

**Kim Iryeop and Buddhism<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

This essay examines the role of gender in Korean Buddhism's encounter with modernity. I argue that different roles society has imposed on different genders resulted in different experiences of modernization. In the case of Kim Iryeop, a representative female intellectual who lived during the first half of the twentieth century in Korea, it was Buddhist philosophy—especially the Buddhist view of the self—that provided her a philosophical foundation in her search for identity and liberation from the traditional view of women. An investigation of Kim Iryeop's Buddhism demands a reconsideration of the so far accepted postulation of the binary of modernity and tradition—Buddhism, in this case. Kim Iryeop's Buddhism also brings to our attention the patriarchal nature of our understanding of modern Korean Buddhism, in which the Buddhist encounter with modernity has been portrayed as focusing exclusively on male Buddhist leaders and gender-neutral issues. Finally, Kim Iryeop's Buddhism offers us an example of how Buddhist philosophy can contribute to the contemporary discourse on feminism, providing the possibility for creating a new Buddhist, feminist theory.

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Discussions on Buddhist modernity in Asia have frequently characterized the phenomenon with the emergence of nationalism, mass proselytization, lay Buddhist movements, and the influence of political situations such as imperialism, communism, and colonialism, to name a few. What has been completely neglected in this discussion on the Korean Buddhist encounter with modernity is the role of gender.

In this essay, I consider Kim Iryeop's (1896-1971) Buddhism revealed through her life and writings as another expression of Korean Buddhism's encounter with modernity. In the process of exploring the way Buddhism meets modernity in Kim Iryeop, I examine the role that Buddhism played in the construction of woman's identity at the dawn of the modern period in Korea. To sum up, the questions I attempt to answer in this essay include: What was the role Buddhism played in the creation of modern woman? Which aspects of Buddhism made an appeal to a woman who was searching for her identity and independence? How would this consideration of the role of gender change our view as to modern Korean Buddhism? I argue that in a strict sense, and by its nature, the project of modernity is not completely compatible with Buddhism. The marriage between Buddhism and modernity, especially in the context of Korea during the first half of the twentieth century, has its own limitation. In Kim Iryeop's case, such a limitation was already visible before she fully devoted herself to Buddhism. Buddhism to her becomes a way to complete her goal initiated by modernist influences by going beyond modernity. This will raise a delicate question on the relationship between the

~~tradition represented by Buddhism and modernity understood as a way to overcome tradition. It will also bring up the necessity to introduce a new hermeneutics to interpret women's experience of Buddhism in modern world.~~

~~This essay unfolds in three parts. The first two sections discuss Kim Iryeop's life before she joined the monastery as a case history of a Korean woman's encounter with modernity; the third section investigates the role of Buddhist thought in Kim Iryeop's writings in connection with her realization of innate limitations of the modernist vision expressed through the idea of self and freedom; the final section concludes with a consideration of the potential contribution of Kim Iryeop's Buddhism to the contemporary Buddhist discourse through a discussion on the complex synergy in the play of gender, modernity and Buddhism in Kim Iryeop's writings.~~

~~(Abstract를 다시 써주시기 바랍니다)~~

Keywords:

~~New Woman; New theory of chastity; modern self; Buddhist self; great free being; Buddhist feminism~~

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Discussions ~~on-of~~ Buddhist modernity in Asia have frequently characterized the phenomenon ~~with-in terms of~~ the emergence of nationalism, mass-proselytization, lay Buddhist movements, and the influence of political situations ~~[paradigms?]~~ such as imperialism, communism, and colonialism, to name a few.<sup>2</sup> —The modern period in Korean Buddhism was ~~the-a~~ time for reform.<sup>3</sup> -Whether it ~~takes-took~~ the form of a revival of Zen tradition<sup>4</sup> or a proposal for a total reform of traditional Buddhism,<sup>5</sup> Buddhist modernity in Korea began with a strong desire to ~~repeal-reverse~~ the suppression ~~of~~ Buddhism ~~experienced~~ during the ~~Chosŏn-Joseon~~ Dynasty.<sup>6</sup>

In the process of transformation, Korean Buddhism faced the issues of nationalism and colonialism.<sup>7</sup> —It ~~had~~ also ~~become aware of~~ came face to face with the need to translate the language of Buddhist scriptures into Korean, to reconsider the strict demarcations between the clergy and laityies, and to revisit the meaning of Buddhist practice in the modern environments ~~of modern time~~. ~~What~~ Still, what has been completely neglected in this discussion ~~on of~~ the Korean Buddhist encounter with modernity is the role of gender. —In this context, we can ask the following questions: ~~Is Was~~ women's experience of modernity the same as that of men? ~~Is Was~~ the Buddhist encounter with modernity gender-specific? —Can our understanding of modern Korean Buddhism be complete without considering the different experiences of different genders?

In this essay, I consider Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's (1896-1971) Buddhism, revealed through her life and writings as another expression of Korean Buddhism's encounter with modernity. —In the process of exploring the way Buddhism meets modernity in Kim Iryeop's writing ~~Iryöp~~, I examine the role that Buddhism played in the construction of womaen's identity at the dawn of the modern period in Korea. ~~To sum up, the~~ The questions I attempt to answer in this essay include: What was the role Buddhism played in the creation of the modern woman? —Which aspects of Buddhism may have made an ~~appealed~~ to a woman who was searching for her identity and independence? —How would this consideration of the role of gender change our view ~~as to of~~ modern Korean Buddhism?

This essay unfolds in three parts. —The first two sections discuss Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's life before she joined ~~the a~~ monastery as a case history of a Korean woman's encounter with modernity; the third section investigates the role of Buddhist thought in Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's writings in connection with her realization of the innate limitations of the modernist vision expressed through the ideas of self and freedom; the final section concludes with a consideration of the potential contribution of Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's Buddhism to the contemporary Buddhist discourse through a discussion ~~on of~~ the complex synergy in the play of gender, modernity and Buddhism in Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's writings.

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#### ~~1-~~ Love and Modernity

Kim Iryŏp's-Iryeop's first publication as a Buddhist nun ~~as a Buddhist nun~~ appeared in 1960, when she was a sixty-four years old ~~when she was and a Buddhist nun, sixty-four~~ under the title *Silseŏngin-ui-ŭi hoesang* (Memoir of One Who ~~has~~ Has Lost ~~the~~ her Mind), better known by its subtitle, *Hmyŏng-ŏ-nŭ sudoin-ŭi hoesang* ~~Eoneu sudoin-ui hoesang~~ (Also Known ~~as thea~~ Memoir of a Practitioner).<sup>8</sup> ~~(It seems that your editor made changes here, which actually altered the original meaning. The first publication I mean here is the first publication after Kim became a nun, not her very first publication—she published writings since her 20s....)~~ More than onea half of this book consists of Kim Iryŏp's-Iryeop's letters to her ex-lovers. —These letters were again reprinted in her second publication, *Cheongchun-eul bulsareugo-ŏngeh-ŭn-ŭl pulsari-go* (Having Burned Uot ~~the~~ Youth, 1962). Both the first and second books became best sellers and were credited with having converted many women to Buddhism. ~~Readers of these books, however, might experience some uneasiness. The nature of this uneasiness is somewhat different from the uncannyunageanny feeling one frequently encounters in reading the paradoxical and unconventional language found in Zen writings. In considering the reason for the uneasiness, one might come to a-the realization that the main parts of both publications deal with love stories.~~

To read a Zen teacher's love story ~~of a Zen teacher written~~ in a first person narrative is not a common experience, even when the love story takes the format of a reflection thirty years after the affair superficially came to an-a superficial end. Despite some uncomfortable feelings readers might have as they read ~~the~~ Kim Iryeop's detailed ~~Kim Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ love stories, these books were written for the purpose of proselytization.<sup>9</sup> In her third book, entitled *Haengbok-g-twa bpulhaeng-ŭui gkalp-i-eseo-esŏ* (In between Happiness and Un happiness, 1964), ~~which was~~ her last publication before she died, Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop assumes the role of a counselor by providing her advice about love for all those who suffer from both happy and unhappy love experiences ~~caused by love~~.

