

# The Seon Monk Hyujeong and Buddhist Ritual in Sixteenth-Century Korea\*

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## Abstract

*The aim of this article is to examine Seon monk Hyujeong's interest in Buddhist ritual, focusing on his Unsudan gasa (Verses on the Altar of Cloud and Water), which was the historical product of an anti-Buddhist Confucian society and which stressed the recitation of dharanis and the Buddha's name as salvific methods. Although a Seon (Zen) monk, Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual was unlike the role of Zen monks as described by conventional scholarship, which has been heavily influenced by post-19th century Japanese Zen studies. Therefore, this study suggests the need for a reinvestigation of the thought of Hyujeong as a Seon monk as well as of the conventional scholarship of Zen studies. The role of Hyujeong as a pro-ritual Seon monk resonates with recent scholarship positing that East Asian traditions never rejected ritual. Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual with esoteric elements makes him distinct from Chinese Chan monks, who had no interest in esoteric Buddhism. In addition, Hyujeong's legacy, which laid emphasis on esoteric Buddhist elements and dependence on others, still carries influence in the monastic circles of contemporary Korea.*

**Keywords:** anti-Buddhist Confucian society, Buddhist ritual, esoteric Buddhism, Chan/Seon/Zen, Hyujeong, Pure Land practices, *Unsudan gasa* (Verses on the Altar of Cloud and Water), Zen studies

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## Introduction

The aim of this article is twofold: first, to examine Seon 禪 (Chan in Chinese and Zen in Japanese) monk Hyujeong's 休靜 (1520–1604) interest in Buddhist ritual, focusing on his *Unsudān gasa* 雲水壇歌詞 (Verses on the Altar of Cloud and Water; hereafter, *Verses*);<sup>1</sup> and second, to argue that Seon monks of premodern Korea, including Hyujeong, were not against Buddhist ritual, an idea that contravenes conventional scholarship of Zen and resonates with the arguments forwarded in *Zen Ritual* by Heine and Wright (2007), a work that focused on Chan in China and Zen in Japan but neglected Seon in Korea.

Chan/Seon/Zen Buddhism has been characterized as a pursuit of enlightenment primarily through the practice of meditation. Seon Buddhism constitutes the mainstream of Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea, and Seon monks are often described as being less interested in Buddhist ritual: they do not attend the regular morning and evening services in the main Buddha hall; and the only ritual activity in which they are involved is the noon service before dinner (Buswell 1992, 171). This perception is still in place. In my view, the characterization of Zen monks as being disinterested in Buddhist ritual (Ko 2016, 16), as well as the characterization of this type of Buddhism as one where enlightenment is attained primarily through meditation, are mistaken constructs heavily influenced by the Zen studies of Japan after the Meiji Reform of 1868.<sup>2</sup> Recent scholarship has begun to criticize this Japanese scholarship of Zen, arguing that East Asian Zen traditions never rejected ritual. The Korean Seon monk Hyujeong was no exception in this regard. More significantly, unlike his Chinese contemporaries, he was

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1. This work is also called *Unsudān* (Cloud and Water Altar) or *Unsumun* 雲水文 (Cloud and Water Verses). For Hyujeong's works, see J. Kim (2012, 383–384).

2. Although the celebrated 20th-century Seon Master Seongcheol 性徹 (1912–1993) was influenced by Japanese Zen in the formation of his Seon thinking, the Japanese view of Zen studies has never been influential in Korean academia. However, it is undeniable that Buddhist studies as they developed in Korea after the 20th century have been heavily influenced by Japanese scholarship in terms of scholars' academic background and the Buddhist works used in Korean academic circles. From this perspective, I wonder whether the aforementioned argument is valid.

very much interested in esoteric Buddhism.<sup>3</sup>

Better known in Korea as Seosan Daesa 西山大師 (Great Master of Mt. Seo [Myohyang 妙香]), Hyujeong was the preeminent Seon monk during the anti-Buddhist Joseon dynasty (1392–1910). He has been described as the grandfather of modern Korean Buddhism. Legitimacy through lineage was a newly established system in the mid-Joseon era and it is generally recognized that there were two different lineages in Late Joseon Seon. In particular, it is from Hyujeong that the rest of the subsequent lineage of Joseon Buddhism derives<sup>4</sup> (Buswell 1999, 135–146). Hyujeong also established a family tradition that has lasted to the present day (Y. Kim 1998, 214). In addition, he was not a Seon master in a narrow sectarian sense, but his career encompassed both esoteric and Pure Land practices (Sørensen 2006, 88).

Despite a plethora of extant materials published during the Joseon period, including the *Joseon wangjo sillok* (The Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty; hereafter, *Veritable Records*),<sup>5</sup> Buddhism in the Joseon period remains one of the most underresearched areas in Korean Buddhist studies. Although scholarly interest in Buddhism during the Joseon period has gradually increased in recent years, the subject deserves much more attention than it has thus far garnered from scholars (Buswell 1999, 159). In such a context, there have been scholarly works on Hyujeong's life and thought,

3. The terms “esoteric teachings” or “esoteric Buddhism” are used collectively today to refer to a large body of Buddhist texts, liturgies, implements, and rituals (Buswell et al. 2013, 540). However, about the term “esoteric,” there is no scholarly consensus. In “Appendix” of his work, Buswell discusses “principal chants used in Korean monasteries,” including the morning bell chant (Buswell 1992, 229–242). Here, he uses the term “chants” to designate liturgical *dharani* 陀羅尼 (*darani/chongji* 總持, or mnemonic device or code) or mantras (*jineon* 眞言 or true words or spell) used in Korean monasteries. In this article, the term “esoteric” is used as the equivalent of *dharani* or *mantra* in the Korean context. For an explanation of the concepts of *dharani* and *mantra*, see Buswell et al. (2013, 241, 529). For esoteric Buddhism in Korea, see Suh (1994, 259–306) and Sørensen (2006, 61–77).

