

# ***A Ritual of Doubt***

***Yiqing* (疑情) in Kanhua Chan Buddhism and its Practice in Korean  
Contemporary Ganhwa Seon meditation**



**Bo Ri Kim**

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**University of Bergen**

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## Abbreviations

<b>C.</b>	Chinese
<b>Jp.</b>	Japanese
<b>Kr.</b>	Korean
<b>Sk.</b>	Sanskrit

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Arouse your entire body with its three hundred and sixty bones  
and joints and its eighty-four thousand pores of the skin;  
summon up a spirit of great doubt and concentrate on  
this word “no.” – *The Gateless Gate*<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Every year, approximately two thousand Buddhist monastics participate in a three-month lasting meditation retreat at least twice a year in South Korea. They do the sitting meditation called *Ganhwa Seon*<sup>2</sup> (C. *Kanhua Chan*<sup>3</sup>) for eight to fourteen hours a day in it. Most of them have repeatedly been attending it for many years, and some of them have been doing it for several decades. Since my first year at university where I studied Buddhism with Buddhist monks and nuns, I have always found myself asking when encountering monastic meditators of *Ganhwa Seon*, ‘why do they do it’, ‘what makes them repeat it for decades?’, ‘what is that they actually do while sitting?’, etc. What they must do is to generate *yiqing* until it completely bursts according to the literature of *Kanhua Chan/Ganhwa Seon*. What is *yiqing* then?

This research investigates *yiqing* in *Kanhua Chan/Ganhwa Seon* the main meditative method of Chinese *Linji* (Jp. *Rinzai*, Kr. *Imjae*) school and its subsequent branches in East Asia. As an indigenous Chinese Buddhist term, *yiqing* is generally translated as ‘doubt’ or ‘sensation of doubt’ in discourse related to it in the English language. Nevertheless, it is not entirely corresponding to doubt (Sk. *vicikitsā*, C. *yi* and *yixin*) in either the contexts of Indian Buddhism or the Chan Buddhism before the emergence of *Kanhua Chan* in Song dynasty

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<sup>1</sup> Wumen Huikai, Yuan-wu, A.V. Grimston, and Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku* (Newyork: Weatherhill, 1977), 28. In original text in the book, “no” is “mu” meaning ‘no’.

<sup>2</sup> For the Korean terms, I have followed the Revised Romanization of Korean with two exceptions *yiqing* (Kr. *uijeong*) and *huatou* (Kr. *hwadu*). Since these terms are two of most central concepts of this thesis, I have used the Chinese terms in Korean context as well.

<sup>3</sup> For the Chinese terms, I have followed the Pinyin transliteration without tone marks.

China. Whilst doubt before Kanhua Chan is an impediment to meditative absorption, *yiqing* is the prerequisite essential of the meditative method.

This concept, however, has not received much scholarly attention although to elucidate it may be crucial to understand the East Asian Buddhist meditative tradition. Nevertheless, Kanhua Chan after Dahui Zonggao, the founder of the meditation method, has not been studied much. The status quo, as pointed out by Ryan Bongseok Joo, possibly originates in the fact that Chan Buddhist studies in the West have been established on the foundation of Japanese scholarship whose focus is either weighted on the Chan Buddhism from its outset to the Song period<sup>4</sup> or discussed in the context of Japanese Rinzai Zen, the Japanese line of Kanhua Chan, of which the monastic curriculum hardly emphasizes the role of *yiqing*. The unique role of *yiqing* in Kanhua Chan and the shortage of scholarly scrutiny into this topic triggered the commencement of this study raising questions such as: can *yiqing* be completely differentiated from the negative ‘doubt’ generally conceived as an encumbrance in the Buddhist teachings prior to Kanhua Chan?, why did it become a prerequisite essential for awakening in the tradition?, and is there any other way to look into it than what we can get from relevant academic accounts of it?

My investigation into the topic starts on the premise that Kanhua meditation is a ritual. From the perspective, *yiqing* can be seen in two respects. First, being shared as a concept by the proponents of the Chan tradition, it serves as a crucial element in the meditation ritual. Second, it is experienced and recognized by the performers of a living form of the ritual. Therefore, my approach to the topic is also twofold. The first is textual approach to investigate how authorities manifest and guide the concept, and the second is empirical approach to inquire into how it is performed and conformed to the guideline, and what the practitioners experience through what they do. For the latter, I conducted qualitative interview with nine monastic practitioners of Ganhwa Seon, the Korean line of Chinese Kanhua Chan. Contemporary Ganhwa Seon is probably the living form of the meditation method that is most actively and officially performed not only in the monasteries but also in meditation centers for the laity today being endorsed by the biggest single institution, the Jogye order, in the world. Both in the textual curriculum and practical guideline of it, *yiqing* is taught as the heart of the meditation that infuses the practice with life. Therefore, Ganhwa Seon can work as an optimal

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<sup>4</sup> Ryan Bongseok Joo, “Gradual Experiences of Sudden Enlightenment: The Varieties of of Ganhwa Seon Teachings in Contemporary Korea”, *paper delivered at The Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii*. 2011 (2011), 18.

exemplar of the living ritual, especially for me who as a native Korean grew up and studied Buddhism in South Korea. In my discussion, I mainly use the original term not its common English rendering as doubt or sensation of doubt because this research expects to shed light upon multifaceted dimensions of *yiqing* as both a concept and empirical phenomena.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. After this introduction, chapter two provides explanations of main terms and concepts that are necessary to understand my discussion in the thesis. Chapter three deals with *yiqing* in existing studies to show how other scholars present *yiqing* in their textual research. In chapter four, I discuss main methods and theories that I employ to collect and analyze data. To examine how the most pertinent texts that serve as textbooks teach the meditation focusing on *yiqing*, chapter five introduces teachings of three Chinese and two Korean masters. In chapter six, I discuss my analysis of the interviews of nine Korean monastic practitioners who kindly shared their stories and experiences with me. Lastly, the conclusion chapter suggests findings of this research highlighting the diverse aspects of *yiqing*.

## 2 Main terms and concepts

### 2.1 Chan Buddhism and *Gong'an*

*Chan*, more commonly known as its Japanese transliteration *Zen*, is a Chinese school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Since its commencement which is accredited to Bodhidharma (d. ca. 530), the legendary monk who came to China from South India or central Asia, the school reached the climax during Song dynasty (ca. 950-1300) becoming systemized and dominant in the Chinese religious scenes. Based on the literature and the history which had been gradually constructed until and during Song dynasty, Chan Buddhism (in particular, Linji faction) profoundly influenced on East Asian Buddhism such as in Korean Seon, Japanese Zen, and Vietnamese Thien. It would be impracticable to make a concise but satisfactory introduction that elucidates Chan Buddhism as a complex whole here but offering some of its characteristics would help to understand the discussion in this thesis.

First, as manifested in the name Chan (禪, Kr. *seon*, Jp. *zen*), the Chinese transliteration of Sanskrit term *dhyāna* meaning mediation or “a state of deep meditative absorption”,<sup>5</sup> Chan Buddhism represents itself as the true path of Buddhism focusing on doing meditation not on studying the canonical teachings. Not being rooted in any fundamental scriptures, it claims that true dharma is ‘not based on words’ and ‘separately transmitted from the teachings.’ Such claim implies neither that learning canonical scriptures has been prohibited nor that Chan texts have been disdained in any periods of Chinese Chan history as well as in modern and contemporary Buddhist monasteries. Instead, it is rather to highlight getting enlightened through meditation practice than learning about enlightenment from scriptural teachings. Second, the core doctrinal axiom of the school is that all living beings have *Buddha-nature*, “the potential or actual quality of enlightenment that is latent within all of us”.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Chan Buddhism is known as a path to discover or search for

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<sup>5</sup> Damian Keown, “*dhyāna*” in *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-1570?rskey=BnzuR2&result=5>

<sup>6</sup> John R. McRae, *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 41

Buddha-nature which is inherent but clouded with delusion in a person who is not yet enlightened.

Third, the tradition started to be systemized on a genealogical frame that stretches from the seven Buddhas of the past including the historical Buddha Śākyamuni (Siddārtha Gautama) and the twenty-eight Indian patriarchs to the six Chinese patriarchs. Bodhidharma, the progenitor of Chan Buddhism, is the twenty-eighth patriarch in the Indian lineage as well as the first in the Chinese.<sup>7</sup> This genealogy accords authority to the indigenous Chinese Buddhist school as a genuine succession of the native Indian Buddhism indicating that the Chan patriarchs are homologous with the Buddhas and patriarchs from India. This unilinear lineage structure which appeared in written form first in 801 by cutting off complicated cultural/social settings and factors cannot, of course, be seen as a historical fact per se. Nonetheless, the East Asian traditions such as Korean Seon and Japanese Zen grew based on it adding next generations of the patriarchs from their own cultures. Therefore, a considerable portion of the historical structures and narratives of Chan Buddhism rests on fictional or historically hard-to-proven legends most of which were written after death of the key figures.

Fourthly, relation, and thus interaction between master and student is central. The genealogy is built on the connection between a teacher and a successor of the teacher. The famous encounter story between the first and second Chinese patriarchs Bodhidharma and Huike, where the latter cut his own arm in front of Bodhidharma to demonstrate his earnest aspiration for the master's guidance, exemplifies how extraordinarily the relation between the two began. Even though awakening is a personal achievement of the practitioner, the basic method that guides the achievement is something to be taught and to be transmitted from master to student. In addition, one's enlightenment is officially approved by the master's recognition during and after awakening to confirm the genuineness just as in cases of particularly well-known figures in Chan history. Hence, encounter stories of master-student where the two parties exchange dialogue or actions that contribute to the student's awakening take crucial roles in Chan Buddhism. In this background, *gong'an* (K. *gong-an*, J. *kōan*) became not only a Chan literature genre but also main subject matters in Chan practice from Song dynasty onwards. *Gong'an* is standardized cases of dialogues or anecdotes sorted out from such encounter stories. As John R. McRae remarks, they contain certain features such

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<sup>7</sup> The line of succession continues: Bodhidharma → Huike (487-593) → Sengcan (496? -606) → Daoxin (580-651) → Hongren (601-674) → Huineng (683-713). After Huineng, the line is factionalized and Linji (d.866) from Tang Dynasty (618-907) is a descendant after several generations from Huineng.

as: “logical disjunctions, inexplicable and iconoclastic pronouncements, gestures and physical demonstrations, and even assaultive behavior such as shouts and blows with hand, foot, or stick”.<sup>8</sup> One of the most famous and frequently used *gong’an*s in the history of Chan Buddhism is ‘Zhaozhou (778-897)’s dog’. One day a monk asked Zhaozhou whether a dog has the Buddha nature, and Zhaozhou’s reply was ‘no’. The perplexing answer ‘no’ that counters to Buddha-nature immanent in all living beings demonstrates a typical illogical quality of *gong’an*. Such riddle-like cases, literally meaning ‘legal cases’<sup>9</sup> as precedents, are given in Chan texts as well as orally by a teacher to a student without a specified context. Thus, they are supposed to work as catalyst to realize the enlightened mind of precedent masters without involving conceptual thinking.

## 2.2 Kanhua Chan, *Huatou*, and *Yiqing*

*Kanhua Chan* (Kr. *Ganhwa Seon*) is the main meditation method formalized by the Chinese Chan master Dahui Zonggao (1091-1157) from the Linji faction in Song dynasty. The faction named after Linji Yixian (d. 866), the eleventh Chan patriarch, from Tang dynasty was not only one of the most dominant Chan factions during Song dynasty, but also the most influential one which spread to Korea and Japan as the origin of Ganhwa Seon and Rinzai Zen respectively. The term Kanhua Chan simply presents the key technique of the method meaning meditation (Chan) of seeing (C. kan, Kr. gan) a word (C. hua, Kr. hwa) called *huatou*. *Huatou* (Kr. *hwadu*) is a critical word or phrase excerpted from a *gong’an*. In the case of ‘Zhaozhou’s dog’, Zhaozhou’s answer ‘no’ is the *huatou* as the key word of the *gong’an*.

The meditation method was one of the fruits that systemized Song Chan brought forth simultaneously with the development of Chan literature. Prior to the emergence of Kanhua Chan, the use of *gong’an* collection as a catechism between a master and a student became a

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<sup>8</sup> McRae, *Seeing Through*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Batchelor explains that “The term “public case” was adopted from the Chinese legal vocabulary. In its original sense it referred to the record of a court case which was significant enough to serve as a precedent in making future legal decisions... Later, the same term came to be used to describe the records of the awakenings of Zen masters.” Stephen Batchelor, *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty* (Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2015). 44.

regular practice in the Chan monasteries<sup>10</sup> – and such role of *gong'an* is still central in Japanese Rinzai. Reading and emulating the exemplars in the precedent stories is seen as a performative practice in the sense that the *gong'ans* as written scripts are performed like a theatrical play in a monastic hall (stage) being watched and judged by the audience (the master and fellow practitioners).<sup>11</sup> However, Dahui's Kanhua Chan brought about innovation<sup>12</sup> in the Chan scenes emphasizing to focus on the *huatou* by ruling out the rest of the collection of *gong'ans*. The famous anecdote that Dahui burned the woodblocks of the *Blue Cliff Record* (1125), a *gong'an* anthology compiled by his teacher Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135), symbolizes the gravity of *huatou* in his method. Dahui's such action, whether it is a historical fact or not, demonstrates that focusing on a single *huatou* suffices to reach awakening because to investigate into a whole collection of *gong'ans* may stir up hindrances<sup>13</sup> such as conceptualization to the meditation practice. Hence, the method is also called 'short-cut' approach<sup>14</sup> to enlightenment. Kanhua, that is, seeing *huatou* is meant to

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10 According to Morten Schlütter, "Song Chan monasteries were strictly governed, large institutions where students lived highly regulated lives, engaging in ritualized lectures and encounters with the master according to an established schedule... by reading and listening to lectures on the sayings and doings of the ancient masters and by engaging in the right kind of meditation... the mind of the Song Chan student might be inspired in a way that would ultimately lead to an enlightenment similar to those experienced by his Tang counterparts." Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: the Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-dynasty China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 16.

11 Barry Stephenson, "The Kōan as Ritual Performance", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 73, n. 2 (2005), 476, McRae, *Seeing through*, 65.

12 Morten Schlütter, "Kānhuà Meditation in Chinese Zen" in *Asian Traditions of Meditation*, ed. Halvor Eifring (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 171.

13 Dahui warns eight malfunctions to avoid in the *huatou* meditation. The Korean seon master Jinul from the Goryeo dynasty adds two more kinds on Dahui's and since then the ten malfunctions has served as the main precautions for the meditative practice in the Korean tradition. Young Wook Kim, "Ganhwasibjongbyeong-ui yeonwan [The origin of ten malfunction in the practice of *hwadu*]", *Bumhan Philosophical Society* 42 (2006). They, summarized by Robert E. Buswell, are: (1) understanding the *hautou* 'no' to mean yes or no; (2) considering "it in relation to doctrinal theory"; (3) trying "to examine it with the logical mind"; (4) trying "to express one's own understanding through gestures like raising the eyebrows [...] For the truly enlightened one, words are not a hindrance, and he should be able to express his understanding fluently."; (5) using "words alone or sophistic argument to express one's understanding. Expression must be based on direct experience of the mind."; (6) busying "yourself inside the tent of unconcern."; (7) inquiring "into the *hwadu* [*huatou*] at the place where the mind becomes aware of sensory objects"; (8) looking "for the meaning by analyzing the working of the *kongan* [*gong'an*] or any other literary hints or allusions"; (9) taking "it to be the *mu* ['no'] of true nonexistence"; and (10) understanding that "the Buddha-nature is an inherent quality in themselves and assume that no practice is necessary except to remain "natural" and allow this innate Buddha-nature to manifest." (9) and (10) are those added by Jinul. Chinul, *The Korean Approach to Zen: The collected works of Chinul*. trans. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 338; 373, n 273.

14 Robert E Buswell, Jr., "The "Short-cut" Approach of K'an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism" in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 347. This view that regards Kanhua Chan as the most efficient short-cut method for awakening was further established by the Korean Seon

engender a puzzled and questioning mind on the *huatou*. The act of seeing is not to keep a “passive state of observation, nor a kind of intellectual contemplation”,<sup>15</sup> but to develop the questioning mind or doubt on the *huatou* until the riddle-like mind is completely solved, and thus the meditator gets awakened. The doubt itself is called *yiqing*, and *yiqing* is the other crucial factor of Kanhua Chan’s innovativeness.

*Yiqing*, however, must be considered the most pivotal factor of the method’s novelty. It is because first, the new term *yiqing*, sharing the meaning of ‘doubt’ with the Chinese terms ‘*yi* (疑, doubt)’ and ‘*yixin* (疑心, *lit.* doubt mind)’ started to gain the status as the prerequisite essential of the method by Dahui. Before him, ‘*yi/yixin*’ are generally used to denote doubt as an impediment to enlightenment not only in Chan Buddhism, but also in the Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts. Second, it is also *yiqing* which is in the center of the method’s development by becoming more vital and systematized while emphasis on the importance of *huatou* seems to appear even before Dahui.<sup>16</sup> Working on *yiqing* is described as all-out effort that entails full psychosomatic involvement. In this sense, this active method of Chan meditation was strongly opposed to *Mozhao Chan, the silent illumination meditation*, the method by the *Caodong* faction. Caodong (Kr. Jodong, Jp. Soto) as one of the Chan branches in Song dynasty was another major community who competed with the Linji faction for cultural/social dominance. Dahui most frequently and harshly attacked the Caodong school for its ‘heretical’ belief that the Buddha-nature manifests itself while passively sitting in complete tranquility in which neither the practitioner’s exertion nor the event of a breakthrough would be required.<sup>17</sup>

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master Jinul (1158-1210). After him, the view was succeeded to his student Hyeshim (1178-1234) and the influence is again found in Hyujeong (1520-1604), the Korean Soen master from the Joseon period. In Chinese Chan Buddhism, however, the term short-cut (徑截) is not used in the same context after Dahui. Young-Wook Kim, *Ganhwasibyong-ui yeonwon* [The origin of ten malfunction in the practice of *hwadu*], *Beomhan Cheolhak* [Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophical Society], 42 (2006), 116-117.

<sup>15</sup> McRae, *Seeing Through*, 116.

<sup>16</sup> Dahui Zonggao, *The Letters of Chan master Dahui Pujue*, trans. Jeffrey L. Broughton and Elise Yoko Watanabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 22.

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, Schlütter addresses Dahui’s Kanhua Chan as “an answer or antidote to the silent illumination” Schlütter, *Kànhuà Meditation*, 166.

## 2.3 Ganhwa Seon: a Korean tradition originated from Kanhua Chan

Ganhwa Seon is the official meditation method of the major Buddhist order *Jogye* in South Korea. The name *Jogye* is Korean transliteration of the Chinese mountain *Caoxi* where the sixth Chinese patriarch Huineng's temple was placed. The origin of the Jogye Order is traced back to the nine mountain schools (Kr. *Gusan Seonmun*), the nine initial monasteries of Korean Seon formed by the Seon monks who learned Chan Buddhism in the Tang dynasty during the eighth and ninth centuries. In Goryeo (918-1392), a Korean dynasty where Buddhism was most flourished in the history as the state religion, these schools were first referred as 'Jogye Order' collectively. It was during Goryeo dynasty where Kanhua Chan was first introduced into Korean Seon by Bojo Jinul (1158-1210) who is of prime importance in the establishment of Korean Seon Buddhism. Jinul is known to have his final awakening while reading Dahui's *the Record Sayings of Dahui (Dahui yulu)*. Jinul started to implant Ganhwa Seon into Korean Buddhism by assembling Seon practitioners from all over the country under the movement called the Samādhi and Prajñā Society (Kr. *Jeonghye Gyeolsa*) which urged the monks to practice both meditation (Kr. *jeong*) and wisdom (Kr. *hye*). Taking over Dahui's view that Ganhwa Seon is the most efficient 'short-cut' approach to a sudden enlightenment, he conscientized about the importance of the method throughout his works such as *Resolving Doubts About Observing the Hwadu (Ganhwa gyeoruiron)*. Since Jinul, Seon Buddhism continued to fully bloom in Goryeo dynasty.

I will briefly mention some of the other main figures who contributed to establishment of Korean Seon Buddhism under the direct influence of Chinese Kanhua Chan in the history for two reasons. The first is to show how closely Ganhwa Seon is correlated with the Chinese masters of Kanhua Chan discussed in this thesis. The other reason is because some of the names will be mentioned in the later chapters. Jingak Hyesim (1178-1234) as Jinul's successor continued the effort to enroot Ganhwa Seon. He not only wrote a commentary on *Dahui's Letters* called *Record of Letter* (Kr. *Seojang-ki*), but also compiled the first Korean *gong'an* collection (*Seonmun yeomsong*). In his work *How to Deal with Maladies Involved in Studying the Hwadu 'no'* (Kr. *Guja mubulseonghwa ganbyeongnon*), he also explicated the wrongful approaches to the *huatou* practice, which was first warned by Dahui and emphasized again by Jinul. Taego Bou (1301-1381), Naong Hyeguen (1320-1376)<sup>18</sup>, and Baegun

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<sup>18</sup> It is known that *Mengshan's Record* found in Korea was first transcribed by Naong when he stayed in China.

Gyeonghan (1299-1375)<sup>19</sup> all of whom studied Buddhism staying in China were also under the direct influence of the Kanhua Chan from Yuan dynasty. Among them Taego Bou is recognized as the direct successor of the Chinese Chan lineage. His teaching of the meditation method, according to John Jorgensen,<sup>20</sup> is based on teachings from not only Dahui but also two other Chinese masters, Gaofeng<sup>21</sup> and Mengshan<sup>22</sup>, and Hyesim. Taego's teaching was passed to Cheongho Hyujeong (1520-1604) who is also known as great master Seosan in Joseon, the dynasty following Goryeo in Korea. One of Hyujeong's representative works is *Mirror Illuminating the Seon Houses* (Kr. *Seonga Kwigam*) which is a guidebook to Seon practice published in 1579. The genre and content of the book is overlapped with *the Chan Whip Anthology* by the Chinese master Yunqi Zhuhong published in 1600.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, Gyeongheo Seong-u (1846-1912) who is seen as the revivor of the Seon practice in modern times by the Jogye Order is also important to mention. Many of his works were compiled by his disciples after his death. Among them, *the Essential Saying of the Seon House* (Kr. *Seonmun chwaryo*), a collection of sayings and teachings of masters from both China and Korea, is one of the most important works published by him in 1907-1908.

Based on the figures above, the Jogye Order officially claims the “unbroken lineage”<sup>24</sup> of their Seon tradition from Chinese Chan Buddhism. However, such genealogical frame is just as constructive as the Chinese lineage frame which was selectively simplified and structured by the later generations. Besides, Korean Buddhism went through a turbulent period from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) in which Buddhism was suppressed in favor of Neo Confucianism until the modern reform after the Japanese occupation<sup>25</sup>. Nonetheless, Korean Buddhism itself, which had been a primary cultural/social influence throughout the history since its initial introduction into the Korean Peninsula from China in the fourth

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<sup>19</sup> Baegun is the author of *Athology of Direct Pointing to the Essence of Mind (Jikji simche yojeol)* printed in 1377. It is the world's oldest metal type printed book.

<sup>20</sup> John Jorgensen, *Seon Dialogues*, trans. John Jorgensen, Collected Works of Korean Buddhism 8 (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012), 47.

<sup>21</sup> In China he practiced the method with Shiwu Qinggong (1272-1352) “who trained at one time under Gaofeng and later succeeded one of Gaofeng's co-students”. Yunqi Zhuhong, *The Chan Whip Anthology: a Companion to Zen practice*, trans. Jeffrey L. Broughton and Elise Yoko Watanabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 44.

<sup>22</sup> More explanations of the Chinese masters, Dahui, Gaofeng, and Mengshan are given in chapter four and five.

<sup>23</sup> About the comparison between to texts, see Zhuhong, *The Chan whip*, pp.40-43.

<sup>24</sup> Gou, Muye, Hyegak, Uijeong, and Seoru, *Great Doubt Great Enlightenment: The Tradition and Practice of Ganhwa Seon in Korean Buddhism* (Seoul: Jogye Order Publications, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> My discussion stands aloof from investigating not only the historical succession during and after the Japanese occupation but also how orthodox Korean Ganhwa Seon is as the successor of its Chinese origin, because the interest of this study is in what living practitioners do through the practice they chose and have learned at present.

century, has survived, and adjusted the tradition in the modern era.<sup>26</sup> There are 26 parish temples of the Order including one special military ordinariate temple currently in the country, and under the parish temples over 2800 temples are registered.<sup>27</sup> There are roughly 12,000 full time celibate monks and nuns affiliated to the Order.<sup>28</sup>

The curriculum of monastic education and the system of advancement have been reformed several times since the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Hence, which course a monk/nun has been through often varies depending on when and where they joined the sangha. However, there are certain features that are commonly applied to most of the monks in the Jogye Order. Most of them usually take Buddhist textual education for at least four years to more than ten years at either monastic seminaries or secular universities which are affiliated with the Order. They become exposed to the teachings of Chinese Chan masters either formally or privately during this period. The Jogye Order officially advocates the necessity of textual studies with examples of the historical Seon masters' teachings such as Jinul's 'concurrent cultivation of meditation and wisdom (Kr. jeonghye ssangsu)' and 'letting go of the teachings and entering into meditation (Kr. sagyo ipseon)'. Referring Seosan's *Mirror Illumination of the Seon Houses*, the Order explains that letting go of the doctrinal teachings does not mean that the scriptures must be ignored but put aside during the meditative practice.<sup>30</sup> To become a full-ordained monk (Kr. bigu, Sk. bhikṣu) or nun (Kr. biguni, Sk. bhikṣuṇī), one must go through a postulant (Kr. haengja) course for at least six months and then a novice (Kr. sami/samini, Sk. śrāmaṇera/śrāmaṇerī) for four years or more. From novice, one can participate in a retreat (Kr. *Angeo*), the communal meditative practice.

