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*Robert E. Buswell Jr., Editor*



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## “A Crazy Drunken Monk”: Kyōnghō and Modern Buddhist Meditation Practice

Jin Y. Park

“An Account of Sōn Master Kyōnghō’s Activities” (“Sōnsa Kyōnghō Hwasang haengjang”) is a hagiography of Kyōnghō Sōngu (1857/alt. 1849–1912), written by his disciple Pang Hanam (1876–1951) in 1930. Widely acknowledged as one of the founders of modern Korean Sōn (Zen in Japanese) Buddhism, Kyōnghō is well known for his practice of *hwadu* (critical phrase, or keyword) meditation and his liberal lifestyle. Hanam’s biography of Kyōnghō offers a panoramic view of the life of a man who began his Buddhist practice with scriptural studies and went on to become a leading lecturer on Buddhist sūtras. Later he turned to *hwadu* meditation and attained enlightenment. Eventually, he ended his life as a wandering layperson.

The progression of Kyōnghō’s life and practice contains inherent contradictions. On the one hand, Kyōnghō’s condemnation of a doctrinal approach to Buddhist practice and his emphasis on *hwadu* meditation set the course for modern Korean Buddhism. Kyōnghō’s endorsement of *hwadu* meditation and his subsequent enlightenment are especially important in Korean Buddhism because they occurred when Korean Buddhism was in deep decline after a long period of governmental suppression and social disdain. Kyōnghō provided a positive role model that was much needed at the time. In this way, he has been regarded as a revivalist of meditation practice for modern Korean Buddhism. On the other hand, Kyōnghō’s extremely liberal lifestyle has raised much doubt about his integrity in the minds of both Buddhist practitioners and scholars up to the present.

Usually translated as a “critical phrase,” or “keyword,” *hwadu* (*huatou* in Chinese) is a branch of what is known as the practice of “encounter dialogue” between Sōn masters and students (Korean, *kongan*; Chinese, *gong’an*; Japanese, *kōan*). In practicing *hwadu* meditation, the practitioner employs one word or passage (the “critical phrase”) given by ancient masters as a focus on which the practitioner can concentrate and eventually realize the nature of his existence. The Korean Buddhist tradition considers Sōn meditation, especially on the *hwadu*, to be its main type of contemplative practice. *Hwadu* meditation was introduced to Korea in the thir-

teenth century and was advocated by National Master Pojo Chinul (1158–1210) as the fastest way to attain enlightenment. By the late nineteenth century, when Kyōnghō joined the monastery, *hwadu* practice was moribund, since Buddhist practitioners were more involved with discussing the nature of Sōn Buddhism than in actually practicing *hwadu* meditation. Kyōnghō himself was a renowned lecturer on Buddhist sūtras before he completely gave up the doctrinal approach to Buddhism to focus on *hwadu* meditation at the gravest stage of life and death.

In Kyōnghō’s case, his *hwadu* was a phrase mentioned by the Chinese Chan Master Lingyun Zhiqin (d.u.): “The work of a donkey has not yet gone; the work of a horse has already arrived.” This phrase illustrates that a *hwadu* is generally characterized by the mysterious or inexplicable nature of the statement. The idea is that the impenetrability of a statement will defeat the familiar logic of our thinking and will prevent practitioners from indulging in the habitual and dualistic views that pervade ordinary modes of thought. By creating a dead-end situation for our mental functioning, *hwadu* forces practitioners to directly face their existential condition. Since logical speculation is no longer relevant, practitioners have no other choice but to look inside themselves and face their own reality.

Kyōnghō’s life fits into what some have called the “hippy monk” tradition in East Asian Buddhism. In many ways, Kyōnghō’s life resembles that of the seventh-century Korean monk Wōnhyo (617–86), one of the most liberal monks in the history of Korean Buddhism. The fact that Wōnhyo and Kyōnghō continue to inspire fiction writers and television dramas attests to the controversial nature of their lives. At the center of this controversy lies their relationship with the secular world. Both Wōnhyo and Kyōnghō not only openly violated the vow of celibacy incumbent on monks but also maintained liberal sexual relationships with women; both Wōnhyo and Kyōnghō frequently mingled with people from various social groups and in diverse situations that may not always have seemed appropriate for monks. In one of his poems, Kyōnghō even described himself as “a crazy drunken monk.” It is not difficult, then, to see why Kyōnghō’s personal conduct has been an object of controversy, despite the important role he played in revitalizing modern Korean Sōn Buddhism.

