

Imperialism and Temple Properties: A Case Study of Korean Buddhism During Japan's Occupation

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ABSTRACT

In 1911, the Japanese Governor-General Office established regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples, effectively colonizing Korean Buddhism. The regulations heavily influenced modern Korean Buddhism during its occupation period (1910-45) and continue to do so to the present. In complete acquiescence to these regulations, the Korean government passed the Law of the Management of Buddhist Properties in 1962 to control all of Korean Buddhist Temples under the hands of its dictator, Bak Jeonghui. Because progressive Buddhist activists protested against the undemocratic law, the government substituted it with the Law of the Preservation of Traditional Temples in 1987. Even though the scope of the government's control was reduced from all Buddhist temples to the traditional temples, the current Korean government is still imposing the undemocratic law to manipulate Korean Buddhism by continuously revising it in to appease Korean Buddhist opposition.

Based on the regulations, the Japanese colonial government organized all of Korean Buddhist temples under its bureaucratic hierarchy and established the system of the thirty parish headquarter temples in which the vertical relations between the headquarter temple and its respective branch temples are strictly regulated. In order to easily rule Korean Buddhism, the Japanese Governor-General Office approved the abbots, in contrast to the Korean Buddhist tradition in which abbots are appointed in accordance with the unanimous recommendations of monastic members. The articles and bylaws of the thirty parish headquarter temples had to be approved by the government. The regulations also stipulated that all Korean temples must report their temple affairs in detail to the government.

While or after pursuing education in Buddhist Studies at universities in Japan, many Korean monastics got married through the influence from married monasticism of Japanese Buddhism. The Japanese colonial government encouraged the thirty parish headquarter temples to change their articles and bylaws so that married, pro-Japanese monastics could become abbots through whom Japan could smoothly controlled Korean Buddhism. Because their abbotships were approved by the government, it was economically and politically prudent to be loyal its will. The married monastics also privatized temple properties to support their families. In short, the Japanese derived system destroyed traditional Korean celibate monasticism and brought about the loss of monastic properties.

In one hand, Korean progressive activists reacted against Japanese control of Korean Buddhist temples and properties and began to demand that the Japan's Governor-General Office abolish the regulations and the parish system in the early 1920s, this is, just since the massive March 1, 1919 movement for independence from Japan. However, they were unsuccessful in nullifying the regulations because pro-Japanese abbots and Japan's colonial government crushed the movement. On the other hand, Korean Seon practitioners initiated the Center for Seon Studies in 1920, just after the March 1 movement, and tried to recover Korean Buddhism's celibate tradition and other conventions of Korean Seon Buddhism. After the liberation from Japan in 1945, activists purged Korean Buddhism of Japanese married monasticism between May 1954 and April 1962. This is known as the Buddhist Purification Movement.

1. Japan and Korean Buddhist Temple Properties

The regulations of Korean Buddhist temples¹ proclaimed by the Office of the Japanese Governor-General in 1911 continue to influence the management of Buddhist properties. The traditional temples still hold the rights to huge areas of land and forests. Most of the temples' income derived from agricultural lands, belonging to temples during the Japanese occupation period (1910-45).²

The management of temple properties became an emergent issue for Korean Buddhists even immediately after the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) opened up the nation to foreign nations. Korean Buddhism, which was weakened and became feeble during the severe persecution of the Joseon Dynasty, could not sustain the impact of foreign religious influences, Western Christianity and Japanese Buddhism, supported by foreign nations.

Korean Buddhist intellectuals tried to modernize Korean Buddhists by establishing modernized schools. They appropriated the temple properties to establish modern schools in an improper way. Some monastics also appropriated the temple properties for their private interest by selling the lands. Korean Buddhism lost a lot of the temple properties at the time.³

The Korean government designated the Wonheung-sa Temple as the headquarter temple of Korean Buddhism on January 25, 1902 after establishing it near the palace in Seoul. The government founded the Office for Management of Temples and Shrines as an administrative sub-unit of the Royal Court Administration at the Wonheung-sa Temple in July, 1902. The office issued the regulations of temples with 36 articles.

According to the regulations, the office proclaimed the Wonheung-sa Temple as the national headquarter of Korean Buddhism and appointed sixteen temples as the providential headquarters, each of which represents some area across the Korean Peninsula. For instance, first, Bongeun-sa Temple represents the left area of the Gyeonggi Province; second, Bongseon-sa Temple the right area of the Gyeonggi Province; third, Yongju-sa Temple the southern part of the Gyeonggi Province; fourth, Magok-sa Temple the South Chungcheong Province; fifth, Beopju-sa Temple the North Chungcheong Province; sixth, Songgwang-sa Temple the South Jeolla Province; seventh, Geumsan-sa Temple the North Jeolla Province; eighth, Haecin-sa Temple the right area of the Gyeongsang Province; ninth, Donghwa-sa Temple the left area of the Gyeongsang Province; tenth, Tongdo-sa Temple the southern part of the Gyeongsang Province; eleventh, Wonjeong-sa Temple the southern part of Gangwon Province; twelfth, Yujeom-sa Temple the northern part of Gangwon Province; thirteenth, Seokwang-sa Temple the southern part of the Hamgyeong Province; fourteenth, Kwiju-sa Temple the northern part of the Hamgyeong Province; fifteenth, Bohyeon-sa Temple the Hyeongan Province; and sixteenth, Singwang-sa Temple the Hwanghae Province. Later, the office added ten temples to the providential headquarter temples, which became the origin of the system of Korean Buddhist parish headquarters.