Every year about two thousand monks attend regular summer and winter retreats which last three months respectively.<sup>31</sup> There are approximately over ninety meditation halls

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26 Approximately 15 % of the population are affiliated to Buddhism as of 2015 in South Korea. The percentage has been decreasing for the last two decades while Christian population has been increasing in the country. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/996058/south-korea-number-of-buddhists/>

27 According to the statistics provided by the Jogye Order, there were 2856 registered temples in 2020. <http://www.beopbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=212923>

28 This number was provided by the main office of the Jogye Order through a phone call I made March 3, 2021 since I could not find any official statistics of the monks and nuns registered in the Order.

29 About the reforms, see Kaplan Uri, "Transforming Orthodoxies: Buddhist Curriculums and Educational Institutions in Contemporary South Korea," (PhD diss., Duke University, 2015).

30 Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 89

31 1,894 monks (985 males and 505 females) participated in the summer retreats and 1,951 (1010 males and 524 females) in the winter retreat in 2020. Daehan Bulgyo Jogyejong Jeon-guk Seonbang Sujahwe, *Seonsa Bang-amrok*, (Seoul: Jogye Order Publications, 2020; 2021)

belonging to different temples. The daily schedule of each hall during the retreats varies depending on the temple as presented in table 4.1.<sup>32</sup>

Table 1 Daily schedule of Ganhwa Seon retreats

Palgong Chongnim Seon Center at Donghwasan Monastery <sup>33</sup>	Taego Seon Center at Bongamsa Monastery <sup>34</sup>
02:30 Wakeup & Dharma service	03:00 Wakeup
02:45 Begin meditation	03:20 Dharma service & Begin meditation
05:30 Stop meditation	05:00 Stop meditation
05:55 Breakfast & break	05:40 Breakfast & break
08:00 Begin meditation	08:00 Begin meditation
11:00 Finish meditation & Dharma service	11:00 Finish meditation
11:25 Lunch & break	11:10 Dharma service
13:30 Begin meditation	11:20 Lunch & break
16:30 Stop meditation & cleaning	14:00 Begin meditation
16:45 Dinner & break	16:00 Stop meditation & cleaning
18:20 Dharma service & begin meditation	16:40 Dinner & break
22:00 Finish meditation	18:00 Dharma service & begin meditation
	21:00 Finish meditation & bedtime
Geumbong Seon Center at Seokjongsan Monastery <sup>35</sup>	Munsu Seon Center at Chukseosa Monastery <sup>36</sup>
3:00-05:00 Early morning meditation session	01:30-03:30 Meditation session
05:30 Breakfast & break	03:30-04:00 Dharma service
07:00 Communal work	04:00-06:00 Meditation session
08:00-11:00 Morning meditation session	06:00 Breakfast & break

<sup>32</sup> The contents of this table are directly brought from Gou et al., *Great Doubt*. According to my interview respondents, the custom and routine of the Seon halls have become more diverse than a couple of decades ago. The diversity stems from the directing masters' principle.

<sup>33</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 327.

<sup>34</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 330.

<sup>35</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 332.

<sup>36</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 335.

11:30 Dharma service	08:00-11:00 Meditation session
12:00 Lunch & break	11:00 Lunch & break
14:00-17:00 Afternoon meditation session	14:00-22:00 Meditation session
17:00 Cleaning & communal work	Their retreats last five months.
17:40 Dinner & break	
19:00-21:00 Evening meditation session	

The duration of the daily meditation practice<sup>37</sup> is in general from eight to fourteen hours (Table 1). Ten-minute break is given every fifty minutes, which is up to the practitioners whether to take it or not. During the retreats, “undaunted practice (Kr. *Yongmaengjeongjin*)”<sup>38</sup> sitting for eighteen hours or more without sleep is additionally conducted for mostly seven days and even up to a month at most Seon halls. After the retreat ends, some of the monks participate in the interval retreat (Kr. *Sancheol*) between the regular ones.

The Jogye Order officially claims that relation between master and student is crucial in Ganhwa Seon, highly emphasizing the role of the teacher who gives a *huatou* with instruction on the meditation and check the student’s progress. In practice, however, such strong bond between master and student appears not to be prevalent in contemporary Ganhwa Seon. It is known that a monk meets the teacher when having an urgent question or after experiencing a breakthrough. Moreover, regular check-ups between a teacher and the student are not conventional, which implies that not every Seon monastic can get the teacher’s guidance at the right time. After receiving a *huatou* from a master, many monks seem to practice not relying on the master’s direct guidance, of which the tendency is referred by Jaehyeong Seo as “unkind climate of the practice”<sup>39</sup> in the sense that one cannot benefit from her/his teacher. It is also a common case that one’s Seon teacher is not necessarily her/his vocation teacher (Kr. *eunsa sunim*) who is akin to the dharma parent to a monk. Many – although we do not

37 The official instruction on “how to sit in Seon meditation” is in Appendix.

38 There are other types of intensive meditation practice such as “intensive meditation without lying down (Kr. *jangjwa burwa*) for periods of three months or more, and also the practice of gateless-gate (Kr. *mumungwan*) in which one locks oneself inside a room and practices meditation alone without ever going outside. This gateless-gate practice can last six months, a year, three years, or even six years. In addition, there are practice movements called *gyeolsa* ranging from fifteen months to three years, in which the members refrain from leaving the temple and practice diligently for a specific length of time.” Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 43.

39 Jaehyeong Seo, “Ganhwa Seon dajunghwa-ui munjaewa gwajae [Problems and Tasks for Ganhwa Seon’s Popularization]”, *Seonhak* [Seon Studies], Vol. 15 (2006), 493.

know how many – receive their *huatou* from a renowned master or a master of the Seon center they first participate in to practice the meditation. Some of them even voluntarily select their *huatou* from a written text.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.4 Ganhwa Seon as Ritual

Meditation in Buddhism is a practice by which one actively engages and participates in Buddhism. The method of meditation varies depending on traditions, while some constituents like involving the body from breathing to sitting and concentration are common in majority of the cases. Although there are other ways of practicing Buddhism than meditating – for example, performing regular dharma services and ceremony in Korean monastic life, “the question, do you practice? is very often almost synonymous with do you meditate?”<sup>41</sup> in both academy and the popular understanding of Buddhism. Therefore, meditation as a practice can mean a way of “doing” Buddhism not just reading Buddhist texts or going to a Buddhist temple. When we say, ‘I *practice* meditation’, the practice is not necessarily constrained by specific time and place just as we say, ‘I practice jogging’ or ‘I practice taekwondo’. In the monastic settings of Korean Buddhism, however, a meditation practitioner refers to one who personally chose to ‘pursue her/his calling’<sup>42</sup> through meditative practice. The practice is more systematically done by regularly participating in a retreat, the highly formalized, stylized, and public event that I view as “ritual”.

Examining Ganhwa meditation based upon the premise that it is a ritual may look completely wrong to some Buddhists, especially to Seon monastic practitioners. In their

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<sup>40</sup> This status quo can be thought about together with McRae’s question on Chan as a global spiritual path. McRae says: “if Chan practice was originally genealogical – by which I mean patriarchal, generational, and relation – in ways that fit so well with medieval Chinese society, how will it be (or, how is it being) transformed as it spreads throughout the globe in the twenty-first century (and as it did in the twentieth)? In other words, how is Zen changing, and how will it change and spread within the context of globalization and Westernization?” McRae, *Seeing through*, 11. Although Seon Buddhism is a part of Korean traditional culture, it is hard to say that the westernized contemporary society appreciates its traditional values unchanged. Seen in this way, it would be more ‘kind’ and sustainable for the Jogye Order to actively publicize the gap between the theoretical principle and reality in hand and even to amend the principle so that those monks who practice Ganhwa Seon without direct guidance of a master could better fit in the system.

<sup>41</sup> Carl Bielefeldt, “Practice”, in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 230.

<sup>42</sup> Bielefeldt, *Practice*, 230.

understanding, the relation between “myth” as “false belief”<sup>43</sup> and true belief would be almost equivalent to the one between ritual as empty/none-essential performance and meditation. The notion that the iconoclastic stance of Linji Chan, which even commends to ‘kill the Buddha and teachers’<sup>44</sup> to emphasize that enlightenment is perfected by only oneself, is “against ritualism”<sup>45</sup> is often taken for granted by the practitioners. It is because the term ritual is in a popular sense usually associated with liturgical ceremony, which is in fact a part of the Buddhist monastic life, albeit not a main duty of Korean Seon monastics. However, the fact that the Buddhist school has created new rules by breaking rules like to kill the Buddha tends to be generally overlooked.

‘*Ritual*’ is a scholarly meta category used to refer to events and behaviors performed “through formalization of space, place, time, sequence”<sup>46</sup>. More specific units of such events and behaviors are also called ‘rite’. Since rites – e.g., the liturgy of the Eucharist, a traditional wedding ceremony, the forty-nine days memorial ceremony of Tibetan Buddhism, etc.- are something formalized, and thus prescribed in any forms, they are not only distinguished from ordinary actions but also able to be enacted “the way things ought to be”<sup>47</sup> over and over. When we specify Ganhwa Seon as the meditation performed during the retreats, it falls into the category of ritual in the following senses based on Grimes’s perspective of “family characteristics of ritual”<sup>48</sup> which will be discussed more in the later chapters. The characteristics are: first, ritual is ‘formally, publicly, and collectively’ in a specific place performed during specific times. In Ganhwa Seon, summer retreat (Kr. ha-angeo) is performed from April 15 to July 15 and winter retreat (Kr. dong-angeo) from October 15 to January 15 according to lunar calendar at a meditation hall of a Seon center at a monastery; second, it is an ‘embodied’ activity using the body; third, it is ‘enacted as prescribed, and repeated’; fourth, and yet ‘individual, improvisational, and *transformative*’. In this thesis,

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43 Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 60.

44 Lin-chi, *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), trans. Burton Watson, 52.

45 D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Second Series*, (London: Rider and Company, 1950), 20.

46 Don Handelman, “Conceptual Alternatives to ‘Ritual’” in *Theorizing Rituals*, Vol.1: Issues, topics, approaches, concepts, ed. Jens Kreinath, J.A.M. Snoek, and Michael Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 39.

47 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: from Babylon to Jonestown*, Chicago studies in the history of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 63.

48 Ronald L. Grimes, *The craft of ritual studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 193-196.

therefore, Ganhwa Seon refers to ‘the meditation performed during the retreats’ when it is discussed as a ritual<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Pointing out that two groups of approaches, namely, the experientialist “from the perspectives of psychology, mysticism, and religious experience” for which the essence of Zen is about enlightenment that is outside of texts independently from language; and the textualist employing “philological, historical-critical, and hermeneutical methods and theories” for which the latter even experiences of enlightenment are all dependent on scripture or language, dominate in studies of Zen Buddhism, Barry Stephenson he asserts the necessity for performative approach to ritual of Zen. Nevertheless, his argument primarily turns on Japanese Rinzai Zen. When Linji Chan Buddhism is mentioned regarding ritual, the catechistic feature of *gong’an* practice, where regular and repetitive exchange of questions and answers (Jp. *dokusan*) between the master and student is central particularly in contexts of Japanese Rinzai, commonly comes to the fore. In my discussion, however, Kanhua meditation needs to be distinguished from such *gong’an* Chan mainly for two reasons: first, in Kanhua Chan, a single *huatou*, the critical phrase of a *gong’an*, is supposed to suffice for the practice; second, regular interviews with a master to check up students’ answer to the master’s questions on each *gong’an* would, therefore, not be necessary in Kanhua Chan. Stephenson, *Kōan as Ritual*, 475 and 477-480.

### 3 *Yiqing* in existing studies

To a mind familiar to Indian Buddhist context, the fact that ‘doubt’ (the common translation of the term) is so central in a Buddhist meditative method might look quite odd for two reasons. First, it is because doubt (Sk. *vicikitsā*) is in general obstruction to meditation practice in Indian Buddhism, of which the understanding is still prevalent in the Chan Buddhism before Kanhua Chan. Second, doubt in Kanhua Chan is a prerequisite essential that must arise in the mind where conceptualization is ceased whereas Indian Buddhist doubt partakes of intellectual characteristics. Doubt in Indian Buddhism, according to Buswell, namely appears as “a debilitation of the intellect”<sup>50</sup> without “an affective dimension”.<sup>51</sup> The skeptical consciousness caused by doubt disturbs the mind to maintain sustained thought, and therefore, it must be driven out along with ‘sensual desire’, ‘ill-will’, ‘sloth and torpor’, and ‘restless and worry’ before entering into meditation.<sup>52</sup> *Yiqing* in Kanhua Chan texts is, however, presented to involve rather affective, emotional, and physical dimensions. In this chapter, I will examine how this unique concept in the Chinese Buddhist tradition is expressed by scholars of Chan Buddhism.

Before introducing how other scholars mention *yiqing*, I will shortly discuss the semantic of it. While *yi* which is widely used in the literature of Buddhist in general has a connotation of doubt, the meaning of *yiqing* as the new concept in Kanhua Chan is not clearly given in any texts. Thus, let us approach the term with looking into the semantic of *qing*. First, I found that Chad Hansen’s thesis on the term *qing* provides a critical perspective on this character. Attributing the tendency that *qing* has been interpreted to mean ‘emotions, affections, feelings, and desires’ in the Western academic world to the preconception of “the

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50 Robert E. Buswell, “The Transformation of Doubt (Yiqing 疑情) in Chinese Buddhist Meditation” in *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Halvor Eifring (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 227.

51 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 227.

52 The five hindrances to eliminate before entering into a meditative state in Indian Buddhism are: ‘sensual desire obstructing one-pointedness of mind (*ekāgratā*), ill-will obstructing rapture (*prīti*), sloth and torpor obstructing applied thought (*vitarka*), restless and worry obstructing ease (*sukha*), and doubt obstructing sustained thought (*vicāra*)’. Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 228.

reason/emotion opposition”,<sup>53</sup> Hansen argues that the pre-Buddhist Chinese folk psychology does not draw a line between cognitive and affective states.<sup>54</sup> It is because “a single faculty/organ, the *xin* (heart-mind) guides action rather than separate faculties of heart and mind” in the Chinese psychology, contrarily to the Indo-European understanding of mind.<sup>55</sup> Noting this point, I again apply Christoph Anderl’s analysis of *qing* in the context of Chan Buddhism to *yiqing*. *Qing*<sup>56</sup> in Chinese Buddhist texts, according to Anderl, “refers to the activities of the unenlightened mind”<sup>57</sup> as “*secondary mental processes* which are generated through contact with the external objects”.<sup>58</sup> Besides, there are occasions where the term is used as synonym for *xin* meaning ‘mind’ as “*the cardinal term*” in Chan literature,<sup>59</sup> but rarely in a positive sense such as “the true and perfected mind”.<sup>60</sup> Drawing on these explanations, thus, we can say that *qing* has a connotation as “mind/state of mind”<sup>61</sup> which covers cognitive and affective elements of human psychology, and such connotation is also in line with Halvor Eifring’s suggestion of the meaning of *qing* as “activities of the unenlightened mind”.<sup>62</sup>

Rendering the term as doubt, Stephen Heine mentions it as a feeling or “sense of profound instability and [spiritual] uncertainty”<sup>63</sup> based on the *gong’ans* mostly from a collection of *gong’ans* called *the Gateless Gate*. In his explanation, doubt is akin to existential questions about finiteness of human life and existence, and an element that is directly/inversely proportional to faith in Buddha-nature – namely, Ultimate Sacred Postulates (Rappaport). Referring to angst created between self and world (Kierkegaard), and torment caused by

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<sup>53</sup> Chad Hansen “Qing (Emotions) 情 in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought” in *Emotions in Asian Thought : a Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, ed. Joel Marks, Roger T. Ames, and Robert C. Solomon (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 183.

<sup>54</sup> Hansen, *Qing*, 183.

<sup>55</sup> Hansen, *Qing*, 183.

<sup>56</sup> One of the most common usages of *qing* in Chinese Buddhist texts is in the term *youqing* (literally translated as “possessing sensibility” by Buswell) referring to ‘sentient being (Sk. sattva)’. Buswell, *Sensation of Doubt*, 70.

<sup>57</sup> Christoph Anderl, “The Sementics of Qíng 情 in Chán Buddhist Chinese” in *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 149. His analysis is based on the 10th-century historical Chan text, *Zutang ji* which is the first historical text that mentions Linji.

<sup>58</sup> Anderl, *Sementics of Qing*, 149.

<sup>59</sup> Anderl, *Sementics of Qing*, 164.

<sup>60</sup> Anderl, *Sementics of Qing*, 165.

<sup>61</sup> Anderl, *Sementics of Qing*, 163.

<sup>62</sup> Halvor Eifring, “Introduction: Emotions and the Conceptual History of Qíng 情” in *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 20.

<sup>63</sup> Steven Heine, *Zen Koans* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 99.

alienation (Marx and Feuerbach),<sup>64</sup> he says that such doubt as perplexity is a starting point of one's attempt to find the truth.<sup>65</sup> The journey to "mystical awakening",<sup>66</sup> that is, the koan practice, begins when one confronts the doubt about the *gong'ans*. However, for this textualist scholar, experience of doubt is a disembodied event which "originates and ends through mental capacity"<sup>67</sup> and the somatic and physical states found in the texts of Chan are merely rhetorical expressions.

In the study on Yan Bing,<sup>68</sup> a Chan Buddhist layman of the Southern Song, Alan Gerard Wagner suggests that the tendency that the term *yi* including *yiqing* in Chan Buddhism is universally rendered as 'doubt' in relation to existential crisis and anxiety in English is rooted in "the long history of opposition between "faith" and "doubt" in the Christian tradition,<sup>69</sup> especially with regard to questions of highest importance (e.g., our destiny after death)".<sup>70</sup> He further points out that the term's semantic range covers not only such meaning, which is often implied by scholars who render the term as 'doubt' in relation to Kanhua Chan, but also meanings of "puzzlement", "perplexity", and "uncertainty", etc. According to him, 'puzzlement' and 'perplexity' which connote "a fruitless search for an answer ... to a question"<sup>71</sup> imply "a process of trying to 'figure something out' rationally or cognitively, a process which has been frustrated".<sup>72</sup> 'Uncertainty' is "the most neutral of these terms ... denoting a state of being unsure about something".<sup>73</sup> Acknowledging Wagner's explanation, Jeffrey L. Broughton renders *yi* as "indecision (irresolution, hesitancy, uncertainty, vacillation, wavering, dithering)-and-apprehension (anxiety, nervousness, tension, trepidation, foreboding, the jitters)",<sup>74</sup> and *yiqing* as 'sensation of uncertainty' in his translation of *the Letters of Chan Master Dahui*

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64 Heine, *Zen Koans*, 105.

65 Heine, *Zen Koans*, 104.

66 Heine, *Zen Koans*, 103.

67 Heine, *Zen Koans*, 103.

68 Alan Gerard Wagner, "Practice and Emptiness in the "Discourse Record of Ruru Jushi", Yan Bing (d. 1212), a Chan Buddhist layman of the Southern Song (2008, 62-63)," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2008), ProQuest (AAT 3312614).

69 Wagner exemplifies this with Chadwick's translation, "I heard in the way one hears within the heart, and all doubt left me", of the moment St. Augustine resolves the anguish between free will and natural evil. Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63, Augustine. *Confessions*. trans. Henry Chadwick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 124.

70 Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63.

71 Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63.

72 Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63.

73 Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63.

74 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 32-33.

*Pujue*.<sup>75</sup> The two scholars' renderings which are less definitive and deviated from the reason/emotion dichotomy may be more flexible to cover the complexity of the term. However, our understanding of *yiqing* as the crucial part of the meditation practice remains ambiguous, for the two scholars do not develop further discussion on the issue.

Specified in the context of Dahui's Kanhua Chan, Miriam L. Levering's explanation of doubt provides two key points of the concept. 'Doubt' is the common rendering of *yi*, *yixin*, and *yiqing* for her. First, it is hindrances to enlightenment.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, this meaning is in the same vein as the "conventional notion"<sup>77</sup> of doubt before Dahui. Second, "doubts arise when things seem to be going against the desire of"<sup>78</sup> the unenlightened mind, being "connected intimately with fear",<sup>79</sup> and thus to have doubts is in the nature of the unenlightened mind. From this point, she notes, Dahui's creative view that "all doubts are in fact one doubt"<sup>80</sup> started when it arises by means of *huatou* in the meditation. Referring to her on the same understanding, Morten Schlütter describes doubt as "both powerful and dangerous".<sup>81</sup> It is because doubt causes delusion, and therefore, it hampers enlightenment; but concurrently, it is a force that leads to enlightenment in Kanhua chan. Once it arises on a *huatou*, "all doubts about other things should be forgotten"<sup>82</sup> and the moment of enlightenment comes when it vanishes with all other doubts by bursting after growing to a huge ball. His explanation implies that doubt as an impediment is not dissimilar by nature to doubt as a driving force in the meditative practice. As he remarks, "the unenlightened mind will always have doubts",<sup>83</sup> and thus, it would be impossible to get rid of them before or during the meditation even if one believes that doubt is absent in her/his mind for the reason that it is not detected in their consciousness. Seen in this way, we can possibly say that *yiqing*, the essential of Kanhua meditation is related to the effort to confront the impediment of enlightenment by embracing it, instead of trying to overcome it prior to embarking on the meditation.

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75 Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 2017.

76 Miriam L. Levering, "Ch'an Enlightenment for Laymen: Ta-hui and the New Religious Culture of the Sung" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1978), 298.

77 Levering, *Ch'an Enlightenment*, 298.

78 Levering, *Ch'an Enlightenment*, 301.

79 Levering, *Ch'an Enlightenment*, 301.

80 Levering, *Ch'an Enlightenment*, 301.

81 Schlütter, *How Zen*, 109

82 Schlütter, *How Zen*, 109.

83 Schlütter, *How Zen*, 109.

Robert E. Buswell, the distinguished scholar in Korean Buddhism, who was once a monk in a Korean Buddhist monastery, is the only scholar who accounts for *yiqing* by specifying its role in Kanhua meditation. Highlighting doubt's new status in Kanhua Chan, he articulates its role as "the motive force that propels the meditation forward".<sup>84</sup> Pinpointing that the abstruse term 'qing'<sup>85</sup> is never annotated in the original literature of Chan Buddhism, he assures its connotation as: "a palpable, conative sensation that ultimately serves to pervade all of one's thoughts, feelings, emotions and eventually even one's physical body, with the doubt generated through Kanwha practice".<sup>86</sup> Buswell's suggestion is partly based on the semantic aspect of *qing* in Chinese literature.

Drawing mainly on the *Essentials of Chan* by Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1239-1295), Buswell renders the term as 'sensation of doubt'.<sup>87</sup> He states that "the existential doubt created through investigating the *huatou* becomes the locus around which all the other doubts experienced in life coalesce". Such "coalescence" of doubt termed as *great doubt (dayiqing)* by Gaofeng, is so overwhelming that it "creates intense pressure on the meditator's intellectual processes and on his own sense self-identity and self-worth". It yields then *great fury (dafenzhi)* as "the courage necessary to abandon" oneself "seemingly to ultimate disaster: his own personal destruction".<sup>88</sup> Although his explanation illuminates the topic multilaterally, it leaves a question whether such sensation can be separated from 'great fury', one of the three essentials (great faith, great doubt, and great fury)<sup>89</sup> of the meditative practice, in the mind of a meditator. His analysis, that circles within the schematic principle systemized by Gaofeng, of the practitioner's psychology is rather an ideological interpretation that brings up further questions. What does the personal destruction additionally described by him as 'unification of

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<sup>84</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 226; Robert E. Buswell, "The 'Sensation of Doubt' in East Asian Zen Buddhism and Some Parallels with Pāli Accounts of Meditation Practice", *Contemporary Buddhism*, Vol. 19, No.1 (2018), 70.

<sup>85</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 230-231.

<sup>87</sup> Referring *yiqing* to "a constant state of intense questioning of the 'doubt mass', B. Hyun Choo puts forward that "emotionalized and sustained doubt' may be rendered better than a 'sensation of doubt' as a doubt itself is not sensible". Although his article does not deal with the topic more than the suggestion, he has an acceptable point here because modifying 'doubt' with the participles - emotionalized and sustained - can imply that doubt is multifaceted. However, he does not specify on what ground: doubt itself is not sensible; or emotionalized or sensualized doubt differs from doubt as emotion or sensation. B. Hyun Choo, "Tracing the Satipaṭṭhāna in the Korean Ganhwa Seon Tradition: Its Periscope Visibility in the Mindful hwadu Sisimma, 'Sati-Sisimma'." *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland, 2018) 9 (11): 341, 12, n 32.

<sup>88</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 235.

<sup>89</sup> Gaofeng's three essentials are treated more in detail in 4.1.2.

mind/body and oneself/others' mean? Why do the Buddhist monks repeat their meditation retreats even after claiming to have had a small and great breakthrough experience?

## 4 Theories and methods

I explore Ganhwa Seon as ritual mainly drawing on a performative approach to ritual. When ritual is considered rigid and fixed sets of actions, examining the relevant texts, history, and doctrine is more important to interpret the underlying meanings, symbols, and cultural values of the ritual. However, Ganhwa Seon retreat is a living ritual that is actively practiced by living individuals. The meditation is what the Seon monastics ‘do’ corporeally, not just ‘understand’ cerebrally what they read and are taught. Therefore, what the performers do can best present the ritual as “embodied ‘doing’”.<sup>90</sup> This approach thus empowers the practitioners, who put the ritual script into action, as the “ultimate source of ritual authority”<sup>91</sup> more than anyone else like “ethnographer or theorist.”<sup>92</sup>

What the practitioners do at the meditation hall during the retreats can appear invariant, and thus impersonal in the sense that “ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be”.<sup>93</sup> However, ritual only comes into existence while being performed by an individual as an embodied being. As Robert H. Sharf analogizes it with music which “resists any and all attempts to translate its content into another medium”,<sup>94</sup> in ritual “form and content are inseparable”.<sup>95</sup> Although a musical score (form) displays what the music (content) is like and how it must be played, the score per se is not the music. When the music is played, and thus sensed by the performer or the audience, we can finally say that it is out there in the space where it is played and even inside the person who is sensing it. Not only how it is performed, expressed, and sounded, but also how it is sensed and what it arouses would hardly be the

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<sup>90</sup> Axel Michaels and William S. Sax explains: “a performative approach to religion thus emphasizes the embodied ‘doing’ of religion in particular contexts, and gives rather less attention to religious belief, doctrine, and history. It also downplays traditional mind/body and thought/action dichotomies. Performative acts in religions are therefore mostly staged, mediatized (scripted, liturgical), embodied, and public events.” Axel Michaels and William S. Sax explains, “Performance” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2016), 305. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198729570.013.21

<sup>91</sup> Robert H. Sharf, “Ritual”, in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 251.