Love has rarely been discussed in Korean Buddhism. ~~Two well-known discussions of love in the history of Korean Buddhism are the love story between Wŏnhyo and Princess Yŏseŏk Yoseok in the seventh century seventh-century and various versions of love affairs in the life of Zen master Kyŏnghŏ-Gyeongheo in the modern period. The case of Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop is different from either of these situations in several ways. Both Wŏnhyo's-Wonhyo's and Kyŏnghŏ's-Gyeongheo's love stories were recorded by a third person, and were not presented~~

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as first person narratives. -Also, in both cases, the act of love has been frequently interpreted as a higher level of action, even when the affair literally meant the violation of precepts. -Some claim that their love cannot be compared to mere love affairs or sexual relationships because those affairs represented the free spirit of the enlightened mind. It remains debatable whether ~~Wŏnhyo's~~ Wonhyo's and GyeongheoKyŏnghŏ's stories truly represent unobstructed actions of the enlightened mind, as some claim,<sup>10</sup> or whether the narratives of unobstructed love affairs are themselves symbolic gestures designed to create a Zen ideology of the unobstructed mind.<sup>11</sup> What is important for our discussion is that Kim Iryŏp's love stories have been presented and interpreted in a context ~~which-that~~ is totally different from ~~Wŏnhyo's~~ Wonhyo's and ~~Kyŏnghŏ's~~ Gyeongheo's cases.

~~Beginning from early on in her career as a writer and New Woman, until after she became a nun [this is a little wordy, how about: "Beginning early in her career as a writer and New Woman and even after she became a nun"]~~, Kim Iryŏp's-Iryeop's meditations on love continued to appear in her writings until the ~~last publication during~~ end of her lifetime. -Why, some might ask, was love ~~so such an~~ important issue to Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop? In order to answer this question, we need to understand the meaning of love in the cultural context of Korea during the early twentieth century. -Scholarship on Korean modernity and ~~the~~ New Womeaan ~~at the beginning of the twentieth century in Korea [can delete this phrase?]~~ has revealed that love, ~~to the New Woman (of whom Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop was one of central figures),~~ had a special meaning ~~to the New Womeaan, of whom Kim Iryeop was one of the central figures, which-that~~ reflected the spirit of the time.<sup>12</sup>

~~"New Womeaan"~~ (Kor.-~~shinyeoseongŏsŏng~~) ~~신여성주의, New Women-ism~~ is a term that became popular in the 1920s in Korea, as ~~the word was introduced in~~ a woman's magazine called ~~Shinyŏjoja~~ (New WomenWomen), ~~which was first published appeared~~ in 1920. The definition of ~~"New Womeaan"~~ is still debatable. -In general, the expression was used to refer to women who "were educated and became aware of gender equality, who possessed determination that was much stronger than Old Women, and whose capacity to carry out the determination was outstanding."<sup>13</sup> -They were also characterized as women "who were aware of the value of their existence and ~~their~~ tried to live up to their historical responsibilities as women and who tried to realize them."<sup>14</sup> -Unlike the traditional image of women in Korea, which emphasized their role ~~of women as a mothers~~ and ~~wifewives~~, the ideal image of women

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proposed by New ~~Women-Woman~~ emphasized their social and political involvements ~~in their activities~~. -In sum, compared to Old ~~WomenWoman~~, New ~~Women-Woman~~ emphasized: “first, economic independence; second, rationalization and simplification of the family system; third, rejection of male-~~dominated~~ traditional thoughts; fourth, a call for the stronger awareness of women’s responsibility and duties; fifth, campaigns by women’s organizations and female students for Old ~~Women-Woman~~ so that they could get-become aware of various women’s issues, including health and child-education.”<sup>15</sup>

In their expression of women’s rights, love had a special meaning ~~to-for~~ these ~~NN~~New ~~WomenWomen~~. To them, falling in love was correlative with being modern; it was also synonymous with exercising the idea of a woman’s freedom. -In other words, falling in love and having love affairs were understood by New Women to be manifestations of their freedom, ~~which-something that~~ can further be ~~explained-as~~interpreted as aspects of the dawning of modernity in Korea.

Modernity in the West began with the discovery of human beings. -The right of a human being to make decisions as an independent individual has been emphasized in various manifestations of modernity. -By the same token, liberal love, as understood as an expression of an individual’s feelings towards another individual, emerged as one major venue for the New Women in Korea to declare ~~their-her~~ individuality.

That the idea of liberal love was understood in connection with gender equality and ~~understood, thus, to be~~ equated with modernization, is well articulated in the newspaper articles and journal essays published at the turn of the century. -For example, as early as 1896, a Korean-language newspaper, the *Tongnip-Dongnip sinmun* (The Independent/Independence newspaper), called for the equality of men and women and ~~considered-argued-that~~considered gender equality as one requirement for the creation of a civilized society. -The editorial of its April 21, 1896 edition states: “Women are not lower than men in any respect; however, men look down upon women because men have failed to become civilized and thus do not think logically and humanely; instead, relying only on their physical power, men have suppressed women. -How can they be different from barbarians?”<sup>16</sup> -Gender equality here is identified with civilization; it represents the rational thinking of the civilized, ~~being-which~~which The Independent ~~the Independence newspaper~~ contrasts with the barbarian practice of gender discrimination.<sup>17</sup> -This line of argument accords with the New Women’s claim that liberal love affairs are

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manifestations of individuals' ~~freedom~~ freedom and, thus, women's liberation, which is further characterized as a feature of a modernized and civilized society. -Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's life before she joined a monastery presents a good example of this logic of love as understood by a New Woman who considered herself to be intellectually challenging the traditional value system of her society.

Kim ~~Wönju~~ Won-ju, as she was known before taking the pen name ~~Iryöp~~ Iryeop, was born in northern Korea in 1896, the daughter of a Christian pastor. -According to her memoir, her mother was a rather active woman who did not have much interest in traditional woman's roles, such as cooking and sewing, but was good at managing household finances.<sup>18</sup> -As the oldest daughter of a family with five children, Kim ~~Wönju~~ Won-ju had to take care of her siblings from a very early age. Her parents had an unusual zeal for education. ~~Without concern~~ Paying no mind to ~~he~~ the criticisms of the other for villagers' ~~criticism~~ criticism, her mother pledged to Kim ~~Wönju~~ Won-ju that she would be educated like any male child.<sup>19</sup> -Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's biography shows that ~~the~~ her education at Ehwa Hakdang (1913-1918) and subsequent study in Japan (1919-1920) had a great influence on her awareness of ~~the~~ gender discrimination in Korean society.<sup>20</sup> -After Kim ~~Iryöp~~ Iryeop came back from Japan, she launched a literary magazine called *Sinyeoŏja* (New ~~women~~ Women), which is considered to be the first magazine in Korea run by women for women for the purpose of their liberation ~~of women~~.<sup>21</sup>

What is notable in the life story of Kim ~~Iryöp~~ Iryeop is the change in her attitude toward love and morality. -In her autobiographical essay, Kim ~~Iryöp~~ Iryeop states that she grew up with a strong belief in the existence of a God-given moral system of good and evil in the world, and in the existence of heaven and hell in the afterlife. -As a Christian, she also ~~had a strong belief~~ strongly believed that Christians go to heaven, whereas non-believers burn in hell. Thus, ~~With that belief, as early as the age of eight, she imagined, from~~ as early as the age of eight, she imagined her future as a missionary to the land of non-believers to whom she would send the words of God in order to save them from the fires of hell.<sup>22</sup> -Kim ~~Iryöp's~~ Iryeop's Christian faith wavered over time as she began to have doubts about all aspects of ~~the~~ Christian doctrine.<sup>23</sup> -Some believe that her doubts about Christianity began and were intensified as she experienced a series of deaths in her family. -One of her sisters died in 1907<sup>24</sup>; then, her mother died right after giving ~~she gave a~~ birth to a boy in 1909, and the newborn baby died several days later. -Her father died in 1915 when Kim ~~Iryöp~~ Iryeop was twenty. -When her half sister,

