

A Historical Introduction to Minjung Buddhism¹

—A Liberation Buddhism of South Korea in 1980's—

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There have been two major movements in the Buddhist history of South Korea since the liberation of that country from Japan on August 15, 1945. Chronologically, the first to appear was the 'Purification Buddhist movement' (Jeonghwa Bulgyo Undong³), the more recent being the Minjung Buddhist movement. This paper focuses primarily on the Minjung Buddhist movement in terms of its history, development and meaning within the larger context of Korean Buddhism and society. I will also indicate when and how the two movements came into conflict with each other. The term Minjung means 'masses,' 'people,' 'populace' and so on, strongly associated with the oppressed class. Minjung Buddhism

¹ I want to express my heartfelt appreciations to Professor John Dunne, specialist in Tibetan Buddhism and my sincere colleague Ron Green, specialist in Japanese Tantric Buddhism. Both of whom have given me a lot of precious advices and comments on this paper.

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³ I follow the romanization system authorized in 1990 by the Department of Education of the South Korean Government.

became a movement in its collective and continuous activities aimed at the accomplishment of particular social, political and religious ends. As the representative movements in contemporary Korean Buddhism, the above-mentioned have greatly affected the formation of current Korean Buddhism. It is Minjung Buddhism that continues to be a vital force in that respect.

The Purification Buddhist movement⁴ began in 1954 and was largely concluded by 1962. This movement was to focus on the 'cleansing' of the influence from Japanese Buddhism on that of Korea, and the purification of monastic order. The movement was initiated by the executive order of the first South Korean president, I Seungman⁵, to expel married Buddhist priests from traditional monasteries. Basically, the Korean monastic orders had kept the precept of non-marriage until the Japanization of it by the Japanese government. This occurred during the colonial period from 1910 to 1945. During that time, the Japanese Government General in Korea forcibly caused Korean Buddhist monks to marry in order to facilitate control over the Korean Buddhist orders.

Because the aim of the Purification movement was to recover this aspect of monastic order from the Japanese influence, the movement was basically for reformation. In contrast, the Minjung Buddhist movement is fundamentally an attempt to construct a type of Pure Land in the society by introducing such universal issues as human rights, labor, democracy, reunification and so on.

⁴ Mog Jeongbae, "Yeogsa pyeon, geun-hyeondae"(History - modern and contemporary times), in *Han'gug bulgyo chongnam*(Comprehensive Collection of Source Materials of Contemporary Korean Buddhism), edited by Han'gug bulgyo chongnam pyeonjip wiweonhoe, 102-106.

⁵ He himself romanized his name Rhee Seungman. Hereafter I follow the South Korean governmental official romanization system without exceptions in the transliteration of all of the Korean alphabets.

Minjung Buddhism experienced its greatest period of influence as a progressive religious movement in the 1980's. There are two major reasons why the Minjung movement has been declining since the early 1990's. One stems from international conditions, namely, the economical and political collapse of the Eastern European Communist bloc and the Soviet Union. Minjung Buddhism is indebted for its theories and praxis to Marxism and socialism. As the Eastern European Communist bloc collapsed, Minjung Buddhism lost one of its most important models.

The second reason for its decline is related to domestic conditions. In 1992, a long time opposition party leader, Gim Yeongsam, was elected president, even though this involved collaboration with the conservative ruling camp. Although many Korean intellectuals considered his victory in the presidential election incomplete in terms of overthrowing the dictatorship, it definitely decreased the need to push for democratization through extra parliamentary means. After assuming power, Kim recruited some radical and progressive opposition leaders for filling some important positions in his cabinet and ruling party. His measures brought democratization to many areas of administration and served to nullify the power base of the long time ruling conservative group, even though he was elected by the support of that group. His aim was to diminish the influence of conservative politicians and their supporters, including businessmen, bureaucrats, bankers, and so forth, in order to establish a strong democratic hegemony in the ruling circle.

