

Article

Buddho-Confucian Rituals, Filial Piety,
and Ritual Monks: Sketching the
Social-Cultural Dynamics of
Later Joseon Buddhism

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Introduction

On a summer day in 1564, Seosan Hyujeong 西山 休靜 (1520-1604), one of the most eminent monks of the Joseon period (1392-1910), put brush to paper to explain what had been bothering him enough for him to write *Seongagwigam* 禪家龜鑑. In the preface Hyujeong (1977) wrote of how the Buddhist monks during his days were spending time not reading Buddhist scriptures but those of the “gentry” 士大夫 and even reciting gentry poems. He described that the monks dyed the pages of these books with bright color and wrapped the covers with silk treasuring them. He went on to say that no matter how many books the monks had they could not help wanting more (39).

What has been described in this short preface appears to be in-line with the situation of Buddhism of that time. During the early to mid-Joseon period, Buddhism, as the main opposing heterodox, became an object of neo-Confucian polemics and state oppression. Yet, the seemingly opposed traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism interacted more closely than one would have expected. The situation was that in the socio-cultural and religious sphere of morality and ritual practice, neo-Confucians became the dominant source of moral values and norms. The Buddhist monks nevertheless maintained their specialization of ritual performer, especially with regard to the afterlife. Interestingly, filial piety and ancestor worship were the underlying moral ethos of their rituals, while at the same time there were liberal adoption of elements of Zhu Xi Family Rites 朱子家禮.

Together with these noted characteristics of Joseon Buddhism, the increased popularity of rituals in the 16th to the 18th centuries can be characterized as broad popularization of rituals. Rituals were part of a shared practice among the various traditions including Confucianism, Buddhism, and

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Shamanism that were performed as socio-religious practices.

Indeed, the realm of rituals formed a sphere that allowed the traditions to engage in borrowing and copying of values and ideas and where the boundaries and identities became blurred and possibly meaningless. This denotes a negotiated ritual space and also a commonly shared sphere between, Buddhism and Confucianism where a complex process of assimilation and transformation took place.¹

The aim of this paper is to bring to light Buddhism that became manifest within the everyday context partly as an effort to move away from examining religious ideals as independent entities or separately from mundane concerns. Thus, negotiations and reformulations of religious goals and practices are considered within the greater socio-historical and cultural spheres.² With this in mind, I have chosen to focus on Buddhist rituals. Rituals have been a socio-religious manifestation that has provided a converging point where various social and religious concerns have come to be expressed and negotiated. What we find is an amalgamation of new and long held traditions and customs that were an outcome of an effort to adapt to the socio-historical situation of the mid-Joseon period. At the same time the amalgamation was also part of an effort to find a balance between various pragmatic institutional and religious aims.

Ritual Buddhism during the Joseon Dynasty and the Spirit Realm

Pre-modern Korean society has been closely connected with the spirit world. Daily events were perceived to occur in close relation to the spirits and their effect on the world of the living. For instance, fortune or misfortune including natural disasters were thought to occur depending on whether the surrounding

1. In a previous paper I argue for a more integrated approach to the study of Joseon Buddhism where Buddhism and Confucianism are in fact closely intertwined and mutually dependent on each other. For further details, see Kim 2013, 3-13.

2. There is seminal work done by Reader and Tanabe on the acculturation of Buddhism to the Japanese culture and society which examines practices that have been greatly shaped by the local culture and religious economic activities. For example, Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe (1998) explain that Buddhism has adopted much of the Japanese traditional religious ethos, namely praying for “worldly benefits.”

spirits were pleased and content or ignored and discontented. This was no different in Joseon society where the spirit realm was a fundamental part of the world of the living. Ranging from the personal to state affairs, the underlying notions and methods of how misfortune was avoided, as well as how to gain fortune, have been an on-going concern. In this regard, Confucianism and Buddhism were bodies of knowledge and traditions of ritual practice aimed to hone the ability to handle this very pressing concern at both the societal and private level. Even Neo-Confucian scholar-officials or the Confucian literati were no less concerned with the spirit realm and the spirits of the dead ancestors. This is despite the traditional conception that Confucianism did not deal with matters beyond the world of the living; although the existence of spirits or their powers were never denied.³ This was important since the entity of the spirits, their essence and character, were directly relevant to the performance of Confucian rituals to the ancestor spirits, Heaven, and to other gods and spirits.⁴

The conception of the spirits as entities that had an influence on natural events and on the living was generally shared between Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and popular practices. For example, the underlying notion that the wandering souls of the dead must be appeased, including those of the ancestors was a generally accepted idea. Rituals were the main mode for the living to communicate and pay homage to the spirits and possibly affect how the spirits will influence the living. Rituals were necessary and basic to the world of socio-religious praxis and formed an essential capital for the religious traditions and for Confucianism. It is no surprise that the traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism had commonly shared notions and aims when performing rituals.