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who was the only immediate family member left to Kim Iryōp-Iryeop after the death of her father, died in 1919,<sup>25</sup> she ~~found herself completely alone~~ ~~became a complete loner~~ in the world. By 1920, it was clear that Kim Iryōp-Iryeop no longer considered herself a Christian.<sup>26</sup> -Around that time, her sense of morality turned drastically away from ~~the Christian-based morality~~ ~~one based in Christianity~~ to a radical idea which she called the “New theory of chastity,” ~~which is a subject~~ to which we will return shortly. In her essay “Na-u~~i~~ aeje~~o~~ŋg yŏkehŋgyeokjeong” (“The ~~path-Path~~ of ~~M~~my ~~L~~love ~~A~~ffairs”), Kim Iryōp-Iryeop explains how much this new idea about a woman’s chastity deviates from the moral code in which she used to believe. -She explains that, having believed in Jesus since she was a child, she had thought that having a sexual relationship before marriage or having an affair with a man other than one’s husband was a guaranteed path to hell.<sup>27</sup> -However, beginning around 1918 and continuing for about a decade, Kim Iryōp’s-Iryeop’s life was ~~marked by~~ a series of affairs without marriage, with a married man, or in marriages without love. -She married three times, divorced three times, and gave a birth to a son out of wedlock.<sup>28</sup> -People might have different positions regarding Kim Iryōp’s-Iryeop’s life and its ethical implications; however, regardless of one’s views on these issues, one cannot deny that Kim Iryōp’s-Iryeop’s life and the change in her attitude toward morality were strongly influenced by her search for ~~the~~-independent identity and freedom, which ~~was~~-in turn ~~was~~ heavily colored by her awareness of ~~the~~-gender discrimination in her society. -A review of Kim Iryōp’s-Iryeop’s publications during the 1920s supports this claim.

## 2. Gender and Creation of a Modern Self

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Kim Iryōp’s-Iryeop’s writings span ~~from~~ the 1920s to the 1960s and cover many different genres, including poetry, fiction, essays, and Buddhist writings, as she journeys through a panoramic life as a young female writer, feminist activist, and Zen Buddhist nun. -What strikes readers in examining the bulk of Kim Iryōp’s writings is the consistency of her message despite the contradictions on the surface. -Her writings and her life represents her long search for her -self, for ~~the~~ freedom to find her -self, and her meditations on the nature of that self. -That her search for self and freedom was closely related to the issue of gender is well-articulated in her writings published during the 1920s.

-In a newspaper article published in 1927, entitled “My ~~view~~ View on ~~chastity~~ Chastity,” Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ openly criticizes the century-old practice of the double standards placed upon chastity and declares what is known as a “New theory of chastity” (~~K~~-sinjŏeongjoron). -In a conventional sense, “chastity” is a virtue ~~which-that~~ has been applied exclusively to women. -In other words, society demands ~~that~~ a woman to be faithful to one man, whereas men are allowed to have relationships with more than one woman. In her challenge to the norms of her society, Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ finds this traditional concept of chastity one of the most visible realities of gender discrimination in Korean society, as she states:

In the traditional concept of chastity, chastity was materialized and thus a woman with a past was treated as if she ~~was staled~~ had become stale and had no freshness. -In other words, when a woman had a sexual relationship with a man, she was treated as if her chastity had been lost. Chastity in this case was viewed like a broken container made of jewels.

However, chastity is not such a static entity. . . . .

Even when a person had affairs with several lovers in the past, if the person possessed a healthy mind, was able to completely ~~clear up~~ from ~~his/her~~ the memory whatever had happened in the past, and was capable of creating a new life by fully devoting herself/himself to the new lover, such a man or a woman ~~possessed~~ was said to possess ~~the~~ a chastity ~~which-that~~ could not be broken.<sup>29</sup>

Later in the same essay, Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ emphasizes the importance of the new concept of chastity for the creation of a new woman, a new man, and eventually a new history:

We, new women and new men, who want to do away with all the conventions, traditions, concepts and who are determined to bring attention to a new and fresh concept of life, cannot but strongly resist, among other things, the traditional morality on sex, which has ignored our personalities as well as our individual characteristics.<sup>30</sup>

Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ idea of chastity was first introduced around 1920 when she was running a society for New Women known as Cheo-ŏngt<sup>2</sup>aphoe (~~The The Society for of the Blue Tower~~ for: Blue Tower Society?). -This new idea of chastity was Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ declaration of

freedom as she states: “Human beings are free from the time they are born. -The freedom to love, freedom to get married, and freedom to get divorced, is all sacred; to prohibit this freedom is a bad custom of an underdeveloped [society].”<sup>31</sup> -In another essay published in 1924, entitled “Uri-uŭi isang” (“Our ideals”), published in 1924, Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop repeats her ideas on love and chastity:

Without love, there cannot be chastity. -Chastity does not mean morality toward one’s lover that can be imposed from outside; it is the passion representing the maximum harmony of affection and imagination for one’s lover; it is a feeling related to one’s original instinct which cannot be demanded without love. ---.---.--- Chastity then is not something fixed ---.--- but that which is fluid and that which can always be renewed. --- Chastity can never be identified with morality; it is the optimum state of one’s sense of affection ---.---.---<sup>32</sup>

Whether it was practical in Korean society at that time to declare such a radical view on chastity or whether her concept of chastity had achieved its goal as an agenda to promote women’s positions in that society is not a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Superficially speaking, Kim Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s personal life can be taken as a demonstration of her own view on chastity. -One can even say that such a seemingly licentious life was an expression of freedom, from Kim Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s perspective. -If that told Kim Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s whole story, she might not have had to resort to Buddhism. It is in this context that we can explain-examine the role Buddhism played in Korean women’s struggle to create a new vision for women-themselves at the dawn of the modern period.

When Kim Iryŏp-Iryeop developed her view on chastity, she was bold and strong. -However, soon after she published the essay “My view-View on chastity-Chastity” in 1927, she declared that she had given up on love, a statement which-that was received with ridicule by the public.<sup>33</sup> The-s Society would not accept Kim Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s decision to join the monastery and tried to interpret her tonsure as nothing other than reactionary. -An interview appearing in the literary magazine Kaebŏk’s-Gaebyeok’s January 1935 issue was suggestive not only of people’s curiosity about the cause of Kim Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s becoming a nun, but also of the image of Buddhist nuns at the time. -The first question asked by a reporter reflected people’s speculation

that Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ had left the secular world and joined the monastery in order to escape a certain scandalous incident in her life. -The reporter asked:

“It looked to us that you had a happy life in ~~SŏngbukSeongbuk~~-dong ~~so-and~~ how did you end up getting a divorce?” ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~: “That was to devote myself to Buddha-dharma.” - I [reporter]: “Do you mean that there was no problem between you and your husband?” ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~: “There was absolutely nothing like that. - Our marriage was extremely satisfactory. [We] were very happy.” I [reporter]: “How then was a divorce possible? Did you divorce then, as you mentioned earlier, in order to perfect the Buddha-dharma?” ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~: “Yes, that was so.”<sup>34</sup>

The question arises as to whether Kim ~~Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s~~ tonsure was reactionary, as others interpreted ~~it~~, or ~~whether it~~ was based on her determination to fully devote her life to the teachings of the Buddha, as Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ claimed.<sup>35</sup> -To consider this question, we can ask ~~the~~ following questions: What was ~~it that~~ Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ ~~was~~ expecting from Buddhism, if her joining the monastery was not ~~a-merely a means of escape escapism~~ from her failed marriages and love affairs? -Also, was Buddhism able to offer ~~what she was looking for~~, both in terms of monastic life and ~~in~~ its philosophy, ~~what she was looking for~~? -And lastly, if Buddhism was able to offer what a New Woman at the beginning of modern time searched for, can Buddhism play the same role for women in our time?

Before we ~~answer-examine~~ these questions, let us briefly consider the logic of liberal love ~~which-that~~ was the foundation of Kim ~~Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s~~ thought in her pre-monastic life. -What is striking about the role of the liberal concept of love and love affairs is that, to the New Women who embraced this liberalist view of individual identity, love was not only a concept but also a reality for their liberation. -The reason for ~~the~~ New Women’s belief in the importance of love was partly based on the fact that a woman claiming the right to make a decision ~~in-regarding~~ her own life, especially in the selection of her spouse and in the nature of the relationship with ~~her-that~~ spouse, ~~meant-amounted to~~ a full-scale challenge to the concept of a “woman” ~~the-that the~~ society had held ~~up~~ for centuries. Those representatives of ~~the~~ liberated women in the early twentieth century, —Na ~~Hyesŏk-Hye-seok~~ ~~who was~~ the first female painter, Kim ~~MyŏngsunMyeong-sun~~, the first woman writer, and Yun Sim-~~dŏkdeok~~, the

first female singer---all embraced liberal love as an act of claiming their individuality, independence, and gender equality and eventually all became victims of their own actions because of the gap between their ideals and the norms of the society.