4. For a discussion of the Dharma lineage of Hyujeong, see Kamata (1988, 209–217).

5. *Joseon wangjo sillok* (The Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty) is an official source for the anti-Buddhist policies of the Joseon dynasty. Although entries on Buddhist ritual in the *Veritable Records* are few, this source does well document the development of Buddhism during that period (Han 1993, iii).

most of which have been concerned with his Seon thought, his unity of Seon philosophy with doctrinal Buddhism, and his Pure Land practices of invocation of the Buddha's name.<sup>6</sup> However, there has been very little research on Hyujeong as a ritual specialist, on the *Verses* itself, or on the relationship between Hyujeong as a Seon monk and Buddhist ritual as reflected in his *Verses*.<sup>7</sup>

This article is based on the *Verses* in the *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* 韓國佛教全書 (The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism; hereafter, *CWKB*). This is because the *Verses* in the *CWKB* is the most complete edition (*CWKB* 7, “Beomnye 範例” [Legend]).<sup>8</sup> Composed of three sections, this study will analyze the background to the compilation of the *Verses*, its underlying features, including its contents and ideological underpinnings, and the relationship between Hyujeong as a Seon monk and his employment of Buddhist ritual.

## Historical Background to the Compilation of the *Verses*

The historical background around the time of the compilation of the *Verses* is characterized by the dominance of Confucianism and the resuscitation of Buddhism.

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6. For the scholarly achievements of Hyujeong, see Y. Kim (2010, 15, 22–23). Research on Hyujeong's view of the invocation of the Buddha's name was not undertaken until 2008 (S. Kim 2008, 6–7). For more recent research on this subject, consult J. Kim (2012).
  7. A master's thesis (S. Kim 2008) appears to be the only scholarly work on the subject. For materials on Korean Buddhist rituals, see Pak (1993) and Yi (2012, 10–11). For a brief discussion of the relationship between Hyujeong and esoteric Buddhism, see Sørensen (2006, 87–91). In his treatment of Hyujeong, Robert Buswell sought to explore how Hyujeong attempted to respond to the ideological critiques of his religion by rival Confucians and what forms of Buddhist thought and practice Hyujeong believed would be most appropriate in the suppressive environment within which Buddhism existed (Buswell 1999, 134–159).
  8. The *Verses* found in the *CWKB* is the edition published at Ballyongsa 盤龍寺 monastery in 1627 (*CWKB* 7:743c).

### *Confucian Dominance*

It is often asserted that the Confucianization of Korea was more thorough than it was even in China (Walraven 2012, 106). However, the claim that Korean society was thoroughly Confucianized is also doubted. Nevertheless, no one would dispute that Confucianism has had an enormous impact on Korean thought and society (Deuchler 2007, 3).

The end of state sponsorship of Buddhist ritual in the early 16th century signaled the ascension to dominance of Confucian values in Joseon Korea (Choi 2009), and Neo-Confucianism flourished during Hyujeong's lifetime, when such representative Confucian scholar-officials as Yi Hwang 李滉 (pen name: Toegye 退溪, 1501–1570) and Yi I 李珣 (pen name: Yulgok 栗谷, 1536–1584) were active. The Neo-Confucian literati entered government service in the capital and dominated the political process. The social position of monks declined as Buddhism withered in the wake of Neo-Confucianism's ascendance.<sup>9</sup> By the beginning of the 16th century, the Neo-Confucian dominance of Korea was uncontested (J. Kim 2012, 386).

The mid-Joseon period also saw the flourishing of Confucian ritual texts and opening the era of the Confucian ritual studies (*yehak* 禮學). This increased popularity of rituals in Korea from the 16th to 18th centuries can be characterized as part of the broad popularization of rituals (S. Kim 2014, 190). To mitigate the peril to Buddhism, as the government's suppression intensified, Korean Buddhist intellectuals from the early Joseon period<sup>10</sup> sought an accommodation with the increasingly dominant Neo-Confucian ideologies (Buswell 1999, 140). As a result, the Confucian transformation of Korea deeply affected Buddhism, and Confucian social ethics emphasizing filial piety and loyalty to the monarch were fully accepted by Buddhists

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9. However, recent research criticizes conventional scholarship that posits the low social position of monks during the Joseon period, arguing instead that monks need to be examined according to the level of their spiritual faculties: upper, middle, and lower (Son 2013a, 51–81).

10. Gihwa 己和 (Hamheo Deuktong 涵虛得通, 1376–1433) is one such example. For Gihwa's guide to meditation, see Muller (1999).

(Walraven 2012, 105–106).<sup>11</sup>

### *Resuscitation of Buddhism*

The resuscitation of Buddhism in Joseon Korea is represented by the growth of Sangha and Buddhist temples and the publication of ritual texts.

#### 1) Growth of Sangha and Temples

The Joseon dynasty has been characterized by its anti-Buddhist, pro-Confucian policies. However, Buddhism was popular among the Joseon aristocracy and masses, and monks and temples continued to exist. Indeed, from the 1530s, Confucian scholar-officials even recorded an increase in the number of monks and temples. In addition, a 1606 entry from the *Seonjo sillok* (Annals of King Seonjo) states, “On the past 28th day of the fifth month, a group of monks and laypersons enticed foolish people and held a ‘great assembly of water and land’ (*suryuk daehoe* 水陸大會) outside Changuimun gate. Men and women in the capital closed up their shops and hurried to join it” (KBRI 2003, 19:153). A 1607 entry from the same source also records, “From more than ten years ago [1590s], people’s minds became clouded and capricious words were circulated. However, they could not be prohibited” (KBRI 2003, 19:179). Despite the waning of its political power, Buddhism’s scholastic traditions also remained vibrant (Buswell 1999, 134). The strategic noninterference of the state with the Sangha and the stability of the monastic economic base were primary reasons for such an increase in the number of monks and temples. This also served as backdrop to the sharp increase in the publication of Buddhist ritual texts (Son 2013b, 282).