<sup>92</sup> Sharf, *Ritual*, 251.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 63.

<sup>94</sup> Sharf, *Ritual*, 251.

<sup>95</sup> Sharf, *Ritual*, 251.

same to any individual and any time it is played. Ganhwa meditation is not any different. The texts that instruct the meditation is essential in order to enact and master the meditation, but the meditation is valid and existing to the practitioner or the audience, namely, masters and fellow practitioners only while being conducted.

Doing ritual leads to ‘knowing’. The performers gain various knowledge, from about how to perform the ritual properly to about themselves and the world through repeatedly performing the ritual. Thus, ritual serves to gain and transmit knowledge. I examine this perspective based on Theodore W. Jennings’ thesis on ‘ritual knowledge’.<sup>96</sup> Jennings suggests that performing ritual has ‘noetic functions’ in terms of three aspects. The first to mention is that ritual performance is a ‘display’ of the ritual in which both the performers and observers who “see, approve, understand, recognize the ritual action”<sup>97</sup> are involved. In Ganhwa Seon, the observers are the master or the monitor practitioner<sup>98</sup> in the meditation hall and other meditators who are the performers at the same time. While supervising the participants or meditating, the observers not only witness what is happening, but also learn about the meditation – e.g., how to do, what is right, and sometimes who is doing what and how. Secondly, ritual is a means “to transmit knowledge”. Ganhwa meditation is a means to get enlightened, and enlightenment is the ultimate realization of Buddhist teachings. Whether the realization comes true or not, doing the meditation entails getting to learn how to perceive things and so how to live as a Seon practitioner. Thus, thirdly, ritual is “a way of gaining knowledge”. Jennings explains this aspect as “a mode of inquiry and of discovery”<sup>99</sup> in the sense that the performer finds new questions and knowledge of the world and self as well as the ritual per se by repeatedly doing it. This aspect is particularly pertinent to Ganhwa Seon in which *yiqing* that has questioning, that is, ‘wanting to know’ quality is central.

I also discuss Grimes’s characteristics of ritual mentioned in section 2.4 in the relevant context. Particularly, the characteristic of ‘*transformative*’ among them is crucially dealt with in line with changes that occur together with ritual knowledge. I use the term ‘transformative’ not in the perspective of mysticism accentuated by the experientialists, but in the sense from a perspective of performative approach, explained by Richard Schechner, that during the

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<sup>96</sup> Theodore W. Jennings, “On Ritual Knowledge”, *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1982), 111-127

<sup>97</sup> Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 113.

<sup>98</sup> The role of a monitor monk in a meditation hall is to admonish the meditators who are “drowsy and lose concentration” with poor postures. The monitor corrects the meditators’ states by hitting their shoulders and back with a bamboo clapper. Gou et al., *Great doubt*, 324. See Appendix.

<sup>99</sup> Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 114.

meditative practice a practitioner as a neophyte undergoes “breaking down”, “rendering” of her/himself “psychophysically malleable”<sup>100</sup> and again “rearrangement” of the deconstructed parts of self.<sup>101</sup>

To investigate what Ganhwa Seon practitioners do, and how and why they do it, I conducted qualitative interviews with nine - eight male and one female - Korean Seon monastic practitioners. Other methods, e.g., participation observation, that requires physical attendance at the scene of the ritual were not considered from the beginning, for the retreats in Buddhist monasteries are exclusively for the monastics. Although the practitioners’ retrospective report about their personal experience cannot be identified as what have happened to them per se, what is performed and going on during the meditation will never be approached without scrutinizing the performers’ stories in the field. My interest is not in whether their experiences are ‘mystical’ or ‘authentic’<sup>102</sup> but in what they ““perceive”, “observe”, “be aware of”, or “be conscious of””<sup>103</sup> through performing the meditation. My focus is, namely, not on extraordinary meditative experiences per se, but on the changes the practitioners have undergone in relation to the experiences. The interviews were done from December 2020 to September 2021 digitally without physical meeting with the respondents due to the travel restrictions under the Covid-19 pandemic. Being in Norway, the most realistic way to find the respondents was through my trustworthy friend, Dr. Young-sun Yang, who is an Indologist working at a Dongguk University in Seoul, Korea where she and I once studied Buddhism together. Three of the respondents then were reached through snowball sampling. Considering that the average ratio of male monastic practitioners to female who participate in the retreats every year is two to one,<sup>104</sup> I had tried to get thirty percent of the interviewees to be female, but I had to appreciate that I could find at least one nun in the very limited possibility of contacting monastic practitioners abroad.

A consent letter with research protocol which was approved by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) were given to the respondents either orally or via emails, and all of them provided verbal consent prior to the interviews. Seven of them said that they could have

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<sup>100</sup> Richard Schechner, “Magnitudes of Performance”, in *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 41.  
<sup>101</sup> Schechner, *Magnitudes of*, 41.

<sup>102</sup> Robert H. Sharf, “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience”, *Numen*, Vol. 42 (1995), 229.

<sup>103</sup> Robert H. Sharf, “Experience” in *Critical Term of Religion*, ed. Marc C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 104.

<sup>104</sup> See n. 31.

second interview if necessary, and I did two to four additional interviews with five among them. I gave them questions based on four categories that I made beforehand: motivation; meditation method they learned and used; what happened during the retreats; and changes they noticed during and after the retreats. More open questions under these themes and additional spontaneous questions were given during the interviews. The duration of each interview was between fifty to sixty minutes. Our conversations were first recorded in a password-protected database in my personal computer. It was then transcribed with pseudonyms. Information that could reveal the respondents' identity such as their masters' name, the temple or meditation centers they had been engaged in, hometowns, names of the schools they went to, etc. were excluded in the transcription. After that, the transcription was analyzed using qualitative content analysis method. The audio files will be deleted together with the transcription when this thesis is completed. The themes sorted out at the final stage of the analysis will be discussed in the sections of chapter 6.

Before the interviews with the nine monastics, I was skeptical about how much they would be willing to open themselves, because it is extremely rare to find any personal stories of ordinary Seon monastic practitioners except for in official biographies of renowned masters. A main reason for that would be in Buddhism to talk about their practice is regarded as a taboo which in some cases can violate the precepts.<sup>105</sup> Before giving me consent to the interviews, some of them asked me about my understanding of Ganhwa Seon and *yiqing*. Five of them particularly were concerned about my empirical limit of empathizing their experience as an outsider who has just temporally practiced different types of Buddhist meditation but not Ganhwa Seon with a *huatou*. Once the interviews began, however, my respondents attended briskly to the conversations, although some of them at some point seemed to hesitate to tell personal stories while some of them were much more open to talk about their childhood and what happened before they joined the sangha. Nevertheless, all of them were careful about recounting what they experienced while performing the meditation. I fully admitted to the point and expressed that I would not attempt to judge their stories' meanings or values, but to convey them as objectively as possible in my thesis. However, I am aware of that research

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<sup>105</sup> According to Buswell, "one of the 250 precepts that monks accept upon their full ordination forbids them from discussing with anyone other than their fellow monks the experiences achieved through their meditation; violation of this precept is an offense demanding expiation. And if a monk should falsely claim to have achieved spiritual powers through his practice when he has not, he would be subject to permanent expulsion from the order." Robert E. Buswell, *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10.

is much more complicated work than recording conversations, for it is established based on the researcher's interest, knowledge, and intuition. Besides, subjectivity intervenes in creating data from giving questions that may influence many factors such as the respondents' answers and analysis of the interview contents. In addition, even the interview quotations that I chose to insert in my discussion in order to present the respondents' voice directly are already secondary texts in the sense that it is my English translation of the original interviews which were conducted in Korean although I tried my best to translate the nuances and details of the conversations. While working on this study, therefore, I have kept the promise in mind that I would share my completed thesis with the respondents for their validation.

Prior to dealing with the empirical part of the research, I investigate how the primary sources describe the meditation with a focus on *yiqing* for two reasons: first, it is because the primary sources I selected serve as the prescription of the Ganhwa Seon as a ritual. Even though what the practitioners do during the meditation can look like just sitting in the way prescribed in any instruction books of Ganhwa Seon, what they must enact is more than a physical matter. Second, thus the descriptions of the meditation in the original texts can provide us a larger picture of how to do the meditation and what is like to do it, particularly regarding *yiqing* such as what *yiqing* is and how to generate it. As the Chinese sources, *the Letters of Chan Master Dahui Pujue* (hereafter *Letters of Dahui*) of the founder of Kanhua Chan Dahui Zonggao and *the Essentials of Chan* (hereafter *Chanyo*) of Gaofeng Yuanmiao who is addressed as “a major hub of post-Song continental Chan”<sup>106</sup> are firstly chosen. These works which set the foundation of Kanhua Chan are two of the most crucial texts not only in the history of Chan, but also in Korean Seon Buddhism. In *the Fourfold Collection (Sajip)*<sup>107</sup> which has been used as a part of the main curriculum of Korean Seon Buddhism since at least the sixteenth to seventeenth century,<sup>108</sup> they are the key texts that teach how to perform the meditation. The other Chinese Chan master I chose to refer to is Mengshan Deyi (1231-1308?). As a contemporary of Gaofeng, Mengshan is never a less influential Chinese Chan figure than Dahui and Gaofeng in Korean Seon Buddhism. Although his works are not included in the Fourfold Collections,<sup>109</sup> *Preceptor Mengshan's Dharma Talks* (hereafter

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<sup>106</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 44.

<sup>107</sup> The other two are: Guifeng Zongmi's (780–841) *Chan Preface* and Jinul's *Excerpts from the Dharma Collection and Special Practice Record with Personal Notes*.

<sup>108</sup> The importance of the collection which was already stressed by Hyujeong (1520-1604) has steadily stayed throughout the reforms.

<sup>109</sup> Referring to Suk-Hyun Kim, Uri Kaplan remarks that Mengshan's “influence withered after it was Gaofeng and not himself who received official Linji transmission in 1288”. However, his influence is deeply rooted both

*Mengshan's Talks*)<sup>110</sup> containing the essence of his teachings is a must-read to Korean Seon monastics. In the West, however, he has not been a main scholarly subject yet. The fact that *Mengshan's Talks* has been widely preserved with approximately twenty editions<sup>111</sup> only in Korea<sup>112</sup> not in China and Japan, gives us a clue to why he has rarely drawn western scholarly attention. Nevertheless, in Yunqi Zhuhong (1535–1615)'s *the Chan Whip Anthology* a section (*Chan Master Mengshan Deyi Instructs the Sangha*) is dedicated to an autobiographical narrative about his endeavor for enlightenment.<sup>113</sup> I use the two primary texts, *Mengshan's Talks* and *the Chan Whip*, to discuss Mengshan's teaching. These Chinese texts written hundreds of years ago in China are still pertinent sources as main references in Korean Seon curriculums.

To inquire how *yiqing* is taught in contemporary Korean Seon Buddhism, I look into contemporary Seon masters' teachings as well. Among many great teachers, Songdam (1929-present) and Seongcheol (1912-1933) are chosen for three reasons: firstly, they are indubitably two of the most eminent and revered masters in South Korea; secondly, my interview respondents mentioned them in common as the most influential masters to them; and thus lastly, their names are mentioned in my discussion of the interviews in chapter 6. Distinctively from other great masters, Songdam has not published any books, but we can find his sermons originally given orally and then turned into a written form at the website of the Seon center where he has been guiding Ganhwa Seon since 1975. In Addition to it, I refer to his sermons on Youtube provided by the center. There are considerable materials about Seongcheol written by not only himself, but also his students and scholars after his death. I

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in Korean Seon texts and in modern and contemporary masters' teachings. Kaplan, *Transforming Orthodoxies*, 48. Suk-Hyun Kim, "Gobong hwasang Seonyo yeon-gu [Research on Gaofeng's *The Essentials of Chan*]" PhD diss., Dongguk University, 2013, 108.

110 Broughton raises a possibility that the names in three (sections 6, 8, and 9) of the eleven sections of *Preceptor Mengshan's Dharma talks* are Korean. Besides, two sections contain Korean Seon masters' talks. For more information, see Jeffery Broughton, *Core Texts of the Sōn Approach: A Compendium of Korean Sōn (Chan) Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2021), 37-43.

111 Eleven versions of woodprint, and eight versions of vernacular Korean (Hangul) translation-explication from the Joseon dynasty have been found in Korea. Hyung-Rok Kim, *Mongsan deogiwa goryeo hugi Ganhwa Seonsasang yeon-gu* [A Study of Mengshan Deyi's Seon and the late Goryeo Dynasty] (Seoul: Myeongasang Sangdam Yeon-guwon, 2009), 201.

112 He influenced Korean Seon Buddhism through not only his works, but also direct communication with monks and laymen from Korea (Goryeo) who visited him or exchanged letters with him. According to Hyung-Rok Kim (2009, 20), he is the Chinese Chan master whose works were published most in Korea up to the Joseon dynasty in Korean Buddhist history. *Mengshan's Record* was published fourteen times until the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592. His edition of *Platform Sutra* was also the most published and used version of *Platform Sutra* in the history. Hyung-Rok Kim, *Mongsan Deogiwa*, 20

113 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 78-84.

refer to some of them. One important secondary source of both masters is Joo's paper<sup>114</sup> on contemporary Seon masters. The direct quotations from the masters' talks that I use are his English translation given in the paper.

Admittedly, my discussion on the masters' teachings is inevitably limited and selective, for my focus is on *yiqing*. Since to examine them deeper and broader would require work for another thesis, I try not to include elements for which to extend the scope of discussion is necessary. When dealing with the Chinese primary sources, I read both translations and the original texts in Chinese in principle. When I refer to them in my discussion, however, the translated versions either in English or Korean are used as the references. It is because by not providing my own English translation of the original Chinese texts, I tried to avoid conducting too sensitive philological tasks which are extremely time consuming as well as vulnerable to judgement on accuracy and reliability. Thus, all direct quotations inserted in this thesis are also from English translations by other scholars.

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114 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*.

## 5 *Yiqing* in primary sources

In this chapter, I investigate how *yiqing* is presented in the primary texts both in Chinese Kanhua Chan and Korean Ganwha Seon. What is discussed in this chapter is an attempt not only to examine the canonical presentation of the topic, but also to provide the background knowledge to understand the contents of my interviews with the practitioners in Chapter 6. This chapter consists of four sections. The first three sections look into *yiqing* in the teachings of three Chinese Chan masters - Dahui Zonggao (1091-1157), Gaofeng Yuanmiao (1239-1295), and Mengshan Deyi (1231-1308?), who probably influenced Korean Ganwha Seon the most.<sup>115</sup> Dahui, the establisher of Kanhua Chan, did not talk about *yiqing* systematically. Besides, since *yiqing* appears only three times in *Letters of Dahui* – nevertheless, the fact that the term is interchangeably used with *yi* provides us possibility to infer more about *yiqing*. Gaofeng, on the other hand, presented the role of *yiqing* far more strongly and repeatedly than Dahui – or the most systematically<sup>116</sup> in the history of Kanhua Chan – employing not only the frame of three essentials: great faith, great fury, and great doubt, but also the term ‘*yidan*’. Mengshan also emphasized essential elements of the practice pivoting on *yiqing*, but he did not systemize them as Gaofeng did. However, both masters from the Yuan dynasty described *yidan* as the advanced state of *yiqing* exemplifying it with their own experiences. The last section introduces the teachings of two contemporary Korean Ganwha Seon masters who were mentioned as the most important teachers by the Seon practitioners, the participants of my research.

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<sup>115</sup> About the reason why these three were chosen as the Chinese primary sources, see Chapter 4.

<sup>116</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 233.

## 5.1 Dahui Zonggao

In *Letters of Dahui*, *yiqing*<sup>117</sup> appears as something that must be completely extinguished to reach enlightenment. However, *yiqing* does not merely denote something negative and obstructive to enlightenment. In this sub-chapter, I will discuss *yiqing* in Dahui's Kanhua Chan with three points.

Firstly, *yiqing* is related to one's unenlightened state. Let us start with the following passages:

...you will just practice at the point where *yiqing*<sup>118</sup> is not yet smashed ...

This one word (*no*)<sup>119</sup> is a sword for smashing the doubt<sup>120</sup>-mind (*yixin*) of samsara<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Referring to Jundo Ogisu, Levering argues that “on the subject of doubt, Ta-hui [Dahui] developed a line of thought that may have begun with Wu-tsu Fa-yen [Wuzu Fayen (1024-1104)]”. However, the excerpt suggested by Ogisu Jundo as Wuzu Fayen's statement does not particularly deal with doubt. Ding-hwa Evelyn Hsieh raises the possibility that the famous passage “not having doubt for words and phrases is a great illness” attributed to his teacher Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135) in Dahui's work is his “deliberate attempt to portray his idea as deriving from the orthodox transmission of Ch'an teaching through his teacher, Yuan-wu”. Buswell also views that Yuanwu “still treats the sensation of doubt as something harmful to faith, which should be diligently avoided ... especially so in the course of *gong'an* investigation”. Discussing this matter by mentioning Levering and Hsieh, Wagner suggests that “Dahui's conception of *yi*” may have been inspired by Yuanwu's dharma brother, Foyan Qingyuan (1067-1120). In the *Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Patriarch Huineng of which the earliest extant version was written in 780, however, we can find a passage which seems to be quite relevant to doubt's positive function. In John R. McRae's translation of a composition of Yuan Dynasty, it reads:

If you want to teach others,  
You must have expedient means yourself.  
Do not make them destroy their doubts.  
This is what allows the self-nature to become manifest.

Philip Yampolsky in his work on the Dunhuang version rectifies the last line to “Do not allow him to have doubts” from “Do not destroy his doubts for him” for the reason that the latter is “out of context.” Jundo Ogisu, “大慧禪師の碧巖集燒毀 [Dahui's incineration of *The Blue Cliff Record*]”, *Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu*, XI, 1 (1963), 115-118. Ding-hwa Evelyn Hsieh, “Yuan-wu K'o-chin's (1063-1135) Teaching of Ch'an *Kung-an* Practice: A Transition from the Literary Study of Ch'an *Kung-an* to the Practical *K'an-hua* Ch'an.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 17, 1 (1994), 89. Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 232. Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 65-68. Hui-neng, *the platform sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. John R. McRae (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation & Research, 2000), 36. Hui-neng, *the platform sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. Philip Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 161, n 196.

<sup>118</sup> In this sub-chapter, I changed Broughton (2017)'s rendering of *yiqing* ‘the sensation of uncertainty’ into *yiqing*.

<sup>119</sup> ‘[wu 無]’ in the original rendering by Broughton.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Uncertainty’ is Broughton's original rendering of ‘*yi*’. I changed it to ‘doubt’.

<sup>121</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 123-124. The round brackets are mine.

When *yiqing* is not smashed, birth-death goes on and on and on. If *yiqing* is smashed, then the mind of samsara [lit., “birth-death”] is cut off.<sup>122</sup>

In the first passage, *yiqing* is expressed as equivalent to “the doubt-mind (*yixin*) of samsara”<sup>123</sup>. Samsara (Sk. *samsāra*) is “the cycle of repeated birth and death that individuals undergo until they attain”<sup>124</sup> enlightenment. The next passage states that samsara continues because of *yiqing*, and thus *yiqing* can be interpreted as the cause of the cyclic rebirth. Then, *yiqing* is, namely, ignorance (Sk. *avidyā*) which is the main origin of samsara in Buddhism.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the passages above say that the rebirth cycle of embodied sentient beings derived from *yiqing* can solely be cut by destroying *yiqing*. However, what wanders in the cycle due to ignorance is cognitions as well which constantly appear (birth) and disappear (death) in the unenlightened mind of a practitioner. Seen in this way, *yiqing* is the state of the unenlightened mind per se as well as the cause of the ignorant state of the mind.

Translating the same phrase as “doubt or doubt-mind(*yixin*) of birth and death”, on the other hand, provides another possibility to interpret *yiqing*. Birth and death (C. *shengsi*; 生死), the term translated as ‘samsara’ above, are the most fundamental source of human suffering. Attachment to and fear for birth and death can be regarded as the foundation of all the existential problems that human beings face. Thus, birth and death can represent what has questions and wants to know about. ‘Not knowing (Sk. *avidyā*)’ is the natural state of the unenlightened mind. It is because one who has not yet realized the state of a Buddha has always doubts, whereas Buddhas have no doubts about anything by virtue of ‘knowing’ or ultimate wisdom (Sk. *prajñā*). In both translations, therefore, ‘not knowing’ is the nature of *yiqing* which belongs to the unenlightened mind.

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122 Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 194.

123 The original Chinese phrase (C. *shengsi yixin*; 生死疑心) is ‘birth (C. *sheng*; 生)-death (C. *si*; 死)-doubt (C. *yi*; 疑)-mind (C. *xin*; 心)’. Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 337.

124 Keown, “Samsāra” in *Dictionary of Buddhism*. <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-1570?rskey=BnzuR2&result=5>

125 In early Buddhism, one can only reach the state of enlightenment, and thus escape from the wheel of samsara by getting true knowledge obtained through meditation (Sk. *dhyāna*). In Mahāyāna Buddhism, one can accomplish enlightenment by breaking ignorance with the true insight of Emptiness (Sk. *sūnyatā*). However, ignorance is never a crucial element in any Indian Buddhist meditative practice. See Tilmann Vetter, *The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism* (Leiden: EJ. Brill, 1988), XXI-XXII.

The second point is that *yiqing* has a questioning – that is, ‘wanting to know’ - nature. Unless one confronts her/his ignorant state and recognizes it as a problem, enlightenment cannot be pursued. One should, namely, have doubts or questions about her/his problematic reality. The following passage is related to such a characteristic of *yiqing*:

... great bodhisattvas raise questions concerning their individual doubts (*yi*), and Śākyamuni takes those doubts into account. He analyzes them clearly one by one, and, for the most part, the bodhisattvas understand. The *huatou* that I previously allocated you is taken from among these (i.e., bodhisattvas’ questions).<sup>126</sup>

The last sentence of this passage connects the individual doubts with *yiqing* which is supposed to be engendered by a *huatou* in Kanhua Chan. In other words, *yiqing* triggered by a *huatou* is combined with one’s (and bodhisattvas’) individual doubts. Dahui’s remark “the thousands upon thousands of instances of *doubt* are just the “single *doubt*”<sup>127</sup> can be understood in the same sense. Thus, one’s own doubts about anything such as birth, death, patriarchs, or buddhas are not different from *yiqing* in the meditation. In the place *yiqing* bursts, one’s own doubts are together extinguished, of which the moment is only fulfilled by her/himself.<sup>128</sup>

Lastly, *yiqing* is the driving force in Dahui’s Kanhua Chan because one’s enlightenment is achieved only through working on *yiqing*. Let us look into this point with Dahui’s instructive talks about the meditative method. The most told *huatou* by Dahui is “no” from the *gong’an* of Zhaozhou.<sup>129</sup>

Whether you are walking or standing, sitting or lying down, you must not for a moment cease [to hold this ‘no(wu)’ in your mind]. When deluded thoughts arise, you must also not suppress them with your mind. Only just hold up this *huatou* [‘no(wú)’]. When you want to meditate and you begin to feel dull and muddled, you must muster all your energies and hold up this word. Then suddenly you will be like the old blind

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<sup>126</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 256. My round brackets.

<sup>127</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 196.

<sup>128</sup> According to Broughton, Dahui emphasizes that “the practitioner or student cannot get awakening from anybody else. It must be accomplished on one’s own. *Letters of Dahui* speaks often of self- confidence, awakening on one’s own, and so forth”. Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 29.

<sup>129</sup> For the *gong’an*’s full story, see p.11 in section 2.1.

woman who blows [so diligently] at the fire that her eyebrows and lashes are burned right off.<sup>130</sup>

The passage above demonstrates a striking feature of Kanhua Chan: the meditation is an active and zealous practice. This feature that is associated with *yiqing* is first related to the fact that the meditation is performed while not only sitting but also “walking or standing, sitting or lying down”. Although Dahui accepted sitting meditation as the most ‘practical’ way,<sup>131</sup> sitting is just “one instance of providing medicine in accordance with”<sup>132</sup> one’s problems for him. To continue the practice in the midst of doing any daily actions became a standard instruction in the meditative tradition since Dahui.<sup>133</sup> Dahui deprecated being attached to sitting in a silent place referring it to becoming “entrenched in the ghostly cave”.<sup>134</sup> Such criticism was in fact directly aimed to the silent illumination (*mozhao*) meditation of the Caodong tradition, because in Caodong’s passive meditation, recognized by Dahui as sitting still until the Buddha-nature gets naturally unveiled in complete tranquility of one’s mind, was contrary to his Kanhua Chan. “To muster one’s all energies” is imperative in Dahui’s method, which is also contrary to sitting passively in quietude. The striving is so zealous that it is depicted as “the old blind woman who blows [so diligently] at the fire that her eyebrows and lashes are burned right off”. Mustering the energies is not for an unrealizable purpose such as to refrain constant arising of “deluded thoughts”. Instead, the energies are for smashing *yiqing* using the *huatou* - the means that triggers *yiqing* on it, but also the weapon to smash the *yiqing*. Dahui talks about further what it is like to work on *yiqing* as follows:

The thousands upon thousands of instances of *doubt* (*yi*)<sup>135</sup> are just the “single *doubt*.” When [the single] *doubt* about the *huatou* is smashed, the thousands upon thousands of instances of *doubt* are smashed at the very same time. If [the single *doubt* about] the

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<sup>130</sup> Schlütter, *How Zen*, 107-108.

<sup>131</sup> Schlütter, *Kànhuà Meditation*, 170.

