

The Koguryŏ monk Sŭngnang 僧朗 (fl. 476?–512) and his role in Chinese San-lun

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I. Introduction

Notably through T'ang Yung-t'ung's monumental portrayal of the history of Chinese Buddhism from the Han to the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Sŭngnang from Koguryŏ has been widely known as the first patriarch of the San-lun 三論 tradition South of the Chiang-tzu. This perception is based on the lineage constructed by Chi-tsang 吉藏 (549-623), which in turn has been considered the earliest predecessor of the T'ang dynasty lineages. Thus, Sŭngnang effectively becomes the first patriarch of the great doctrinal schools on Chinese soil.

For obvious reasons, several famous Korean scholars of the 20th century had been interested in Sŭngnang: Drawing from Japanese research, Yi Nŭng-hwa (1868-1945) adduced some of the sources indicating Sŭngnang's eminent role in Chinese San-lun in his *Chosŏn Pulgyo T'ongsa* as early as in 1918. Of lasting impact, however, proved to be the famous literate and historian Ch'oe Nam-sŏn's (1890-1957) article "Chosŏn Pulgyo. Tongbang munhwa innŭn kŭ chiwi" (Korean Buddhism and its role in East Asian cultural history), published in 1930: With a most obviously political agenda, Ch'oe Nam-sŏn considered Sŭngnang the first true patriarch of San-lun, on grounds that he based himself solely on the *Three Treatises*, i.e. *Chung-lun* 中論, *Pai-lun* 百論 and *Shih-erb men lun* 十二門論, and raised his voice against *Ch'eng-shih lun* 成實論 studies. Even more: He labeled him a "birth helper" of "East Asian Buddhism" (Tongbang Pulgyo). - Ever since, and this holds true also decades after the liberation from Japanese colonial rule, scores of Korean researchers have considered Sŭngnang one of the most prominent examples of "Koreans" influencing Chinese and East Asian intellectual history.

Likewise not surprisingly, several Japanese and Chinese scholars have questioned the importance of Sŭngnang, in particular raising objections against a suspected direct influence on the lay scholar Chou Yung's 周顥 (fl. late 5.c) famous *San-tsung lun* 三宗論. The main argument later was taken up by Robert H. Robinson (cf. below), and thus has become current also in Western research.

However, another look at quotations from nowadays lost sources, preserved in the biographical collection *Sanron soshi den shū* 三論祖師傳集 and Anchō's 安澄 (763-814) *Chūron shoki* 中論疏記, provides somewhat better insight into Sŭngnang's sojourn in the South and thus serves to dispel most remaining doubts. And yet, the very same quotations might necessitate a reassessment of our perception of Sŭngnang's role in Chinese San-lun.

II. The biography and the main issue: Sŭngnang and Chou Yung

Biographical information on Sŭngnang is scattered through a variety of works. Apart from Chan-jan's *Fa-hua hsüan-i shih-ch'ien*, the principle sources quoted in the secondary literature are:

1. the *Kao-seng chuan* 高僧傳 (Entry Fa-tu 法度), T.2059.50.380c15-18.

2. Chi-tsang's Works, esp. *Erb-ti i* 二諦義, T.1854.45.108b, *Ta-sheng hsüan lun* 大乘玄論, T.1853.45.19b6-11, *Chung-kuan lun shu* 中觀論疏, T.1824.42.26b22f. and 29b28-c6.
3. The *Ch'i-hsia ssu pei-wen* 棲霞寺碑文, an inscription from the monastery on Mt. She which was to be Sūngnang's last dwelling-place.
4. Chan-jan's 湛然 (711-782) *Fa-hua hsüan-i shih-ch'ien* 法華玄義釋籤, T.1717.33.951a20-25.

Even when complemented by fragmentary quotations from Anchō's *Chūron shoki*, the information which can be derived from these sources are scanty and to some extent even puzzling, if not overtly contradictory: Thus, even the name Sūngnang, appearing for the first time in the *Kao-seng chuan*, has been subject to debate. In fact, Chi-tsang never uses this name, but rather the designations She-shan Ta-shih 攝山大師 (“the great master from Mt. She”), Kau-li Lang Ta-shih 高麗朗大師 (“the great master Nang from Koryō”), or Ta Lang Fa-shih 大朗法師 (“the great Dharma master Nang”), while his co-disciple Hui-chün 慧均 employs the name Tao-lang 道朗 in his *Ssu-lun hsüan-i* 四論玄義. Therefore, it should be reasonable to follow a suggestion by Chōng Inbo that Chi-tsang was anxious to avoid any possible confusion with Ho-hsi Tao-lang 河西道朗, whom Chi-tsang repeatedly makes mention of, and therefore consciously avoided to use the first character. The name Sūngnang thus should be understood as an abbreviation of Sūng 僧 (“Monk”) Tonang 道朗. - For convenience, however, we will abide by the generally received abbreviated name.