If we look at the preface to the detailed explanations on the regulations, issued in 1902, we can see that the government was aware of how seriously the perverted monastics had appropriated the temple properties. We can also understand very easily that the regulations were essentially made by the government to protect the temple properties. Articles 25-7 of the detailed explanations prescribes the examination of temple lands and forests and mandating a record be created of detailed information in order to thoroughly manage the temple properties. A copy of the record on each temple properties should be kept in the temple, the providential headquarter temple and the national headquarter temple respectively.

Some monastics, represented by I Bodam of Bongwon-sa Temple in Seoul, made a request to the government that temple properties should be managed independently of the government's control in 1903. The Office for the Management of Temples and Shrines was abolished and the position of Wonheung-sa Temple as the national headquarter of Korean Buddhism was lost in 1904. The management of the temple properties was not much improved because of the short duration of the office.

Japan established a puppet government in Korea in 1905. The Japanese puppet government announced the ordinance on the management of Korean temples and allowed Japanese temples and organizations to manage Korean temples in 1906. The measurement legalized Japanese Buddhist influences on Korean Buddhism. Many Korean temples were entrusted to Japanese organizations.

To fund modern schools, the Buddhist leaders sold out the temple properties. This caused Korean Buddhism to lose a lot of temple properties.⁴ The thirteen Buddhist monastic representatives, representing thirteen provinces, established the Organization for Research on Buddhism at the Wonheung-sa Temple, created the thirteen provincial chapters in each provinces and elected Hong Wolcho as the president on the 19th day of February in 1906. The organization founded a school named Myeongjin (Principal: I Bodam), current Dongguk University, at Wonheung-sa Temple on May 8, 1906. Na Jeongho and others taught students at Bongeun-sa Temple independent of the group. Many modern schools were founded in the provincial temples.

The following is a list the modern schools before 1910 in which Japan annexed the Korean territory: the Haein-sa Temple established the Myeonglip School in 1906; the Yongju-sa Temple the Myeonghwa School in 1906; the Geonbong-sa Temple the Bongmyeong School in 1906; the Beomeo-sa Temple the Myeongjeong School in 1906; the Seokwang-sa Temple the Seokwang-sa Elementary School in 1906; the Daeheung-sa Temple the Daeheung Elementary School in 1906; The Daeseung-sa Temple the Gyeongheung School along with the Gimryong-sa, Namjang-sa, Yongmun-sa, Myeongbong-sa and Gyeongheung-sa Temples in 1907; the Wibong-sa Temple the the Bongik School in 1907; and the Hwaeom-sa Temple the Simmyeong School along with the Cheoneun-sa, the Taean-sa, the Taean-sa and the Gwaneum-sa Temples in 1909.⁵

The education department of the Japanese puppet government issued an official order on the monastic education and the protection of the temple properties on March 6, 1907. The department of internal affairs issued orders to examine the properties of the shrines and the temples comprehensively on February 1, 1908. The department of internal affairs issued an official order for twelve province offices to protect the local temple properties in July 1908. According to the official order, some monastics appropriated the land in the name of educational purposes and sold it out for the sake of their own personal interests so that the majority of monastics complained about the loss of the temple properties. The central government strongly recommended that local officials protect temple properties in order to contain the complaints by the majority of monastics about the loss of the temple properties.⁶

To manage the temple properties effectively, the department of internal affairs began to collect the information on the temple properties and to examine the status quo of them very concretely in May 1909. Based on the examination, figures released on October 22, 1909 report the number of temples as 957, that of monks as 4920 and that of nuns as 563.

2. The Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples

With the government's request, Japanese scholars, Sekino Tadashi, Watanabe Toru and others investigated the historical remains on the Korean Peninsula and were near completion of their investigation by the end of 1909. Watanabe Toru was involved in making the regulations of Korean Temples in 1911 and was a key figure in the management of temple properties even in 1920s.

The following "Regulations of Korean Temples" was approved by Japanese Governor-General on May 29 and proclaimed on June 3, 1911 after Japan officially annexed Korea on August 29, 1910. An enforcement ordinance that comprised the eight articles was announced on July 8 and was enforced from September 1, 1911. The "Regulations of Korean Temples", proclaimed by the Office of the Japanese Governor-General in 1911, are as follows:

- Article 1: When one merges, moves, abolishes a temple or temples, one should get permissions from the Japanese Governor-General. When one changes the temple's location and/or name, one should also get permissions from the Japanese Governor-General.
- Article 2: If one cannot get permission from a local governor, one cannot use the temples for any other purposes except for the transmission of Buddhism, the propagation of Buddhist teaching, the performance of Buddhist rituals and the monastic residential quarters.
- Article 3: After each parish-headquarter temple makes articles on relations between the headquarter temple and the branch temples, the monastic regulations, the ritualistic manuals and

other miscellaneous ones, one should get permission to implement them from the Governor-General.

Article 4: The abbot represents a temple. One is supposed to manage temple properties, monastic business and religious affairs.