In his “Account,” Pang Hanam also addresses this controversy surrounding Kyōnghō’s life. Hanam’s interpretation of Kyōnghō’s conduct is thoughtful and persuasive, addressing the issue on several levels. On a superficial level, Hanam strongly warns practitioners not to follow Kyōnghō’s lifestyle but only to learn from his dharma teaching. Hanam, however, qualifies his warning as a concern that practitioners might try to imitate Kyōnghō’s liberal lifestyle without first embodying his teaching. On a deeper level, Hanam tries to explicate Kyōnghō’s life within the context of the Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching of freeing oneself from all kinds of artificially constructed rules, theories, and constraints. These include monastic settings, Buddhist precepts, and even such fundamental teachings as the four noble truths. These are provisional and thus only have temporary value as they are dressed up in common parlance, logical structures, and social customs. Moreover, they provide only short-term frames of reference to guide practitioners to the ultimate teaching, which Hanam identifies as the teaching that

mind is the Buddha and that, ultimately, all teachings are themselves empty. Hanam claims that in defying all forms of constructed precepts as well as social conventions, Kyōnghō demonstrates that he himself was free from the artificiality of life. Thus Kyōnghō's liberal lifestyle was one way of teaching the nonobstruction between all things. Hanam concludes that by freeing himself from the monastic setting and rules imposed by tradition, Kyōnghō was able to practice the bodhisattva path and realize the Mahāyāna teaching of the nonduality between buddhas and sentient beings.

Hanam further elaborates on the issue by considering the social and historical impact on Kyōnghō's behavior. Hanam wonders whether Kyōnghō's lifestyle was his reaction to the extremely impoverished state of Buddhism at the time. In the "Account," Kyōnghō is quoted as having said that he wished not ever to set foot in the capital city. Given that Buddhist monks were not allowed to enter the capital city for centuries until 1895, when the anti-Buddhist decree was lifted, Hanam had a good reason to interpret Kyōnghō's wish as a reflection of the latter's awareness of the humiliation that Buddhism suffered during his time. For Hanam, it thus followed that practicing Buddhism in such dire conditions was tantamount to Kyōnghō's placing himself in the humblest position in the society.

Whether one agrees with Hanam's interpretation of Kyōnghō's life as a practice of nonduality between buddhas and sentient beings, and between a monastic setting and the secular world, Kyōnghō's life itself poses important questions as to the relationship between wisdom and compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism. How does a Sōn practitioner transform his wisdom obtained through practice and awakening into compassion for others? The former (gaining wisdom) is a solitary endeavor, whereas the latter (compassion for others) is a communal act. Both Wōnhyo and Kyōnghō chose to transform their wisdom into compassion by putting themselves in the lowest possible position, going far beyond social convention. Is this the ultimate way of practicing nonduality between "myself" and others, or is this an "anything-goes" way of life?

As Hanam states, it may not be possible for those who are bound by provisional truths to fathom the state of the mind of masters who have liberated themselves from all the world's constraints. In this sense, the account of Kyōnghō's life provides us with rich resources regarding Sōn practice, its influence on an individual, and its social implications in modern times.

This translation is based on Pang Hanam's "Sōnsa Kyōnghō Hwasang haengjang" and included in Pang, *Kyōnghō chip (Collected Works of Kyōnghō)* (Korea: Küngnak Sōnwōn, 1991), pp. 399–405.

### Further Reading

Accounts of Kyōnghō's life and practice appear in Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Life and Thought of the Korean Sōn Mater Kyōnghō," *Korea Journal* 30, no. 1 (1990):

17–27; Henrik H. Sørensen, "Buddhist Spirituality in Premodern and Modern Korea," in *Buddhist Spirituality: Later China, Korea, Japan and the Modern World*, edited by Takeuchi Yoshinori (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 109–33; and Mu Seong Sunim, *Thousand Peaks: Korean Zen—Tradition and Teachers* (Cumberland, R.I.: Primary Point Press, 1991), pp. 162–78.

### An Account of Sōn Master Kyōnghō's Activities

It is said in the *Diamond Sūtra*: "If, five hundred years later in this world, a sentient being keeps his faith pure upon hearing this sūtra, and thus sees reality, this being will achieve the most rare kind of meritorious virtue." Master Dahui states: "If a few individuals did not awaken their minds and achieve success in spite of difficult situations, how would it be possible for the Buddhadharma to remain alive today?" The Buddha and the patriarch made these statements because, even in the final dharma age, there were individuals strong-willed and courageous enough to penetrate to the foundation of dharma. These statements also suggest that such individuals are so rare that continuing the wisdom of the dharma is difficult. Which individual had the will of a great man to realize thoroughly the self-nature, to achieve the unsurpassed merit, and to transmit the light of great wisdom through the next five hundred years? My teacher Sōn master Kyōnghō was this person.

