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Tracing the *Satipaṭṭhāna* in the Korean Ganhwa Seon Tradition: Its Periscope Visibility in the Mindful *hwadu Sisimma*, ‘*Sati-Sisimma*’

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Abstract: The Buddha is said to have awakened to the true nature of existence and attained final liberation from suffering through the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. This practice begins by addressing sensations from the processes of body and mind, as characterized by ‘bare attention’ and ‘clear comprehension’ through non-judgmental observation, ultimately effecting a transformation into a unique religious experience. During its transmission to East Asian countries, particularly in the Chan tradition, the essence of *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* has become transformed, while maintaining the theme of intense concentration, perhaps in the form of ‘counter-illumination’—an extended equivalent of ‘bare attention’. Not much has been written on which aspects of the Indian contemplative tradition were passed on to the Chan/Seon schools. In the Korean Ganhwa Seon practice, however, there are some indications that the spirit of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, resonating as a role of sustained attention with mindfulness, has been partially manifested, having crystallized into the mindful *hwadu* called *Sisimma*, or ‘*Sati-Sisimma*’. To substantiate this, this paper investigates how the two seemingly different practices can be seen to link together in the Korean Seon tradition, and proposes *pari passu* meditative parallels, *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Sati-Sisimma*, recommending for an ‘attentive’ mode and a ‘non-attentive’ mode respectively, in modern meditative practices.

Keywords: *Satipaṭṭhāna*; mindful *hwadu Sisimma*; *Sati-Sisimma*; bare attention; counter-illumination; Chan/Seon/Zen; Korean Ganhwa Seon

1. Introduction

Sati (S; *smṛti*) means “to remember,” “to recollect,” “to bear in mind,” as in the Vedic tradition. *Satipaṭṭhāna* is a compound term that has been translated in two ways, namely *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Satiupaṭṭhāna*: *Satipaṭṭhāna* is translated as “foundation of mindfulness” underscoring the object used to gain mindfulness, and *Satiupaṭṭhāna* as “presence, establishment or arousing of mindfulness” underscoring the mental qualities co-existent with or antecedent to mindfulness (Anālayo 2003, pp. 29–30; Bodhi 2000, p. 1504). The early Buddhist practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* exemplifies its empirical nature by focusing concentration on all incoming sensory data or experiences, enabling one to lead toward the ultimate religious experience. This process begins with the conscious registering of the sensations experienced through the six sense faculties, characterized by detaching from the processes of body and mind in non-judgmental observation and awareness. Being ‘non-judgmental’ refers to an undistracted watchfulness, which calmly observes each emerging sensory or mental object to systematically notice certain ubiquitous characteristics of experience such as arising and passing away, whereas being ‘judgmental’ has the tendency to promote ensuing emotional turbulence. The practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* is said to provide a “direct path” for the development of liberating insight in which the practitioner faces whatever happens with awareness. This requires an effort in order to ensure that

mindfulness is established with continuity and in combination with the presence of clear understanding (Anālayo 2013, p. 19). Bodhi states that mindfulness does not occur automatically but is a quality to be cultivated. It also has an ethical function in that it distinguishes wholesome qualities from unwholesome ones, good deeds from bad deeds, and beneficial states of mind from harmful states (Bodhi 2011, p. 26). It is said that *Satipaṭṭhāna* operates on the principle that tranquility (P. *samatha*) is initially cultivated which finally leads to insight (P. *vipassanā*). Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are aspects of liberating direct knowledge. The practice thus requires the continuous observation of reality, in which the practitioner microscopically analyzes the very process of perception.

During its transmission from India to East Asian countries, namely China, Korea and Japan, this practice may have subsequently infused its message into the Mahāyāna/Chan traditions. However, there is relatively scant evidence of research on this issue. One may wonder if its teaching has been sustained in the Mahāyāna tradition, especially the Chan tradition. If it has ever been preserved, what aspects of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula are visible in the later traditions and in what particular form?

This paper emerged from the endeavor to detect any evidence of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* or any of its special features within the Chan/Seon/Zen tradition, particularly in the form of *huatou* 話頭 (K. *hwadu*, J. *watō*, the topic of inquiry). Specifically, the spirit of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, if it has ever been recognizable, will be explored to determine to what extent it appeared in the Korean Ganhwa Seon practice. However, this does not mean that Korean Buddhism, the Chogyŏ Order in particular, would view itself as a unique heir to *Satipaṭṭhāna* in its contemplative practice, nor should it hold an exclusive monopoly on this practice.

To support this proposal, *Satipaṭṭhāna* with its emphasis on the functions of the human mind will be reexamined in order to explore the ways in which these seemingly different traditions may become amalgamated and reconciled in the Korean Buddhist tradition, which is uniquely identifiable as a distilled meeting point, the mindful *hwadu* *Sisimma*, ‘*Sati-Sisimma*’. During the Indian-Sino-Korean encounter with the *Sisimma*, a bridging mechanism will be identified through the input of “counter-illumination” (McRae 1986, p. 114) or “tracing back the radiance” (廻光返照 C. *huiguang fanzhao*/K. *hoe-gwang ban-jo*) (Buswell 1992, pp. 103–4) utilizing a number of early Mahāyāna and Chinese scriptures.

2. *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the Foundation of Mindfulness

Buddhist scholars generally agree that the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*¹ is one of the most widely commented upon texts in the Pāli canon and continues to hold a central place in the modern *Vipassanā* movement. In the text, the Buddha is reported to have set forth the discourse under a fourfold rubric called the “four foundations of mindfulness” (P. *Satipaṭṭhāna*; C. *nianchu*; K. *nyeomcheo* 念處), which are comprised of ‘contemplation of the body’; ‘contemplation of sensations’, that is, physical sensations that are pleasurable, painful, or neutral; ‘contemplation of mind’, in which one observes the broader state of mind or units in the ephemeral mind-stream of momentary duration; and ‘contemplation of mental objects’ or factors of consciousness making up the respective states of mind, which involves the mindfulness of several key doctrinal categories, such as the five aggregates, the Four Noble Truths, and so forth.

The central theme of *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice is insight into the true nature of the body, feelings, mind-states and reality-patterns (phenomena, mind-objects, or *dhamma*): this enables the practitioner to achieve a transformation through awareness by means of a rigorous detachment. Specifically, the practice supports a sustained analysis resulting in the arising of wisdom into the true nature of reality,

¹ *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness) appears in two versions in the Pāli canon: (1) A long account known as the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (Walshe [1987] 1995, chp. 22, pp. 335–50); (2) A slightly shorter text called the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (Ñānamoli and Bodhi 1995, chp. 10, pp. 145–55).

namely the ‘three marks’ of all conditioned phenomena in *saṃsāra*: impermanence (P. *anicca*, S. *anitya*); suffering (P. *dukkha*, S. *duḥkha*), and non-Self (P. *anattā*, S. *anātman*).