Not surprisingly, Sūngnang's exact dates cannot be determined (fl. 476-512, cf. below). At least, it seems beyond question that Sūngnang was born in Liao-tung, which had been under Koguryō control at least during part of the 5th century. Also, we may quite safely assume that Sūngnang was not Chinese by origin, as he is consistently labeled a “Koryō” (i.e. Koguryō) monk. - Most of what is commonly known about Sūngnang may be represented by quoting a passage from Chi-tsang's *Ta-sheng hsüan lun*:

... The great master Lang from Kau-li [staying on] Mt. She originally was from the area of Liao-tung. Setting out from the North, he far away practiced the [scriptural] meanings [established by our] teacher Kūmarajīva. Having come to the South, he stayed at T'sao-tang 草堂 monastery on Mt. Chung 鍾山, meeting the retired scholar (yin-shih) Chou Yung 周顛. Chou Yung consequently studied under the master. Then Liang Wu-ti 梁武帝, who respectfully believed in the three jewels, upon hearing that the great master had come, sent Seng-cheng 僧正, Chih-chi 智寂 [etc., altogether] ten masters to the mountain (i.e., Mt. She 攝山), in order to receive the teaching. The Son of Heaven Liang Wu grasped the master's intention, discarded the *Ch'eng-shih lun* and created *chang* 章 and *shu* 疏 [commentaries] based on Mahāyāna. K'ai-shan 開善 (i.e., Chih-tsang 智藏, 488-522) likewise heard [these] statements and grasped the words, yet failed to grasp the intention. ...

The account in the *Erb-ti i* is almost identical), but additionally makes explicit mention of the *San-tsung lun* as a later result of Chou Yung studying under Sūngnang. According to Chi-tsang, when Chih-lin 智琳 (408?-487) asked Chou Yung to give the treatise out of his hands, Chou Yung expressed concern that if he (lit. “the disciple”) did so, the general public might be terrified. - Only when Chih-lin stated that he once had heard [statements of] the same meaning in his youth, lamenting that the profound sounds [of the teaching] had been interrupted for more than 40 years, Chou would finally publish the text.

In the corresponding letter (preserved in the in the *Kao seng chuan* and the *Kuang hung-ming chi* 廣弘明記) Chih-lin assures Chou Yung of the orthodoxy of the latter's statements, claiming that, when he was twenty years old, he had adopted the same position and ever since trusted in it as the instrument eventually leading to spiritual attainment. Also, he remembers that in his youth he had been told by old monks in Ch'ang-an that this idea originally had been well-known in that area, at the same time receiving the prognostication that no one east of the river would understand his lectures on this idea. Over a period of forty years he had been proselytizing, literally becoming sick because no one would understand, and finally fearing that the transmission indeed would be cut off. Now, however, he felt great relief, as Chou Yung “secretly manifested what has no connection and solitarily created what is beyond the [ordinary] square”... - Chih-lin's elaborate

praise should not be outweighed, and the subsequent request for a copy of the text for dissemination west of the Yang-tzu might have been motivated by the search for a pretext in order to achieve the emperor's permit to return home. Nevertheless, the contents of the letter seem to indicate that Chou Yung developed his treatise independently from Chih-lin.

Special attention has been given to the detail that Chih-lin mentions that [at the time of his writing] 67 years (*liu ch'i shih sui* 六七十歲) had passed “since the profound voice had ceased”, an obvious allusion to Kūmarajīva. Modern research tends to follow an obituary by Seng-chao contained in the *Kuang hung ming chi*, and consider Kūmarajīva to have passed away in 413. Thus, it has been assumed that the *San-tsung lun* was written around (413+67=) 480 or before.

Although the date 413 is supported by a colophon to the *Ch'eng-shih lun* 成實論 contained in Seng-yu's 僧瑜 (445-518) *Chu san-tsang chi-chi* 出三藏記集, which states that the translation of the text had been finished in 412, Seng-yu himself somewhat reluctantly states that Kūmarajīva died during the I-hsi 義熙 (405-418) period. The correct date apparently had not even been known to Hui Chiao 慧皎 (497-554) when compiling the *Kao Seng chuan* 高僧傳 (before 519): In fact, he gives 409 as the year of Kūmarajīva's death, and even a critical note appended to the biography only lists the years 405 and 406 as possible alternatives. Thus, it is quite uncertain whether Chih-lin knew the actual date. The letter thus might have been written at least four years earlier, and the *San-tsung lun* theoretically might have been composed in (or even before) 476.

Through Chou Yung's biography in the *Nan Ch'i shu*, we know that at the beginning of the period Chien-yüan 健元 (479-483) he served as adjutant to the Prince of Ch'ang-sha 長沙王, adjutant of the rear troops, and magistrate of Shan-yin 山陰 in K'uai-chi 會稽. However, Chih-lin in his letter proposes to come “to the mountain” in order to receive the copy he is requesting. This suggests that the letter was written at a time when Chou Yung usually was staying near the capital on Mt. Chung. Thus, 476 might be considered the more likely date.

Sakaino Kōyō and T'ang Yung-t'ung questioned the facticity of Chou Yung's alleged indebtedness to Sūngnang, basing themselves on a remark in Chan-jan's *Fa-hua hsüan-i shih-ch'ien*, according to which Sūngnang came to the South at the beginning of the Chien-wu 建武 period (494-497) and thus long after the death of Chih-lin, the textual witness of Chou Yung's *San-tsung lun*. Following their lead, Richard Robinson names several other San-lun specialists in the South and points out that Chou Yung was at good terms with the already mentioned Chih-lin, as well as with Hsüan-ch'ang 玄暢, another scholar monk versed in the *San-lun*. In addition, Robinson mentions that Seng Chao's *Pu chen k'ung lun* 不真空論, according to Chi-tsang's *Chung-kuan lun shu* 中觀論疏 the actual source of the *chia-ming k'ung* 假名空 theory forwarded in Chou Yung's treatise, is listed in Lu Ch'eng's *Fa-lun-mu-lu* 法輪目錄, compiled for Sung Ming-Ti between 465 and 471, and thus had been known in the South early enough to exert influence on Chou Yung.