<sup>132</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 73.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Practice in the midst of action (C. dong-zhong-gongfu; 動中工夫, Kr. dong-jung-gongbu)’ is especially emphasized in Korean Ganhwa Seon. In Chapter 6, we will see how it is understood by the practitioners in relation to *yiqing*.

<sup>134</sup> Schlütter, *How Zen*, 116.

<sup>135</sup> *Doubt* in italic here is ‘uncertainty’ and *huatou* is ‘cue’ in Broughton’s original rendering.

*huatou* isn't smashed, then upon [and only upon the *huatou*] keep pressing hard with it [exclusively] ... Your mind will have nowhere to go — “the mouse will enter the ox's horn” [i.e., all tricky maneuvers will be severed], and then you will be “felled” [like a giant tree, i.e., you will emit the *Aah!*]<sup>136</sup>

According to Broughton, ‘keep pressing hard’ is “a common exhortation”<sup>137</sup> urging to ‘muster one's all energy’ to smash *yiqing* in *Letters of Dahui*. What one must press hard upon by means of the *huatou* is *yiqing*.<sup>138</sup> One must devote all her/his energies to *yiqing*, but neither “in a rush” nor ‘slackly’ each of which brings about ‘restlessness’ and ‘torpor’ respectively.<sup>139</sup> As the result, one's mind has nowhere to go but is stuck in a dead end analogized as ‘the ox's horn’. Then, explosion of the doubt, ‘being felled like a giant tree’, a breakthrough occurs. What is important here is that even if one succeeds in a complete absorption (Sk. *dhyāna*) on the *huatou*, she/he can never accomplish enlightenment without breaking *yiqing*. The state of complete absorption, which can also be attained through the silent illumination meditation of Caodong, is of no use in Kanhua Chan unless it is fully charged with *yiqing*. Bringing on the tricky state of quandary in the dead end, *yiqing* hence serves as the powerful and active force that leads to enlightenment.

This force of the practice is differentiated from one's previous doubts such as about Buddhist teachings or “troublesome defilements of daily activities”<sup>140</sup>. Until all doubts become the single doubt, one must focus on the *yiqing* aroused by the *huatou* during the meditation. Dahui articulated that to link up the *yiqing* consciously with other doubts while meditating is a malady which involves conceptualization and reasoning.

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136 Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 196. My round brackets.

137 Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 33.

138 Discussing this phrase, Broughton uses the expression the “‘*huatou*-uncertainty (yi)’ mass” which implies that *huatou* and *yiqing* fuse into a ‘mass’ at some point when one ‘keeps pressing hard’. Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 33. This state of being fused into a mass is not directly described in *Letters of Dahui*.

139 Dahui says, “... you shouldn't be in a rush. If you're in a rush, then you will be restlessly moving (C. *zaodong*; 躁動). You shouldn't be slack either. If you're slack, you will be gloomy and dark [i.e., in torpor] (C. *hundān*; 昏怛).” Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 280.

140 Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 189.

## 5.2 Gaofeng Yuanmiao

The foremost reason why Gaofeng's influence is so profound in his subsequent Kanhua traditions lies in his systematic explanation regarding the meditation method. In *The Essentials of Chan*, the most renowned work by Gaofeng, he introduced three essentials of the meditation. The three consists of: *great faith* (C. *daxin'gen*); *great fury* (C. *dafenzhi*); and *great doubt* (C. *dayiqing*, i.e., *great yiqing*). Using such typology, he allocated formal status of essential to faith and persistent zeal which were also mentioned by Dahui and masters before Dahui albeit not in a schematic way. Nevertheless, the most stress was dedicated to *dayiqing* throughout the work,<sup>141</sup> since *yiqing* is of prime importance. A key point to pay attention to in his teaching of *yiqing* is that he used a term, *yidan* generally translated into English as *ball of doubt* or *doubt mass* to highlight the advanced state of *yiqing*. In this subchapter, I will first discuss the three essentials mainly drawing on Buswell's explanation. Thereafter, the concept of *yidan* will be dealt with to examine *yiqing* in Gaofeng's teaching.

Gaofeng addresses three essentials as follows:

If we're speaking about authentic Chan<sup>142</sup> contemplation, there have to be three essentials. The first essential is to have the faculty of great faith: This Matter should be so patently obvious that it is just as if you are leaning against Mt. Sumeru. The second essential is to have great fury, which is just as if you've come across the villain who murdered your father and right then and there you want to cut him in half with a single strike of your sword. The third essential is to have the sensation of great doubt (*great yiqing*), which is just as if you've done a heinous act in secret and are about to be exposed.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> According to Suk-Hyun Kim, thirteen sections out of twenty-nine sections in *the Essential of Chan* deal with *yiqing*, while nine with faith and five with fury. Suk-Hyun Kim, "Ganhwasamyo-ui yugijeok gwangye-ae daehan gochal – gobonghwasangseonyo-rl jungshimeuro [An Investigation of the Close Relationship among three essentials of Kanhua Chan: Based on the Chan Essentials]", *Hanguk Seonhak* [Journal of Korean Seon Studies], 27 (2010), 162.

<sup>142</sup> I changed "Sŏn" in Buswell's original rendering to "Chan".

<sup>143</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 233-234.

The passage firstly says that a practitioner must have ‘great faith’ so firmly as if one is leaning against “the axis mundi of the world”<sup>144</sup> (Mt. Sumeru) in Buddhism. Buswell identifies what one must have faith in with Buddha-nature. The goal of Chan Buddhist practices is, in principle, not to ‘obtain’ enlightenment, but to resolve the contradiction between the innate nature of enlightenment and the unenlightened reality. Thus, to have the faith is “to accept the fact”<sup>145</sup> that one already has the enlightened nature, and the faith is “the catalyst”<sup>146</sup> for the change of discarding the false view that one is unenlightened. In this sense, Buswell views that Gaofeng raised the statue of faith, which was an ancillary element before him in Chan Buddhism, to “a principal catalyst for awakening”.<sup>147</sup>

Buswell interprets again the “natural tension between faith...and doubt”<sup>148</sup> as the true catalyst for awakening. He explains that doubt is generated from the awareness of the contradiction between Buddha-nature and one’s ignorant reality in response to the faith. Thus, the greater the faith is, the greater the doubt arises just as Gaofeng said that “when faith is a hundred percent, so too will be doubt”.<sup>149</sup> When the doubt is elicited from a *huatou* which mirrors the moment of a previous patriarch’s enlightenment, it is *yiqing*, the third essential of the practice. Rendering *yiqing* as ‘sensation of doubt’, Buswell describes it to involve “mental stress, existential quandary, and even emotional anxiety”,<sup>150</sup> all of which connote the state of predicament expressed by Gaofeng: “as if you’ve done a heinous act in secret and are about to be exposed”.

The second essential ‘*great fury*’, also translated as *great zeal* or “*great passionate intent*”<sup>151</sup> is a unique concept which is not found in the Chan texts before *Gaofeng*.<sup>152</sup> Buswell interprets the term as “the courage necessary to abandon himself seemingly to ultimate disaster: his own personal destruction”.<sup>153</sup> In other words, it is the courage to push forward the practice in the face of the predicament brought about by great doubt. The term is also addressed by Buswell as “the passion”<sup>154</sup> to persist in the meditative endeavour with

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144 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

145 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

146 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

147 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

148 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 235.

149 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 235.

150 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 235-236.

151 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 233.

152 Suk-Hyun Kim, *Ganhwasamyō-ūi*, 157.

153 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 236.

154 Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 236.

‘urgency’ “as if you’ve come across the villain who murdered your father and right then and there you want to cut him in half with a single strike of your sword”.

Although Buswell’s explains that ‘great fury’ as ‘courage’ and ‘passion’ is aroused by ‘great doubt’, the term ‘*dafenzhi*’ seems to connote more than that. Firstly, it might have the meaning of ‘anger’ or ‘fury’. While Buswell does not approach the Chinese term ‘*dafenzhi*’ semantically, Suk-Hyun Kim<sup>155</sup> points out that ‘*fen* (憤)’ literally the meaning of ‘anger’ or ‘fury’ should not be understood as emotional anger.<sup>156</sup> Instead, Suk-Hyun Kim interprets the term as the spirit of exertion which is “enraged and anguished for not having achieved the goal, but again determined towards the goal”.<sup>157</sup> Such interpretation is in line with both ‘courage’ and ‘passion’ in the sense that all of them are related to the impetus to sustain the meditation practice. However, the meanings of anger and fury can hardly be separated from Suk-Hyun Kim’s interpretation either. Besides, this essential is also recognized rather literally as “furious mind”<sup>158</sup> followed by ‘feeling of guilty about not having awakened yet’ in other sources.<sup>159</sup>

Secondly, Gaofeng’s description of ‘great fury’ consists of two parts: awareness (“you’ve come across the villain”) of a problem (“who murdered your father”); and resolution (“you want to cut him in half with a single strike of your sword”) to solve the problem. Kim, S.’ explanation seems to correspond to them: “enraged and anguished for not having achieved the goal” to the first part; “determined towards the goal” to the second part. The first part is, again, akin to Wagner’s explanation<sup>160</sup> of ‘*yi*’ as: ““puzzlement” and “perplexity,” ... indicate a failure to make sense of something, or a fruitless search for an answer, solution ... to a question, problem, or situation. These words suggest ... a process which has been frustrated.”<sup>161</sup> The recognized problem that engenders feeling of anger, anguish, frustration, etc. here could be not only existential questions about life and death but also the status quo of “not having achieved the goal” (e.g., enlightenment), both of which can function as motives for conducting the practice regardless of successful arousal of *yiqing* on the *huatou*. Seen in this way, we could say that ‘great fury’ connotes the meaning of *yiqing* as the mind that is

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<sup>155</sup> When the Korean names with the surname Kim is referred, I have used written a full name to avoid confusion between the names.

<sup>156</sup> Suk-Hyun Kim, *Ganhwasamyō-ūi*, 157.

<sup>157</sup> Suk-Hyun Kim, *Ganhwasamyō-ūi*, 157.

<sup>158</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt Great Enlightenment: The Tradition and Practice of Ganhwa Seon in Korean Buddhism* (Seoul: Jogye Order Publications, 2014), 172.

<sup>159</sup> Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 172. *Great Doubt* written by Seon masters in South Korea is one of the sources.

<sup>160</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>161</sup> Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 63.

unenlightened (problem) and thus, wants to be enlightened (resolution). Furthermore, to interpret ‘great doubt’ as not mere *yiqing* but ‘great *yiqing*’ aroused during the meditative practice which starts with ‘great fury’ might help us to understand why Gaofeng placed ‘great fury’ before ‘great doubt’.

Then, let us examine Gaofeng’s *yiqing* further. Although Gaofeng put all the essentials equally in the passage above, he clearly spoke about the overriding role of *yiqing* throughout *Essentials of Chan*. When working on the *huatou* ‘no’ which was given by his teacher Xueyan Zuqin (1215?–1287), he did not make any progress for three years even though he strived so zealously without a rest except for when eating twice a day. The cause of the unfruitfulness was absence of *yiqing*. He namely failed in arousing *yiqing* on the *huatou*. Contrarily, one day while asleep during the period of working on the other *huatou* “who is dragging this corpse in here for you?” given by the same teacher, *yiqing* suddenly spurted on another *huatou* “the thousand dharmas return to one; to what does the one return?” which he received from the teacher Duanqiao Miaolun (1201-1261) before Xueyan’s.<sup>162</sup> Gaofeng described his experience of *yiqing* which is far more personal and detailed than Dahui’s as follows:

Unexpectedly in my sleep I began to doubt [the *huatou/huatou*] “the thousand dharmas return to one; to what does the one return?” At that point, the *yiqing*<sup>163</sup> suddenly erupted. I stopped sleeping and forgot about eating. I couldn’t distinguish east from west and couldn’t tell day from night. Whether spreading out my sitting mat or laying out my bowls, whether defecating or urinating— finally whether active or still, whether speaking or silent, everything was just this “to what does the one return?” There wasn’t the slightest extraneous thought. And even if I had wanted to think of something else, I was utterly incapable of doing it. [My mind] was exactly like something nailed or glued: no matter how hard you shook it, it would not move. Even if I was in a dense crowd of people, it was like no one was there. From dawn till dusk, from dusk till dawn, [my mind was] lucid and profound, lofty and imposing, pristine and flawless. One thought seemed to last for ten-thousand years. The sense realms were tranquil and all persons were forgotten. It was as if I were stupid or senseless.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> This story implies that certain *huatous* can be more effectual to a practitioner than others. However, Gaofeng does not talk about why the *huatou* ‘no’ was not valid for him.

<sup>163</sup> In the original rendering by Buswell, *yiqing* is “sensation of doubt”.

<sup>164</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 235-236.

In the passage above, one evident feature of Gaofeng's experience is that the state when *yiqing* was fully aroused is a state of extreme absorption. In psychology, absorption is defined as "the capacity to become focused on the mind's object ... and to allow that focus to increase while diminishing attention to the myriad of everyday distractions".<sup>165</sup> Absorption as mental states is common phenomenon found in the contexts of certain rituals such as prayer<sup>166</sup> and meditation.<sup>167</sup> When a practitioner is deeply absorbed in the ritual performance, she/he does not recognize the world and her/himself<sup>168</sup>, or her/his "sense of time and agency begins to shift"<sup>169</sup> just as Gaofeng felt as if his mind was "nailed or glued" and as if he was "stupid or senseless".

What we need to pay attention to concerning his experience is *yiqing*'s role. Such a state of absorption occurred when *yiqing* finally aroused. *Yiqing* namely gave rise the absorption, and the absorption lasted so long as *yiqing* lasted even while defecating, urinating, speaking, etc. – that is, 'practice in the midst of action' as Dahui stressed. After such state continued for six days, his *yiqing* became exploded, namely, the event of awakening happened "like [a fish or bird suddenly] leaping out of a net".<sup>170</sup> Therefore, we can say that *yiqing* in Gaofeng's case is the essential prerequisite for enlightenment as well as the cause of the occurrence and sustentation of the state of absorption.

However, *yiqing* is not only the cause of the state of absorption, but also appears to be the state per se because one is "fused into oneness with *yiqing*".

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<sup>165</sup> T. M. Luhrmann, Howard Nusbaum, and Ronald Thisted, "The Absorption Hypothesis: Learning to Hear God in Evangelical Christianity", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 112, No. 1 (2010), 75.

<sup>166</sup> Luhrmann, Nusbaum, and Thisted deal with Christian evangelical prayer practice at the Chicago Vineyard church.

<sup>167</sup> Johannes Bronkhorst, "Can Religion be Explained?: The Role of Absorption in Various Religious Phenomena", *Method & Theory in The Study of Religion*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2017), 14. In his article, Bronkhorst mentions diverse repetitive ritual behaviors that function to deepen absorption such as dancing, chanting, meditation, prayer, etc.

<sup>168</sup> Bronkhorst, *Can Religion*, 16.

<sup>169</sup> Luhrmann, Nusbaum, and Thisted, *Absorption Hypothesis*, 75.

<sup>170</sup> Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 96.

From morning until evening [this *yiqing*]<sup>171</sup> is stuck to your head and sewn to your tail—you're fused into oneness [with *yiqing*]<sup>172</sup>. Even if you give it a jolt, it won't dislodge; even if you shoo it away, it won't depart ... you arrive at the point where, when walking, you are not aware that you are walking, and, when sitting, you are not aware that you are sitting. Cold, heat, hunger, thirst—you are not aware of any of these.<sup>173</sup>

The state of “oneness”<sup>174</sup> is the state where one is fully absorbed in *yiqing*. After Dahui, the term *yidan* has been used in Kanhua Chan to denote such state.

According to Suk-hyun Kim, there are certain distinctions in Gaofeng's usages of *yi*, *yiqing*, and *yidan* in relation to the *huatou* meditation.<sup>175</sup> When *yi* is used distinctively from *yiqing* and *yidan*, it not only covers a comprehensive meaning of doubt, but also refers to a lighter level of *yiqing* which can be generated by even a beginner of the practice. On the other hand, what *yiqing* refers to is, Kim argues, a mental state which requires much deeper and persistent absorption. Finally, *yidan*<sup>176</sup> refers to the most advanced stage of *yiqing*. What is fused into oneness is not only *yiqing*, but also the practitioner's mind and body. When talking about how he resolved the *huatou* which he was so struggling with that it almost let him to death, he analogized the *huatou* with a poison and *yidan* with the medicine that saved his life from the poison. Then, instructing how to take the medicine (*yidan*), he emphasizes that one's

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171 I changed “[this sensation of indecision-and-apprehension]” in Broughton's original rendering to “[this *yiqing*]”.

172 I changed “[with indecision-and-apprehension]” in Broughton's original rendering to “[with *yiqing*]”.

173 Zhuhong, *Chan whip*, 95.

174 The expression ‘oneness (C. yi-pian; 一片)’ or ‘being formed into a whole (C. da cheng yi-pian; 打成一片)’ is found before Gaofeng, but not related to *yiqing*. About the case it was used in relation with *yiqing* after Gaofeng, See Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 92 and 177, and Hyujeong, *Hyujeong: Selected Works*, Collected Works of Korean Buddhism 3, trans. John Jorgensen (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012.) 86, n.167.

175 Suk-Hyun Kim, *Ganhwasamyō-ūi*, 169-170.

176 The term *yidan* is first found in *the Gateless Gate*, a *gong'an* collection compiled by Wumen Hukai (無門慧開, 1183-1260) before *The Essentials of Chan*. Therefore, *yidan* must have been a standard term already in Gaofeng's time. The following passage from *The Gateless Gate* expresses *yidan*, rendered as “a spirit of great doubt” in connection with body: “Arouse your entire body with its three hundred and sixty bones and joints and its eighty-four thousand pores of the skin; summon up a spirit of great doubt and concentrate on this word “wú.” Huikai, Yuan-wu, Grimston, and Sekida, *Two Zen*, 28.

all mental/physical and internal/external elements<sup>177</sup> must fuse together into *yidan*.<sup>178</sup>

Thereby, one reaches at the point where *yiqing* arises by itself “as if one sets a boat afloat along the current”,<sup>179</sup> just as Gaofeng proceeded the state of extreme absorption without sensing himself and the world.

However, to execute such instruction calls for extreme exertion, and thus, Gaofeng urged that one “must be determined to bore through a ring/nugget of adamant or swallow a cluster of thorny chestnut burrs”.<sup>180</sup> Buswell remarks that throwing oneself into this “chocking”<sup>181</sup> predicament - or into “the ox’s horn”<sup>182</sup> can involve “shortness of breath, or shallow, fitful breathing that is almost as if the meditator is gasping for air ... intense shaking, twitching and/or tingling of the body”.<sup>183</sup> Given that the development of *yiqing* tends to be presented by Gaofeng in phases, that is, *yi*→*yiqing*→*yidan*, in the process of meditation, such strong sensations would be affiliated to the stage of *yiqing*. Then, the senseless stage of extreme absorption would belong to *yidan*.<sup>184</sup>

### 5.3 Mengshan Deyi

Mengshan’s emphasis on *yiqing* and the usage of *yidan* do not diverge from Gaofeng’s teaching. However, in Mengshan’s *Kanhua Chan*, we can find several features that are distinguished from Gaofeng’s. For instance, he underlined the importance of ‘maintaining one’s practice (C. *baoren*)’ after awakening in order to dissolve one’s behavioral tendency (C. *xiqi*, and Sk. *vāsanā*). One another example which is not found in *Mengshan’s Record* but in *Preceptor Mengshan’s Nianfo Huatou Method (Mengshan-heshan-nianfo-huatou-fa)* is that he integrated the ‘invocation practice of Buddha’s name (C. *nianfo*)’ in connection with Pure

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<sup>177</sup> The elements are the sensations arising from the six sense faculties, six forms of perception, four physical elements (earth, water, fire, and air), five aggregates (physical matter, reception, conception, functioning of mind, consciousness), mountains, rivers, and earth, and the universe.

<sup>178</sup> Gaofeng Yuanmiao, *Gobonghwasang seonyo · eorok [the Essentials of Chan by Gaofeng Yuanmiao and His Record of Sayings]*, trans. Tong-gwang (Seoul: Bulgwang Chulpanbu, 1993), 53.

<sup>179</sup> Gaofeng, *Gobonghwasang seonyo*, 54, 58, and 59.

<sup>180</sup> Buswell, *Sensation of Doubt*, 77.

<sup>181</sup> Buswell, *Sensation of Doubt*, 77.

<sup>182</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 196.

<sup>183</sup> Buswell, *Sensation of Doubt*, 77.

<sup>184</sup> We will see that the interview respondents’ understanding of the terms does not deviate from this view in chapter 6.

Land of Amita Buddha in the *huatou* meditation.<sup>185</sup> However, this work composed in 1605 into the extant manuscript form is excluded in my discussion, for two reasons: one is that it is still in need of scholarly scrutiny, and the other is that none of the Korean monks I interviewed involve invocation of Buddha's name in their practice. This sub-chapter, therefore, focuses on Mengshan's teaching on *yiqing*. The discussion is based on several points that are not only distinguished from the teachings of Dahui and Gaofeng, but also importantly accepted in Korean Ganhwa Seon tradition.

Mengshan received the *huatou* 'no' as a layman at the age of thirty-two from his teacher Wanshan Zengning (1192-1275). Wanshan's instruction on the meditation is described by Mengshan as follows:

Twenty-four hours a day you must be wide awake (C. *xingxing*; 惺惺)<sup>186</sup> —like a cat catching mice or a hen hatching eggs. Don't take any breaks. When you have not yet passed through [the barrier, i.e., the *huatou*], you should be like a mouse gnawing at the wood of a coffin. [You should be completely intent upon the *huatou*] and should never shift [from the *huatou*]. If you go on doing [*the practice*] in this way, there will without fail come a time when enlightenment emerges.<sup>187</sup>

The gist of the instruction is not any different from Dahui's saying that a practitioner must work on the *huatou* relentlessly like a mouse that ends up in a wood coffin just as a mouse that enters "the ox's horn".<sup>188</sup> However, the expression "wide awake" (C. *xingxing*; 惺惺, Kr. seongseong), which is also translated as "alertness", in the passage above is an important point in his teaching.

Alertness is known to have been used together with calmness (C. *jiji*; 寂寂, Kr. *jeokjeok*) by the Chan master Yongjia Xuanjue (665-713) from the Tang dynasty. Cautioning

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<sup>185</sup> According to Schlütter, invocation of Buddha's name (C. *nianfo*) in the meditation practice became an evolved form of the orthodox Kanhua Chan during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. See Schlütter, *Kànhuà Meditation*.

<sup>186</sup> My brackets.

<sup>187</sup> Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 79. In Broughton's original rendering, "*huatou*" is "cue" and "the practice" is "gongfu".

<sup>188</sup> Dahui, *Letters of Dahui*, 196.

against the two most commonly occurring hindrances in Chan meditation, that is, agitation or restlessness (C. *diaoju*; 掉舉, Sk. *auddhatya*) and lethargy or dullness (C. *hunchen*; 昏沈, Sk. *styāna*), Yongjia emphasized to have both alertness and calmness in harmony.<sup>189</sup> Staying in only calmness, namely in the tranquil state of deep concentration, one can easily fall into lethargy. On the other hand, only being alert can lead to restlessness. To borrow an explanation by Jinul who intactly accepted Yongjia's teaching on it, right alertness 'brings lethargy under control'<sup>190</sup> and right calmness "subdues mental agitation".<sup>191</sup>

However, Mengshan seems to place more emphasis on alertness stating that "the wondrousness of the practice of Chan lies in becoming wide-awake", namely, alertness.<sup>192</sup> For him, alertness means not to forget the *huatou*. If one covets merely the state of deep absorption, he says, the *huatou* vanishes. The calmness in which the *huatou* is forgotten leads to a void and darkness. Thus, one must work on the *huatou* - that is, one must generate *yiqing* on the *huatou* - to be awake and eventually to get awakening. This stance resonates with Dahui's critical view on the silent illumination meditation of the Caodong tradition. Staying in mere calmness is "dead sitting" which corresponds to being "entrenched in the ghostly cave"<sup>193</sup> as Dahui expressed about Caodong's meditation, although Dahui did not use the term alertness to attack the Caodong.

Following Wanshan's instruction with full concentration on the *huatou* "day and night, with unceasing diligence",<sup>194</sup> one day while drinking tea he had a small awakening, but it did not bring him enlightenment yet. Two years later, a monumental event happened to him when he was suffering from a fatal illness causing "diarrhea a hundred times during the day and night".<sup>195</sup> At the border between life and death he reseated himself and made a vow to continue the practice by becoming a monk as early as possible in the next life if he would die, or to join the sangha right away to pursue enlightenment if he would regain his health. Within a day, he recovered from the disease while meditating.

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189 Yongjia says, "If one remains in deep calm without being aware, it means sinking into dullness and if one remains aware without being calm, it means becoming entangled in one's thoughts. If one is in a state of being neither aware nor calm, then one is not only entangled in thoughts but also submerged by dullness." Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 204.

190 Chinul, *Korean Approach*, 107.

191 Chinul, *Korean Approach*, 107.

192 Broughton, *Mengshan's Talks*, 51.

193 Schlütter, *How Zen*, 116.

194 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 79.

195 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 79.

Having completed this vow, I raised the *no*<sup>196</sup> 無 character to full awareness, and traced the [mind] radiance back.<sup>197</sup> Within a short period of time the five *zang* and six *fu* [i.e., my internal organs] went through three or four spasms, but I didn't pay any attention to that [pain]. After a good while, my eyelids were immobile. And after another good while, I couldn't see that I had a body—just the *huatou*<sup>198</sup>, in an unbroken continuum.<sup>199</sup>

What he carries out in the meditation is full absorption which is so deep that he even forgets the body engulfed in severe pain from the illness. Such state corresponds with the Gaofeng's description of *yidan* or the advanced state of *yiqing*, although the term *yiqing* is not mentioned here.

About two years later, watching rice being cooked, he realizes that the meditation must be conducted unceasingly “like the fire under the rice pot”.<sup>200</sup> What must be done “in an unbroken continuum” is not merely focusing on the *huatou*, but arousing *yiqing*. *Mengshan's Record* begins with declaring that only unceasing *yiqing* is genuine whereas constrained, thus

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196 I changed ‘wu’ in Broughton’s original rendering to ‘no’ here.