His posthumous designation was Sōngu, his secular name, Tonguk, and his soubriquet, Kyōnghō. His family name was Song and he was from Yōnsan. His father's name was Tuok, and his mother's family name was Pak, from the Miryang region. He was born in Chadong village in the city of Chōnju, on the twenty-fourth day of April in the Year of the Snake [1857], the eighth year of King Ch'ōlchong's reign. He astonished people, it is said, because he did not cry for three days after he was born, and only when given a bath did he begin to make sounds. He lost his father when he was young. At the age of nine, his mother took him to Ch'ōnggye monastery in Kwangju. With Master Kyehō as his teacher, he shaved his head and received precepts. His brother also received precepts at Magok monastery in Kongju. Their mother took refuge in the Three Jewels and chanted incantations with devotion. This resulted in the brothers joining the monasteries.

Even in his youth, Master Kyōnghō's will was as strong as an adult's. The monastery was destitute, but he did not express any fatigue or aversion but instead collected firewood, drew water, and prepared food for his master.

He did not have a chance to learn Chinese characters until he turned fourteen, when a Confucian scholar came to stay at the monastery for the summer. The scholar, as a way of passing time, began teaching the boy the text of the *Thousand Character Classic*. The boy learned by heart what was taught. The scholar then taught him history and other texts, and the boy amazed the scholar by memorizing five to six pages per day. The scholar said to himself: "This boy

has remarkable talent. There is an old saying that a horse capable of running hundreds of miles pulls a salt-cart with fatigue, but only because its owner fails to recognize its capacity. This boy will grow up to be a figure who will deliver all the people in the world."

Soon after that, the boy's dharma master Kyehō disrobed. Having recognized Kyōnghō's talent and not wanting the boy's education to stop with his own disrobing, Kyehō sent Kyōnghō to Master Manhwa at Tonghak monastery on Kyeryong Mountain with a recommendation letter. Master Manhwa was a well-known lecturer at the time. Manhwa recognized Kyōnghō's capacity and accepted him with delight. Within a few months of studying with Manhwa, Kyōnghō demonstrated his talent in composition and was able to discuss the teachings of the Buddha. Kyōnghō memorized in one glance the sūtras and śāstras assigned for the day's study and then slept the rest of the day. The following day, when he was asked about the material, his interpretation was as sharp as the splitting of wood and as clear as the light of a candle.

Disapproving of his excessive sleep and intending to test his talent, the lecturer assigned Kyōnghō anywhere from four to ten pages to study, including commentaries, from the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment* (Kor. *Wōn'gak kyōng*; Ch. *Yuanjue jing*). Kyōnghō continued to sleep most of the day and still memorized all the assignments, thereby amazing people at the monastery who had never witnessed such aptitude. Since that period, Kyōnghō's name and talent became widely known. Having frequently attended lectures held in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, his scholarship matured every day, and his knowledge expanded to such an extent that he became an expert even in the subjects of Confucianism and Lao-Zhuang Daoism.

Master Kyōnghō was a man with a free and easy disposition inwardly, while being active and unadorned outwardly. When reading sūtras on hot summer days, other members at the monastery would be dressed up and sitting up straight, sweating all over. Kyōnghō alone took off his clothes without being bothered by his appearance or informality. Noticing this, a lecturer named Iru acknowledged to other practitioners: "He is truly a person of the Mahāyāna dharma. Others cannot compete with him."

At the age of twenty-three, Kyōnghō began to lecture at Tonghak monastery at the request of its members. His discussion of Buddhist doctrine was like waves in the ocean, attracting people from all over.

One day, Kyōnghō thought about his former teacher Kyehō, who took care of him as if he were his own child. Kyōnghō wanted to visit him. After informing the monastery members of this plan, he went on his way. In the middle of the journey, Kyōnghō was caught in a rainstorm. Hurriedly he tried to take shelter from the rain under the eaves of a nearby house. But the owner of the house hurriedly drove him out, and he tried another without success. Dozens of houses in the village treated him in the same manner. As they sent him away, they shouted in rage: "The village is contaminated by a contagious disease that spares no living soul. Why would you want to come to such a deadly

place?" Upon hearing these words, Kyōnghō found himself shivering all over. Both his body and mind became feeble as if death had attacked him at that very moment. Life, it seemed, was equivalent to the breath he was breathing, and all the things in the world looked like mountains in a dream.