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, being mindful of the body in the body is explained in the following six ways: mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*), the four postures (walking, standing, sitting, lying), clear awareness of all activities of the body, reflection on the repulsive parts of the body, analysis of the four bodily elements (earth, water, fire, and air), and the nine charnel ground contemplation (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, pp. 145–55). While one abides contemplating in the body, supreme insight is developed through being mindful of its arising and vanishing factors to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and awareness. In mindfulness of feeling, one recognizes three kinds of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent, and sees clearly their transitory quality. Supreme insight is developed similar to the contemplation of the body. In contemplation of mind, one remains mindful of every state of consciousness, whether the mind is possessed or not of the impulses of greed, hatred, or delusion. Supreme insight is developed similar to the contemplation of the body and feeling. How does a practitioner abide by the contemplation of mental objects? This is to be practiced in five areas with reference to the Five Hindrances,² the Five Aggregates of Clinging,³ the Six Internal and External Sense-bases,⁴ the Seven Factors of Enlightenment,⁵ and the Four Noble Truths (Nyanaponika [1965] 1988, pp. 123–35). Likewise, supreme insight is to be developed similarly. The methodical practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* operates on the principle that tranquility (P. *samatha*) is initially developed which finally leads to insight (P. *vipassanā*). Here, the mental phenomena are analyzed and viewed in the light of the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena as stated above. Properly practiced, the technique developed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* is said to lead to the realization of *Nibbāna* (S. *Nirvāṇa*) through the attainment of *jhāna* states, or states of absorption.

In psychological terms, *Satipaṭṭhāna* appears to impart a type of *de facto* melting mechanism of ego formation, namely the dissolution of ego through cultivating penetrating insight. As the Dalai Lama states that the nature of non-Self is not a matter of something that existed in the past becoming nonexistent, the ‘Self’ is to be understood as being never-existent right from the start (His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso 1984, p. 40). Further details can be extracted from available publications.⁶

3. ‘Bare Attention’ as Shared with the *hwadu Sisimma* Practice in the Form of ‘Counter-Illumination’ as Its Extended Equivalent

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, a collection of writings representing some of the teachings of the Buddha, the repetition of the phrases “contemplating the body as body, feelings as feelings” and so forth, is meant to impress upon the meditator the importance of remaining aware, utilizing sustained attention directed on a chosen object (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, p. 145). The writings state that the Buddha is reported to have taught the systematic cultivation of Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) as the simplest and most direct method for training and developing the mind. The object of Right Mindfulness comprises the entire human being as well as one’s entire field of experience.

Similarly, Chan practice is distinguished by intense concentration, or *samādhi*, but not through seeking for an analytic, rational answer; thus it is different from a cognitive understanding of the mind, or *vipassanā*. Having said this, out of all known *hwadus* in Chan practice, the *hwadu Sisimma* is unique, in that a student is advised to sustain the questioning: ‘What is seeing?’ ‘What is hearing?’ ‘What is smelling?’ ‘What is moving the body?’ and so on, in essence asking ‘What is one’s true nature?’ Unlike other *kung-ans* or *hwadus*, there are several parallels in the *hwadu Sisimma* to *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice,

² S. *pañcāvaraṇa*; Five obstructions of wisdom: desire, wrath, sloth & torpor, agitation, and doubt.

³ Material form, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness.

⁴ The six loci of perception or sensation; they are six organs of sense, which constitute the fifth of twelve links of dependent origination. The term is also used for the six sense fields and the six objects.

⁵ Mindfulness, investigation of reality, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

⁶ (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, p. 155). Also see (Anālayo 2003, pp. 117–249).

specifically the idea of being mindful of the body, feelings, mind, and mental objects. As such, the utilization of bare attention provides the key to the distinctive method of intense concentration in both the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and likely the *hwadu Sisimma* practice as its modified equivalent.

In the discourse of *Satipaṭṭhāna* mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) are essential for the actual practice of meditation, in which *sampajañña* becomes insight into impermanence, that is, direct knowledge of the arising and passing of phenomenon. The word *sati* may best be characterized as mindfulness, in the sense of a lucid awareness of the present, and is commonly described as ‘bare attention,’ a term first rendered by Nyanaponika Thera (Bodhi 2011, p. 28). However, Bodhi asserts that Nyanaponika did not regard ‘bare attention’ as non-conceptual or non-verbal. He argues that the expression ‘bare attention’ can be pragmatically useful to guide a beginning practitioner in the method of setting up mindfulness; this is presumably what Nyanaponika had in mind when he used the expression ‘bare attention’ (Bodhi 2011, p. 30). Interestingly, while the role of ‘bare attention’ is emphasized, *sampajañña* is not only discouraged but also positively prohibited in Chan practice.

How does this ‘bare attention’ influence the proper practice of *samatha*? Nyanaponika Thera sums up the general principle underlying the practice of bare attention in the *Satipaṭṭhāna*: “Bare Attention is the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens in us . . . kept to a bare registering of the facts observed, without reacting to them... Any such comments arising in one’s mind are neither repudiated nor pursued, but are dismissed, after a brief mental note has been made of them” (Nyanaponika [1965] 1988, p. 30).

However, the word *dismissed* may not be appropriate in describing the method of bare attention because it connotes implicitly an active sense of rejecting or refusing. The practitioner is not supposed to actively dismiss the facts of perception, but to just gently ‘let go’ of them. It is similar to the idea of not chasing a fly away, but rather just letting it buzz off by itself. The term *letting go* is used in the sense of relinquishing or renouncing. Why is it important to clarify the meaning of letting go? The phrase encompasses a considerable scope of meaning in early Buddhism; it is a central theme that underlies the path to liberation from its outset to its final completion of letting go of any clinging whatsoever (Anālayo 2012, p. 266). What has to be let go of in a deeper sense is *control*. Anālayo aptly states that the desire to control is simply a manifestation of clinging to the sense of ‘I’. A correlate to clinging to an ‘I’ notion is the sense of ownership towards goods and possessions. To gradually undermine this sense of ownership, ‘letting go’ is repeatedly recommended in the early discourses (Anālayo 2012, p. 267). Anālayo elaborates that the benefit of such letting go is the attainment of the concentrative depth of the mind, following which the sense of ‘I’ goes into abeyance, allowing for a subjective experience of the merger between the observing subject and the observed meditative object (Anālayo 2012, pp. 267–68). Here it is interesting to note that the *hwadu Sisimma* practice stresses sustaining questions by addressing various sensations, which arise from the processes of body and mind, in the form of ‘counter-illumination’. This serves as an extended equivalent of ‘bare attention’, ultimately effecting a transformation into a unique religious experience, that of ‘Oneness’, or the Buddha-nature. The *hwadu Sisimma* will be further delineated in Chapter 8.

