

## Introduction

# Buddhism and Modernity in Korea

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Buddhism's encounters with modernity appear in different forms, depending on the regional specifics and historical contexts in which these encounters took place. In the West, the encounter resulted in the introduction of Buddhism to the Western world, which was followed by the emergence of a modern style of Buddhist scholarship and of new forms of Buddhism. In the context of Asia, Buddhism's encounters with modernity have been frequently discussed in relation to political situations including nationalism, colonialism, and communism; and their socio-religious manifestations have been characterized by, among others, mass-proselytization, lay Buddhist movements, institutional reform, and the emergence of socially engaged Buddhism.

Buddhism in modern Korea also experienced the phenomena identified above, but in their responses to modernity, Korean Buddhists had to deal with their unique socio-historical and political situations. In this context, three aspects are especially noticeable in Korean Buddhism's encounters with modernity. I will identify them as Buddhist reform movements, Zen/Sōn revivalism, and the Buddhist encounter with new intellectualism. In this introduction, I will discuss the major issues in these three aspects of modern Korean Buddhism and close this essay by proposing three issues that need reconsideration for a better understanding of the evolution of Buddhism in modern Korea.

### Buddhist Reform Movements

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Korean Buddhism faced a dual challenge generated by the legacy of its past and the prospects for its future. Most urgent was the recovery of its dignity after centuries-long persecution under the neo-Confucian Chosōn dynasty (1392–1910).

Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, Buddhist monks and nuns were prohibited from entering the capital city; this ban remained effective until 1895. The ban is a concrete example of the severe persecution Korean Buddhists experienced for more than 400 years prior to Korea's opening to the modern world. As Korea made the transition from a pre-modern to a modern society, Korean Buddhists were hoping to exploit this opportunity to regain the dignity of Buddhism in Korean society. This hope was also charged with the urgent need to renovate the religion so as to prove that the Buddhism, which had a 1,500-year history in Korea, was still relevant in the modern world.

The dual task of Korean Buddhism in reestablishing its status as a major religio-philosophical system on the one hand and demonstrating its relevance in modern society on the other was further complicated because of the political situation of colonialism. Korea was annexed to Japan in 1910, beginning a 35-year colonial period. Colonialism is one of the shared aspects that Buddhism had to deal with in Asia in its encounter with modernity. However, Korean Buddhist colonial experiences were unique in that Korea was colonized not by a non-Buddhist Western country but by an Asian country in which Buddhism had long been a dominant religion. This situation caused conflicting and sometimes contradictory responses of Korean Buddhism to Japanese Buddhism and Japanese colonial policy.

At the initial stage of Korean Buddhism's encounter with modernity, Korean Buddhists considered Japanese Buddhism a model to follow for the revival of Korean Buddhism. Some Buddhist intellectuals also considered the possibility of employing Buddhism for the modernization of Korea. As early as the late 1870s, Japanese Buddhist missionaries arrived in Korea for the purpose of proselytization, and in exchange, progressive-minded Korean monks traveled to Japan in order to learn what they considered an advanced form of Buddhism. A representative case during the initial stage of the encounter between Buddhism and modernity is that of a monk named Yi Tongin (1849?–1881?). Yi introduced techniques of modern education to Buddhist lecture halls and traveled to Japan to learn about its civilization and progress in an effort to use them as models for reform in both Korean Buddhism and Korean society.<sup>1</sup> His reform movement, however, faced an early death amidst social and political turbulence in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Despite the premature death of Yi Tongin's project, and of Yi himself, his case demonstrates that the reformist spirit was already in the process of making changes in Korean Buddhism during the late nineteenth century. The appearance of publications demanding the reformation of Korean Buddhism during the early twentieth century is visible proof of this spirit.

Starting from the early 1910s and continuing until the late 1930s, a series of treatises containing the reform agenda of Korean Buddhism appear. Kwōn Sangno (1879–1965), who was not a favorite of Korean Buddhist scholars because of his collaboration with the Japanese colonialists, published a treatise titled *Chosōn Pulgyo kyehyōk ron* (Treatise on the Reformation of Korean Bud-

dhism, 1912–1913). *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Revitalization of Korean Buddhism) by Han Yongun (1879–1944), the most well-known figure in this group, was published in 1913. Yi Yŏngjae’s (1900–1929) *Chosŏn Pulgyo kaehyŏksillon* (A New Treatise on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism) appeared in 1922, and *Chosŏn Pulgyo hyŏksillon* (Treatise on the Renovation of Korean Buddhism) by Pak Chungbin (1891–1943), the founder of Won Buddhism, was published in 1935. These treatises share a number of agendas they proposed for the renovation of Korean Buddhism. Depending on the time the treatises were written, each holds different positions as to Japanese colonial policy and Korean Buddhism’s relation to Japanese Buddhism.

One of most emphasized issues at the early stages of Buddhist reform movements was education. Kwŏn Sangno especially focused his reform agenda on the issue of education, including the creation of educational institutions for Buddhists and the general public. Han Yongun’s treatise also proposed the education of clerics as one main agenda for the reformation of the Buddhist community (saṅgha). Other issues that Han Yongun emphasized for that purpose include the unification of the doctrinal orientation of the saṅgha, the simplification of Buddhist practices, and the centralization of the saṅgha administration by reforming its policies and customs. Han’s proposals became a framework for subsequent saṅgha reformation.