Kyōnghō thought about the situation and told himself: "I pledge that even though I have to remain a fool in this life, I will not be constrained by letters. I will seek the path of the [Sōn] patriarchs and deliverance from the three realms of existence." Having made this vow, Kyōnghō thought about the exchanges [*kongan*] between Sōn masters and their students. Soon he realized that, because of his habit for analyzing and interpreting these exchanges, he was approaching the exchanges with rational thinking and usual knowledge. He could not find one case on which he could meditate. Eventually he came across a "critical phrase" [*hwadu*] given by Sōn Master Lingyun: "The work of a donkey is not yet gone; the work of horse has already arrived." This phrase was difficult to interpret, and Kyōnghō felt as if he were facing a silver mountain and iron wall, which forced him to ask "what is this?" His journey with the *hwadu* meditation had finally begun.

Kyōnghō returned to his monastery and dismissed those assembled there with a statement: "I bid you farewell; please find your path according to your karma. My intentions and wishes do not lie in this [studying Buddhist scriptures]." Locking himself inside, he sat up straight, concentrating wholeheartedly on *hwadu* meditation. When sleep overwhelmed him, he would prick his thigh with a gimlet, or he would keep a sharpened knife below his chin. For three months, he meditated on the *hwadu* with no other thoughts.

One acolyte who attended Kyōnghō had a father, whose family name was Yi, who was known to have attained a degree of realization after having practiced meditation for several years. People called the father Layman Yi. An occasion came when the acolyte's dharma master went to visit Layman Yi at home. During their conversation, the Layman Yi stated: "A monk will eventually become a cow." The acolyte's teacher responded, paraphrasing the remark: "If a monk fails to enlighten his mind and does nothing but receives almsgivings from believers, he will definitely become a cow and thereby repay the gratitude of almsgivings in that manner." Layman Yi rebuked the monk: "How can a monk's response be so inappropriate?" The monk responded: "I am not well versed in the teachings of Sōn. How else should I have interpreted what you said?" Layman Yi said: "You should have said that a monk might become a cow, but he would have no nostrils."

Without responding further, the monk left Layman Yi. When he returned, he told the acolyte: "Your father told me such and such but I cannot understand what he means." The acolyte said: "The Abbot [Kyōnghō] has lost sleep and skipped meals in practicing meditation. The Master must understand what my father meant. Dear teacher, why don't you go ask the Abbot about what my father said?" The monk cheerfully went to see Kyōnghō, paid his respects and sat down. He told Kyōnghō about the conversation with Layman Yi.

When the monk mentioned the cow without nostrils, Master Kyōnghō's expression changed. It was as if a message from the time before the Buddha's birth was suddenly revealed to him. The earth flattened, as subject and object were both forgotten. Kyōnghō had arrived at the state which the ancient masters called the land of great rest. A hundred or a thousand dharma talks, and inconceivable and mysterious truths, opened themselves as if a layer of ice had been broken or a tile cracked. This happened on the fifteenth day of November in the Year of the Rabbit [1879], the sixteenth year of King Kojong's reign.

There is no dharma outside the mind; his eyes were filled with snow and the moon; water was flowing under pine trees on a high mountain; what should one do under the clear sky on this long night? This is truly a different state; unless one obtains it oneself, one cannot comprehend it.

Kyōnghō lay down in the Abbot's room and was not concerned whether people came in or went out. Lecturer Manhwa entered the room, and Kyōnghō would not sit up. Manhwa asked Kyōnghō: "Why do you stay in bed?" Kyōnghō responded: "Those who have nothing to do stay like this." Manhwa left the room without inquiring further. The next spring, Kyōnghō moved to Ch'ōnjang hermitage on Yōnam Mountain where his brother, Sōn master T'aehō, was staying with their mother.

Kyōnghō described the experience of his enlightenment in a poem and a *gāthā*. Both pieces were as elevated as a canyon a thousand times deeper than two arms extended, and so wide that no names or words could reach across. These compositions did not fall short of the tradition kept by the patriarchs of old. His poem states:

Upon hearing that there are no nostrils,  
I realized that the entire world is my home;  
On the path under Yōnam Mountain in June,  
People in the field enjoy their time, singing a song of good harvest.