Article 5: One cannot sell any temple properties such as land, forest, buildings, Buddha images, stone architects, old manuscripts, old calligraphies and paintings and other precious materials without permission from the Governor-General.

Article 6: The penalty for violating one of the above articles is imprisonment for more than two years or a fine of less than 500 Yens.

Article 7: The Governor-General shall make regulations of Korean temples in addition to the above six articles if needed.

A Supplementary Provision: The Governor-General shall name the date to enforce these regulations.

The enforcement ordinance also established the parish system of Korean Buddhism prescribing relations between the 30 headquarter temples and the respective branch temples. The 30 headquarter temples obtained an approval of their articles from the Governor-General's Office after they modeled the Haein-sa Temple's articles, which granted the abbots many privileged rights to manage the temple properties.

The 30 headquarter temples are as follows:

Four Temples in Gyeonggi Province: Bongeun-sa Temple, Bongseon-sa Temple, Yongju-sa Temple and Jeondeung-sa Temple;

Five Temples in North Gyeongsang Province: Donghwa-sa Temple, Eunhae-sa Temple, Goun-sa Temple, Gimyong-sa Temple and Girim-sa Temple;

Three Temples in South Gyeongsang Province: Haein-sa Temple, Tongdo-sa Temple and Beomeo-sa Temple;

Four Temples in South Jeolla Province: Daeheung-sa Temple, Baekyang-sa Temple, Songgwang-sa Temple and Seonam-sa Temple;

Two Temples in North Jeolla Province: Wibong-sa Temple and Boseok-sa Temple;

One Temple in South Chungcheong Province: Magok-sa Temple;

One Temple in North Chungcheong Province: Beopju-sa Temple;

Three Temples in Gangwon Province: Geonbong-sa Temple, Yujeom-sa Temple and Woljeong-sa Temple;

Two Temples in Hwanghae Province: Paeyeop-sa Temple and Seongbul-sa Temple;

Imperialism and Temple Properties: A Case Study of
Korean Buddhism During Japan's Occupation

Two Temples in South Pyeongan Province: Yeongmyeong-sa Temple and Beopheung-sa Temple;

One Temple in North Pyeongan Province: Bohyeon-sa Temple; and

Two Temples in South Hamgyeong Province: Seokwang-sa Temple and Gwiju-sa Temple.

Later Hwaeom-sa Temple in South Jeolla Province was added to the parish headquarter temple in 1920. The system of the 31 parish headquarter temples was completed.

The fourth and fifth articles of the regulation state the management of temple properties is under the responsibility of each temple's abbot. The abbot should receive supervision from the Japanese Governor-General. The Japanese Governor-General Office made the law to control Korean Buddhism through the abbots of the parish main temples to the greatest extent possible. The seventh article of the enforcement ordinance states that the abbot should submit all of financial data of the temple's movable properties and real estates to the Japanese Governor-General Office in five months after inauguration and should report to the same office in five days if the change of the temple properties takes place. The third article of the regulations of Korean temples proscribes that each parish headquarter temple's articles should be approved by the Governor-General.

The Governor-General Office also issued the Regulations of Confucian Centers in 1911 and the Regulations of Christian Churches to put them under the control of the Japanese Governor-General in 1915. Unlike Korean religious centers, the Governor-General Office promulgated special regulations to protect Japanese Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in 1915.

The Governor-General Office supervised the drafting of the articles of parish headquarter temples and drove Korean Buddhists to include Japanese traditional holidays not related with Buddhism and the memorial days of previous Emperors in temple rituals in order to be loyal to Japan as colonial subjects.

The parish system paved ways for the Japanese Governor-General to rule Korean Buddhism very smoothly. To effectively rule Korean Buddhism, the Japanese government included the parish system under the bureaucratic hierarchy. The Governor-General was able to approve the abbot of the headquarter temple and the local governor the abbot of the branch temple. The abbot of the headquarter temple could appoint the abbots of the branch temples. The monastic power was absolutely centered on the temple abbot through alienating normal monks.

The viable candidate for abbotship was one who showed strong loyalty to the Governor-General. Without the approval of Japan's Governor-General it was impossible for an individual to secure the numerous privileges of being an abbot. Abbots had the absolute right to sell and manage temple properties. Abbots voluntarily helped Japan rule the Korean Peninsula in order to secure and

preserve their positions from the Japanese occupation forces. Their loyalty to Japan was their ticket to fame, good positions and economic prosperity.

3. The Aftereffects of the Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples

After proclaiming the regulations of Korean temples, the Japanese Governor-General Office concretized them in many ways. For example, the minister of state affairs ordered the province governors to examine the monastic members and their curriculum vitae on August 17, 1911 and to propagate the main purport of the regulations of Korean temples. Based upon the regulations, the government began to approve the abbots of each parish headquarter temple from November 17, 1911 and to permit the articles and bylaws of each parish headquarter temple and the assignment of some branch temples to it from September 2, 1912.

The Governor-General Office promulgated the scope of the Korean monastic hierarchy on September 19, 1911 and the exemplary explanations on how to obtain the monastic hierarchical titles on March 8, 1912.