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11. The *Scripture on the Ten Kings* is one of the most obvious signals of the birth of a new concept of the afterlife in medieval Chinese Buddhism (Teiser 1994, 1), and in their medieval forms, the Buddhist ideas and practices evident in the system of the ten kings were already heavily Confucianized (14).

## 2) Publication of Ritual Texts

Buddhist ritual writings became extremely popular during the Joseon dynasty due to the increasing interest in liturgy and esoteric practices, and Buddhist ritual texts from this period amount to several dozen individual works (Sørensen 2006, 80). In particular, the time of Hyujeong saw a bountiful publication of Buddhist ritual texts, especially *dharani* texts. Compiled by Seon monks, including Hyujeong, published ritual texts proliferated after the 16th century and continued to appear until the 18th century (Nam 2004, i).<sup>12</sup> Buddhist texts published in that period were probably a product of the Confucianization of Seon Buddhism.<sup>13</sup>

Some 277 Buddhist ritual texts were published during the Joseon dynasty, and among these, texts on the Buddhist ritual for water and land spirits called *suryukjae* 水陸齋 (Rites of Water and Land), everyday rituals, and almsgiving rituals are the most numerous. But the compilation of Buddhist ritual texts was concentrated in the period from the 16th to 17th centuries, the time Hyujeong live, which witnessed the publication of some 192 Buddhist ritual texts, or about 70 percent of the total number of such ritual texts published during the Joseon period.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, Buddhist ritual texts were published at a constant rate (Son 2013b, 284), indicating that Buddhist ritual occupied a very important position in contemporary Buddhist circles (Nam 2004, 71–98).

In addition, 97 *dharani* texts were published during the Joseon dynasty, accounting for more than one-third of all published Buddhist ritual texts of the period. Forty of these 97 were published during the time of Hyujeong (Woo 2011, 255–257) and Hyujeong's *Verses* served as a good example of such *dharani* texts (Nam 2004, 71–72). In the course of this manifestation of esoteric Buddhism, which by the middle of the 16th century had become

12. For Seon monks and Buddhist funeral texts in 17th-century Korea, see J. Kim (2015a).

13. Conventional scholarship has argued that Buddhism was suppressed during the Confucian Joseon period. However, Buddhist circles were well adapted to such circumstances, represented by an emphasis on the concepts of filial piety and ancestor worship, thus producing a number of Buddhist ritual texts (S. Kim 2014, 200–206).

14. For Buddhist ritual texts published in the 17th century, refer to Woo (2011, 260–261).

a fully accepted part of Seon Buddhist rituals, we encounter examples of a conscious attempt at integrating esoteric meditation practices with Seon practices. The large number of published *dharani* texts and an emphasis on esoteric elements were the most prominent characteristics of Buddhism during the Joseon period (Sørensen 2006, 93–97).

Buddhist ritual texts proliferated during the Joseon period because such texts were needed to deal with pending issues, including sociopolitical confusion, illness, and natural disasters (Woo 2011, 255–262). After the 16th century, public demand for Buddhist memorial rituals<sup>15</sup> also increased and the importance of these rituals in monastic circles was accordingly heightened. In such a context, Seon monastic circles needed to reorganize these memorial rituals. Furthermore, in contrast to the Goryeo 高麗 period (918–1392), commoners predominated in the patronage registers of Buddhist publications during the Joseon period, and in particular, the vibrant publication of *dharani* sutras and *dharani* collections was also a result of the vigorous contributions of the commoner classes (Nam 2012, 15–16).

### Underlying Features of the *Verses*

Although the exact date of the compilation of the *Verses* is unknown, its publication year is dated 1627 (Yi 2012, 82).<sup>16</sup> Hyujeong probably composed the *Verses* around 1557, when he was 37 years old and living as a wandering monk following his retirement from a high-ranking monastic post (S. Kim 2008, 19).<sup>17</sup> The *Verses* has had a continuous influence on the subsequent development of Buddhist ritual and esoteric practices within Korean Seon circles, as noted in Hyujeong's *Seonga gwigam* 禪家龜鑑 (Speculum on the Seon School), one of his most important Seon works published in 1564 (Sørensen 2006, 88), and Baekpa Geungseon's 白坡巨璇 (1767–1852) *Jakpeop gwigam* (Speculum on Performing Buddhist Ritual) published in

15. For up-to-date research on Buddhist memorial ritual, refer to S. Kim (2008, 5–6).

16. There is little information regarding how *Verses* was used between the year of its composition (1557) and that of its publication (1627).

17. However, Kim does not specify why he regarded the date of the *Verses* as 1557.



1826. The influence of the *Verses* has also been felt into the present century (Sørensen 2006, 90–98; S. Kim 2008, 77–86), including the Yeongsanjae 靈山齋 (Rites of Vulture Peak), which is unique to Korea.<sup>18</sup>

Hyujeong edited the *Verses* with reference to previous Buddhist ritual texts, including the *Cheonji myeongyang suryukjae ui chanyo* 天地冥陽水陸齋儀纂要 (Excerpts from the Rites of Water and Land in the Bright and Dark World)<sup>19</sup> and the *Jineon gwongong* 眞言勸供 (True Words on Advice to Almsgiving) (S. Kim 2008, 22–25; Woo 2011, 247–248). With regard to structure and style, the *Excerpts* served as a source text for the *Verses* (S. Kim 2008, 22–25). Let us now examine the motive for the compilation of the *Verses*, its contents, and the Buddhist doctrines expressed in it.

