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KYUNYŎ-JŎN:

THE LIFE, TIMES AND SONGS OF A TENTH CENTURY KOREAN MONK

CHŎNG HYŎNGNYŎN
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Dedicated

with respect and deep affection

to the memory of

Professor A. R. Davis

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* has long been regarded as one of the most significant documents of the Koryŏ Period (918-1392), but its proper translation requires expertise in a number of fields, including classical Chinese language and literature, Hua Yen Buddhism, Koryŏ history, and Old Korean language and literature. During a series of informal sessions at the University of Sydney during the early 1980s, Dr Prince and I became increasingly impressed with the fact that together we were fortunate enough to possess sufficient expertise in these fields for a long-overdue attempt to bring it before a wider audience. This translation is the result.

For my part, I would like to express particular thanks to Professor Nam P'ung-hyŏn of Dankook University, Seoul, who first guided me through the work and then later offered many helpful comments, and to others at Dankook who assisted in so many ways, especially University President Chang Ch'ung-sik.

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Finally, it remains for us to accept corporate responsibility for the final translation, opinions and interpretations contained herein. If pressed, responsibility may be attributed as follows: Dr Prince is primarily responsible in the Buddhist studies and Chinese literary domains, while the actual translation was a joint effort. I am primarily responsible in the domains of Korean history, language and literature. Praise, blame and correspondence should be directed accordingly.

Adrian Buzo

Sydney

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ABBREVIATIONS

BhCP *Bhadracarīpraṇidhāna*

CKC *Chosŏn kŭmsŏk ch'ongnam*

DN *Dīgha Nikāya* (Pali Text Society Edition)

GSR Pronunciation according to the *Grammata Serica Recensa*

GVS *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*

HKY *Han'guk kūmsŏk yumun*

HYS *Hua Yen Sūtra*

60HY Buddhabhadra's translation of the HYS in 60 fascicles

80HY Śikṣhānanda's translation of the HYS in 80 fascicles

40HY Prajña's translation of the GVS in 40 fascicles

KS *Koryŏ-sa*

KYJ *Kyunyŏ-jŏn*

SGSG *Samguk sagi*

SGYS *Samguk yusa*

SN *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (Pali Text Society edition)

ST Supplement to the Tripitaka

T *Taishō Daizōkyō*

TMS *Tongmunsŏn*

Note on the transcription of Sanskrit terms:

Where it seemed appropriate some words, such as "Mahayana" and "Nirvana", have been treated as English words, and diacritics have been omitted.

INTRODUCTION

The document generally known as the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn*, or A*ccount of the Life of Kyunyŏ*[1]was written during the winter of 1074-5 by a Koryŏ court official named Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng. It is a brief, episodic account of the life of the early Koryŏ monk Kyunyŏ (923-973), to whom Hyŏngnyŏn ascribes a key role in the propagation of Korean Hwaŏm (Hua Yen) Buddhism in Koryŏ, and as such it takes its place in the broad genre of Koryŏ Buddhist biographic/hagiographic works that have survived on contemporary inscriptions, in sections of longer works such as the *Samguk yusa* (mid-thirteenth century), and in whole works such as the *Haedong kosŭng-jŏn* (1215).

Kyunyŏ is the earliest Hwaŏm figure whose writings have largely been preserved. Unlike Wŏnhyo and Ŭisang, whose works have only survived in fragments, it is possible to gain a reasonably broad grasp of the range of Kyunyŏ's doctrinal concerns through his writings. The *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* therefore has particular significance, since it permits these writings to be set against a personal, social and historical background.

Kyunyŏ's biographer was a court official and a scholar, and thus his grasp of secular events was strong. However his prime purpose was not, of course, simply to relate such events. His aim was to give an account of the life of Kyunyŏ, in such a manner as to demonstrate the spiritual authority of the monk whom he claims as the most significant and influential Buddhist of the Hwaŏm school to have lived under the Koryŏ dynasty to date. The resulting hagiographic dimension not only provides a nonpareil picture of the norms and standards of the medieval Korean Buddhist organization, but also of the close nexus between state and religious affairs in early Koryŏ, a topic on which the secular histories are almost entirely silent.