And the *gāthā* reads:

Looking around, I find no one nearby,  
To whom shall I give this robe and bowl?  
To whom shall I transmit them?  
Looking around, I find no one nearby.

The four lines of the *gāthā* were added after the poem because the Master deeply deplored the situation in which no one could recognize his enlightenment, since the lineage of dharma teachers had been interrupted.

Earlier he had explained to his students, "In the school of the patriarchs [viz., Sōn], there exists a principle and standard for transmitting the mind-dharma, which no one can disrupt. Historically, Huangbo received the dharma-transmission from Baizhang and attained enlightenment upon hearing Baizhang emulate Mazu's shouting. Xinghua attained enlightenment upon receiving Dajue's hit, which reminded him of Linji's being hit; this amounts to Xinghua

receiving the dharma-transmission from Linji, even though Linji had been dead by that time. In our country, Pyōkkye traveled to China and received transmission from Zongtong. Chinmuk was a sage representing the Buddha's transformation body and received dharma transmission after Sōsan died. The recognition of the transmission of dharma from teacher to disciple has been strict because dharma has been transmitted from mind to mind, and mutual recognition takes place through mind.

"Alas! It has been a long time since the Sage [the Buddha] came to this world and the dharma has already deteriorated. However, from time to time a serious monk would revive the dharma by shooting the arrow of birth and death, which will result in the appearance of a perfect or half-perfect sage, who would maintain the right path with this teaching, like a lamp in the darkness, or like life in death.

"Even though I am not perfect in my dharma and have yet to examine its nature, all I have aimed to do in my life is to clarify dharma. But now that I am old, I am telling you my students that, in the future, with regard to the origin of my dharma lineage, you should record as its source the dharma of Master Yongam, whose dharma-transmission I have received, and Lecturer Manhwa should be recorded as my training teacher."

If we trace the dharma lineage in the way the dharma has been transmitted, Master Kyōnghō received the dharma from Yongam Hyeōn, who received the dharma from Kūmhō Pyōlch'ōm. Pyōlch'ōm in turn received the transmission from Yulbong Ch'ōnggo, and Ch'ōnggo from Ch'ōngbon Kōae, and Kōae from Hoam Ch'ejōng. Ch'ōnggo transmitted the dharma to P'yōnyang, P'yōnyang to P'ungdam, P'ungdam to Wōltam, and Wōltam to Hwansōng. This makes Master Kyōnghō the twelfth descendant from Ch'ōnggo and the seventh descendant from Hwansōng.

Master Kyōnghō presided over monasteries in the western region of the Korean peninsula, including Kaesim and Pusōk monasteries on Sō Mountain, and Ch'ōnjang monastery in Hongju, all of which were well managed by him, and thus became good places for practicing the dharma. In the fall of the Year of the Boar [1899], the third year of Kwangmu's reign, Master Kyōnghō moved to Haein monastery on Kaya Mountain in the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula. According to a royal order, Master Kyōnghō had the Buddhist canon reprinted and established a Center for Sōn Practice in order to provide a space for meditation practitioners. Both ordained and lay practitioners then respected him as head of the meditation school. When he gave a dharma talk on his dharma seat, he directly revealed the original nature. Using various methods he emphasized the importance of the issue of birth and death. He was truly like a diamond jewel sword and was as majestic as a lion. Those who heard his talks were able to remove all the biases and attachments as cleanly as if their bones were replaced or intestines washed.

At the beginning of a retreat for the monastic community, Master Kyōnghō sat high on the dharma-seat and hit the floor of the dharma hall once with his

dharma staff and said: "All the buddhas of the three time periods, all the generations of patriarchs, dharma teachers and masters in the world—they all will come and follow." Master Kyōnghō struck down his dharma staff once again and said, "All the buddhas in the three time periods, all the generations of patriarchs, dharma teachers and masters in the world—they all have followed. Do you understand me?" There was no response from the assembly. The master threw away his dharma staff and came down from his dharma-seat.

A monk asked, "An ancient said, 'One can run along the old road all the while changing one's facial expressions, and one still does not fall into a feeble frame.' What does this old road refer to?" The master responded: "There are two meanings to the phrase 'old road': one is a plain path, the other, rough. What is a rough road? Below Kaya Mountain there are a thousand paths along which carts and horses pass from time to time. What is a plain path? In a canyon a thousand times wider than the distance of two arms extended, which humans cannot reach, only monkeys were hanging on the trees."