This could not be truer for Buddhism as rituals have arguably taken up the greatest part of the daily business at Buddhist temples throughout the 1700 years of Buddhist history in Korea. During the Joseon period, rituals were an

3. This was famously illustrated in the conversation between Confucius and his disciple Tzu-lu 季路. According to *Analects* 11:11, Tzu-lu asks how the spirits should be served and Confucius responds rhetorically by saying, “[i]f we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?” Tzu-lu responds, “I venture to ask about death.” Confucius continues and says, “[i]f we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?” (Chan 1963, 36).

4. The metaphysical debate on the nature of the spirits of the dead had been on-going among Confucian scholar-officials starting from the start of the Joseon period to the very end. See for example, Yi and Kim 2012, 366-76; Kim 2007.

important aspect of Buddhism as a lived tradition among all strata including the societal elites. At about the same period when Zhu Xi Family Rites were becoming popular and widespread among the larger population starting from the mid-Joseon period, Buddhist rituals were also becoming more popular. This is evidenced by a flurry of publications of Buddhist ritual texts during the 16th and the 17th centuries. These publications mostly belonged to the genre of *dhāranī* ritual texts and were part of the growing popularity of Buddhist rituals.⁵

The role and the importance of Buddhist rituals and the role of monks in mid-Joseon period can be glimpsed from an example of a scene recorded by Yi Jun on his travels through the Jeolla province after the Japanese invasion of Korea that started in 1592. In his personal diary he recorded that monks performed a ritual in the public by a river in Jeonju to safely send off the souls 薦度齋 of the victims of a bloody battle that had taken place during the Imjin War (1592-1598). Yi Jun noted that after the fall of the nearby castle in a battle during the war, the river had turned red with the blood of the deceased every July 19 (Y. Kim 2006, 111). Decidedly, placating and ensuring the safe passage of the souls seems to have been an essential job of Buddhist monks. The significance of the Buddhist cult of the afterlife and its use at the societal level can also be gathered from various rituals including the Land Assembly Ritual 水陸齋, a mortuary ritual performed for the souls that have suffered an unnatural death,⁶ and the *Yesujae* 豫修齋 performed for a soul that wanders through the underworld and suffers the judgments of the underworld kings. It is worth noting that after the Imjin War, Buddhist rituals took on the role of pacifying the spirits who did not have anyone to offer them ritual food, referred to as lonely ghosts 無主孤魂. This is particularly important since Confucianism was not equipped to be able to pacify such ghosts. This obviously gave Buddhism an edge over Confucianism since it was recognized that such ghosts who did not have anyone to offer them spirit food were dangerous and able to

5. Nam Hui-suk (2004) argues that despite the oppressive policies of the state 崇儒抑佛政策, Buddhist rituals and cults continued as the mainstay of Joseon Buddhism implying that popular ritual practices abounded (97). Nam's claims are solidly based on the flourishing of publication of ritual texts during the 16th and 17th centuries.

6. Choi Miwha (2009) describes how the *Suryukjae* was continuously performed as a state sponsored ritual up until late 15th century of the Joseon period paradoxically despite that the state had enforced harsh anti-Buddhist policies (211-13).

inflict sickness to people or bring about natural disasters.⁷

Buddhist monks as ritual mediators to the next world are also evidenced in the *Siwang gyeong* or the Sutra of the Ten Kings, an apocryphal scripture, which was popular from the Goryeo dynasty up to the end of the Joseon period.⁸ Though this text was originally introduced from China, its popularity in Korea indicates that the Buddhist occupation with dealing with the souls of the deceased seemed to have been one of its central roles that continued, if not increased in importance, into the Joseon period. It is a ritual closely tied to the act of filial piety in that one's duties towards one's parents continued by comforting their souls after they have passed away (Kim 2004, 133).

Similarly, performing rituals was a fundamental aspect of filial piety according to the explanations in the *Analects*. When a disciple Meng I Tzu asked about filial piety, Confucius replied, “[n]ever disobey.” Later another disciple Fan Ch’ih asked Confucius what this means and Confucius replied, “[w]hen your parents are alive, serve them in accordance to the rules of propriety. When they die, bury them according to the rules of propriety and sacrifice to them according to the rules of propriety” (Chan 1963, 12). In the *Classics of Filial Piety*, filial piety is clearly defined into five acts as follows.

