinhwaltong ŭi p'iryo" (Association for the Revitalization of Buddhism: the Self-Management of Buddhism and the Necessity of New Activities), *Tonga Daily* 1920; *HYC*, 2: 133.

35. Han Yongun, "Pulgyo yusinhoe: Pulgyo ŭi chach'i wa sinhwaltong ŭi p'iryo," *HYC*, 2: 133-134.

36. We can see Socialist influence in the term *minjung* (the masses). Kang Man'gil of Koryŏ University notes that the first usage of *minjung* as the leading group of the nationalist movement appeared in Sin Ch'aeho's "The Declaration of the Korean Revolution" (Chosŏn hyŏngmyŏng sonŏn sŏ) written in 1923. Kang infers that Sin's *minjung* may refer to the proletariat of the oppressed colonial nations in Asia. It is said that movements of peasants and laborers became

Buddhist institutions and properties had to be open to, and used for the benefit of, the *minjung*. In his article, "*Chosŏn Pulgyo kaehyŏk an*" (Record on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism) published in 1931, Manhae asserted that Buddhism should be involved in improving the life of the *minjung*. By investing Buddhist properties in the running of factories, the Sangha could generate income to support the poor and the needy. By comparison, Manhae had previously proposed in the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* the same commercial operation of the Sangha, but at that time, the purpose was to achieve the economic self-sufficiency of the Sangha and thus enhance the status of Buddhist clerics. He later sought to expand these profits to the lay people, stating that the essential meaning of religion was to increase people's happiness.[37] He showed in this his pragmatic approach to religion. Like secular ideologies, such as Socialism and Capitalism, he believed that Buddhism should be functioning in the daily lives of people in addition to taking care of their spiritual concerns. He defined *minjung Pulgyo* as follows:

> *Taejung Pulgyo* [*minjung Pulgyo*] means to practice Buddhism for the *minjung*. Buddhists neither abandon human society nor deny close, loving relationships with people. They instead attain enlightenment among defilements and achieve nirvana in the midst of the stream of life and death. Being aware of this truth and getting involved in action are the practices of *Taejung Pulgyo*.[38]

Thus, he reasoned, Buddhists should participate in social activities by establishing Buddhist libraries, welfare institutions for laborers and farmers, and educational facilities for the general public.[39] Manhae attempted to construct a

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rampant during the mid-1920s. Prior to Sin's usage, the term *minjung*, which appeared in the latter half of the nineteenth century, simply indicated the general populace: Kang Man'gil, "Contemporary Nationalist Movements and the Minjung," in *South Korean's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed. Kenneth Wells (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii Press, 1995), 32-34.

Buddhists used the concepts *minjung* and *taejung* interchangeably. *Minjung* thus probably referred to a wider range of people who are the governed, in contrast to the governing. During the latter parts of the 1920s, the term *minjung* seemed to have been used widely by society and also among Buddhists. In 1928, a monk stated that at that time no one failed to mention *minjung*: *Pulgyo* 43 (1928): 9. The term *minjung Pulgyo* was also used by the Buddhist counterparts in Japan. It was widely spread by the introduction of democracy during by the Taishō era (1912-1925), referring to the larger segment of the general populace: Tamamuro Taijō, ed., *Nihon Bukkyō shi* v. 3 (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1967), 399-406.

37. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo ŭi kaehyŏk an," *HYC*, 2: 164-165; *Pulgyo* 88 (1931): 490-491.

38. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo kaehyŏk an," *HYC*, 2: 167; *Pulgyo* 88 (1931): 492-493.

39. Ibid.

socially sensitive Buddhism, letting Buddhist practices take root in a concrete place.