Practically speaking, one may wonder how to incorporate ‘letting-go’ in one’s daily life. Here is a hypothetical illustration of how bare attention may be practiced while meditating on *Satipaṭṭhāna*: Imagine a practitioner jogging while being mindful of breathing (*kāya*); then s/he happens to fall into a thorny rose bush and pricks her/his face on a thorn, becoming mindful of feeling a sharp pain (*vedanā*) from a swollen, dirty, and bleeding wound. S/he may then become aware of various thoughts of rising anger, name-calling, regretfulness, and so forth (*citta*). Through mindfulness of mental objects, one recognizes clearly their ephemeral quality, devoid of everlasting substance, thus being mindful of their arising, abiding and vanishing factors. While thus engaged, one’s mind is settled, calm and detached, and not clinging to the bodily sensations. As such, the supreme wisdom of dependent origination, that is, the interdependent nature of all phenomena may be developed accompanied by insight into the two aspects of non-Self: lack of ego and absence of substance.

In short, when feelings arise upon sense contact with one's surroundings, the practice of mindfulness meditation, monitored at a default setting using a heuristic method, can assist one in transforming her/his natural faculty of ordinary perception into the status of enlightenment. As Ayya Khema states, "Instinctively we are a constant reactor, but deliberately we become an actor" (Khema 2010, p. 16).

4. *Satipaṭṭhāna* in the Mahāyāna Tradition

Although most of the Mahāyāna writings affirm the harmony between *samatha* (calmness) and *vipassanā* (insight), it is noted here that the latter aspect is not emphasized to a similar extent in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* of Indian Buddhism. As Sujato has indicated, the emphasis on non-Self is more prevalent in the later Mahāyāna scriptures, and less so in the Indian context of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The early *suttas* have a more balanced approach, embracing both the attractive [breath, pleasant feelings, purified mind, and so forth] and unattractive [charnel ground, painful feelings, defiled mind, and so forth] aspects of experience within *Satipaṭṭhāna* (Sujato 2012, p. 356). In the later Mahāyāna and particularly the Chan tradition, the typical Indian description of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice begins to be described in a slightly altered and condensed form: the body, feeling, mind, and mental objects are recognized as essentially empty (*śūnya*), and there is less emphasis on the heuristic methodology through the six sense faculties and the consequent transformation into an ultimate religious experience. It seems apparent among extant commentaries that the Chan adepts attempted to skim the essence of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, making light of its paramount centrality while also bypassing its elaborate, empirical, and practical instruction. Although the vital message of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* formula had been transmitted in the earlier Mahāyāna literature, especially in the later Chan tradition, the heart of the teaching was often eviscerated and categorized merely as one of the so-called "Hīnayāna" practices.⁷ What motivated such an implicit (and later explicit) neglect of this practice in the Chan tradition? This issue is to be examined by addressing a subtle but significant difference in the ultimate concerns of the Buddha and Chan, respectively.

It is a matter of great significance to compare the primary object of the Buddha's search for truth, as stated in early Buddhism, to that of Chan practice. It is apparent from the Buddha's discourses as described in the *Nikāya*, that the Buddha's primary concern was complete liberation from suffering, not merely the transient alleviation of physical or emotional pain. However, during the Sinification of Buddhist doctrine and meditation, what transpired regarding the Indian meditative concepts, especially as they were passed on to the Chan/Seon tradition?

Although this is a vast area which lies beyond the scope of this article, a brief explanation may suffice here. In sum, the primary concern regarding practice in the Chan tradition is to attain ultimate enlightenment, with the understanding that all sentient beings at their core are inherently preloaded with True Suchness/Self Nature (*tathatā/svabhāva*),⁸ this issue closely parallels the debate regarding the sudden (頓悟頓修 K. *donō donsu* C. *dunwu dunxiu*) vs. gradual (頓悟漸修 K. *donō jeomsu* C. *dunwu jianxiu*) approach to enlightenment and cultivation, which has been extensively discussed elsewhere.⁹

The Chan tradition's precedence for such an ultimate enlightenment itself is based on the implicit premise that enlightenment, once attained, resolves all suffering *instantaneously* and *simultaneously*. This appears to differ significantly from the Buddha's primary concern of suffering and its remediation. Seongcheol, the late Supreme Patriarch of the Korean Buddhists Jogye Order, stated, "When the clouds get cleared away, simultaneously the sun does shine. It is one instantaneous step, not two steps" (Park 2009, p. 42). In this context, Seongcheol pronounced in his monumental writing, *Seonmun Jeongro*, that in the Chan school, "Seeing one's own originally enlightened mind is fundamental. Seeing

⁷ Hīnayāna (C. *xiaosheng*, Lesser Vehicle, 小乘) a pejorative term coined by the Mahāyāna (Greater Vehicle) tradition of Buddhism. *Hīna* has the negative connotations of lesser, defective, and vile.

⁸ *Tathatā* (如, True Suchness, Thusness, which is the ultimate reality beyond)/*Svabhāva* (自性, inherent self-nature).

⁹ See the following: (Buswell 1987, pp. 321–80; McRae 1987, pp. 227–78).

one's original nature means a penetrating understanding of *tathatā/svabhāva*.¹⁰ This may be one reason why the lack of sufficient emphasis on moral practice has been acquiescently permissible among practitioners of Chan. Buswell asserts that Chan eventually not only discarded but also condemned both *samādhi* (concentration) and *prajñā* (wisdom) as having only provisional value for dullards who were as yet unprepared spiritually for the more sophisticated techniques of Chan (Buswell 1987, pp. 324–25, 328, 330). It could then be claimed that the dual nature of *samādhi* and *prajñā* in the Indian teaching collapsed into the nondual nature in Chan's single inseparable system which espoused that enlightenment is operative at all levels of meditative practice.

Here, it may be logical to question whether the terms 'enlightenment', referred to as *Nibbāna*, or final liberation from suffering in early Buddhism, and 'True Suchness/Self-Nature' in Chan, are even addressing the same issue. Given its apparently differing approach, does the Chan tradition preserve the spirit of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* as taught in early Buddhism? A plausible explanation has been presented briefly in Chapter 6, which discusses counter-illumination, although a comprehensive critical comparison between the two traditions remains to be explored.