197 ‘Tracing back the radiance (C. *huiguang fanzhao*; 迴光返照)’ is a widely used phrase in Chan Buddhist literature. In the context of Kanhua Chan, according to Buswell (2018, 71), “single-minded attention to the *huatou* was claimed to create an introspective focus that would eventually lead the student back to the enlightened source of his or her own mind”, and ‘tracing back the radiance’ refers to this process. Both Dahui and Mengshan used the phrase. However, Mengshan’s phrase (C. *huiguang zikan*; 回光自看) is slightly different from Dahui’s, but the meanings are almost identical. This phrase is important in examining the meditative method - and I even suppose that it is highly related to *yiqing*. After investigating relevant sources to develop a plausible argument on it, however, I concluded that it is a quite huge topic that requires separate research. Therefore, I intentionally excluded it in my discussion.

198 I changed ‘cue’ in Broughton’s original rendering to ‘*huatou*’ here.

199 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 80.

200 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 80.

fitful *yiqing* is false, because only persistent *yiqing* can prevent lethargy<sup>201</sup> and agitation.<sup>202</sup> When true *yiqing* is sustained, Mengshan says, the practitioner cannot perceive things around herself/himself, for she/he is entirely immersed in the ball of *yiqing*, that is, *yidan*.<sup>203</sup> Thereby, *yidan* incessantly manifests itself with no effort from the point when the practice namely starts to flow like riding “in a bottomless boat”<sup>204</sup> along with the current. To reach enlightenment, this state should last until the ball of *yiqing*, “the blacklacquer bucket [of ignorance]”, bursts by itself.<sup>205</sup> When it comes to how to raise *yiqing* on the *huatou*, Mengshan advises that one should “From time to time, once again whip up”<sup>206</sup> *yiqing* asking whyever Zhaozhou said that a dog did not have a Buddha-nature contrary to the fundamental tenet that all living beings have it. Stirring up such wondering mind after understanding the whole context of the *huatou* is namely a crucial starting point to arouse *yiqing*.<sup>207</sup>

After becoming able to be absorbed in *yidan* even in the midst of action like sitting, eating, etc.,<sup>208</sup> while walking on the road he finally reached the moment that the ball of *yiqing* in his “melt like ice, leaving nothing behind.”<sup>209</sup> He then received recognition of enlightenment from his teacher Wanshan who turned him away in the previous checkup. Looking back on his practice, he states two crucial points about his journey for enlightenment. One is “meeting a [true teacher who possesses] correct knowing”,<sup>210</sup> that is, Wanshan, which is about the confirmation of the result, namely enlightenment, of his practice by the authority.

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201 Sleepiness is a common mode of lethargy. His personal tactics to defeat sleepiness are worthy noting because they are examples of ‘ritualizing’ (about ‘ritualizing’ see section 5.3.). They are: ‘to call the *huatou* out aloud a couple of times’ and ‘to get up and walk dozens of steps.’ Broughton, *Mengshan’s talks*, 51. His other improvisational countermeasure to sleepiness is talked more in detailed in *the as*, “When the sleep Māra came for the first time, without leaving my seat, I roused my spirit ...When the sleep Māra increased for the third time, I got down [off the platform] onto the ground and did full prostrations, and it was dispelled. I got back up on the sitting cushion again, and the rules and forms [of Chan sitting] were already restored. I immediately took advantage of this occasion [of pervasive sleepiness] to polish off the sleep Māra. At first I used a pillow for a short sleep; later I used my upper arm [as a pillow]; and still later I stopped sleeping horizontally.” Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 81.

202 Broughton renders the two states as ‘torpor’ and ‘excitedness’. Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talks*, 50.

203 Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talks*, 51

204 Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talks*, 49.

205 Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talks*, 48.

206 Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talks*, 46.

207 Two Korean Seon masters emphasize this point. See section 5.4.

208 This is ‘practise in the midst of action’ that Dahui emphasized. See n

209 Broughton, *Mengshan’s Talk*, 55.

210 Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 83.

The other is “urgency”<sup>211</sup> as desperate aspiration or drive (C. *qie*; 切, Kr. *jeol*) caused by his fatal illness without which he “would have come to within an inch [of awakening] with all in vain”.<sup>212</sup> Before holding up the *huatou* during the illness, he made a vow:

If my allotted lifespan is about to be exhausted, I vow to receive the power of *prajñā*, with correct mindfulness to be reborn [into a place with which I have a karmic connection], and to leave home as early as possible. If I recover from this illness, I will immediately set aside lay life and become a monk, quickly obtain awakening, and widely lead younger students [to the other shore of nirvana].<sup>213</sup>

The urgent but determined vow he made in the face of death in critical pain was his true resolution not only to become a monk, but also to fully embark on the practice. The situation caused by the illness served as a motive for him to stake his life on the practice. His desperate aspiration to break through his problems – both the disease and *huatou* – seems to resonate with Gaofeng’s great fury. It is so urgent “as if you’ve come across the villain who murdered your father”<sup>214</sup> and so determined as if “right then there you want to cut him in half with a single strike of your sword”<sup>215</sup> that there is no other way but to lunge at the *huatou*.

## 5.4 Songdam and Seongcheol

Songdam (1929- present) and Seoncheol (1912-1993) are undoubtedly most prominent figures among great Seon masters in contemporary Korea. These masters are highly revered by both monastic practitioners and the laity not only as great teachers but also as truthful practitioners. While these masters’ teachings can be seen as a faithful inheritance of the Kanhua Chan/Ganhwa Seon tradition, what they emphasize in their instructions does not entirely coincide. In this section, I will introduce the meditative technique of Songdam and

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<sup>211</sup> Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 84.

<sup>212</sup> Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 83.

<sup>213</sup> Zhuhong, *Chan Whip*, 80.

<sup>214</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

<sup>215</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 234.

Seongcheol focusing on ‘breathing technique’, ‘questioning ‘why’ on the *huatou*’, and ‘alertness/calmness’.

Master Songdam has been supervising Ganhwa Seon since 1975 to both Seon monks and the laity at Yonghwa Seonwon, a modern monastic complex center which started to establish in 1950 by his teacher Jeon-gang (1898-1975). He received recognition of enlightenment in 1957 by his teacher after conducting the meditation practice while keeping silence for ten years. Most of my interview respondents expressed veneration for him whether he is their direct teacher or not.

His meditation method called ‘living words meditation method (Kr. *hwalgu chamseonbeop*)’ emphasizes the pivotal role of *yiqing* above all. Traditionally, living words (Kr. *hwalgu*) is used by Dahui’s teacher Yuan-wu<sup>216</sup> and other Korean historical Seon masters such as Hyujeong to denote a *huatou* in which no conceptualization is involved. When a *huatou* is conceptually investigated, it accordingly becomes ‘dead words (K. *sagu*)’. Expanding such perspective, Songdam uses the term living words to accentuate *yiqing*’s role in the meditation. Since “the life of the *huatou* lies in *yiqing*”,<sup>217</sup> ‘living words’ means, namely, a *huatou* that is not only non-conceptualized but also accompanied by *yiqing*. What one must concentrate on is, he says, *yiqing*<sup>218</sup> on the *huatou*, not the *huatou* itself until “it becomes so earnest and deep that it overflows one’s heart and fills the entire universe.”<sup>219</sup> When one reaches such stage, according to him, it proceeds by itself whatever one is doing whenever, and if it lasts for about six or seven days, a breakthrough occurs “as if a big pot filled with water suddenly bursts by itself.”<sup>220</sup>

Master Seongcheol is probably the most famous modern Seon master both within South Korea and abroad among those who have practiced and taught the meditation only in Korea. It is known that he got awakened<sup>221</sup> four years after becoming ordained during a retreat and that he subsequently continued the sitting without lying down for eight years. He served as the first patriarch at the monastery of Haeinsa which is the temple representing

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216 Heish, *Study of Evolution*, 153-164.

217 Songdam, “Hwalgu chamseonbeop”, Yonghwaseonwon, 2019, <http://yhsw.or.kr/asp/sub2/sub2-2-1.htm>

218 Songdam’s lineal student, Theodore Joon Park says that *yiqing* is not a skeptical mind but a state of consciousness which is full of desire and craving to know that we cannot know using one’s mind wanting to find a lost key as a metaphor. Theodore Joon Park, *Chamseon* [Seon meditation] Vol. 1, (Paju: Namu-ui maeum, 2016).

219 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 3.

220 Songdam, *Hwalgu chamseonbeop*.

221 It is known that he did not receive recognition of enlightenment because he refused it.

Dharma among the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) Temples in South Korea. He taught both the monastic practitioners and laity at Haeinsa until his death in 1993. Advocating Ganhwa Seon as the more efficient way to awakening than studying sutras and chanting, he stressed that the life of the practice of Buddhism lies in ‘doing’ the meditation.

One of the most popular *huatous* in Korean Ganwha Seon is “what is it (Kr. yimwokko)”, and this is also one of the main *huatous* the two masters have been used. The origin of “what is it”, which is hard to find with a full context in other Chan texts, is known to be related to the encounter between Nanyue Huaijang (677-744) and the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng<sup>222</sup> and the first case that this phrase was used formally as a *huatou* is found in the Korean master Naong’s work, *the Recorded Sayings of Naong*.<sup>223</sup> In Ganhwa Seon “what is it” is regarded to embrace all other *huatous*, since it can be applied to all the questions the *huatou* bears.<sup>224</sup>

However, there is a striking difference between the two masters’ instructions on how to begin the meditation practice on the *huatou*. In Songdam’s instruction, it is necessary to learn to control one’s own breathing before fully working on arousing *yiqing* on the *huatou*. The purpose is not only to clear mind from distractions but also to prevent ‘abnormal rising of vital energy’ (Kr. *sangki*) which is considered to cause a very common Seon sickness called *Sangki sickness* (Kr. *sangkibyeong*)<sup>225</sup> among Korean Seon monks. The breathing technique consists of “breathing through the lower abdomen area” or cinnabar field (Kr. *danjeon*)<sup>226</sup> and counting breath (Kr. *susikgwan*). It is known that he learned such means from his teacher, but from when and by whom it started being employed as such is unknown. Stressing the importance of such means, he warns abnormal rising of vital energy as a potential peril of

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222 Buswell explains: “Korean tradition traces this huatou to Nan-yiieh Huaijang’s (677-744) meeting with the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng, which is described in the expanded Yuan dynasty recension of the Platform Sutra. Huai-jang had been studying with national master Hui-an on Mount Sung before he came to pay his respects to Hui-neng. When he arrived at the Sixth Patriarch’s residence, master Hui-neng asked him, “Whence have you come?” Huai-jang answered, “From Mount Sung.” Hui-neng then asked, “What thing is it (shen-ma wu) that has come in this manner?” Huai-jang replied, “Whatever thing you might say it is would not hit the mark.” From this simple exchange, Korean Seon has evolved this seminal meditative question. In fact, Kusan [one of the great masters in modern Korea who was Buswell’s teacher] explained, the question “What is it?” could be viewed as the basis of any existential question, from “What is the meaning of my life?” to “What is the meaning of life itself?” In this wider sense, then, Koreans consider “What is it?” to be the fundamental question raised in all the thousands of *huatous* used in the Seon school, and thus the source of all other *huatous*. Buswell, *Zen Monastic*, 155, my brackets.

223 Hyujeong, *Hyujeong*, 483-484, n 7 and 8.

224 Hyujeong, *Hyujeong*, 484, n 8.

225 This sickness is more discussed in section 6.

226 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 4.

intense endeavor to arose *yiqing* especially when one is captivated with desperate aspiration for a breakthrough. He explains how to conduct the skill:

After breathing in deeply and holding your breath for about three seconds, you ask, “what is it?” as you are breathing out. While breathing in again, you maintain the lingering resonance of your previous “what is it?” and observe it quietly. You hold your breath for about three seconds [again] and, while breathing out, do another “what is it?” As you keep doing “what is it?” along with your breathing, you will be less and less distracted. When you are able to do “what is it?” well [without distraction], you just need to do it every other breath. Once you have become accustomed to it, then bring up the *huatou* once every five breaths while keeping the doubt continuously.<sup>227</sup> When you become even better at it, there will come a day when you just need to do “what is it?” only once as you open your eyes in the morning and live your whole day [with the doubt].<sup>228</sup>

Seongcheol, contrarily, holds aloof from involving any technique of breathing, for it can disturb concentrating on the *huatou*. He says that although breathing through the lower abdomen area can be tried when one cannot keep on the meditation due to *sangki* sickness, it is not only ineffectual when the sickness is severe but also becomes a hindrance of the practice after all.<sup>229</sup> Asserting that focusing on the *huatou* is the only way to pursue the practice, he underlines that the practice must be conducted neither too tensed nor too loose just like when the strings of *geomungo* (Korean musical instrument with six strings) are being tuned.<sup>230</sup>

The key point to work on *huatou* is that one must arouse *yiqing* asking “why” to the *huatou* in the context. Seongcheol says:

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227 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 4.

228 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 4.

229 Wontaek, *Seongcheol sunim huatou chamseonbeop* [Master Seongcheol’s *huatou* meditation] (Seoul: Jangkyeong-gak, 2016).

230 This analogy, commonly used by Korean Seon masters, is similar to the sermon on the middle way using the metaphor of the strings of a lute in Chapter 34 of *the Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters*. The sutra, one of the earliest Indian Buddhist sutras translated into Chinese, is known to have an important status in Chan Buddhism

When raising the *huatou* of “what is it?” many people end up calmly observing their mind while repeating “what is it? what is it?” like that. By doing this repeatedly, the student rests his/her mind comfortably and falls into the pitfall of quietude. Consequently, the *huatou* of “what is it?” becomes the object of sense sphere ... and ends up producing the sickness of “what is that I am observing [in my mind] right now?” ... the patriarch in the past taught practitioners to ask, “what is it that it is neither mind, buddha, nor a material thing?” Only by asking this way, one won’t search “it” within their mind or follow the outside sense sphere.<sup>231</sup>

This method called ‘questioning meditation’ resonates with Mengshan’s teaching saying that one should ask why Zhaozhou said ‘a dog does not have a Buddha-nature.’<sup>232</sup> For both Mengshan and Seongcheol, asking ‘why’ is not for finding the reason using conceptual reasoning, but only for arousing and cultivating *yiqing*.

Referring to Mengshan, Songdam as well instructs to ask “why” on the *huatou*.<sup>233</sup> However, he teaches neophytes to focus on only the *huatou* even without asking ‘why’ but combining with the breathing technique until their mind gets clear and calm. After that, one should focus on *yiqing* by asking “why” which can gradually arouse *yiqing*, and furthermore, eventually *yidan*. Without this training, he says that one can easily falls into lethargy staying in calmness (Kr. jeokjeok), or one can stay alert (Kr. seongseong) but trapped in agitation while working on the arousal of *yiqing*.

Whilst Songdam says that one should first enter into calmness by controlling one’s breath, and then, stay in alertness filled with *yiqing*, Seongcheol warns to fall into the state of calmness in which *yiqing* is absent. He says:

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231 Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 7.

232 Yong-Suk Oh, “Seongcheol seonsa-ui Ganhwaseonbeop ilgo [A study on Seogcheol’s Ganhwa Seon], *Journal of Korean Seon Studies*, 51 (2018), 44.

233 Songdam, “Songdamsunim (No 423) 1990 nyeon Ha-angeohaejae palweol cheotjae-ilyobeopweo [Songdam’s sermon on the first Sunday of April in 1990 after the summer retreat]”, Yonghwaseonwon: Songdamsunim, YouTube video, 1:14:47, June 17. 2017, 22-31:25.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtHxY5rLUMw&t=1897s>

if practitioners sit and just do “no” or “doesn’t-have,” they may be able to drop off delusional thoughts and fall into *samādhi* (Kr. jeong 定). They then mistakenly regard losing track of time in meditation as a good sign of cultivation.<sup>234</sup>

In this sense, to stay in a deep absorption (Sk. *samādhi*) uncombined with *yiqing* is seen by him as one of the main impediments to the practice. The practice is thus performed rightfully when one only stays fully awake and alert with *yiqing* on the *huatou*.

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<sup>234</sup> Joo, *Gradual Experiences*, 8.

## 6 Living practitioners' *yiqing*: continuity of inquiry and discovery

This chapter consists of four sections: motivation; learning 'how to do'; discovery of *yiqing*; and changes as discovery and inquiry. They are the categories I created from my content analysis of the interview contents drawing on Jennings' thesis that ritual is "a mode of inquiry and of discovery"<sup>235</sup> as the main framework. According to Jennings, ritual has noetic functions to 'display', 'transmit', and 'gain' knowledge.<sup>236</sup> This perspective highlights what happens to the participants in Ganwha Seon, namely, the performer and audience who engage in ritual. What is happening is cycle of new inquiry and discovery about the ritual itself and the performer self. Jennings says that the cycle occurs through the 'body', 'action', and 'alteration'. These three factors are again equivalent to the characteristics of ritual put forward by Grimes: 'embodied', 'performed', 'innovative', and 'transformative'. While motivation serves as an inquiry that the practitioners wanted to solve by doing Ganwha Seon, the rest parts cover both inquiry and discovery which transpire continuously throughout the course of their practice.

Before unfolding the interview respondents' stories, I will briefly introduce them. To ensure anonymity, I decided to name them 'Sunim' with a random alphabet attached to distinguish one from another. Sunim is the Korean title to call a Buddhist monastic with respect. Table 2 shows their approximate age, duration of monkhood after being ordained, gender, and *huatou*. Their vocational or direct masters and the locations where they took tonsure, learned Ganwha Seon, and have participated in the retreats are not revealed here to protect their anonymity.

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<sup>235</sup> Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 114.

<sup>236</sup> See chapter 4, p. 00

Table 2 Interview Participants

	Age	Years of Monkhoo	Gender (Male/Female)	<i>Huatou</i>
Sumim M	30s	11	M	“What is it”
Sunim P	50s	14	M	“What is it”
Sunim K	40s	25	F	“What is it”
Sunim N	60s	27	M	“The thousand dharmas return to one; to what does the one return?” <sup>237</sup>
Sunim H	50s	30	M	“No (Wu)”
Sunim O	50s	30	M	Untold
Sunim G	50s	32	M	“An oak tree in the garden”
Sunim L	50s	33-34	M	“No (Wu)”
Sunim J	70s	47	M	“What is it”

Sunim N is the only one who did not take any formal monastic education among the respondents and did not receive the *huatou* from a master. He picked up the *huatou* from a *gong’an* collection autonomously. While most of them took four to six years monastic education during and before<sup>238</sup> the monkhood, Sunim M started to attend the retreats after taking the education for almost ten years. All of them have participated in the retreats from at least twice a year - three months each in summer and winter, up to eight times a year including interval retreats occasionally.

<sup>237</sup> This is the *huatou* that brought eruption of *yiqing* to Gaofeng suddenly in sleep. Although its English translation consists of sentences, it has only six syllables in Korean as the Korean transliteration of the Chinese phrase.

<sup>238</sup> Sunim P took Buddhist education equivalent to the monastic one at a secular university before joining a sangha.

## 6.1 Motivation

Not all the Korean Buddhist monastics are considered Seon monks and nuns (Kr. seonseung) – and of course Seon practice is not exclusively for the monastics, for many lay people also actively engage in it. There are approximately 7 million people who identify themselves as Buddhists in South Korea. Among them there are about 12,000 celibate monks and nuns registered in the Jogye Order, and about 2,000 of them are monastic Seon practitioners in the sense that they participate in retreats regularly every year. To become a monk or nun in the Jogye order, which is alike to be born a new self after abandoning one's previous identity, would require a great determination, but to become a Seon monastic practitioner who meditates between eight to fourteen hours a day for three months at least twice a year and even repeat it for decades would require even a greater resolution. What made them do it then? I approach this question in the light of motivation.

When asking the respondents about why they decided to become a Seon practitioner, I included three points that are connected to each other: personal problems or existential questions they were facing before joining the sangha; goals they wanted to achieve through Ganhwa Seon; and their faith in Buddhism or the meditation. One's awareness of personal problems would lead to desire to solve it, and the desire would serve as the motives as well as the goal of practicing the meditation. What liaises between the desire and resolution to pursue the practice could be faith, at least to a certain extent, that the meditation would help to solve the questions. All three points resonates with Ann Taves' explanation of motivation in her book on the emergence of three spiritual paths.<sup>239</sup> Providing a definition of motivation as “factors that activate, direct, and sustain goal-directed actions” by Jeffery Nevid,<sup>240</sup> Taves suggests several elements that are involved in motivation.<sup>241</sup> She first says that motivation to follow a path is “goal-directed” and “a path is a means to an end”. Although individual goals can vary, the ultimate/doctrinal/official goal in the case of Ganhwa Seon would be enlightenment which would be the ultimate/doctrinal/official end of the path at the same time.

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<sup>239</sup> The three paths are Mormonism, Alcoholics Anonymous, and A Course in Miracles.

<sup>240</sup> Jeffery Nevid, *Psychology: Concepts and Applications* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013), quoted in Ann Taves, *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 270.

<sup>241</sup> Taves, *Revelatory Events*, 270.

However, we should consider that ‘what enlightenment is’ may be construed differently by the practitioners – which I will discuss in section 6.4, while enlightenment can be theoretically the end of the path.

Next element Taves mentions is that the motives as reasons for what one does are implicit as well as explicit, and thus often “affective, that is, *emotion-laden*”.<sup>242</sup> In a psychological perspective, motivations and emotions are closely connected as “two fundamental components of affect.”<sup>243</sup> ‘Affect’ as “the experience of feeling or emotion” “guides behaviour, helps us make decisions, and has a major impact on our mental and physical health.”<sup>244</sup> While the boundary between motivation and emotion within affect is blurry and we can never know all the reasons for our own actions, one thing we can say for sure would be that we follow our motivations because it leads to feeling better or less bad. Some of the respondents did not clarify why they chose Buddhism and Ganhwa Seon. Instead, their answers included that they “liked” Buddhism or Buddhist temples, or they had some positive feelings about the path. Taves’ last element is that the followers of a path have a faith that the path will lead them to achieve their goal, which we will see an important factor for the resolution of most of the respondents. There are also undoubtedly many other factors that contribute to motivation other than the elements mentioned so far, and thus it is simply impossible to probe into the practitioners’ motivation thoroughly in this thesis. As “goal-directed action is initiated, directed, and sustained at an unconscious level”<sup>245</sup>, what we can explore through qualitative interviews will be, therefore, merely some elements that the respondents were aware of or allowed themselves to talk about.

In this section, I will introduce their stories about why they became Seon monastic practitioners dividing them into three groups based on the problems they were facing before joining the sangha. The goal they wanted to achieve through the meditation practice was solving the problems rather than enlightenment. None of them mentioned enlightenment as the goal they set before joining the sangha. Whether they were exposed to Buddhism since childhood – e.g., two participants, Sunim G and K, were born to a Buddhist family – or not,

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<sup>242</sup> Paul Thagard, *Hot Thought: Mechanisms and Applications of Emotional Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), quoted in Taves, *Revelatory events*, 270.

<sup>243</sup> Charls Stangor and Jennifer Walinga, *Introduction to Psychology* (Victoria, B.C.: BCcampus, 2014), chap. 11, <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology/>

<sup>244</sup> Stangor and Walinga, *Introduction to Psychology*, chap. 11.

<sup>245</sup> Taves, *Revelatory Event*, 271.

all of them encountered Buddhist doctrines to greater or lesser degree before entering the monastery.

The first group's questions or problems were concerning how they felt and thought about themselves and the world. To my question "why did you become a Buddhist monk", Sunim G started to answer saying, "some people may well organize the reasons, but in many cases, people don't know why".<sup>246</sup> Then, he talked about stories from his childhood to when he decided to devote himself to Ganhwa Seon. As a young boy who spent much time on gazing into his own mind, he always had a question "what is the force that makes human beings act?". He said:

I mean, even infants, before they develop cognitive ability. Something like phototaxis and geotaxis we learn in biology class, tree branches grow towards the Sun light and the roots grow towards the earth. You know, even a monad has something that keeps its life.<sup>247</sup>

Becoming older, he felt like his perception of things in the world was not really his own but merely conceptual based on what he had learned from schools and people. He said, "so, I felt as if I were floating in the air not standing on the ground".<sup>248</sup> Thinking that "everything would end up in death",<sup>249</sup> he turned nihilistic. He was discontented with the world, bored with repetitive daily life, and frustrated, so he ran away from home several times when he became a high school student. Buddhism was always near him, as his family was Buddhist. After finishing high school, he went to a temple to become a monk. To my question 'why?', he replied:

There is not only one reason ... Looking backwards, but there were also many problems... I went to a Christian high school where to organize a Buddhist student club was banned, but I was one of them who founded a Buddhist club there fighting against the teachers... I liked the Buddhist attitude to fight against the unjust world...

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<sup>246</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

<sup>247</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

<sup>248</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

<sup>249</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

At that time, I heard master Seoncheol's sermon 'mountain is mountain, water is water...Satan is teacher, the Buddha is also teacher'. I didn't know what it meant, but it just made me feel so refreshed.<sup>250</sup>

He lived at several temples as a postulant because he thought he had become lazy and then left for a new place every time he felt comfortable with the postulant position. During this period, he even worked on a pelagic fishing vessel and a coal mine rather trying to make his body exhausted. While doing so, it felt like he could keep his mind less fluctuated. However, it was just temporary feeling. After wandering as such for a few years, he met a Seon master who gave him the *huatou* saying "you just practice Ganhwa Seon from the beginning as if you were unborn or dead".<sup>251</sup> He then made a resolution to see the end of the practice, realizing that it was time for him to do it. Having a faith that he would solve all his inner problems, he got a goal, and the goal was to break through the *huatou*.