Manhae also pursued his initial ideas for the centralization of the Sangha. In the *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* he laid out two steps of the centralization: first, sectional unification (*kubun t'onghal*) and next, complete unification (*honhap t'onghal*).[40] The former was intended to accomplish partial centralization by establishing independent regional centers while the latter consisted of only one central system that would serve to govern the entire Sangha. Manhae admitted that the thirty-one *ponsan* (main monastery district) system through the "temple ordinance" was a sort of *kubun t'onghal*. But he criticized the fact that each *ponsan* established its own independent system under each respective abbot. He argued that political intervention in Buddhist affairs was the main obstacle to the Order's unification. The separation of religion and state, that is, securing the independence of the Sangha and its autonomous operation, was thus an ideal step for unification.[41] He compromised, however, with the political situation in which no changes of the colonial rules were attainable. Given the situation, he suggested the establishment of a central organ in the present system as an alternative:

> The unification of monasteries means to change the monastery system fundamentally by separating religion from the state. This kind of unification is the ultimate ideal. But before attaining the ultimate stage, establishing the central organ upon the present monastery system is the next best. In this way, the Sangha could perform uniform activities under uniform regulations.[42]

As a way to unify the Sangha, he supported the revision of temple laws (*sabŏp*). The central organ should have the power of appointing abbots and should unify *sabŏp* to make all monasteries follow its policies.[43] Manhae envisioned that all main monasteries would have the same *sabŏp*, which included the establishment of the central organ and its related regulations.[44] The old *sabŏp* utilized strict qualifications for main monastery abbots: candidates had to be of the same dharma lineage as the majority of the main monastery clerics and had to be older

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40. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 124-25.

41. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo rŭl t'ong'il hara" (Unify Korean Buddhism), *HYC*, 2: 146-147; *Pulgyo* 84/85 (1931): 215-216.

42. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo rŭl t'ong'il hara," *HYC*, 2: 147; *Pulgyo* 84/85 (1931): 216.

43. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo kaehyŏk an," *HYC*, 2: 162; *Pulgyo* 88 (1931): 488.

44. Han Yongun, "Sabŏp kaejŏng e taehayŏ" (Regarding the Revision of Temple Laws), *HYC*, 2: 150-151; *Pulgyo* 91 (1932): 3-4.

than forty years. Instead, Manhae insisted that the election of abbots should include those who were qualified regardless of their lineages and who were younger, beginning at thirty years.

The primary goal of Manhae's reform ideas was to instigate Sangha reformation in order to maintain the survival of the religion in a modern context. His later reform ideas were presented as a form of resistance against state intervention. He tried to sever the Sangha's dependence on the powerful and attempted to establish direct contact between the religion and the people. In this pursuit of self-government, Manhae made clear his attitude toward the Japanese state, unlike most other clerics. He reappropriated nationalism from a Buddhist standpoint. He regarded the loss of the nation's sovereignty as a social inequality, and he saw Japan's annexation of Korea as a violation of the liberty and the equality of the Korean people, according to Buddhist teachings.[45] His participation in the Independence Movement was based on this belief. His major concern was the attainment of Korean independence, not the improvement or rectification of the policies of Japanese regime. He insisted on making a proclamation of independence (tongnip sŏnŏn), not a request for independence (tongnip ch'ŏngwŏn), as proposed by some factions of Korean nationalists.[46] He denied the foundation of colonialism itself. By the same token, Manhae condemned colonialism and militarism in general for their destruction of the happiness of humanity. He went on to criticize the world system of capitalism because it was also power-oriented.[47] He believed justice and human morality would eventually be triumphant over all the world systems of power.[48]

Manhae regarded colonialism as an extreme case of nationalism and saw the potential danger in both forms, though as long as he fought against the injustice of Japanese colonialism, he appeared to be nationalist. Working for the ethnic-nation (*minjok*) was an interim process leading to the ultimate stage of universalism.[49] He stated that history develops from ignorance to civilization and that humanity progresses from individual, family, community, nation, and the world, ultimately to the cosmos. He thought that nationalism was a temporary yet necessary step for Koreans to accept and that the exigency of this period

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45. An Pyŏngjik, "Manhae Han Yongun ŭi tongnip sasang," in Han Yongun sasang yŏn'gu, ed. *Manhae Sasang Yŏn'guhoe* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1980), 74.

46. Ibid., 76-77.

47. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn tongnip ŭi sŏ" (A Discourse on the Independence of Korea), *HYC*, 1: 347.