Buddhist concern for the general public, or *minjung* (the masses), was another visible aspect of the reform agenda. Paek Yongsŏng (1864–1940) was a pioneer in expanding the audience of Buddhism beyond the Buddhist clergy. He contended that reaching out to the public was the very way to realize the original teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha and developed his idea into a movement called *Tae’gakkyo undong* (the Great Enlightenment Movement).

The concern for the public made the Buddhist reformists aware of the importance of translation projects. Buddhist literature at the time was mostly written in classical Chinese, with which the majority of Korean people were unfamiliar. Thus, translating Buddhist scriptures into the Korean language was one of the first steps to make Buddhism accessible to the public. Paek Yongsŏng was especially keen on the importance of translating Buddhist scriptures, being influenced and alarmed by the existence of the Korean version of the Bible introduced by Christian missionaries.

The creation of city-center gathering places for Buddhists was another project to which Buddhist reformists paid close attention. Traditionally, Korean Buddhist monasteries were mostly located on the mountainside. However, Buddhist reformists found the remote location of Buddhist monasteries to be an obstacle for the growth of Buddhism in modern society, both practically and philosophically. In terms of practicality, the remote location of Buddhist temples made it difficult for people to frequent them, which naturally created a gap between the religion and the people. Philosophically, the spatial distance

between Buddhist monasteries and society was considered a visible sign of the religion's incapacity to deal with issues relevant to modern society. Han Yongun was vehemently vocal about the issue, writing,

What happens when a temple locates itself on a mountain? First of all, progressive thoughts will disappear . . . And adventurous ideas will vanish. . . . Then a liberating element will evaporate . . . And then a resistant spirit will cease to exist . . . Located on secluded mountains, [Buddhist] temples do not recognize upheavals in the world. As a result, although anti-religious sounds of drums and trumpets disturb the earth, Buddhism never wages war against them. Nor does it console the defeated warriors. Despite the commanding banners in the Buddhist castle, the religion is so helpless and powerless that it cannot raise a flag of resistance.<sup>3</sup>

As the reformists endeavored to bring Buddhism closer to people's lives, the traditionally rigid demarcation between the ordained and lay practitioners blurred. This does not mean that the ordained monks were laicized, as in the case of Japan during the modern period.<sup>4</sup> Instead, in Korea, the traditional emphasis on the privileged position of the ordained monks was gradually replaced with mutual recognition of the ordained and lay circle in an effort to bring both Buddhism and Buddhist community into the milieu of daily life. Lay Buddhist movements that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century reflect this aspect of modern Korean Buddhism. Yi Nünghwa (1869–1943), a lay practitioner, scholar, and intellectual, was a notable figure in this context. Yi launched a lay Buddhist movement (K. *kōsa Pulgyo*) and proposed a reform agenda focusing on the laity.

The modern period also witnessed the emergence of new forms of Buddhism. By creating a new Buddhist order, the founders of these new forms had more flexibility in renovating Buddhism without being constrained by tradition. Won Buddhism, founded by So'taesan Pak Chungbin (1891–1943) in 1916, offers a good example. Pak's idea was to create a form of Buddhism that fit into the modern lifestyle: Won Buddhist scripture was written in the Korean language (not in classical Chinese), its gathering places were located in village centers in the milieu of people's everyday lives instead of on a remote mountainside, sophisticated Buddhist doctrines were reinterpreted to make them more easily understood by commoners, and the lay and ordained distinction was underplayed in Won Buddhist doctrine. In the *Chosŏn Pulgyo hyŏksillon* (Treatise on the Renovation of Korean Buddhism, 1935), So'taesan succinctly summarizes the objectives of his Buddhist reform as the change of Korean Buddhism "from the Buddhism of abroad to Buddhism for Koreans [. . .]; from the Buddhism of the past to the Buddhism of the present and future [. . .]; from the Buddhism of a few monks residing on the mountain to the Buddhism of the general public."<sup>5</sup>

Korean Buddhist efforts to bring Buddhism to the milieu of people's daily lives by actively engaging themselves in the social and political situations of the time re-emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in the form of Minjung Buddhism. The term "minjung" (the masses) was used during the first half of the twentieth century by Buddhist reformists, as they emphasized the importance of the religion's rapport with society and the people. Minjung Buddhism during the second half of the twentieth century takes visibly political stances, directly responding to the military dictatorship in Korea. By its founding principles, Minjung Buddhism is Buddhism for the politically oppressed, economically exploited, and socio-culturally alienated. Philosophically, Minjung Buddhists appeal to the bodhisattva ideal and compassion. Adherents of Minjung Buddhism emphasize the liberation from all forms of oppression including social and political constraints.