The abbots of the 30 headquarter temples met to make the united temple articles during June 17-22, 1912. The minister of the department of internal affairs issued a directive on how to give permission for people who want to cut the trees in the temple forests and/or sites on August 12, a directive on how to regulate the temple's stamp and that of its abbot on September 26, 1912, and an official order not to take the leaves from the temple forests on December 28, 1912. Each year, the Governor-General Office examined the status quo of Korean Buddhism, including the number of monastics, laymen, missionaries and temples in detail since 1912. The government issued a decree on the management of monastic registrations in 1916.

In the 1910s, the Governor-General Office arranged for the parish headquarter abbots and Buddhist leaders to observe the advanced systems of Japanese temples, to meet with the emperor and to have special meetings with the Governor-General very frequently in order to receive favor from them. From August 31 to September 24, 1917, a group of Buddhist leaders including Gim Guha, I Huigwang, Gang Daeryeon, Na Jeongho, Gwak Beopgyeong, Gim Yonggok, I Jiyeong, Gim Sangsuk, Gwon Sangno and others visited Japan to examine the advanced systems of temples.

Even though Japan made various regulations of Korean Buddhist temples to smoothly control Korean Buddhists, Korean monastics and Buddhists appreciated its control of Buddhist properties. They thought that the Governor-General Office's control protected Korean Buddhist temple properties from being sold and lost. Moreover, Japan's good treatment of Korean Buddhism contrasted with that received from the government during the Joseon Dynasty, which persecuted Buddhism and even prohibited Buddhist monastics from going into the cities. Naturally, this made Korean Buddhists and monastics appreciate Japan and its Governor-General Office.⁷

Imperialism and Temple Properties: A Case Study of
Korean Buddhism During Japan's Occupation

The regulations of Korean Buddhist temples shifted the relations between the parish headquarter temple and its branch temples from a religious dimension to the government's administrative one. That is, the regulations changed relations between Buddhist temples and between the government's administrative units and Korean Buddhist monastic ones into the system of bureaucratic hierarchy. The monastic power was centered on the abbot of each parish headquarter temple in all aspects.

Before the regulations, each abbot was generally recommended in the general assembly of each temple's all monastic members according to Korean monastic tradition. Afterwards, the relation between the abbot and the temple monastic members became bureaucratic. Basically, the temples were put under the effective control of the Japanese government.

However, in the late 1910s, Korean Buddhists began to be aware of the Japanese Governor-General Office's real intention and to strongly protest against its occupation of the Korean Peninsula. For example, on August 21, 1918, the Ullambana Ceremonial Day, Ven. Gim Yeonil, a monk of Beopjeong-sa Temple on Jeju Island, delivered in front of more than 30 devotees a public speech in which he predicted that a Buddhist emperor would appear and recover the status of the independence of Korea. He suggested that Korean Buddhists kill Japanese officials and kick out Japanese traders. He declared he himself to be the Buddhist emperor. He appointed high military officials and made an armed uprising with four hundred devotees. On October 5, 1918, two monks Jeong Guryong and Gang Minsu participated in the uprising. They burned Japanese offices, hit Japanese residents and cut the electric lines. Also, there was an article in the June 5, 1918 issue of the daily newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, which reported the abbots' privatization of temple properties. However, the cases of the abbots' privatization had not been reported before the article.

On March 1, 1919, Korean people declared independence from Japan and massively demonstrated throughout the nation take it back Korea from Japan. After the March 1 movement, young Korean Buddhist leaders tried to solve Korean Buddhist problems from a stance of independent, not relying on the occupation forces.

On May 12, 1920, some student leaders of Jungang Hakrim, modern Dongguk University, dispatched notices nationwide to convene the Korean Buddhist Youth Association's Conference and on June 6, they formed the general assembly for projectors and elected provisional executive committee members on the university campus. On June 9, the projectors made the association's articles and bylaws on the campus and on June 26, they held a founding ceremony at the Gwakwang-sa Temple at which several hundred young Buddhists attended from across the nation and elected the association officers. In October, they held public lectures in many areas to propagate their purport.

According to the founding prospectus, they proposed to experience the Buddha's original spirit which is centered on saving sentient beings in the world; to establish reasonable religious systems at the administrative level to revive the

radiant culture of the Three Kingdoms period; and to overcome the structural problems prevalent in Buddhism and not flexible to accept new information and knowledge, massively coming from outside. They clearly revealed that they established the association to reform the current problematic system.

On December 15, 1920, the association held a preparatory meeting to organize a reform committee with local chapter leaders. The next day, it established the committee and adopted a memorial with eight items to the office of the confederation of thirty parish headquarter temples.

In the memorial, they clearly refuted the system of letting the abbots of the thirty parish headquarter temples monopolize the temples' management.⁸ Instead, they suggested all temple affairs should be decided democratically and based on public opinion. They proposed to unify a financial management system of Korean Buddhist temples under the control of the confederation office and to have six secretaries under the chairman of the confederation of thirty parish headquarter temples, who would be in charge of six parts: (1) proceedings, (2) general affairs, (3) finance, (4) education, (5) propagation and (6) justice.

4. Movements to Abolish the Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples

In January 1921, the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization, affiliated with the Korean Buddhist Youth Association, was established. In its prospectus, the organization stated its desire to reform the management of temple properties by the abbots of the thirty parish headquarter temples because the abbots appropriated temple properties and monopolized temple power and management in favor of the ruling Japanese Governor-General Office.

