Guest Editor's Introduction

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Journal of Korean Religions, Volume 6, Number 1, April 2015, pp. 5-11 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/jkr.2015.0008*

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Pure Land Buddhism is widely recognized as the most prevalent and popular form of Buddhist practice in East Asia. This form of Buddhism is conventionally understood as veneration of the Buddha Amitābha (Amit'abul 阿彌陀佛) and the aspiration of being reborn in Sukhāvatī or "Extreme Bliss" (Kŭngnak 極樂), the Buddhaland (Skt. *buddhakṣetra*; Kor. *pulguk* 佛國; *kukt'o* 國土) or "Pure Land" (*chŏngt'o* 淨土) formed by means of the forty-eight vows Amitābha made when he was a bodhisattva. Although the Pure Land sūtras going back to the fifth century CE list many kinds of practices describing how an aspirant may achieve this goal, the devotional practice of verbally chanting the name of the Buddha Amitābha (*yŏmbul* 念佛) has increasingly become the most common way of invoking the saving power of this Buddha.

In medieval China, the chanting of Amitābha's name became so pervasive among the common people and ordinary monks and nuns during the Tang period (618–907), due to such proponents as Daochuo 道綽 (562–645), Shandao 善導 (613–681), and Fazhao 法照 (fl. 762–804), that to the present day it is arguably one of the most basic pillars of Chinese Buddhist practice. Furthermore, the study of Pure Land doctrines and practices found a home in the inclusive Tiantai school 天台宗 and, from at least the tenth century, were assimilated to Chan Buddhist practices by Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975). In Japan, where the belief that the Buddhist teaching or dharma was in decline (Kor. *malbŏp*, J. *mappō* 末法) was prevalent, monks associated with the Tendai school 天台, namely Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), increasingly drew inspiration from medieval Chinese promoters of chanting Amitābha's name, and during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) formed sectarian traditions focused on the single-practice of chanting Amitābha's name (J. *nenbutsu* 念佛). These Japanese spiritual leaders emphasized the concepts of drawing on the "other-power" (J. *tariki*, Kor. *taryŏk* 他力) of Amitābha's vows rather than depending on "self-power" (J. *jiriki*, Kor.

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charyŏk 自力), the virtue of following bodhisattva practices. In time the Japanese Pure Land sects became the most popular forms of Buddhism in Japan, with nearly 50 percent of all Japanese Buddhists claiming membership in or affiliation with either the Jōdo-shū 浄土宗 or Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 at the end of the twentieth century.

Although many dissertations, books, and articles have been written in Western languages on the Pure Land traditions in China and Japan, comparatively little has been published in English on Pure Land Buddhism or the cult of Amitābha in Korea. Most studies have either been overviews of the Silla period from the standpoint of doctrine (Minamoto 1991), cultic practice (McBride 2001, 427–505), or the doctrinal positions held by the famed Silla scholar-monk Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686) (Jang 1994; 2003; Tanaka 2004) and his rough contemporary Kyŏnghŭng 憬興 (Jung 1994), who served as the "state elder" (*kungno* 國老) during the late seventh century, because both authored extant commentaries on the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra* (*Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經). Aside from that, there is a translation of Chinul's 知訥 (1158–1210) *Essentials of Pure Land Practice* (*Yŏmbul yomun* 念佛要門), which provides an interpretation of the pivotal practice of chanting Amitābha's name from the standpoint of a devoted practitioner of Sŏn meditation during the Koryŏ period (Chinul 1983). Only one essay has attempted a comprehensive introduction to Pure Land from the Three Kingdoms to the modern period (Kwŏn 1994).

The six articles in this special issue explore aspects of the history of Pure Land Buddhism in Korea. Two essays deal with the Three Kingdoms and Silla periods, two papers treat topics in the Koryŏ period, and the final two articles break new ground in the Chosŏn period. Several articles reveal a close relationship between Pure Land practices and the Hwaŏm tradition, which was the dominant doctrinal school during the middle and late periods of Silla (ca. 668–935) and was the most influential intellectual tradition at court in the Koryŏ period (918–1392). The inclusive nature of the Hwaŏm doctrine of the perfect interfusion (*wŏnyung* 圓融) of all things made it possible for Amitābha's Pure Land to be conceptualized as an integral part of the dharma realm, the universe as it is, and for the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land to be subsumed to the expansive bodhisattva path encompassing fifty-two inter-

connected stages. Furthermore, two essays look at the development of Pure Land practice during the Chosŏn period (1392–1910) and the increasing popularity of the devotional practice of chanting Amitābha's name among the approaches favored by monks in the Imje tradition (Ch. Linji zong 臨濟宗), which increasingly became the dominant lineage of Sŏn in the late Chosŏn period.