Their failure, however, was caused as much by the resistance of their society as by their inability to see the limitations of the ultimate value they imposed on love. -These women failed to see that the idea of free love itself was a cultural product, not a timeless, universal truth. Hence, it could not be the only ultimate manifestation of individuality and freedom for which these New Women so desperately searched. -Ch<sup>2</sup>oe Hye-sil, the author of *Sinyŏsŏngdŭrŭn Sinyeoseongdeul-eun mueot-eul muŏsŭl-kkumkku eoŏnneun-tŭn-ga?ga?* (What ~~was~~-~~Were~~ New Women ~~dreaming~~-~~Dreaming~~ of?), made this point succinctly in her investigation of different responses to the theme of love as it appeared in Korean literature published in the 1910s and the 1930s. -Ch<sup>2</sup>oe states: “In the 1910s, to get involved with a love affair itself represented the spirit of the time, whereas in the 1930s, a love affair had already diminished into a personal issue, at best, and, at worst, was related to an immoral action.”<sup>36</sup> -This passage not only confirms the special function that love and love affairs played in Korean society in the process of modernization, it also claims that “love” is not a homogenous universal feeling that human beings experience, nor does it have a consistent form independent of the fashion of changing times; rather, it is culturally and socially bound in its meaning and in the form of its manifestation. -Elevating the meaning of love as a lever for their agenda of gender equality, the New ~~Women~~-~~Woman~~ ~~were~~-~~was~~ blind to this fact, for which ~~they~~ ~~had~~ ~~were~~ ~~she~~ ~~was~~ forced to pay a dear price.

In the essays ~~that~~ ~~which~~ describe her state just before she joined the monastery, Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ ~~Iryeop~~ more than once expresses her disillusionment with the idealized concept of love. - Unlike the eternal value she imposed on love, Kim ~~Iryŏp~~-~~Iryeop~~ confesses, love was also subject to changes. The limitations of the reality of love she was facing, Kim ~~Iryŏp~~-~~Iryeop~~ seemed to realize, ~~was~~ ~~defined~~ the limitations of her own freedom.

### ~~3-~~Modern Self and Buddhist Self

Reflecting upon the time when she joined the monastery, Kim ~~Iryŏp~~-~~Iryeop~~ states that she felt -a sense of urgency. -She describes this urgency as the “need to survive.” -This was the topic of

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the dharma talk Zen master Man<sup>2</sup>-gong (1871-1946) gave to her when she became his disciple: “When one leaves the secular world and joins a monastery, the study for the person is ‘to survive’.”<sup>37</sup> -The existential urgency expressed by Man<sup>2</sup>-gong as grounds for Buddhist practice ~~becomes~~ became a major theme of Kim ~~Iryŏp’s~~ Iryeop’s Buddhist thoughts. -Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ Iryeop explains this awareness of existential reality as a desperate desire to become a “human being.”<sup>38</sup> And to become a human being, to her, was to find a real “I.” -Time and again in her Zen writings, Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ Iryeop meditates on the meaning of this “I.” The importance of finding the real “I” in Kim ~~Iryŏp’s~~ Iryeop’s thoughts is also reflected in her evaluation of her own time. -Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ Iryeop characterizes her time as a period when people ~~have~~ lost their selves. -In an essay entitled “Na-reul~~ra~~ ir~~e~~obeo~~ŏ~~bŏrin na” (“I ~~Who~~ Have ~~lost~~ Lost ‘me’ Me”), Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ Iryeop addresses this fundamental problem by raising the question of the meaning of being a human and being a true “I” as ~~a~~ the ground-work for one’s attitude toward life:

Since life is a matter about which everyone has his/her concerns, different people have different positions ~~from~~ with different perspectives. -However, before we discuss issues related to the life of a human being, it is important for us to think about whether “I” am a human being ~~---~~ ----

The standard of value regarding existence is determined by whether “I” am a being who has “my” life at “my” disposal ~~---~~ ---- When we say “I,” this “I” has meaning only when this “I” is free to handle her/his own life. -By the same token, only the life in which this “I” is free to handle her/his life can be called a “life of a human being.” In our lives, however, the “I” is far from being free in various aspects of life, so why do we still call it “I” and pretend as if “I” am “I”?

If we live this life as free beings, how can we have all those complaints and dissatisfactions? ~~---~~ ---- Moreover, if we are really free beings in this life ~~---~~ ---- why are we still being bound by time and space and unable to free ourselves from the birth and death of this body?<sup>39</sup>

The fact that one exists within the boundary of the finite being and thus is subject to the reality of birth and death as well as to various dissatisfactions caused by one’s limited capacity is evidence to Kim ~~Iryŏp~~ Iryeop of the limits of human existence. -Such a limited being cannot be the owner of the “I” because the subject of actions by nature should be one who is in charge of

those actions. -The small “I” (~~K-so~~-a) is the name Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ gave to the being who is subject to the limitations of the finite being, including birth and death.- Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ compares the small “I,” which is the everyday “I” in the ~~samsara~~samsara, to the ripples in the ocean, which are always subject to changes. -Behind and below ripples, Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ claims, should exist the source and origin of life, the life ~~which~~-Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ considers to be the big “I” (~~K-tdae~~-a), which is free from the changes of birth and death.

The Buddha, to Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~, is another name for this ocean in which the small “I” joins the big “I” and thus realizes the foundation of its own existence. -To her, the Buddha is the original name of the universe in which “the state of the universe (before thoughts arise) and the creativity of reality (after thoughts arise) become united.”<sup>40</sup> -Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ clarifies:

The Buddha is a single representative of this and that, yesterday and today, and you and me.- In other words, it is the unified “I.” -The Buddha then is another name for “I.”

The Universe is the original body of this “I”; hence ten thousand things are all “my”-self. The ten thousand things being “my”-self, only the being who is capable of exerting the capacity of the ten thousand things can be endorsed as a being who has attained the full value of its existence.

In life, beings possess the right to absolute equality.- Because of that, whatever position a being is in or whatever shapes a being’s body takes, if the being can manage his/her own life, the being takes the most valuable position in the standard of [existential] value.<sup>41</sup>

The being which “takes the most valuable position in the standard of existential value” is the being who possesses the “original spirit” (~~K-ph~~bonjŏeongsin). -Only the being who keeps the original spirit, Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ argues, can maintain a-the life of a human being.

Only when one finds the original spirit of human beings, which is non-existence (~~K-mujŏeok~~ ~~je~~honjae), and is able to use it at one’s disposal, ~~does-do~~-the lives of human beings’s lives open up. When that happens, one becomes an independent being who is not a being swindled-beholden to by the environments, and thus whenever, wherever, and whatever kind of life with whatever shape of a body, one leads one’s life, one finds nirvana.<sup>42</sup>

Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ equates this original spirit with self-identity (~~K-ehja-'a~~), creativity (~~K-ch'angjosŏeong~~), Buddha-nature (~~K-phulsŏeong~~), truth, and original heart (~~K-phonma-ŏeum~~), which she further describes as "the identity of all beings' existence and pre-existence which cannot be described or named."<sup>43</sup> -She describes all the beings of the world as parts of this original existence.

The theory of "no-self" constitutes one main feature of Buddhist philosophy. -The Buddhist emphasis on the lack of any permanent, independent entity ~~which-that~~ can define one's existence does not deny the existence of a phenomenal "I." -In an ultimate sense, Buddhist ~~non-~~self can be understood as an attempt to liberate one from the limits of "I" ~~which-is~~ confined in the boundary of the independent self. -Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~, like many Buddhist thinkers before her, interprets this unbounded extension of one's self by breaking up the temporary and illusory boundaries created by the small "I" as the ultimate teaching of Buddhism. -This is the universal "I," Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ believes, the ocean below the ripples on its surface, which is the "suchness" of one's existence, as is repeatedly emphasized in Zen tradition.