Part One of this volume discusses the major Buddhist reformers. In Chapter 1, Woosung Huh examines Paek Yongsŏng's Buddhist reform movement, focusing on the balance between individual practice and bodhisattva activities of helping sentient beings. American Buddhist scholarship has been keen on the relationship between wisdom and compassion, or between Buddhist practice and Buddhism's social engagement, in relation to Buddhism's potential as social theory. Huh's essay offers an example of a Korean Buddhist stance on the issue at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Chapter 2, Pori Pak investigates Han Yongun's Buddhist thoughts with a focus on the integration of doctrinal study (*K. kyo*) and Zen meditation (*Sŏn*). Chapter 3 discusses Won Buddhism. In this chapter, Bongkil Chung offers a detailed explanation of the structure of Won Buddhism and its relation to Korean Buddhism. Yi Nŭnghwa's contribution to Korean Buddhism is the theme of Chapter 4, in which Jongmyung Kim offers a critical assessment of Yi Nŭnghwa's lay Buddhist movement and Yi's efforts to utilize Buddhism for the modernization of Korea. Two chapters in Part Three are also relevant to the theme of Buddhist reform. In Chapter 11, Vladimir Tihkonov addresses in detail Yi Tongin's activities and Korean Buddhism's initial encounter with Japanese Buddhist missionaries during the period from 1876, the year Korea opened her door to the outside world, until 1910, when Korea was annexed to Japan. In Chapter 12, John Jorgensen offers an in-depth exploration of the history and philosophy of Minjung Buddhism together with his critique.

### Revival of Sŏn/Zen Buddhism

While the reform-minded Buddhists endeavored to renovate Buddhism so as to make it fit into the social and cultural milieu of modern life, another form of renovation was also underway: that is, Sŏn/Zen revivalism. On the surface, Buddhist reformism and Sŏn revivalism seem to pull Buddhism in opposite directions: the former trying to take Buddhism into the future and the latter attempting to revive the past. On a deeper level, we find that they were both

attempts to reconstruct Buddhism, but with different focuses. Sŏn revivalists sought to reinstate the quality of Sŏn practice and the training at the Sŏn monasteries, whereas Buddhist reformists emphasized the religion's rapport with society.

In the course of its history, Korean Buddhism developed a strong Sŏn Buddhist tradition. Within Sŏn Buddhism, the Kanhwa Sŏn (C. Kanhua Chan) tradition, which was consolidated by the thirteenth century National Master Pojo Chinul (1158–1210), dominated Korean Buddhism. During the Chosŏn Dynasty, Sŏn Buddhism suffered from neo-Confucian anti-Buddhist policy together with other Buddhist schools. At the beginning of the Chosŏn period, Buddhist schools were merged or abolished according to government policy, and as a result, starting from the mid-fifteenth century onward, no Buddhist sectarian identity was allowed. This is called the period of mountain Buddhism, when Buddhism sustained itself on the remote mountainside. Centuries later, this resulted in an identity crisis for Sŏn Buddhists.

Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, attempts were made to overcome the decline of Buddhism by critically exploring the identity of Sŏn Buddhism. In the debate known as the Debate on the Types of Sŏn (K. *yijong Sŏn-samjong Sŏn nonjaeng*), Paekp'a Kŭngsŏn (1767–1852) proposed a systematization of Sŏn Buddhist teachings in his *Sŏnmun su'gyŏng* (Hand Mirror of Sŏn School, 1820), and Chŏüi Ŭisun (1786–1866) critically responded to Paekp'a's theory in his *Sŏnmun sabyŏn manŏ* (Talks on the Four Divisions of Sŏn School).<sup>6</sup> The debate on the identity of Sŏn Buddhism revived the scholastic zeal for Sŏn Buddhism and opened a way for Sŏn revivalism, but in order to fully re-establish the Sŏn tradition, one had to wait for the appearance of a radical practitioner of meditation who could confirm the efficiency and relevance of Sŏn meditation in the path to one's enlightenment.

In this context, Kyŏnghŏ Sŏngu (1849–1912) is considered the revivalist of Korean Sŏn Buddhism in modern time. Kyŏnghŏ joined the monastery when he was nine and was appointed as a *sūtra*-lecturer at the young age of 23, which earned him national fame. A dramatic incident in his life, however, became a turning point for Kyŏnghŏ to condemn the doctrinal approach to Buddhism and wholeheartedly devote himself to the practice of *huatou* (K. *hwadu*) meditation, through which he had an awakening experience.

By setting a model for Sŏn practitioners at a time when the tradition was at its lowest point in the history of Korean Buddhism, Kyŏnghŏ set the foundation for Sŏn revivalism. In an effort to revive Sŏn tradition, Kyŏnghŏ created compact communities at Hae'in Monastery in 1899 and at Pŏmŏ Monastery in 1902. Kyŏnghŏ's contribution to modern Korean Sŏn tradition is also demonstrated by the fact that his disciples, especially Suwŏl (1855–1928), Hyewŏl (1861–1937), Man'gong (1871–1946), and Hanam, played a significant role in modern Korean Buddhism, and by so doing, they re-established the Sŏn lineage.