48. Ibid., 353.

49. Ibid., 346.

required himself to employ a nationalistic discourse. This support of the ethnic-nation was thus but a strategic means for the religion to accommodate the needs of the people. Manhae made it clear that universal revolution was the ultimate concern of the Buddha, not nationally bound movements.[50]

In sum, Manhae focused his energy on the modernization and centralization of the Samgha. At the same time, he criticized the Samgha-centered operation that resulted in an over-emphasis on the monastery training of clerics while neglecting any social responsibility. He encouraged active lay participation and interaction between clerics and lay people such that they would eventually work together on equal terms.[51] He published the *Pulgyo taejŏn* (Great Canon of Buddhism) as a guidebook for lay Buddhists and his advocacy of minjung *Pulgyo* also derived from his concern for the laity. Manhae's reform activities, however, mainly consisted of writings and lectures. He was critical of the Sangha reform policies, but he did not create a grassroots movement of his own that could test his new ideas. His idea of *minjung* Buddhism was thus not carried out in any specific form of community.

The Integration of Sŏn and Kyo

In conjunction with his spirit of reform, Manhae attempted to seek a doctrinal basis for his critique. In his *Pulgyo yusillon*, he divided the quintessence of Buddhist teachings into two aspects: the principle of equality (*p'yŏngdŏng chuŭi*) and the principle of saving the world (*kuse chuŭi*).[52] The principle of equality refers to the absolute, universal, and impartial nature of the Buddha or truth. In accordance with this absolute point, both sentient and insentient beings have the buddha-nature that has never been deluded by phenomena. The latter concept of *kuse chuŭi* refers to the compassion and vows of buddhas and bodhisattvas to save all beings from their suffering. Manhae tried to interpret this principle of saving in light of the principle of equality by building a dialectical tension between the two principles. He applied the fundamental nature of equality to determine a way of living, saying that the major goal of Buddhism is to love and save all beings equally.[53] Similarly, Manhae emphasized the nondual aspect of "mind only" (*yusim*); the mind (equality) includes the

50. Han Yongun, "Sŏkka ŭi choŏngsin" (The Spirit of the Buddha), *HYC*, 2: 293.

51. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo rŭl t'ong'il hara," *HYC*, 2: 148; Pulgyo 84/85 (1931): 217.

52. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* in *HYC*, 2: 104.

53. Han Yongun, "Nae ka minnŭn Pulgyo" (Buddhism That I Practice), *HYC*, 2: 288.

material world, and the mind is no different from matter. Mind and matter depend upon one another for their existence. The absolute truth and the phenomenal world are thus coexistent, making a harmonious whole.

Manhae explained this dialectic aspect as follows: "Buddhism is a way of transcending this world (*ch'ulsegan*), but it teaches us to transcend the world by entering the world, not by avoiding it."[54] He argued that Buddhism had to be practiced with the active participation of society. One attains enlightenment through predicaments and achieves nirvāna without leaving behind the stream of life and death.[55] The salvation of our own existence and our full involvement in this world are fulfilled simultaneously.

By juxtaposing *kuse chuŭi* with the absolute *p'yŏngdŭng chuŭi*, Manhae was able to incorporate social salvation into Buddhism as a fundamental principle, not merely as a supplement. Moreover, this juxtaposition aimed to prevent Buddhist social involvement from being affected by secular values by balancing the social involvement with an absolute truth. By linking social salvation with existential freedom, Manhae also made the concept of Buddhist social engagement, a concept that would otherwise have been an imitation of Christianity, a unique concept within the Buddhist system.

As a means of fulfilling these major goals of *p'yŏngdŭng chuŭi* and *kuse chuŭi*, Manhae presented a unified approach of Sŏn (meditation training) and Kyo (Buddhist doctrines). He emphasized internal attention through meditation (Sŏn) as much as the ideas of social involvement gleaned from teachings (Kyo) and sought the absolute sense of truth not in isolation from society, but in active involvement with it. In his vision, active involvement in turn does not hinder existential freedom, in that it renders each moment as the perfect manifestation of the absolute. Manhae presented this simultaneous practice of Sŏn/Kyo as the core of Buddhism:

> We cannot talk about Buddhism apart from Sŏn and Kyo, such that Sŏn/Kyo is Buddhism and Buddhism is nothing but Sŏn/Kyo. Sŏn is Buddhism's metaphysical truth; Kyo is Buddhist teachings in writings. We acquire *prajnā* (wisdom) from Kyo and *samādhi* (meditative concentration) from Sŏn. With the attainment of *samādhi*, we can reach *nirvāna* passing over the turbulent sea of life and death; and by Kyo we can acquire the wisdom to save sentient beings.[56]