The characteristics of Minjung Buddhism can be outlined as follows.⁶

⁶ See Lim Dongju's "Bulgyo undong eu moseubdeul—minjung bulgyo" (Buddhist movement forms—Minjung Buddhism) in the January 1986 issue of the *Bulgyo sasang* (Buddhist Thought); Bag Suil's "Indo bulgyosa e natanan minjung bulgyo eu heureum" (Minjung Buddhist movement in the history of Indian Buddhism) in *Seungga* (Saṅgha) 5 (1988); (Seog) Mog'u's "Minjung bulgyo undong eu i'nyeon gwa jeon'gae" (The ideas and development of Minjung Buddhist movement) in *Silcheon*

First, it maintains an acutely critical stance towards traditional or established Buddhism. Their criticisms in this respect are focused primarily on practice as opposed to theory or doctrine itself. If the oppressed masses are not liberated, Minjung Buddhists assert, the true ideal of Buddhism cannot be realized. They charge the traditional Buddhists with standing in opposition to this by maintaining the status quo.⁷

Second, Minjung Buddhists believe that they can alleviate the real suffering of the masses by the transformation of contradictory structures in politics, economy, and society. In order to do so, they adopted the idea of class struggle as one of their major principles. For this reason, the Minjung Buddhist method of salvation is quite different from that of traditional Buddhism, which tries to destroy the suffering of sentient beings by purely "spiritual" means.⁸

Third, Minjung Buddhist activists do not interpret doctrine with the traditional *p'an-chiao* (判教: doctrinal classification) system but by reference to the modern social sciences. For example, Minjung Buddhism does not see suffering as originating from human internal desire or ignorance but from the external social structure. For this reason, their solution to suffering focuses upon structural contradiction rather than individual ignorance.⁹

bulgyo (Praxis Buddhism) 4 (1987); (Seog) Beobseong, Hwang Pilho, et al., *Minjung bulgyo eu tamgu* (Researches in Minjung Buddhism).

⁷ Jo Seongryeol's "Bulgyo eu jeongchi gyeongjye sahoe sasang" (Political, economic, and social thoughts in Buddhism) in *Seungga* 5 (1988), 48-59.

⁸ See O Weonchil's "Sahoe-jeog silcheon euroseou bulgyo" (Buddhism as a social praxis) in *Donggug sasang* (Journal of Buddhist College of Donggug University) 21 (1988), 54-56.

⁹ See (Seog) Beob'u's "Bulgyo eu minjung-jeog jeon'gae" (The development of Buddhism for the masses) in the first issue of *Cheongnyeon yeorae* (Young Tathagata) (1981), 89; Bag Gyeongjun's "Minjung bulgyo i'nyeon eu bipan-jeog gochal" (Critical examination of Minjung Buddhist ideology) in *Minjung bulgyo eu tamgu*, 162-163;

Forth, Minjung Buddhist activists exercise a cliquish exclusionism, taking it as far as to consider themselves to be endowed with an advanced consciousness. They believe they are justified then, simply based on this assumption, in strongly criticizing those who do not follow their line.¹⁰

Fifth, traditional Buddhists and other scholars disagree with Minjung Buddhism in terms of its doctrines as well as its practices. They ask whether Minjung Buddhism is Buddhism and consider it instead a new Buddhism or heretic Buddhism.¹¹

1. The Sprout of Minjung Buddhism

There are several opinions about the advent of Minjung Buddhism. Some say that Minjung Buddhism began with the appearance of the Buddha Śākyamuni, contending that the Buddha refuted the caste system of the ancient Indic society by revealing the life of liberation.¹² Others point, for the beginning of Minjung Buddhism, to the appearance of Mahayana Buddhism, which holds the thesis of social salvation and the doctrine of acting for the sake of others as an ideal model for practice.¹³

and O Weonchil, *op. cit.*, 56-59.

¹⁰ See (Seog) Beobseong's "Bulgyo eu minjung-seong gwa minjung eu bulgyo-seong" (The masses for Buddhism and Buddhism for the masses) in the collection of the source materials in commemoration for the first anniversary of the national massive monastic conference at Haein-sa temple (Sep. 7, 1987), 1988, 19; (Seog) Jinsang's "9.7. haein-sa seungryeo daehoe eu yeogsa-jeog eui wa palsibnyeondae minjung bulgyo undong eu pyeongga wa jeonmang" (The historical meaning of the September 7 Haein-sa temple massive monastic conference and the evaluation and prospect of Minjung Buddhist movement in 1980's) in the above same source material, 39; and Yeo Iggu's *Minjung bulgyo cheolhag* (Philosophy of Minjung Buddhism), 231-237.