The master said, “filial children in serving parents in the daily lives they must show respect, in tending to their needs and wants they must strive to bring them enjoyment, in caring for them in sickness they must reveal their apprehension, in mourning for them grief must be expressed, and in sacrificing to them true veneration must be shown. With these five dispositions firmly in place, they (children) will truly be able to serve their parents.” (quoted in Xing 2013)

Here, in the Confucian definitions of filial piety, the postmortem act of filiality was as much part of filial piety as acts towards the parents while they were alive.⁹

7. I thank the anonymous reviewer for suggesting this invaluable point.

8. The text is not at all a philosophical or doctrinal discussion but a simple depiction of the process the souls must undergo during their time in the underworld. The text is also laid out to be used for recitation during a ritual performance. The consistent reproduction of the paintings and scriptures related to the cult of Ksitigarbha and the cult of the Ten Kings can be used to infer the popularity and importance of this cult in the Goryeo and Joseon dynasties (Kim 2004, 451-85).

9. It must be noted that the filial piety according to the Buddhist scriptural accounts cannot be

Though the ritual realm was dominated by the underlying Confucian moral values such as filial piety and loyalty to the throne, Buddhist rituals were quite successful in carving out a substantial portion of “the ritual pie” which played an important role in sustaining their own social significance. Not differing much from the Confucian rituals, a prominent feature of the mortuary Buddhist rituals was that they were also aimed to fulfill the virtue of filial piety and devotion to ancestors. This was characteristic of the participation of Buddhist monks in the ritual realm of the Joseon society. The Buddhist monks were active participants in the business of communing and dealing with the afterlife and this meant they had to keep up with the times regarding any changes in the ritual world.

The reason why Buddhist mortuary rituals were popular and even important in Korea was that they fulfilled one’s filial duties and one’s responsibility in performing rituals to commemorate and appease one’s ancestral spirits. In China, throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism, the afterlife, filiality, and ancestor worship were part of the adaptive strategies employed by the Buddhist institution to become established in the society where concerns for ancestor worship and the spirits of the afterlife were so deeply rooted (Kang 1993, 84). In a similar sense Buddhism during the Joseon period was closely aligned to the then current worldviews of filiality and ancestor worship. This was part of the process of adaptation to the given situatedness, one of which was the evolving and changing of values and worldviews according to which Buddhist monks remolded Buddhist rituals. As will be further argued below, the borrowing and adoption of new ideas and practices are an indication of commonly shared worldviews which can be characterized as a conglomerate of moral value.

This was particularly true with regards to the performance of filial piety and ancestor worship in the Buddhist mortuary rituals that were represented in the tradition of votive temples¹⁰ and similarly the rituals associated with Nectar

assumed to be the same as the Confucian definitions (Xing 2013, 22-43).

10. Prayer halls were used for housing the following items: royal ancestral tablets 位牌, royal portraits 御眞, royal calligraphies 御筆, and the placentas of royal births 胎. Of course, prayer halls were the places of ritual performances including the Commemorative Rituals 忌日齋, Sending Off the Souls Ritual 遷度齋, and Rites for the Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land 水陸齋. Also, prayer halls were places to pray for this-worldly benefits such as long life and

Ritual paintings, known as *gamno do* 甘露圖 or *gamno taeng* 甘露幀. Not only were the Buddhist funerary rituals patronized by the elites, *gamno taeng* shows strong connections between Buddhism, filial piety and ancestor worship in its pictorial depictions of funerary rituals. This further affirms that the trade of being a mediator to the afterworld, through rituals, had been a significant aspect of Buddhism.¹¹ Furthermore, filial piety expressed through mortuary Buddhism had been one of the key elements in maintaining its societal relevance and a defining aspect of Joseon Buddhism.

Nectar Ritual Paintings: Filial Piety and Buddhist Rituals

In Joseon society communing with the past generations of familial patriarchs were essential filial acts. Through these rituals past generations were served their ritual meals and thus their due respect. It was also a way of reaffirming the lineage with the past generations and reifying the lineal connection that tied together generations. While filial piety had been originally one of the underlying values in Confucianism, it became commonplace in the system of values of Joseon society such that it also came to be a fundamental aspect in Buddhist rituals.

As such, ironic as it may appear, these rituals were central in determining the social significance and even the identity of Joseon Buddhist monks. In a memorial to the throne that was written by the monk Baek gok 白谷 處能 (1617-1680), the importance of rituals to the foundation of Buddhism was made clear. In the memorial *Ganpyeo seokgyo so* 諫廢釋教疏, Baek gok defends the societal significance of Buddhism in an effort to oppose the oppressive state policies. He argued that the role of the monks as the ritual intendants at the royal votive temples or shrines contributed to the welfare of the state and its people (Kim 1979, 119-22). Baek gok neither drew on the philosophical merits nor on the sophistication of Buddhist tenets. Votive temples were manifestations of the socio-cultural aspects of Buddhism of the time. This highlights the rooted characteristics of Buddhism in the socio-cultural layers of the society which at

the wellbeing of the royal family members (Bak 1996, 360-61). See for example, Lee 1993, 61.
11. See for example, Lee 1993, 61.

times may be at odds or even competing with its doctrinal ideals.