In a literary work dedicated to the creation of the compact community at the Hae'in Monastery, Kyōnghō admonishes those who underestimate their capacity for Buddhist practice and abandon efforts to attain Buddhahood. He also criticizes the premature declaration of awakening among the practitioners of meditation. With these warnings, Kyōnghō invites everyone to seek to attain Buddhahood by focusing on real practice, which Kyōnghō, following the Sōn school's premise, defines as being none other than finding one's own nature.<sup>7</sup>

In order to reinstate rigorous Sōn practice at monasteries, Sōn revivalists offered new versions of Sōn monastic regulations. Traditionally, the first guidelines of the Chan monastery known as Pure Rules (C. *qinggui*; K. *chōnggyu*) were formulated by Chinese monk Baizhang Huaihai (721–814). Baizhang's Pure Rules were introduced to Korea during the Koryō dynasty (918–1392) and subsequently served as guidelines for practitioners in Sōn monasteries. Sōn revivalists introduced their versions of Pure Rules, and three are the most notable. The first was composed by Kyōnghō in 1902 at Pōmō Monastery.<sup>8</sup> Kyōnghō's disciple Pang Hanam introduced two sets of Sōn monastic regulations: "Sūngga och'ik" (Five Regulations for the Saṅgha) and "Sōnwōn kyurye" (Regulations of Sōn Monastery) in 1922 at Kōnbong Monastery.<sup>9</sup> The third was known as "Kongju kyuyak" (Community Regulations), written by T'òeong Sōngchōl (1912–1993) together with Chōngdam (1902–1971) and several other Sōn masters at Pongam Monastery.<sup>10</sup> Pure Rules are not administrative regulations; they are rules aiming for guiding Sōn practitioners in their spiritual cultivation, and in this sense, the three versions of Pure Rules that I listed above distinguish themselves from the institutional reform agenda that Buddhist reformists introduced to renovate Korean Buddhism.

Another notable aspect of Sōn revivalism is the emergence of a training system for nuns. Kyōnghō's disciple Song Man'gong is credited as being the first to support and guide nuns' meditation practice in modern time. Man'gong's disciple Myori Pōphūi (1887–1975) is known as a pioneer of the Sōn lineage of nuns in modern Korea. Together with Pōphūi, Mansōng (1897–1975), Iryōp (1896–1971), and Pon'gong (1907–1965) were all influenced and supported by Man'gong and set the models for nuns' Sōn practice.<sup>11</sup> The opening of Kyōnsōng Hermitage at Sudōk Monastery in 1928—the first meditation hall for nuns—made a significant contribution to the promotion of Sōn practice for nuns. Immediately after its opening, Kyōnsōng Hermitage became a center for revitalizing the Sōn tradition among Korean nuns. In addition, the first modern seminary for nuns opened in 1935 at Po'mun Monastery in Seoul.<sup>12</sup>

Korean nuns receive training in two ways: Seminaries (K. *kangwōn*) offer basic education, and meditation practice is done at the meditation hall (K. *sōnwōn*). With the opening of Kyōnsōng Hermitage as nuns' meditation hall, and the seminary at Po'mun Monastery for nuns' education, the primary foundations for nuns' training were set up. In the second half of the twentieth century,

Daehaeng (1927–) was recognized by her activities of founding Hanmaum Sönwön in 1972.

Kyöngghö's disciple Man'gong was a leading Sön master during the colonial period, whose challenge to Japanese colonial officials left behind various legends and Sön stories. Another of Kyöngghö's disciples, Pang Hanam, was appointed as the first Patriarch of the Chogye Order, established during the colonial period. The Chogye Order (Jogye Order) is currently the most dominant Buddhist order in Korea. The revival of Sön Buddhism culminated in T'oëong Söngchöl, a renowned Sön master during the second half of the twentieth century. Well-known for his relentlessly strict Sön practice, Söngchöl demanded that fellow Sön practitioners return to the "original teachings of the Buddha and the Patriarchs" (K. *ko-Pul kojo*) in every detail of monastic life including the material of monks' bowls and robes, and the relationship of the monastic community with the lay circle.<sup>13</sup>

During the 1990s, Söngchöl's publications on Korean Buddhism kindled a debate which later developed into the Sudden-Gradual Debate. Söngchöl criticized Chinul for allowing gradualism in Sön practice and accused him of being a heretic in the Sön School. After criticizing Chinul as the origin of the inauthentic practice of Korean Sön Buddhism, Söngchöl proposed his subitist theory as the orthodox way for Sön practice.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of one's position concerning the subitist and gradualist theories, the debate can be understood in the context of Sön revivalism in modern Korea and its efforts to bring back the authentic form of Sön practice in modern times, which culminated in Söngchöl's claim of subitism as the "purist" Sön practice.

Chapters in Part Two of this volume discuss Sön revivalism, focusing on individual figures. In Chapter 6, Henrik Sorenson examines the life and thoughts of Kyöngghö Söngu through a close reading of Kyöngghö's writings in *Kyöngghö pöbö* (Dharma Talks of Kyöngghö). In Chapter 7, Mu Seong offers life stories of Man'gong, mostly based on the collections of the orally transmitted anecdotes related to him. In Chapter 8, Patrick R. Uhlmann examines Pang Hanam's Buddhism with a close analysis of his Five Regulations for the Saṅgha (K. *süngga och'ik*). In Chapter 9, Woncheol Yun presents T'oëong Söngchöl's theory of Sön practice based on Söngchöl's *Sönmun chöngno* (Correct Path of the Sön School). Finally, in Chapter 10, Chong Go discusses Daehaeng's teaching known as "Doing without Doing."