And yet, as both Yi Nüng-hwa and Hirai Shun'ei have pointed out, the *Ch'i-hsia ssu pei-wen* states that Sūngnang, while in the south and “... roaming from the most Northern mountains in the North to the most Southern mountains in the South, kept away from the capital for 3 Ch'i...” (i.e., 3 times 12 years, i.e. 36 years), before Liang Wu-ti in 512 sent the above mentioned ten monks to Mt. She. Consequently, Sūngnang may have arrived in the South as early as in 476. - The date given by Chan-jan (i.e., 494) thus may be reinterpreted as the year in which Sūngnang finally went to Ch'i-hsia monastery on Mt. She.

III. Towards a more detailed account of Sūngnang's sojourn in the South

Already Chōng In-bo quoted extensively from another source, which provides much more detailed information on Sūngnang: the *Sanron soshi den shū* 三論租師傳集, a text of unknown authorship, which basically is an alignment of textual quotes on important Indian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese predecessors

of the Sanron lineage as viewed by the Japanese compiler. The *textus receptus*, contained in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zenshū* vol. 111, is based on a text which had been “corrected” twice. - According to a colophon at the end of the middle *chüan*, the text is a revised edition from the 12th month of the second year Shōka (1259), again revised in the 4th month of the 10th year Kyōhō (1726).

The passage of interest is labeled as a quotation from the “13th *chüan* of the *Ssu-lun hsüan-i* 四論玄義, written by Chün-cheng 均正” (i.e. Hui-cheng 慧正). At the beginning, we find a somewhat alerting excuse by the compilers, stating that the grass script of the manuscript is difficult to read. Unfortunately, the *Ssu-lun hsüan-i* has survived only in a 10 *chüan* (*kwōn*) recension (lacking the first parts of *chüan* 1, 3 and 4, resp.). However, in a note to the table of contents of the extant version, the editor muses whether *chüan* 10 in fact might be *chüan* 12. Furthermore, the *Toiki dentō mokuroku* 東域傳燈目錄 (T.2183.55.1145c-1165b, comp. in the 8th year Kanji 寛治 (1094) by Eichō 永超 (dates var., 1014-95 or 1003-95) not only records a 12 *chüan* version, but also mentions someone reporting of a 14 *chüan* version. - The existence of several versions with such differences in textual alignment might seem odd, and yet becomes explainable if we consider the fact that the *Ssu-lun hsüan-i* 四論玄義 - both in contents and structure comparable to the *Ta-sheng hsüan lun* (T.1853.45.68a-77b) - is a compilation of several self-contained texts.

Following a conspicuous note correcting the year of Kūmarajīva's death to 413, the actual account of Sūngnang's activities begins as follows:

... Right-hand of the [Yellow] River there also was a conditioned arising: At the times of the Ch'i 齊 there was the monk from the state Kau-li, Dharma master Shih Tao-lang 釋道朗法師. He journeyed to the descendents of the Eight old ones (Pa-su 八宿, i.e. Kūmarajīva's main disciples) in the countries of Huang-lung (i.e. in the area of Tun-huang), learned what the disciples had heard and studied, attained the dharma gate of the Large Vehicle without abiding and without attainment, crossed the Chiang and reached Yang-chou. At that time a scholar [under] the Prince of Ching-ling 敬陵王, [his] family name being Chou 周, personal name Yung 顓 — this is exactly the grand father of Chou Hung-cheng 周弘正 — kept company with the Dharma master Tao-lang, and thus they compared their [interpretations of textual] meanings and [their respective spiritual] foundation (*i-tsung* 義宗, lit.: “meanings and ancestor”). Thus, Lord Chou awoke and understood the general intention (*ta-i* 大意). Thereupon he prepared the *Ssu-tsung lun* 四宗論 (sic!). At that time [one] did not see his writing. — Master Tao-lang said: “[Concerning] the *Ssu-tsung lun* which [you] created: The taste of the words is comprehensible.” Afterwards, [Chou] feared this meant that [the master] did not yet appreciate its intention....

So far, Hui-chün's report resembles Chi-tsang's. However, the following remarks allow most interesting insights into Sūng-nang's itinerary and his relationship with Chou Yung:

The Prince of Chin-ling invited all Dharma masters to [come to] Wu-shan monastery 五山寺 and establish (*shu* 豎) [their interpretations of textual] meanings (*i* 義). Chou Yung established [his interpretations of textual] meanings and [spiritual] foundation (*i-tsung* 義宗) of the *Four treatises* (*Ssu-lun* 四論). Thereupon, [the prince] invited the Dharma master Tao-lang to expound the statements of the Large Vehicle at that monastery. — [What used to be] Wu-shan monastery is exactly nowadays Ch'i-hsia monastery 栖霞寺 —...

... Lord Chou invited the Dharma master to return to Ts'ao-tang monastery 草堂寺 [on Mt. Chung], to hold lectures and pass on [his] learning. [Concerning] the Large Vehicle of non-attainment, [Chou Yung] was already near to awakening and salvation. He was considered to be a man without pair in the empire. Since Mr. Chou had grown old, he already transformed himself.