Sunim J's question was "what is that I really want, and how should I live?".<sup>252</sup> As a teenager, he felt like there was nothing he wanted to have from the world. While "material wealth or secular power"<sup>253</sup> did not attract him, he "always felt some utopia must have been somewhere".<sup>254</sup> After leaving home without notice several times, one day he decided to take his own life in the sea of the Southern end of Korean Peninsula. Standing by the sea after walking for a fortnight from his home, he saw himself considering his own life so trivial. He then came to think that he should at least read teachings of four great minds – Socrates, Gautama Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus. He spent a few years reading them with clerics and teachers. Then, he was convinced to go for Buddhism, because the Buddha's teachings seemed to have what he wanted to find. To practice Ganhwa Seon was the natural path for him to follow because his master was a renowned Seon teacher.

Sunim M wanted to overcome distress and pain that started at an early age due to absence of his sick mother. He said that he "knew little about Buddhism",<sup>255</sup> but when he visited a temple on a school excursion as a middle school student, he felt like living there. He

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250 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

251 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

252 Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

253 Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

254 Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

255 Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, September 8. 2021.

said, “I didn’t and still don’t know why, but I thought I would live there someday”.<sup>256</sup> Later at high school, he learned and read about Buddhism which eventually led him to become a monk as soon as finishing high school. It took almost ten years for him to start attending the retreats, since he first studied Buddhism and Indian thoughts at university and graduate school. Therefore, he, the youngest practitioner among the respondents, has attended three retreats so far while the other practitioners have participated in retreats during almost the whole period of their monkhood. He said, “after all, I got to think that all the learning at school was just study and other monastic duties than meditation practice was just jobs”.<sup>257</sup> Although nearly ten years had passed since he became a monk, his problems were still left unsolved. It was time for him to turn into the meditation practice which his master also recommended then.

To overcome mental distress was also Sunim H’s main goal, but for him it was a strongly traumatic and urgent matter triggered by his fellow soldier’s death in military service. The witness of the death gave him a tremendous shock, and the sense of guilt caused from the fact that he could not help the soldier made him suffer. Agonizing about life and death, he had to find a solution to overcome the trauma. Within a week after being discharged from military duty, he joined the sangha. Since when he was a high school student, he had been highly interested in Buddhism. He said that there were no directions he wanted to go for in the society, but he always found thoughts of some Indian Philosophers and Buddhism intriguing. He also took a Buddhism class from a lay Buddhist teacher at a Buddhist student club at high school, which made him already quite familiar with Ganhwa Seon. On the way to the temple where he tonsured his head, he believed that doing the meditation would help him to extinguish the pain, because he realized that cerebral understanding of Buddhism did not help with it. He said, “I thought there was nothing I could do but the meditation. I simply went to the temple to meditate”.<sup>258</sup>

The second group overlaps with the first group in the sense that they became monastics to solve their inner problems, but they specified the main problem they had as the fear of death. Sunim P said, the biggest reason was the fear of death that he had felt since his teenage years. The absolute fear sometimes made him out of breath and feel like he was dying. Such fear led him to get engaged in Taoist practices such as meditation, breathing, and martial arts as well as Indian yoga. While studying Indian philosophy and Buddhism at

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256 Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, September 8. 2021.

257 Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, September 8. 2021.

258 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

university, he practiced not only Vipassana meditation but also Ganhwa Seon. Conducting the latter, he gradually got to see that the meditation worked for him. He did the meditation even at his workplace, then he decided to become a monk to be fully occupied with the meditation. Similar fear distressed Sunim O who often had a dream about himself dying as a child. He said, “the world after death was the fear itself to me since it was the world I didn’t know. Changes represented by death were too painful to me”.<sup>259</sup> Longing for liberation from such pain, he ended up reading about Buddhism. One day, a thought struck him: “I would regret if I had to die as an unenlightened sentient being. That is, if my life was not clear to me when I had to die”.<sup>260</sup> Upon the thought, he joined the sangha and has dedicated to practicing Ganhwa Seon. He said:

I thought that all was in vain after death... and that going to the dark world was inevitable. I could not help but do the practice, since there was nothing else that I could do because of the fear and terror.<sup>261</sup>

The problems that led the last group to join the sangha are related to social issues and relations. Born in a Buddhist family, Sunim K grew up being much exposed to Buddhism. At university, she actively engaged herself in Buddhist student clubs and various nonprofit Buddhist organizations that worked for social justice and equality. As time went by, however, she got deeply disappointed with colleagues and friends who had fought together with her against injustice even by going to jail turned out to be stuck in the unjust social systems. The effort they made together seemed to be merely transient to her. She then only wanted to “pursue the unchanging truth”<sup>262</sup> that could always benefit human beings. Right after graduating from university, she became a Buddhist nun. Taking the four-year monastic seminary education, she “felt what all the scriptures told was that we must first reflect on our mind and find our true self.”<sup>263</sup> To practice Ganhwa Seon was the only righteous path to do so to her. She said:

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259 Sunim O. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, February 28. 2021.

260 Sunim O. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, February 28. 2021.

261 Sunim O. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, February 28. 2021.

262 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

263 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

So, I went out for the journey. Since I had had my fill of scriptures, now it was time to learn them through experience, through participating in the retreats. I had no doubt about that Ganhwa Seon was the easiest and most efficient path to find the truth as I learned from my master and scriptures.<sup>264</sup>

Sunim L was a university student when universities were the epicenter of democratic movement against the government's dictatorship in South Korea in the 80s. The violent confrontation between the students, to whom to hold nationwide demonstrations was a daily routine, and the police and military caused numerous casualties. A great number of the demonstrators - and even non-demonstrators as suspects for the reason that they were university students – were arrested, tortured, killed, and even sentenced to death during this dark period of the modern history of South Korea. He was one of the students who was frustrated and depressed under the insecure social situations. One day during a vacation, he met a monk at a temple he happened to visit in an unfamiliar rural area. They had a long conversation drinking tea the monk served. He had read a few books about Buddhism and attended a lecture on the philosophy before, but what the monk told him during the conversation gave him much more impact. He was profoundly moved by the monk's "broad perspective and understanding of the world."<sup>265</sup> After this event happened, he decided to become a monk thinking that he wanted to become a person like that monk. However, there was no specific question that he wanted to find the answer to through the meditation. He said that he just did Ganhwa Seon because he was told to do it.

The crucial event that made Sunim N who did not have any previous Buddhist background turn to Buddhism occurred when he was studying to get a job. One day at a library where he used to sit to study, a children's book about Uisang (625-702), a famous Korean monk from the Silla Kingdom (57 BCE–935 CE), caught his eye. Uisang traveled to China and became a student of Zhiyan (602-688), the second patriarch of the Huayan<sup>266</sup> (Kr. Hwaeom) school, a Chinese Mahāyāna school that thrived in the Tang Dynasty. The key

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<sup>264</sup> Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

<sup>265</sup> Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

<sup>266</sup> According to Keown, the school is "One of the major schools of Chinese Buddhism, whose highly abstract philosophy is generally accepted as the highest expression of Buddhist thought in China. Two aspects of this school's teachings are notable: doctrinal classification and the theory of unobstructed interpenetration of all phenomena." Keown, "Hua-yen" in *Dictionary of Buddhism*. <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-773?rskey=7sR5jU&result=761>

teaching of the school highlights that every being has mutual relation depending on and being in harmony with each other. After coming back to Korea, Uisang founded Buddhist temples and strived to propagate the teachings of Huayan in the Silla Kingdom which was undergoing a chaotic period after being unified with two other Kingdoms, Baekje and Goguryeo, in the Korean Peninsula in 676. For the reason that Huayan Buddhism was too abstruse for most of the ordinary people in the Kingdom to understand, the founder of the Korean Huayan Buddhism incorporated the Guanyin (Sk. Avalokiteśvara<sup>267</sup>) belief into it. Guanyin who appears as a compassionate Bodhisattva that always helps those who call his name with an earnest heart in Lotus Sutra was already believed in the Kingdom. Regarding Uisang's motive for becoming a monk renouncing his privileged status as an elite youth warrior from a noble family, a legendary tale says that he chose the path in deep sorrow and shock caused by the death of the woman he loved. Sunim N said:

It was just a biography for children. I don't know why but I got just vastly moved by the book. To tell how great the feeling was...as much as I was moved to tears reading it five or six times in a row. His life had no comparison with mine. Before, I had thought that a fine life was about having a good job, making a fortune, getting married... But the very single book made me think differently in many ways.<sup>268</sup>

He started to go to bookstores often to buy books about Buddhism, and he got gradually absorbed in those books in which he found the right direction in life from bodhisattva's<sup>269</sup> aspiration "to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all beings".<sup>270</sup> The compassionate mind of Mahāyāna Buddhism resonated with him. He wanted to know more about the Buddhist

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<sup>267</sup> "One of the eight great Bodhisattvas, and one whose activities especially involve the active practice of compassion (karuṇā) in order to save and protect beings." Keown, "Avalokiteśvara" in *Dictionary of Buddhism*. <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-199?rskey=A6dYus&result=181>

<sup>268</sup> Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

<sup>269</sup> Keown explains: "Bodhisattva literally means 'enlightenment being' but the correct Sanskrit derivation may be 'bodhi-sakta' meaning 'a being who is orientated towards enlightenment'. The ideal is inspired by the lengthy career of the Buddha before he became enlightened". Keown, "Bodhisattva" in *Dictionary of Buddhism*. <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-277?rskey=BXHFOi&result=261>

<sup>270</sup> Keown, "Bodhisattva" in *Dictionary of Buddhism*. <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-277?rskey=BXHFOi&result=261>

canons mentioned in the books, but he found many of them difficult to understand. He said, “I then read some Ganhwa Seon sayings, and they just touched my heart. They were not easy but there were some spots I could sympathize with”.<sup>271</sup> Literally throwing himself into focusing on the sayings, he realized that “it was not the world I could enter as a lay man”.<sup>272</sup> It was important for him to have awakening to save not only himself but also others even though the goal of the practice is supposed to be enlightenment. Thus, his goal was to be awakened to help others.

Although each respondent’s personal situation was different, what they had in common was a ‘sense of urgency’ that they had to resolve the problems they were facing. When they decided to take the way to become a Seon practitioner, most of them except for Sunim L thought with their heart that the meditation practice was the only path to follow. In other words, the participants, excluding Sunim L, had the faith, albeit to different extents, that Ganhwa Seon would lead them to solve their questions or problems when they made a resolution to conduct the retreats. Moreover, for three of them, Sunim J, Sunim L and Sunim K, faith in their master who taught them the meditation as the solely right path was an important factor to the resolution. However, none of them told me that their faith was in Buddha-nature which Buswell views as the object of ‘faith’, one of Gaofeng’s essentials for Kanhua Chan along with doubt (*yiqing*) and fury.<sup>273</sup> Even after learning a vast body of Buddhist doctrines by completing formal monastic education, none of them had a question which was ‘generated from the awareness of the contradiction between Buddha-nature and one’s ignorant reality’.<sup>274</sup> Sunim P said that whether one has faith in Buddha-nature or not is “a different matter. Buddha-nature is not something one experiences. It’s something in the realm of blind or theoretical faith, isn’t it?”.<sup>275</sup> Mentioning Dalai Lama’s quotes: “do not try to become a Buddhist using Buddhist teaching but to become a better you than before”,<sup>276</sup> Sunim G said, “a word like Buddha-nature or whatever is pointless. It’s strictly for the birds to use such a term that you don’t even know what it actually is”.<sup>277</sup>

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271 Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

272 Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

273 See, section 5.2.

274 See p. 42 in section 5.2.

275 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 17. 2020.

276 Dalai Lama XIV Quotes, in *Goodreads*. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/887986-do-not-try-to-use-what-you-learn-from-buddhism>

277 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 11. 2021.

## 6.2 Learning ‘How to do’

What do the practitioners do during the meditation and how do they do it? We can of course come up with simple answers to these questions: they sit cross-legged as explained in the instruction<sup>278</sup>; and they focus on *huatou* and generate *yiqing*. However, such answers do not display a full performance of the meditation, just as a score of a piano concerto can never present us a performance of the piece. Moreover, not only for non-practitioners but also for the practitioners to be able to perform the meditation is not the natural consequence of to be well-informed of the instruction, for to perform it entails to learn with the body which is “primarily corporeal rather than cerebral”.<sup>279</sup> As Jennings argues, ritual is learned through ‘body’ and ‘action’. In other words, bodily involvement is essential in performing it, and the performance occurs “not by detached observation or contemplation but through action”.<sup>280</sup> With a metaphor of “how to use an axe to chop firewood”,<sup>281</sup> Jennings claims that one is finally getting to learn by actually doing it, that is, by holding and swing the axe. As to use the axe ““teaches me” through my hands, arms, and shoulders how it is to be used”,<sup>282</sup> a practitioner learns how to perform it by doing. Thereby, according to Jennings, he/she discovers what to do and how to do in a proper way, a way that ‘fits’ herself/himself.

The first step the practitioners must find their feet in is to sit, that is, to sit for 8 to 14 hours a day for three months without nodding off and being lost in distracting thoughts which can lead to failure of sitting still per se. It was never an easy procedure for any of my respondents. Although they were instructed how to do it by masters or through books, some of them articulated that they ‘did not know’ how to do it. Sunim M who had completed his third retreat right before the interview said:

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278 See Appendix.

279 Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 115.

280 Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 116.

281 Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 116.

282 Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 116.

At first, I was just wandering because I didn't know how to do it. I haven't got used to sitting for such a long time yet. My body hasn't adapted to it. Besides, it is still challenging for me to fast after noon.<sup>283</sup>

After trying it during his first five years, Sunim L walked away from Ganhwa Seon to go for Vipassana meditation because he had never got the sense of how to do it. Receiving the *huatou* 'no (wu)', he "didn't know what it was".<sup>284</sup> He could sit for about thirty minutes focusing on the *huatou*, and then other thoughts distracted his sitting. For the next few years while he was engaging in Vipassana, however, the questions about what the *huatou* is and how to do the meditation were always in his mind until he returned to Ganhwa Seon. Sunim K also said:

...in the beginning, it was just impossible to know how to do it. I just did it after my master's instruction as I memorized. I asked myself 'what did the master demonstrate?' ... but it was a bit frustrating feeling like 'what is this?'<sup>285</sup>

In her first retreat, however, she got the sense of how to do the meditation without struggling with the long hours sitting. To my comment "so can we say that you entered the practice quite successfully already at the first retreat then?", she replied that her first retreat was just one spot of the long journey that we never know how it goes next.

During and between the meditation hours, the means they additionally employ to fulfill retreats more efficiently were also different. When I asked whether she had her own rules or eclectic means, Sunim K said that "all practitioners would have their own ways".<sup>286</sup> Although the routine of retreats is fixed, "everyone has their own schedule based on what they need themselves".<sup>287</sup> This is related to not only 'improvisational' and 'individual' characteristics of ritual pointed out by Grimes, but also to 'alteration' of ritual by Jennings,

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283 Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, September 8. 2021. Some Seon centers provide dinner, but many practitioners skip the meal for the reason that a full stomach can disturb their concentration.

284 Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

285 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

286 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

287 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

which I will discuss in section 6.4. For example, particularly during optional ten-minute breaks every hour or official breaks, the practitioners do: prostrations, walking meditation, cleaning around themselves, more sitting meditation, etc. They added such exceptional actions into their retreats because they found them help their performance to go forward. For example, Sunim K said that she often listened to recorded sermons of great masters like Songdam and read Seon sayings of the teachers of Kanhua/Ganhwa meditation during the breaks because it made her see why she was doing the meditation reminding her of the urgent resolution she made before becoming a nun.

Sunim G who used to visualize putting down a pebble on a grass leaf to compose himself when distracted, which he referred to as delusion and so stopped doing it after all, counted being together with fellow practitioners in the fixed “frame of retreats”<sup>288</sup> as an important means to him. The system under which the community lives together and practices together sharing the same purpose is a crucial factor not to fail in conducting the practice as well as the three-month lasting retreats. He said:

When my legs are aching and I ask myself ‘what am I doing?’, I look at the fellow monks reverentially sitting next to me. Then I realize, ‘ah, that’s it. This is the way I must go’... Something that the body of a fellow monk who has practiced for a long time radiates... those things work for me. The energy of the community...<sup>289</sup>

Sunim G’s discovery can be seen drawing on Jennings’s view that ritual performance ‘displays’<sup>290</sup> ritual knowledge between the performers and audience.<sup>291</sup> In the case of Ganhwa Seon retreats which are exclusively for the monastic practitioners, audience is fellow practitioners as well as the master or monitor monk<sup>292</sup> who supervises the performance, while performers are the practitioners. Sunim G is thus the audience as well as the performer here. While meditating himself, he not only witnesses what is happening during the ritual, but also learn about the ritual – e.g., how to do it and what to do. In his first seven to eight years, he

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288 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 11. 2021.

289 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

290 Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 113.

291 From a perspective of performative approach, ritual performance entails performer and audience as other types of performance such as theater.

292 A monitor monk is the one who wakes up drowsy or distracted practitioners by hitting their shoulders or back with a stick. See Appendix.

almost abstained from talking with other practitioners during retreats. During this period, he also kept away from the Chan/Seon literature and any Buddhist canons, because he “wanted to avoid applying the logic”<sup>293</sup> from the literature “involuntarily”<sup>294</sup> to his own experience. Then, he studied both Indian and Western philosophy, but not Chan/Seon Buddhism, at university and graduate school, which he had considered the least important for his practice, but he had felt necessary for his practice at that time. However, his “mind was always focused on the *huatou*”<sup>295</sup> during this time.

The time the practitioner spent until they adapted themselves to the sitting at retreats varied from less than three months to more than five years. However, the fact that a practitioner became proficient at the sitting does not correspond with that she/he completely mastered it. As Sunim K mentioned, there are always new factors that change the levels of difficulty of the meditation such as physical illness and hearing bad news about people, what happened before retreats, etc. Moreover, to work *yiqing* on the *huatou* is the part<sup>296</sup> of the meditation that not only is the never-ending<sup>297</sup> but also requires zealous striving which serves as another critical factor which affects a practitioner’s psychosomatic state and so the sitting itself. To discuss this matter further, let us return to Songdam’s instruction on breath-control.<sup>298</sup>

One of the main purposes of Songdam’s emphasis on controlling breath is to prevent *sangki sickness* (Kr. *sangkibyeong*)<sup>299</sup> which many practitioners of Ganhwa Seon experience. *Sangki* literally means rising of vital energy (Kr. *ki*, C. *qi*). As an important concept in Chinese philosophy and traditional medicine – and so in the philosophy and traditional medicine of the neighboring countries of China like Korea and Japan,<sup>300</sup> vital energy connotes “a kind of vital breath-like matter-energy”<sup>301</sup> which works as fundamental source of living

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293 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

294 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

295 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

296 For example, Dahui depicts the striving as “you must muster all your energies” like “the old blind woman who blows [so diligently] at the fire that her eyebrows and lashes are burned right off”. See p.38 in section 5.1.

297 Sunim N expressed such a challenge of the meditation using a metaphor “climbing on a vertical cliff holding a single tool called *huatou*”. Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

298 See section pp. 54-55 in section 5.4.

299 Songdam says, “if one focus ferociously on *huatou* without learning the fundamental posture and way of breathing, a hundred practitioners out of a hundred experience” *sanki sickness*. Songdam, *Hwalgu chamseonbeop*.

300 The concept of the term is widely used in everyday language in the neighboring countries of China.

301 Mou Bo, *Chinese Philosophy A–Z*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 118.

beings as well as of “everything”<sup>302</sup> in the world. To Ganhwa Seon practitioners, *sangki sickness* is generally regarded to appear when vital energy rises abnormally “toward one’s upper body and head”<sup>303</sup> of a meditator, especially when the meditator’s exertion of working on *yiqing* is strenuous or excessive. *Sangki sickness* is a conventional proper name that refers to various pathological symptoms Korean Seon practitioners can go through. Nevertheless, there are no formal texts including scriptures of historical masters that deal with the sickness with the same name. However, similar illness is warned by some historical masters. For instance, *Mengshan* says, “If one applies mind in a “tense” way, illnesses such as activation of the “meatball mind” [i.e., the opposite of the “true mind”] and disharmony of the blood and the breath<sup>304</sup> will arise. This is not the correct path.”<sup>305</sup> The Japanese Rinzai Zen master Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769) is well-known to be plagued with “Zen sickness (Jp. *zenbyō*)” of which the symptoms include “a “fire” mounting in the upper body followed by parched lungs, cold feet, fear, depression, ringing in the ears, constant perspiration, and hallucinations”.<sup>306</sup> In his biography *Wild Ivy*, the Taoist hermit Hakuyu who teaches Hakuin a visualization and breathing practice as the cure of the sickness quotes Heo Jun (1539-1615), a renown Korean physician from the Joseon Dynasty: “When the vital energy is in the lower heater, the breaths are long, when the vital energy is in the upper heater, the breaths are short”<sup>307</sup> to emphasize that “keeping the vital energy in the lower body”<sup>308</sup> is essential. This is related to Songdam’s teaching about “breathing through the lower abdomen area”.<sup>309</sup>

Four of the respondents said that they had had the sickness, and it was still chronic to one of them – four said that they had never experienced it, while one spoke unclearly whether he had had it. The common symptoms of the sickness they mentioned are headache as if “the

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302 Bo, *Chinese Philosophy*, 118.

303 Joo, *Gradual Experience*, 5.

304 The original Chinese term of ‘breath’ here is ‘qi (氣, Kr. *ki*)’, the vital energy. See Broughton, *Core Texts*, 225.

305 Broughton, *Core Texts*, 51.

306 Juhn Young Ahn, “Malady of Meditation: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Illness and Zen (2007, 20),” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007),

307 Hakuin, Hakuin Ekaku, *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Zen Master Hakuin*, trans. Norman Waddell (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), 97. On this statement, Waddell comments that the “quotation has not been found among Heo Jun’s works”. Hakuin, *Wild Ivy*, n.18, 157. However, the quotation is found intact in Heo Jun’s masterpiece *Principles and Practice of Eastern Medicine* (Kr. *Donguibogam*) which was published not only in Korea but also in China and Japan several times already about a century after it was published in 1610 in the Joseon Dynasty. The Academy of Korean Studies, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0063152>

308 Hakuin, *Wild Ivy*, 157, n 18.

309 Joo, *Gradual Experience*, 4.

skull was about to break”,<sup>310</sup> migraine, dim sight, hallucinations, dysesthesia, palpitation, feeling of heart constriction, feeling fury, hemoptysis, etc.<sup>311</sup> It is beyond the scope of my research to examine the relation between the abnormal rising of the vital energy and these symptoms, but Sunim J believed that “once one has *sangki*, the most vulnerable parts of the body tend to collapse first. So, one can get any illness”.<sup>312</sup> Although most of them told Songdam’s name as their direct or indirect teacher, all of them thought that having the state where *yiqing* arises naturally instead of forcing oneself to generate *yiqing* too strenuously is more primary in preventing *sangki* sickness than to practice breathing technique. Sunim G said:

Once you have *yiqing*, you get to know where to use your energy... Straining for keeping dry and unnatural *yiqing* is like trying to push one’s body into a very tiny hole... Then, *sangki* is inevitable.<sup>313</sup>

*Sangki* sickness, however, occurs even to one who is proficient at arousing *yiqing*. When I asked, “do you still experience *sangki*?”, Sunim G answered, “of course I do. Why don’t I have the moment that I feel too suffocating so that I want to dissect my body!”,<sup>314</sup> but before the feeling develops further, he then always goes out from the meditation hall and take a walk. Sunim P and J, however, had experienced serious years-long symptoms, and they stated the primary reason for the sickness as too intense exertion. Neglecting eating and sleeping sometimes, they often used to sit for nearly twenty hours a day during retreats. Becoming proficient at immersing in *yiqing* which was naturally aroused triggered greater resolution to continue focusing on the meditation for both monks. During this period, they also felt fury which again led them to devote themselves more to the meditation. Due to the feeling of fury, Sunim J “couldn’t sleep a wink, couldn’t eat... I just kept sitting, forgetting sleep and food”.<sup>315</sup> While both monks were vehemently pushing their practice, they felt also

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310 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

311 I try not to specify who had which pathological symptoms to protect their rights over the health information.

312 Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

313 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 11. 2021.

314 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

315 Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020. This is in fact similar what Gaofeng experienced as a state of *yiqing*. In the Essentials of Chan, it is described that he was sick before he finally immersed in *yiqing*, and *yiqing* on the right *huatou* was the cure of his sickness. Tong-

strong resentment – which both identified with Gaofeng’s ‘great fury’<sup>316</sup> - over their status quo where they could not reach a greater breakthrough. For these monks, such fury was both emotional anger - which Suk-Hyun Kim<sup>317</sup> rules out from the connotations of Gaofeng’s ‘great fury’ - as well as ‘passion’ and “the courage necessary to abandon himself seemingly to ultimate disaster: his own personal destruction”<sup>318</sup> - which is Buswell’s interpretation of ‘great fury’.

Sunim P who was in the beginning much influenced by great Kanhua Chan masters’ stress on zealous striving realized one day that he was too strained doing Ganhwa Seon compared to when he practiced Vipassana meditation that he used to do before joining the sangha. He said, “Ganhwa Seon is not just contemplating on your mind like Vipassana. You have to keep focusing on your *yiqing* until it surrenders”.<sup>319</sup> While sitting still, one must actively work on *yiqing*, and thus “no matter how hard I tried to relax, I couldn’t help getting tensed again”,<sup>320</sup> he said. Sunim J who experienced the most severe *sangki* sickness among my respondents said, “the body felt worthless because I thought the body was one day supposed to be abandoned. I shouldn’t have thought like that, though”.<sup>321</sup> He eventually had to take a long-term acupuncture therapy which he found most efficacious for him after trying several other types of treatment.

They learned how to do the meditation in a way that fits them “by being sick so much”<sup>322</sup> as Sunim P expressed. Thereby, they got namely to be able to combine ‘zealous striving’ with the teachings of masters such as “‘not in a rush’ nor ‘slackly’”,<sup>323</sup> “both alertness and calmness in harmony”<sup>324</sup>, “neither too tensed nor too loose just like when the strings of geomungo”.<sup>325</sup> Sunim P analogized the moment he fully sensed how to do it as if:

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gwang, *Gobonghwasang seonyo · eorok [the Essentials of Chan by Gaofeng Yuanmiao and His Record of Sayings]*, trans. Tong-gwang (Seoul: Bulgwang Chulpanbu, 1993), 53.