¹¹ See Bag Gyeongjun, *op. cit.*, 133-170.

¹² Choe Seogho's "Weonsi bulgyo eu hyeondae jeog jaejo'myeong" (Contemporary re-reflection in primitive Buddhism) in *Bulgyo sasang eu saeroeun balgyeon* (New Discovery of Buddhist Thought), vol.1, 43-75.

Advocates of new movements typically employ these assertions, procuring authority from the past. Likewise, in order to doctor the appearance of its recent origin, Minjung Buddhist theorists conventionally assert that their movement is not new but rather fundamental in nature. It is generally recognized however, that Minjung Buddhism actually began around 1980.

If we discuss the beginning of Minjung Buddhism only in relation to the term, we first find it mentioned in the Korean context in an article entitled 'On Minjung Buddhism' (Minjung bulgyo-ron) written by Jeon Jaeseong in 1976. The article, however, cannot be fully characterized as Minjung Buddhist theory as it lacks the characteristic type of social scientific analysis as well as any advocacy of concrete praxis. Nevertheless, we may still consider the article to be an expression of a nascent form of the movement.

For understanding the reasons for the appearance of 'On Minjung Buddhism,' certain political circumstances must be taken into consideration. The year 1976 in which the article was publicized was in the middle of the most severe dictatorship under the former president Bag Jeonghi. At the time, institutional Buddhists had not expressed concern, much less interest in anti-dictatorship democratization.

Moreover, the institutional Buddhist scholars and monks had justified their own behaviors in the name of Pure Buddhism, contending that the religion should be separated from the state. That is, contending that the religion should not intervene in political affairs, their said focus was on the so called 'pure activities' of Buddhism. In reality, these same people had been in favor of the ruling camp without being equally concerned for ordinary people who formed the vast majority of society. Because of this,

¹³ Bag Suil, "Indo bulgyosa e natanan minjung bulgyo undong eu heureum" (The currents of Minjung Buddhist movement in the history of Indian Buddhism), *Seungga* 5 (1988), 162-175.

some progressive younger intellectuals and Buddhist student leaders criticized the institutional Buddhist leaders, asserting that the Buddhist ideal should be built up in this actual historical reality, not as a transcendental notion.¹⁴

Buddhist students of the National Federation for Buddhist Associations of Universities and Colleges (NFBAUC) were especially fierce in their criticism of institutional Buddhist leaders and made an effort to create a more dynamic theory for the Buddhist movement. These young Buddhists were determined to arrange a new theory for the engagement of Buddhism in protest against the dictatorship.

At last, a concrete result appeared at the summer practice conference for NFBAUC at Songgwang-sa temple in Jeonju, North Jeolla province. The gathering was called a conference for the advancement of the practice of Minjung Buddhism. At the conference, seven papers were presented, the faculty advisors of the association of Buddhism in universities and colleges attended, and the ways of social practice for the attainment of Bodhisattvic spirit were the main topic of discussion.

Notably, among the seven papers presented at the conference, the president of NFBAUC, Jeon Jaeseong, borrowing the term Minjung Buddhism from the very famous work *On Restoration of Buddhism* (Bulgyo yusinron) by Seog¹⁵ Yong'un¹⁶, the most prominent Buddhist activist for

¹⁴ Hong Saseong, "Minjung undong eu pyeongga wa jeonmang" (The evaluation and prospect of Minjung Buddhist movement), *Minjung bulgyo eu tamgu*, 98.

¹⁵ It is very complicated to refer Korean Buddhist monk names. Their ordained Buddhist names are usually used without their own original family names but sometimes with them or the surname Seog 穉, meaning the monkhood. Hereafter I consistently put the surname Seog in parenthesis when I mention Buddhist monks or nuns. My intention to put the surname Seog in parenthesis for monastics is for non-Korean readers to recognize the identity of monastics and laymen very easily.