After the Dharma master had proceeded, Lord [Chou] went to the District Yin 陰 [near] the K'uai-chi 會稽 mountains, and held lectures for a short while ...

Later, all the [other] Dharma masters [from Mt. She] invited the Dharma master again to come to Mt. She 攝山. - Mt. She is 70 li away from Yang-chou 楊洲. — [Tao-lang] stopped at Chih-kuan monastery 止觀寺 and practiced the way.

Eventually, when the Son of Heaven Liang Wu[-ti] ascended to his position, he wanted to study the Large Vehicle of non-attainment. He invited [Tao-lang] to come out to Yang-chou. However, the Dharma master personally (*wei jen* 為人) always wished to dwell in quietude and did not wish to come out [of the mountain]. The Son of Heaven by imperial decree summoned 10 eminent priests (Ta-te 大德) and ordered them to enter Mt. She in order to listen to and learn the essential Way of the Large Vehicle...

Summarizing and arranging the pieces of information pertaining to the stay in the South in a more natural order, we might propose following loose chain of incidents:

- Sūngnang crosses the Yang-tzu and comes to Yang-chou Province (ca. 36 years before 512, i.e. around 476).
- Staying on Mt. Chung, he associates with Chou Yung, and becomes the lay scholar's mentor. (around 476?)
- Their interchange of ideas results in the latter's composition of the *San tsung lun*. (around 476?, cf. above)
- The Prince of Chin-ling organizes a doctrinal disputation at Wu-shan ssu, located at the foot of Mt. She. Chou Yung apparently leaves a lasting impression with his exposition of the *Four treatises*. Most likely as a result of this incident, Sūngnang is invited to this temple. (presumably, but not necessarily before the stay in K'uai-chi)
- Chou Yung follows Sūngnang (or, rather, vice-versa) to Shan-yin in K'uai-chi (479, cf. above).
- Having returned from K'uai-chi, Chou Yung again invites Sūngnang to the Tsao-t'ang ssu on Mt. Chung - only short time before his death. (between 482 and 485?)
- The Dharma masters from Mt. She ask Sūngnang to return. Sūngnang settles in the Mountain temple [Chih]-kuan ssu. (presumably, in 494)
- Sūngnang becomes abbot of the "mountain temple" after the death of Fa-tu. (500)
- Liang Wu-ti tries in vain to lure Sūngnang out of the mountain to the provincial capital and finally sends the famous 10 eminent monks to She-shan. (512)

As Itō Takatoshi has demonstrated, these details integrate quite well with Chi-tsang's outline of the events. Furthermore, the quote is accompanied by a quotation apparently drawn from Chiko's 智光 (709-770/780) *Jomyō gen ron ryaku jutsu* 淨名玄論略述, which, in spite of some other obvious corruption (thus, one character is marked as unreadable) is much smoother to read. Obviously, it summarizes either Hui-chün, or an unknown common source both texts may be based on, at the same time adducing further pieces of information possibly drawn from Chi-tsang's works.

- After some stock phrases on Sūngnang's character and appearance, which seem to summarize contents which appear towards the end of the quotation from Hui-chün's work, we learn that Sūngnang studied under T'an-chi 曇濟 from Tun-huang, according to the author a disciple of Tao-sheng.
- Again, we learn that Chou Yung received instruction by Sūngnang. However, the *San-tsung lun* is not mentioned.
- Also, the debate at *Wu-shan ssu* is mentioned, with the plausible emendment that it was the Prince who suggested Chou Yung to invite Sūngnang.
- There is no word of a stay in K'uai-chi. However, we are informed of Chou Yung's invitation to Tsao-t'ang ssu, this time more logically followed by the reference to Chou Yung's death.

- Though there is no mention of an invitation, we again read about Sūngnang's return to [Chih-]kuan ssu on Mt. She.
- Finally, we again learn of Liang Wu-ti's futile invitations to the capital, after which he sends out the ten masters.

In Anchō's *Chūron shoki* we find a passage echoing the report of Sūngnang's stay at the Chih-kuan ssu. In an attempt to explain the designation "Great master from inside the mountain", Anchō quotes the *Chūron jutsu ki* 中論述記 (again ascribed to Chikō) as follows:

In the past, the great Dharma master Nang from Koryō went at the end of Sung and the beginning of Ch'i to the place [of sojourn] of Dharma master T'an-ch'ing 曇慶 from Tun-huang prefecture, studied the *San-lun* and journeyed, proselytizing, to all directions, until he crossed the Chiang and stayed at the old mountain temple, expounding the statements of the Large Vehicle. Then he entered the She mountain range and stopped at Chih-kuan ssu, practicing the way and doing *tsuo-ch'an* 坐禪.

Anchō doubts the last statement and suggests a confusion with Seng-chüan, who is widely known as *Chih-kuan ssu Seng-chüan*. And yet, discussing the designation She-shan Ta-shih 攝山大師 ("Great master from She-shan"), Anchō somewhat inconsistently adduces another quotation from the *Chūron jutsu ki* mentioning Sūngnang's stay at *Chih-kuan ssu* 止觀寺. - In this context, he apparently does not feel any necessity to express doubts on account of a possible confusion of statements pertaining to different persons. - The quotation again is backed by another quote from Chün-cheng's *Ssu-lun hsüan-i*:

In the tenth role of Chün-cheng's *Hsüan-i* it is said: "Master Tao-lang, retreating (yin) to the district Shan-yin in K'uai-chi, for a little while spoke the Dharma..." - Interruption (ch'u 處). "[...]The Dharma masters asked the Dharma master later to come to Mt. She. - Mt. She is 70 miles away from Yang-chou. - at Chih-kuan monastery he practiced the way [...]" - even up to detailed explanation, all as in the first *chüan* of the record.