<sup>316</sup> See section 5.2, p. 00.

<sup>317</sup> See section 5.2, p. 00.

<sup>318</sup> Buswell, *Transformation of Doubt*, 236.

<sup>319</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

<sup>320</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

<sup>321</sup> Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

<sup>322</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

<sup>323</sup> See section 5.1, p.

<sup>324</sup> See section 5.3, p.

<sup>325</sup> See section 5.4, p.

An old man who enters and sits in a bathtub filled with hot water will say ‘ah, it hits the spot!’. The body is very relaxed... so he feels just comfortable without any thoughts.<sup>326</sup>

He found that relaxation was the most important for him, and that to put down the attached mind to his practice was necessary to do so. However, to maintain such state still requires effort for him. In addition to Vipassana meditation, yoga, and walking meditation that he does during and between retreats, he also emphasized ‘to take a rest’ saying:

...everybody talks about vehement practice of the meditation, but not about taking a rest. If your body is not healthy, the focusing power as well as sustaining power get low. Then, you can never go into the deep absorption.<sup>327</sup>

Citing the strings of geomungo which mentioned by master Seongcheol, Sunim J said, “one should learn how to balance... when to strain and when to relieve”.<sup>328</sup>

Through performing the meditation repeatedly, the practitioners started to fill in the space between lines of the formal script of the ritual with either their own regular sequence or temporarily improvisation as occasion demands. In other words, as Grimes says,<sup>329</sup> although the ‘formal, public, and collective’ ritual is ‘enacted as prescribed’, the ritual is concurrently ‘individual’ and ‘improvisational’ to those who want to perform it through or more effectively.

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<sup>326</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

<sup>327</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

<sup>328</sup> Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

<sup>329</sup> Grimes, *Craft of Ritual*, 6.

### 6.3 Discovery of *yiqing*

Before starting to practice Ganwha Seon, the respondents' knowledge of *yiqing* seemed not more than what the literature and teachers teach about it. What Sunim G talked about his first retreat shows how the practitioners struggled in the beginning. He said:

I received the *huatou* 'an oak tree in the garden' from the master. When a monk asked why Bodhidharma came to the east, Joshu replied 'an oak tree in the garden'. So, I constantly asked myself 'why?'... As soon as I got the *huatou*, I was tormented by it during the whole retreat. Some concentration on the question 'why' lasted for a bit, then suddenly I lost it... then if I got a little careless, other thoughts would be mixed in it... no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't sustain the sole and clear mind of asking why.<sup>330</sup>

Having practiced the meditation for many years, however, all of them believed that they knew their own *yiqing* based on what they had gone through during and between retreats. To my question "what is *yiqing*?", their first definition of it was short and similar, meaning like 'a questioning mind or doubt about the *huatou*'<sup>331</sup>, which specifies that it is about the *huatou*. As the interviews were proceeding with a number of additional questions such as "how was it when you first managed to generate it?", "did it go well in the beginning?", "why was it difficult?", "could you tell me anything related to your *yiqing* experience?", "have you experienced a moment that *yiqing* (*yidan*<sup>332</sup>) shattered?", "what changes have you noticed after the experience?", etc., however, their talks on the topic expanded involving other aspects of *yiqing* that they found. I analyzed their answers into two themes.

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<sup>330</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10, 2021.

<sup>331</sup> The first meanings of *yiqing* the respondents gave me were: doubt (as a question) about the *huatou* (Sunim J, Sunim N, Sunim G, and Sunim L), 'true' doubt about the *huatou* (Sunim K), doubt that arises 'inevitably' about the *huatou*, (Sunim O), 'not-knowing' mind about *huatou* (Sunim H), 'wondering' about the *huatou* by 'not trying to find the answer' (Sunim M), and 'just' wondering about the *huatou*, 'asking why' (Sunim P).

<sup>332</sup> For most of them *yidan* was recognized as just a textual term referring to a synonym of *yiqing* or as strong state of *yiqing*. Since they did not use the term except for when I mentioned, I do not deal with it in this chapter.

The first is that *yiqing* which was recognized by the respondents is related to awareness of personal problems which retains ‘desperate’<sup>333</sup> desire or motive to solve the problems. About my question ‘whether existential questions or problems that one was facing could be also seen as *yiqing*’, most of them<sup>334</sup> answered affirmatively. Sunim H told me that “*yiqing* could arise more easily to the beginner meditators”<sup>335</sup> because of their strong awareness of “personal inner problems and sufferings”<sup>336</sup> and “clear goal to solve them”.<sup>337</sup> Rephrasing the term as “alert mind”,<sup>338</sup> Sunim G told me that “it comes from being in pain, that is, desperate awareness of problems”.<sup>339</sup> He saw “a will to solve any problems without pain as just an ideal matter”.<sup>340</sup> For him, to arouse *yiging*, one should be desperate, and to do so feeling pain is prerequisite. He also called it “eye-opening experience”<sup>341</sup> which one could even have by constantly gazing at her/his own problems regardless of knowing about *yiqing*, and thus without associating the state with the term *yiqing*. Sunim J told me that the famous story of how master Gyeongheo from the Joseon dynasty became a great Seon master as an example of the urgency or desperation.<sup>342</sup>

Sunim O and Sunim L, moreover, believed that one could in essence make an *huatou* autonomously by desperately asking about her/his own problems. Sunim O said,

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333 All of them, except for Sunim M, emphasized “urgency” or “desperate” drive, which Mengshan also stressed. See section 5.3.

334 I could not get an answer to this question from Sunim M who had just completed his third retreat when we had the interview. Considering himself still a neophyte, he was very careful to talk about the topic.

335 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

336 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

337 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

338 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

339 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

340 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

341 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

342 Gyeongheo Seong-u (1846-1912) who is seen as the revivor of the Seon practice in modern times by the Jogye Order joined the sangha at the age of nine. He learned the canons of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism until he became a renowned lecturer at Buddhist monastic college (Kr. gang-won) in 1871. A famous episode about how he turned into a meditation master from a dharma master is often brought up by contemporary Seon monks with respect to his resolution to enter the meditation practice. One day he visited a village to take shelter from a sudden storm on his way to meet his former teacher in 1879. Unwontedly, nobody let him in their houses. When heard that it was because a fatal epidemic taking away the inhabitants’ lives was spreading the village, he could not move his body enveloped by fear of death. Standing under a tree until the next day, he realized that his knowledge could not lead to liberation from such existential suffering. The realization sparked off his determination to embark upon the meditation practice. After coming back to the temple where he used to teach dharma, he isolated himself holding a knife in one hand and setting up an awl in front of his throat in order to defeat sleepiness in a locked room with a tiny hole for receiving a rice ball. It is known that he had a breakthrough after such performance of the meditation practice for three months.

For those who are unenlightened, every mind is *yiqing*, and the *huatou* we know is the result of... that such *yiqing* was patterned. So, masters' *yiqing* is not different from mine.<sup>343</sup>

Calling Ganhwa Seon “theatre of situations”<sup>344</sup> between the master who gave or made the *huatou* and student who should pretend to be the monk who gave the question to the master in the *gong'an*. he underlined that the meditation method is still necessary for its practitioners because such autonomous practice based on self-discipline works only for “religious genius”<sup>345</sup> like masters from the Tang dynasty. Sunim L said that he would always tell lay students to adopt their own questions as the *huatou* in their Ganhwa Seon practice. Remember he did not have any questions to find answer to through Ganhwa Seon when he first started Ganhwa Seon. He did it not because he was desperate for it, but he was told to do so by his master who he wanted to become like. The fact that he did not have the motive to solve his own problems through the meditation can probably be a clue to his failure in learning how to fit himself in the meditation after the five-years of effort which led him not to attend retreat anymore. His story about how he returned to Ganhwa Seon seems to correlate with his stance on the *huatou*. One day, he was walking down to the parking lot from the main buildings in a temple. When passing by the restroom building, a boy was walking towards him. He greeted the boy asking, “hey boy, where are you going?”<sup>346</sup> The boy smiled and replied, “you know that”.<sup>347</sup> The boy’s answer suddenly kindled strong *yiqing* on the *huatou* in him although he could not explain why. One thing he could tell was that his question about the *huatou* never left him but more waxed while he was practicing Vipassana meditation instead of Ganhwa Seon. In other words, his question about the *huatou* had become personal problem to him as a Seon monk, and the desire to untangle the knot of his failed practice had grown stronger while he stood away from the retreat.

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343 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

344 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

345 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

346 Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

347 Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

Although most of the practitioners had clear awareness of their problems and desperate aspiration to solve them, all of them struggled<sup>348</sup> with learning *yiqing* through performing Ganhwa Seon. This fact signifies that *yiqing* in the meditation is not completely identical to the personal problems of the respondents. Whereas personal problems which served as factors of their motivation to become a Seon monastic practitioner can come under the category of *yiqing*, *yiqing* on the *huatou* does not always refer to such problems. How did the respondents connect *yiqing* on the *huatou* and personal problems then? To this question which I did not ask during the interviews, Sunim G's remark below might work as a reply:

When this [asking 'why' about the *huatou*] is continuously repeated, it's gradually becoming mine, that is, internalized as my problems... but my own problems are the start and the end [of Ganhwa Seon]. The end is completed after confirming that my problems have been solved. Breakthrough [of the *huatou*] without my problems is useless...when they're still in me, it's meaningless.<sup>349</sup>

This statement has two points that we can pay attention to. One is that the question about the *huatou* is *yiqing* when it becomes one's personal problems as in the case of Sunim L. The other is that *yiqing* is valid when it meets one's own problems that she/he have had before receiving the *huatou* in the sense that the problems must be solved together with the problem as *yiqing*.<sup>350</sup>

Then, how did the respondents distinguish *yiqing* from awareness of the other problems? How and when did they know that they properly generated *yiqing* while performing the meditation? We can approach these questions with the second theme I want to talk about: *yiqing* as various mental/physical states recognized by the respondents. Most of the respondents commonly used the term '*yiqing* state' which they basically referred to a state of absorption<sup>351</sup> where "the mind is fully immersed in *yiqing*"<sup>352</sup> as Sunim P defined.

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348 Sunim O asked me back, "if it was so easy, why have I been doing this for thirty years?" when I asked him whether he could consider him to be proficient at *Ganhwa Seon*, especially at working on *yiqing*." Sunim O. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, February 28. 2021.

349 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

350 This view resonates with Dahui's saying "the thousands upon thousands of instances of *doubt* are just the "single *doubt*". See section 5.1, p.

351 This state they mentioned was similar to Gaofeng's description of *yiqing*. See section 5.2, p.

352 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 17. 2020.

Nevertheless, *yiqing* states they talked about were not like *dhyāna* state of higher levels from the Theravada tradition where “all sense-activity is suspended... mental activity becomes progressively more attenuated”.<sup>353</sup>

Sunim G asked me back, “why do you think the Chan masters called it *yiqing* when they could still use the term *yixin*?”, and he answered to his own question:

To constantly repeat this [Ganhwa Seon, that is, participating in the retreats] may look boring, but it’s not boring at all. Why? ... even though I’ve been repetitively doing it for thirty years... Because it’s *yiqing*... This feeling called *yiqing* is something vivid. Feeling is vivid regardless of what kind. If you find new love, your heart leaps up, even though you fell in love thousand times before. Likewise, when *yiqing* appears, you find your *yiqing*, it’s always vivid. And it’s sticky and so it has sustaining strength.<sup>354</sup>

He described *yiqing* as vivid and sustaining feeling caused by ‘wanting to know’ why about the *huatou*, while *yixin* is a mere question ‘why’ about the *huatou*. His question about the *huatou* finally turned into *yiqing* when he found the state where such feeling was vividly present to him. Once being absorbed in it, he would “feel comfortable with the body, and time flows quickly... the mind becomes more alert”.<sup>355</sup> After experiencing the state several times, he had asked himself whether it could be what the masters said as ‘wide awake’ or ‘alertness’ (Kr. *seonseong*), which master Mengshan emphasized.<sup>356</sup> Two other respondents<sup>357</sup> also mentioned Mengshan’s alertness when talking about their *yiqing*. Sunim K said:

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<sup>353</sup> Keown, “dhyāna” in *Dictionary of Buddhism* <https://www-oxfordreference-com.pva.uib.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-1570?rskey=BnzuR2&result=5>. Regarding this point, Buswell’s remark on Ganhwa Seon from the book based on his personal five-year experience as a Seon monk at a Korean Seon monastery is worth noting: “If one were to try to place the state of mind engendered through Kanhwa practice in the stages in Buddhist meditation outlined in the Theravada school, I believe it would be rather more akin to “access concentration” (upacara-samadhi), which accompanies ten specific types of discursive contemplations. In access concentration, the meditator generates sufficient concentration to remain focused on his object of meditation, but not so much concentration that his mind becomes absorbed in full-blown meditative absorption (dhyana), when all sensory awareness is temporarily allayed.” Buswell, *Zen Monastic*, 159.

<sup>354</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 9. 2021.

<sup>355</sup> Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 9. 2021.

<sup>356</sup> See section 5.3, p.

<sup>357</sup> The other is Sunim M, but he just shortly mentioned it saying that he felt alert.

It's very lively. It has tremendous energy, but very calm at the same time... when you have only doubt [*yixin*] about the *huatou*, it's not lively. But when you have true *yiqing*, it's tight, tensed, but very calm. Then, I don't hold the *huatou*, the *huatou* just comes to me. It's the state where my breath, my body, and my energy become one, so I feel very comfortable...<sup>358</sup>

Mentioning similar states as *yiqing*, Sunim H went into detail about the difference between *yiqing* and *dhyāna* state as deep absorption in which all sense activities can cease. According to him, *yiqing* can carry over outside the meditation hall, and thus one can be immersed in it while eating and talking. He analogized it with a mental state:

It is like when you lost your wallet with your entire fortune in it, when you have starved over a week, and when you love somebody.<sup>359</sup> No matter what you do, the question 'where is my wallet', yearning for food... longing for the person you love are strongly in you. You can't stop it. That's *yiqing*.<sup>360</sup>

This is in line with 'practice in the midst of action'<sup>361</sup> underlined by Dahui. However, the point is not on one's duty to work on it anytime but on the persisting *yiqing* that one cannot avoid sensing although it does not necessarily lead to a breakthrough as in Mengshan's description of the *yidan* state he had before the moment of the final awakening.<sup>362</sup> Sunim L shared his story about a similar state he had experienced since the encounter with the boy who triggered his *yiqing*. Being immersed in *yiqing*, for instance, he had to drive his car from the temple where he met the boy. While driving, he felt like his field of vision was very limited as if there

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358 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

359 The Korean Seon master Taego (1301-1381) from the Goryeo dynasty teaches how to focus on the *huatou* as follows: "Just be alert and focused in this way, focused and alert, and closely investigate it in detail. It is, for example, just like a baby remembering its mother, like when one is hungry one thinks of food, when one is thirsty one thinks of water. The Recorded Sayings of Taego. Jorgensen, *Seon Dialogues* 340. However, Taego does not mention *yiqing* in the saying. For more information about Taego, see section 2, p.

360 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

361 See section 5.1, p.

362 See section 5.3, p.

were only the things that he had to sense such as the steering wheel or the road ahead of him in the world. He said:

I could sense things, so I was driving. Everything was there. The car was there, and I was driving, but the space felt different...it had been impossible to arouse *yiqing* before, so I had tried many ways like chanting the *huatou* asking why ‘no...no...no...’, breathing with the *huatou*...even tapping on my belly... writing the *huatou* with a wooden poker. Then, the focus didn’t last more than thirty minutes... But now the *yiqing* state lasted over a month... I felt like it was in me for twenty-four hours a day, even while I was having a meal and meeting people. I wasn’t tired at all, but it was rather a relaxed state.<sup>363</sup>

Although ‘being relaxed’ was commonly mentioned as one of the features of *yiqing* states by these four practitioners, all the respondents did not necessarily always feel relaxed when being immersed in their *yiqing*. Even after discovering what *yiqing* is and getting used to arousing it, a practitioner can be taken with *sangki* sickness and seized with fury or rapture while being faced with *yiqing*. As introduced in section 6.2, Sunim P and Sunim J had gone through severe *sangki* symptoms when they were most fiercely focusing on Ganhwa Seon. The two practitioners were sitting for almost twenty hours a day because their state of being fully immersed in *yiqing* drove them not only to put more energy into the meditation, but also to notice their status quo that they did not solve their problems yet. Sometimes they sat for many hours having a great fury in *yiqing* over the status quo, and other times they felt extreme rapture. About the rapture he had while doing walking meditation, Sunim P told me:

Suddenly the foot of the mountain ahead of me captured my eyes. There was the horizon between the sky and the mountain. When I saw it, the mountain which was far away from me suddenly came to me and stuck on my right eye, instantaneously... then, as soon as it was disappearing, I felt some energy was rising from my heels. It was so gratifying and delightful... I did dance on the road... I felt a twinge like an electricity shower in my body.<sup>364</sup>

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363 Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

364 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

During the meditation, Sunim P also had feeling of tremendous sadness because of his dead mother who he had not thought about much since she passed away almost thirty years ago. Regarding such various feelings, Sunim H commented that “hidden things appear”<sup>365</sup> concurrently with *yiqing* as discovery of one’s own problems. As working on *yiqing* proceeds, he said, “desires that one had in the past, anger, resentment, self-esteem, depression, and all appear and are amplified with *yiqing*”.<sup>366</sup> He analogized *yiqing* with a sunlight coming into the window when one has drawn aside the curtains. According to him, as the sunlight let one see the dust particles floating in the room, *yiqing* lights a meditator’s problems that she/he must break through together with *yiqing* on the *huatou*. In other words, *yiqing* aroused by the *huatou* comes upon the personal problems that the practitioners were aware of explicitly and implicitly.

To put together the descriptions of *yiqing* that the interview respondents provided, *yiqing* is awareness of personal problems, desperate desire to solve them, and certain states which have a sustaining strength having characteristics of relaxed, vivid, and arousing both emotions like fury and rapture and physical symptoms. Discovering it, recognizing it, individualizing it, and continuously updating it, the respondents had been working on it, that is, generating it and immersing themselves in it. Therefore, *yiqing* seems to resonate with ‘motivation’ in the sense that motivation refers to “a driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction, and vigour of goal-directed behaviour.” As mentioned in section 6.1, from a psychological perspective, motivation is closely related to emotion. Regarding this point, Chales Stangor and Jennifer Walinga explain, “... emotions and motivations involve arousal, or our experiences of the bodily responses created by the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). ... emotions and motivations are “hot” — they “charge,” “drive,” or “move” our behaviour.”<sup>367</sup> In the case of the respondents, the goal-directed behavior is to perform Ganhwa Seon. The respondents’ descriptions of *yiqing* experience - such as ‘sticky’, ‘tremendous energy’, irresistible ‘yearning for food’, ‘longing for person one loves’, ‘gratifying’, ‘delightful’, ‘a twinge like an

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<sup>365</sup> Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

<sup>366</sup> Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021. Sunim N also said, “sometimes when sitting, especially during the first years, emotions... the innermost feelings, conflicts can arise strongly.” Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

<sup>367</sup> Stangor and Walinga, *Introduction to Psychology*, chap. 11.

electricity shower', 'fury', etc. – can be seen as 'arousal'. Seen in this way, it seems that *yiqing* as the practitioners' cognitive state has a possible relation with motivation as a psychological process, which I have decided not to investigate into further in this thesis. However, what can certainly be said here about *yiqing* would be: the *yiqing* that had been sustained in the respondents seems to serve as a crucial driving force of their practice of Ganwha Seon.

## 6.4 Changes as discovery and inquiry

Through performing Ganwha Seon, the practitioners gained new knowledge not only about the meditation itself – that is, about how to do it and *yiqing*, but also about themselves and the world. The knowledge was derived from the changes that the practitioners underwent and then became aware of through performing the ritual. Without the awareness, that is, discovery, as Sunim H said, the meditation method of “Ganwha Seon can be regarded as too simple...thus, the meditator never knows what's going on and so can have the feeling of futility while sitting”.<sup>368</sup> Sunim P told me that for those who “don't find anything in the meditation, one or two years of practice are even too long. Then, they do something else”,<sup>369</sup> which was the case of Sunim L who once chose to practice Vipassana meditation instead. My respondents talked about various changes that transpired to them not only when I asked, “what changes have you experienced?” but also throughout the interviews. This section deals with such changes under three categories that I made after analyzing the interviews, and the categories are: alteration of the meditation, changes of goals, and transformation of the practitioners themselves.

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<sup>368</sup> Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021

<sup>369</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 13. 2021.

### 6.4.1 Alteration of the meditation

After at least over ten-years of attending the retreats, most of the interview respondents – except for Sunim M - became proficient in doing the meditation. When I asked, “would you say that Ganhwa Seon is the best Buddhist practice method?” and “would you recommend Ganhwa Seon to other people?”, all the respondent answered ‘no’ articulating that one should find a method that fits herself/himself. However, all of them believed that the most suitable method for themselves was Ganhwa Seon.<sup>370</sup> Diverse challenges that they had faced such as *sangki* symptoms and new problems such as anger, sadness, worries, conflicts, etc. led them to understand more about themselves both physically and mentally. Although such challenges may be generally considered obstruction<sup>371</sup> of the meditation, to notice them served as both necessary and invaluable discovery to know better about their body and mind, so long as the practitioners recognized them as inquiry that they must solve and sought the solution. Applying their own ways<sup>372</sup> to overcome the challenges, they became more skillful at the meditation. Their knowledge of how to do Ganhwa Seon got deepened, and thus they got to know further of what to do to conduct the meditation more efficaciously.

As an extension of the individual and improvisational means the respondents had employed in performing the meditation, which is mentioned in section 6.2, some of them had found unique ways to continue the meditation under the fixed schedule of the retreats. Sunim P’s way was to lay down the *hautou*. He said:

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<sup>370</sup> Sunim M who had just finished his third retreat also believed so albeit not completely certain yet. He told me that even his negative view on those who quit the monkhood had changed since he realized that Ganhwa Seon “fits” only some people. He said: “It can be a different choice of their practice. I don’t think that being a Buddhist monastic is the only way to solve the questions of life anymore.” Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, September 8. 2021.

<sup>371</sup> There is a study on such diverse symptoms that practitioners of Buddhist derived meditation experience. In the study based on qualitative interviews with Western practitioners of Theravāda, Zen, and Tibetan meditation traditions, Jared R. Lindahl, et al. defines such symptoms as ‘advert effect’ of the practice. Jared R. Lindahl, Nathan E. Fisher, David J. Cooper, Rochelle K. Rosen, and Willoughby B. Britton, “the Varieties of Contemplative Experience: A mixed-methods Study of Meditation-related Challenges in Western Buddhists,” *Plos One*, May 2017. (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0176239>)

<sup>372</sup> See section 6.2, p.00.

I realized that the *huatou* is an expedient after all ... to gather all deluded thoughts and questions into one, *yiqing* on the *huatou*. If some masters and monks hear what I said, they might think I am crazy... But I can't say that I don't use the *huatou* in the meditation at all, because I now observe my problems ...by virtue of the capability accumulated through focusing on the *huatou* for many years. The power in you is not something you can throw away. Let's say that you practiced weightlifting before and now you practice Taekwondo. Your power would be stronger than others who didn't practice anything like weightlifting. It's like your strength acquired through weightlifting doesn't disappear in you but helps you to make progress on Taekwondo now.<sup>373</sup>

Instead of focusing on his *huatou*, 'what is it', he started to meditate directly on the deluded mind in which his questions and problems would gather. When I asked him whether he would call it *yiqing*, he replied, "all deluded thoughts per se are *yiqing*".<sup>374</sup> If we can say that the *huatou* is the prescribed inquiry, the deluded mind with questions and problems which had continuously been discovered in his case, whether we call it *yiqing* or not, is the acquainted inquiry, just as Bertrand Russell' knowledge by acquaintance, that he obtained himself through performing the meditation.

Without listening to his story, he would look like merely a faithful performer of Ganhwa Seon who enacts the retreats as instructed – and he indeed is in the sense that he has participated in the retreats every year for the past fourteen years. However, what he has been doing to perfect his meditation is more than the instruction he had learn from masters and scripts. Apart from laying down the *huatou*, he practices yoga and Vipassana meditation albeit not while performing Ganhwa Seon as I discussed in section 6.2. Such additional means came into his practice from his discovery that he tended to become too strained while doing Ganhwa Seon and they helped him to keep a balance between exertion and relaxation which is also emphasized by masters such as Dahui and Seongcheol. He also told me that he must sit, that is, do Ganhwa Seon at least four hours a day even during the period between the retreats, because to continue the sitting makes his next retreat more 'comfortable'. His meditation where these methods were added is a fixed set of ritual for him which would never be noticed to others without his description of it.

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373 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

374 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

The ‘personal’ and ‘variant’ characteristics of his ritual can be seen in the light of Grimes’ ‘ritualizing’. According to Grimes, ritualizing is “the act of cultivating or inventing rites”<sup>375</sup> as a deliberate “attempt to activate”<sup>376</sup> the “stylized heritage”<sup>377</sup> of a tradition. When such invention is “sustained and developed”,<sup>378</sup> it becomes ritual.<sup>379</sup> To activate the prescribed Ganhwa Seon as the stylized heritage in accordance with his needs, he supplemented and revised the procedure of the meditation. Thereby, his ritual as Ganhwa Seon has changed from before. This change or variation of ritual is in line with Jennings’ ‘alteration’ of ritual. Underlining that any rituals that are known to us, even the ones that look most rigid and orthodox, are variations of their former versions,<sup>380</sup> Jennings argues that a ritual performer gains knowledge as a mode of inquiry and discovery through alteration of the ritual action. In Sunim P’s case, the changes are what he made from the discovery of himself and the meditation itself, and we could say that the changed parts of the ritual was set for another discovery he was searching for. When the new discovery turns into an inquiry to solve, the solution found by the performer can be the change that she or he applies to the ritual. In this way, the mode of discovery and inquiry circulates in ritual while leading to alteration of the ritual. The case of Sunim G, who entered a year-long retreat after the interviews with me, shows an example of such change. He said:

... when I push harder [i.e., intensively working on the meditation] ... I feel like something ticklish is waiting in the next stage. Then, for the next retreat, I go to a meditation center where the practitioners usually sit without sleeping. When I need to reflect on myself and to rearrange myself, I go to a meditation center where they do the meditation only in the morning and evening.<sup>381</sup>

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375 Grimes, *Craft of Ritual*, 193.