#### *Motive for the Compilation of the Verses*

Buddhist rituals flourished most during the Goryeo period. More Buddhist rituals were held during the Goryeo than at any other time in Korean history, a frequency unsurpassed even in China and Japan (J. Kim 1994, xiii; 2001, 10). They primarily served as rituals for the longevity of the royal house and the repose of royal ancestors. In addition, when Wang Geon 王建 (877–943) founded the Goryeo kingdom, eminent *Seon* monks supported him, and his successors also maintained close ties with *Seon* masters. In this aspect, we may infer the close relationship between Buddhist rituals and the *Seon* School, and Hyujeong's *Verses* was a product of that tradition. However, the issue is not that simple. This is because although Jinul 知訥 (1158–1210), the philosophical founder of Korean *Seon* Buddhism, was an admirer

18. For the Rites of Vulture Peak as a *Seon* Buddhist practice in contemporary Korea, see J. Kim (2014). For the latest discussions on the origin and development of the ritual, refer to CBRC (2016).

19. This is a text on the Rites of Water and Land. Texts on this ritual were published with greater frequency than any other Buddhist ritual text during the Joseon period. The 16th century, in particular, saw the publication of a great number of texts on the Rites of Water and Land, a trend that continued into the 17th century (Woo 2011, 251–229). For Buddhist ritual texts published in 16th-century Korea, see Woo (2011, 258–259). For the Rites of Water and Land in early Joseon and its Buddhist philosophical implications, see J. Kim (2015b).

of Hyujeong, as far as extant records are concerned, the former was not interested in Buddhist rituals. Therefore, Hyujeong's *Verses* seems to have been a product of his times, when the compilation of Confucian ritual texts was popular.

All the authors of Buddhist ritual texts in mid-Joseon Korea were Seon monks,<sup>20</sup> as was Hyujeong. Hyujeong was probably critical of the monastic circles of his time that were surviving through the patronage of certain royal family members. In his writings, Hyujeong emphasized the need for monks to have internal strength, and he urged the strengthening of the social activities of the monastic circles. In fact, he intensely defended Buddhism (Buswell 1999, 146). As a result, part of Hyujeong's strategy to preserve Buddhism was to compose a basic primer on Buddhist doctrine (S. Kim 2008, 2).

The audience for Buddhist ritual texts during the mid-Joseon period consisted of novices within Buddhist circles (S. Kim 2013, 5). Those who studied Hyujeong's works also appear to have been his disciples or his fellow monks (Buswell 1999, 144): the *Speculum on the Seon School* was written for his junior monks who were more interested in learning Confucian texts than Buddhist ones (J. Kim 2006, 4), or his disciples who were ignorant and young (J. Kim 2012, 386–387); and the readers of the *Verses* were also his disciples who Hyujeong thought were on the wrong path (CWKB 7:743b3-4).

### *Contents of the Verses*

The *Verses* is composed of an introduction, three main sections, and an appendix (CWKB 7:743c–752a). The Introduction consists of three parts: (1) the ritual for purification of an almsgiving place; (2) an invocation to Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and saints; and (3) an invocation to heavenly beings, immortals, and the spirits of the deceased.

The first part, concerning the ritual for purification of an almsgiving

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20. For a discussion of Seon monks and Buddhist ritual texts in Joseon Korea, see J. Kim (2013b).

place, includes: praise of the incense; a song for the incense; a song for the lantern; a song for having a fulfilling practice; the three refuges; wishes for the descent of Buddhas and bodhisattvas from Heaven; one-thousand hands *dharani*; and praise of an almsgiving place.

The second part, dealing with the invocation to Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and saints, contains: a *dharani* to purify three modes of activities; a *dharani* to purify the dharma realm; a *dharani* to open the altar; a *dharani* to establish the altar; a song to accompany ringing of a bell; a *dharani* to invoke Buddhas and bodhisattvas; the reasons for making an almsgiving; an enumeration of the objects of the almsgiving; an invocation to the Three Jewels of Buddhism, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; a request for Buddhas and bodhisattvas to be seated at the almsgiving; and a song rhapsodizing the offering of tea.

The third part, dealing with the invocation to heavenly beings, immortals, and the spirits of the deceased, comprises: a song to accompany bell ringing; a *dharani* to invoke heavenly beings, immortals, and spirits; an enumeration of the reasons for the almsgiving; an enumeration of the objects which will comprise the almsgiving; homage to the Three Jewels; a request for the heavenly beings, immortals, and spirits to be seated at the almsgiving; a song and a *dharani* for the offering of seats; and a song for the offering of tea.

The three main sections of the *Verses* comprise almsgiving to Buddhas and bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, and spirits who are placed at the upper altar, the middle altar, and the lower altar, respectively (S. Kim 2008, 3). The section on the almsgiving to Buddhas and bodhisattvas is composed of an invocation to Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and offering them comfortable chairs to sit on. The section on the almsgiving to heavenly beings comprises offerings of lanterns, flowers, the fruit of One-Vehicle, tea, a taste of meditation, and a *dharani* to invoke heavenly beings, immortals, and divinities; and the taking of refuge in them. The section on the almsgiving to spirits includes: a notice of the purport of a dharma assembly; a song which concerns the destruction of a realm of hell; entry into the world of the *Flower Garland Sutra*; homage to the Three Jewels; a *dharani* to palliate the suffering of hungry spirits; a *dharani* to arouse the mind to enlightenment; a call

to seek refuge in the seven Buddhas; repentance; the four great wishes; a lecture on the Doctrine of Dependent Origination; and bidding goodbye to spirits. Finally, the Appendix includes: a ritual for the solace of the deceased; a *dharani* to invoke spirits; a call to seek refuge in the Three Jewels; the burning of incense; and an invocation to the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

In sum, Hyujeong composed the *Verses* as a text to be used to teach his disciples. Hyujeong's purpose was to reorganize Buddhist ritual, maintain his Buddhist lineage, and fulfill his social goals under Confucian dominion. The *Verses* is composed of praises, invocations, songs, almsgiving, and *dharanis* in relation to the Three Jewels of Buddhism and Buddhist divinities, followed by a memorial ritual text as an appendix. However, due to a lack of information, we are left not knowing the actual function of the rituals in the *Verses*.