Ending a summer retreat, the master sat on the dharma seat and told the assembly, quoting a dharma talk by Dongshan: "Master Dongshan said, 'In the late summer and early fall when dharma brothers are traveling to the east and to the west, one should directly go to a place that is thousands of miles away, and where there is not even one blade of grass.' I do not say that. I say, 'In the late summer and early fall when dharma brothers are moving to the east and to the west, one should step on each and every blade of grass along the way.' Is what I say the same as or different from what Dongshan said?" There was no response from the assembly. Kyōnghō waited for a while in silence and said, "Since there is no response from the assembly, I will answer the question myself." He suddenly stepped down from his dharma-seat and returned to his room. This is the way that the master directly revealed his truth.

The monasteries where the master stayed include T'ongdo monastery on Yōngch'uk Mountain, Pōmō monastery on Kūmjōng Mountain, Hwaōm monastery and Songgwang monastery in the western region of the Korean peninsula. At this time, meditation halls began to spring up all over the country as if there were a competition. The number of practitioners who began to explore their faith rose up like clouds. It was very impressive. No time has been more active than this period in which the light of the Buddha shone once again and opened up people's eyes and ears.

In the fall of the Year of the Tiger [1902], the master was staying at Kūmgang hermitage at Pōmō monastery. During that time at Maha monastery, which was located east of Pōmō monastery, an event was held to venerate the repainting of an arhat statue, and the Master was invited to witness the event. As Master Kyōnghō arrived at the entrance to the monastery, darkness prevented him from continuing on. At that time the abbot of the monastery was dozing off. In his dream an old monk appeared and said, "Big Master is on his way. Hurry out and receive him." The abbot woke from the dream and went to the entrance of the village with a torchlight in his hand. As expected, Master Kyōnghō was on his

way. The abbot then realized that the old monk in his dream was the arhat. The abbot told the story to the assembly, which took all by surprise. Hearing this story, those who had earlier defamed and refused to trust Master Kyōnghō came to see him and repent.

In the fall of the Year of the Rabbit [1903], on his way from Pōmō monastery to Haein monastery, Master Kyōnghō composed a poem:

My knowledge remains shallow, as my name becomes high,  
The world is rough and I do not know where to hide this body.  
Fishing villages and taverns can be found wherever I go,  
But I am afraid that my name will become better known, the more I try  
to hide it.

A poem usually expresses one's will. The will of the master in this poem is to hide himself, and people whose goal lies in seeking fame would not understand this. The following year, which was the Year of the Dragon [1904], Master Kyōnghō moved to Odae Mountain and then to Sōgwang monastery in Anbyōn village via Kūmgang Mountain. At the time, an event to venerate the repainting of the five hundred arhats was about to be held at Sōhwang monastery. Renowned monks from various places attended the dharma meeting in order to witness the event. When Master Kyōnghō went up to the podium and gave a dharma talk, he was so eloquent that people assembled there put their palms together and expressed their admiration of the uniqueness of his talk. After the event, Master Kyōnghō disappeared and nobody knew his whereabouts.

Ten years later, Chōnghae Sōn Center received a letter from Master Suwōl, which stated that Master Kyōnghō was seen around places like Kapsan and Kanggye with his hair grown out, wearing the attire of a Confucian scholar. Sometimes he was seen teaching people in a village, other times having a drink in a marketplace.

In the spring of the Year of the Rat [1912], the news arrived that our master had entered nirvāṇa at a village teaching room in Toha village, Ungibang in Kapsan. Two of his disciples, Hyewōl and Man'gong, immediately left for Kapsan. They moved the master's body to Nandōk Mountain, where it was cremated. They also retrieved a poem Master Kyōnghō had composed on his deathbed. This happened in the twenty-fifth day of July in the Year of the Ox [1913], which was the year after Master Kyōnghō's death.

Village elders reported that one day, Master Kyōnghō was sitting under the bamboo fence, watching schoolchildren weeding. He then suddenly lay down and was not able to sit up. The Master said: "I am really tired." People carried him to his room. He refused to either eat, speak, or murmur a sound. He was lying with his legs stretched. The next morning, at about the time of sunrise, Master Kyōnghō suddenly sat up, and began to write a poem with a brush.

The moon of the mind is round all alone,  
Its light has engulfed ten thousand things in the world.

Light and things are both forgotten,  
And what is this thing?

Having written this, Master Kyōnghō drew an image of a circle after the poem. He then threw away the brush, lay on his right side, and passed away. That was the twenty-fifth day of April in the Year of the Rat (1912). The villagers paid their respects and held a funeral.