Furthermore, this is a picture that emerges not only directly through the narrative of

Hyŏngnyŏn himself but also through the lengthy and eloquent essay written by Ch'oe Haenggwi, a contemporary of Kyunyŏ, which Hyŏngnyŏn has incorporated into his text, and in which Ch'oe, too, highly appraises the achievements of Kyunyŏ. Ch'oe Haenggwi's essay comprises one of two significant incorporations in Hyŏngnyŏn's work, the other being a cycle of eleven songs with accompanying preface, composed by Kyunyŏ himself. It is the presence of these songs, composed in the Korean language, and written in the Korean *hyangch'al* script that gives the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* immense significance as a source for early Korean language and literature studies, such that these aspects have exercised a near monopoly on attention paid to the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* since its rediscovery in the early 1920s. This significance arises not only because these songs represent eleven of a total corpus of only twenty-five short songs that have survived from pre-fourteenth century Korea, but also because the integrity of their text contrasts strongly with the many doubts that surround that of the texts of the other fourteen songs, all of which have been preserved in the *Samguk yusa.*

Moreover, Kyunyŏ's songs come with supporting Chinese texts to aid the deciphering of the *hyangch'al* script, for not only were the songs themselves based directly and closely on what was probably the most widely disseminated and popularly known Hua Yen text of this era, the *Bhadracarīpraṇidhāna* or *Commitment to Virtuous Practice,* but also the essential purpose of Ch'oe Haenggwi's essay in the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* is to provide renderings of Kyunyŏ's songs into the Chinese *shih* poetic form.

In his essay, Ch'oe Haenggwi praises Kyunyŏ highly as a composer of such secular songs on Buddhist themes. In so doing, he elaborates considerably on the literary tradition of which Kyunyŏ's songs were a part, and in addition to preserving the names of otherwise unknown leading practitioners of the Korean lyrical song form *ka* from preceding centuries, his text is also important as the source of a number of literary

allusions and descriptions that have helped to define with greater precision aspects of form and style in Silla and early Koryŏ songs. Futher, in more general terms, Ch'oe's work is important for the world-view it contains of a tenth-century Koryŏ man of letters writing about, and comparing his own country's literature with that of China, a country he was deeply familiar with,[2] several hundred years before the era when the predominance of Neo-Confucianism in Korea drastically altered the terms of such comparisons.

The *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* is also valuable for the light it sheds on aspects of contemporary Korean history. Hyŏngnyŏn was writing in a time when the Koryŏ court was absorbed in two especially significant affairs of state—the resumption of full relations with Sung China, and the completion of a century-long process of accumulating a definitively complete library of extant Buddhist writings. His indirect reflections of these two interrelated concerns are therefore a valuable addition to the otherwise sparse Korean sources for this period. Secondly, he is writing about the life of a monk intimately connected with affairs of state during the 950s, a decade of immense significance for the evolution of the Koryŏ state. This is likewise a period about which very little is known outside of the dynastic histories, and Hyŏngnyŏn's work is thus a valuable supplement.

While it is not really surprising that scholars in the modern era should have tended to approach the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* almost exclusively in terms of the light that the contributions of Kyunyŏ and Ch'oe Haenggwi can shed on early Korean language and literature, this has inevitably led to some significant methodological shortcomings. For example, more than fifty years were to pass from its rediscovery in 1921 until the first reasonably comprehensive treatment of Kyunyŏ's life and works began to appear, [3] and the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* has not yet been properly analysed as a document in its own right, despite the obvious importance a consideration of the whole might have for a

proper consideration of its parts. The motives of Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng, the circumstances in which he wrote his work, and the Buddhist aspects of the work thus remain subjects almost entirely untreated, or even uncommented upon.

In sum, a methodology analysing the nature of the document and the doctrine it expresses as the logical point of departure from which to approach the enormously valuable information it contains has been slow to emerge. This present work seeks to redress this by examining the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* as a document first, and then evaluating its literary works and references accordingly.

The Author of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn*

Little is known about the author of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn*. It is not even entirely clear whether his family name was Hyŏk or Hyŏngnyŏn, for both names appear to have been current, albeit highly uncommon, in eleventh-century Koryŏ,[4] and it is not possible to link him with any known clans or families by either name. The fact that he refers to himself as simply "Chŏng" at one point in the document suggests that his family name was in fact Hyŏngnyŏn, for the omission of the family name is a conventional form of literary reference elsewhere in the document, and hence if his family name were just Hyŏk, he would have referred to himself as "Yŏnjŏng".