#### *Doctrinal Underpinnings of the Verses*

The Buddhist doctrines expressed in the *Verses* appear to be esoteric Buddhism; Flower Garland thought; Seon thought; Pure Land Buddhism; and the Doctrine of Dependent Origination; Doctrine of Karma; Doctrine of Emptiness; and religious Daoism.<sup>21</sup> In the text, Hyujeong attempted the doctrinal classification of Buddhist canonical texts:

The *Hwaeomgyeong* 華嚴經 (Flower Garland Sutra); *Dae wongakgyeong* 大圓覺經 (Great Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment), which is the sudden teaching of One Vehicle; *Dae banyagyong* 大般若經 (Sutra of Great Wisdom), which is the initial teaching of the Greater Vehicle; and *Beophwagyong* 法華經 (Lotus Sutra), which is the final teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. (CWKB 7:745a14–16)

However, what is most emphasized in his *Verses* is esoteric Buddhism in that the text is full of *dharanis*. Buddhism incorporated *dharanis* in India during the period of the 4th to the 6th centuries (Taegyong 2013, 76).

21. A persistent lacuna in research on Buddhist rituals in Korean academic circles concerns the lack of scholarly studies of the doctrinal underpinnings of these rituals (E. Kim 2004, 3).

Since then, *dharanis* have become an integral part of East Asian Buddhism. For example, spells were functional and fashionable in medieval China and have continued in that role to the present (McBride 2015, 190). Korea was no exception. The introduction of *dharani* to Korean society dates back to the practice of esoteric Buddhism and supernatural incantations around the 7th century.

During the middle period of the Joseon dynasty, Buddhism was characterized by its emphasis on the invocation of true words (S. Kim 2008, 2). The development of esoteric thought in Korean Buddhism from the 16th century on was tied to the frequent publication of esoteric texts, and this esoteric thought was a manifestation of the trend towards popularization strongly exhibited in late Joseon Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism worked its way into the population through the mere recitation of brief *dharani* incantations among the common people. This trend toward esoteric Buddhism had a feature different from the scholastic Buddhism that had flourished during the preceding era (Nam 2012, 11–13). Practices related to esoteric Buddhism would eventually become pervasive influences on Korean Seon Buddhism (Sørensen 2006, 83). Seon monks' recitation of *dharani* was also a common practice in the Buddhist circles of the mid-Joseon period.<sup>22</sup> Hyujeong's interest in esoteric practices also shows up in his *Verses* and in the *Speculum on the Seon School* (Sørensen 2006, 88).

Hyujeong also recommended the use of a set of five *dharanis* for purification and control over various evil powers which had been traditionally thought to dwell in latrines. Although this section has been discarded from all modern editions of the *Speculum on the Seon School*, it is important because it sheds light on an old pattern of belief and a behavior within the Buddhist Sangha in traditional Korea. The extent of Hyujeong's esoteric practice even included the worship of the seven stars of the Big Dipper, a practice normally carried out as a means of attaining worldly blessings<sup>23</sup> and the prolongation of one's life span (Sørensen 2006, 89–91).

22. For the presence and significance of esoteric Buddhism (*milgyo* 密教) that has been evident in Seon literature since the Joseon period, see Sørensen (2006, 79–98 passim).

23. Worship of the Big Dipper in Korea is often connected to prayers for offspring.

## The Relationship between Hyujeong and Buddhist Ritual

Hyujeong composed the *Verses* as a primer on Buddhist ritual for his disciples. The existence of the *Verses* itself clarifies that Hyujeong was interested in Buddhist ritual. However, when we juxtapose our conception of Hyujeong as a Seon monk with emphasis on Buddhist ritual and doctrines expressed in the *Verses*, it suggests the need for a reexamination of the thought of Hyujeong: not as a philosopher, but as a practitioner.

### *The Verses and Buddhist Doctrines*

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels and emphasis on belief in Flower Garland thought are considered doctrinal characteristics of the *Verses* (S. Kim 2008, 66). Hyujeong emphasized Flower Garland thought. According to his classification of Buddhist canonical texts, the *Flower Garland Sutra* was not to be placed in any category. He probably considered this Sutra to include the perfect teaching, the highest quality among them.

When analyzed critically, however, the *Verses* does not appear to have been composed within the context of Seon Buddhism. Flower Garland thought in the text is not found at the upper altar. Many Buddhist songs in the *Verses* are said to have been excerpted from the *Flower Garland Sutra* (S. Kim 2008, 67–71). Nevertheless, monks were supposed to sing these songs to the spirits of the deceased at the lower altar. Hyujeong was in principle a Seon monk, and as such he should have emphasized the significance of self-awakening. Despite his reputation as a leading Seon master, except for a brief mention of “arousal of the mind to enlightenment,” no other Seon elements are found in the *Verses*. Even its mention of the arousal of the mind to enlightenment is not unique to Seon Buddhism, but universal in other Buddhist schools. Instead, Hyujeong’s primary concern was with esoteric Buddhism and the main esoteric element in the *Verses* was the use of *dharani* (Sørensen 2006, 91–98).<sup>24</sup>

Then what made Seon monk Hyujeong emphasize the esoteric Bud-

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24. For texts on true words published during the Joseon period, see Woo (2011, 244).

dhist element of *dharani* in his *Verses*? How can his emphasis on *dharani* be understood? Hyujeong must have considered this esotericism as “skillful means” (*upaya* in Sanskrit), as a spiritual practice which could be tailored to people’s unique spiritual constitutions. However, his emphasis on *dharani* leaves a question.