¹⁶ Original articles by Han Yong'un and research papers by contemporary scholars on him are included in *Hyeondae han'gug eu bulgyo sasang* (Buddhist Thoughts in

independence from Japan, presented the paper entitled 'On Minjung Buddhism.' In his paper, he asserted that Buddhism should no longer serve the oppressors but the oppressed. In the end, the conference functioned to make the term Minjung Buddhism the official designation of the developing movement. Jeon Jaeseong published his article under the pseudonym Jeon Seoam in the last issue of the monthly magazine *Dialogue* (Daehwa) in October 1977.

In contrast with the tremendously big ideal of the conference, there was no actual application of Minjung Buddhism immediately forthcoming. At the time, by laymen and monks, Buddhist activities had been done in the temples and centers of the organizations of the established orders. Rituals and services were exclusively carried out by professional monks and laypersons associated with institutional groups. So, the young Buddhist university students faced this limitation to accomplishing their own ideal in reality.

2. Historical background

2.1. Politics

In October 1979, former president Bag Jeonghi was killed by his longtime loyal aide, Gim Jaegyū, director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. With this Korean politics was suddenly thrust into extreme confusion.

At that time, members of the ruling camp struggled among themselves for power though the political conflict was limited by the strongest political figure, ruling party president Gim Jongpil. Much more severe, however, was the struggle in the opposition party between Gim Daejung and Gim Yeongsam, longtime rivals who fought for both the hegemonic

Contemporary Korea), edited by Han Jongman.

control of the party and the presidential nomination. University students demonstrated for democracy to former Prime Minister Choe Gyuha, who had succeeded the presidency after the death of Bag Jeonghi.

In May 1980, a military general, Jeon Duhwan, carried out a coup d'état and, by having massacred hundreds of civilians in Gwangju, the capital of South Jeolla province, succeeded in gaining power. In September 1980, Jeon Duhwan became president by an 'indirect election' after revising the constitution in order to ensure this victory.

When reflecting upon the coup's impact, it is crucial to recall that after the 1953 cease-fire that ended the Korean Civil War, the power to order troop movements and other such actions was invested in the joint commander of the Korean and U.S. forces stationed in Korea. The agreement that underlay this arrangement stipulated that the joint commander be a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. Hence, in effect, Korean officers such as General Jeon Duhwan ultimately could not exercise the final authority over Korean military units. With this in mind, many Korean citizens and intellectuals asked how General Jeon Duhwan could have used Korean military forces to massacre civilians during the coup. After all, were those forces not technically under the command of an American general? In addition, to carry out such an act, would that U.S. officer not require the authority not only of the U.S. ambassador to Korea, but also of higher officials in Washington itself? These and other such doubts prompted a radical change in the democratization movement after the coup of 1980.¹⁷

¹⁷ Actually, after 1980, as a concrete protest against the responsibility about the Gwangju massacre, some student activists burned, attacked or occupied several U.S. Cultural Centers stationed in big cities, such as Gwangju, Busan, Daegu, and Seoul. See Gim Namgyu's "8.15 haebang ihu bulgyo undong eu jeon'gae gwajeong" (Developmental process of Buddhist movement after the August 15, 1945 liberation from Japan) in *Donggug sasang* 20 (1988), 85.

The American government has been unwilling to give a 'yes' or 'no' concerning its responsibility for the Gwangju massacre. America's failure in this regard led Korean progressive intellectuals and students to realize that the dictatorship had been based upon the strong support from the United States government.¹⁸

For this reason, the slogan 'Yankee, go home!' began accompanying the request for democracy. Anti imperialism and anti-dictatorship became two sides of a single coin for the Korean progressive intellectuals and students.

Necessarily, the nationalist movement worked in the favor of progressive Buddhists for organizing Minjung Buddhism systematically in terms of its practice and theory. Before 1980, demonstrations for democratization against the dictatorship had been organized for the most part by progressive Christian leaders and students affiliated with the churches. However, after 1980, Christian groups began losing influential power to the progressive intellectual camp. Some progressive activists suspected the motives of the Christian social engagement movement. Knowingly or unknowingly, Christian activist groups had been funded by the Christian organizations of the western advanced nations.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Choe Sangjae's "80 nyeondae sangbangi hagsaeng undong e gwanhan pyeongga" (The evaluation on student democratization movement in the first half of 1980's) in *Godae munhwa* (Culture of Korea University) 24 (1984), 210-217.