Thus, at least parts of the lengthy quote from the *Ssu-lun hsüan-i* found in the *Sanron soshi den shū* can be corroborated with parallel citations in much earlier sources.

For lack of additional sources, any attempt to determine an exact chronology of the events soon will reach its limits. However, it should have become clear by now that Chou Yung and Sūngnang must have shared a close relation over a longer period. - As Anchō quotes from the local gazetteer *T'an-hai chi* 淡海記:

"The *danapati* of Master Lang was called Chou Yung."

The fundamental question whether Sūngnang influenced Chou Yung also in the composition of the *San-tsung lun* most likely will never be settled beyond doubt. On the other hand, however, the basic arguments brought forward against this claim are insubstantial. Furthermore, Chih-lin's claim that he had heard in his youth that statements to the same content had been known in Kuan-chung (i.e. the Ch'ang-an area) indicates that Chou Yung's doctrines had not been current in the South, which in turn might suggest a fresh external stimulus from the North. Thus, it is not improbable that Chou Yung indeed wrote the *San-tsung lun* under Sūngnang's influence, and – unless more substantial counter evidence is brought forward – we should abide by this view.

IV. Some notes on Sūngnang's thought

There are no extant works known to have been written by Sūngnang. Conclusions concerning his thought can be reached only based on quotations and other references. Therefore, Korean scholars have assembled impressive amounts of text passages from Chi-tsang's works allegedly representing Sūngnang's teachings, the most extensive collection comprising 40 pages of materials. However, careful revision of these materials shows that most attributions are doubtful, and some are most definitely wrong - Already Anchō warns against any automatism, setting out with following observations concerning Chikō's *Chūron shō ki*:

Now, passage over passage says: “Middle of the Mountain” (Shan-chung 山中): [This refers to] the great Master Lang from the state of Kau-li; “Mountain gate” (Shan-men 山門): [This refers to] Dharma master [Seng-]ch'üan [僧詮] from Chih-kuan Temple. If sometimes it is said “the one master”, sometimes “the great master”, sometimes plainly “master”, [this refers to] Master Fa-lang 法朗 from Hsing-huang 興皇 Temple. ...

What follows, are quotations from various texts illustrating that the usage of Shan-chung 山中 and Shan-men 山門 in Chi-tsang's and Hui-chün's texts in fact is more complex: In different settings, both terms may alternatively refer to Sünngang, Seng-ch'üan or Fa-lang. The designations equated with Fa-lang, however, are not subjected to criticism.

This is far from accidental: Although being designed and conceived as literary works, the *hsüan* 玄 and *shu* 疏 commentaries written down by Chi-tsang and Hui-chün or their successors basically fall into the two categories of scripts for and transcripts of public lectures, and almost all texts were written with a physically present local audience in mind. As both Sünngang and Fa-lang are explicitly referred to as *ta-shih* – thus, we find references to She-shan ta-shih 攝山大師 or She-ling ta-shih 攝嶺大師 (“the great master from Mt. She” and “the great master from the She mountain range”) alongside references to Hsing-huang fa-shih 興皇大師 (“the great master from Hsing-huang [temple]”) –, it should be evident that underspecified phrases such as *ta-shih* 大師 (“the great master”), *fa shih* 法師 (“the Dharma master”) or even *shih* 師 (“the master”), as far as they were not preceded by a more specific designation, had to be understood as references to Chi-tsang's and Hui-chün's personal mentor, i.e. Fa-lang.

To make things even worse, there are no lengthy quotes and often it is difficult to determine where a given quotation ends. Thus, decisions whether Chi-tsang at a given point still represents Sünngang's thought or whether he already has moved on to present his own ideas are far from trivial. - Nevertheless, a few rather important positions held by Sünngang may be identified.

1, The basic idea passed on to Chou Yung

In his *San-tsung lun* 三宗論 (“Treatise on the three [spiritual] ancestors”), Chou Yung apparently forwarded a dialectical scheme of three theses reflecting different conceptions of the term “provisional names” (*chia-ming* 假名). Unfortunately, only fragmentary quotes from the text survive. - The fundamental theses appear to have been:

... 1. Not emptying provisional names (*pu-k'ung chia-ming* 不空假名), 2. emptying provisional names (*k'ung chia-ming* 空假名). 3. provisional names being empty (*chia-ming k'ung* 假名空). ...

Concerning the culminating final thesis, Chi-tsang explains:

“Third: provisional names being empty”: This is exactly what Chou Yung makes use of. [Its] overall intention says: provisional names as a matter of fact are exactly emptiness.” Searching for the origin of Mr. Chou's “provisional names being empty”, [one will find that] it comes out of Seng-chao's 僧肇 (384-414?) *Pu-chen k'ung lun* 不真空論 (“Treatise on [reality] not being truly empty”). The treatise says: “Although having (*yu* 有) [characteristics], it still is lacking (*wu* 無) [them], although lacking [characteristics], it still has [them]. 'Although having, it still is lacking' is what is called 'not to be something what has' (*fei yu* 非有). 'Although lacking, it still is having' is what is called 'not to be something what lacks' (*fei wu* 非無). Such does not exactly mean that there are no things. - The things [just] are not real things. If the things are not real things, in relation to what could we make them 'things'?”