Hyujeong’s ideology is in general characterized by his emphasis on the unity of the three religious traditions, i.e., Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism;<sup>25</sup> it is also characterized by his conjoining of meditation and doctrine; and his merger of Seon Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism.<sup>26</sup> Hyujeong’s soteriology is based primarily on one’s own efforts and begins with the practitioner’s attainment of sudden enlightenment to original nature whereby the practitioner must gain verification and sanction for his sudden enlightenment from an enlightened master.<sup>27</sup> Only then should the practitioner proceed to gradual cultivation. This schema of sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation, which was originally the soteriological schema of the monk Jinul,<sup>28</sup> constitutes the essence of Hyujeong’s soteriology. Hyujeong considers each individual to have differences in the three poisons (*trivisa* in Sanskrit), i.e., craving, hatred, and ignorance, the root causes of all human evils. These phenomenal differences among people became a point of departure for Hyujeong’s soteriology. As a Seon monk, Hyujeong

25. Hyujeong’s idea to harmonize the three religious traditions is represented well in his *Samga gwigam* 三家龜鑑 (Speculum on the Three Houses) and also scattered in the *Cheongheodang-jip* 淸虛堂集 (Collected Works of Cheongheodang [Hyujeong]) (CWKB 7:659–736). The concepts of “state protection of Buddhism” (*hoguk bulgyo* 護國佛教) and “syncretic Buddhism” ([*hoe*]tong bulgyo [會]通佛教) were used to characterize Korean Buddhism. However, each of these concepts is now under criticism (Cho 2004, 30–51; J. Kim 1995, 23–55; 2001, 277–286; 2008, 310–318; Shim 1999, 173–181). It is generally known that Hyujeong emphasized the unity of the three religious traditions, and that of doctrinal Buddhism and Seon Buddhism. However, it is not clear whether his *Verses* was the product of such consciousness.

26. Hyujeong’s *Verses* and *Speculum on the Seon School* represent this idea well (J. Kim 2012, 382).

27. For a discussion of Hyujeong’s soteriology, refer to J. Kim (2006).

28. For the life and thought of Jinul, refer to Buswell (1983, 1990), Keel (2012), and Shim (1999).

suggests two types of soteriology: salvation by one's own efforts and salvation by reliance on others.

### 1) Salvation by One's Own Efforts

Of the two soteriological methods, Hyujeong preferred that of one's own efforts. According to him, one's own efforts are a faster way to attain enlightenment than dependence on others. This one's-own-efforts approach was best suited to those with sharp spiritual faculties. For those possessed of such faculties, he proposed the investigation of the "live word" (*hwalgu* 活句) through meditation as the fastest way to complete enlightenment (J. Kim 2006, 86–92). Hyujeong also proposed the simultaneous cultivation of meditation and doctrine for people with higher spiritual faculties. In particular, he admitted the need for skillful means for two reasons: the multiple meanings in the Dharma and differences among people in terms of spiritual capacity (J. Kim 2012, 391–392), thus proposing soteriological ways to attaining enlightenment by reliance on others, which include the recitation of Buddhist spells and the Buddha's name.

### 2) Salvation by Reliance on Others

Hyujeong's approach to salvation by reliance on others was meant for those with medium or dull spiritual faculties. Hyujeong compares the efficacy of one's own efforts and reliance on others in attaining enlightenment. He argues that one's own efforts is a slower approach to awakening while otherworldly power is a shortcut (J. Kim 2006, 94), in particular, for people with lesser spiritual faculties. Hyujeong suggests three types of easier paths to enlightenment for those with dull spiritual faculties: the incantation of spells (*jiju* 持呪); salvation by divine power (*sillyeok* 神力); and the chanting of the Buddha's name (*yeombul* 念佛). Hyujeong proposes the recitation of *dharani* as one of the easiest ways to enlightenment.

Hyujeong's soteriology, which harmonized meditation with the chanting of the Buddha's name, targeted those of his fellow monks who had medium or lower spiritual faculties, and this harmonizing soteriology also constitutes an essential part of Hyujeong's thought (J. Kim 2006, 80). Hyujeong argues



that there are two types of recitation for the Buddha's name: oral recitation and mental recitation. He prioritizes the latter over the former. For Hyujeong, the recollection of Amitabha Buddha's name is a skillful means of leading people with inferior spiritual faculties to wholesome conduct and eventually to enlightenment. For him, the salvific ground of the chanting of the Buddha's name rests in Amitabha Buddha's whole-hearted compassion toward all sentient creatures (J. Kim 2006, 92–95).

### *Issues in Question*

Hyujeong's interest in Buddhist ritual, as expressed through his *Verses*, raises questions in terms of the identity of Hyujeong as a monk, the nature of the *Verses*, and his salvific methods for the audience of the text.

#### 1) The Identity of Hyujeong as a Seon Monk

Hyujeong's emphasis on ritual gives rise to a question concerning his identity as a Buddhist monk, and more particularly a Seon monk. In India in the middle of the first millennium BCE, early Buddhism was one of many antiritualistic movements that challenged the Brahmanic system of ritual and sacrifice (Hüsken and Seamone 2013, 2). Scholars have pointed out that unlike what has thus far been *believed* to be true in Buddhist Asian countries, Buddhism was originally not a belief system that depended on others, such as a god, but had been a pragmatic "life education system" (Thurman 1999, pt. 1), which emphasized the correct recognition of existence and how to live rationally by one's own efforts. The Buddha rejected religious traditions that depended on salvation from outside, and he objected also to occult traditions. Furthermore, the Buddha declared ritual to be useless or worse. For Buddhism, ritual *per se* was utterly irrelevant for salvation; and the growth of Buddhist rites and liturgies was surely an unintended consequence of the Buddha's preaching (Premasiri 1991, 151–158). These aspects lead us to question the identity of Hyujeong as a Seon monk.