¹⁹ See "Han'gug minjung bulgyo eu jeon'gae gwajeong—gaehang ihu choe'geun ggaji" (The developmental process of Minjung Buddhism in Korea—from the end of 19 century to the recent times) by the propagation department of Central Sangha College, *Seungga* 5 (1988), 194. According to the article, the most comprehensive association for progressive Christian leaders in South Korea, the Korean National Christian Conference (KNCC) had been funded around 70% of its budget from the western advanced nations including the United States.

2.2. The October 27 Buddhist Persecution

At six o'clock A.M., on October 27, 1980, under martial law, the military command conducted a nationwide search of temples and Buddhist organizations. Among the many locations searched were the headquarter of the Jo'gye order, located in Jo'gye-sa temple, the order's twenty-four parish headquarter temples scattered throughout the nation, and even small temples connected to the Jo'gye order. Forty-eight monks were arrested including the secretary general of the Jo'gye order, the highest ranked administrator of that order. Most of the monks arrested were conservative senior leaders. The military declared the measure necessary for the purification of the Buddhist order.

Three days later, on October 30, as a joint effort with the police, the military investigated all temples nationwide under the pretext of searching for communists, pro-communists, and communism sympathizers. At the time, the military-police joint investigation corps thoroughly investigated even the books, materials, and documents of Seon (Zen) centers and seminaries appended to the big monasteries.

The incident, generally called as the October 27 Buddhist Persecution, can be seen as an attempt by the military to redirect public concern from the coup and Gwangju massacre. At the same time, the military tried to justify their coup by restructuring the press, political parties, religion, officialdom, and by identifying a new group of 'criminals' in the name of social purification. The real purpose behind the October 27 Buddhist Persecution was to flush out members of the opposition and progressive intellectuals who would, in the opinion of the Coup leaders, stand as obstacles to their government.²⁰

Buddhist progressive activists on several grounds have criticized the justification of the persecution by the military.²¹ First, it was a time of a

²⁰ *Ibid*, 194-5.

strong democratic sentiment in the Buddhist Jo'gye order. After the death of the dictator Bag Jeonghi, in the free social atmosphere experienced in politics as well as by members of the press, academics and others, the Jo'gye order was reunified after a division of their administration into two headquarters. A new secretary general, Song Weolju, was elected in the reunited Jo'gye order.

Second, Buddhists, even including most conservative believers and leaders, asked about the justification of the persecution. Further, they asked why the military had victimized only the Buddhist order in their efforts of so-called religious purification. Even though progressive Buddhists did not have concrete proof, they believed that the military chose the Buddhist order as an easy target with no risk of a diplomatic struggle with the western nations or the Vatican. There are many bits of circumstantial and concrete pieces of evidence concerning the amount of effort the military put into establishing diplomatic and international recognition for their illegal regime. Most importantly, the common Buddhist adherent felt that the order had been discriminated against by the military. After 1980, this sentiment was elevated by the strength of the nationalist issue, anti-imperialism represented by anti Americanism.

Third, the persecution tremendously influenced the Buddhist leaders, both conservatives and progressives, and was thus especially instrumental in the formation of Minjung Buddhism. Before the persecution, institutional Buddhism had been a pro-ruling party camp and did not voice any support for social democracy, human rights, labor rights, and so forth. In short, institutional Buddhism acted as a puppet religious authority for the ruling party and government, that is to say, the dictatorship, and did not have their own voice at all.

It was the Purification movement that had brought about this state of

²¹ Gim Namgyu, *op. cit.*, 86.

affairs for institutional Buddhism. That movement had been supported by the government and initiated by the ordinance of the first president I Seungman. Only by reliance on government support could they expel married monks in face of their absolute inferiority in number and finance. The backlash of the October 27 Buddhist Persecution was that the military lost the longtime strong supporters of the government, institutional Buddhism. Even though some institutional Buddhist leaders still supported the government, the momentum was gone compared to past times. Furthermore, in addition to the progressive Buddhist student group, another anti-government group appeared among the junior progressive monastics and laymen.