This special issue begins with Choe Yeonshik's essay, which addresses an often overlooked trend in the early history of Sinitic Buddhism in East Asia: the popularity of the cult of the future Buddha Maitreya and the widespread belief among aspirants that Maitreya's present and future abodes were Pure Lands. In Korea during the Three Kingdoms period (ca. 300–935), the worship of Maitreya can be said to encapsulate what it meant to be Buddhist. Choe's article shows that limited evidence from Koguryŏ suggests that, following trends in such Northern Dynasties as the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534), the people of Koguryŏ sought to be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven, which functioned as a Pure Land for lay people. In both Paekche and Silla, however, aspirants considered their own countries to be the Pure Lands where Maitreya would appear in the present. In the early seventh century, the Paekche court commissioned Mirŭksa 彌勒寺, a monastery with three golden halls in three separate courtyards with pagodas, symbolic of or preparatory for the three assemblies under the dragon flower tree (Skt. *nāgapuṣpa*) where Maitreya would teach the dharma when he appeared on earth. Silla nobles, building off the Paekche position, developed the view that the domain of Silla was a Buddhaland where Maitreya would appear as a *hwarang* (flower boy) from time to time because of a deep karmic connection between Maitreya and the land of Silla.

The next article, by Kim JongWook, investigates the eminent monk-scholar Wŏnhyo's doctrinal understanding of how the doctrines of "pure lands" and "defiled lands" are integrated by the key Mahāyāna doctrine of the "one mind." In other words, Wŏnhyo sought to understand and make a case for how a person's seeking rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land by means of the power of the Buddha's vows could have a place in the all-encompassing bodhisattva path through which individuals purified their own spiritual territory to make a Pure Land in the process of becoming an enlightened being. Kim demonstrates how, in his *Doctrinal Essentials of the Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, Wŏnhyo

articulated rapprochement between doctrinal views often seen to be incompatible—if form is empty or if true thusness is empty of self-nature, then pure lands must merely be expedient means (*upāya*)—by stressing that pure lands were world systems that had material existence by bestowing the mark of form on not only the gratification lands of others (such as Amitābha's Pure Land) but even on one's own gratification land.

Doctrinal interpretations of Pure Land practice continue in Kim Cheon-hak's study on the role of the Pure Land in the dominant Hwaŏm tradition of the Koryŏ Period. The historical memory of founder of the Hwaŏm tradition in Silla, Ŭisang 義湘 (625–702), is that he was a strong advocate of Pure Land beliefs and practices. This is reasonable because he studied in the Tang capital between 660 and 670 when the famous Chinese Pure Land proponent Shandao 善導 (613–681) was at the height of popularity. An interesting vow-text, the "Vow Made at White Flower Enlightenment Site," is attributed to Ŭisang, which encourages practitioners to worship Amitābha and Maitreya, to utilize the "great compassion spell" (*taebi chu* 大悲呪) taught by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and to seek rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land. In his essay, Kim uses the concepts of "self-power" and "other-power" as interpretive and heuristic devices to analyze Kyunyŏ's 均如 (923–973) views on the Pure Land of the Lotus Storehouse Realm in the early Koryŏ period and Ch'ewŏn's 體元 (ca. 1280–d. after 1338) belief in Avalokiteśvara in the late Koryŏ period in the context of the adoption and development of Chinese Huayan. Kim explores Ch'ewŏn's *Brief Explanation of the Vow Made at White Flower Enlightenment Site*, which was composed in the late Koryŏ period and which is the source for the vow-text attributed to Ŭisang.

