Korean Buddhist Reforms and Problems in the Adoption of Modernity during the Colonial Period

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- 박포리 선생님
- Korea Journal 은 2001 년부터 새로마자표기법을 사용하고 있기 때문에 선생님께서 사용하신 MR system 을 new romanization 으로 바꾸었습니다. 그리고 일본어 표기의 ō 나 ū 등은 간단히 o 나 u 로 표기하였습니다. 이 점 양해 바랍니다.
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Keywords: Korean Buddhism, Buddhist reforms, Buddhist modernity, Buddhist nationalism, religion and colonialism, Buddhist Youth movement, Buddhist social engagement

Abstract

Korean Buddhists during the colonial period (1910-1945) first had to overcome the effect of the Chosŏn persecution and then bring changes to their religion that were compatible with their newly opened society. The arrival of Japanese Buddhism and Christianity in the peninsula provided Korean Buddhists with both challenges and a frame of reference for their idea for modernity. This paper presents the major reform issues, activities, and institutional changes implemented by the Korean Sangha. The viability of Korean Buddhism depended largely on the capability and willingness of Buddhists to participate in a nationwide march toward co-opting Western modernity. Social and nationalistic stances were adopted to prove the utility of Buddhism, so that the status of Buddhism in society would be improved.

The Buddhist order was launched on the modernization of Buddhism, focusing on reformation of the monks' education as well as their proselytization. While educational reforms were aimed at consolidation within the Buddhist order, the Buddhist order also attempted to promote the religion in society by developing propagation methods. At the same time, Korean Buddhists joined the nationalist march for the restoration of

sovereignty. After the March First Movement in 1919, young clerics began to challenge the docile Sangha and question the religious policies of the colonial regime. This paper shows, however, that Korean Buddhists faced a number of difficulties, such as a lack of financial resources, passion, and vision, in their effort to create a "modern" tradition.

Introduction

Korean Buddhists during the colonial period (1910-1945) first had to redress the negative effects of 500 years of persecution under the staunchly Confucian Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) and then bring changes to their religion that were compatible with a newly opened society. The Joseon court maintained anti-Buddhist policies throughout most of the dynasty. As a result, Buddhist clerics fell into one of the lowest social strata. The general public disparaged Buddhism, and anti-Buddhist sentiment became widespread throughout the population.

However, with the advancement of colonial powers came political change. As the result of being caught in the crossfire amid the rivalries of imperialist nations, late Joseon kingdom was annexed by Japan in 1910. As a result, the Korean Buddhist order was on the one hand released from the restraint of Joseon persecution, and on the other hand, was forced to accommodate its old practices to Western modernity that had been ushered in by Japanese colonial rule.

The subsequent reform movement was a concerted effort by Korean Buddhists both to resurrect the fallen status of Buddhism and to adapt the religion to the new era. The Korean Buddhist Sangha as a whole attempted to revitalize Buddhism with the common goal of the "modernization." It tried to find ways of making the religion relevant to "modern" life.

The concept of "modern" presents conflicting shades of meaning, however, depending on the context. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Korean Buddhists adopted the notion of "modernism" from Western liberalism. Korean intellectuals were heavily influenced by late-Qing intellectuals because of their shared political experiences as victims of colonialism. The "modern" thought of Yan Fu (1853-1921) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) had an especially great influence on Korean intellectuals and particularly on Korean Buddhists in terms of such notions of "modernization."

These Chinese intellectuals advocated the concepts of Spencerian social Darwinism.[1] Liberalism in this context was a movement that would create conditions allowing individuals to fulfill their own interests and perform to fullest extent of their potentials. "Modernism" in this sense came to be defined in terms of both constant evolution and progress in which only the strongest and fittest survived. Most Korean Buddhists presented their initial reform ideas along these lines. For example, in his *Joseon bulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Revitalization of Korean Buddhism"), Han Yong-un (1879-1944) saw "the world in melioristic terms, as in a continual state of evolution that would culminate ultimately in an ideal civilization."[2] Likewise, other Buddhist

[1] Schwartz (1964, 42-90).
[2] Buswell (1992, 26).

clerics used terms "civilized" (*munmyeong*) or "progressive" (*jinbo*) to refer to the modernity to which they aspired.

Korean Buddhists felt both stimulated and challenged by the rapid growth and the active propagation of Japanese Buddhism and Christianity, which began after the Korean-Japanese Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876, when Korea agreed to open Busan and two other ports and granted extraterritorial rights to Japanese settlers in these areas. Japanese Buddhists and Christian churches were actively involved in social charity and education as part of their evangelization strategies, and Korean Buddhists attempted to borrow a "modern" outlook on religion from them.

The Korean Sangha[the Buddhist Order] embarked on reforms centering on the Buddhist institution. The main areas of reform were Sangha education and methods of propogating the religion, with the goal of making the Sangha more accessible to the public. The curriculum included secular subjects to make Buddhist clerics conversant with the secular world. The Sangha co-opted the social activities of Christian missionaries and attempted to develop a sense of connection among the Sangha, the laity, and society. In the earlier phase, before the March First Independence Movement in 1919, the prime goals of the reform were the survival of the Sangha and protection of its interests rather than political involvement. Additionally, the Japanese regime, in supporting Buddhist reforms, pressured for reforms to be confined to religious and apolitical areas.