Lord Chao [further] says: “For the reason that things are not real things, they are provisional things. For the reason that they are provisional things, they are exactly emptiness.” The great master Lang from Kau-li, obtained this[scriptural] meaning in Kuan-nei (i.e. the area around Ch'ang-an) and passed it on to Mr. Chou. Mr. Chou on grounds of this composed the *San-tsung lun*.

Judging from the above passage, Chi-tsang considers the *San-tsung lun* basically a restatement of Seng-chao's ideas. Concerning the ultimate identity of “having” and “non-having”, or “provisional names” and “emptiness”, i.e. the interrelation which Chi-tsang normally labels *hsiang-chi* 相即 (“mutual identity”).

Thus, it is difficult to decide, whether another snippet of information contained in the passage on Sūngnang in the *Erh ti-i* paraphrases the *San-tsung lun*, or merely is a restatement of its quintessential meaning:

...Chou Yung in his late age composed the *San-tsung lun*, clarifying that the two scrutinies take the middle way as their [inner] body (*erb-ti i chung-tao wei t'i* 二諦以中道為體) ...

In any case, the passage leads us to what possibly may be considered Sūngnang's most important, and yet possibly somewhat problematic intellectual contribution.

2. The relation between the two scrutinies (*erb-ti* 二諦) and the middle way (*chung-tao* 中道)

In his, *Chung-kuan lun shu* Chi-tsang first claims the eventual identity of “middle” and “provisional”, and then lets the opponent raise the following question:

... This being such, for what reason is what is neither what has, nor 'what lacks [characteristics] (*fei yu fei wu* 非有非無) [in the case of] the great master of Mt. She termed “middle way” (*chung-tao* 中道), and what and yet has, and yet lacks (*erb yu erb wu* 而有而無) is termed “provisional designations” (*chia-ming* 假名)? - Then, the [inner] body (*t'i* 體) is termed “middle”, and the function (*yung* 用) is exactly the “provisional”. - For what reason [should] they be without distinction?

Chi-tsang vaguely explains that this only means to open into [inner] body and function in a first approach (*i-wang k'ai yü t'i-yung* 一往開於體體用). Therefore the [inner] body is designated “middle” and the function is designated “provisional”. - Sūngnang's statement seems to pose a considerable problem to Chi-tsang, as can be inferred from the second interchange with the opponent:

... Question: Why [then] does the great master produce this exposition? Answer: The text of the *Treatise* (i.e., the *Chung-lun*) is such. Therefore, the great master makes use of it. The *Chapter on the fourfold scrutiny* says: “The multitude of dharmas produced by causes and conditions (*chung yin-yüan sheng fa* 眾因緣生法), - I say, these exactly are emptiness (*k'ung* 空), also I consider them to be provisional designations (*chia-ming* 假名), and also these are meanings of the middle way (*chung-tao i* 中道義).” The analysis in long lines (i.e., the prose commentary to the verses) says: “As it is far apart from the two extremes, it is named 'middle way'. For the sake of the the living beings, it is spoken of by means of provisional designations. The middle way being the [inner] body, one cannot speak of its 'having' or 'lacking'. As the function is what has or lacks, it can get to the point to be spoken of provisionally.” Therefore, one takes what neither is what has nor what lacks as the “middle” and what and yet has, and yet lacks as the provisional. - The above merely means to treat [the matter going just] one way. If one distinguishes the three middle and three provisional ones, then middle and provisional always penetrate [each other]. Later on, this will be spoken of comprehensively...

While the reader would expect another quote to the effect that Sūngnang eventually would transcend the static duality of “middle” and “provisional”, Chi-tsang apparently has no other choice than to defend Sūngnang by resorting to the limitations imposed by the framework of the textual foundation.

As will be discussed *infra*, from the perspective of Fa-lang 法朗 and Chi-tsang, Sūngnang's clear distinction of “middle” and “provisional” ultimately should be discarded. - The benefit of Sūngnang's conception for the development of *San-lun* - to be more precise, the branch represented by Fa-lang and Chi-tsang - lies in the uncompromising reduction of *yu* and *wu* to mere *fang-pien* 方便. Thus, these terms are deprived of ultimate

validity, and of their initial static. Even though this move by no means anticipated the far more “deconstructive” developments to follow, it nevertheless was a necessary first step to make these developments possible.

However, Sūngnang's concept might have implications far beyond the San-lun traditions: The verse from the *Chung-lun*, i.e. MMK 24:18, provides also the textual foundation for the concept of “three scrutinies” (*san-ti* 三諦), normally attributed to the T'ien-t'ai scholar Chih-i 智顛 (538-597). Interestingly enough, Chi-tsang considers the use of a third scrutiny (i.e., the scrutiny from the perspective of the middle way) to be a decisive feature lacking in Chih-tsang's distorted interpretation of Sūngnang's theories. In the *Ta-sheng hsiian lun*, a wealth of textual evidence for the formula of the middle way as [inner] body and the related idea of a third scrutiny is given:

... Question: [According to] which passages in the sutras does the middle way function as the [inner] body of the two scrutinies? Answer: The *Chung-lun* says: “The dharmas produced by causes and conditions, - I say, these exactly are emptiness (*k'ung* 空), also I consider them to be provisional designations (*chia-ming* 假名), and also these are the attributes of the middle way (*chung-tao* 中道).” - [Comment:] “The dharmas produced by causes and conditions ...”: this is the scrutiny [from the] “vulgar” [perspective] (*su-ti* 俗諦). “... these exactly are emptiness”: this is the scrutiny [from the] “true” [perspective] (*chen-ti* 真諦). “... and also these are attributes of the middle way”: this is the inner body (*t'i* 體). The *Hua-yen* 華嚴 says: “All dharmas of 'what has' and 'what lacks' , [properly] understood, are neither 'what has' nor 'what lacks'.” For this reason, “what has” and “what lacks” function as the two scrutinies, and “what is neither 'what has' nor 'what lacks'” functions as [their inner] body. The sutra says: “what is neither what has nor what lacks provisionally is spoken of [as] 'what has' and 'what lacks'.” The *Nieh-p'an ching* 涅槃經 says: “Following the [limited capacities of] the living beings, [the Buddha] speaks of the existence of the 'two scrutinies'.” For this reason, one takes the gate of teaching (*chiao-men* 教門) to be the scrutinies. The *Jen-wang ching* 仁王經 says: “The scrutiny [from the perspective of] what has, the scrutiny [from the perspective of] what lacks, the scrutiny in the highest sense [from the perspective of] the middle way”. Therefore, [you should] know that there is a third scrutiny.

It should not go by unnoticed that the *Jen-wang ching* 仁王經 - together with the *P'u-sa ying-lo pen-yeh ching* 菩薩嬰珞本業經 - provides the scriptural evidence from the sutras Chih-i/Kuan-ting 灌頂 (561-632) would resort to. Given the circumstance that Hui pu 慧布 (518-587), one of Fa-lang's three major fellow disciples, is reported to have shared contacts with Chih-i's predecessor Hui-ssu 慧思 (517-577), these coincidences give reason to raise the question whether the T'ien-t'ai concept of three truths possibly might have evolved out of Sūngnang's ideas.

3. The formulae of the “provisional before the middle” and the “middle before the provisional”, etc.

In Chi-tsang's *Ta-sheng hsiian lun*, we find the following passage :

... And the Master from the She range says: “To clarify the middle before the provisional is the middle as [inner] body (*t'i-chung* 體中). To clarify the middle after the provisional is the middle as function (*yung-chung* 用中). To clarify the provisional before the middle is to make use of the middle as provisional (*chia-chung* 假中). To clarify the provisional afterwards is the provisional of the [inner] body (*t'i-chia* 體假).” Therefore, “what is neither what has, nor what lacks, and yet has and lacks” is the middle as [inner] body (*t'i-chung* 體中). What provisionally “has” is not called “what has”; what “provisionally lacks” is not termed “what lacks”. Therefore, “what neither is what has nor what lacks” is the middle as function (*yung-chung* 用中). “What neither has nor lacks, and yet has and yet lacks” is the provisional of the [inner] body (*t'i-chia* 體假). That what provisionally “has” cannot be termed “what has”, and that

what provisionally “lacks” cannot be termed “what lacks”, this is the provisional as function (*yung-chia* 用 假). Therefore, the use of “middle” and “provisional” in both cases depends on the [specific kind of] teaching (*chiao* 教) exposing [them], and the [very] absence of “provisional” and “middle” consequently is the structure (*li* 理) taught.

Even though the final step, the eventual negation of both middle and provisional, appears to have been reached only by Fa-lang and Chi-tsang, the peculiar use of repeatedly permuted binomes obviously derives from Sūngnang. - This observation is of considerable importance, as the use of dialectical formulae and continuous shifts of the perspective were to become an important feature of Fa-lang's and Chi-tsang's exegesis.

IV. practice as a dividing issue

Hirai Shun'ei and Aaron Koseki have drawn our attention to a conflict between “meditators” and “lecturers” among the followers of Seng-ch'üan 僧詮 (n.d.), Sūngnang's successor. Seng-ch'üan was, the *Hsü Kao-seng chuan* leaves no doubt on this, rather a meditator than a lecturer. When accepting Fa-lang as a disciple, he explained: “Everything depends solely on the middle contemplation” (*chung-kuan* 中觀), and disappeared into the forest in order to meditate. When he was asked to lecture on the Nirvāṇa-sutra, he refused: As the students had already heard lectures on the *Prajñā-paramitā* corpus, why then should he lecture on the Nirvāṇa? - And when his disciples had broken their commitment to silence, he reportedly said: “[As to] the fine subtleties of this Dharma: Those who understand can practice [them]. - There is nothing [which should] induce to leave the room and unceremoniously disclose it. Therefore, the sutra says: '[Among] those who cling to the notion of an ego, no one expounds this sutra. Those deeply enjoying the Dharma, do not make many words [about it].’” - As might be expected, at least two of Seng-ch'üan's four major disciples became ardent meditators. Chi-tsang's teacher Fa-lang, however, though even having received training in meditation techniques during his early career, most obviously did not share his predecessor's inclination: Quite symbolically, perhaps even somewhat ironically, he was styled Ssu-chü 四句 (“Tetralemma”).