Manhae characterized the entire Buddhist teachings as Sŏn and Kyo, in

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54. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn Pulgyo ŭi kaehyŏk an," *HYC*, 2: 167.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 168.

dialectical tension, influencing one another. Sŏn provides the solid basis for the ultimate deliverance from entanglements, while Kyo offers specific guidance on how to live together with others. Thus, Sŏn and Kyo constitute a complementary whole. Manhae states, "not depending upon words and letters" (Sŏn) is a way to see one's own nature and attain Buddhahood."[57] On the other hand, "not leaving behind words and letters" (Kyo) consummates one's nature and also provides a great means to save all beings. One should thus see letters from Sŏn and attain Sŏn from letters.

Major Buddhist thinkers before Manhae, such as Chinul (1158-1210) and Hyujŏng (1520-1604) also tried to unify Sŏn and Kyo. Chinul, a Sŏn apologist during the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392), faced disharmony among Buddhist practitioners who had split themselves between Sŏn and Kyo. Chinul integrated Sŏn and Kyo from the point of Sŏn praxis. He introduced doctrinal understanding into Sŏn by advocating the notion of sudden awakening/gradual cultivation (*tono chŏmsu*). Doctrinal understanding could spur the initial sudden awakening to the inherent buddha-nature and thus help complete Sŏn training proper. This sudden/gradual schemata reconciled Sŏn with the teachings of the *Buddhāvatamsaka Sūtra* and the fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva's development became possible through the sudden awakening in the beginning of the path.[58] Due to the initial awakening to the mind-essence, this long process became bearable to practitioners who understood the non-dual aspects of practice and the realization of innate purity. Chinul's approach stems from his concern for presenting a workable Sŏn soteriology to his fellow practitioners while coming up with a doctrinally-based rationale for this system. Chinul focused on the restoration of the proper sense of monastic order by establishing a concrete mode of praxis to which his fellow practitioners could resort.

Similarly, Hyujŏng, a leading Sŏn master during the Chosŏn dynasty, tried to harmonize Sŏn and Kyo in order to subdue the conflict between the two schools. He taught that both Sŏn and Kyo originated from the Buddha, "Sŏn being the Buddha's mind and Kyo, his words."[59] Sŏn is a way to attain the ultimate state that is beyond words (enlightenment) by means of no-words while Kyo is a way to reach the state through words. For Hyujŏng, Kyo is necessary to teach the

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57. Han Yongun, "Muncha pimuncha" (Letters, Non-letters), *HYC*, 2: 304.

58. Robert Buswell, Jr., *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii Press, 1991), 51.

59. Hyujŏng, *Sŏn'ga kwigam* in *Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ* (Seoul: Tongguk University Ch'ulp'anbu, 1984), 7:635b. Hyujŏng quoted this phrase from Zongmi's *Preface to the Complete Explanations on the Fountainhead of Ch'an Collection* (Chanyuan zhuquanji douxu) 1, T 2015.48.400b.10-11.

differences of all dharmas to people of ordinary faculties before showing them the ultimate truth, emptiness.[60] But Sŏn training, from the outset, requires complete renunciation of Kyo because Sŏn teaches one to see one's own nature in this thought-moment that is beyond thought and understanding in words. Hyujŏng thus put more emphasis on Sŏn than on Kyo, encouraging the short-cut investigation of live-words (*hwalgu*), which are beyond the reaches of reason, meaning, mind, or discourse.[61] In contrast, he regarded Kyo as ratiocination in association with meaning, mind, and consciousness.

In comparison, Manhae's Sŏn and Kyo integration provided the doctrinal foundation for the unification movement of the Sangha during the colonial period. The Korean Sangha struggled to establish a central organization. Manhae proposed centralization of the Sangha in order to utilize the human and financial resources of the institution. Equally important, he attempted to bring about a socially viable Buddhism. He gave equal emphasis on both Sŏn and Kyo as a means of fulfilling two major goals: *p'yŏngdŭng chuŭi* and *kuse chuŭi*. He emphasized Sŏn practice to meet existential suffering and Kyo to deal with social suffering. Manhae regarded the doctrinal system as a source of wisdom that could offer spiritual guidelines for living in relation to other people. However, Manhae was aware that as Buddhism expanded its interests to social problems and interacted with the wider society, the dangers of secularization could increase. Hence, Manhae's emphasis on Sŏn practice was intended to counteract inner disturbances caused by such involvement in social activities.