During the second phase of the reform movement, which began after 1919, however, the youth movement added a political dimension to the reforms by joining the nationalist march for the restoration of sovereignty. This nationalist undertaking was another way for the Buddhists to prove the social utility of Buddhism. After the nationwide protest against Japanese rule in March 1919, the colonial regime shifted its coercive policy to a so-called cultural policy in dealing with its Korean colony granting Koreans a limited degree of political freedom. Under these circumstances, cultural nationalists embarked upon a gradual reformist march towards the ultimate goal of national independence.[3]

It was under these circumstances that young monks formed Buddhist youth associations and challenged the status quo of the abbot system. The Joseon Bulgyo Cheongnyeonhoe (Joseon Buddhist Youth Association) came into being in 1920, and the Joseon Bulgyo Yusinhoe (Joseon Buddhist Reformation Association) was formed in 1921. Together, they embarked on a campaign against the "temple ordinances," the Japanese coercive regulations imposed on Korean temples, and also demanded self-government of the Buddhist order. In the 1920s, disputes over temple management occurred frequently and the movement to expel corrupt abbots became widespread.[4]

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[3] The Korean nationalists, both in exile and within the Korean peninsula, shared a common goal of restoring national independence, although they differed in their strategies for pursuing this goal. The exile movement was divided into three factions: that of Syngman Rhee, who advocated diplomatic representation abroad; the gradualists, who were represented by An Chang-ho; and the socialist radicals of the Yi Dong-hwi camp. In a similar fashion, the domestic nationalists were also largely divided into two camps: the gradualists and the radicals. Gradualists initiated the cultural nationalist movement.

[4] *Bulgyo* (Buddhism) 2 (1924): 63.

By examining how Korean Buddhists reformed their practices to present a socially viable form of Buddhism, this paper provides an analysis of what modes of adaptation were applied to reforms and to what extent the reforms were successful or problematic in creating a new tradition.

The Influence of Christianity and Japanese Buddhism

Japanese Buddhist denominations and Christian missionaries were allowed to proselytize in the capital, in what is now Seoul, whereas Korean monks were still forbidden from entering the city. Beginning in 1449, Korean monks' entry into the capital had been prevented by the anti-Buddhist policies of the early Joseon dynasty.[5] Sano Zenrei of the Nichiren school filed a petition to the government in 1895 to lift the ban against Korean monks. The pro-Japanese cabinet, which was proceeding with the Gabo Reforms of 1894, accepted this request.[6] Korean Buddhists viewed the activities of Japanese Buddhism and Christianity as advanced forms of religion. The arrival of these religions in the peninsula provided them with both challenges and a frame of reference for their idea for modernity.

The first Japanese missionaries to Korea arrived in Busan in 1877, sent by the Higashi Honganji branch of Jodo Shinshu. The Korean missions were prompted by a special letter of request sent by the Japanese government's Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs to the head of Honganji, named Otani Kosho (1871-1894).[7] The Japanese government solicited the assistance of Japanese Buddhism to serve Japanese nationals in Korea and, more importantly, to function as a buffer zone against which to ease the animosity of Koreans against Japan's military and economic encroachment. The Higashi Buddhists were pleased to accede to the government's needs and embarked on their mission in Korea to support the foreign expansion. They carried out foreign missions to fulfill the religion's mandate, namely that of "serving the monarch and nation and abiding by the king's law before the religion's."[8]

Higashi missionary temples were established in Busan in 1877, Wonsan in 1881, Incheon in 1885, and Seoul in 1890, soon after the Korean court opened these cities.[9]

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[5] In 1449, King Sejong restricted monks from entering the capital unless they had to see their parents or to buy things form marketplaces. The *Gyeongguk daejeon* (National Code) made the permanent rule that monks were prohibited from entering the capital except for soliciting alms, seeing their parents or siblings, or buying the necessities of Buddhist rites (*Gyeongguk daejeon* 5:8b). Succeeding Joseon monarchs abided by this injunction until 1895, yet some monks still found ways to sneak into the capital by back doors.

[6] The progressive cabinet instituted a series of reforms, such as the abolition of the traditional state examination (*gwageo*) and the social class system, restructuring of the political system, the currency reform, and the standardization of weights and measures (Jeong 1988, 77).

[7] Chōsen Kaikyō Kantoku-fu (1928, 18-19).

[8] Chōsen Kaikyō Kantoku-fu(1928, 75-77).

[9] Chōsen Kaikyō Kantoku-fu (1928, 22-24, 29-30, 44-46).

Four years after the Higashi branch opened, the Nichirenshu also embarked on its own mission and built temples in Busan in 1881, Wonsan in 1893, and Incheon in 1895.[10]

The second wave of Japanese missionaries came after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). With the Japanese victory over the Chinese military presence in Korea, the Japanese population expanded quickly. By 1900, 24 years after the Korean-Japanese Treaty, the total population of Japanese settlers on the peninsula reached 15,829. Around this time the Nishi Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū began its missionary work, and the Jodoshu (Pure Land School) began their missionary work in 1897.[11]

The third wave of missionaries came after the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). By this time, the promotion of migration to Korea had become a firm government policy,[12] and between 1900 and 1910, the Japanese population grew tenfold. By the time of colonization, the number of Japanese nationals in Korea had reached 171,543. All the other major Japanese denominations, specifically the Sotoshu, Shingonshu (True Word School), and Rinzaishu, arrived after this war.[13] From a look at this history, it is obvious that most of the Japanese denominations that became influential in Korea had already made their way to the peninsula before the 1910 annexation.