Even among the educated elite monks such as Baek gok, the traditional Buddhist monks were acknowledged. Pragmatic sets of values were important to him even though he was a highly literate monk who would have been fully aware of the principles and the ideals of Buddhism. This is not at all because Baek gok was ill intended but it was because he was aware of the practical social role of Buddhism. In the eyes of Baek gok, Buddhism carried on a very practical and valuable tradition. He points out that the tradition of praying for the royal ancestors by the Buddhist monks has been practiced during the time of the preceding kings and that to discontinue it would be against the wishes of the previous monarchs (Kim 1979, 119). It is obvious that such discourse was not a debate on doctrine but on the social merits that also played on the filial duties of the current king towards the past kings. Therefore, the tradition of votive shrines was obviously an integral part of the esteemed role of the monks where the royal ancestral tablets were housed and various rituals related to the royal ancestors were performance (Bak 1996, 360-61).

Such role of Buddhist monks as ritual performers was well depicted in the Nectar Ritual paintings. They are an insightful source of information of Buddhism in society where its role is accurately described as embedded within the larger society and reveals its socio-religious role. Unlike Buddhist rituals that supposedly took place in the private quarters and isolated in some temple shrines or inner palatial rooms, rituals associated with the Nectar Ritual paintings took place in the public domain and were situated within the larger societal context. One cannot help but notice in the paintings the Buddhist ritual taking place in a harmonious juxtaposition along with many other events within the public domain. Though the presentation of Buddhism in these paintings may be an idealization of its own tradition, it is perhaps not too far from reality when presented as coexisting harmoniously with the greater society including the Confucian officials who are depicted in their court attire as well as the *yangban* who are either participants of the ritual or close observers and possible sponsors.¹² Even women are depicted prominently in these paintings at

12. Boudewijn Walraven (2012) argues that such a depiction of harmonious coexistence between Buddhism and Confucianism was not entirely unrealistic given the patronage that Buddhism received for such paintings from the members of the royal family or from high-ranking officials (6-7).

all levels of social class. For example in the 18th century Nectar Ritual paintings (1786) of Tongdo temple in south Kyeongsang province, women who look like possible members of the royal family are positioned in the section that includes important historical and legendary figures on the right side close to the main altar in the center of the painting.

Generally, Nectar Ritual paintings represent a blending of three worlds: the world of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, this world, and the world of the hells. Among these, the primary focus is on “this world” since it is prominently situated in the center of the paintings and takes up the largest space. The current world is depicted as populated with all classes of people including officials, the upper class yangban, sometimes members of the royal family, the masses, and even shamans.¹³

The scenes are of everyday activities including even fighting and killing scenes mixed with leisure scenes. In the middle of all this is the role of the monks as the officiator of the ritual for safely sending the souls to the Western Paradise, most like the Sending Off the Souls Ritual 薦度齋. The monks are portrayed as the performers of the ritual with monks drumming and performing a dance as the main focus of the paintings. The world at the bottom of the paintings usually consists of scenes from hells filled with hungry ghosts and the souls being punished in graphic ways such as being boiled in a large cauldron or by having their tongues pulled out. This adds to the theme of the paintings which is Buddhist salvation from possible torments of postmortem punishments. In contrast, the method of salvation, through necessary Buddhist rituals performed within the context of a Buddhist cosmology is depicted at the top of the paintings.

For instance, a scene in the 19th century Nectar Ritual painting (1898) housed in Bo kwan temple in Gyeonggi province prominently depicts an ancestor worship ritual being officiated by monks. At the scene of the ritual, participants of the ritual, most likely the sponsors, are wearing coarse mourning clothes and are kneeling in prayer before the officiating monk and the altar. What can be noted is the situatedness of Buddhism in the everyday public social sphere where filiality and ancestor worship was seamlessly incorporated into a Buddhist structure of soteriology. Together with the ritual monks, the sponsors

13. See for example, Yang 1992, 163-68.

of the ritual were part of a ritual for the salvation of their deceased parents. It is a performance of the principle ritual theme of filial piety. This theme is what is also fundamental to the genre of Buddhist ancestor worship rituals such as the Forty-Nine Days Ritual 四十九日齋, Commemorative Rituals 忌日齋, Sending Off the Souls Ritual, and Land Assembly Ritual.¹⁴

The moral value of filial piety and the practice of ancestor worship that were evidently adopted by Buddhists in China and in Korea were without a doubt part of the greater societal worldview. It is not a surprise that rituals for the aim of enacting filial piety were one of the focal points of Korean Buddhist rituals at a time when rituals was a central social issue during the mid-Joseon period.¹⁵ This placed Buddhism squarely within the ritual sphere of society and in competition with Confucian rituals.¹⁶

So far, extant Nectar Ritual paintings can be dated as back as the Goryeo period. They are a clear depiction of the continuous tradition of religious Buddhism that extended from the Goryeo into the Joseon dynasty. This component has been a prevalent character throughout Korean history and is one of the staple aspects of Buddhism that not only appeared in the Joseon period but was a generalizable aspect of Korean Buddhism.