What attracts one's attention in Kim ~~Hyö̃p's-Iryeop's~~ approach to Buddhism is a consistent emphasis on the idea of the "I" ---what Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ defines as the big "I" ---after the break-down of the small "I." -Whereas Buddhist writings frequently attempt to avoid underscoring the "I" because of the danger of reifying the little "I," Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ explicitly emphasizes the fact that the Buddhist theory of no-self *is* the theory of self, with a note that this self is the universal self without boundaries. -The importance of Buddhist teaching to Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~, then, lies not so much in the removal of the self as in liberating the self from the boundaries imposed on it, be they social, biological or merely illusory. -Hence, Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ declares: "To take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in one's self."<sup>44</sup>

As a New Woman, she declared the new concept of chastity, and demanded freedom as the inborn right of an individual. - As a Buddhist nun, she was still searching for freedom as an existential right of a human being. -It is in this context that we identify the function of Buddhism in Kim ~~Hyö̃p's-Iryeop's~~ life and thoughts. -Unlike the common claim that Kim ~~Hyö̃p's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhist phase ~~was-existed~~ in stark contrast to her pre-monastic life, we see here that Buddhism provided Kim ~~Hyö̃p-Iryeop~~ with a way to continue her pursuit of freedom and self-identity by expanding her challenge to the existing mode of thinking in her time and society.



In her autobiographical essay, Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ states that all the paths she had taken in her life were ways to find her identity:

Now I realize that as I walked through the different paths of love, literature, and freedom, though it was not clear to me at that time, in my subconscious ~~my~~ mind, which struggled to ~~reach~~ realize the life of a human being, ~~I also tried to live according to was also undertaking~~ [the ~~teaching-principle~~ of] ‘I need to survive’ as I practice it now [as a Buddhist nun].”<sup>45</sup>

As in her pre-monastic life, in the monastic setting the theme of self-identity in Kim ~~Iryŏp’s~~ ~~Iryeop’s~~ writing was expressed through “love, literature, and freedom.” -In an interview with a reporter from the ~~KGaebyeŏek~~ magazine in 1935, Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ was asked whether she was still writing after she joined the monastery, to which she responded, “One should not, when one’s thought is not ripe.”<sup>46</sup> -When asked whether she intended to open up a new horizon in her writing when her practice became mature, Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ relied, “Yes, like Shakyamuni Buddha....” -Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ came back to the world of letters in the 1960s and became a productive writer until her death in 1971. -She also explicitly declared that she ~~became-had become~~ a nun in order to find the source of her writing so that she could write the most appealing works.<sup>47</sup> -These responses confirm that Kim ~~Iryŏp’s-Iryeop’s~~ way to Buddhism was not a disconnection from her previous life as a writer and New Woman who looks for freedom and personal identity, but a continued path to search for them.

Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ considered the final stage of her Buddhist practice a returning to the world as a “great-free-being” (~~K-taejayuin~~):

As a student [at a school] grows up to be an adult in a society, a nun completes the education at a monastery and becomes able to lead a life free from the idea of purity and impurity. -Thus she becomes an independent mind ~~the mind before a thought arises~~ which is not being manipulated by ~~the~~ environments. -She can come back to the secular world in which she leads a life free from good and evil, beauty and ugliness, heaven and hell. -This is the liberated person. -The final winner is the great-free-being (~~K-taejayuin~~) who is bound by nothing.<sup>48</sup>

In this passage, one can hear the echoes of Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ search for freedom in her pre-monastic life. -Was Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ able to complete her search for identity and freedom as a Buddhist nun? -The question should remain unanswered, partly because it falls ~~into the realm that is not outside of~~ the scope of this paper. -However, ~~even~~ without ~~answering this question~~ ~~[?]answering this question~~, we can still tell that her Buddhism offers us several points ~~which we need to consider~~ ~~in need of consideration~~ for a comprehensive understanding of modern Korean Buddhism. -In the following section, I will discuss three aspects of Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism in relation to ~~the~~ contemporary Buddhist discourse. -The first is the meaning of Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism in understanding Korean Buddhism during the modern period; the second is the challenge Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism presents to us as to the binary postulation between modernity and tradition; and the third is the understanding of Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism in the context of recent efforts to create a Buddhist feminist discourse.

#### **4. Buddhism, Modernity and Gender**

Korean Buddhism in the first half of the twentieth century can be broadly categorized into two aspects: the first is a revival of ~~Sŏn-Seon~~/Zen tradition and the second is ~~found in~~ Buddhist reform movements. -The former has been represented by Zen Masters ~~Kyŏnghŏ-Gyeongheo~~ (1849-1912), who has been credited as a revivalist of Korean Zen Buddhist tradition, and his disciples including Man<sup>2</sup>-gong (1871-1946), Hanam (1875-1951), and ~~Suwŏl-Suwol~~ (1855-1928), to name a few. Representative figures for the latter include ~~Paek-Baek~~ Yong-sŏng-seong (1864-1940), Han Yong-un (1879-1944), and ~~Pak-Bak~~ Chungbin-Jung-bin (1891-1943). -The revival of Zen Buddhism is characterized ~~with by~~ the revival of ~~Kanhwa-Ganhwa Sŏn-Seon~~ (~~or Ch.:~~ Kanhua Chan) tradition (the Zen of observing a critical phrase), which was established in Korea by ~~Pejo-Bojo Chinul-Jinul~~ (1158-1210) in the thirteenth century. Hwadu (~~Ch.:~~ Huatou) meditation (or meditation with a critical phrase) played a central role once again for the practice and subsequent attaining of enlightenment for the Zen masters mentioned above. -For the reformists, the issue of bringing Buddhism back to the life-world of people emerged as one main agenda for their reform of Buddhism. -~~The t~~Translation of Buddhist scriptures, lay Buddhist movements, and ~~the~~ reinterpretation of Buddhism in the context of modern time became part of their Buddhist narratives. -For both reformists and Zen masters, ~~the~~ colonial

reality of Korea and Japanese Buddhist influence on Korean Buddhism during and after the colonial period (1920-1945) had been a frequent theme of their Buddhism.

~~Visibly~~ ~~Noticeably~~ ~~Noticeably~~ absent from ~~invisible in~~ this picture of modern Korean Buddhism ~~is~~ ~~are~~ women practitioners and female teachers. -The invisibility of women in ~~the~~ discussions of modern Korean Buddhism, however, does not mean that women made no contribution to Korean Buddhist tradition. -We can consider Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism as a case ~~history~~ ~~study~~ of how women's ~~Buddhist~~ experience ~~of Buddhism~~ has been ignored in ~~a-the~~ male dominated narrative of modern Korean Buddhism. Up to now, studies on Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ have been focused on her literature and her activities as a New Woman before she joined the monastery. -Research on her Buddhism or on the relationship between her Buddhism and feminist discourse ~~almost does not exist~~ ~~is almost non-existent~~. -The lack of ~~women's-a female~~ ~~mark on~~ Buddhism in modern Korea does not suggest that women have nothing to offer to Buddhism. -As we witnessed in Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ case, it simply means that women's Buddhism has been ignored and silenced because they speak ~~a~~ different language. -And their stories are different because their "social ontology" is different. -By ~~the~~ "social ontology," ~~which-a term~~ I borrowed from Charles W. Mills, I mean the way one's existence is defined by ~~a~~ gendered society ~~which-that~~ takes the male discourse as the genderless normative, ~~as-in the~~ ~~same way that~~ the racial world of ~~the~~ whites universalizes the colorless normative in a colored society.<sup>49</sup>

With these ideas in mind, if we compare Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism with that of the male teachers of her contemporaries, we find visible differences between the two. -First, even though Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ was a disciple of Zen master Man<sup>2</sup>-gong and strongly advocated Zen Buddhism, she did not spend much time discussing the ~~Kanhwa-Ganhwa Sŏn-Seon~~ tradition, nor did she emphasize the Zen style of communication ~~which-is~~ ~~that was~~ very much visible among the male Zen masters of her time. -Miriam L. Levering pointed out that Zen Buddhist discourses of equality are charged with the rhetoric of masculine heroism and thus implicitly demand ~~that~~ women practitioners ~~to~~ take on masculine qualities if they want to embody Buddhist teaching at all.<sup>50</sup> -In this context, the essays Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ published in three volumes during the 1960s provide a good example of Zen writing ~~which-that~~ does not display ~~the-such~~ masculine rhetoric, and which discusses women's experience of Buddhism in ~~a-the~~ socio-cultural and historical context of modern Korea in which Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ lived her life.