Manhae defined Sŏn as a way to find out what the mind is.[62] Once the mind is illuminated, all mysteries of life will be solved. If nothing blocks the brightness of the mind, the mind can reflect all objects on its surface in every detail. He further elaborated:

> There is nothing but the mind, so no independent, objective things could exist without having a relation to the mind. Only the mind is able to give rise to the existence of history and the myriad things in space. Nothing exists outside the mind.[63]

The mind is the key behind all things and troubles, and its cultivation thus reigns in Buddhist practice. The mind is accountable, Manhae believed, for every aspect

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60. Hyujŏng, ibid., 636b.

61. Hyujŏng, *Sŏn Kyo kyŏl* (Secrets of Sŏn and Kyo) in *Han'guk Pulgyo Chŏnsŏ*, 7:658a.

62. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 52-53.

63. Ibid., 52.

of human life.[64] In order to lead a good life, one should cultivate the mind. Perceiving the mind from the absolute point of view, it is originally empty, being neither existent nor nonexistent.[65] From the viewpoint of sentient beings, however, all dharmas are constantly arising and ceasing. Cultivating the mind is to preserve the original essence of emptiness and thus Manhae recommended Sŏn practice to people in every walk of life. He delineated Sŏn practice as such:

> Sŏn is neither religious faith nor the object of academic inquiry. It is something that no one can avoid practicing. It is an easy and necessary practice for everyone and provides a solid foundation for one's character. It is a supreme hobby and the ultimate art on Earth.[66]

Manhae depicted Sŏn as an integral cultivation that provides a sense of completeness in human life, not only a means of salvation, but also a foundation for living without being entangled in the cycle of life and death.

Sŏn practice, Manhae also mentioned, allowed that one not be disturbed by any external circumstances.[67] The "Real person" (*ch'am saram*) is never alienated from the original self (*chin'a*), no matter what happens. In metaphor, he liked it to the situation in which the eye is not affected by objects that it sees, nor is the ear itself disturbed by sounds when it hears. Because of the power of *samādhi*, one is not agitated by any aspect of life, whether sadness, irritation, or pleasure, nor is the mind swayed by either danger or comfort. Manhae epitomized the spirit of Sŏn in this way:

> Sŏn [that I refer to] is not "dead Sŏn" (*sa-Sŏn*) that clings to quiet calmness. It is a "live Sŏn" (*hwal-Sŏn*) that could make use of the Sŏn spirit: you soar as you please, and as you please you soar (*imun dŭngdŭng*).[68] Sŏn can eradicate danger and fear, and it repels sorrow and hurt. It eventually leads one to transcend life and death.[69]

One enters into the world of life and death with a mind that has already transcended the boundaries of phenomena. There is no death to overcome, because the adept has already died. Manhae mentioned that great-life (*taehwal*)

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64. Han Yongun, "Sŏn kwa insaeng" (Sŏn and Life), *HYC*, 2: 311.

65. Ibid., 312.

66. Ibid., 311.

67. Ibid., 318.

68. This phrase, "*imun dŭngdŭng*" is seen in *Wanglinglu*, T 2012.48.386c.5-6; and *Hongzhi Chanshi guanglu* 6, T 2001.48.74a.9-10.

69. Han Yongun, "Sŏn kwa insaeng," *HYC*, 2: 317.

is made possible by great-death (*taesa*).[70] A trivial life in which one is indulged in selfish desires is nothing but death. Life in a real sense begins when one disregards death. In other words, for Manhae, dying to oneself (disregarding one's own self) paradoxically saves one's very life. Accordingly, Manhae regarded Sŏn as the best form of art on Earth.