### Buddhist Encounter with New Intellectualism

During the first half of the twentieth century, both Buddhist reformists and Sön revivalists were actively promoting Buddhism. In addition to these two aspects, I propose Korean Buddhism's encounter with what I would call new intellectual-

ism as the third characteristic of modern Korean Buddhism. New intellectualism does not refer to a specific movement; it is a term I employ here to denote intellectual orientations of those whose thought was significantly influenced by modernity and by the modern mindset. One characteristic aspect of modernity is an effort to break away from traditional modes of thinking. The new intellectuals, who challenged the status quo of their society in the spirit of modernity, more often than not came from the middle class or socially marginalized groups. The reformist intellectuals from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries were one such group. The New Woman, the first generation of Korean women who received modern-style education and demanded gender equality during the 1920s and 1930s, was another such group. Yi Tongin's Buddhist thought and Reform Party members' Buddhism can be included in the category of Korean Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism.<sup>15</sup> The Buddhism of New Woman Kim Iryöp (1896–1971) exemplifies female intellectuals' reinterpretation of Buddhism. Kim Iryöp was a writer and leading female intellectual before she joined a monastery. In her search for identity and freedom in a patriarchal society, Kim Iryöp resorted to Buddhism, in which she explored the idea that the great "I" (K. *taea*) earned through Buddhist awakening liberated the small "I" (K. *soa*) of the daily life.

Another aspect of Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism is the emergence of a modern-style Buddhist scholarship. Yi Nünghwa is credited with setting the foundations of Korean Buddhist scholarship and Korean Studies. Along with the appearance of Buddhist scholarship, publications on the history of Korean Buddhism emerged as well. Yi Nünghwa's *Chosön Pulgyo tongsä* (A Comprehensive History of Korean Buddhism), the first in its kind, appeared in 1918.<sup>16</sup> Buddhist journals also began to appear during the 1910s, providing a forum for discussion of Buddhist philosophy, reform ideas, and literature by Buddhist intellectuals.

The emergence of new interpretations of Korean Buddhism reflecting the social and political situation and the intellectual orientation of the time is yet another result of Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism as well. Ch'oe Namsön (1880–1957), a writer and historian, defined Korean Buddhism as ecumenical Buddhism (K. *tong Pulgyo*) in his essay "Chosön Pulgyo: Tongbang munhwasasang e itnün kü chiwi" (Chosön [Korean] Buddhism: Its Place in Oriental Cultural History).<sup>17</sup> In his efforts to find the identity of Korean Buddhism in the milieu of foreign cultures rushing into Korea, Ch'oe underscored the importance of the seventh-century monk-scholar Wönhyo's (617–686) Buddhism. Ch'oe characterized Wönhyo's Buddhist thought as ecumenical and contended that Wönhyo's ecumenical Buddhism was the culmination of Buddhist teachings not only in Korea but in Eastern Buddhism in general. In doing so, Ch'oe suggested the prominent position of Korean culture in the intellectual history of East Asia. Ch'oe's theory of ecumenism as the identity of Korean Buddhism continues to influence Korean Buddhist scholarship today, if not without being challenged.<sup>18</sup>

Three essays in this volume address Korean Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism. In Chapter 4, Jongmyung Kim offers a critical evaluation of Yi Nünghwa's Buddhism and his contribution to the construction of Korean Buddhist scholarship during the first half of the twentieth century. In Chapter 13, Sungtaek Cho discusses another aspect of modern Korean Buddhist scholarship, focusing on Pak Chonghong and Kim Tonghwa, two leading figures of Korean Buddhist scholarship during the second half of the twentieth century. In Chapter 5, Jin Y. Park discusses Kim Iryöp's Buddhism. Park emphasizes the search for identity as a theme running through Kim Iryöp's philosophy from her feminist writings as a New Woman to her Sön essays as a Buddhist nun and contends that woman's experiences of modernity and modern Korean Buddhism are significantly different from those of male practitioners.

### Reconsidering Buddhism and Modernity in Korea

I have identified three characteristics of modern Korean Buddhism as Buddhist reform movements, Sön revivalism, and Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism. Needless to say, these three are closely related to one another, and the figures discussed in this volume demonstrate, one way or another, that the three issues are intricately interwoven in their Buddhism. In exploring these themes, one finds the need to reconsider some aspects of the scholarship of modern Korean Buddhism that are taken for granted. I will point out three such issues as starting points to be re-examined for a better understanding of Buddhism in modern Korea.

The first is the issue of periodization. The most commonly used date as the beginning of the modern period in Korean Buddhism is 1895, when a ban on monks' and nuns' entering the capital city was repealed.<sup>19</sup> Another historical date used for this purpose is 1876, when Korea opened its door to foreign power. This relatively simple way of employing historical dates to identify the time line separating the pre-modern and modern periods in Korean Buddhism can be an easy way of dealing with the issue of periodization, but not without problems. As we investigate changes in Korean Buddhism during this period, a question arises: How was it possible that Korean Buddhism, which allegedly reached its lowest point by the end of the nineteenth century, was able to re-emerge so quickly?