5. Traces of Early Buddhist Meditation in the Chinese Buddhist Tradition

The Chan school in the Sinitic system can hardly be said to have any equivalents with the Indian Buddhist tradition. Despite its adoption of the word 'Chan 禪' (meditation), its theory and practice predominantly emphasize wisdom (*prajñā*), unlike the classical Indian meditative absorption (*dhyāna*) as taught in the *Satipaṭṭhāna*. While the investigation of various traditions of meditation in Chinese Buddhism requires much detailed discussion, this paper shall focus by and large on the mindfulness of breathing (P. *ānāpānasati*; C. *annabanna-nian*; K. *annabanna-nyeon* 安那般那念)¹¹ and "counter-illumination"¹² as they relate to the *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

Sometime during the 1st–4th centuries, a group of early Buddhist meditation texts, which are preserved in Chinese translation, known as the *Dhyāna Sūtras* 禪經 (C. *Chanjing*) emerged. Broadly, the *Dhyāna Sūtras* are said to have laid the foundation for the development of Sinitic Buddhist meditation practices, especially the later writings of Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538–597). One of his texts, the *Six Gates to the Sublime Dharma* (六妙法門, 575–585), is particularly worthy of note. It discusses the six-fold practice of inhalation and exhalation, that is, counting (數), following (隨), fixing (止), contemplation (觀), shifting [turning] (還 or 反轉), and purification (淨). The 'shifting' aspect is focused on the impermanence of the five aggregates and also reflects the impermanence of inhalation and exhalation, and is called the "shifting contemplation," which eliminates the five obstacles and various defilements (Yamabe and Sueki 2009, pp. 29–30, see also T 1917.46.0550a23–24). Particularly, it characterizes the cultivation of "shifting back to the contemplating mind" (反觀觀心) as an essential factor in the elimination of both the objective realm and the faculty of knowing.¹³ This is reminiscent of the later concept, so-called 'counter-illumination', the practice of which reflects back on one's original nature, the putative enlightened source of one's clear mind, in which the subject and the object merge to become 'Oneness'. This precisely echoes the praxis of the later Chan school. The process referred to as 'counter-illumination' involves turning the light inwards onto oneself, to reflect on one's original nature, or 'brightly shining mind'.

This paradigm of 'counter-illumination' has a long history, dating from early Buddhism and continued through to Chinese Buddhism. It is to be remembered that in the Indian Buddhist meditative traditions the idea of practicing 'counter-illumination' was seldom addressed explicitly, but a latent form of the technique can be implicitly alluded to via the way of 'bare attention' as employed in the

¹⁰ (Toei-ong 1981, p. 2). *Seonmun Jeongro* 禪門正路 (Right Road to Seon School).

¹¹ Focusing the mind by counting inhalations and exhalations as a method of stilling the mind. One of the five meditations and four bases of mindfulness.

¹² See "turning back the brilliance in counter-illumination" as John McRae labels it (McRae 1986, p. 114).

¹³ (Dharmamitra 2009, p. 43) the *Six Gates To the Sublime Dharma* (六妙法門), T 1917.46.0550a24–25: 觀觀心.

Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta. It is intriguing to note here that the technique of “turning back the attention and contemplating the mind that hears sound” (反觀聞聲) reappears some hundred years later in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (首楞嚴經, *The Sūtra of Heroic Progress*), where it is further elaborated in the theme of the “perfect penetration of the organ of hearing” (耳根圓通) and later ‘counter-illumination’ (迴光返照). This technique survived and found its way into Kanhua Chan (K. Ganhwa Seon)¹⁴ practice in the 12th century.

6. Early *Sutta* Evidence of ‘Counter-Illumination’ for a *Bhavaṅga*-Type State: A Key Theme in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*

Throughout the Sinitic transformation, one of the elements in Indian Buddhist spiritual practice seems to have survived and been further developed, which is the process referred to as ‘tracing back the radiance’ (迴光返照 C. *huiguang fanzhao* / K. *hoe-gwang ban-jo*) or ‘counter-illumination’, as discussed above. The radiant *citta*, or ‘luminous mind’, is examined briefly here for the light it sheds on the early Buddhist view of human potential. The expression “luminous mind” first appeared in *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I. 49–52: “Luminous, bhikkhus, is this mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilement” (Bodhi 2012, p. 97). Bodhi notes that it is identified with the *bhavaṅgacitta*, an *Abhidhamma* (a collection of the philosophical and psychological teachings of early Buddhism) concept denoting the type of mental event that occurs in the absence of active cognition (Bodhi 2012, p. 1597). Bodhi states that it corresponds roughly to the subconscious or unconscious of modern psychology. The word *bhavaṅga* means “factor of existence,” that is, the factor responsible for maintaining continuous personal identity throughout a given life and from one life to the next. However, the *bhavaṅga* is not a persistent state of consciousness or a permanent self, Bodhi adds. It is a series of momentary flow of mind that alternates with active cognitive processes, the *javana*, “sequences of cognition,” in which the mind consciously apprehends an object. It is sometimes expressed as “stream of *bhavaṅga*” to highlight the fluid nature of this type of mental process. In regard to *bhavaṅga*, Peter Harvey discusses the “brightly shining mind” as a mysterious form of *citta* often alluded to in the Theravādin tradition, and also serves as the basis for Mahāyāna expositions of the ‘Buddha-nature’, or ‘enlightenment-potential’ in all beings (Harvey 1995, p. 166). He asserts that one of the key early *suttas*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, indicates the existence of a radiant *citta* which pervades everywhere, whether defiled or translucent. Thus, even a corrupt person possesses a “brightly shining *citta*,” although it is covered by the defilements, which obscure it. This expresses a very positive view of human nature and of the nature of all beings (Harvey 1995, p. 167). Later in the Chan tradition, it is reflected in Mazu’s statement that the mind is identical with the Buddha, emphasizing that sentient beings are inherently and immanently awakened Buddhas.¹⁵

Interestingly, a latent form of ‘counter-illumination’ can be found in the method of ‘bare attention’ as employed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*; when attention is restricted to a bare noting of the object, the activity of mind reverts to the very first phase of the process of perception, where it is in a purely receptive state. The four contemplations of body, feeling, state of mind and mental contents, which are observed mindfully and non-judgmentally in order to reach the insight that ‘all things are impermanent’, converge in the central conception of the *dhmma*: *anattā*, non-Self. This is the ultimate instruction for the realization of the liberating truth of *anattā*. Thus the meditator is taught simply to observe the arising, abiding and vanishing factors of any mental thought process, devoid of any everlasting ‘Self’ or substance.

While the principal mental technique of the Kanhua Chan praxis can be described positively as ‘counter-illumination’, it appears from a psychological perspective to reflect an evolved form or an

¹⁴ Kanhua Chan (K. Ganhwa Seon 看話禪, phrase-observing meditation). A Seon meditation method that seeks direct attainment of enlightenment through investigation of the ‘key phrase’ (C. *huatou*; K. *hwadu*), first popularized by the Chinese Linji monk, Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163).