2.3. Establishment of Central Sangha College

Another important event of this time was the establishment of Central Sangha College (CSC) in Gae'un-sa temple in Seoul. With the formation of that college came an opportunity for young progressive Buddhist monks and nuns to gather in a central location. The CSC was started under the name of the Central Buddhist Sangha Institute, and was renamed the Jo'gye Order Sangha College in 1979. When the CSC united with Korean Buddhist Nuns' College in 1982, it was upgraded in status from a two-year junior college to a four-year undergraduate college.

One of the largest general universities in Korea is the Jo'gye order affiliated Donggug University in Seoul. There, some monks and nuns study mostly as students of the Buddhist College. Although the monk and nun students in the Buddhist College of Donggug University contributed to the development of Minjung Buddhism, when we compare their influence on that movement to that of the monk and nun students at the CSC, we find that those at Donggug played a lesser role.

There are two aspects of CSC that brought about a tremendous

transformation in the traditional monastic organization. First, traditional monastic education has been based exclusively upon the inner teachings of the Buddhist canon in the seminaries housed in the parish headquarter temples. Other than Buddhist Studies, the CSC introduced courses on the outer teachings, taught at modern western religious academic institutions.

Second, both graduates and undergraduates of the CSC felt a stronger affiliation with their own colleagues than towards other monks or nuns of their own parish. This was true in spite of the fact that their parishes and the headquarters of the Jo'gye order supported the students and their school financially.²² Rather than subjugation to their own parishes, they sought their identity as students of same school. They had collective concerns for the non-democratic Jo'gye order in internal affairs and the dictatorial government in external affairs. The students of seminaries appended to big parishes had difficulty in raising the problems of non democratic internal affairs of the parishes because of their close relationship with the representatives of their own parishes. With this background, students of CSC collectively participated in the reform of the Buddhist order and the realization of social justice through issues such as democratization, the unification of Korea, human rights and labor rights.

3. Early Minjung Buddhism

3.1. The Movement for the Revitalization of the Temple's Original Roles.

In early 1981, activist monks and laymen began to meet in order to discuss methods for the democratization of the Buddhist order and society. The result was the 'Symposium on the Movement for the

²² Gim Jongchan, "Minjung bulgyo undong eu jeon'gae gwajeong" (Developmental process of Minjung Buddhist movement in *Minjung bulgyo eu tamgu*, 185-6.

Revitalization of the Temple's Original Roles (MRTOR)' at Myo'gag-sa temple, affiliated with the minor Buddhist order, the Bul'ib sect. Even though the majority of activists of the MRTOR were the monks and members of the Jo'gye order, they housed their office at Myo'gag sa temple for several reasons. First, they had difficulty in finding an office in the conservative Jo'gye order and second, the abbot of the temple, I Hongpa, was comparatively progressive and an alumnus of the National Federation for Buddhist Associations of Universities and Colleges (NFBAUC).

Those of the MRTOR are considered the first professional Buddhist activists because they systematically and persistently participated in political practices. Their first action was to establish institutions for educating the poor and uneducated workers. This was carried out at Myo'gag-sa temple and Bohyeon-sa temple, both in Seoul, as well as in the cities of Busan and Jeonju. This activity was revolutionary in comparison with traditional methods for the propagation of Buddhism.

The MRTOR asserted that the sangha cannot be separated from the secular world. In this context, the society should be buddhicized through the recovery of the fundamental role of the temple. Accordingly, the established temples and their local branches should serve for the benefit of local people. To implement this philosophy in concrete practice, the MRTOR created the institutions for educating the poor and uneducated workers.

Second, they published the quarterly magazine *Young Tathāgata* (Cheongnyeon yeorae) through which they interpreted doctrine in a different way from the traditional Buddhist scholars and monks. The most important transformation would come from the reinterpretation of the concept of suffering (duḥkha). In addition to the long held view of individual suffering, the new interpretation included four types of sufferings according to the social scientific perspective of the MRTOR. ²³

Furthermore, the world-view of Buddhism was also interpreted in a different way. The new view held by the MRTOR focused more social karma than on that of the individual. This was facilitated by a sociological interpretation of the central Buddhist doctrine, the theory of co-arising, which holds that all existing things are dependent upon one other for that existence.²⁴ Interpreting this as a basis for democracy provided the strong philosophical grounds for social practice.