Besides Japanese Buddhism, Christianity also began to make its mark on the religious landscape of the peninsula. The establishment of the Korean Catholic Church began around the last quarter of the eighteenth century, but the government tacitly recognized its existence only after the 1876 treaty. The church grew rapidly in membership from the 1880s: believers were estimated at 13,625 by 1885 and 73,517 in 1910.[14] In addition, Protestant missionaries arrived on the peninsula in the mid-1880s and enjoyed unprecedented success in converting people to their faith. The number of Protestant believers reached about 37,400 in 1905 and had increased to 140,000 in 1910.[15] The number of Christians grew quickly and outnumbered Korean Buddhists during the colonial period. Christianity had spread quickly before Korean Buddhism began to recover from its fallen status. "There were mission stations in every corner of Korea," James Grayson writes, "and everywhere schools were created and medical work carried on along with pure evangelism."[16] According to a Japanese government report, the number of Christians, including Catholics and Protestants, had reached 265,000 (Japanese, 5,500; Koreans, 259,000; and other nationals, 300) by the end of 1927, with 3,069 churches supporting 3,447 clergy.[17] This report records the number of Christians at about 420,500 (Catholic, 95,500; Protestants, 314,500) around 1935.

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10 Aoyanagi (1911, 143-144).

11 GGK (1935, 188). For Japanese Buddhism in Korea, see also Kang S. and Bak (1980); Bulgyo Sahakhoe (Society for Buddhist History) (1988); and Kang W. (1979, 42-47).

12 Duus (1995, 295-301).

13 For Japanese Buddhism in Korea, see *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 2:1-48).

14 Jo (1989, 59). The figures are taken from Compte Rendu.

15 Jo (1989, 59). The figures are taken from Clark (1930, 268).

16 Grayson (1989, 198).

17 GGK (1935, 493–494).

In comparison, the Korean Sangha had thirty main monasteries and 1,371 branch temples with about 6,000 clerics by 1911. As for the numbers of Korean Buddhists, the Japanese government recorded the number of Buddhist clerics at 7,590, and a laity of 189,800 at the end of 1927.[18] Around 1935 there were 6,790 clerics and 128,000 lay people.[19] The Journal *Bulgyo* reported higher lay numbers: 73,749 in 1916; 150,868 in 1919; and 203,533 in 1924.[20]

Japanese Buddhists and Christian churches were actively involved in social charity and education as part of their propagation strategies, and their activities awakened Korean Buddhists. Yi Neung-hwa, a lay Buddhist intellectual, wrote in 1915 that Buddhists had to produce books for propagation that were well-organized and easy to read, like Christian bibles.[21] He also recommended changing Buddhist rituals so as to model them on Christian Sunday services. In 1917, the Buddhist magazine, *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* (The Journal of the Collection of Korean Buddhism) recorded the first Buddhist marriage ceremony conducted at a Buddhist temple in Seoul.[22] In an article published in the Buddhist magazine, *Bulgyo* (Buddhism) in 1925, a Buddhist monk wrote that the success of Christianity in the peninsula was not only due to the efforts of American missionaries but also the systematic propagation strategies of the religion.[23] He noted that the Christian education system produced competent missionaries and that Christians managed all social outreach programs and charity work in ways to promote their religion. He then criticized Buddhists for their mere imitation of Christian social programs, such as Sunday schools, night schools, and job-training facilities. He argued that Buddhists needed this incorporation of the propagation skills and social work from Christianity, but that these activities had to be done in a way to promote Buddhism. Generally speaking, as a way to overcome their isolated status in society, Korean Buddhists took Christian activities as models to learn from.

Japanese Buddhism, which came to largely adopt Christian missionary tactics, provided a particularly important point of reference for Korean Buddhist reforms. Japanese Buddhist organizations engaged not only in building propagation stations but also in providing education for poor children and taking care of the poor and the sick.[24] Korean Buddhists were eager to learn from Japanese Buddhism: Japan was the country where most Korean clerics went to study. Student clerics were sent to Japan soon after the annexation until the eventual liberation of Korea, and the Sangha also sent inspection parties to Japan several times. Even before the annexation, Buddhists were sent to Japan in 1907 and in 1909.[25] Three times after 1910, the Sangha sent cleric groups, consisting mainly of main-monastery abbots, and in 1917, eight people, including Kwon Sang-ro,

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18 GGK (1935, 493).

19 GGK (1935, 915–916).

20 *Bulgyo* 21 (1926): 9-10.

21 Yi N. (1915, 614-618).

22 *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* 6 (1917): 383.

23 Obong Sanin (1925, 16-18).

24 GGK (1935, 492); *Bulgyo* 100 (1932): 736.

25 Jeong (1988, 81).

were sent to Japan for three weeks. They visited Buddhist monasteries, Buddhist colleges, secondary schools, social charity groups of various Buddhist sects, and Shinto shrines. An account of their trip, including daily schedules and a brief description of places they visited, was published in the seventh issue of *The Journal of the Collection of Korean Buddhism*, so their experiences in Japan were widely disseminated.[26] In 1925, another group was sent for about ten days. A monk, referring to himself as Sobaek Duta, recorded a travel diary that was serialized in *Bulgyo*.[27] In 1928, twenty-two abbots and clerics were sent to Japan for three weeks. Im Seok-jin also left a somewhat detailed travel diary.[28]

Han Young-un (1879-1944), a leading Buddhist reformer, also had an opportunity to go to Japan in 1908, which he believed to have emerged as a new center of modern civilization at that time. Monks of the Sōtō sect assisted him during his stay at Sōtōshū (now Komazawa) University from May through August 1908. He also made a tour to various Japanese cities, such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Shiminoseki, and Nikko before returning to Korea after his eight-month stay in Japan.[29] Korean Buddhists made good use of the knowledge gained from these trips for their reform efforts.