¹⁵ 是佛 此心即佛 <http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X69n1321.001>.

extended equivalent of ‘bare attention’. Specifically, single-minded attention to the *hwadu* is believed to create an introspective focus that would eventually lead the practitioner back to the *putative* enlightened source of one’s own mind. As Buswell elaborates, once the meditator rediscovers the source of her/his own mind through such counter-illumination, s/he would come to know the enlightened intent of the *kung-an* or *hwadu*, and in turn consummate in her/himself the same state of enlightenment.¹⁶ Through this technique, the sense of subjective ‘I’ goes into abeyance, allowing for an experience of the merger between the observing subject and the observed meditative object. This, in turn, leads to the transcending of the subject/object duality, a *nonduality*. There then emerges a liberating insight into the emptiness of inherent nature/existence. The *hwadu Sisimma* practice stresses sustaining questions as associated with various sensations, arising from the processes of body and mind, ultimately effecting a transformation into a unique religious experience, ‘Oneness’, or the Buddha-nature. It can be said that the idea of counter-illumination is critical to induce an experience of ‘Oneness’, or status of nonduality. However, how did the idea of ‘counter-illumination’ come to permeate the Chan/Seon tradition?

In the search for a vestige of *Satipaṭṭhāna* practice in the later Chan tradition, it is particularly worth focusing on one of the eighth century Chinese apocryphal scriptures, the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* 首楞嚴經 (*Sūtra of the Heroic Progress*), in which an emphasis on the mind’s discernment of the hearing faculty is presented distinctively as a tool for enlightenment.¹⁷ According to Yong-Heon Jo, the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*’s author(s) point(s) specifically to the “perfect penetration of the organ of hearing” (耳根圓通, *C. ergen yuantong*, *K. e-geun wontong*) which involves two steps: first focusing on sounds, the sound profound, the seer of sound, the purifier, and the sound of ocean tides;¹⁸ and then “turning one’s faculty of hearing inward to hear one’s own nature,” (反聞聞聲) (Jo 2002, p. 84) as in the practice of ‘counter-illumination’. This appears to have become the basis for the setting of one of the most popular *huatous*, “Who is it that recites the name of the Buddha?” (*Nianfo sh* 念佛是誰), that is, who recites the invocation to Amitābha Buddha without interruption in one’s daily devotional practice? (Harvey 2013, p. 366). The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* claims that mindfulness meditation through turning inward particularly to the organ of hearing is selected by “the Buddha” as the most suitable way of attaining enlightenment for humanity in a degenerate age because the organ of hearing is characterized as containing ‘Three Truths’ that are complete and perfect: its all-around hearing faculty is able to pierce a screen (通眞實), hear simultaneously from ten directions (圓眞實), and hear with or without the sound (常眞實). Yet despite the issue of questionable authenticity, modern scholars seem to have drawn attention to the importance of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* in the development of Chan in China, and its further significant impact on Seon practice in Korea (Jo 2002, pp. 20–42).

The spirit of ‘the perfect penetration of the organ of hearing’ is believed to have maintained its place in the Chinese Chan tradition by Jeongjung Musang 淨衆無相 (C. Jingzhong Wuxiang, 680–756), who is said to have been a prince of the Silla dynasty (57 BCE–935 CE), a kingdom located in the Korean Peninsula, and later by Linji Yixuan. Jeongjung Musang was a Korean-Chinese Chan master of the Tang dynasty, who became famous for his ascetic practices and meditative prowess, and he taught a practice known as *inseong yeombul* 引聲念佛, a method of reciting the name of the Buddha by extending the length of the intonation (Jo 2002, pp. 59–69). He was said to have taught and influenced several renowned Chan monks, including Mazu Daoyi, whose tradition was evidently practiced by Linji Yixuan, the founder of the Linji School.

¹⁶ See more in (Buswell 2011, p. 190).

¹⁷ Due to questionable authenticity and conflicting evidence regarding its provenance, the later Tang version (714–723), is widely acknowledged by modern scholars to be one of the Chinese apocryphal scriptures. See (Mochizuki 1946, pp. 493–509; Jo 2002, pp. 20–42).

¹⁸ T 0945.19.0130c23: 妙音觀世音 梵音海潮音.

7. The Emergence of Kanhua Chan in the Evolution of the Chan School

A brief explanation may suffice here to present some of the major influential Chan adepts in order to indicate how the Sinitic transformation of molding and accentuation has progressed to the appearance of Kanhua Chan in the 12th century Song dynasty, and also to examine to what extent the Indian Buddhist meditative culture has survived.

In terms of contemplative praxis in the Chan school, as Robert Buswell states, one of the most striking transformations in the Sinicization of Buddhism is characterized by the imposition of the idea of *doubt* (C. *yi*; K. *ui* 疑), which is viewed as the motive force that impels this type of meditation (Buswell 2011, p. 190). Buswell asserts that doubt plays no constructive role in Indian Buddhist spiritual culture but is instead an obstacle that must be overcome if progress is to proceed. Some may argue that the approach to handling doubt in two traditions may be different, but it is to be remembered that the five hindrances, one of which is doubt, are included as among the mind-object contemplations (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995, pp. 151–55). In these practices, the meditator is taught to contemplate the arising and vanishing factors of doubt as well as the other four hindrances of the mind. Although doubt is consistently associated with unwholesome states as an obstacle and thus viewed negatively in Indian scripture, there was a Chan adept of the Southern Song who ironically capitalized on doubt as a most crucial dimension of Kanhua Chan. It means literally “Chan of observing the key phrase” (or “phrase-observing meditation”) practice, which is strikingly different from the Indian Buddhist spiritual traditions. This was Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) who transformed doubt, normally seen as a debilitating mental concomitant, into the principal force driving one toward enlightenment (Buswell 2011, p. 192). Dahui Zonggao inherited the Linji lineage as the seventeenth generation successor of the Linji school, championing exclusively Kanhua Chan which employs the investigation of the topics of inquiry (*huatou*). Thus he revitalized the teachings of the Chan master Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866–7), the putative founder of the eponymous Linji Zong 臨濟宗 in the tradition of the dharma-grandfather Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788). The latter was one of the most influential Chan masters of the Tang dynasty and retrospective patriarch of the Hongzhou zong, the broadest Chan tradition in China.