Secondly, despite the utter differences in appearance, Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ writings served one of the goals of modern Korean Buddhism: the idea of bringing Buddhism back to the everyday lives of people from its seclusion on the mountainside. -Whereas ~~male-the projects of male~~ Buddhist masters' ~~project to achieve these goals~~ usually include a translation of Buddhist sutras into vernacular Korean and a reinterpretation of Buddhist teachings in the context of people's lives, Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ writings published during the 1960s effectively served this function by describing ~~the~~ life as experienced by a woman in Korean society.

Thirdly, in Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ writings, colonial reality and activities for independent movements in Korea-which usually ~~take-took~~ a central role in ~~the~~ many Buddhist discourses in her time-is not highlighted, despite the fact that secondary sources testify that Kim ~~Iryöp Iryeop~~ was an active participant in the socio-historical reality of Korea. -For example, Kim T<sup>2</sup>ae<sub>-</sub>sin claims that one major reason Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ rejected a proposal from Ota Seijo, Kim T<sup>2</sup>ae<sub>-</sub>sin's father, was that Ota was Japanese.- Kim T<sup>2</sup>ae<sub>-</sub>sin further states that Kim ~~Iryöp Iryeop~~ considered it unacceptable to marry a Japanese man because of the way in which Koreans suffered under Japanese colonialism.<sup>51</sup>

We can say that gender was one major factor ~~which-that~~ produced these differences between Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism and that of her contemporaries. -Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ demonstrated that women's ~~Buddhist~~ experience ~~of Buddhism~~ in the modern time took a path ~~which-that~~ was different from the modernist narrative commonly dominated by a male's perspective.

In this context, we can also consider the need to revisit the binary formula between the traditional and the modern and to become aware of the complex trajectory in individual's experiences of Buddhism in ~~the~~-modern times. -During the 1920s, when Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ published her literary works and her thoughts on women's liberation, Kim ~~Iryöp's-Iryeop's~~ thought showed a clear tension with traditional value systems.-Her view on women's chastity exemplifies the challenges ~~the~~ New Women brought against ~~the~~-tradition. -From the viewpoint of these women, overcoming the traditional system was necessary in order to achieve a ~~free and~~ humane ~~and-free~~ life, and Kim ~~Iryöp-Iryeop~~ positioned herself at the forefront of such social changes. -However, in her case, Buddhism became a major route to pursue her goal. -When one is faithful to the binary postulation of ~~the~~-tradition versus modernity, with the acceptance of modernity-in the context of Korea-one is not likely to go to the mountainside to become a

Buddhist nun. -One changes one's hair style, adopts ~~a~~ new fashion, wears make-up, and comes to the city in which newly emerging cafés attract newly ~~sty~~-styled human beings called “modern girls” and “modern boys.”<sup>52</sup> It was in this society that Kim ~~Iryŏp-Iryeop~~ was arguably a leading figure before she became a nun. However, if Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ life as a nun was a continued path in her search for identity and freedom, which she pursued as a New Woman in her pre-monastic life, her Buddhism demonstrates that Buddhism is not that which stands at the opposite end of modernity, but that which can provide a philosophical foundation to overcome the limitations of modernity itself.

Finally, Kim ~~Iryeop~~'s life and thoughts presents to us a potential function Buddhism can play ~~for~~ in the creation of a Buddhist feminist discourse. —Recent Buddhist scholarship on the relationship between gender and Buddhism has illuminated the complex role gender has played in ~~the~~ its development ~~of Buddhism~~. -Research shows that ~~al~~ even though Buddhist traditions have ~~displayed~~ played a patriarchal ~~position~~ role in their literature and monastic systems,<sup>53</sup> this does not necessarily prove that the fundamental teachings of Buddhism are patriarchal or that the tradition is irreparably sexist.<sup>54</sup> The fact that Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ journey to Buddhism created a fundamental change in the philosophical horizon of her views on women's liberation proffers the possibility that Buddhism can contribute to ~~the~~ feminist discourse in our time.

Seen from this perspective, a more critical and in ~~depth~~ study of Kim ~~Iryŏp's-Iryeop's~~ Buddhism seems an inevitable stage both in our investigation of women's experience of Buddhism in modern Korea and in the future of feminist Buddhist philosophy.

□

#### Glossary ~~of Chinese and Korean Characters~~

bonjeongsin 本精神

bonmaeum 본마음

<u>bulseong</u> 佛性	<u>mu</u> jök <u>mu</u> jeok <u>eh</u> öngsinjeongsin; 無的精神	서식 있음
<u>ch</u> 'angjosöng 創造性	<u>mu</u> jök <u>mu</u> jeok <u>eh</u> onjae <u>jon</u> jae 無的存在	서식 있음
<u>eh</u> a'a; 自我	<u>pon</u> jöngsin; 本精神	서식 있음
Cheong <u>t</u> 'öt'aphoe 青塔會	<u>pon</u> maüm; 본마음	서식 있음
<u>dac</u> -a 大我	<u>pul</u> söng 佛性	서식 있음
<u>dae</u> jayuin 大自由人	<u>sh</u> inye <u>eo</u> seoöng 新女性	서식 있음
Ganhwa Seon 看話禪	<u>sh</u> iyöja <u>sin</u> yeoja 新女子	서식 있음
Huatou (Ch.) ► Hwadu	<u>sin</u> jeo <u>ö</u> ngjoron 新貞操論	서식 있음
Hwadu 話頭	so- <u>a</u> ; 小我	
<u>ja</u> -a 自我	<u>tae</u> 'a; 大我	서식 있음
Kanhua Chan (Ch.) ► Ganhwa Seon		
<u>tae</u> jayuin 大自有人		서식 있음

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КСД

## NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to express my appreciation to for Youn-Kyoung Kim and Young A Chung who helped me locate materials on Kim Iryŏp. Their help has been invaluable for this research. I also thank the participants of the Hanmaeum conference, in which this paper was first presented, for their helpful comments. I especially thank Barbara Ruch who brought my attention to Setouchi Jakuchō, a Japanese novelist and Buddhist nun whose life contains many similarities with that of Kim Iryŏp, and Livia Kohn who gave me suggestions of for the title to reflect the contents of this essay. I would like to express my appreciation to Youn-Kyoung Kim and Young A Chung who helped me locate materials on Kim Iryeop. Their help has been invaluable for this research. I also thank the participants of the Hanma-eum conference in which this paper was first presented for their helpful comments. I especially thank Barbara Ruch who brought my attention to Setouchi Jakuchō, a Japanese novelist and Buddhist nun whose life contains many similarities with that of Kim Iryeop and Livia Kohn who gave me suggestions of the title to reflect the contents of this essay.
- <sup>2</sup> See Steven Heine and Charles S. Prebish (2003), eds. *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition*; Also see Ian Harris (1999), ed., *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-century Asia*.
- <sup>3</sup> For a the discussion on of the reform of Korean Buddhism at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Kim Kyŏngjip G. J. (2001), *Han'guk pulgyo kaehyŏknon yŏn'gu*.
- <sup>4</sup> Zen Master Kyŏnghŏ Gyeongheo has been aecredited as a revivalist of Korean Zen Buddhism in modern times. For discussions on of Kyŏnghŏ Gyeongheo, see Henrik H. Sørensen (1983), "The Life and Thought of the Korean Sŏn Master Kyŏnghŏ": 9-33; Jin Y. Park J. (1998), "At the Crossroad: the New versus the Traditional in Modern Korean Buddhism."
- <sup>5</sup> Han Yongun is a representative example of this case. -See Pori-Park P. (1998), "The Modern Remaking of Korean Buddhism: the Korean Reform Movement during Japanese Colonial Rule and Han Yongun's Buddhism (1879-1944)." -A more radical challenge can be found in new Buddhist movements such as Won Buddhism. -See Kwangsoo-Park K. (1997), *The Won Buddhism (Wŏnbulgyo) of Sot'aesan: A Twentieth-Century Religious Movement in Korea*; Bongkil Chung (2003), *The Scriptures of Won Buddhism: A Translation of the Wŏnbulgyo kyojŏn with Introduction*; and Jin-Young Park J. (1998), "Religious Conflict or Religious Anxiety: New Buddhist Movements in Korea and Japan": 34-46.
- <sup>6</sup> See Yang (1993) Ŭnyong, "Kŭndae pulgyo kaehyŏk undong": 129-175.