The Reforms of the Buddhist Sangha

A number of Korean monks began to offer their own reform proposals. Kwon Sang-ro urged in his article titled "On the Reformation of Korean Buddhism" that Buddhism be compatible with other religions, advocating reforms for monk education and proselytization.[30] He suggested that Buddhist clerics first had to change their own attitudes and minds for the common goal of reformation. The Sangha needed collective power and self-governance, which he said were possible only after reformation.

In an article "Changes Are the Public Principles of Buddhism" Hyegeun stated that nothing was immune to change. He argued that change was needed in order for progress to occur, and there would be no developments without the will to change.[31] He then proposed that the Sangha improve its proselytization and involvement with social charity for the poor and the sick.

Han Yong-un published the *Joseon bulgyo yusillon* in 1913, three years after he had finished a first draft. He assessed the present situation of the Sangha and criticized the practices that he thought had contributed to the decline of Buddhism. He proposed reforms in order to prepare the Sangha to have easier access to the laity and the public. His reform ideas can be divided into four major groups: the unification of doctrinal orientation of the Sangha, simplification of practices, centralization of the Sangha administration, and reformation of Sangha policies and customs.

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26 *Joseon bulgyo jungbo* 7 (1917): 394–416.

27 *Bulgyo* 16-18 (1925).

28 *Bulgyo* 49- 54 (1928).

29 Yu B. (1992, 182).

30 Kwon S. (1912-1913).

31 Hyegeun (1912-1913).

The Korean Sangha as a whole finally executed reforms in order to make the religion socially viable, participating in the general march toward modernization and nation-building. Due to the limited financial resources of the Buddhist order, however, the reforms focused mainly on monastic education and proselytization rather than the extension of efforts to extend the religion into greater society. The Buddhist Sangha could not afford to get involved in social charity work. The first and only Buddhist clinic, which was able to house 100 patients, opened at the Korean Buddhist Propagation Office (Joseon Bulgyo Jungang Pogyodang) in 1923 and closed in 1925 because of a lack of funds. [32] Only a small number of propagation stations opened night schools or kindergartens for the poor.[33]

The primary concern of the Buddhist Sangha was that of equipping clerics with knowledge of modern society with which to more effectively disseminate Buddhist teachings. Monasteries attempted to implement a modern educational system for Buddhist clerics as both independent and cooperative projects. As a cooperative effort, the Sangha tried to build a central post-secondary school—the Myeongjin School was the first—founded by the Bulgyo Yeonguhoe (Association of Buddhist Studies) at Wonheungsa temple in 1906. The school asked each main monastery to send two students and to cover their tuitions. It offered a two-year course of study with prerequisite courses of three months to one year.[34] The curriculua included both Buddhist and secular subjects. Secular subjects were arithmetic, history, geography, philosophy, religious studies, physics, biology, and the Japanese language.[35] The Wonjong (Consummate sect) office took over the operation of the Myeongjin school from 1908 to 1910, changing it to a Buddhist normal school in 1910, modeled on the Japanese college system.[36] This school lasted until 1914, but its fate declined once the Wonjong [圓宗] disbanded in 1911. It became an educational academy (*gakjong hakgyo*) after the "temple ordinance" became effective.

After the proclamation of the "temple ordinance," the Cooperative Office of the Thirty Main Monasteries established the Jungang Hangnim in 1915 as the highest Buddhist school in lieu of the Bulgyo Godeung Gangsuk, which eventually took over the Buddhist Normal School and lasted only another four months. The Jungang Buddhist School (*hangnim*) offered three-year courses with a one-year preparatory course. Its curriculua included Buddhist texts, philosophy, religion, proselytization methods, the Japanese language, and Chinese texts.[37]

On the other hand, local main monasteries began to open primary schools as independent operations. These schools included the Myeonghwa School at Yongjusa, the Bongmyeong School at Geonbongsa, the Myeongjeong school at Beomeosa, and the Taeheung school at Taeheungsa. Between 1906 and 1910, twenty primary schools

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32 *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 11).

33 *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1–14).

34 Yi N. (1968, vol. 3, 937); Nam (1988, 228).

35 Nam (1988, 232).

36 Nam (1988, 251). For the establishment of Wonjong, see p. 96 of this chapter.

37 Nam (1988, 257).

(*botong hakgyo*) were founded.[38] Students of these schools were mostly young monks. For example, Myeongnip school of Haeinsa and Bongik school of Wibongsa were both said to have opened for the education of young monks. The only exceptions extant were the Bomyeong School of Ssanggyesa and the Myeongsin school of Tongdosa, which were said to be open to both monks as well as to the general public.[39] In 1913, there were eighteen primary schools (sixteen *botong hakgyo* and two *botong gangsuk*), and forty-seven traditional monastery schools (*gangdang*).[40]

Local main monasteries also opened local preparatory schools (*jibang hangnim*) to prepare students for the Jungang Buddhist School. Ten main monasteries, including Geumnyeongsa, Beomeosa, Tongdosa, Haeinsa, Seonamsa, and Daeheungsa, opened such schools, which took graduates from Buddhist primary schools.[41] By 1915, the Buddhist order appeared to have completed a three-step modern education system, starting with primary schools, local preparatory schools, and a central post-secondary school (Jungang Buddhist School) as the highest educational institution at Seoul.[42]