The principal tool of Kanhua Chan involves focusing intensely on the crucial phrase (*huatou*) of the *kung-an*.¹⁹ The term *huatou* 話頭 (K. *hwadu*), the “head of speech,” can be interpreted figuratively as the apex of speech or the point beyond which speech exhausts itself (Buswell 1992, p. 104). It is a short *holophrase*, functioning as a phrase or sentence, which is often extracted as a part of *kung-an*. It represents the concise summary of an entire “encounter dialogue” model (機緣問答; C. *jiyuan wenda*), which is the spontaneous and unstructured repartee between Chan masters and interlocutors as passed down from an earlier *kung-an* and is conducive to enlightenment.²⁰ The purpose of focusing on the *huatou* is to bring the practitioner beyond the point of rationalization and conceptualization, thus enabling a great enlightenment to occur. While this phrase is closely connected with the gist of the entire dialogue, it is clearly representative, becoming the subject of meditation and introspection in its own right. The *huatou* can be described as equivalent to a computer shortcut key input, which operates as a means of facilitating a function [the ultimate state of great enlightenment] in the computer [Buddhist practitioner] by pressing [breaking the final barrier of the rationalistic intellectual capacity while focusing single-mindedly] on a combination of keys on the keyboard [a *huatou*].

Kung-an/huatou meditation has been increasingly popular in Asian Buddhist societies. In China, it is well known that the most popular *huatou* is the question “Who is it that recites the name of the Buddha (*Nianfo shishéi* 念佛是誰)?” (Harvey 2013, p. 366). This particular *huatou* was advocated by Xuyun (1840–1959), the most famous Chan monk of the 19th and 20th centuries in China; he taught

¹⁹ Schlütter notes that Dahui himself did not provide the name, Kanhua Chan, but clearly distinguished it (Schlütter 2009, p. 107).

²⁰ For a definition of “encounter dialogue,” see (McRae 2000, pp. 47–48).

this as his favorite form of meditation practice until he passed away at the age of 120 years (Shi 2010, pp. 248, 255). The Chan view of Amitābha Buddha at the intuitive noumenon level is that he represents the True Mind/One Mind or the self-nature of the Buddhas and sentient beings (Choo and Choi 2017, p. 55). In China, there are two other common *huatous*:²¹ “What was my original face before my father and mother were born?”²² and “Wu” 無.²³ In the Japanese Zen tradition, especially the Rinzai (C. Linji) school, the two most popular *koans* are “Mu” 無 and Hakuin’s “What is the sound of one hand?”²⁴

The Sinicized Chan tradition, in transforming the Indian Buddhist spiritual tradition, is said to have culminated in the Linji soteriological system, allegedly for the benefit of achieving enlightenment. It seems obvious that early Indian Buddhist principles such as the four *dhyānas*, seven branches of enlightenment, and four bases of mindfulness, and so forth, have been progressively suppressed and even revoked by most Chan masters for almost seven hundred years since the period of Bodhidharma. What has survived in the later Kanhua Chan, then?

8. The Evolution of a *kung-an/huatou*, the *Shishenmo* 是什麼, to *Sisimma* in the Korean Seon Tradition

Although the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* was initially introduced to Korea in the ninth century,²⁵ it was formally publicized by Uicheon 義天 (1055–1101), one of the major Korean scholar-monks of the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), having organized twenty-eight commentaries of the *Sūtra* in his *Sinpyeon jejonggyojangchongrok* 新編 諸宗教藏總錄 (*New Edition General Recording of All Religions*).²⁶ Approximately one hundred years later, the method of ‘tracing back the radiance’ was adopted by Bojo Chinul 普照 知訥 (1158–1210) of the Goryeo dynasty in Korea (Buswell 1992, pp. 103–4). Chinul was the first teacher in Korea to advocate the use of the *hwadu* in its formalized sense and established it with his disciple Jingak Hyesim 眞覺 慧湛 (1178–1234). Chinul proposed, as the principal means for catalyzing the initial awakening, the tracing of the radiance emanating from the luminous core of the inner mind back to its source, thus restoring the mind to its natural enlightened state (Buswell 1992, pp. 103–4). Thus, the message of through-the-sensation in the formula of the ‘perfect penetration of the organ of hearing’ was specifically communicated to Korean Buddhists by Chinul. A century or so later, the key technical formula in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* was further emphasized by Naong Hyegeun 懶翁 惠勤 (1320–1376), who introduced the *hwadu Sisimma* to his followers in Korea while instilling its message with new meaning.

In Korean Seon, unlike the Chinese/Japanese traditions, the *hwadu* ‘*Sisimma*’ 是什麼 (C. *Shishenmo*, K. *Sisimma*, J. *Zejinmo*)²⁷ is one of the most popular *hwadus* among Ganhwa Seon practitioners. This particular *huatou* is arguably one of the most famous *huatous* of the entire Kanhua Chan, which traces its origin to the first encounter of the sixth patriarch Huineng 六祖 慧能 (638–713) and Nanyue Huairang 南嶽 懷讓 (677–744). Specifically, it first appears in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng*.²⁸ Nanyue Huairang was one of Huineng’s two disciples who was conferred the dharma transmission of mind-seal, the other being Qingyuan Xingsi 清原 行思 (d. 740); the Chan lineage

²¹ (Harvey 2013, p. 366).

²² This *huatou* was originated from an encounter dialogue of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng (638–713 CE) with his first disciple, Huiming, which is listed as the 23rd case in the *Wumen guan* 無門關, T 2005:48.0292a25–0299c25). (Yamada 1979, pp. 118–24), see T 2008:48.0347c20.

²³ The *huatou* ‘wu’ 無 (K. *mu*, J. *mu*, nothing or empty) centers on the response of Zhao Zhou (778–897) when asked if a dog had the Buddha-nature, described in Case 1 of *Mumonkan*, “Zhao Zhou’s Dog.” (Blyth 1966, pp. 26–27). See also T 2005:48.0292c21–24. This is perhaps the most famous *kung-an/huatou* used among Chan practitioners.

²⁴ See (Hoffmann 1975, pp. 47–54). Hakuin Ekaku 白隱慧鶴 (1685–1769), Japanese Zen Master renowned for revitalizing the *Rinzaishū*, was a strong advocate of questioning meditation (Jap. *Kanna Zen*).

²⁵ Jeongjin Guksa (878–956) was said to have recited the *sūtra*, which is recorded in the *Stupa Recording of Jeongjin Guksa Won-O* (Jo 2002, p. 19).

²⁶ (Jo 2002, p. 18).

²⁷ This is translated as What is it?; also *Imwotgo*, a vernacular translation of *Sisimma* in Korean.

²⁸ The *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng* (六祖大師法寶壇經), T 2008:48.346c06–357b28.

branched out into a number of sublineages thereafter. The first historical anecdote concerning the *kung-an Shishenmo* depicts Nanyue Huairang's first encounter with Huineng as follows:

The patriarch asked Nanyue Huairang where he came from. He replied, 'From Sung Shan.' The patriarch asked, 'What thing came in this way? (什麼物恁麼來)' 'To say it is a thing is not on the mark [right],' he retorted. 'Is it attainable by training or not?' asked the patriarch. 'It is not impossible to attain it by training but it is quite impossible to pollute it,' he replied.²⁹

In the Korean Ganhwa Seon practice, however, in the earlier depiction of this encounter dialogue, *Shishenmo* evolved into the mindful *hwadu Sisimma*, which integrated the classical Sinitic Chan praxis with the spirit of *Satipaṭṭhāna* in a format of 'counter-illumination'.

