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## Won Buddhism

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#### Won Buddhism

Hangul 원불교

Hanja 圓佛敎

Revised Romanization Wonbulgyo

McCune-Reischauer Wŏnbulkyo

Won Buddhism, *Wonbulgyo*, a compound of the Korean *won* (circle) and *bulgyo* (Buddhism), means literally *Circular Buddhism*, or *Consummate Buddhism*. It is the name of an indigenous religion founded in Korea in the twentieth century. Instead of a statue or painting of Buddha figures, believers meditate before a *won*, or circle. During different stages in Korean history leading up to the to the twentieth century, Buddhism and Confucianism took turns as Korea's leading ideology. Won Buddhism seeks a way to synthesize some of the conflicting teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism.

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The front gate of the Won Buddhist holy ground in Iksan. Won Buddhist temples and gates are primarily constructed in black and white elements, in contrast to other Korean Buddhist temples, which use a bright multi-colored painting style.

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## History

Pak Chung-bin (1891-1943; Great Master Sotaesan) attained great enlightenment in 1916 and had a precognition of the world entering an era of advancing material civilization, to which humans would be enslaved. The only way to save the world was by expanding spiritual power through faith in genuine religion and training in sound morality. With the dual aims to save sentient beings and cure the world of moral ills, Sotaesan began his religious mission. He opened a new religious order with the *buddhadharma* as the central doctrine, establishing the Society of the Study of the Buddha-dharma at Iksan North Cholla province, in 1924. He edified his followers with newly drafted doctrine until his death in 1943. The central doctrine was published in the *Pulgyo cheongjeon (The Correct Canon of Buddhism)* in 1943.

In 1947, Song Kyu (1900-1962; "Cheongsan"), the second patriarch, renamed the order *Wonbulgyo* (Won Buddhism) and published the new canon, *Wonbulgyo Kyojeon* (The Scriptures of Won Buddhism), in 1962.

## Doctrine and Practice



Interior of a Won Buddhist temple. Won Buddhist services are conducted before the image of a won (circle).

The central doctrine lies in the tenets of *Ilwonsang*, which states that **Ilwon** (one circle), the Wŏnbulgyo name for the Dharmakāya Buddha, is the source of all sentient and non sentient beings in the universe, the original nature of all buddhas and patriarchs, and the Buddha-nature of all sentient beings. Won Buddhist faith begins with a belief in Ilwonsang as an all encompassing source and center, where there is no distinction between great and small, between self and other, between void and being. Just like a finger pointing at the moon, *Ilwonsang*, enshrined as the symbol of the dharmakaya of the Buddha, refers to the Buddha-nature of the Tathāgatha and the fundamental source of one's life.

The worship of *Ilwon* lies in acknowledging our

indebtedness to the **Fourfold Grace** **The Fourfold Grace**, signifying our indebtedness to elements in the universe:

- Indebtedness to Heaven and Earth, in which we harbor no thought after rendering beneficence
- Indebtedness to Parents and protection of the helpless
- Indebtedness to Fellow Beings, benefiting oneself by benefiting others
- Indebtedness to Laws, doing justice and forsaking injustice

Another set of principals is called **The Four Essentials**, which indicate that salvation is to be sought in community, that salvation is universal and that we must work together for salvation:

- The Principle of Developing Self-Power
- The Principle of the Wise One First
- The Principle of Educating Others' Children
- The Principle of Venerating the Public Spirited

The practices of Ilwon are to be mastered through the **Threefold Study**

## M a h a y a n a



## B u d d h i s m

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### Doctrine

Bodhisattva • Bodhicitta  
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### Scriptures

Prajnaparamita Sutra  
Avatamsaka Sutra  
Lotus Sutra  
Nirvana Sutra  
Vimalakīrti Sutra  
Lankavatara Sutra

### History

4th Buddhist Council  
Silk Road • Nagarjuna  
Asanga • Vasubandhu  
Bodhidharma

- Samadhi, or Cultivating the Spirit, fostering concentration
- Prajñā, or Inquiry into Human Affairs and Universal Principles, developing wisdom
- Śīla, or Heedful Choice in karmic action, using virtue

The Threefold Study is carried out through timeless Zen, which holds as its central principle that when the six sense organs are at rest, one should nourish One Mind by clearing the mind of worldly thoughts; when they are at work, one should forsake injustice and cultivate justice.

## Religious life and Daily life



Monument at Won Buddhist holy ground: 만고일월(萬古日月): The sun and moon eternally shine the light of the Buddha.

Traditional Buddhist paths to enlightenment often involve withdrawal from the world, living in a monastery and many hours each day spent in meditation. This model for religious mastery came into strong conflict with some of the most basic teachings of Confucianism. To be a good Confucianist, it is centrally important to care for one's parents. This is very difficult if one has withdrawn from society into isolation and meditation. This is the kind of ideological conflict that Won Buddhism addresses, trying to provide an appropriate balance between spiritual life and material life. This balance can be expressed in many aspects:

- **Timeless Zen, Placeless Zen** - Practice meditation continuously, practice meditation everywhere.
- **Everywhere a Buddha Image, Every Act a Buddha Offering.** - All things are incarnation of Truth-Buddha, do each thing as an offering of worship to the Buddha.
- **One Suchness in Action and Rest; Wholeness of Spirit and Flesh** - Maintain the full oneness of spirit and body in motion and rest.
- **Buddhadharma is Daily Life, Daily Life is Buddhadharma.** - Buddhist truth is found in daily life, life is Buddhist Truth itself.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Won Buddhist Sites

### Affiliated Institutions

Won Buddhism has a network of about 350 temples in Korea, organized in 16 districts. In contrast to traditional Seon and Hwaem Temples, Won Temples are located in cities so that people can visit them easily, to pray, to hold memorial services, to find peace, to attend Dharma services, and to meditate. There are also 50 Won Buddhist temples in Europe, Asia, Africa and North & South America and 20 Won Buddhist-affiliated middle schools, high schools and colleges, including a graduate school in the United States.

### Sacred Sites

There are five major holy places revered by Won Buddhists:

- Yeongsan, the birthplace of Great Master Sotaesan, located at Gilyong-ri, Paeksu-eup, Young-gwang county, South Jeolla Province
- Injang Rock on Bongnae Mountain, where The Great Master organized his ideas and began teaching.



Headquarters of Woneum Broadcasting, Won Buddhism's radio network.



The birthplace of Great Master Sotaesan.

- Manduksan, site of the first Zen retreat, where the Great Master and his disciples spent a month in meditation and training in Won Buddhism year nine.
- Won Buddhism's Headquarters in Iksan, which includes many historical sites and buildings, including the sacred pagodas that hold the ashes of the Great Master Sotaesan and Venerable Chongsan.
- The birth house of Won Buddhism's second head Dharma master, Venerable Chongsan, located in Jojeon-myun, Sungjugun, North Kyeongsang Province.

## Notes

1. ↑ Won Buddhism Int'l Website. (<http://wonbuddhism.info/info/page/2.html>) , wonbuddhism.info, 2003. Retrieved Aug 31, 2007

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## External links

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- Won-buddhism: Buddhism, Meditation (<http://www.wonbuddhism.info/>) . Retrieved August 8, 2007.
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- Won\_Buddhism ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Won\\_Buddhism&oldid=136935590](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Won_Buddhism&oldid=136935590)) (Jul 31, 2007) history ([http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Won\\_Buddhism&action=history](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Won_Buddhism&action=history))

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