In terms of theory, Manhae regarded Sŏn as essence (*ch'e*) and sudden awakening (*tono*) while regarding Kyo as function (*yong*) and gradual awakening (*chŏmo*).[71] For him, the mind was beyond the reach of human wisdom and thought. The only plausible way to gain access to the mind is to let the mind shine by itself by raising its essence calmly. This was likened to muddy water that could be clear only by letting the dirt submerge by itself.[72] An originally pure mind becomes a hell because of deluded thoughts. However, deluded thoughts never stop through one willing to stop them and even good thoughts adversely affect Sŏn practice.

While traditional Sŏn focused on individual liberation, Manhae extended the area of Sŏn practice beyond the religious pursuit of enlightenment. He extended the practice of Sŏn into people's daily lives. He believed that anyone could practice Sŏn, and that it was a necessary part of living. Sŏn could provide not only inward peace for this death-bound existence, but also give poise and courage in our daily affairs. He coined the term "live Sŏn" to emphasize its active involvement in life while regarding meditation, which sought only inner quietude, as "dead Sŏn". Manhae's main interest lied in the social functions of Sŏn. In comparison, traditional *kanhwa* Sŏn advocated "live words" (*hwalgu*) to warn against intellectual endeavors to attain awakening. The totality of Manhae's Buddhist thought was thus directed to two major problems in life, namely existential and social sufferings. The salvation to this death-bound existence and the alleviation of social predicaments are coexistent.

Nondual philosophy, seen in the *zheng* (center) and *pian* (off-center) of the Caodong school and the *li* (principle) and *shi* (phenomena) of the Huayan system, was an attempt to show the possibility of Buddhist practice in the temporal world. By positing the identity between the absolute and the relative, it propounds that Buddhist enlightenment is attainable without departing from social life. In other words, this temporal world could be the foundation of Buddhist practice. The ultimate goal of this nondual world is enlightenment, which is beyond thought and conceptualization. This nondual philosophy is not

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70. Han Yongun, "Ch'unmong" (Dreams of Spring), *HYC*, 1: 240.

71. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 54.

72. Han Yongun, "Sŏn kwa insaeng," *HYC*, 2: 312.

a way of improving and developing the social world, but rather, the social world, as it is, is a place for attaining enlightenment. Careless identification between this Huayan universe and the human world could thus create a potential danger of totalitarian and antinomian tendencies. The undifferentiated nondual world does not discriminate between the natural world and the world of history. It could help maintain the status quo since anything could be acceptable under the rubric of nonduality.

Manhae attempted to resolve this impasse that he had identified by introducing a value system into the world of enlightenment. Manhae drew social values — freedom, equality, and peace — from absolute equality. He interpreted absolute equality as being fundamentally free: "What is the position of equality? It refers to truth [*tathatā*] that is without obstructions because it is free from time and space."[73] Manhae translated this absolute sense of freedom and equality into social terms.[74] He regarded social equality as the social manifestation of *tathatā* and argued that contemporary liberalism and cosmopolitanism could have derived from this absolute truth.[75] As previously mentioned, by respecting the freedom of others as that of one's own, liberalism would epitomize the ideal of equality. Cosmopolitanism (*segye chuŭi*) would also reflect absolute equality by seeing the world as one house and all people as one's own brothers and sisters. It thus discourages competition and military conquest of other countries. The practice of social equality is possible by the realization of the absolute. In other words, for Manhae the fundamental awareness of the absolute is the key to social justice.

Yet, any value system, based as it is on a discrimination between higher and lower values, is incompatible with the world of enlightenment, a realm beyond any traits of thought or judgment. The world of value, which is in the realm of thought, could go along with the world of enlightenment only with an attitude of no-self. Activities without ego consciousness are thus highly valued. As such, Manhae suggested a man of purpose (*chisa*) as an ideal type. The will and determination for social justice become feasible modes of life only because of the resolution of the *chisa* whose determination goes beyond self-interest. The *chisa* makes a firm resolution to serve society and the country instead of any personal well-being. Manhae idealized the *chisa* as such:

> However treacherous mountains and waters may be, there is no place that could

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73. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 44.

74. An Pyŏngjik, "Manhae Han Yongun ŭi tongnip sasang," 73.

75. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, *HYC*, 2: 44.