On December 13, 1921, four incorporators, represented by Gim Beopgwang, encouraged local young Buddhists to affiliate so that more than 1000 persons joined. On December 21, the organization was established at the Korean Buddhist Youth Association Center, adopting articles and bylaws and electing officers.

On January 3, 1922, the members of the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization attended the general meeting for the abbots of the thirty parish headquarter temples and asked that the meeting should be for all Korean monastics, not only for abbots. Some abbots agreed with their suggestion and some disagreed with them. Some abbots withdrew from the confederation of the thirty abbots.

On January 6, the thirty abbots accepted the organization's suggestion and changed the meeting's title from the general meeting for the abbots of the confederation of the thirty parish headquarter temples to that for all Korean monastics. On January 7, the participants to the general assembly for all of the Korean monastics decided to abolish the articles and bylaws of the confederation of the thirty parish headquarter temples, which guaranteed the thirty abbots to monopolize the power in the Buddhist society. They agreed to establish the Central Office of General Affairs in order to unite all of the Korean Buddhist

organizations and to have under the office two departments: the department of theoretical affairs in charge of education and propagation and the department of business affairs in charge of finance and administration.

On March 24, more than 150 members of the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization held a general assembly at Gwakhwang-sa Temple and discussed how to make a proposal on Buddhist reform to the Governor-General Office, to solidify the foundation of the Central Office of General Affairs and to concentrate on education and propagation.

On March 26, around 100 monastic members of the organization, including Gang Sinchang, Gim Sangho and Jeong Maengil, hosted a public lecture to criticize pro-Japanese abbots. The group put a drum on the back of the most representative pro-Japanese Buddhist leader Gang Daeryeon, abbot of one of the parish headquarter temples, Yongju-sa Temple, and beat it as they marched through downtown Seoul from South Gate to East Gate via Jongno Street. They also carried a flag on which was written the phrase, "Gang Daeryeon, the great Mara of Korean Buddhism, should be kicked out." The Jongno Police Department dispatched officers, who broke up the demonstration and detained five leaders. Three days later, on March 29, sixteen leaders, including Gang Sinchang, Gim Sangho, Jeong Maengil, Yang Muhong, Gim Jijun, were imprisoned.

On April 19, the 2,284 members of the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization signed a long proposal for abandonment of the regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples and submitted it to the Governor-General Office. They demanded the separation of religion from politics and the abolishment of the system of the thirty parish headquarter temples.

On January 6, 1923, the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization held the second general assembly and decided to submit a proposal once more for the Governor-General to abandon the regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples. In May, the organization actually proposed that the Governor-General Office abolish the regulations.

On January 18, 1923, even some conservative abbots of the confederation of the thirty parish headquarter temples, Tongdo-sa Temple, Beomeo-sa Temple, Songgwang-sa Temple and others, complained about the Governor-General Office's intervention into the confederation meetings.

Even though the organization was actively pursued the nullification of bad regulations, its activities could not succeed because the abbots, supported by the government authority and the Japanese Governor-General Office persecuted it. So, in 1924, the Korean Buddhist Youth Association and its affiliate, the Korean Buddhist Reform Organization, disbanded.

5. Married Monks and the Korean Buddhist Temple Properties

As we have see, with the opening of Korean borders to foreign nations, Korean Buddhists were exposed to Japanese Buddhism, which allowed Buddhist

priests to marry. As the time passed, Japanese Buddhist influence on Korean Buddhism increased in all areas. According to the January 30, 1907 issue of the daily newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, Go Yeonggyun proposed Buddhist monastics accept marriage in his public speech at the Bongwon-sa Temple and some monastics argued against his suggestion.

In December, 1908, Gang Hongdu sent a petition for the Japanese puppet government to allow monastic marriage and in March and September, 1910, Han Yongun petitioned the puppet government twice to allow freedom for monastics to choose marriage. I Minu also petitioned the cabinet of the puppet government to permit monastic marriage in April, 1910.

Some daily newspapers⁹ reported that the Japanese puppet government was supposed to issue an ordinance to allow monastic marriage around May in 1910. However, this did not happen. On August 29, 1910, Japan annexed Korea and established the Governor-General Office.

There are no statements on the monastic marriage system in the regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples of 1911. On May 28, 1912, the thirty abbots of the confederation of the thirty parish headquarter temples met to unite the articles and bylaws of the thirty parish headquarter temples. They decided not to allow married monks to get any positions in temples, not to give full ordination to married monks and not to permit their wives and children to live in temples. They strictly prohibited monastics from marriage and eating meat.

Since the March 1, 1919 Movement, many Korean temples dispatched a lot of monastics to study advanced Buddhist Studies in Japan. While they were studying, just after they finished studying and just before and after coming back to their homeland, they were married with the serious influence from Japanese Buddhism. After coming back to Korea, they were assigned to their original temples. The young married monastics who had studied in Japan protested against the misconducts of the abbots and the senior monastics, their monopolization of temple properties and their blocking of Buddhist reformative measures. The conservative senior monastic group criticized the young married monastic group in terms of their marriage.

Around 1925, the married group became prevalent. Some married monastics who studied in Japan tried to change the articles and bylaws of each parish headquarter temple to which they belonged in order to get the abbotship at some headquarter temples, represented by Yongju-sa Temple. On October 16, 1925, some abbots of the confederation of the thirty parish headquarter temples requested to change their articles and bylaws in order to allow for married monks to become abbots. Some abbots strongly objected to their suggestions so that they could not change them successfully.