<sup>7</sup> See Robert E. Buswell (1998), Jr. "Imagining 'Korean Buddhism'," Hyung Ill Pai and Timothy R. Tanagerlini, eds. *Nationalism and Construction of Korean Identity*: 73-107; Henrik H. Sørensen (1999a), "Buddhism and Secular Power in Twentieth-Century Korea," in Ian Harris, ed., *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*: 127-152; and Jae-Ryong Shim (1993), "Buddhist Responses to the Modern transformation of Society in Korea (Vitality in Korean Buddhist Tradition)": 50-56. For a general introduction to modern Korean Buddhism in English, see Henrik H. Sørensen (1999b), "Buddhist Spirituality in Premodern and Modern Korea." Takeuchi Yoshinori, ed. *Buddhist Spirituality II*: 109-133.

<sup>8</sup> The subtitle, *A Memoir of a practitioner* *Practitioner*, became used as a title of the book was adopted because the expression "the one who has lost the mind" in Korean also means "the one who went crazy." I will follow this convention from now on in referring to this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Kim Iryöp (1960, 3, 199), *A memoir of a practitioner*, p. 3 and p. 199. Ha Chu'n-saeng, the author of the only extant book on the life and thought of modern Korean Buddhist nuns, also evaluates Iryöp's-Iryeop's publications in the 1960s as an expression of "bodhisattva's ultimate action of searching for bodhi and its practical phase of helping sentient beings, which is the source-power of [Iryöp's-Iryeop's] mass-proselytization" (Ha 1998-2001 1: 79) *Kkadarün-üi-kkot: Han'guk pulgyorül-pitnaen-künse-pi'gu'ni* [*The flowers of enlightenment: Buddhist nuns in modern time who have lightened up Korean Buddhism*], vol. 1, p. 79. All the quotations from Korean sources in this essay, including those from Kim Iryöp's-Iryeop's works, are my translations.

<sup>10</sup> Iryöp-Iryeop herself also mentioned that Wönhyo's-Wonhyo's activities are not a violation of precepts as unenlightened people tend to see it but are examples of the unobstructed action of love. See Kim Iryöp (1974, 1: 326), "Chilri-rül morüpnida" ("I do not know the truth"), *Mi'rae-se'ga taha-go namdorok* (*Until the future life comes to an end and even afterwards*), vol. 1, p. 326.

<sup>11</sup> For example see Bernard Faure (1995), "Random thoughts: Wönhyo's 'Life' as thought": 197-223.

<sup>12</sup> See Ch'oe (2000) Hyesil, *Sinyösöng-türün-muösül-kkumkkuotnün'ga?* (What was New Women dreaming of?); Kim, C. hinsong, (1999) *Söule-ttansühorül-höhara: kündaesöng-üi-hyöngsöng* (Allow dance halls in Seoul: formation of modernity); Mun (2003) Okp'yo, ed. *Sinyösöng: Han'guk kwa ilponüi-kündae-yösongsang* (New Women: images of modern women in Korea and Japan); Kwön-PodreGwon (2003), *Yönae-üi-sidae: 1920-nyöndaeh'oban-üi-munhwa-wa-yuhaeng* (The age of love affairs: the culture and the fashion in the early 1920s).

<sup>13</sup> Yi B. (2003, 22) Paeyong, "Ilje-si'gi-sinyösöng-üi-yöksajök-sönggyök" ("Historical characteristics of New Women during the Japanese colonial period") in Mun Okp'yo, ed. *Sinyösöng* (New Women): 21-50, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Yi B. (2003, 22). Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Yi B. (2003, 23). Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> ~~Dongnip Tongnip sinmun (The Independent)~~, April 21, 1896, p. 17. ~~Quoted in Kim Chinsong, Söul tansühorül höhara: hyöndaesöng üi hyöngsöng, p. 202.~~

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<sup>17</sup> ~~The Independent The Tongnip sinmun~~ continued its support for gender equality, emphasizing the importance of education for women. ~~The Independent Tongnip sinmun~~, May 26, 1899. Quoted in Ch'oe (2000, 33) Hyesil, ~~Sinyösongdülün muösül kkumkkuötüniga?~~, p. 33. The trend was reinforced with the establishment of ~~the an~~ institution for the education of women: ~~Ehwa Ihwa Hakdang~~ was founded in 1886 and was followed by ~~it was Chöngsin-yöhakhyo Jeongsin Hakkyo~~ and others.

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<sup>18</sup> Kim Iryöp's ~~Iryeop's~~ life is reflected in many of her writings. ~~t~~—The most comprehensive ~~being material is~~ a collection of her autobiographical essays in “~~Ichilli-reul moreumnidari rül morüpnida~~” (“~~I do-Do nNot know Know tThe truthTruth~~”): 266-384. These essays were originally published in ~~Yeoseong donga Yösöng tonga~~, Dec. 1971-June 1972. ~~Also see Kim I.~~ (1974, 1: 256-265). “~~Iryöp sejön: naüi ipsan'gi~~” (“~~A short biography of Iryöp: a story of my joining the monastery~~”) in ~~Until the future life comes to an end and even afterwards~~, vol. 1, pp. 256-265.

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<sup>19</sup> Kim I. (1974, 266) ryöp, “~~I do not know the truth~~,” p. 266.

<sup>20</sup> It is still debatable whether women's movements in Korea in ~~the~~ 1920s and 1930s were closely related to those in Japan. ~~(For the discussion on of the issue, see Mun Ok-p'yo (2003), ed, Sinyösöng: Han'guk kwa Ilpon üi kundae yösöngsang.)~~ However, in the case of Kim ~~Iryöp Iryeop~~, it seems clear that she was influenced by ~~women's those~~ movements ~~in Japan~~, which she learned ~~about~~ during her stay in Japan. ~~One~~ evidence of this is the name, Ch'öngt'aphoe ~~ongtaphoe~~ (~~The Society for of the blue Blue tower Tower~~), which was a feminist group she ~~was running ran~~ during ~~the time of~~ her editorship of the magazine ~~Sinyöja Sinyeoja~~ (New ~~w Women~~). ~~The name clearly~~ reflects that of a radical feminist magazine in Japan. (Kim I. 1974, ryöp, “~~I do not know the truth~~,” p. 298) ~~The first issue of the magazine Blue Tower came out in 1911 in Japan. It was at the gathering of the Society for of the Blue Tower that Kim Iryöp Iryeop first expressed her idea of chastity.~~

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<sup>21</sup> ~~Yyöejagye~~ (Women's ~~world World~~), first published in 1917, precedes ~~Sinyöja Sinyeoja~~, whose first issue came out in 1920. ~~However, Sinyöja Sinyeoja was the first to be published for the liberation of womcan.~~

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<sup>22</sup> Kim I. (1974, ryöp, “~~I do not know the truth~~,” p. 268).