Buddhist schools, however, had faced financial problems all along. An article published in July 1919 reported a financial crisis among the local preparatory schools which occurred because the local preparatory schools had been established without having separate funds for their operation.[43] Kim Jeong-hae, a monk graduate of the Japanese Sotoshu college, suggested a merger of the several local preparatory schools to save them from having to close.[44] In addition, the Jungang Buddhist School was closed in 1922 after a student boycott of classes in 1921 demanded that the Cooperative Office upgrade its status to the college level. An article attributed the failure of the Jungang Buddhist School to not only a lack of funds, but also to internal divisions of the Buddhist order, political disturbances (student involvement with the March First Movement), and a lack of qualified students.[45]

To fill the gap left by these closures, traditional seminaries (*gangdang*) systems, most of which had disappeared after the establishment of *jibang hangnim*, were revived. Only four or five traditional seminaries for the education of monks were said to exist by 1924,[46] but in 1925, Haeinsa *gangwon* reopened after a ten-year closure, along with other monasteries that also reopened their respective *gangwon*.[47]

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38 For the list of these schools, see Nam (1988, 237).

39 "Gyoyuk bonsan" (main monasteries for cleric education) and "Ilbon bulgyo" (Japanese Buddhism), in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1: 5, 6, 9; 2: 23).

40 *Haedong bulbo* 4 (1914): 317–319.

41 "Gyoyuk pyeongnyeon (chronology of education)," in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1: 46).

42 Nam (1988, 255).

43 Bak K. (1919, 601–609).

44 Kim C. (1920, 595).

45 Uusaeng (1926, 520).

46 *Bulgyo* 2 (1924): 1–2.

47 *Bulgyo* 29 (1926): 626; *Bulgyo* 32 (1927): 165.

After seven years of vacuum of the central education system for clerics, Jungang Buddhist School reopened as Bulgyo Jeonsu Hakgyo in 1928. It became a junior college, the Jungang Buddhist Junior College, in 1930. However, this college's educational quality was said not to have been as high as other private colleges.[48] There were no independent funds for the operation of the school, and furthermore, the college did not have enough qualified students to enter because the Buddhist order had failed to maintain its primary and secondary schools. The education system was said to have only the head, describing a college without a lower school system.[49] The college was promoted as the Hyehwa Junior College in 1940, adding one more Asian studies major to Buddhist studies.[50]

As well as attending their own Buddhist schools, young clerics went to public secondary schools in Seoul and colleges in foreign countries, mostly in Japan. The magazine *Haedong bulbo* (Buddhist Journal of Korea) reported that there were thirteen students in Japan in 1913, of whom only three were studying with monastery funds, while five students were reported to be in Seoul, four of whom were supported by monastery funds.[51]

The first three graduates returned from Japan to Korea in 1918, after finishing their studies at Sotoshu college. These monks received a hearty welcome from the fellow Buddhists.[52] They were Yi Ji-gwang of Geonbongsa, Kim Jeong-hae of Yongjusa, and Yi Hon-seong from Yujeomsa. Yi Ji-gwang received a teaching position at the Jungang Buddhist School, Yi Hon-seong became the chief editor of the Buddhist magazine *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* (The Journal of the Collection of Korean Buddhism) beginning with its twelfth edition, and Kim obtained an administrative position at Yongjusa and later became a chief editor beginning with the fourteenth edition of *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo*.[53] In 1919, Yi Jong-cheon, Kim Yeong-ju, Jo Ha-gyu, and Jeong Gwang-jin also returned after five to six years of study in Japan.[54] In 1924, about thirty students were studying in Japan, and six at universities in Beijing.[55] Baek Seong-uk received a Ph.D. from Germany in 1924,[56] and Kim Beom-rin of Beomeosa returned from France with a bachelor of arts in 1928.[57] In 1928, twenty-two graduated from Japanese colleges.[58] Until

48 *Bulgyo* (*Sin*) 22 (1940): 3.

49 *Bulgyo* (*Sin*) 20 (1940): 10.

50 Nam (1988, 260).

51 *Haedong bulbo* 4 (1914): 320.

52 *Joseon Bulgyo jeongbo* 11 (1918): 5, 57.

53 *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* 11 (1918): 57.

54 *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* 15 (1919): 367; *Joseon bulgyo jeongbo* 16 (1919): 441.

55 *Bulgyo* 6 (1924): 66; Prior to these six students, Kim bong-su of Baegyangsa temple was reported to have gone to Beijing University in 1910; "Gyoyuk bonsan," in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1:9).

56 "Gyoyuk pyeongnyeon," in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1:62).

57 *Bulgyo* 45 (1928): 43.

58 "Gyoyuk pyeongnyeon," in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1:104–105); *Bulgyo* 43 (1928, 243); *Bulgyo* 45 (1928): 385–386. The Japanese colleges from which Korean clerics graduated were: Rinzaishu, Sotoshu, Rissho, Chuo, Waseda, Nihon, Taisho, Ryukoku, etc.

liberation in 1945, Buddhist clerics continued to mostly go to Japan to study. These educated monks emerged as the leaders of the youth movement and later assumed the central positions of the Sangha.

Along with education, proselytization was the Sangha's other major concern for reformation. Each monastery district also opened branch stations for proselytization (*pogyoso*) in villages and towns to make the religion accessible to the general public. The Korean Buddhist Propagation Office (Joseon bulgyo jungang pogyodang) was established at Gakhwangsa temple of Seoul in 1910 by the cooperative investment of main monasteries. The Korean Seon Buddhist Propagation Office (Joseon Seonjong jungang pogyodang) was opened in Seoul in 1912 by nine monasteries, including Beomeosa, Tongdosa, Baegyangsa, and Daeheungsa.[59] By 1913, eighteen propagation stations had opened, including the above two central propagation offices. According to the Sangha's report, the numbers of *pogyoso* had increased to about forty and Buddhist lay followers numbered 100,000 in 1915.[60] By the end of 1924, there were seventy-two *pogyoso* with seventy-two *pogyo* clerics and 200,000 lay people.[61] In 1930, there were 117 *pogyoso* with 122 *pogyo* clerics.[62] These numbers demonstrated the Buddhists' efforts at societal outreach.