Nothing at all is known about Hyŏngnyŏn beyond what might be gleaned from the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* itself, and from two brief notices in the *Koryŏ-sa*. In the first of these notices, it is recorded for the 11th month 1100 that "Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng went to Liao and presented (the Liao Court with) goods from Koryŏ." (KS 11.24B.3). Five years later, in November 1105, the *Koryŏ-sa* records Hyŏngnyŏn's appointment as Superintendent Examiner of the Scholars of the Chang-ak Pavilion (KS 12.17A.2). Since the Koryŏ-sa does not elaborate on this position, nor does it carry notices of any other incumbents to it, it is difficult to judge the significance of this appointment

beyond the fact that it must have been a position of some significance to warrant mention. Before conversion into a chapel in 1126 (KS 15.23B.6), the Chang-ak Pavilion is frequently mentioned in Hyŏngnyŏn's time as a location for official banquets, and it seems probable from the title of Hyŏngnyŏn's position that activities relating to the civil service examination were also carried on there, for which he may have been some type of chief adjudicator.

Taken together, these two references present Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng as a person of high official standing and of recognized scholarship. Little can be added to this from his hand in the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* some twenty-five years earlier, beyond that he was a layman, already the holder of a *chinsa* degree in 1075, and already able enough in letters to be the recipient of a commission from a monk of senior rank to write the biography of a person regarded in influential official quarters as the most significant Hwaŏm teacher yet produced by the dynasty.

The Work

In his foreword, Hyŏngnyŏn gives two reasons for undertaking to write an account of Kyunyŏ's life. He refers to some unspecified dissatisfaction, which he says he shares, with a recent work of a Palace Chronicler, Kang Yuhyŏn, on Kyunyŏ on the grounds that "it omitted many things", and implies that this led to his being approached by the Great Master Ch'ang'un to arrange an attested record of Kyunyŏ's life in biographic form. Since Kang's work is now lost, and since nothing else is known of Ch'ang'un, their respective attitudes to Kyunyŏ can only be guessed at.

The work that resulted consists of ten chapters, bracketed by a Foreword and an Afterword. It is twenty-eight pages long, each page containing eleven lines with a variable number of characters on each full line, usually twenty to twenty-three. The division into ten chapters was itself a stylistic device, invoking the special

significance that the number ten had for the Hua Yen school as a symbol of completeness, and Hyŏngnyŏn would certainly have been aware of the example of the ten-chapter biography of Fa-tsang by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn (857-?),[5] to mention just one such work, in ordering his own work in this way.

The work opens with Hyŏngnyŏn's brief Foreword, in which he announces the significance of Kyunyŏ in a series of three parallel sentences which place him alongside Nāgārjuna (second century A.D.), who is credited by tradition as being the one who put the Hua Yen teachings into circulation, and Ŭisang (625-702), who was the First Patriarch of the Hwaŏm school. As for Kyunyŏ, it is claimed that it was due to him that Hwaŏm teachings first became widespread in Koryŏ. Hyŏngnyŏn then explains briefly how he came to write his work, and the Foreword concludes with a list of the ten chapter headings for the work.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are a mildly hagiographical account of Kyunyŏ's birth, early life and entry into temple life respectively. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with his early activities as a monk, and also provide an extensive listing of his discourses and formal writings. Chapter 6 relates four incidents by which he rose to prominence under King Kwangjong (949- 975), and Chapter 7 is almost wholly given over to the incorporation of Kyunyŏ's eleven-song cycle on the *Bhadracarīprcnidhāna,* along with a brief preface also composed by Kyunyŏ in the *p'ien-wen* style. A note in the text at the conclusion of the songs states that the songs were not included in Hyŏngnyŏn's original work.

Chapter 8 introduces the incorporation of Ch'oe Haenggwi's work, which consists of his eleven poetic renderings of Kyunyŏ's songs into Chinese, along with a lengthy and lyrical introductory essay in which he extols the virtues of Kyunyŏ and his songs. Although at times the poems follow Kyunyŏ's songs closely, points of divergence are such that they cannot properly be termed translations. They accord well with Ch'oe's

stated aim of making the content of Kyunyŏ's songs better known "to the east and to the west" (KYJ 10B.4).

In Chaper 9, Hyŏngnyŏn again gives emphasis to Kyunyŏ's spiritual authority with two anecdotes in which Kyunyŏ bests both political enemies and malevolent spirits. Chapter 10 briefly records Kyunyŏ's death and an attendant miraculous story. The chapter also has what seems to be an addendum covering miscellaneous aspects of Kyunyŏ's personal abilities and career as a monk. The work then concludes with a brief, eulogistic Afterword.

It is, of course, striking—and somewhat ironic—that someone, presumably Hyŏngnyŏn himself, omitted from the original text of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* the very feature that gives the work its chief claim to modern fame—Kyunyŏ's songs. At the same time, the note in Chapter 7 of the text referring to this omission indicates that the text of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* passed through a subsequent editing process, and this in turn leads us to a consideration of the modern textual traditions of the work.