Aside from the enduring religious component, it is also true that Buddhism adapted to the changing socio-historical situation and this can be noted in the specific rituals, again with regard to funerary rituals. In such instance it was part of an effort by the Buddhist monks to remold Buddhism into a more meaningful and relevant system of religious practice fitting to the times.

14. Kang (1993) explains that the Buddhist ancestral festivals or rituals were part of the adoptive process to the fundamental Sinitic culture based on ensuring the wellbeing of the family through ancestor worship (84).

15. See, for example, Yi 2006, 35-65.

16. Before the creation of a Confucian mortuary ritual in the 14th century in Korea, the realm of funerary rituals was dominated by Buddhist rituals (Deuchler 1992, 180-81).

Common Social Values and Shared Worldviews of the Joseon Society

The idea of filial piety has been an important part of the Buddhist moral consciousness from the very early times of Buddhism in India and China.¹⁷ The Buddhist adoption of filial piety and ancestor worship undoubtedly had a long history in China and this would have been no different in Korea. This is obviated by the *Bulseol daebo bummo eunjung gyeong* 佛說大報父母恩重經, a Chinese apocryphal scripture which was transmitted to Korea in the 9th century. The oldest extant sutra in Korea is the Gi lim temple copy that dates back to 1300. Despite the deep tradition of filial piety in Buddhism, we can talk about its heightened popularity during the Joseon period when ancestor worship rituals became popularized. Buddhism as an institution and a system of religious practice needed to change in order to adapt to the rapidly changing times of 17th century Korea when Zhu Xi Family Rites was becoming widespread and having impact on the ritual landscape (Yi 2006, 42-46). Filiality was one of the basic underlying moral ethos of Joseon society which came to be commonly accepted. The virtue of ancestor worship along with filiality and patriarchy became expressed through rituals in new ways to which Buddhist rituals became adjusted.

The practice of filiality as newly defined in the Zhu Xi Family Rites was adopted into the Buddhist practices and came to be fully identified with Buddhist rituals (Walraven 2012, 111). This adoption and development of Confucian ritual elements in Buddhist rituals can be explicitly noted in the 16th and 17th century Buddhist ritual manuals. One such case is the Buddhist manual *Seongmun garye cho* 釋門家禮抄 (1659) written by Naam Jin-il 懶庵眞一, a disciple of Byeogam Gakseong 碧巖覺性 (1575-1660), and presently published in the *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* 韓國佛教全書 (hereafter *HBJS*).¹⁸

17. In his paper, Xing (2013) traces the discussions of filial piety in early Buddhism using the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinayas* of different schools in Pāli and compares them to Mahayana developments along with discussions in the Confucian tradition.

18. In this manual there are three separate diagrams illustrated at the beginning. The first is the *Seungsook obok do* 僧俗五服圖 regarding the dress for the monks when the relatives of the monks pass away, it determines the type of clothing that must be worn and for how long. The second diagram is the *Jong obok do* 宗五服圖 and the last is the *Bonjong obok chonsu do* 本宗五服寸數圖 and it outlines the type of clothing and the duration that the clothes must be worn for the laity

There are other similar texts published in the span of 36 years starting with the *Seongmun sang-ui cho* 釋門喪儀抄 (1636) composed by Byeogam Gakseong and *Seungga ye-ui mun* 僧家禮儀文 (1670) by Heobaek Myeongjo 虛白 明照 (1593-1661). The common characteristic among these three texts is that they have newly accepted the system of funerary dress code that was originally common in Confucian rituals but not previously in Buddhist rituals. These ritual texts are an example of the assimilation of the then popular ritual norms that were skillfully adopted into the Buddhist rituals which allowed Buddhism to be more socially and religiously in-tune with the then newly developing moral framework.

The greater incorporation of Zhu Xi ideology from the mid-Joseon period had an effect on the Buddhist ideas of mortuary rituals and as a result, adjustments to the funerary rituals were made. In the introduction to the *Seongmun garye cho*, Jin-il's introduction makes reference to the current situation. He firstly explains that,

Though our (Buddhist) rituals favor quietude and extinction and consider life and death as no different, when following the rules of the Vinaya, it is imperative that we are in-line with the rules. As in the case of the Buddhist family ritual, no Joseon ritual text exists. When an esteemed master of the *sangha* passes on to nirvana there is much incoherence in the funerary rituals. The tablet shrine is in most cases placed in the dharma hall and the grief and weeping are the same as in any other regular mundane funerals... Also, in the recited ritual text much of what is said does not have any (scriptural) basis. The system of clothing which prescribes what is important and what is not does not fit the customs.¹⁹

In other words there appears to have been no consistency in the Buddhist mortuary ritual performances and neither a common ritual manual was available. The situation was that even the funerary rituals for eminent monks

(Kim 2010, 365).