Internal reflections and criticisms, however, revealed how this new adventure had proceeded. An editorial in the 1926 edition of *Bulgyo*, entitled "A Discussion on Proselytization" (Pogyo-e daehan ch'uŭi 추의 한국어로 무엇입니까?), analyzed the increase in the number of *pogyoso* and *pogyo* clerics. It acknowledged the efforts of the Sangha at proselytization and then offered several suggestions to improve propagation policies. The article proposed that the Order needed a central office that would provide unified policies among all *pogyoso* nationwide and offer clerics quality education and regulations. In 1927, Kim Byeog-ong[Kim Pyŏgong 벽옹, 이름은 무엇입니까?], a Buddhist cleric, lamented the situation of Buddhism, in which every main and branch temple had become loaded with debt due to the coveting and avarice of the abbots. He pointed out that few qualified *pogyo* clerics existed and only old women and children filled the *pogyoso*.[63]

In order to discuss and improve the situation, the first Assembly of *pogyo* clerics was held for seven days in August 1927 at Donghwasa temple in Daegu. The clerics discussed ways of establishing a central system for propagation methods, rites, regulations, and publications.[64] The second assembly was held in 1928, and discussed establishing a study group for proselytization and education for propagators of Buddhism,

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59 *Joseon bulgyo wolbo* 19 (1913): 655–657.

60 *Bulgyo jinheunghoe wolbo* 4 (1915): 292.

61 The accuracy of lay numbers was said to be doubtful because lay people registered their names at three or four temples simultaneously. *Bulgyo* 21 (1926): 9-10.

62 A statistical list of numbers of *pogyoso* and clerics between 1917 and 1930 is provided in "Pogyo pyeonnyeon" of *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 2:34–36).

63 Kim Byeog-ong. (1927, 224–229).

64 *Bulgyo* 40 (1927): 748–749.

along with uniform regulations and ways of publishing books for proselytization.[65] Despite these attempts, the situation barely improved. Kim Tae-heup, who had been working as a propagator at the Central Propagation Office since 1928, pointed out the failure of proselytization and expressed his overall frustration with such efforts in his article appearing in 1932.

> I shudder at the sound of the word *pogyo*. I have nothing but the thought of fleeing from this world of *pogyo*, let alone changing this outmoded world [the Sangha].[66]

Limits of Reform

As seen before, financial difficulties were the major stumbling block for reformation, as the Sangha's investment in both education and proselytization suffered. Evidence of the financial problem is seen in the *Bulgyo,* which reported in 1924 that the monastery treasures of Haeinsa, one of the largest main monasteries in Korea, were subject to seizure because of huge debts.[67] A Buddhist cleric lamented in 1927 that all monasteries, whether main or branch ones, were burdened by crushing debt.[68] According to an article appearing in 1932, the Gyomuwon[Central Office of the Cleric Administration] faced a financial crisis and owed a debt of 90,000 won. The article also pointed out that no monasteries were without debt or financial strife.[69] The total debt of all monasteries in the early 1930s was estimated at more than one million won.[70]

The financial crisis happened for a number of reasons. New expenses—such as building schools and *pogyo* temples and supporting young clerics for their education in Seoul or Japan—consumed the financial resources of the order.[71] Buddhists also pointed out the negative ramifications of the "temple ordinance." At the outset, reform under the scrutiny of the government implied inevitable limits. All essential transactions related to monastery affairs now required government approval, and Buddhists were not able to utilize monastery properties effectively.[72] In particular, the "temple ordinance" concentrated power in the abbots, who in turn abused their monastic management power, including in terms of finance.[73] The abbot's power overruled the traditional practice—*sanjung gongui* (public council of monasteries)—

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65 *Bulgyo* 46/47 (1928): 514–515.
66 Kim Tae-heup (1932, 735).
67 *Bulgyo* 6 (1924): 6. The debts were said to have been caused by the ten-year failure of the abbot Yi Hoe-gwang's ventures.
68 Kim Byeog-ong (1927, 226).
69 Mongjeongsaeng (1932a, 764-765).
70 *Bulgyo* 100 (1932): 733.
71 Mongjeongsaeng (1932b, 39).
72 Kim Beom-rin (1932, 731).
73 Kim Beom-rin (1932, 732).

that honored the opinions of all the members of the order. One monk noted, in an article published in 1932, that the abbots had become despots whose power had become unruly by any standard.[74]

Furthermore, as the numbers of married clerics increased, clerics needed more personal funds to support their own families.[75] The economy of the monasteries deteriorated quickly. Cleric marriages had already become prevalent when the government officially approved them in 1926.