## 2) The Nature of the *Verses* as Buddhist Text

Scholars view the nature of the *Verses* in various ways: as a daily liturgy for Seon monks (Nam 2004, 21); as a liturgical text (Sørensen 2006, 90); as a ritual text that revised almsgiving rituals from the standpoint of Seon Buddhism (S. Kim 2008, 1); as a ritual text that explained the ritual procedures portrayed in Buddhist scroll paintings (N. Kim 2008, 72); as a text on almsgiving to Buddhas and bodhisattvas (Woo 2011, 247); and as a text on almsgiving rituals performed by Seon monks (Yi 2012, 46).

Hyujeong's main philosophical ideas, which can be summarized as the unity of the Three Religions, the conjoining of meditation and doctrine, and the merger of Seon Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism, are not clearly found in the *Verses*, although some relevant elements are expressed in it. The authors of Buddhist ritual texts during the Joseon dynasty compiled them in order to reorganize Buddhist ritual. Through these Buddhist rituals, they sought a rearrangement of the Buddhist order, the maintenance of their Buddhist lineages (Y. Kim 2010, 361–362), and the fulfillment of their social goals, rather than the proliferation of Buddhist doctrines in Confucian society (Walraven 2012, 105). The *Verses* also served these functions. Neither syllogized like modern-day academic articles, nor clear in structure and content (J. Kim 2012, 390), the *Verses* was not a philosophical text in the modern sense of the term, but a primer on Buddhist memorial ritual. As such, the *Verses* was consistent with the Buddhist intellectual setting of Hyujeong's time,<sup>29</sup> and contributed to continuing his dharma lineage during a period in which the majority of Neo-Confucian officials were anti-Buddhist.

However, the Confucian idea of a spiritual lineage was a product of emphasis on integrity (*jeorui* 節義) rather than on scholastic traditions (Son 2013b, 288). Martina Deuchler (2007, 3–6) argues that certain social transformations that took place during the Joseon period were a result of practical considerations, i.e., of a “logic of practice,” rather than of “Confucianization” as an ideal force.

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29. His *Speculum on the Seon School* was also such a product (J. Kim 2006, 104).

Therefore, it is important to note that Hyujeong's *Verses* was a historical product composed to meet the *practical considerations* of Buddhism under Confucian dominion.

### 3) Salvific Methods for Hyujeong's Disciples

Hyujeong's soteriology was a product of the historical setting in which he lived, rather than that of his philosophical reasoning (J. Kim 2006, 99). Hyujeong strongly warned people with medium or lower faculties not to advance straight to the practice of meditation without depending on the genuine teaching in words and letters. He also admitted that the method by dependence on others was easier than the cultivation of meditation for people with inferior spiritual faculties (J. Kim 2006, 84–86). In this aspect, Hyujeong emphasized to his disciples the recitation of *dharanis* and the Buddha's name.<sup>30</sup> However, these salvific methods of his appear to be problematic for various reasons.

#### A. Hyujeong's Emphasis on *Dharani*

The indigenization and popularization of post-16th-century Korean Buddhism can be demonstrated through the emphasis on the miraculous efficacy of *dharanis* (Nam 2012, 15). However, in China there had been very little, if any, connection between Chan Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism (Sørensen 2006, 81). Then, why did Hyujeong stress the recitation of *dharanis*?<sup>31</sup> No information is found in the *Verses* regarding this. Instead, his magnum opus, *Speculum on the Seon School*, clarifies this:

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30. Similar ideas in 16th-century China are found. For example, Patriarch Luo, or Luo Qing, advocated an integrated approach of Pure Land and Chan practice (Haar 2015, 39). Seon monks in Korea after Hyujeong were also interested in combining Seon and the recitation of the Buddha's name. However, as far as extant sources are concerned, it is Hyujeong who first argued the unity of the two.

31. There is an idea that Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual and *dharani* through his *Verses* was possibly a product of his interest in non-Buddhist indigenous elements, such as *gukseon sasang* ("thought of national immortal"). However, I am unaware of any relationship between the two.

[The reason why] we recite *dharanis* is because although present karma (*hyoneop*) can be regulated and avoided through self-cultivation, former karma (*sugeop* 宿業) is difficult to cut off. Therefore, it is necessary to avail oneself of spiritual power. . . . Those who do not recite spiritual *dharanis* will not be able to remove themselves from the affairs of Mara. (CWKB 7:640a)<sup>32</sup>

According to this quotation, a practitioner of Seon will need the divine assistance that the *dharanis* are said to generate in order to overcome obstacles from previous karma (Sørensen 2006, 88). However, we are left with a lack of evidence to support the contention that the recitation of *dharanis* can “cut off” our “former karma.”