19. This citation comes from *HBJS* (277b). The followings are the original text: 雖我宗以寂滅爲樂 生死是常隨方毗尼 須合其則如釋氏家禮 東國素無其本 釋門上德歸寂 凶禮多違 龕室當堂哀泣同俗 兼乃口吊祭文 言多無稽 制服輕重 罔所合規。

This manual was accessed between February and May of 2014 through the Dongguk University *Hanguk bulgyo jeonsoe* Internet search homepage at http://ebti.dongguk.ac.kr/ebti/keyword/index_keyword.asp. The references made to the *Hanguk bulgyo jeonsoe* below are accessed in the same manner.

were no different from those of non-Buddhist popular funerals. This tells us that popular conceptions and customs had been adopted into the Buddhist mortuary rituals. Moreover, we are also made aware that the past prescription for mourning clothing did not fit the prevailing customs. Jin-il continues stating that being dissatisfied with the situation, he refers to the then existing Chinese Buddhist ritual texts including *Seonwon chonggyu* 禪院清規 of Ja-gak 慈覺 and *Osam jip* 五衫集 of Ungji 應之, and the *Seokssi yoram* 釋氏要覽, and comes to the conclusion that,

Rather, the rules of Chinese customs do not fit Korean rituals and so with the summary (of these texts) the important points have been outlined.²⁰
(277b)

The above discussed situation point to a changed setting where an obvious need for a standardized Buddhist ritual was strongly felt. This then leads to the question of what compelled Jin-il to write such a manual aside from the reason that there were no Korean Buddhist ritual manuals. Simply, what led Jin-il to feel this need? Despite that there had previously been no standardized Buddhist ritual for some time and that there arose a need at that specific time for a ritual manual, begs the question of what had caused this need? Also, why did there arise a perception that the rituals that had been prescribed in the Chinese texts were “unfitting” to the Korean situation in the early to mid 17th century?

The answer to these questions becomes clear in the postscript of the *Seongmun garye cho* composed in 1659 by another monk named Gyeong-il 敬一 (?-?). It becomes obvious that the situation of the Buddhist rituals was being out-dated mainly because the prevailing social moral framework had changed. As alluded to in the above, in the early 17th century a new moral framework based on neo-Confucian morality for performing funerary rituals became predominant.

Let's see what Gyeong-il says. He begins his postscript taking a stance of affirming the existence of death by arguing that, “[e]ven though the study of Buddhism is based on extinction, because there is life, there is death.”²¹ He then

20. The original text is as follows: 但是中國所尚之法 不合東方之禮 抄出其要.

21. This citation comes from *HBS* (288b). The original text is as follows: 釋氏之學 雖原於寂滅

follows with quotes from Mencius and alludes to the very argument that has been used throughout history by the Confucian polemicists against Buddhism, that Buddhism went against familial values and structure. Firstly, in Gyeong-il's rhetoric, the significance of death is emphasized although in Buddhist thought death is not significant and does not figure into the doctrines of Buddhism due to the laws of reincarnation. He then reiterates the age-old criticism of Buddhism that it rejects parents, even kings and teachers. The aim here was to affirm the need to perform ancestor worship rituals and, as we will see later, that Buddhism was socially responsible.

Here, we must note that the situation at the time was when Zhu Xi Family Rites were becoming popular and the family system was becoming increasingly patriarchal. Secondly, the very purpose for performing funerary rituals was focused primarily on the patriarchal line.²² This is an example of the newly developing moral framework, which over the course of the Joseon period became increasingly accepted. The situation was such that it had come to a point where monks felt compelled to standardize and align Buddhist rituals to the then current societal norm. It was not that other mortuary ritual manuals including Ja-gak's *Seonwon chonggyu* and Ungji's *Osam jip* and the *Seonssi yogam* cited in the *Seongmun garye cho* were not known in Korea before that time. It was perceived that these rituals were no longer fitting to the Korean situation, which was the increased predominance of neo-Confucian based social values and morality.

The need for standardization and the need for a ritual that was consistent and in-tune with the Korean situation were also stated in the postscript of the *Seongmun garye cho*. As mentioned in the above there were explicit references made, together with the works of Tang monks, to Zhu Xi's compilation of mundane rituals as sources.²³ It almost would have been necessary to adopt the

既有生則有滅.