Besides a lack of funds, the Sangha was not equipped with unified and consistent policies with which to carry out effective reforms. Each independent main monastery carried out its own education and propagation policies. Even within each main monastery, long-term plans or budgets had not been established before reforms were implemented.[76] Main monasteries were said to open schools because other monasteries began to open them, but not because they felt an urgent need to open their own.[77] Although the Sangha tried to modernize its educational system, its members did not have clear goals or purposes for promoting modern education for Buddhist causes. With regard to sending young clerics to Japan, they did not set up any guidelines or define goals for selecting students, nor did they clearly decide upon consistent content of their studies.[78] A monk called Obongsanin (It is a pen name? Who is he? 오봉산인, I cannot find his name) criticized the fact that no leadership was provided regarding the policies and effectiveness of sending students to Japan. He wrote:

> The abbots and sponsoring teachers randomly sent their disciples to foreign countries to study without any consistent plans or guidelines for them. Thus monk-students entered schools of any kind to study topics of their own preference, which had no relevance to Buddhism. If this situation continues, the order will dry up its financial resources and only produce a type of layman.[79]

Similarly, the students complained that no guidance and stable financial support was provided. Also, no opportunities were offered for work in the Sangha after their graduation. Thus, many of them studied majors in disciplines other than Buddhism.[80] A young monk wrote:

> When students returned to their monasteries after graduation, the abbots avoided them for fear of losing their job and status. Also, there were no other jobs

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74 Mongjeongsaeng (1932b, 37–38).

75 Mongjeongsaeng, (1932b, 38–40).

76 Kim T. (1928, 174).

77 *Joseon bulgyo jeonggbo* 16 (1919): 601.

78 *Bulgyo* 2 (1924): 1–2; *Bulgyo* 4 (1924): 61.

79 Obongsanin (1924, 1).

80 *Bulgyo* 17 (1925): 377; *Bulgyo* 23 (1926), 182.

available for monks who were trained only in Buddhism. Graduation thus meant joblessness for them.[81]

One student cleric testified that even a big monastery like Tongdosa did not require any obligation for repayment from the returned monks. To avoid higher salaries, the monastery also did not hire these monks for monastery administration.[82]

In a way, this negligence reflected the Buddhists' lack of interest in and passion for reformation. Many of those students who were sent to Japan studied disciplines of their own interest and left the monkhood when their studies were completed. A monk named Kang Ui-sin made the criticism that these students lacked a sense of purpose and pursued personal careers, majoring in law, economics, and sociology.[83] As a matter of fact, in 1926, among the approximate forty students in Japan, only thirteen studied at Buddhist colleges and about eight enrolled at non-Buddhist colleges, studying other disciplines. The remaining students engaged in every kind of secular business.[84] The majors of these twenty-two graduates of 1928 included mathematics, English, agriculture, literature, and geography, in addition to Buddhist studies.

Moreover, most clerics lacked interest in proselytization. Kim Tae-heup contended in 1932 that no genuine interest had been paid to the development of proselytization: those beneficiaries of modern education, including graduates of the Buddhist junior college, did not work for propagation; no propagation policies were in effect; the present propagators were interested only in supporting themselves financially, mainly engaging in lectures on personal fortunes and misfortunes and conducting rituals for the dead.[85]

A possible reason explaining this lack of involvement could be that Buddhist clerics did not develop ways to connect all the new changes with their own religious goals, or they were incapable of incorporating them into their own system of thought. In other words, social responsibility had been relegated to a lower priority within their existential system. Mere imitation could not provide with them lasting inspiration and purpose. Without having established a religious ground for social involvement, they were not at all clear about their new social roles.

On the contrary, they were easily affected by secular values as their social activities increased and the distinctions between the religious order and the secular society became blurred. Buddhist clerics vied for the attractive positions of the abbots and pursued personal gain. Kim Beom-rin wrote in 1932 that the Order became secularized under the "temple ordinance," being a center for seeking power and personal interests.[86] He added that mistrust among the Sangha members and the adulation of government officials became common practices of the Sangha.

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[81] Kaya-napcha (1926, 182).pen name? What is his name? (A meditation monk living in Mount Kaya)

[82] "Gyoyuk bonsan," in *Hanguk geunse bulgyo baengnyeonsa* (1994, 1:9).

[83] Kang U. (1924, 17).

[84] *Bulgyo* 26 (1926): 388.

[85] Kim T. (1932, 735–740).

[86] Kim Beom-rin (1932, 732).

Buddhist Reforms and Nationalism

Before the March First Movement in 1919, the majority of Buddhist leaders conceded to colonial rule, and some of them openly praised the "temple ordinance," which they regarded as having given structure to and resources for the reform of the Sangha. After 1919, the youth movement among the young clerics began to challenge the docile Sangha and question the religious policies of the colonial regime. This was the Korean Buddhists' first attempt to express their position vis-à-vis the state by opposing the Buddhists' overt and covert collaboration with the Japanese government. Young clerics formed associations and petitioned the government to nullify the "temple ordinance," claiming the need to separate religion from politics. They demanded the self-management of the Sangha and the centralization of the Sangha's administration. They confronted the abbots of main monasteries about the direction of the Sangha administration and insisted on the practice of Minjung Bulgyo (people's Buddhism) in lieu of *gwanje bulgyo* (bureaucratic Buddhism). Through the advocacy of *minjung* Buddhism, they attempted to sever their religion's long relationship with the court and worked to extend the religion to wider segments of society.