> block the *chisa* from going forward. However rapidly changing circumstances may be, there is no time period that could inhibit the *chisa* from carrying out his work. The resolution itself becomes his time and space, which are in turn his life and world. No hells, heavens, battleships, and weapons could obstruct his path.[76]

In order to live up to this resolution, this man of principle does not mind facing his own death, let alone any of life's temporary difficulties.[77] One's principle never changes its course due to mere selfish interests or external circumstances, including threats of death. Manhae noted that it is changed only by a conscious, progressive decision. He compares this kind of person with a plum blossom that shows off its peak beauty amidst the snow and bitter-cold wind.[78] This ideal man resembles that of neo-Confucianism. Manhae seemed to incorporate this belief into his Buddhist beliefs in his exploration of the function of the absolute. With the attitude of no-self, no dangers, personal adversities, or destitution could inhibit the true seeker. This lifestyle also epitomized the bodhisattva ideal in which personal interests are dissolved into compassion for suffering beings. Like the *chisa*, bodhisattvas make vows to rescue people in pain and danger, laying aside their egoistic pursuits.

Manhae thus envisaged an active mode of life. As such, to realize the absolute sense of equality in a social world, the mind resists any social inequalities and takes risks for social justice:

> Liberty is the life of all beings and peace is the happiness of life. So a person without liberty is like a dead body and a person deprived of peace is the one who suffers the greatest pain …. Therefore, in order to obtain liberty and secure peace, one must regard life as lightly as a strand of hair and be willing to sacrifice.[79]

Conclusion

As a Buddhist reformer and philosopher, Manhae strove to solve two major problems doctrinally. First, he had to present a socially active Buddhism for the Sangha to survive the challenges of modernity and thus, he made a conscious effort to promote Buddhism's place in society. With the traditional image of

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76. Han Yongun, "Pan kusimni" (Ninety *ri* is half of 100 *ri*), *HYC*, 1: 224.

77. Han Yongun, "Kohaksaeng" (A Self-supporting Student), *HYC*, 1: 273.

78. Han Yongun, "Yongja ka toera" (Be a Hero), *HYC*, 2: 352.

79. Han Yongun, "Chosŏn tongnip ŭi sŏ" (A Discourse on the Independence of Korea), *HYC*, 1: 346.

Buddhism as aloof from the concerns of the secular world, the very existence of Buddhism came into question in a country undergoing rapid westernization. As such, Manhae believed that Buddhism needed to demonstrate its utility in this process of modernization. His challenge was to show the social dimension of Buddhism as an essential part of the religion, not as an appendage. Social salvation needed to be in harmony with the existential salvation of the Buddhist tradition. This incorporation of the two also made social involvement uniquely Buddhist, not a mere imitation of Christianity. By connecting the two, he intended to prevent Buddhists' lack of passion in social engagement.

Second, Manhae had to prevent the negative concomitants of the social engagement of Buddhist clerics. At first, Buddhist monks showed a reluctance to take full responsibility for social involvement, but once they became involved in social activities, they were easily affected by the worldly values of society. Their social involvement blurred the distinction between a religious career and a lay livelihood, and monkhood was thus becoming a worldly profession. As the clerics began to be affected by worldly values, the maintenance of a monastic community became questionable.

To resolve these two problems concurrently, Manhae proposed his unified philosophy of Buddhist teachings. Manhae presented the principle of equality (*p'yŏngdŭng chuŭi*) and the principle of saving the world (*kuse chuŭi*) as the core of Buddhism. He attempted to place a social ethic within Buddhist teachings. He emphasized the principle of "saving the world" (*kuse chuŭi*) as a fundamental teaching of Buddhism, interpreting the absolute sense of equality and liberty in social terms. The absolute world of enlightenment thus became no different than its realization in the social world. Manhae encouraged active social involvement to cure social ills and injustice, factors that he believed impeded the ultimate Buddhist goal of attaining enlightenment.

By establishing a dialectical tension between Sŏn and Kyo, Manhae incorporated social salvation into the Buddhist existential system. At the same time, his analysis reasoned that social engagement would not disturb the inner pursuit of salvation because its working principle was based on the nature of no-self and an equanimity drawn from the absolute world of enlightenment. Manhae stressed Sŏn cultivation as a way to manifest the absolute in the relative. As such, one sees another dialectical tension between social participation and cultivation in his system of thought. In this way, Manhae offered his version of a Buddhist social ethic that emphasized cultivation of the mind and a mature attitude toward life.