22. Becoming patriarchal included changes in inheritance patterns which reduced the societal and ritual role of women by undermining her position as a legitimate heir to her parent's property. Rights to inherit property that women once held equally with her brothers during the Goryeo dynasty were dissolved. For example, in the seventeenth century, daughters did not even receive any inheritance. During the Goryeo period, daughters received equal portion of the inheritance as sons and daughters equally took on the role and responsibility of performing ancestor worship ceremonies (Peterson 1983, 39).

23. Gyeong-il writes in *HBJS*: 朱文公所編俗禮者 (288b).

ideals as outlined by Zhu Xi whose instructions on “family rituals” given how important they have become in defining the ritual norms of the 17th century. This is most obviously exemplified in the Five Morning Clothes System 五服制 as outlined in Zhu Xi’s family rituals, which was clearly prescribed in the *Seongmun garye cho*. This system stipulated the ritual clothes and the length of mourning which corresponded with the distance of the relationship between the ritual performer and the ancestor for whom the ritual was performed.²⁴

Though mourning dress were specified in previous Buddhist ritual texts, the systematized Five Morning Clothes System for funerary rituals as outlined in the *Seongmun garye cho* did not exist in previous Buddhist ritual manuals (Kim 2006). Furthermore, the adoption of the Five Morning Clothes System of Zhu Xi was reflected in the emphasis on the agnate line that had also appeared in this Buddhist ritual text. This followed the general trend of male-centeredness of the family structure which was revealed in the increased acceptance of patrilocality and patrilineage (Kim 2010, 379-80).

In his introductory remark, Jin-il explains the reason for the need of a funerary ritual manual which was also fueled by the fact that the funerary customs in Korea did not accord with those prescribed in the outdated Chinese texts. This was obvious given the changes in the ritual sphere and the changes in the family pattern. Moreover, a further interesting point here is that there was a clear effort to transform Buddhism in relation to the prevailing funerary customs. This included, among others, adopting a more elaborate system of mourning clothes and even adopting the long-held criticism that Buddhism was misanthropic. One of Jin-il’s intent in writing the *Seongmun garye cho* was to make Buddhism more accepted as a socially and ritually upright tradition. Gyeong-il explains that,

The way of practice for some time has been mundane and the disciples avoided following strict moral practices. Thus they have together fallen

24. In the *Seongmun garye cho* there are three separate diagrams illustrated at the beginning. The first is the *Seungsok obok do* 僧俗五服圖 regarding the dress for the monks when the relatives of the monks pass away, which determines the type of clothing that must be worn and for how long. The second diagram is the *Jong obok do* 宗五服圖 and the last is the *Bonjong obok chonsu do* 本宗五服寸數圖, and it outlines the type of clothing and the duration that the clothes must be worn for the laity (Kim 2010, 365). See also Kim 2009, 28.

into ignorant tendencies and all have come to the shameful situation of no father and no ruler and moreover the ridicules of being in a state of no master could not be avoided... This (manual) will make later students to pursue detailed knowledge of the procedures of the funeral and not fall back into improper customs. Thus the criticism of being devoid of blessings and morality will be well avoided.²⁵

Gyeong-il reassures the readers that, having made adjustments in the new funerary ritual manual, Buddhism will no longer be ridiculed for being in a state of “no father and no ruler.” Buddhism will not be in a position to be criticized for being social irresponsible and misaligned with the then current moral values.

Together with the above ritual text, the sketch of the ritual worldview that can be drawn is one in which Buddhism was closely in-tune and engaged with the current moral values. Unlike the usual depiction of monastics who were isolated physically and socially in the mountains from the rest of the society, the ritual monks were highly sensitive to and aware of the changes in the societal moral values and norms. Obvious from the newly written ritual texts, the monks were also active in keeping up with new ritual developments. Furthermore, although there was awareness of the need to specify a separate “Buddhist” ritual from profane 俗 ones, maintaining a separateness from Confucian practices, at least in the sphere of ritual practice, did not seem to be a high priority according to Gyeong-il.

However, it was also the case that while the *Seongmun garye cho* was for the most part in congruence with the fundamental ideas of the new family rites, slight differences also persisted. As Kim (2010) explains, the prescribed system of the Zhu Xi Family Rites was not adopted wholesale but rather there was selection process where some native elements were continued (379-80).²⁶

It seems the ritual sphere was commonly shared and not contained within guarded and reified walls of separate traditions, similar to the situation noted

25. This citation comes from *HBJS* (288b). The original text is as follows: 一時之道俗者徒抗耿介之節 同墜蒙昧之鄉 胥入於無父無君之譏境 又未免無師之誚...俾晚學後進 細知其喪次進退曲節 儘免乎孤恩負德之謗.

26. Zhu Xi Family Rites were also not wholly accepted by the Korean Confucians either. Within the community of the Confucian literati there was a period of interpretation and assimilation, in relation to the existing customs, especially in the early 16th century when many commentaries were written (Yi 2006, 43-45).

earlier of the monks collecting non-Buddhist, perhaps popular, texts as noted by Hyujeong.