In May 1926, 127 monastics, including Baek Yongseong of Beomeo-sa Temple, signed and submitted a memorandum requesting the Governor-General Office prohibit Korean monastics from marriage and eating meat. In September,

Baek Yongseong again sent another letter to the Japanese Governor-General Office in Seoul and Japan's Department of Internal Affairs in Tokyo.

However, in May 1926, the Governor-General Office issued official instructions to provincial governors stating they should direct the provincial head temples and their branch temples to change temples articles and bylaws, making it possible for married monks to become abbots. The office pushed the headquarter temples to revise their regulations to allow monastic marriage and the possibility for them to become abbots. In October, the Governor-General Office granted this. In November, more than ten parish headquarter temples revised their laws and the Governor-General Office approved them.

The married monastics who had studied in Japan needed good positions, including abbotship, to support their families financially and pushed the temples to allow for the married monks to become abbots with support from the Japan's Governor-General Office. They were seriously eager to secure financial support for their family and hoped to privatize the temples' finances for themselves and their family.

Japan's Governor-General Office could control married abbots and Korean Buddhism very easily and effectively because the government could supervise them legally. If they were not loyal to the Japan's colonial government, they would lose their jobs. If so, not only they but also their family could not survive financially. Married monks competed to get favor from Japan's colonial government and if they got a good position, they tried to privatize the temple's properties as much as possible. The monastic marriage system made Japan's colonial government control of Korean Buddhism more effective, damaged the independence of Korean Buddhism and led to the loss of numerous temple properties.¹⁰

6. The Establishment of the Center for Seon Studies

In 1920, just one year after the March 1 Movement, Gim Namjeon, Gang Dobong, Gim Seokdu and others resolved to establish a representative Seon center in Seoul to revive Korean traditional Seon Buddhism.¹¹ Baek Yongseong, Song Mangong, O Seongwol and others concretized the project and began to construct the center on August 10, 1921 and completed the construction on November 30 at Anguk-dong in the downtown of Seoul.

In May 1921, they held a ceremony of Bodhisattva precepts to raise money for establishing the Center for Seon Studies at the Propagation Center of Seokwang-sa Temple in Seoul. Gim Namjeon donated 2000 yen, Gang Dobong 1500 yen, Gim Seokdu 2000 yen and O Seongwol, abbot of Beomeo-sa Temple, promised to donate money received from renting out the Propagation Center of Beomeo-sa Temple in Seoul.

They put the Korean-Chinese character *won* 院 in the title of Seonhak-won (Center for Seon Studies) without putting the Korean-Chinese characters *sa* 寺 or

am 庵, both of which mean temple. If the center has the characters *sa* or *am* in its religious institution's title, it should be controlled by the Japanese Governor-General Office's regulations of Korean Buddhist temples. They established the center to manage it independently of the Japanese control in the colonial period.¹²

On two days, March 30 and April 1, 1922, 82 monastics, including O Seongwol, Baek Hakmyeong, Hwang Yonggeum, and Song Mangong, established the Seon Practitioners' Association as an affiliate organization of the Center for Seon Studies at the center. They transmitted the Korean traditional Seon tradition and kept the celibate monastic system in the colonial period. The association accepted only unmarried monastics as its members.

The Seon Practitioners' Association had its headquarter at the Center for Seon Studies in Anguk-dong and had three departments in its headquarter office: the Department of General Affairs, the Department of Seon Practice and the Department of Finance. It also had local branches at nineteen temples including Mangwol-sa Temple, Jeonghye-sa Temple, Jikji-sa Temple, Baekyang-sa Temple, Beomeo-sa Temple, Bulyeong-sa Temple, Geonbong-sa Temple, Mahayeon-sa Temple, Jangan-sa Temple, Woljeong-sa Temple, Gaesim-sa Temple, Tongdo-sa Temple, Singye-sa Temple, Namjang-sa Temple, Seokwang-sa Temple, Seonam-sa Temple, Cheoneun-sa Temple, Yonghwa-sa Temple and Haein-sa Temple.

On November 3, 1922, the association had their second special general assembly at the Center of Seon Studies and elected Gi Seokho as the acting chairman. On March 29, 1923, the association held the second regular general assembly at the center and elected Gang Dobong as the director of the Department of Seon Practice. On March 15, 1924, the association hosted the third special general assembly at the center and elected Han Yongun as the acting chairman.

In November 1924, the association held the fourth special general assembly at the Center for Seon Studies and the Center also established the Female Seon Practitioners' Association and built up the Center Building for Laywomen in front of the monastic residential quarters. On November 15, the association convened the third regular general assembly at the Center for Seon Studies.

Even though the Center for Seon Studies and its affiliate, Seon Practitioners' Association aimed at inheriting the authoritative Dharmic lineage from Śākyamuni Buddha and previous patriarchs, purifying Korean Buddhism from the Japanese Buddhist monastic marriage and saving sentient beings in trouble, they struggled with financial problems. At the time, married abbots managed the temples and excluded celibate Seon practitioners. The unmarried Seon practitioners had difficulty in finding temples in which to meditate. In May 1926, the Center for Seon Studies was finally transferred to the Propagation Center of Beomeo-sa Temple due to serious financial need.