In early 1982, the prosecutor and the police defined the MRTOR movement as a movement for Buddhist socialism.²⁵ The police investigated the MRTOR activists on a national scale and arrested one hundred fifty members. This was preceded in late 1981 by the detention of the leader (Seog) Beob'u at the police station in Jeonju. At the time, (Seog) Beob'u was preparing to open the national federation of institutes for the education of the poor and uneducated workers.

The government interpreted the MRTOR as an organization to propagate the Buddhist socialism of southeast Asian Buddhist nations in South Korea. After an investigation lasting two or three months, the monk Beob'u received a prison sentence of three years and lay leaders Choe

²³ See (Seog) Beob'u's "Saeroun bulgyo undong euroseoeu saweonhwa undong" (New Buddhist movement for the revitalization of fundamental roles of temples) in the autumn 1981 issue of *Cheongnyeon yeorae* (Young Tathagata).

²⁴ Mog Jeongbae contends that these MRTOR activists modeled Minjung temples of Vietnamese Buddhist socialism. But he does not explain functions of the Minjung temple in Vietnam in details. See his "Yeogsapyeon, Geun-hyeonda" (Part History: Modern and contemporary) in *Han'gug bulgyo chongnam*, 105.

²⁵ Mog Jeongbae points out the influence of Buddhist socialism from Vietnam on page 105 in his above-mentioned article. Also, refer to I Jihyeon's "Dongnam asia minjog jui wa bulgyo" (Nationalism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia) in *Seungga* 5 (1988), 203-214. And I have not precisely examined how much the MRTOR movement had an doctrinal and practical inspiration from the following book, which was published only just one year before the movement; Jerrold Schecter, *The New Face of Buddha*, translated by (Seog) Myeogjeong (Yeo Ikgu), with the title *Bulat eu sae olgui*.

Yeon and Sin Sangjin received sentences one year each. Their crime was said to be the violation of the law protecting National Security.

The event shocked those of the Buddhist order who remained conservative in faith and conceptualist in their approach to Buddhist studies. Several senior monks were taken to police stations for interrogation. This attracted the attention of monks and laymen, some of whom attended the trials and raised funds in support of the defendants. Such a situation had no precedence in the history of Korean Buddhism.

3.2. Important Minjung Buddhist activities

In 1981, from July 11 to 16, on the CSC campus, monk students organized a massive conference entitled 'National Youth Monk's Conference for Six Harmonies' (NYMCSH). CSC students took the leading role in this event which monk students from all over the country attended. In the conference, the contemporary problems of the Buddhist order were investigated with focus on solutions. In the process, they defined their own role in the Buddhist movement through the examination of emergent social problems. For this reason, the conference proved to be of importance for the Minjung movement.

The massive participation in the monk students to the conference happened just after the previous year's military persecution when there was a prevailing feeling of defeat among the established monks. In this context, in 1981, the junior monks (Seog) Donggwang, (Seog) Don'yeon and (Seog) Seongmun established two organizations. Of them, it was the Association of the Forest of the Buddhist Teachings (Gyorim-hoe) in particular that held a hearing for the reform of the Buddhist order from which a tentative draft was drawn towards the achievement of this goal.

Shortly afterwards, progressive junior monks established the 'Center for Research of the Policy of the Jo'gye Order' (CRPJO, director (Seog) Cheonjang, secretary general (Seog) Jihyeong). The center began to take a

serious look at the direction of development of the Jo'gye order and in November 1981, the 'Center for Buddhist Society and Culture' (CBSC, director professor Han Sangbeom) was established as a subsidiary organ for the purpose of examining the particular cases and suggesting concrete alternatives.

In 1982, the CBSC presented a report on their comprehensive research on the Korean religious educational system. In the same year, they publicized a draft of their proposal for the reform of the system of the Jo'gye order. This was based upon their research's findings concerning the Korean religious legal system as compared with the Buddhist educational system in southeast Asian Buddhist nations.