In addition, nobody can prove the actual existence of the former karma as a substantial entity. Furthermore, the question remains as to why Hyujeong did not recommend to his disciples, the target audience of the *Verses*, other possible salvific ways, such as what the Buddha actually taught, including the Four Noble Truths;<sup>33</sup> and why he did not recommend the reading of

32. English translation from Sørensen (2006, 88), with slight revision.

33. My emphasis on what the Buddha actually taught may be criticized as “a normative approach” or “an opinion piece.” Stephen F. Teiser (1994, 11) argues that we must be cautious to avoid using “original Buddhism” as a standard of measurement because most of the details of the Buddhist tradition during the time of the founder are inaccessible to us. I agree with him in that the nature of Buddhism has changed across time and space, and there is no fixed form of Buddhism. In addition, the fortunes of Buddhism in premodern Korea have depended on the will of the monarch and Korean monarchs’ primary interest in Buddhism was not in doctrine but as a vehicle for worldly and other-worldly happiness (J. Kim 2013a, 3ff.). However, we also need to pay more attention to Oliver Freiberger’s argument: “Earlier generations of scholars were interested in the origins of Buddhism and thus focused on the earliest, that is the canonical, texts. . . . They selected texts according to their interests which were determined by their own culturally and personally, often ‘protestant’ backgrounds. In such a way, they again ‘canonized’ the sources which for them represented original or authentic Buddhism. For overcoming this—still influential—canonization, Buddhist scholars have turned to other expressions of Buddhist religiosity, particularly to contemporary religious practice. I have argued that following this trend, Buddhist Studies runs the risk to further a new process of canonization which now excludes the Buddhist canon. . . . I suggest that during the course, every now and then the ‘classical’ readings should be supplemented and confronted with other, undermining data” (Freiberger 2004, 282–283). In addition, few Buddhist scholars deny the basic teachings of

Buddhist canonical texts.

Rather, it appears that Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual and his emphasis on *dharanis* through his *Verses* were a product of his interest in such non-Buddhist elements as *power*.<sup>34</sup> This is because the use of *dharanis* within Seon Buddhism was associated with the general function of Seon monks in society, as *tools* of power or as a means for spiritual efficacy; rather than as a means to achieve the goal of the religious life (Sørensen 2006, 98). When the historical evidence is less favorable, then one can shift the argument to the religious realm (Bodiford 2008, 264–268). Many people who failed the Confucian civil service examination in Song China (960–1279) became Chan monks. Hyujeong also attempted to pass the examination, as it was the only way to officialdom during his time. Though he failed in the civil service examination, he passed the monastic examination that had just been reinstated.

#### B. Hyujeong's Unity of Seon and Pure Land

Hyujeong's unity of Seon with Pure Land emerges as a typical characteristic of his soteriology, and the recitation of the Buddha's name was the aspect of Pure Land which mostly attracted Hyujeong's attention (J. Kim 2012, 393). He emphasized the existence of the Buddhist Paradise and Amitabha Buddha and argued that Seon practice and the recitation of the Buddha's name were no different as ways of attaining enlightenment (S. Kim 2008, 28–31). The content of the *Verses* also reveals that Hyujeong was a believer in the Pure Land after death,<sup>35</sup> someone who accepted the doctrine of karma, and who composed Buddhist songs to bid goodbye to the sacred beings and

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further research: What caused changes in Buddhism? What was happening behind the scenes during these changes? What are the contents and legacies of such changes?

34. This argument is applicable not only to Hyujeong. There are also examples of monks in medieval Japan who were engaged in Buddhist activities to fulfill practical ends (Sango 2015, 43–59).

35. In Joseon, there were different ways of believing in the Pure Land among monks, with some of them believing that it could be realized in the here and now. It is said that Hyujeong was interested in the idea of “pure land of the immaculate mind” (*yusim jeongto* 唯心淨土). However, the *Verses* is rather concerned with the Pure Land after one's death.

spirits. The *Verses* was a result of the systematization after the 16th century of rituals meant to better one's rebirth (Yi 2012, 82).

Hyujeong claimed that the Western Pure Land should be understood as a real place for people of low spiritual faculties (Kwon 1994, 247). He appears to have emphasized the Pure Land thought in his *Verses* as an easier way, or as a skillful means, for those of his disciples who might have preferred Confucian texts to their Buddhist counterparts, to concentrate their mind on one-pointedness. In this aspect, Hyujeong's identification of Seon practice with the recitation of the Buddha's name makes sense. The idea that rebirth is present also runs against the spirit of the Buddha's silence on metaphysical questions, and against the Buddhist idea of no-self. Hyujeong's classification of people in terms of their spiritual status is also doubtful because he does not specify the criteria for such classification. The target audience for his *Verses* was his junior monks who were ignorant and young. Even so, was his emphasis on reliance on others the best way to guide them?

In short, my examination of the relationship between Hyujeong and his interest in Buddhist ritual based on his *Verses* suggests the need for a reexamination of diverse issues, including the conventional scholarship of Zen, the nature and function of the *Verses*, and Hyujeong's salvific methods.

## Conclusion

This article sought to examine Hyujeong's interest in Buddhist ritual, focusing on his *Verses*, which was a historical product of an anti-Buddhist Confucian society and which stressed the recitation of *dharanis* and the Buddha's name as salvific methods. As a Seon monk, Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual differs from the view of the role of Zen monks held by Western scholarship, which has been heavily influenced by post-19th-century Japanese Zen studies. Therefore, this study suggests the need for a reinvestigation of the thought of Hyujeong as a Seon monk as well as of the conventional scholarship of Zen studies. The role of Hyujeong as a priritual Seon monk resonates with recent scholarship arguing that East Asian traditions never rejected ritual. Hyujeong's concern with Buddhist ritual with esoteric ele-

ments makes him distinct from Chinese Chan monks, who were not interested in esoteric Buddhism. Hyujeong's achievements and their legacy are very great, and his emphasis on esoteric Buddhist elements and dependence on others still influence the monastic circles of contemporary Korea (Y. Kim 1998, 214).<sup>36</sup>

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36. For a reappraisal of Zen religious experience and a discussion of the distinctive features of Korean Seon Buddhism, see Buswell (1992, 217–223). In the 2000s, a series of international conferences on “keyword meditation” (Ganhwaseon 看話禪), a major soteriological path to enlightenment in contemporary Korean Buddhism, were held at Dongguk University, Seoul, Korea. For the latest scholarly discussions of this, refer to ABS (2016). However, much of the research on Ganhwaseon has focused on its proselytization and further examination of the substantial features of Korean Seon Buddhism remains for future study.

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