9. The Mindful *hwadu Sisimma*, 'Sati-Sisimma' of the Korean Seon Tradition

In the Korean Seon tradition, the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* has further evolved into a new version, the mindful *hwadu Sisimma*, 'Sati-Sisimma', which is reminiscent of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* formula, never having been presented as such elsewhere. Both *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Sisimma* require the retaining of concentration when awake and alert, the difference being that the former requires the systematic cultivation of Right Mindfulness, one of the Buddha's Eightfold Noble Path, while the latter demands an incessant questioning. In Korean Buddhist history, Naong Hyegeun 懶翁 惠勤 (1320–1376) was known as the first Seon Master who emphasized the importance of *Sisimma* (Kim 1997, p. 258). He was a famous Seon master in the late Koryeo period (918–1392) and one of the great authorities on the restoration of the present Korean Buddhists Jogye Order. Ganhwa Seon is generally acknowledged as the most authentic way of practice as indicated in *Ganhwa Seon, Path to the Jogye Sect Practice*.³⁰ This publication indicates that Ganhwa Seon retains the core of the Patriarchal Seon and inherits the same view of the enlightenment experience as emphasized by the Chan patriarchs in the past (Choo 2014, vol. 22, pp. 92–93).

Ever since Naong introduced *Sisimma*, its usage as one of the most famous *hwadus* has prevailed widely, often practiced as *Imwotgo*,³¹ among most Korean Buddhist Seon practitioners up until the present day. Since its introduction, some of the most influential Seon masters who extensively employed the *hwadu Sisimma* in their period include Gyeong-heo Seong-u 鏡虛 惺牛 (1849–1912), Man-gong Wolmyeon 滿空 月面 (1871–1946), Gusan Su-ryeon 九山 秀蓮 (1909–1983), Toei-ong Seongcheol 退翁 性徹 (1912–1993), Seungsahn Haeng-won 崇山 行願 (1927–2004), and Songdam Jeong-eun 松淡 正隱 (1929–). Seungsahn used the metaphor of *Ahn Su Jeong Deung* 岸樹井藤 (A Tree Vine off the Cliff hanging into the Well) as a *gong-an/hwadu* and urged the student not to attempt to solve it using stereotyped knowledge, but rather to proceed only with the question "What is it?" (是甚麼) Then he said, "One day you will surely hear the sound of a *Stony Rooster*" (Choo 2014, vol. 22, pp. 98–100).

Notably, Gusan was one of the renowned Korean Seon masters who provided a wealth of practical teaching, particularly with regard to the Korean practice of *hwadu Sisimma*. He was the first Seon teacher to have accepted and trained Western students in a Korean monastery. He emphasized that the key factor is to maintain a constant state of questioning, 'a doubt mass', and not just recite a simple repetition of the words. Having taken hold of the *Sisimma*, a student is advised to sustain the questioning: "What is seeing?" "What is hearing?" "What is smelling?" "What is moving the body?" and so on (Batchelor 2009, pp. 59–63). Whenever the *hwadu Sisimma* arises in the meditator's mind, s/he is to trace the radiance back to its source, restoring the mind to its natural enlightened state and to thus effect an integration, creating a wholeness. This is reminiscent of the inductive empiristic practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The process of questioning should continue uninterruptedly, with each new question

²⁹ T 2008:48.0345c06–07: 六祖大師法寶壇經 古笥比丘異撰, T 2008:48.0357b19–28: ... 什麼物恁麼來.

³⁰ (Hyeguk and Hwarang 2005, pp. 33–34).

³¹ A Korean dialect of What Is It?

adding to the previous one, as if it were overlapping it. When the mass of questioning becomes enlarged to a critical degree, it is said to suddenly burst and the entire universe is shattered. Finally, one's 'original nature' is said to appear; this is considered the beginning of so-called enlightenment, or an awakened state (Batchelor 2009, pp. 59–63). Recently, Ryan Joo chose to focus on three contemporary Korean Seon masters: Songdam, Seongcheol and Subul (1953–), and concluded that their practice did impart a considerable weight to the critical role of sustaining the 'sensation of doubt'³² (疑情, *K. uijeong*) during pre-enlightenment (Joo 2010, pp. 236–37). Among the three Seon masters, Songdam teaches his students how to practice the meditation of counting the breath (*K. susikgwan*, *C. shuxiguan* 數息觀) before the actual *hwadu* practice of "What is it?" Specifically, he has presented a technique, that is, how to couple the *hwadu Imwotgo* [*Sisimma*] with the breath. While inhaling slowly, one should recall *Sisimma*, hold the breath for a few seconds, and while exhaling, recall another *Sisimma* shortly afterwards. As one becomes accustomed to *Sisimma*, one can recall it every second or third breath. Later, when one becomes more familiar with holding the *Sisimma*, one can recall it only once a day, when opening the eyes in the morning, and then holding it for the entire day. In this way, one can move one step closer to experiencing a great sudden burst of enlightenment (Songdam 1988, No. 445, 455).

It is particularly worth mentioning that mindfulness of breathing refers to a very close observation of one of the fundamental sensations of the body. It holds the highest place among the various techniques of Buddhist meditation since the Buddha recommended and praised its value, as described in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. This is what Korean Seon practitioners place great emphasis in their teaching, seeing it as a basic requirement to any Buddhist meditation. Specifically, when one attempts to be mindful of each breath attentively, the *hwadu Sisimma* can be an especially helpful reminder for sustaining awareness of the mind. The question "What is it?" is to be held onto firmly at every moment of moving, abiding, sitting, lying, speaking, being silent, and being tranquil. It creates an ambience for the undivided attention or mindfulness so that the mind of the practitioner is fully employed at each and every moment of breathing during all biological functions. With the help of the *Sati-Sisimma*, one can learn to divert one's discursive attention, reverting it back to awareness of one's original nature. This can be an invaluable tool in alleviating the ubiquitous issue: the inattentive tendency to constantly switch the focus of attention in a complex daily environment, which results in a state of disharmony and thus unwholesomeness.

10. Korean Influence on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions: A Case of "Countercurrent" Influence on Chinese Buddhism and Even to Early Buddhism

Bernard Senécal critically reflected on the Chogyé Order's campaign for the worldwide propagation of Ganhwa Seon, raising three questions with regard to the uniqueness, the homogeneity and the continuity of the Korean Ganhwa Seon tradition (Senécal 2011, pp. 75–105). He concluded that the powerful and fascinating narrative presenting it as the hallmark of Korean Buddhist tradition is far from fully convincing (Senécal 2011, p. 87). Be that as it may, however, despite some evident historical facts, the overall understanding of Korean Buddhism seems remiss in identifying some of its unique aspects.