In its time, the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* appears to have been highly appraised, for it was included in the *Tripitaka Koreana* (hereafter TK) as an appendix (K 1510b) to Kyunyŏ's *Sŏk hwaŏm-gyo pun'gi wŏnt'ong ch'o* (K 1510a), from where it emerged to gain the attention of modern scholars in the early 1920s.

There is no direct evidence as to when the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* text was in fact entered into the TK. The TK as a whole was carved between 1237 and 1251, and the colophons to the four Kyunyŏ works contained in. it (K 1507, K 1508, K 1509, and K 1510a) record that these works were carved in 1250-51.[6] It would therefore seem that this was a logical time for the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* to have been carved as well, and certainly the integrity of the text argues that it assumed its present form at an early stage of its life, for it is remarkably free of the textual ambiguities and corruptions that are associated with repeated manual copying. Thus a possible re-editing to include Kyunyŏ's songs

may have occurred at this point, but in any case, the insertion of the songs into the text must have occurred at an early date—and hence the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* must also have assumed its final form at an early date—since the *hyangch'al* system of transcription employed by Kyunyŏ began to die out as the Koryŏ period progressed, and appears to have been all but dead by the fourteenth century.[7] No point would thus have been served by their specific inclusion at a later time than this.[8]

The rediscovery of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* is, briefly, a tale of two texts. In 1921, a Japanese amateur scholar, Ariga Keitarō included a document titled *Wŏnt'ong yangjung taesa Kyunyŏ-jŏn* in his work on Korean village shrines titled *Shijū shichi shiin.* In this form, the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* came to the attention of the Japanese scholar Ogura Shimpei, who was chiefly interested in the eleven *hyangch'al* songs contained in the work. Ogura recorded that he asked Ariga about the origin of the text but was unable to obtain a clear answer. However, shortly afterwards he learnt that the original source of Ariga's text was the TK, and there he found the same work but under the title of *Taehwaŏm sujwa wŏnt'ong yangjung taesa Kyunyŏ-jŏn.* Comparison with Ariga's text then revealed the latter's text to be a somewhat corrupted copy of the TK text, and so Ogura used the TK version as the source for his landmark study on Old Korean songs *Kyōka oyobi ridoku no kenkyū.*[9]

Since then, the Ariga text has been progressively set aside in favour of the TK text, but since the Ariga text was the first to be published, and since it appeared in some widely circulated early editions of basic source materials for Korean history such as the 1928 Chŏson sahak-hoe edition of the *Samguk yusa,* the influence of this text has continued to be felt. This may well continue to be the case, because the late Yang Chudong used the Ariga text in his *Koga yŏn'gu* (1942), a work that continues to be the most widely-consulted source for interpretations of the songs, while in Western languages, Lee (1958-9) mirrors Yang's usage.

The residual influence of the Ariga text is discernible today in two basic points. These are the specific issue of whether the name of the author of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* is Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng (TK text) or Saryŏn Chŏng (Ariga text) and the more general issue of the reliability of the two texts. There is little to be gained by debating these points here beyond what has been said above, for it would essentially be an anachronistic debate traversing ground already well covered by Yang Chaeyŏn (1959). The TK text is clearly reliable and substantially free of corruptions, but the same may not be said of the Ariga text.[10] Even if one did not have the corroborating evidence of the *Koryŏ-sa* that a Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng was alive and active in court activities at the time the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* was written, one would in any case be obliged to accept the TK text as authoritative, and accept that the first character in his name is *Hyŏk* and not *Sa*.

But if little is known about Hyŏngnyŏn Chŏng and, for that matter, the other people who influenced the content of the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* either directly or indirectly, rather more can be said on the question of Hyŏngnyŏn's motives in writing the work. Although he does not state these beyond his brief reference to dissatisfaction in Hwaŏm circles with the previous work by Kang Yuhyŏn, a number of features in the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* indicate strongly that his commission was to write an account of Kyunyŏ's life with a non-Korean readership in mind—no doubt principally Sung but also Liao and Japanese. Reference has been made to such features in the footnotes to the translation, but the main points are drawn together here for the sake of clarity. They are:

a) The omission of Kyunyŏ's songs from Hyŏngnyŏn's original account.

As already indicated, a note in the text states that Kyunyŏ's songs were not included in the original account, and it would appear most likely that they were incorporated at the time when the *Kyunyŏ-jŏn* was being prepared for entry into the TK. It would have made little sense for a Korean writing in the late eleventh century, when *hyangch'al* was still current, to deny them to Korean readers, but it would have made rather more