In order to answer this question, let us go back to the beginning of the modern period of Korean Buddhism and examine the situation at the time.<sup>20</sup> As we have discussed, during the late nineteenth century, when Korea was in the process of transforming into a modern society, Yi Tongin and other reform-minded Korean Buddhists considered the social and political changes an opportunity for Buddhist revival. Yi Tongin had a close relationship with members

of the political party known as the Reform Party (K. *kaehwadang*). It has been claimed that Yi was not just an acquaintance of the reformist intellectuals at that time, but actually taught Buddhism to those intellectuals.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Yi Nünghwa writes in his *Chosön Pulgyo t'ongsa* (A Comprehensive History of Korean Buddhism) that during the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a boom in Sön studies among reform-minded intellectuals who gathered together in the capital city to study Buddhism and practice Sön meditation.<sup>22</sup> Referring to Yi Nünghwa's description of the temporary resurgence of the interest in Sön meditation among Korean intellectuals, Korean Buddhist scholar Kim Kyöngjip mentions that the trend was especially influenced by Yu Taech'i, a member of the Reform Party. Yu Taech'i evaluated Confucianism as the ideology of the ruling class that fell short of functioning as a religion. Kim Kyöngjip proposes that Yu Taech'i's reformist consciousness challenged the stratified social system of the ruling ideology and that Buddhism with its egalitarian doctrines made an appeal to him in this context.<sup>23</sup>

Yi Nünghwa's discussion of the tradition of lay Buddhists in China and Korea helps us further expand the scope of this encounter between Buddhism and reform-minded intellectuals. In his *Chosön Pulgyo t'ongsa*, Yi Nünghwa offers a list of thinkers and writers who were influenced by the Chan/Sön spirit, and the list expands all the way to the Tang-Song poet-intellectuals in China.<sup>24</sup> In the context of our discussion, it is worth noting that Yi Nünghwa pays special attention to Kim Chönghui (1786–1856, courtesy name, Ch'usa), a renowned calligrapher who frequented Qing China to learn about new ideas. Yi Nünghwa identifies Kim Chönghui as one of the immediate influences on the lay Buddhist movement in Yi's time and on Reform Party members' interest in Buddhism. A full-scale examination of the intellectual history of the evolution of Korean Buddhism from the pre-modern to modern periods would require a separate project. For now, I would like to propose the following hypothesis as one paradigm to understand the transition from the pre-modern to the modern period of Korean Buddhism. During the Chosön dynasty, neo-Confucianism was a dominant ideology; as the society searched for reformation, Buddhism offered an alternative to neo-Confucian ruling ideology, especially to reform-minded intellectuals and underprivileged groups. The question remains as to whether this dual paradigm of neo-Confucianism as a religion and ideology for the privileged and Buddhism for underprivileged and marginalized groups was simply a result of social and historical situations, or whether it had to do with philosophy represented by these two traditions. Without answering this question, we can still say that the root of Buddhist reform movements, Sön revivalism, and Buddhism's encounter with new intellectualism in modern time can be traced further back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This suggests us that, in order to better understand modern Korean Buddhism, instead of merely relying on the convenience of historical markers, we need to

pay closer attention to the evolution of Buddhism from the pre-modern to the modern periods. Such a project will not only enable us to understand what we now consider modern Korean Buddhism, but also reveal to us potentials and possibilities that could have been modern Korean Buddhism, but that have failed to be recognized as such because of social, political, historical, or other factors that contributed to the process of modernization of Korea.

The second issue is to reconsider the nature of colonial modernity and its impact on modern Korean Buddhism. As the expression “colonial modernity” suggests, modernity in Korea cannot be understood without considering colonial experiences. However, the colonial and postcolonial reality has often excessively influenced both scholars and Buddhists in Korea, to the extent that binary postulations are uncritically accepted. As a result, most Buddhist activities during the colonial period have been evaluated through the lens of whether certain activities were patriotic, or collaborating with Japanese colonialists. The nationalist tendency in understanding modern Korean Buddhism has reduced the religious and philosophical identity of Buddhism to purely political issues. If we look into the situation more closely, however, we find that such dualism does not always work. One example that demonstrates the complexity of the situation can be found in the practice of monks’ meat-eating and clerical marriage. Married monks among Koreans began to appear at the beginning of the twentieth century, before colonization, and the number of married monks rapidly increased during the 1910s and 1920s. Having maintained the tradition of celibacy and vegetarianism, many Korean Buddhists strongly disapproved of the practice of meat-eating and clerical marriage as a form of monkhood contaminated by Japanese Buddhism. The conflict between celibate and married monks continued in postcolonial space, creating one of most devastating internal conflicts in Korean Buddhism during the 1950s and 1960s.

To group celibacy with religious purity, Korean national identity, and patriotism on the one hand, and to set them against married monks, stigmatizing them as religiously impure, Japanese invaders, and traitors on the other hand, would oversimplify the situation. Paek Yongsŏng, a leading Buddhist reformer during the colonial period, submitted a petition to the Governor-General requesting a prohibition of monks’ marriage, which did not produce visible results. Meanwhile, Han Yongun, another leading Buddhist during the same period who is still a national hero for his anti-Japanese activities, filed a petition in the early 1910s requesting that monks be allowed to marry. In 1926, monks’ marriages became officially allowed in Korea. Both Paek Yongsŏng and Han Yongun are still considered to have played significant role in modern Korean Buddhism, but they took opposite positions on the question of clerical marriage. The incident demonstrates that the binary postulation of pure Korean Buddhism versus contaminated Japanese Buddhism, and further elaborated binary sets of celibacy-Korean patriots versus clerical marriage-colonial collaborators, oversimplify the situation. A crucial re-examination of binary postulations is necessary in order to understand the

complexity involved in Korean Buddhism's encounters with modernity.