Admittedly, the dominant current of the eastward dissemination of Chinese Buddhism creates important eddies, or countercurrents, of influence from various "peripheral regions" of East Asia. Buswell asserts that among these peripheral regions, Korea, in particular, has clearly participated in the evolution of the broader Sinitic tradition of Buddhism (Buswell 2005, pp. 1–2). He further states that there is definitive evidence that such an influence occurred with the writings of Korean Buddhist exegetes. Korea was a vibrant cultural tradition in its own right, and its Buddhist monks were intimately involved in contemporary activities occurring in neighboring traditions. Korean

³² *Euijeong* 疑情 (*C. yiqing*); This refers to a constant state of intense questioning of the 'doubt mass'. Most Buddhist scholars often translate this literally as 'sensation of doubt', but an 'emotionalized and sustained doubt' may be rendered better than a 'sensation of doubt' as a doubt itself is not sensible.

Buddhism, exercising a syncretic harmonization of various doctrines and meditations, is commonly characterized as *tongbulgyo* 通佛教, or “ecumenical Buddhism” (Buswell 1989, p. 116) or “Buddhism of total interpenetration” (Park 1983, p. 37). Korean scholars generally agree that Wonhyo (617–686), one of the most distinctive Korean Buddhist monk scholars of the United Silla period (668–935), attempted to explicate the Buddhist teachings as being fundamentally congruous and pioneered a hermeneutical technique which he called “reconciling doctrinal controversies” (*hwajaeng*). Wonhyo’s *hwajaeng* thought seeks to demonstrate that various Buddhist doctrines, despite their apparent differences and inconsistencies, can be integrated into a single coherent whole. His basic principle is explained chiefly in his *Simmunhwajaeng non* 十門和諍論 (“Ten Approaches to the Reconciliation of Doctrinal Controversy”), *Daeseung gisillon so* 大乘起信論疏 (“Commentary to the Awakening of Faith According to the Mahayana”), and *Geumgang Sammaegyong non* 金剛三昧經論疏 (“Exposition of the *Vajrasamādhi-Sūtra*”) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 998).³³ Buswell states that Wonhyo’s exegesis, *hwajaeng*, so inspired the Silla intellectual community that “syncretism” became the watchword of Korean Buddhism from Wonhyo’s time onward. Since at least the twelfth century, Wonhyo’s *hwajaeng* exegesis has come to be portrayed as characteristic of a distinctive Korean approach to Buddhist thought (Buswell 1989, p. 116).

For this reason, it seems reasonable to behold the birth of *Sati-Sisimma* as “no surprise” since the development of *Sati-Sisimma* in the Korean Seon tradition may have been enabled by the ideological basis of syncretic harmonization, which was widely prevalent in Korean Buddhism. Considering the idea of “ecumenical Buddhism,” the emergence of *Sati-Sisimma* has not been the result of a simple grafting of two different traditions, but rather the outcome of an insightful application of fervent aspiration concerning the ideology of early Buddhism beyond the orthodoxy and the orthopraxis of Dahui Zonggao’s teachings in Chan tradition. This latter radically transformed the Indian Buddhist spiritual tradition and thoroughly suppressed early Indian Buddhist principles such as the four *dhyānas*, seven branches of enlightenment, four bases of mindfulness, and so forth.

Further, the *Sati-Sisimma* may offer a useful applicability for the practice of *pari passu* meditative parallels in modern meditative practices: *Satipaṭṭhāna* as suitable for ‘attentive’ modes such as driving, working, and so forth; *Sati-Sisimma* for ‘non-attentive’ modes such as waiting in line, walking in the park, and so forth. This will greatly assist the practitioner to sustain an uninterrupted continuity of meditation practice. If one keeps this understanding in mind, it can be said that *Sati-Sisimma* provides a practical dialogue between scholars and practitioners, in which scholarship can inform Seon practice and Seon practice can vivify scholarship.

11. Conclusions

The Buddha is said to have awakened to the true nature of existence and attained the ultimate religious experience of enlightenment, *Nibbanā*, through the practice of the *Satipaṭṭhāna*. The practice itself begins with registering sensations stemming from the processes of body and mind, characterized by utilizing non-judgmental observation and awareness. During its transmission to East Asian countries, it evolved into alternative ways of teaching, particularly in the Chan tradition. The author contends that the Mahāyāna tradition maintained some essence of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, but that the Chan tradition, in particular, placed significantly less emphasis on it than did the Buddha, as can be evidenced by early Buddhist writings. The practice appears to have rather faded and become truncated, transformed or even excluded altogether, especially by the Tang to later Song dynasty Chan practitioners. In the Korean Seon tradition, however, some elements of *Satipaṭṭhāna* appeared to have been introduced into one of the famous Ganhwa Seon *hwadus*, identified as *Sisimma*, by the 14th century Seon Master Naong Hye-geun as well as numerous influential Seon practitioners following him.

³³ Wŏnhyo’s *Kishillonso*, “Commentary on Awakening Mahayana Faith,” also called the *Haedongso* (Park 1983, p. 37).

To date, there has been little study concerning which aspects of the Indian contemplative traditions were passed on to the Chan/Seon schools. In the Korean Seon tradition, there are indications that the spirit of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, particularly in the form of ‘counter-illumination’ and ‘mindfulness of breathing’ has been manifested, at least in part, and further expanded and crystallized into one of the popular *hwadus* of the Ganhwa Seon, the mindful *hwadu Sisimma*, ‘*Sati-Sisimma*’. Of all the known *gong-ans/hwadus*, the *Sati-Sisimma* resonates as a reminder of the value of sustaining mindfulness, effectively linking the significantly different emphasis of practices. With all due respect to other traditions, it can be concluded that Korean Buddhist practitioners have made a meaningful contribution to the *Satipaṭṭhāna* teaching by imbuing the element of religious experience with the practice of *Sati-Sisimma* as a distilled denominator.

Further, while *Satipaṭṭhāna* practitioners may find that the *gong-an/hwadu* practice may not prove to be as concrete or clear-cut as mindfulness practice, conversely Chan practitioners may feel that mindfulness practice may not induce a state of deep concentration as easily or extensively as *gong-an/hwadu* practice. In view of this understanding, it is possible that a balance of the weaknesses and strengths of each tradition may be reached between the two practices. This may offer a potential basis for the useful practicality of optional meditative parallels in modern meditative practices: *Satipaṭṭhāna* as suitable for ‘attentive’ modes and *Sati-Sisimma* for ‘non-attentive’ modes.

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