376 Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual*, 60.

377 Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual*, 43.

378 Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual*, 62.

379 The development of Kanhua Seon can also be seen as a continuity of ritualizing. In Dahui’s Kanhua Chan, *Huatou*, one of the key elements of the meditative method, is extraction of the formularized and stylized heritage of the tradition, that is, *gong-ans*. Dahui’s Chan is in line with this formula within the tradition of Linji Chan. Such creative formulae of Dahui have again become more established being adjusted throughout the history of Chan Buddhism having placed the role of *yiqing* in the center of the practice.

380 Jennings argues, “A diachronic perspective on ritual, together with a cross-cultural comparison of putatively identical rituals, brings to light considerable variation which cannot be accounted for by the view of ritual action as sheer repetition”. Jennings, *Ritual Knowledge*, 113

381 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

Although the fact that Sunim G participates in the retreats and performs Ganhwa Seon there every year has not changed, how many hours a day he meditates – and so which meditation hall he attends - and what he puts weight on during the retreats in accordance with the inquiries he has found – namely, to know what is waiting in the next, to reflect on himself, and to arrange himself - change. Some of the respondents, Sunim H, Sunim, P and Sunim K, also mentioned such adjustment as a matter of course. Accordingly, for example, Sunim K had attended the retreats, including interval retreats, four to eight times a year.

#### 6.4.2 Changes of goals

Together with alteration of the meditation method, the problems that the respondents wanted to solve through their meditation performance had also more or less changed. We saw in section 6.1 that most of the respondents' common goal of their practice was to solve their personal questions and problems when they first began the meditation. While the goal itself stayed solid to the respondents most of whom had confirmed that the meditation was effective for the goal in praxis, what to solve through the meditation was variable. It is because firstly, some problems that they had when they started the retreat “were diluted or already solved”,<sup>382</sup> as Sunim G said, after having practiced the meditation for some. Secondly, they found other problems that they had not been aware of before or they got to look at the same problems from another angle. The challenges they had clearly noticed and experienced bodily during and after the retreats were not only new knowledge that they gained through doing the meditation, but also new problems as the elements that would raise *yiqing* in their meditation performance. Regarding such changes, Sunim H gave me a notable remark:

The masters in books, in textbooks... their goals don't usually change while practicing and even until they got enlightened. But ordinary people's goals are modified on the way along with spiritual growth. In the beginning, the goal can be to reach an imaginary ... ideal world of enlightenment that people presume based on their knowledge or to solve the problems or anguish of life. The latter, for example, can be

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382 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

achieved after five to ten years of doing [Ganhwa Seon] at least to some degree. At this moment, you can continue it [i.e., the meditation] only if you find another goal.<sup>383</sup>

What Sunim H said was valid to most of my respondents. Some of them told me that it was because the wisdom or insight that they gained through Ganhwa Seon led them to see the problems deeper. Sunim P who had realized that relaxation was the key to the progress of his meditation performance after going through years-long *sangki* sickness, for instance, said:

It was wisdom that I didn't have before... Realizing about relaxation, I saw the fear, anxiety was all from attachment to life, my ego ... If you have nothing to lose, nothing can control you. The attachment is something that threatens to take things that you don't want to lose from you, isn't it?<sup>384</sup>

The fear of death which made him out of breath as the main problem that he wanted to solve when he started Ganhwa Seon 14 years ago did not trouble him anymore. To my question 'what is your current goal?', his answer was to be free from the attachment. Sunim K said that such wisdom which had led to change of her view of life and the world also came from the insight into various Buddhist teachings she had obtained by "repeatedly experiencing such [i.e., *yiqing*] state"<sup>385</sup> - albeit without an explanation of the relation between 'such state' and the insight. Sunim G, similarly, told me that years of practicing Ganhwa Seon made him see that different teachings of Buddhism that people would consider contradictory to each other were not contradictory, and thus "problems are in the tunnel vision not in the teachings".<sup>386</sup> In fact, all the respondents believed that Ganhwa Seon enabled them to understand teachings of Seon and Buddhism in general deeper. What they newly understood is also knowledge which not only they gained, but also was 'transmitted' to them through performing Ganhwa Seon. One of the noetic functions of ritual suggested by Jennings is 'to transmit knowledge'. In this case, the knowledge that Ganhwa Seon as ritual transmits is what the path as Seon Buddhism or Buddhism teaches the practitioners. Although all the respondents did not even say that they

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383 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

384 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

385 Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

386 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

were close to enlightenment which is the ultimate and doctrinal goal of the path, they all had moments of great and small awakenings which brought them the insight into what the path teaches.<sup>387</sup>

One of the questions I gave them when we talked about goals was “what is enlightenment to you?” Remember that enlightenment was none of the respondents’ initial goal when they started Ganhwa Seon. The personal problems they were confronted with were more urgent matters for them to solve than the abstract concept of enlightenment. Then again, doing Ganhwa Seon seemed to lead the respondents to not only get the sense of enlightenment but also have it as their goal. When I expressed my assumption that some practitioners’ goal could be enlightenment from the beginning, Sunim H said:

The practitioners whose initial goal was enlightenment get to see that the enlightenment they imagined was an ideal and wrong goal. Hence, even though some say that their goal of doing the meditation is enlightenment, the content of enlightenment would not be the same as before. It’s like... you are now aiming at a different target with your bow, for you realized that the target you shot an arrow at earlier in the belief that it was enlightenment was not enlightenment.<sup>388</sup>

Most of them, except for Sunim G, told me their own definition of enlightenment drawing on what they experienced through the meditation. For Sunim P, enlightenment was “the state that attachment [to life and ego] is extinct”.<sup>389</sup> He said that he got to believe that such state of “ultimate happiness”<sup>390</sup> would be enlightenment because he reached a similar state after he had a deep immersion in *yiqing* state which brought him, for example, the feeling of ‘a twinge like an electricity shower’,<sup>391</sup> even though he realized that it was not enlightenment<sup>392</sup> by noticing that attachment came back to him after some period passed. Sunim K also said:

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387 Sunim H, K, and P talked about the virtuous circle relation between this knowledge and the efficiency/effectiveness of their performance of the meditation.

388 Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 21. 2021.

389 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

390 Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

391 See section 6. 2, p.

392 Such self-evaluation of the result of a practitioner’s performance is a part of the process of gaining or updating knowledge about her/his performance as well as herself/himself. This procedure is an exclusive and proper role of the practitioner. Most of the respondents thought that the importance of the self-evaluation in

The deeper you go into the meditation, although how deep can't be expressed, the more you can see immediately, the more the meditation proves ... that enlightenment is to live every moment truly ... that I become the truth itself.<sup>393</sup>

The definitions by both Sunim L, “to see clearly all the transformations I undergo one by one, and every point of the process itself”<sup>394</sup> and Sunim J, “complete transformation of consciousness as wisdom itself that never goes back to the one in the past”<sup>395</sup> were grounded in the changes that they believed Ganhwa Seon led to them. Their own meanings of enlightenment, one of Buddhism's fundamental elements which Rappaport calls “Ultimate Sacred Postulates”, were created by the respondents from their experiences. Moreover, once they began to believe that there would be enlightenment, whether they believe that they would be able to reach it or not, the faith that the meditation was the right method to achieve it was also confirmed and stronger. This resonates with Rappaport's argument that a path's “certain meanings and effects can best, or even only, be expressed or achieved in ritual”<sup>396</sup> and what the performers experience in ritual “reinforces acceptance and certainty with belief or conviction”.<sup>397</sup>

Sunim G, however, refused to define enlightenment at first saying:

Enlightenment is not what I am living with. I don't use such word, even a word like happiness. I don't think it's right to express what I feel with such terms. I would rather sympathize with striking a fist out of what one feels ... What I only can do is to swing the *huatou* using my hands and to work on *yiqing* further... if enlightenment is there in the end, then that's it. You should go to

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Ganhwa Seon would be one of the reasons why it is uncommon that Ganhwa Seon practitioners meet their master to check their awakenings. Sunim P said, “hence, you simply know that what you need is more meditating not a check-up.” Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, April 14. 2021.

<sup>393</sup> Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

<sup>394</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 13. 2021.

<sup>395</sup> Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, December 18. 2020.

<sup>396</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 30.

<sup>397</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion*, 419.

Seoul step by step and then you say it's Seoul when you arrive there, but you can't say it when you don't even know where and how it is. You do your best every day having fun or joy and then you could say that the life you had was happiness eventually, but it sounds wrong to me that you try to fill your days for the vague word, happiness.<sup>398</sup>

To define enlightenment was the impossible for him who had an empiricist stance preferring “to use words based on touch with reality... and to draw feelings and sense to my feet”<sup>399</sup> because he had never had it yet. For him, any attempt to make a meaning of it was not only further conceptualization of a practitioner's experience which was already interpreted<sup>400</sup> by the practitioner since it happened, but also presumption of the end of the meditation practice. Emphasizing that Ganhwa Seon “begins and ends exhaustively by myself”,<sup>401</sup> the performer, he told me that he was not anymore keeping his eyes far away on the star symbolized as the Buddha which he used to practice towards before but was “trying to put my eyes under my feet”.<sup>402</sup> I asked him “what would be your final goal then?” He answered, “all the problems are solved even to below the threshold of consciousness”.<sup>403</sup> This reply gave me a hint that the other respondents' meanings of enlightenment could correspond to their current goal that could change someday although none of them mentioned enlightenment as their goal. The meanings that they had not had before are highly related to their problems that they discovered while conducting Ganhwa Seon. Therefore, we could say that the end of the meditation practice or enlightenment for the respondents is the state they want to achieve in which their problems are all extinguished.

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398 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

399 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

400 Being particularly wary of conceptualizing meditative experience, Sunim G said, “to get a sense of unexperienced world is as hard and impossible as a computer grasps human feelings. One might belittle the long-term experience of Ganhwa Seon practice just regarding it as so-called mystical experience... but then again what you sense during the meditation is not something that you can talk about at that moment, but something you recall and gauge later, isn't it? ... so, I don't think about it... and I even try to push it out of my mind sometimes.” Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 9. 2021.

401 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

402 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

403 Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 12. 2021.

### 6.4.3 Transformation

When I asked them “why do you continue Ganhwa Seon?”, the reasons they gave me were more than just ‘to solve their problems’. They continue the meditation because: they liked it, they wanted to know what more they could experience in the future, it made them happy, comfortable, clearer, etc., but above all it made them ‘who they are’ now. Regarding this, the last change that I would like to discuss is ‘transformation’ of the practitioners. Transformation here refers to a permanent change of who the performers are, which ritual brings about to them.<sup>404</sup> In ritual studies, transformation is also used as a relative concept of ‘transportation’. While rites of passage such as a wedding ceremony, baptismal service, and a Buddhist rite of ordination are examples of transformation ritual which is also called liminal ritual, transportation means a temporary change which occurs when “one enters into the experience, is “moved” or “touched” ... and is then dropped off about where she or he entered”.<sup>405</sup> By performing transportation ritual, the performer can experience various “overwhelmingly powerful emotions”<sup>406</sup> such as trance, rapture, fury, twinge, etc. To draw on this explanation, Ganhwa Seon can be an example of transportation ritual because *yiqing* state that the respondents described in section 6.2 is only temporarily experienced during the meditation – and for some time after the meditation. However, their repetitive performance of the retreats, by which they were repetitively immersed into *yiqing* states, seemed to transpire a certain transformation to them as well.

To the interview respondents who had participated in the retreats more than 10 years, Ganhwa Seon became the impossible not to do. For example, Ganhwa Seon is “something just natural to continue, not something to try to continue, as if water flows”<sup>407</sup> for Sunim H who said, “my everything works as it should only if I do Ganhwa Seon”.<sup>408</sup> Sunim P said that he would never stop the meditation looking forward to discovering new things about himself because all he acquired through doing it “made me who I am today”.<sup>409</sup> Now their body feels comfortable by keeping on sitting for the retreats, and their perceptions and thoughts work

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<sup>404</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 72.

<sup>405</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 72.

<sup>406</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 72.

<sup>407</sup> Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 18. 2021.

<sup>408</sup> Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 18. 2021.

<sup>409</sup> Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 14. 2021.

under the influence of the embodied and cognitive knowledge that they gained through Ganhwa Seon. When changes of bodily habits and views are deemed transformation, such transformation would happen continuously throughout the course of their practice of Ganhwa Seon. However, the transformation which shows that Ganhwa Seon has a characteristic of a liminal ritual differs from great and small changes as such. The transformation is, namely, that they became true Seon monastics which is their identity that separates them from other Buddhist monastics whose duties vary such as studying and teaching Buddhist scripts, conducting services and ceremonies mainly with chanting, and doing social service in an organization, and administrating a temple. In the eyes of an outsider, the identity could be applied to all the practitioners who participate in the retreats. Nevertheless, the identity, a Ganwha Seon monastic (Kr. seonseung), can only be maintained so long as their participation continues, and the continuation seems only possible for those who became real Seon monastics to whom the circle of discovery and inquiry works as motive power to continue the meditation. Sunim K's remark below sums up such transformation. Saying that repeatedly being immersed in *yiqing* led her to see 'what she does', she told me:

Then, it's indomitable. I can't go back ... This is a complete change... Even if you know something through reading a book, when you are in an unmanageable environment again... you go back to your previous self again. But this [Ganhwa Seon] made me change completely... By doing [Ganhwa Seon], I got to know what kind of person I am, that is, a person who do this [i.e., Ganwha Seon].<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim, Personal Computer Recording, Bergen, March 10. 2021.

## 7 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to examine *yiqing*, the prerequisite essential of Kanhua Chan/Ganhwa Seon. Dahui Zonggao, the founder of Kanhua Chan, started to use the term *yiqing*, although similar terms such as *yi* and *yixin* which were used by not only previous Chan masters but also Dahui himself interchangeably with *yiqing*. Although all three terms are generally translated as doubt in English by scholars, the significant difference between *yiqing* and *yi/yixin* is that *yiqing* is the prerequisite essential of the Chan meditation method while the others are impediments of other Buddhist meditation practices. If I tried to find answers to my question “what is *yiqing*?” from the history and literature, the scholars’ textual-based explanations I discussed in chapter three would have served as sufficient answers. According to the explanations, *yiqing* is, namely, uncertainty/doubt about life as existential questions or one’s inherent Buddha-nature, perplexity about the illogical *huatou*, and the driving force of the meditation. When I looked at the living practitioners of the meditation who have been doing it for decades to generate *yiqing* until it is exploded, however, I found myself still asking “what on earth is *yiqing* for the practitioners?” and “how can they work on it for so long?”.

To explore the topic in both textual and ethnographical sources, I viewed the retreats of Korean Ganhwa Seon, a living form of the meditation, as a ritual. In the prescriptions of the ritual which I investigated in chapter five, *yiqing* was presented as the sine qua non in the meditation to reach enlightenment. When only fully generated *yiqing* completely bursts, a meditator can get enlightened according to the masters of Kanhua Chan/Ganhwa Seon. In the empirical data that I made employing qualitative interviews with nine Ganhwa Seon monastic practitioners, the first meaning of *yiqing* was identical to the teachings of the masters. For all the interview respondents, *yiqing* meant ‘a questioning mind or doubt about the *huatou*’ that they must work on until it extinguishes. However, *yiqing* had more diverse aspects than such description. I suggest my findings about *yiqing* with four points as follow.

The first is that *yiqing* was known to the respondents only through performing the meditation. None of the respondents, most of whom completed a full monastic education, figured out what *yiqing* was and how they should work on it when they just started to attend

the retreats. Although they were well-acquainted with the instruction of the meditation and pertinent scriptures of Chan Buddhism, it was something they must corporally learn through the body and action. What they first had to learn was how to adjust their body at sitting for eight to fourteen hours or more a day for three months. As their body began to fit in the sitting by attending the retreats repeatedly, they started to discover more about *yiqing*.

The second point is that most of them identified *yiqing* with one's awareness of personal 'urgent' or 'desperate' problems/questions and desire to solve it. Some of the respondents told me that *yiqing* on the *huatou* was only valid when it was internalized by meeting their personal problems, because the questions in *gong'ans* were not fundamentally different from their own problems. This aspect of *yiqing* was related to their motivation to become a Buddhist monk or to decide to dedicate themselves to Ganwha Seon. It was also connected to their goal as 'to solve the problems' that they wanted to achieve through the meditation. When they chose to become a meditation practitioner, all of them had a faith, albeit to different extents, that the meditation would help them to achieve the goal. After several years passed, the faith deepened, because through performing the mediation, the respondents not only got to see that some problems were already solved, but also obtained new insight or wisdom by which they could realize more fundamental causes of the problems. These changes of motivation that brought them new problems as *yiqing* seem to be a reason why they have been repeating the retreats for decades. This aspect of *yiqing* resonates with a psychological explanation of motivation as "factors that activate, direct, and sustain goal-directed actions"<sup>411</sup> In the case of the respondents, goal-directed action is the performance of Ganhwa Seon.

The third is that *yiqing* was mentioned as a state of deep absorption which was called 'yiqing state' by the respondents. The historical Chan masters like Gaofeng's and Mengshan described a similar state of deep meditation absorption where they were fully immersed in *yiqing*, that is, *yidan*, which led to their enlightenment. While the states that Gaofeng and Menghan had were depicted as completely senseless ones, however, the respondents told me that they had various feelings and experiences such as relaxation, emotions like fury and rapture, 'tremendous energy', 'a twinge like an electricity shower' and various symptoms of *sangki* sickness with diverse physical and mental symptoms being in *yiqing* state. Some of what they experienced, particularly, strong emotions, and pathological symptoms may look as

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<sup>411</sup> Nevid, *Psychology: Concepts*, 270.

advert effects of the meditation. However, such experiences seemed to make them learn more about their body and hidden things in their mind. Thereby, they got to know right and wrong of their performance as well as what they needed to do next, which also led to ‘alteration’ of the ritual. The respondents added improvisational means and unique variations to their meditation according to their needs based on what they found within the boundaries of the retreats.

The fourth is that they discovered their own meaning of enlightenment while working on *yiqing*. We saw, in chapter three, that scholars interpret *yiqing* as doubt that is derived from the tension between faith in Buddha-nature, the fundamental doctrine of Chan Buddhism, and their status quo of unenlightened being to the respondents. However, Buddha-nature was merely a theoretical/ideal concept for the respondents. Similarly, enlightenment which was an impalpable, or even irrelevant concept to them was never the goal in their first years of the meditation practice. After learning more about *yiqing*, nevertheless, they seemed to find the meaning of enlightenment. It was, namely, the state that their problems were all resolved. In other words, it was the state their *yiqing* completely disappeared although the problems of every respondent are individual matters. Seen in this way, we could say that the goal of the respondents eventually became enlightenment which none of them had as the initial aspiration of their meditation performance.

The last point is that Ganhwa Seon led to transformation of the respondents. The fact that some of the problems they had had been solved means that they had great and small awakenings even though none of the respondents extinguished all *yiqing* completely. As awakenings were repeated, they found themselves completely changed. I interpreted it as what the repetitive performance of the ritual brought to them, that is, transformation of themselves. Ganhwa Seon retreat may not look like a rite of passage that transforms the performer’s identity. Nevertheless, most of the respondents became true Seon monastic practitioners through performing Ganhwa Seon for decades. They got to know ‘who they are’, that is, Buddhist monastics who do Ganwha Seon. It was their identity that separates them from other Buddhist monastics whose main duties are not the meditation. This was one of the reasons why they had been attending the retreats for so many years and wanted to keep doing it believing that they could never go back to their previous selves.

Ritual is a set of actions of which the procedure is fixed, prescribed, and collectively/publicly performed. However, ritual has other characteristics such as individual, improvisational, and transformative. The ritual that my interview respondents conducted had

also these characteristics. While they strictly followed the schedule of the retreats and rules of the sitting, they gained new knowledge about the ritual individually, altered the way they performed it, and discovered transformation of themselves. Moreover, the respondents' descriptions of what they did and learned showed Ganhwa Seon was 'a means of gaining knowledge as a mode of inquiry and discovery' as Jennings argues as the main feature of ritual. Most of them started Ganhwa Seon to solve their problems as inquiry, and then by repeatedly performing it they discovered: how to do it properly, what *yiqing* is, knowledge about their body and mind, insight, wisdom, meaning of enlightenment, and again new problems and questions. What they discovered again brought them or became new inquiry they wanted to solve. The most crucial inquiry among them was their personal problems as *yiqing* by which Ganhwa Seon starts and ends as one the respondents, Sunim G, said. Therefore, I would like to conclude this thesis saying that Ganhwa Seon is a ritual of *yiqing* of which the focus is not on enlightenment, but the performer's individual problems. For my respondents, *yiqing* was their personal motivation, target to eliminate – and the elimination was their goal, and various states by which they discovered and realized more about themselves, what to do, and why they do the meditation.

## Appendix: How to Sit in Ganwha Meditation<sup>412</sup>

1. There are two postures for sitting: full lotus position and half lotus position. The full lotus position is the posture in which you place the right foot on top of the left thigh and then place the left foot on top of the right thigh. In this posture, the right foot should be brought towards you as closely as possible to be able to sit for a long period in a stable manner. The half lotus position is a posture in which either you place the right foot on top of the left thigh (Posture of Auspiciousness), or you place the left foot on top of the right thigh (Posture of Defeating Mara).
2. Straighten your back naturally in an upright position. Be careful not to feel tense in the shoulders. Align your ears with your shoulders. Your nose and navel align vertically.
3. In case you sit in the Posture of Auspiciousness, place your right palm in front of the *danjeon* (lit. "cinnabar field") over the left foot, and place your left hand over the right hand. *Danjeon* is the energy center located about nine centimeters below the navel. Your two thumbs should touch each other lightly (cosmic mudra). In case of the Posture of Defeating Mara, place the hands in the opposite way.
4. Relax your mouth and teeth. Close your lips lightly. Roll your tongue lightly and place it underneath the palate, touching it. The eyes are half-opened; don't open them too wide nor fully close them. Think as if you do not have a head and look at the floor 1-2 meters ahead of you.
5. Do not make your stomach full; stop eating when you feel like you might want a little more. The waistband should be loose. Try not to talk too much and let go of all tension.
6. Breathe naturally. Inhale a little more deeply than usual and exhale slowly. However, do not pay too much attention to the breath. Rather question the *huatou*.
7. With a determination to devote your whole body and mind to the *huatou*, you should become one with your *huatou*. Whether you think your sitting goes well or not, these thoughts are delusions. Only keep on taking hold of the *huatou* earnestly and truthfully. However, do not arouse the mind of fast attainment or laziness.

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<sup>412</sup> The whole text was brought almost intact, except for a few minor change – e.g., *hwadu* → *huatou* - from Gou et al.'s instruction. Gou et al., *Great Doubt*, 322-324.

8. When you feel drowsy and lose concentration, your posture becomes poor. Then the person who monitors the meditators in the meditation room may wake you up with a stick. This activity is referred to as "*gyeongchaek*" and is considered a teaching to develop correct practice. In administering *gyeongchaek*, the monitor puts first the stick on the right shoulder of the meditator to signal his intention of giving a warning by lightly pressing the stick. Then the meditator wakes up and sets the posture to receive the warning by inclining the head lightly to the left and joining his palms. The monitor hits the back or shoulders, waking up the practitioner and relieving muscle tension. After receiving the warning, he joins his palms again to show his gratitude. Then he resumes the correct sitting posture.

9. A sitting period usually lasts 50 minutes followed by 10-minute walking, but this does not have to be a fixed structure. After the sitting period ends, practice walking meditation (*gyeonghaeng*), walking around inside or outside the meditation room to relieve tension and pain accumulated in the legs. Even during *gyeonghaeng*, you must keep working on the *huatou*.

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## Interviews

Sunim G. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. March 9, 10, 11, and 12, 2021.

Sunim H. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. March 18, 21 and 25, 2021

Sunim J. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. December 18, 2020.

Sunim K. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. March 10, 2021.

Sunim L. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. March 13, 2021.

Sunim M. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. September 8 and 10, 2021.

Sunim O. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. February 25 and 28, 2021.

Sunim N. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. March 13, 2021.

Sunim P. Digital interview by Bori Kim. Computer recording. Bergen. December 17, 2020, and March 13 and 14, 2021.

## Abstract in Norwegian

Hvert år deltar omtrent 2000 monastiske utøvere av koreansk Seon (C. Chan, Jp. Zen) Buddhisme på Ganhwa Seon-retreater. De utfører sittende meditasjon i åtte til fjorten timer om dagen i tre måneder minst to ganger i året, og noen av dem har gjort det i flere tiår. Mens de sitter frembringer de *yiqing* (generelt er oversatt som «doubt» eller «sensation of doubt» på engelsk) på en *huatou* som er en kritisk frase fra en anekdote av historiske Chan-mestere og de jobber med den til den fullt utviklede *yiqing* knuser. Denne studien forsøker å svare på hva *yiqing* er for utøverne, hva de gjør under meditasjonen med den, hva som skjer med utøverne gjennom å utføre meditasjonen og hvorfor de fortsetter å gjøre det så lenge. Min undersøkelse av emnet starter på premisset om at Kanhua/Ganhwa-meditasjon er et rituale og tilnærmingen til emnet er todelt: tekstuell tilnærming til begrepet *yiqing* som er undervist og beskrevet i historiske tekster og av mestere; og empirisk tilnærming til utøvernes opplevelse av det avgjørende elementet i den levende formen til ritualet ved bruk av kvalitativ intervju metode. Derved viser jeg at Ganhwa Seon er et rituale av *yiqing* hvor fokuset ikke er på opplysning, men utøverens individuelle problemer. For de ni Ganhwa Seon utøverne som var intervjuobjektene mine var *yiqing* deres personlige motivasjon, problemer de må løse (og løsningen var deres mål) og ulike tilstander der de oppdaget og innså mer om seg selv, hva de skulle gjøre og hvorfor de fortsetter meditasjonen.