My contribution examines Koryŏ Buddhist paintings and their relationship with the cult of Amitābha. Rather than attempting a novel interpretation and close analysis of one painting, I survey the positions taken by several art historians and attempt to synthesize a nuanced understanding of the location and function of paintings of Amitābha and Amitābha with groups of bodhisattvas. Placed in context with statements by Koryŏ monks, the existence of many paintings with Pure Land themes strongly suggests the universal popularity and applicability of Pure Land doctrines and believes in Koryŏ. Just as important is that the language of many inscriptions on Koryŏ Buddhist paintings

alludes to concepts or cites passages found in materials related to the Hwaŏm tradition. Several peculiar characteristics of Koryŏ Buddhist paintings of Amitābha by himself and this Buddha with other bodhisattvas make sense if viewed from the standpoint of the Hwaŏm doctrines of the dharma realm and the interpenetration of all things. This strongly suggests that, unlike contemporary China or Japan, "Pure Land Buddhism" in Koryŏ was viewed through lenses inspired by Hwaŏm Buddhism and that the Pure Land of Amitābha was interfused with the dharma realm of Vairocana.

A conventional way of understanding religion in traditional Korea has been to accept that Buddhism was dominant in early and medieval times, and that during the long Chosŏn period Buddhism was eclipsed by Confucianism. Furthermore, with the triumph of Chinul's 知訥 (1158–1210) synthesized approach to Sŏn meditation, which enabled the meditation tradition to assimilate the doctrinal tradition in Korea, scholars have primarily engaged with the thought of monastic intellectuals and little research has been done on devotional Buddhist practice. The essays by Kim Yongtae and Boudewijn Walraven remedy this problem and provide interesting insights into the position of Pure Land beliefs in the thick of devotional practice in the late Chosŏn period.

Kim starts by examining the system for educating Buddhist monks during the Chosŏn period within the "orthodox lineage" of monks deriving their transmission in the dharma back to the Chinese Chan master Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866) through T'aego Pou 太古普愚 (1301–1382) and show how the "approach of chanting the Buddha Amitābha's name," which had certainly been a common cultic practice since Silla times, was understood in various ways by different Sŏn masters. Nevertheless, despite multiple attempts to provide an explanation of this most common of Pure Land practices amenable to the Sŏn practice of investigating the topic of inquiry (*kanhwa sŏn* 看話禪), somewhat mirroring or mimicking developments in the Chan traditions in late imperial China, by the late Chosŏn period many Sŏn monks established chanting Amitābha's name as a viable Buddhist practice. Because chanting Amitābha's name was probably popular and widespread in earlier times as well, Kim describes how belief in the efficacy of chanting Amitābha's name proliferated throughout the peninsula once again in the late Chosŏn period.

The final paper, Boudewijn Walraven's detailed treatment of *Exhortation to Universally Practice the Invocation of the Buddha Amitābha*, an eighteenth-century woodblock text that advocates chanting Amitābha's name, provides an example of how Pure Land beliefs and practices could be disseminated effectively in one book using both literary Sino-Korean (*hanmun* 漢文) and the Korean vernacular script. Walraven excerpts and translates a long *kasa* 歌辭 (discursive vernacular song), "On Cause and Effect," from the text, which provides a flavor of the richness of the language of the original. He also demonstrates how the detailed and meticulous imagery used in describing the vagaries and temptations of the present life along with the graphic contrast between scenes of one's possible afterlife of torture and pain in the Buddhist hells and the peace and bliss of the Pure Land of Extreme Bliss (Sukhāvatī) must have presented a startling challenge to the then-normative *Weltanschauung* upheld by the Confucian elites. He also advances the idea that the attractiveness and acceptance of these kinds of texts among the certain literate strata of the late-Chosŏn population may have paved the way for the acceptance of Catholicism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The six articles in this special issue remind us that the field of Korean religion is dynamic, vibrant, and encompasses many disciplines—from philology and history, to philosophy, art history, and literature, to name just a few. The Pure Land practice of invoking or chanting the name of the Buddha Amitābha is arguably the most representative practice in mainstream East Asian Buddhism. Therefore, these six studies help us gain a more nuanced understanding of one of the core beliefs, ideas, and practices that have shaped Korean culture and Korean identity from early times to the present day.

Finally, I would like to thank Prof. Eunsu Cho for recommending me as the guest editor of this special issue, professors Seongnae Kim and Don Baker of the *Journal of Korean Religions* for their mentorship through the process of bringing this special issue to fruition, and Inga Kim Diederich for assistance in translating Kim Yongtae's essay. I would also like to express gratitude to the Humanities Korea Project and the Academy of Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University for assistance in translating several of the papers into English.

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