The third issue is related to another form of binary postulation. This time the binary postulation takes the form of modernity versus tradition. Modernization in Korea has come to denote Westernization. This tendency of conceptualizing modernity with the civilization and culture of the West has created the assumption that the modern is equated with the West and the pre-modern with traditional Asia. Buddhism being part of traditional Korea, in the process of modernization, the idea that tradition is something to leave behind if Korea is to develop into a "modern" nation fostered an environment that considered Buddhism as having nothing to offer in the nation's path to a modern and advanced society. The case of the Buddhist encounter with new intellectualism suggests that this did not have to be the case.

When we consider modernity from its functional aspects, including institutional efficiency, consideration for the general public, and the new role of religion, Korean Buddhism did need reformation. The activities of Buddhist reformists reflect this aspect of the Buddhist encounter with modernity. On the other hand, if we consider the philosophy and spirit of modernity that has been characterized as the individual's search for self, freedom, and equality, one can argue that Buddhism has much to offer in the shaping of modernity in Asia. Our discussions in this volume on Buddhism and modernity in Korea suggest that we need to move beyond modernization of Buddhism and conceive a vision of Buddhist modernity which will help us to understand new aspects of modernity itself. Such an effort might help us shed light on certain aspects of Buddhism that have been suppressed or forgotten in our race toward modernization.



This volume consists of three parts. The first two parts comprise ten chapters, each of which discusses individual figures in modern Korean Buddhism. Three chapters in Part Three take a thematic approach to some of the major issues in modern Korean Buddhism. Throughout this volume the words Chan/Zen/Sōn have been used interchangeably. The following Sanskrit words are not italicized: *nirvāṇa*, *saṃsāra*, *dharma*, *saṃādhi*, *prajñā*, and *saṅgha*. Asian names in this volume appear in the Asian tradition of the family name placed before the given name, unless the Asian name has appeared in English publications, in which case the name will follow the precedent of the previous publications.

## Notes

1. See Kim Kyōngjip, *Han'guk kūndae Pulgyo sa* (History of Modern Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Kyōngsōwōn, 1998), pp. 50–65. On Yi Tongin, also see Kim Kyōngjip, "Kūndae kaehwasūng ūi hwal-dong kwa hyōnsil insik" (Activities of Modern Reformist

Monks and Their Reality Consciousness), *Pojo sasang* 25 (Feb 2006): 463–490; Sin Pongsŭng, *Yi Tongin ūi nara* (Yi Tongin's Country), 3 vols. (Seoul: Tongbang midia, 2001).

2. See Kim Kyŏngjip, *Han'guk kŭndae Pulgyo sa*, pp. 59–60. Yi Tongin is believed to have been murdered for political reasons, but whether he was assassinated by his political opponent or by one from his own group is unclear.

3. Han Yongun, *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Revitalization of Korean Buddhism), *Han Yongun chŏnjip*, vol. 2 (Seoul: Sin'gu munhwasa, 1974), pp. 33–125, 66–68. This issue is also emphasized repeatedly by So'aeasan Pak Chungbin in his reform agenda through Won Buddhism. See Chapter 3 of this volume for details.

4. Following the 1872 edict, modern Japanese Buddhism allowed monks to marry, eat meat, and abandon tonsure. An in-depth study on the issue is found in Richard M. Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

5. Wŏnbulgyo kyo'go chŏnggan, vol. 4, *Chŏgi kyosŏ* (Collections of Early Teachings) (Chŏnbuk, Korea: Wŏnbulgyo chŏnghwasa, 1970), pp. 96–105.

6. Paek'pa identified the three phrases of Linji with the three types of Sŏn—Patriarchal Sŏn, Tathāgata Sŏn, and Theoretical Sŏn—and he understood their relationship as hierarchical. Paek'pa also identified the first phrase in the Linji's three phrases with live words (K. *hwalgū*) and with Patriarchal Sŏn, whereas the third phrase was identified with that of dead words (K. *sagu*) and with Theoretical Sŏn. (See *Sŏnmun sugyŏng*, HPC 10.514c–527c.)

Chŏui warned that Paek'pa's theory of the three types of Sŏn could distort Sŏn teachings. Chŏui argued that neither the Linji's three phrases nor the four classifications of Patriarchal Sŏn, Tathāgata Sŏn, Outside-formal Sŏn (K. *kyŏgoe-Sŏn*), and Theoretical Sŏn formed a hierarchical order. Chŏui considered all four types of Sŏn to be skillful means of Buddhist teachings in which different methods could and should be used according to the different levels and characters of practitioners. (See *Sŏnmun sabyŏn manŏ*, HPC 10.820b–830b.)