The fact that the eminent monks were highly literate is a strong indicator of their rank as cultural elites who were arguably part of the ideologues of society²⁷ and among whom the sharing of texts and ideas must have commonly taken place. It is most likely that these monks kept abreast of Confucian literature. It would have been the same the other way around where scholar-officials and literati enjoyed Buddhist literature and thought. For example, we can gather from his *Samga gwigam* 三家龜鑑, that Hyujeong, one of the most eminent monks of this time, was well-versed in Confucianism and Taoism. In the *Samga gwigam*, Hyujeong discusses the three traditions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, and argues that there is a fundamental commonality among the three traditions.²⁸ What is revealing is that even this eminent monk who deplored the sight of monks reading gentry books, argued for a harmonious interpretation of the three teachings, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Different from the neo-Confucian polemics, at the ground level, it would not have been too difficult to imagine the three traditions as being part of greater whole; as a matter of fact, it may have been natural to think so. The important point here is that there were common ideals and values which can be understood as shared cultural currencies, which in our case were filial piety and ancestor worship. Even shamanism had adopted these values.²⁹

27. Educational background of the monks and the Confucian literati are quite similar and it may even lead to the conjecture that the social class similarities may override their separate socio-religious identities. For example when we take the best known monks of the Joseon period, Hyujeong and his well-known disciple Yujeong, it is quite clear that they were reared in the Confucian education. This may lead us to assert that Confucianism had been the common education of the elite class. Such common denominator seems to be shared between the Buddhist monks and the Confucian literati.

28. Hyujeong (1977) argues that the commonness of the three teachings is “the way” 道, which can be identified as the mind 心. By making this argument, his objective was to assert that Buddhism was the most fundamental system of thought and is therefore able to include both Confucianism and Taoism.

29. See also Walraven 2010, 287-96.

Conclusion

From our discussions in the above we come to realize that rather than a separate and enclosed moral framework of the various traditions, these frameworks are shared and overlapping and coincide in the cultural, social, and the religious spheres. In the ritual domain it was obvious that the Buddhist and the Confucian traditions were intertwined and it only seems logical that much was shared. Not only the moral values but their ritual actions, the ritual setup, and clothes of the mourners shared common similarities pertained to the same ritual-religious realm and underlying intentions. The purpose of the rituals were regarding the spirit realm, and more often than not, performed for the well-being of ancestors, no matter which religious tradition, Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism.

Within this shared socio-religious sphere, and given the fundamental role and importance of filial piety in the ritual practices, the preconceived separateness of religious aims that were identified to be Buddhist or Confucian need to be reconsidered. For example, with regard to filial piety, we cannot relegate it to the realm of popular Buddhist practices and therefore dismiss it as separate from the mainstream tradition of Buddhism. That is because filial piety had been an important and legitimate part of Buddhism from the early days of Buddhism in India and in China. What had happened in the 17th century Joseon was that a unique practice of filiality defined by Zhu Xi had been incorporated into Buddhist funerary rituals by Buddhist monks.

By developing the Buddhist practice of filial piety, there were two goals that were attained. One was maintaining the socio-religious significance of Buddhism, and the other was to continue its identity and role, as an ideology that supported the state, as it had been from the time that Buddhism was first accepted by the Silla rulers. Despite the complaints of Hyujeong, Buddhism both as a system of religious practices and institution of temples was faring well through its method of active adaptation to the greater moral values and ritual practices. It was able to continue to maintain its institutional existence and its religious identity. When considered from this point of view, Buddhism may have been more successful compared to Confucianism of which its institutional identity became diffused and lost while at the same time its institutional existence waned towards the end of the Joseon period until eventually it vanished.

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Abstract

The increased popularity of Buddhist rituals in the 16th to the 18th centuries of the Joseon period can be characterized as broad popularization of rituals. Rituals were part of a shared practice among the various traditions including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism through which people communed with the spirits. One of the main underlying norms of Buddhist rituals was filial piety which had been a general societal virtue. This was part of a complex process of adaptation through which societal moral values became adopted by Buddhist monks. This was especially the case with the popularization of the Zhu Xi Family Rites during the 17th century and its adoption into various streams of the Joseon Society. Indeed, the realm of rituals formed a socio-cultural sphere that allowed the two traditions, Buddhism and Confucianism, to engage in borrowing and exchange where the boundaries and identities became blurred. In a situation as such it becomes difficult and almost meaningless to label certain values such as filial piety filiality and ancestor worship as solely that of Confucianism. This is simply a part of how the monks adjusted to the situation through concrete changes in thought and practice, a process of religious adaption and transformation.

Keywords: Joseon Buddhism, filial piety, Buddhist funerary rituals, neo-Confucianism, shared worldviews, religious adaptation