How sad it is! The appearance of a great dharma teacher into this world is an event that rarely takes place in ten thousand kalpas. Though brief, we had a chance to meet the dharma teacher, but failed to fully serve him and fully learn his teaching. Even on the day when he entered nirvāṇa, we were not able to take care of what was left behind by him. As in the case of the death of ancient sages, we again created reasons for regret.

Master Kyōnghō was born in the Year of the Snake and died in the Year of the Tiger. He joined the monastery at the age of nine. He was fifty-six years old in secular age and his dharma age was forty-eight. Four people received his dharma transmission. Ch'imun taught his dharma at P'yoch'ung monastery located in the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula. During his later years, he gave dharma talks at Pōmō monastery and left behind a poem written on his deathbed. Speaking of Hyewōl Hyemyōng and Man'gong Wōlmyōn, these two Sōn masters served and practiced under Master Kyōnghō from early on, and thus were able to fully receive the master's teaching. Each became a teacher in his own region and played an important role in edifying the people.

As for me, although I am not smart, I had a chance to meet the master and learn his teachings. Now all I can do is to show my respect to the master, since I am not capable of teaching his dharma. Nevertheless I would not dare be ungrateful to the benefit of the dharma I learned from the master. This makes four of us.

"An Account of Activities" is a record of facts, and no fictional elements are to be included. What has been stated so far regarding Master Kyōnghō's enlightenment and his effort to deliver others is all truthful. If we talk about his life, we can say that he was a tall and big man. His will and spirit were strong, his voice was as loud as the sound of a bell, and he was an eloquent speaker. If he had met wind coming from all eight directions, he would have remained firm like a mountain. If he thought he would take action, he would indeed take action, and if he thought he would stop, he would indeed stop. He would not be swayed by others' influence. He showed no constraint in eating or with regard to sex. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, which caused doubts and criticisms from people. Did our master attest to the nonduality with his unbound mind as did Li Tongxuan (635–730)? Or did the feeling of suppression, as well as his awareness of adverse conditions, and his lamentation at the situation, make him hide himself in a lowly place, thus accustoming himself to humble situations? Was he making such training his own pleasure? If one is not a big bird, how can one know the elevated state of that bird? If he had not attained

great awakening, how would it be possible for him not to be distracted by trivial things? In one of his poems, Master Kyōnghō wrote:

Drinks emanate light, and so do women;  
Will there really be a time when I say good-bye to greed, anger, or afflictions?  
I do not care about the Buddha or sentient beings.  
I am spending my whole life as a crazy drunken monk.

In this poem is reflected an aspect of the life of Master Kyōnghō.

However, in ordinary times, Master Kyōnghō ate only just enough to maintain his energy. He was quiet, said little, and did not enjoy meeting people. People sometimes recommended him to teach in cities, and Master Kyōnghō usually responded: "My wish is that I won't have to set foot in the capital." This demonstrates how distinguished and notable Master Kyōnghō was.

When he stayed at Ch'ōnjang hermitage, he wore the same rugged clothes through summer and winter. Mosquitoes surrounded his body as his clothes were full of lice. Bitten by mosquitoes and infested with lice day and night, his skin was abscessed and inflamed, but he remained calm without moving, sitting like a mountain. One day a snake coiled its upper body around the master's back and shoulder. A person nearby gave him a warning, but Master Kyōnghō did not care. Shortly afterward, the snake retreated by itself. Unless one was deep in concentration, and one's degree of awakening highly refined, how could anyone behave that way?

In one sitting, he would spend years, which would pass by like a moment for him. One morning, Master Kyōnghō wrote the following poem:

Which one is right, the secular world or the green mountains?  
Around the castle in the springtime flowers bloom all over.  
If someone asks me about my concerns,  
It is a song beyond the *kalpa* in the voice of a barren woman.

Master Kyōnghō broke his dharma staff and threw it out. Abruptly he left his residence in the mountain. Wandering from village to village, he delivered sentient beings without resorting to habitual methods of teaching or to formalities. Sometimes he would loiter with people at the marketplace; other times he would take time alone, lying in a pine tree arbor, enjoying the wind and the moon. His capacity to transcend cannot be measured by the standard of common people.

When he gave instructions, his method was extremely tender and elaborate. When he expounded the subtle meaning of the inconceivable, he reached the foundation of goodness and, at the same time, the abyss of evil. He had transcended the stage of overcoming good and evil by avoiding them through practice. He distinguished himself in both composition and calligraphy. He was truly the owner of a master-mind rarely seen in this world.