However, the youth could not develop a movement influential enough to change the course of reforms or stage a lasting protest against the state intervention. After the March First Movement, young monks began to form associations and express their political awareness. Student clerics of the Jungang Buddhist School formed the Joseon Buddhist Youth Association at Gakhwangsa temple in June 1920, as well as branch associations in local monasteries. As a subgroup of the Buddhist Youth Association, the Buddhist Reformation Association was formed, which came to hold more than one thousand members by December 1921. While the former represented the whole body of young clerics, the latter consisted only of members who worked in the front.[87] The Buddhist Reformation Association died after three years because of financial difficulties and possibly government pressure. The Buddhist Youth Association also became inactive afterwards. The youth were not those in power, and the abbots would not provide financial support for them.[88]

A second surge of the youth movement came with the revival of the Buddhist Youth Association in 1927.[89] In 1928, there was a rally of Buddhist students and a rally of Buddhist youth.[90] The movement was born again in 1931 as the General League of Buddhist Youth (Bulgyo Cheongnyeon Yeonmaeng). Han Yong-un noted that it was formed as a general league with less central power, since previous youth movements had suffered because of central political control. He added that it was in need of being reorganized as an association (*hoe*) or party (*dang*) in the future, with more central

[87] Han (1931, 340).
[88] *Bulgyo* 86 (1931): 340.
[89] *Bulgyo* 86 (1931): 340.
[90] *Bulgyo* 76 (1930): 421–431; *Bulgyo* 86 (1931, 340).

power.[91] Within two or three years, however, this league also became obsolete.[92] This was likely due to the Japanese government's tightening of its grip on the Korean people following its involvement in a series of wars, the 1931 Manchurian Incident, the 1937 Sino-Japanese War, and the beginning of the Pacific War in 1941.

There were a number of reasons why the youth movement was not as effective as the monks had wished it to be. First, the youth movement did not develop a systematic and enduring organization, but suffered many years of interruption. The Buddhist youth movement began, according to Han Yong-un, with the creation of the Imjejong,[93] which was not much more than a spontaneous reaction to cope with the conspiracy between Yi Hoe-gwang and the Japanese Soto sect. Only after the March First Movement, did the youth movement actually appear. At this point, young monks began to form associations and express their political awareness. Student clerics of the Jungang Buddhist School formed the Joseon Bulgyo Cheongnyeonhoe (Joseon Buddhist Youth Association) at Gakhwang-sa in Seoul in June 1920 and its branch associations in local monasteries. As a subgroup of the Buddhist Youth Association, the Buddhist Reformation Association was formed with more than one thousand members in December 1921. While the former represented the whole body of young clerics, the latter consisted only of active members.[94] The Buddhist Reformation Association died after three years because of financial difficulties and possibly government pressure. The Buddhist Youth Association also became inactive after this point. Those in power were not the youth, and the abbots would not provide financial support to the youth.[95]

Another reason for the youth movement to fail in changing the course of the reformation was the lack of philosophy and vision. The general lack of interest and purpose for reforms was a contributing factor.[96] Young monks' ideas for reforms were no different than the abbots, and their attention was focused on changing policies and organizational structures within the Sangha's administration. This top-down approach had scarcely any significant to the development of reform. They did not develop their own reform programs or generate grass-roots movements; it is thus not surprising that no drastic changes appeared even after youth leaders assumed central positions of the Sangha.

To make matters worse, as youth leaders began to occupy central positions of the Sangha, they also became supporters of the Japanese regime, like their predecessors.[97] Included were Heo Yeong-ho, Kim Sang-ho, Bak Yun-jin, Kim Gyeong-ju, Kim Tae-heup, and Yi Jong-uk. Toward the end of the 1940s, they compromised their position by

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[91] *Bulgyo* 86 (1931): 340–341.

[92] *Bulgyo* (*Sin*) 10 (1938): 3.

[93] Han (1931, 338–340). For a historical overview of the Buddhist youth movement, see Kim Gwang-sik (1994, 227–284).

[94] Han (1931, 340).

[95] *Bulgyo* 86 (1931): 340.

[96] Kim G. (1996, 259).

[97] Kim G. (1996, 298-303). For the general account of the collaboration of Korean Buddhism with the Japanese regime, see Im (1993).

concurring with the Japanese policy of "Japan and Korea are One Entity" a policy that included as an expressed purpose the intention of eradicating Korean identity. They became involved in giving lectures to support the Japanese war policy and even sent a consolatory visit to the Japanese imperial army, submitting to what the regime required. In the end, the youth leaders could not make any drastic changes to the reforms or the Sangha's position with regard to the Japanese state.

To conclude, the Buddhist reforms began with limited financial and human resources as a result of extended Joseon persecution. The viability of Korean Buddhism depended largely on the capability and willingness of Buddhists to participate in a nationwide march toward co-opting Western modernity. Social and nationalistic stances were adopted to prove the utility of Buddhism, so that the status of Buddhism in society would be improved. However, in the process of expanding religious horizons into the social realm, Korean Buddhism became helplessly entangled in the mire of power-relations dealing with both the Sangha administration and the newly arisen nation-state. They were accused of seeking hegemonic power among themselves and collaborating with the colonial regime.

At the price of social expansion, the Sangha was instead adversely affected by the concerns of secular society. This was partly because Buddhists did not seriously reflect on their new social adventure in their own terms. Similarly, they simply adopted a nationalist stance amid the contemporary social changes and did not seriously consider how to locate nationhood within Buddhist teachings. Buddhists showed an ambivalent attitude toward the Japanese state despite their efforts to consolidate a new national identity. Even many of the leaders of the youth movement submitted themselves to collaboration with the Japanese state.

Furthermore, reforms under the scrutiny of the "temple ordinance" suffered from serious restrictions. Efforts to centralize the Sangha repeatedly failed: the independent main monastery system could not be unified under the Jeongmuwon (총무원), Gyomuwon, ~~or~~ under the Sangha Assembly, or through Sangha legislation. In 1941, the Sangha was finally unified under the headquarters monastery (*chong bonsan)*, the Taegosa, and adopted the name Jogyejong as its official designation. The "temple ordinance" and the government's intervention in the Sangha's affairs persisted, however, until the end of Japanese rule in 1945.

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