

## KOREAN TEMPLE

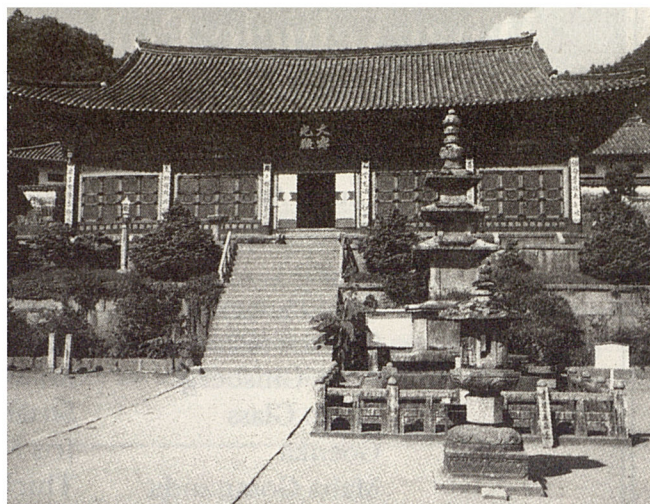
## Haein-sa Temple

*From time to time PRIMARY POINT will portray a famous Buddhist temple of Korea. The renowned library at Haein-sa is notable not only for the books it preserves but also for the way the building interacts with the natural elements.*

*Mu Soeng Sunim*

Haein-sa is one of the three treasure temples of Korea — the Dharma treasure — because the “Tripitaka Koreana,” the most complete edition of the Buddhist canon in Chinese, is stored here. (The other two treasure temples are Tongdo-sa, the Buddha treasure, and Songgwang-sa, the Sangha treasure.) Haein-sa is the largest training center for Buddhist monks in Korea. At any given time, there are 200 to 300 monk-trainees in residence here.

Haein-sa is located amidst the breathtaking scenery of the Kaya mountains in the central part of what is now South Korea. Prior to being connected by a paved road to the nearby town of Taegu in 1975, Haein-sa, like most Korean mountain temples, was extremely difficult to reach. Now the whole area



The Main Sanctuary at Haein-sa Temple in Korea

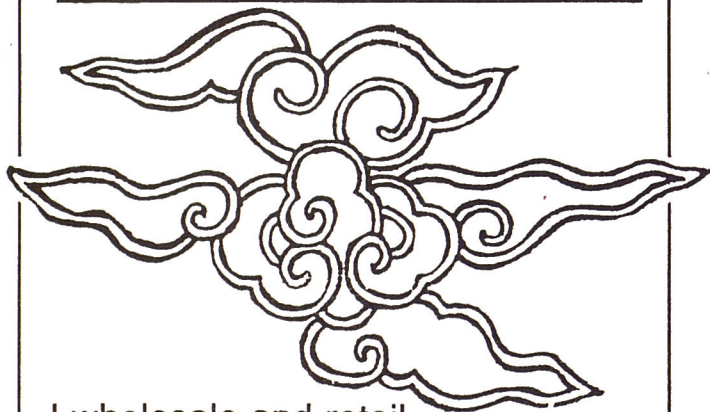
has been designated as Kaya-San National Park, and Haein-sa is a major attraction for tourists.

Haein-sa began as a small hermitage built in 802 by two monks, Sun-ung and I-chong, after their return from China. This was the golden age of Buddhism in Korea under the Silla Dynasty (668-935), and many Korean monks were travelling to China to learn Buddhist doctrine and practices from Chinese masters. Upon their return, they built modest hermitages in remote mountains which were later expanded into large temple complexes under lavish patronage from Silla kings. Legend has it that in 808, the queen of the Silla king became ill with an incurable tumor. After all cures had failed, the two monks tied one end of a piece of string to the tumor and the other to a tree. Then they chanted some special chants. As they chanted, the tumor withered and the tree died! In gratitude the king ordered a temple to be built for the two monks. Thus Haein-sa temple came into being.

Haein-sa is often translated as “Reflection of the Sea” temple or “Ocean Seal” temple. The word “Haein” means the seal or reflection of a smooth sea and is an important symbol from the Hwaom (Avatamsaka) school. This concept holds that earthly existence, with its pain, suffering, and delusion, is like a turbulent sea, whereas a mind which has been liberated from pain, suffering, and delusion is like a calm and smooth sea.