- <sup>23</sup> Kim Iryeop's criticism of Christianity and her endorsement of Buddhism appear many times in her essays. See especially Kim I. (1960, 72-83), quoted in Kim I. (1962/2002, 210-234); Kim I (1960, 161-1690, quoted in Kim I. (1962/2002, 236-253). Kim Iryöp's criticism of Christianity and her endorsement of Buddhism appear many times in her essays. See especially "C Sönsaeng e'ge" ("To Mr. C.") in *A memoir of a practitioner*, pp. 72-83, (Also reprinted in *Ch'öngch'un-ül pulsarü'go* (Having Burned Out the Youth), pp. 210-234; and "M-ch'in'gu-üi pyönjirül ilgo" ("After reading Reading A Letter From M") in *A Mmemoir oof aa pPractitioner*, pp. 161-169. (Also reprinted in *Having Burned oOut Ythe youth*, pp. 236-253.)
- <sup>24</sup> For the occasion, Kim Iryeop wrote a poem, "Dongsaeng-ui jugeum" (The Death of My Sister), which has been considered the first modern style of poetry in Korea. For the occasion, Kim Iryöp wrote a poem, "Tongsaeng-üi chugüm" ("The death of my sister"), which has been considered the first modern style of poetry in Korea [first modern style, or first poem written in a modern style?].
- <sup>25</sup> Kim I. (1920), quoted in Kim I. (1974, 1: 390-398). Kim Iryöp, "Tongsaeng-üi chugüm" ("The death of my sister"), *Sinyöja* vol. 3. Reprinted in *Miraese'ga taha'go namdorok*, pp. 390-398.
- <sup>26</sup> It is not clear exactly when she turned away from Christianity and when she began to consider herself a Buddhist. In her essay, Kim Iryeop says that she was an atheist for about ten years before she encountered Buddhism (Kim I. 1974, 1: 329) and she considers 1927, when she met Baek Seong-uk and began to publish her works in the magazine *Bulgyo*, as the time she became a Buddhist (Kim I. 1974, 1: 424-435). It is not clear exactly when she turned away from Christianity and when she began to consider herself a Buddhist. In her essay, Kim Iryöp says that she was an atheist for about ten years before she encountered Buddhism ("I do not know the truth," p. 329), and she considers 1927, when she met Paek Söngwook and began to publish her works in the magazine *Pulgyo*, as the time she became a Buddhist ("I do not know the truth," pp. 424-435).
- <sup>27</sup> Kim I. (1964, Iryöp, "Naüi aejöng yökehöng" ("The path of my love affairs"), in *Haengbok kwa pulhaeng-üi kalp'i esö* (In between happiness and unhappiness), p. 21).
- <sup>28</sup> See Kim T. (1991)'aesin, *Rahula-üi sa'mo'gok* (Songs of Rahula yearning for his mother), an autobiography of Kim Iryöp's son.
- <sup>29</sup> Kim I. (1927); Kim Iryöp, "Na-üi chöngjo'gwan" ("My view on chastity"), *Chosön ilbo*, Jan 8, 1927. (1985, In *Kkosi jimyön nu'ni siryöra* (When flowers wither, eyes are dazzled): 117-120, p. 117).
- <sup>30</sup> Kim I. (1927) Kim Iryöp, "My view on chastity," p. 119).
- <sup>31</sup> Kim I. (1974) Iryöp, "I do not know the truth," p. 298).
- <sup>32</sup> Kim I. (1924), quoted in Kim I. (1985, 82). For a list of Kim Iryeop's publications in the literary magazines and newspapers during the 1920s and up to 1935, see Jeong (1987, 4-6). Kim Iryöp,



“Uri-ŭi isang” (“Our ideals”), *Pu’nyŏ chikwang* (*The light of women*), July 1924. Reprinted in *When Flowers Wither, Eyes Are Dazzled* [consider rewording this: “When Flowers Wilt, Eyes Ache”?]: 81-86, p. 82. For a list of Kim Iryŏp’s publications in the literary magazines and newspapers during the 1920s and up to 1935, see Chŏng Yŏngja, “Kim Iryŏp munhak yŏn’gu” (“Study on Kim Iryŏp’s literature”) *Suryŏn ŏ’munhakjip*: 1-26, pp. 4-6.

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<sup>33</sup> Kim I. (1974, 1: Kim Iryŏp, “I do not know the truth,” p. 320).

<sup>34</sup> *Kaebyeŏk* (January 1935, 13-14). “Sakpal ha’go sŭngbok ipŭn Kim Iryŏp yŏsa ŭi hoe’gyŏn’gi” (“An interview with tonsured Ms. Kim Iryŏp in a nun’s robe”): 12-17, p. 13-14.

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<sup>35</sup> In her autobiography, Kim Iryeop, looking back this period, actually mentions that her love for her husband gradually deteriorated. See for example, Kim I. (1974, 1: 320). In her autobiography, Kim Iryŏp, looking back on this period, actually mentions that her love for her husband gradually deteriorated. See for example, Kim Iryŏp, “I do not know the truth,” p. 320.

<sup>36</sup> Ch’oe (2000, Hyesil. *Sinyŏsŏngdŭrŭn muŏsŭl kkumkkuŏtmŭn’ga?*, p. 101). -In this investigation, Ch’oe compares the different reactions to two major novels by Yi Kwang-su (1892-1950): *Mujŏng* (*Mujeong*) (1917) and *Yujeong* (1933). -As representative works by Yi during the first half of the twentieth century, both novels deal with love. -Ch’oe asks why the former has been evaluated for its representation of modernity whereas the latter has been treated as nothing more than a “mere” love story, even though both deal with love. -The quotation was her answer to the question.

<sup>37</sup> Kim I. (1974, 1: 321-322). Kim Iryŏp, “I do not know the truth,” p. 321-2.

<sup>38</sup> Kim I. (2001, 79). Kim Iryŏp, “Chonggyo ui moljŏk,” (“The goal of religion”) in *Iryŏp sŏnmun* (*Zen writings by Iryŏp*), p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Kim I. (2001, 54). Kim Iryŏp, “I who have lost ‘me’,” *Iryŏp sŏnmun*, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Kim I. (1960, 156). Kim Iryŏp, “Pulgyo esŏ’nŭm woe chŏnghwa undong’ul irŭk’yetnŭn’ga?” (“Why did Buddhism launch a purification movement?”) in *A Memoir Of A Practitioner*: pp. 156-160, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> Kim I. (1960, 156). *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>42</sup> Kim I. (1960, 5); also see Kim I. (1960, 16). Kim Iryŏp, “Life,” p. 5; also see Kim Iryŏp, “Pulgyo wa munhwa” (“Buddhism and Culture”) in *A Memoir Of A Practitioner*, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> Kim I. (1960, 7). Kim Iryŏp, “Life,” p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Kim I. (1960, 30). Kim Iryŏp, *A Memoir Of A Practitioner*, p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Kim I. (1974, 1: 330). Kim Iryŏp, “I do not know the truth,” p. 330.

<sup>46</sup> *Gaebyeok* (January 1935, 16). *Kaebyeŏk*, “An interview with tonsured Ms. Kim Iryŏp in a nun’s robe,” p. 16.

- <sup>47</sup> Kim I. (1974, 1: 486). Kim Iryöp, “Hanjariüi toep’uri” (“Repetition of the same place”), *Until The Future Life Comes To An End And Even Afterwards*, p. 486.
- <sup>48</sup> Kim I. (1960, 156-157). Kim Iryöp, “Why did Buddhism launch a purification movement?”, p. 156, 7.
- <sup>49</sup> Mills (1998, 12). Charles W. Mills, “Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience,” in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, p. 12.
- <sup>50</sup> Levering (1992). Miriam L. Levering, “Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch’an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism” in José Ignacio Cabezon, ed., *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*: 137-156.
- <sup>51</sup> Kim T. (1991, 47). Choe Eun-hui, a reporter of *Hankook Ilbo*, requested Kim Iryeop details of her activities at the March First Independence Movement (Kim I. 2001, 239). Kim T’aesin, *Songs of Rahula Yearning For His Mother*, p. 47; Ch’oe Eunhi, a reporter of *Han’guk ilbo*, requested Kim Iryöp details of Kim Iryöp’s her activities during at the March First Movement. (Kim Iryöp, *Iryöp sönmun*, p. 239)
- <sup>52</sup> Once again, readers are referred to recent publications on modernity in Korea. See footnote 12. Once again, readers are referred to recent publications on modernity in Korea. See footnote 12.
- <sup>53</sup> For the patriarchal tendency in Buddhism in general, see Bancroft (1987); Barnes (1987); Smith (1987); and Neumaier-Dargyay (1995). For the patriarchal tendency in Buddhism in general, see Anne Bancroft, “Women in Buddhism” in Ursula King, ed., *Women in the World’s Religions: Past and Present*: 81-102; Nancy Schuster Barnes, “Buddhism” in Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions*: 105-133; Kendra Smith, “Sex, Dependency and Religion—Reflections from a Buddhist Perspective,” in Ursula King, ed. *Women in the World’s Religions: Past and Present*: 219-231; Eva K. Neumaier Dargyay, “Buddhist Thought from a Feminist Perspective,” in Morny Joy and Eva K. Neumaier Dargyay, eds., *Gender, Genre and Religion: Feminist Reflections*: 145-170.
- <sup>54</sup> For the discussion on the images of women in Buddhist tradition, see Paul (1979); For the research on the “revalorization” of Buddhist tradition from a woman’s perspective, see Gross (1994). ~~For the a discussion on of the images of women in Buddhist tradition, see Diana Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition*; For the research on the “revalorization” of Buddhist tradition from a woman’s perspective, see Rita Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*.~~