On January 21, 1931, Gim Jeokeum reopened the Center for Seon Studies. He accumulated wealth through his acupuncture and oriental medicine practice and using those funds, assembled and supported Seon practitioners who meditated

at the center. The center had a regular retreat session for monastics and laymen and invited eminent Seon masters, Song Mangong, Gim Namjeon, Baek Yongseong and others to deliver special lectures on Seon so that it extended the popularity among the lay and monastic groups.

On March 14, 1931, Seon practitioners held the National Conference for Korean Seon Buddhist Practitioners at the Center for Seon Studies and demanded that the government and the confederation of the abbots of the thirty parishes headquarter temples name some temples at which unmarried Seon practitioners could live and cultivate their mind. On October 6, the center established its official yearly magazine *Seonwon* (Seon Garden), which included some news on local Seon centers, and it played a central role in uniting local centers under its arms.

According the third issue of *Seonwon*, there were 19 Seon centers among 1,338 temples and Seon practitioners numbered 238 among 6,792 monastics (5712 monks and 1080 nuns) in Korea in 1933. Afterwards, the numbers of Seon centers and practitioners increased. However, the number of unmarried monastics became very few.

In August 1933, the center applied for establishing the foundation "Korean Buddhist Seon Research Institute" to resolve financial problems institutionally and to improve living and practicing environment for the practitioners.

On December 5, 1934, the government approved. Its director was O Seongwol, its advisor Gim Gyeongun, its president Song Mangong, its vice president Bang Hanam, its standing trustees Gim Jeokeum, O Seongwol and Gim Namjeon and its inspectors Yun Seoho and I Tanong.

On January 5, 1935, the Seon practitioners, belonging to the Center for Seon Studies, declared the Constitution of Korean Buddhist Seon Sect and recommended Mangong to its representative patriarch and Hyewol, Suwol and Hanam to its patriarchs.

On March 7 and 8, 1935, they held the national conference for Seon practitioners at the Korean Buddhist Seon Research Institute, made its articles and bylaws and elected a patriarch, a director, some trustees and some representatives. It tried to establish the independent Seon Sect as the united institution for Seon centers and practitioners. Since then, the Center for Seon Studies has been called the Central Seon Center and considered the representative national Seon center.

On March 13, 1935, the Seon practitioners held the 3rd national conference and by demanding of the assembly of Korean Buddhist Central Headquarter for Religious Affairs the there be some temples for the unmarried monastics to practice Seon meditation, passed a resolution to guarantee the ability for practitioners to concentrate on their practice.

On March 23, 1938, they convened the national conference for Seon practitioners at the Korean Buddhist Seon Research Institute, entitled "The

Regular Seon Conference for Korean Buddhist Seon Sect.” By demanding some temples be appropriated for them to concentrate in Seon meditation, asked Korean Buddhist Central Headquarter for Religious Affairs to establish a Seon center for the novice Seon practitioners at the Mahayeon Temple on Mt. Geumgang, which rejected their request. They discussed the issues of the Seon practitioners’ health and social welfare.

Even though they used the title “Seon Sect,” they actually belonged to the Korean Buddhist Central Headquarter for Religious Affairs and didn’t have the independent sect. However, they aimed to establish an independent sect concentrating on Seon practice and to keep the monastic celibate precept by disagreeing with the current Korean Buddhist headquarter, heavily influenced by the married monasticism of Japanese Buddhism.

On February 26, 1941, they held a preaching meeting of eminent monastics. Forty celibate eminent monastics, including I Unheo, I Cheongdam, Song Mangong, Bak Hanyeong, I Hyobong and Ha Dongsan attended the meeting. The laymen donated monastic robes to them. After the gathering, they held the second regular meeting of Korean Buddhist Seon Sect and tried to popularize the Seon practice and preserve the celibate tradition of Korean Buddhism.

On April 23, 1941, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the headquarter temple of which was Taego-sa Temple, modern Jogyo-sa Temple, was established.¹³ The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism has continued as the representative and dominating Korean Buddhist order to present. The Governor-General Office approved the articles and bylaws of Taego-sa Temple, which controlled all Korean temples and monastics.

Loyally following the Constitution of the Korean Buddhist Seon Sect, devised on January 5, 1935, the order declared its constitution in which it defined its original founder as National Master Doui (*fl.* 8 – 9th centuries) of the United Silla Dynasty (668-935), its successor as National Master Bojo Jinul (1158-1210) and its real founder as Taego Bou (1301-82) of Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392).

On May 1, 1941, the Jogye Order implemented the laws of Taego-sa Temple. On June 5, 1941, the order held the first central assembly, elected Bang Hanam as the first patriarch and next day began the religious affairs administration. On June 23, it petitioned the government to approve the position for Bang Hanam and on August 4. The government complied.

On September 18, it declared six advisors on the religious affairs: Gim Gyeongsan, Gim Guha, Gang Daeryeon, Song Mangong, Song Manam and Jang Seoksang. On September 29, it petitioned the government to approve I Jonguk as its secretary-general on October 3. The government approved. In October, the order appointed several secretaries, that is, Gim Beopryong for the General Affairs Department, Im Seokjin for the Religious Affairs Department, Im Wonchan for the Finance Department and Heo Yeongho for the Secretariat Department.

