CHAPTER TWO

CH’OE CH’IWŎN’S BIOGRAPHY OF FAZANG:
A TEXTUAL STUDY

The preceding chapter provided a general survey of the primary sources of Fazang’s life. At this point we must give a textual analysis of one of those—the Korean biography of Fazang written by Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn and which is of primary value for any attempt to reconstruct Fazang’s life. Lack of an in-depth investigation of its structure and sources has prevented modern scholarship from approaching the deeper layers of Fazang’s career.

Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn’s work, Pŏpjang hwasang chŏn, is unique for its richly international characteristics. It was written in Korea by a Korean layman in honor of a Buddhist monk who was a third-generation Sogdian immigrant in China. It was completed in 904 and printed in the year Taian 太安 8 (1092), at Taehŭng’wangsa 大興王寺, in Koryŏ, a state then under the domination of the Liao empire (907-1125). Under the Southern Song dynasty fifty-three years later (in 1145 [Shaoxing 15]), Yihe 義和 (fl. 1160s), a distinguished Huayan master residing at Baitajiao Cloister 白塔院 in Wujiang xian 吳江縣, Pingjiang fu 平江府 (in present-day Suzhou 蘇州, Jiangsu), was compiling Huayan texts for inclusion in a government-sponsored Buddhist canon. Just as he was becoming worried by the poor quality of the edition of Pŏpjang

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1 This is recorded in the colophon attached to the Song edition of PHC (for this edition, see below); see PHC 286b9-10, which says that in Daan 8, a renshen year, an imperial decree ordered the Taehŭng’wangsa of Koryŏ to cut the woodblocks. Yang Chang 樊璋 (?-1092+), a layman with a dharma-name called Ponchŏk 本寂, donated a copy of the original text as the basis for engraving (大安八年壬申歲高麗國大興王寺奉宣彫造本寂住士樊璋施本鑄板). The original has the reign-name as “Daan” 大安, which could, however, be two different periods—one under the Jin from 1209 to 1211, and the other from 1075 to 1085 under Western Xia. Since the Jin’s Daan era lasted for only three years, the “Daan” here could only indicate the Western Xia calendar. Be that as it may, Daan 8 was 1082, which was, however, a renxu 壬戌 (not renshen) year. Furthermore, Koryŏ, not having submitted to Western Xia, had not used the latter’s reign names. For this reason, “Daan” 大安 must be an error for “Taian” 太安, a period under the Liao from 1085 to 1094, the eighth year of which was 1092, and indeed a renshen year. My thanks to Choe Yeonshik for calling my attention to the problem involved in the reign-name Daan.

2 This probably refers to the preparatory work for a part of the Zifu 資福 Canon, which was completed in 1175. For this canon and others, see Li and He, Dazang jing, 223-51.
*hwasaŋ chôn* at his disposal, an excellent one arrived from Korea, and on the basis of this gift he produced a satisfactory edition, which he had printed shortly before December 2, 1149.

A copy of this printed Song edition was then exported to Japan and stored at Kôzanji 高山寺, in Kyôto 京都. The monk Saiun 齊雲 (1637-1713) made a personal copy in 1670, and this was used twenty-nine years later when the Kegon monk Sôshun 僧濤 (1659-1738) published a Japanese edition of *Pôpjàng hwasaŋ chôn* in the year Genroku 12 (1699). Exasperated by the groundless alterations to the manuscript as copied by Saiun, another monk, Dôchû 道忠 (1653-1744), wrote a commentary entitled “Shinkan Genju hiden shôgo.” In addition to correcting Sôshun’s mistakes, Dôchû provided useful notes on difficult points in the original text. The Sôshun edition of *Pôpjàng hwasaŋ chôn*, along with Sôshun’s preface (dated 1670), Fazang’s funeral epitaph written by Yan Chaoyin in 713, a Korean colophon (dated 1082), Yihe’s colophon (dated 1149), and Dôchû’s commentary (with his preface), were included in the *Taishô* edition of the Buddhist canon, which was published from 1924 to 1932. This ended the long and truly international transmission of one biography—that of Fazang.

The biography is unique for another reason—the eminence of the various figures involved in it. While its subject, Fazang, was without doubt one of the most brilliant spirits of East Asian Buddhism, the biographer Ch’oe Ch’iwôn was one of the most talented writers of medieval Korean times. The three monks who introduced this Korean text to China and Japan and making it possible for survival down to the present, namely Yihe, Sôshun and Dôchû, were also important in the history of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Yihe was a highly regarded Huayan master of his time; and Sôshun and Dôchû were two major representatives of Kegon and Zen Buddhism during their time, the Tokugawa period (1603-1867). Dôchû, in particular, was known as an encyclopedic scholar, a fact that is still commented on.

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3 A colophon that Saiun left on his copy asserts that he finished copying on December 29, 1670 (Kanbun 10.11.18), and two days later he had his copy collated with the Kôzanji edition.

4 *PHC* 280a28-29.

5 Dôchû had a close association with Saiun, as attested in a collection of their dialogue that started in 1698 (one year before Saiun made a copy of *Pôpjàng hwasaŋ chôn*) and lasted until 1713. For a useful study of the relationship based on this collection, see Lin, “Mujaku Dôchû to Bakusô Saiun Dôto to no kôshô.”

6 For this monk, see App, “Dôchû”; Jorgensen, “Zen Scholarship”; and the Japanese studies listed there.