In fact, Fa-lang and his successor Chi-tsang were responsible for a fundamental shift towards an approach in which textual exegesis on the basis of dialectical formulae became the prevalent mode of practice. - The emphasis put on these dialectical formulae can be illustrated by a remark in Chih-k'ai's 智凱 (fl. 6.Jh.) biography in the *Kao-seng chuan*: During Chi-tsang's stay in K'uai-chi 會稽 (591 to 599), most students were troubled by the difficulty of grasping the process of driving away the obstructions through double phrases of the *First paragraph* and the *Middle and the provisional* (*Cb'u-chang chung-chia fu-tz'u cb'ien chih* 初章中假複詞遣滯), while Chih-k'ai reached exceptional mastery.

In the course of this change, the *hsiang-chi* 相即 formula was applied also to the relation of middle and provisional, and Sūngnang's interpretation of the two scrutinies as outward function were developed into the well-known *san-ch'ung erh ti* 三重二諦 or *ssu-ch'ung erh ti* 四重二諦 (“two scrutinies in three”, or “four layers”) formulae. The underlying desire to abolish any remaining dichotomy did not only induce Fa-lang and Chi-tsang to criticise Fa-lang's co-disciple Chih-pien 智辯 (n.d.) and others for the hypostatization of a middle beyond the provisional, and to denounce them as *Chung-chia shih* 中假師 (“Masters of the middle and provisional”). In parallel, it led to a radical criticism of conventional approaches towards practice. Thus, in Chi-tsang's *Ching-ming hsüan lun* 淨名玄論 the following is reported:

... Furthermore, our master, the monk Hsing-huang (i.e., Fa-lang), whenever he ascended the high seat, always made these words: “[If] the people who practice the Way want to abandon what is not the Way and strive for the right Way, then they are tied up by the Way. Those [practicing] seated dhyāna, bringing confusion to a rest and striving for stillness, are tied up by dhyāna. The crowd at the dharma-gate (i.e., the beginners in the own camp), meaning that there is wisdom (*chih-hui* 智慧, i.e.

prajñā), is tied up by wisdom (*hui* 慧)". Again, he says: "[If] one practices the contemplation without arising (*wu-sheng kuan* 無生觀), desiring to shatter and wash [away] de mind of having something to obtain (*yu so te hsin* 有所得心), then one is tied up by [the goal of being] without arising (*wu-sheng* 無生)"...

Answering the question what salvation (*chieh* 解) would mean in the light of the above out-look on being tied-up, Chi-tsang quotes a passage from a sutra: If the foolish consider clarity and unclarity (i.e., *ming* 明 and *wu-ming* 無明) to be two, then this is called "being tied up". - What kind of salvation should there be? The opponent insisting on an answer, Chi-tsang finally states:

... [If] one brings to an end [the state that] there is something to strive for, then one brings to an end [the state that] there is something to be tied up with. - What kind of salvation [then should the]? - This single instruction suffices to make known the dark (i.e., profound) awakening. ...

In the light of Chi-tsang's apparent unease concerning Sūngnang's statements on the middle and the provisional, one might raise the question whether, if Sūngnang - after all, the teacher of Fa-lang's teacher Seng-ch'üan, and at the same time a convenient link to the Kuan-chung tradition - had not been indispensable for the construction of a San-lun lineage, he would not also have been subject to criticism as the first Chung chia shih.

Even worse: Taking another phrase ascribed to Sūngnang, *yüan chin yü kuan, kuan chin yü yüan* ("the conditions are exhausted in contemplation, and contemplation is exhausted in the conditions"), as evidence, already Yi Nūng-hwa assumed that Sūngnang was not only inclined towards logics, but that "to a certain degree" his practice was one of "practicing the way and [performing] seated meditation" (*haeng to, chmasōn* 行道坐禪). - This wording seems to allude to some of the sources quoted above. Thus, Chün-cheng's mention of Sūngnang's sojourn at *Chih-kuan ssu* 止觀寺, where he reportedly practiced the way (*hsing tao* 行道), or, as Chikō later would state, practiced "seated meditation" (*tsuo ch'an* 坐禪), suggests that meditation practice on Mt. She did not begin with Seng-ch'üan, but already with Sūngnang. Thus, Sūngnang actually would fall into yet another, albeit related and partially overlapping, group severely criticised by Fa-lang and Chi-tsang.

V. Conclusions

To our best knowledge, Sūngnang's encounter with Chou Yung should be considered factual. Probably it thus indeed was Sūngnang, who triggered the revival of Kuan-chung thought in the South.

While only few concepts can be convincingly traced back to Sūngnang himself, by the explicit interpretation of the two scrutinies as *fang-pien* merely pointing at the Middle Way and the introduction of certain dialectical formulae, he laid the groundwork for later developments. On the other hand, the actual "revolution" in Chinese San-lun, resulting in a radical change in the concept of practice, was still to occur.

Just as Fa-lang and Chi-tsang had little freedom in choosing the predecessors for the time-honoured lineage of teachers and disciples they needed to construct, Sūngnang could not select those who later should claim to be his heirs. In fact, the scarce information we have on his doctrines and attitude towards practice seems to suggest that Sūngnang's positions rather would have resembled those of San-lun fractions heavily criticised by Fa-lang and Chi-tsang. Therefore, it might be justified to view the above mentioned Chih-pien and other practitioners of meditation, notably the outstanding Ta-ming fa-shih 大明法師, as the true heirs or main branches of the Mt. She tradition.

Thus, Sūngnang eventually might have exerted more influence on T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an circles than on the so-called "doctrinal" San-lun. It will be left to future research to shine more light on these still rather neglected relations.