

Translation and Electronic Input of the Complete Works of Wonhyo

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Some of you may already be familiar with the Korean Buddhist thinker Wonhyo (617-686), a scholar and monk active in the 7th century. Then again, many of you may not be familiar with him at all. Despite the fact that he had a pivotal impact on Korean Buddhism, and made a significant contribution to the development of East Asian Buddhism in general, the life and work of Wonhyo is little known in the West. As I see it, he presents an important gap in the current scholarly view of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism—a gap that the International Association for Wonhyo Studies is now trying to fill.

The International Association for Wonhyo Studies is a partnership project launched by the State University of New York at Stony Brook, in the United States, and Dongguk University in Korea. It is dedicated to the mission of introducing Wonhyo to an international audience, and to stimulating scholarship on his life and work. Accordingly, its first major project is a complete translation of his works from Classical Chinese into English, an extremely daunting, multi-volume task involving more than 20 prominent scholars in the United States, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. The translation, which will be accompanied by critical introductions and scholarly annotation for each text, is presently in the 2nd year of a projected 3 year period. Completion is scheduled for early in the year 2000.

Though the translation will of course be published in book form first, we are convinced that, as an expensive, multi-volume reference work, it is an excellent candidate for electronic publication as well; for this reason, we are currently beginning to think through the demands of publishing in CD-ROM form. As we see it now, the CD-ROM will allow us to construct a greatly expanded, multi-lingual version of the translation, including the original Chinese text, the English translation, introductions and annotation, as well as other historical and biographical materials.

Since the translation project is still far from completion, and electronic publication remains farther still, my report today must focus on a future agenda. However, I think we would all agree that it is not a moment too early to begin to consider the complex questions posed by the relatively new approach of electronic publication for large-scale scholarly works like this one. Thus, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly outline the role of electronic publication in our Wonhyo project, as well as the contents and format of the electronic version.

First off, I think it is critical to remember that the electronic publication of Wonhyo's texts is not meant to replace book publication; the complete translation of Wonhyo's works will be an extremely valuable reference work, and there will always be a place for it in book form in University

libraries. Rather, electronic publication is aimed at the creation of a database that will combine the original texts in Classical Chinese with the English translation, critical introductions and annotations, as well as any other useful scholarship in the areas of history, culture and Buddhism. The final goal is to create an expansive, multi-layered research tool that will allow scholars and students with a variety of research interests to take advantage of the works of Wonhyo within the larger context of East Asian Buddhism. An electronic database form will allow researchers to move through these materials with a speed and flexibility, and with a broadness of reach, impossible to imagine with the printed page.

Additionally, there are specific reasons why the works of Wonhyo lend themselves to electronic publication. To name just one example, since most of the 20-some odd works still extant are commentarial, they are full of citations from the sutras and sastras. As anyone who has tried will readily testify, tracking these citations down to their sources through the Taisho Index is an enormously time-consuming, tedious, and very frustrating job that all too often ends in uncertainty or failure. Yet what once took hours or even days to achieve for a single citation can be done with ease in a database format. Drs. Lewis Lancaster and Charles Muller, both of whom are involved in the Translation Project, recently tried an experiment, searching for Wonhyo's scriptural citations in the CD-ROM version of the Korean Tripitaka. The results were amazing: they were able to locate fully 40% of the citations on the first try.

The implications of this experiment are significant. Once we build our Wonhyo database, we could not only locate citations with ease, but could also cross reference them, building a web of connections to other scriptures, other works by Wonhyo, and commentarial works by other Buddhist thinkers. Word searches could trace the use of a single word or Chinese character throughout the corpus of Wonhyo's thought. And as the database will include the complete English translation, we could link up variant translations of key passages or important technical terms, allowing us to compare approaches and interpretations. This would provide something like a glossary for Wonhyo Studies, but much more powerful than a traditional print glossary.

As for the content of electronic publication, I would like to highlight the need for an expansive approach, including not only the original texts in Classical Chinese and the English language translations, but also all of the available historical and bibliographical materials, such as inscriptions on Wonhyo, chapters and articles on Wonhyo from the *Samguk Yusa*, and other biographical and scholarly literature from Korea and China. The broader we cast our net, the richer and more useful will our database become. It is one of the great strengths of electronic publication that size and space restrictions do not apply. For this reason, as I know there are Korean specialists here in the audience today, I am hoping for as many specific suggestions to be generated as possible.

Having touched on the importance of an expansive approach to content, I should say something about the very daunting task of inputting all that information. Fortunately, a start has already been made: a group of volunteers at Dongguk University in Korea have already input the complete works of Wonhyo in the original Chinese, and it looks like we will be able to build on this work for the original text part of our database. There are problems and limitations that need to be overcome, however: in addition to textual errors and omissions, there is the fact that the work is limited to the text provided in the *Han'guk pulgyo chonso* and therefore doesn't provide the variant readings we see in other editions. It remains to be discussed just how we can best deal with the technical aspects of including variant readings into our database. Also, we need to determine what problems, if any, we may face in moving from the word-processing software used by the Dongguk team—a Korean word-processing software called HWP—to our own format, whatever that may be. The thought of having to begin from scratch is sobering indeed.

In conclusion, I know I should say something about the format of the Wonhyo database, and perhaps mention some of the technical problems we can expect to meet in creating this software. But I must confess my complete ignorance of computer technology and programming. Rather, I want to end by placing the task in context. Among the various inputting projects championed by the EBTI, the Wonhyo Project is of a new kind, in that it will include a translation and scholarly materials in addition to the original texts. In comparison to other Buddhist inputting projects, it is relatively small in its overall size, but the format will have to be exceptionally complex to take advantage of the connections between original texts, translations, and other materials. For this reason, I think it will function as a test case, and a glimpse of the future, as Buddhist databases begin to take advantage of the full range of what electronic publishing has to offer researchers. We are entering uncharted waters, and the comments and insights of everyone here today will be of invaluable help. The thoughts generated at this year's EBTI meeting should, I hope, steer us in the right direction.