Chŏui is also well known for the idea of the oneness of Sŏn and tea (K. *ta-Sŏn ilmi*) and has been credited as a revivalist of tea-culture (K. *tado*) in modern Korea. For his thoughts on tea, see *Tasinjŏn* (Story of Tea-Spirits, HPC 10.871a–873b) and *Tongdasong* (Songs of Eastern [Korean] Tea HPC 10.873–876b).

7. Sŏk Myŏngjŏng, ed., *Kyŏnghŏ chip* (Collected Works of Kyŏnghŏ) (Korea: Kŭngnak sŏnwŏn, 1990), pp. 86–117; HPC 11.601b–607b.

8. Sŏk Myŏngjŏng, ed., *Kyŏnghŏ chip*, pp. 74–78; HPC 11.599c–600a.

9. Pang Hanam, *Hanam ilballok: Hanam Taejongsa pŏbŏrok* (Hanam's One Bowl of Records: The Recorded Dharma-lectures of Great Patriarch Hanam), ed., Hanam Taejongsa Munjip P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏn Hoe (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1996), pp. 27–36.

10. See Kim Kwangsik, "Yi Sŏngchŏl ūi Pulgyo kaehyŏngnon" (Yi Sŏngchŏl's Theory of Buddhist Reform) in Sungtaek Cho, ed., *T'ŏe'ong Sŏngchŏl ūi kkaedarŭm kwa suhaeng* (Seoul: Yemun sŏwŏn, 2006), 216–265, pp. 224–227.

11. For a study of major figures among Korean nuns in the modern period, see Ha Ch'unsae, *Kkadarŭn ūi kkot: Han'guk kŭnserŭl pitnaen kŭnse pi'guni* (The Flowers of Enlightenment: Buddhist Nuns in Modern Times Who Have Lightened Up Korean Buddhism), 2 vols. (Seoul: Yŏrae, 1998–2001).

12. See Su'gyöng, "Han'guk pi'guni kangwön paltalsa" (History of the Evolution of Bhikkhuni Seminaries in Korea), in Chön'guk pi'gunihoe, ed., *Han'guk pi'guni üi suhaeng kwa salm* (The Practice and Life of Korean Buddhist Nuns) (Seoul: Yemun söwön, 2007), 15–51.

13. T'oe'ong Söngchöl, "Pongamsa kyölsa" (Compact Community at the Pongam Monastery), in *Cha'girül paro popsida* (Let's Look at Ourselves Clearly) (Seoul: Changgyönggak, 1987), 220–235.

14. Söngchöl, *Sönmun chöngno* (Correct Path of the Sön School) (Seoul: Pulgwang, 1981), pp. 201–209. On the debate, see Kang Köngi and Kim Hosöng, eds., *Kkadarüm: tono tonsu in'ga, tono chömsu in'ga* (Enlightenment: Is it Sudden Awakening and Sudden Cultivation or Sudden Awakening and Gradual Cultivation?) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992).

15. I will further discuss this issue in the next section.

16. Kwön Sangno's *Chosön Pulgyo yaksa* (An Abridged History of Korean Buddhism) was published in 1917.

17. Chöe Namsön, "Chosön Pulgyo: Tongbang munhwasaasang e itnün kü chiwi" (Chosön Buddhism: Its Place in Oriental Cultural History), in *Pulgyo* 74 (1930): 1–51, p. 17.

18. Robert E. Buswell claims that the concept of national identity of Buddhism is purely a modern invention. In his essay "Imagining 'Korean Buddhism': The Invention of a National Religious Tradition," Buswell contends: "It would be going much too far to posit that there was any independent sense of a 'Korean' national tradition of Buddhism, distinct from the broader Sinitic tradition, during the premodern era" (Hyung Il Pai & Timothy R. Tangherlini, eds., *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity* [Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998], 73–107, p. 74). Eunsu Cho also discusses the limits of Chöe Namsön's definition of Korean Buddhism as "ecumenical Buddhism" in her essay "T'ong Pulgyo tamnon ül t'onghae pon Han'guk Pulgyosa insik: Han'guk Pulgyo rül tasi saenggak handa" (The Understanding of the History of Korean Buddhism Seen through the Lens of the Theory of Ecumenical Buddhism: Re-thinking Korean Buddhism), *Pulgyo pyöngnon* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 30–51.

19. For example, Kim Kyöngjip, *Han'guk kündae Pulgyo sa*, p. 21; Kang Sökchu and Pak Kyönghun, eds., *Pulgyo kümse pangnyön* (Recent Hundred Years of Buddhism) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2002), p. 8.

20. Throughout this introduction, I use the term modern or modern period in reference to the time period of the late nineteenth century, based on Korean Buddhist scholarship's common use of either 1876 or 1895 as the beginning of modern period in Korean Buddhism.

21. Kim Kyöngjip, *Han'guk kündae Pulgyo sa*, p. 51.

22. Yi Nünghwa, *Chosön Pulgyo tongsä* (A Comprehensive History of Korean Buddhism), vol. 2 (Seoul: Sinmun'wan, 1918), p. 899.

23. Kim Kyöngjip, *Han'guk kündae Pulgyo sa*, pp. 91–94.

24. Yi Nünghwa, *Chosön Pulgyo tongsä*, vol. 2, p. 897.