Alas! If all the people who left the secular world firmly proceeded along

their paths with the courage of Master Kyōnghō, if they clearly attended to great affairs, and thus continued the dharma transmission, the flourishing of the dharma teaching, as happened in the Nine Mountains Sōn schools, and the continuation of the dharma transmission through the sixteen national masters will not be things of the past! Not only have the transmission of the dharma and the prosperity of dharma teaching been forsaken, but helping all the sentient beings cut off the five defilements of the world by using their bright seed of original wisdom has also been suppressed. How can we not say that to serve the secular world from deep in one's heart is the way to recompense one's debt to the Buddha? Hence I burn incense and pray from the bottom of my heart.

However, practitioners in later generations should follow only Master Kyōnghō's deliverance of dharma, not his way of life, for people might believe in him but would not understand [his behavior]. Also, "to rely on dharma" means to rely on the true, correct, and unfathomable dharma. "Not to rely on the person" means not to rely on rules and ceremonies or those who go against rules and ceremonies. "To rely on" means that one takes someone as a teacher and learns from him. "Not to rely on" means that one does not take account of gain or loss, or right or wrong. Practitioners of dharma will eventually have to abscond with the dharma itself. What more can we say about gain or loss, right or wrong of an individual's behavior?

Therefore, the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment* states: "Sentient beings who have aroused their minds and who have practiced dharma in the degenerate age should seek a person who owns a perfect right view. The mind of such a person will not rest on forms; though staying in the secular world, his mind will always be pure. Though appearing to have errors, he would praise holy conduct, and will not lead sentient beings to fall into improper rules and ceremonies. If one meets such a person, one will immediately attain the unsurpassed wisdom."

Such a teacher will always reveal purity whether he is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. If sentient beings make various faults or create anxiety, such a person would not raise a despising mind or evil thought. The *Diamond Sūtra* states: "If someone tries to see me in form, or find me by sound, the person is following an evil path, and will not be able to see the Tathāgata." Also the National Master Pojo Chinul states: "When awakening their minds, practitioners should first plant right causes. Teachings such as the five precepts, the ten good acts, the four noble truths, the twelvefold chain of dependent co-arising, and the six destinies are not right causes. Believe that one's mind is the Buddha. Do not raise one thought of delusion. Know that endless kalpas of time are all empty. If one believes these, they are the right causes." If teachings such as precepts, the four noble truths, and dependent co-arising are not to be considered as right causes, what more can we say about improper precepts and ceremonies? Therefore, only search for the person who owns the correct knowledge and view, and by doing so you will find your own pure dharma eyes. Do not be deluded and search for evil faith and spoil this grave matter.

Hence, an ancient sage said: "Value only correct view, not one's behavior." And he added: "In my dharma teaching, I discuss neither meditation, nor liberation, nor observing or violating precepts, nor practice or enlightenment. I discuss only how to acquire the Buddha's insight." Doesn't this mean that one should first realize insight and only then discuss behavior? In other words, practitioners should learn Master Kyōnghō's embodiment of dharma, but not his behavior. I say so in order to warn those who try to learn the unobstructed behavior of Master Kyōnghō without first being equipped with the insightful dharma eye. I also caution people who are bound by views based on temporary forms and thus fail to penetrate the source of one's mind. If one is able to earn the right dharma eye, the source of one's mind will be penetrated, and then one's behavior will naturally be authentic. If this happens, whether one is walking, staying, sitting, or lying down, one will always reveal purity. In that situation, how would it be possible to be deluded by outwardly appearances, to harbor affection or hatred, and claim that "I" am right?

In the winter of the Year of the Horse [1930], dharma brother Man'gong was serving as abbot at the Sōn center of Yujōm monastery on Kūmgang Mountain and sent a letter to me to Odae Mountain, asking me to write an account of Master Kyōnghō's activities. I have no talent in writing, but since it is an account about Master Kyōnghō, I did not dare say such a thing and appropriately wrote the facts about the master, so that future generations can read them. First, I praised the master's merit for coming into this degenerate age and accomplishing the difficult job of spreading the dharma widely. Secondly, I reproached our own fault in damaging the Buddha's teaching by being attached to deluded thoughts, keeping us outside the dharma and wasting our time. I included our teacher's poems and writings in my record of his activities. The draft was thus created, printed, and is now made available to the public.