In October, 1942, at the Center for Seon Studies, eight monks, including Hang Yongun, O Seongwol and Song Mangong, initiated the publication project of *The Collected Works of Gyeongho* (b.1849), who revitalized Seon practice in Modern Korean Buddhism after the long persecution period of Joseon Dynasty. Most modern Korean Seon masters practiced Seon under him and/or belonged to his dharma lineage. All modern Korean Seon practitioners were strongly influenced by him directly or indirectly. They considered him the spiritual leader of Seon Buddhism. Including eight senior initiators, more than forty Seon masters participated in the publication project in order to propagate traditional Korean Seon Buddhism.

As shown above, the Jogye Order is a combined religious body of married priests and unmarried Seon monastics. The unsuitable union began to be broken up after the liberation from Japan on August 15, 1945. By succeeding the spirit of the celibate Seon practitioners, affiliated with the Center for Seon Studies, they completely purified the Jogye Order from married monasticism, which had been so completely influenced by Japanese Buddhism.

Notes

This author heavily resorted to the Buddhology Institute, ed., *Hanguk geun hyeondae Bulgyo-sa yeonpyo* (A Chronological Table for Modern and Present Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Education Board of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, 2000) in introducing major historical events throughout this article.

¹ See Seok Boin & Seok Iljin, "Ilje sidae ui Bulgyo jeongchaek gwa Hanguk Bulgyo gyodan" (Japan's Policy on Korean Buddhism and the Korean Buddhist Order during Japan's Occupation Period), in *Sudara* 10 (1995): 182-95; and Seok Wondon & Seok Dongil, "Ilje-ha Bulgyo-gye ui chinil-e gwanhayeo" (Korean Buddhism's Pro-Japanese Attitude during Japan's Occupation Period), in *Sudara* 10 (1995): 196-213.

² See '2.2. Ilje sidae sachal toji ui byeoncheon' (The Transformation of Korean Buddhist Temple Lands during Japan's Occupation Period) (76-83) in Gim Eungcheol, "Bulgyo sachal budongsan ui siltae wa hwalyong bangan" (The Status Quo of Korean Buddhist Real Estates and Some Ways to Use Them) (69-112), in the *Hanguk Bulgyo sawon gyeongje hwalseonghwa bangan* (Some Ways to Vitalize Korean Buddhist Temple Economy), the proceedings of an academic seminar, held by the Institute for Korean Buddhist Social Science, the Central Sangha University on November 20 in 1996.

³ See '2. Sachal jaesan gwa sachallyeong' (Korean Buddhist Temple Properties and the Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples) (150-7) in Gim Gwangsik, "Baek Yongseong Seunim gwa Ilje-ha ui sachal jaesan sachallyeong" (Ven. Baek Yongseong, Korean Buddhist Temple Properties and Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples during Japan's Occupation Period) in the *Daegak sasang* 4 (2001): 147-87.

⁴ See the footnote # 4 in Gim Gwangsik, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁵ Refer to the list of modern schools from 1906 to 1927 in the Education Board of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, ed., *Jogye jongsa: Geun-hyeondae pyeon* (The History of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order: Modern and Present Periods) (Seoul: Jogyejong chulpan-sa, 2001), 69.

⁶ To know the content of the official order, refer to the July 29, 1908 issue of the daily newspaper *Hwangseong sinmun* and the July 30, 1908 issue of the daily newspaper *Daehan maeil sinbo*.

⁷ Refer to “2.1.2. Ilje ui jonggyo jeongchaek gwa sachallyeong” (Japan’s Policy on Korean Religion and the Regulations of Korean Buddhist Temples) in the Education Board of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, ed., *op. cit.*, 59-63.

⁸ See ‘3. Sachal jaesan ui hoengnyeong, maegak gwa juji jeonghoeng’ (The Abbots’ Appropriation and Monopolization of Korean Buddhist Temple Properties) in Gim Gwangsik, *op. cit.*, 157-174.

⁹ Refer to the May 17, 1910 issue of the daily newspaper *Daehan Maeil Sinbo* and of the daily newspaper *Hwangseong Sinmun*.

¹⁰ See ‘4. Daecheoseung ui bopyeon-hwa wa sachal jaejeong’ (The Generalization of Married Monks and Korean Buddhist Temples’ Finance) in Gim Gwangsik, *op. cit.*, 174-82.

¹¹ See ‘2. Recent Korean Son Masters’ (241-57) in Mok Jeong-bae, “Buddhism in Modern Korea,” in The Korean Buddhist Research Institute, ed., *The History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea* (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1993), 219-61 and also Mok Jeongbae, “Yeoksa pyeon, Geun-hyeondae” (Korean Buddhist History – Modern and Contemporary Times), in Hanguk bulgyo chongnam pyeonjip wiwon-hoe, ed., *Hanguk bulgyo chongnam* (The Comprehensive Collection of Source Materials of Contemporary Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Daehan bulgyo jinheung-won, 1993), 102-6.

¹² See the Education Board of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, ed., *op. cit.*, 98.

¹³ See “2.3.2. Jogye-jong ui seongnip gwa jeonggae” (The Establishment of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order and Its Development) in the Education Board of Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, ed., *op. cit.*, 126-9.