From the early eleventh century onward, Korea was repeatedly invaded by tribes from the north, first the Khitans and then the Mongols. In order to seek the protective help of the Buddhas in these times of crisis, Koryo kings ordered the carving of the entire Buddhist Canon on wood printing blocks. The first edition of this “Tripitaka Koreana” was burned during the Mongol invasions of 1231-32. The royal court fled to Kanghwa island, just off the coast of Korea. In 1236, King Kojong ordered the engraving of a second edition of the Tripitaka at Kanghwa, as a national prayer.

### DRAGON MAMA

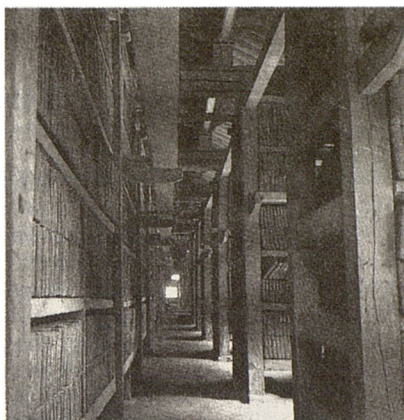


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This prayer against the Mongol invaders was carved on 81,258 wooden blocks, each 9 1/2" wide, 29" long, and 2 1/2" thick. Scriptures are engraved on both sides of the block; on the average, there are 22 lines on each side and 14 characters in each line. The wood for the blocks is white birch and is said to have been imported from China, even though Korea was engaged in hostilities with the northern part of China at that time. The wood was kept submerged in salt water for three years and then in fresh water for another three years. The wood was then buried underground for three years and dried in open air for three years. The actual engraving took 16 years. Today this Tripitaka Koreana is the best preserved of all Chinese translations of the entire Buddhist Canon, and it remains Korea's most important Buddhist treasure.



The Tripitaka Koreana

During the early years of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), it was decided to move the blocks from Kanghwa island to a safer place. Legend has it that nuns carrying one block each on their heads walked the entire distance to Haein-sa. A library was built at Haein-sa in 1488 under the orders of King Songjong, and it is now the oldest surviving structure at Haein-sa. This library/storehouse is an engineering marvel, designed to keep out moisture, create an even flow of air, and

moderate the temperature and humidity inside. This was accomplished by a radical window construction design: large lattice windows were located in the bottom portion of the western walls, with small ones above. On the eastern walls, this design is reversed. Recent experiments to preserve these wooden blocks in modern air-conditioned units were not successful. Thus, the engineering design of the library continues to hold as much fascination for visitors as the wooden blocks themselves.

The library building miraculously escaped destruction during the Hideyoshi invasions by the Japanese in 1592 and 1598, as well as the great fire of 1817 in which all other temple buildings were destroyed.

In the temple courtyard is a three-storied pagoda, typical of Silla architecture, built in 808. A stone lantern in front of the pagoda dates from the same period. The main hall which houses the Vairocana Buddha (the primordial Buddha) was constructed in 1818; the image of the Vairocana Buddha itself is from 1769. The main hall underwent a major renovation in 1971. In 1988, a brand new meditation hall was completed in the hills behind the main hall to accommodate the needs of large numbers of Zen practitioners. □

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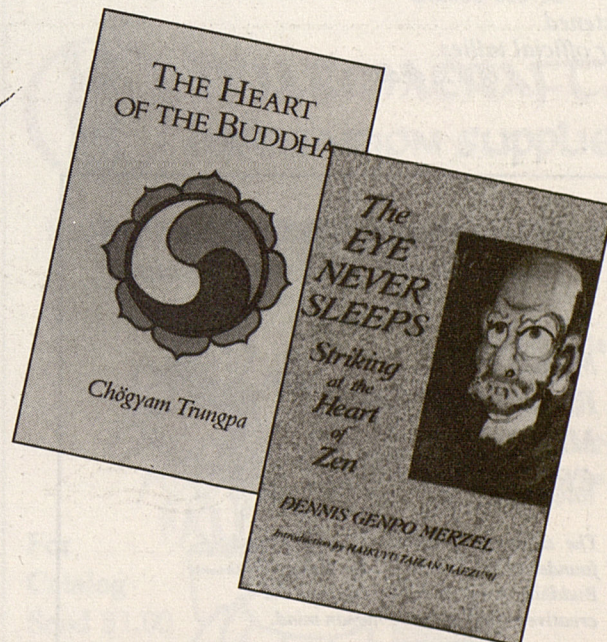
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