This paper, co-edited by Yeo Ikgu and Jeong Seungseog, included a suggestion for the reform of the propagation priest system, which allows for the existence of lay priests. Specifically, it suggested propagation priests be allowed to marry and eat meat. When the reformative draft was publicized in the daily newspapers, senior Buddhist monks reacted with utter indignation. Just one week after the article appeared, the secretary general of the Jo'gye order, (Seog) Jin'gyeong, announced that the proposal would not be considered. This immediate counter measure on the part of the secretary general indicated just how great was the shock and the resistance to change on the part of established senior monks in regards to the propagation priest system.²⁶

To explain why the elder and senior monks reacted instantly, we must understand their roots. The conservative senior leaders had themselves directly or indirectly engaged in the Purification movement. As explained above, the central thrust of that movement was to get rid of the Japanese influence manifested by the marriage of monks. However, because junior

²⁶ See Gim Jongchan's "Minjung bulgyo undong eu jeon'gae gwajeong" (The developmental process of Minjung Buddhist movement) in the *Minjung bulgyo eu tamgu*, 188.

monks were to a greater extent free from the influence of the Purification movement, they examined the propagation priest system in a different light, and they felt to be more objective and pragmatic.

As mentioned above, the MRTOR choose to house their office at Myo'gag-sa temple in part because of abbot (Seog) Hongpa's affiliation with the National Federation for Buddhist Associations of Universities and Colleges (NFBAUC). The NFBAUC played a central role as one of the progressive forces in the Buddhist order. The association initiated the 'National Corps for the Advisory of Dharmic Teachers' in which junior monks were the main participants. The stated purpose of the NFBAUC was to take a leading role in the reform of society and the Buddhist order.

The main books used for the study of reform by student members of the NFBAUC were *Bulgyo eu sahoe sasang* (Social Thought in Buddhism)²⁷ and *Hyeondae sahoe wa bulgyo* (The contemporary society and Buddhism).²⁸ Both of these publications were translated from Japanese and edited by Yeo Ikgu²⁹, the secretary general of the NFBAUC at the time. Yeo introduced the theories of Buddhist socialism largely through the research of Japanese scholars. These books were considered radical at the time and were soon confiscated by the government. However, the publication of them contributed to the clarification of the ambiguous theories of Minjung Buddhism through the reinterpretation of the traditional Buddhism. For this reason, they helped systemize and develop the theoretical aspect of Minjung Buddhism.

In July 1983, some junior monks and lay activists who had participated in the CBSC held a large conference entitled the 'National Federation

²⁷ The book was published by Minjogsa in Seoul in 1981.

²⁸ The book was published by Han'gilsa in Seoul in 1981.

²⁹ His major works are *Minjung bulgyo ibmun* (Introduction to Minjung Buddhism), Seoul: Pulbid, 1985 and *Minjung bulgyo cheolhag* (Philosophy of Minjung Buddhism).

Meeting for Youth Buddhists' (NFMYB, chair of the preparatory committee (Seog) Jihyeong) at Beom'eo-sa temple in Busan. More than one thousand people attended, including junior monks from Seon parish centers and seminaries, CSC student monks, student members of the NFBAUC, members of the Korean Buddhist Youth Association and student monks of Donggug University.

The purpose of the conference is found in the written record of that meeting. In the first clause of the third article of the federation constitution, it states 'the federation takes a responsibility for the future Buddhism in the strong unity between monastics and laymen by taking the spirit of six harmonies of the Sangha.' The meeting attempted to unite the Buddhist movement in both monastic and lay groups.

Moreover, those at the meeting voiced support for the reform of the ideas, institutions, and rituals of the Buddhist order. This also meant the advocacy of that order as an agent for social democracy. Conference participants officially initiated the 'National Federation of Young Buddhists' (NFYB, president (Seog) Jihyung, vice presidents (Seog) Seongmun and Gim Yeonggug).

3.3. The Emergency Order Administration

On August 15, 1983, a monk was killed by a group of trying to occupy one of the richest temples, Sinheung-sa temple in Gang'weon province. The event came to be known as the Sinheung-sa Incident. The day after this, the NFYB held an emergency meeting at Gae'un-sa temple and announced that the order should be purified autonomously and without government intervention, that the secretary general of the order should resign, and that the order assembly should take responsibility for the murder at Sinheung-sa temple. While the NFYB urged for the disbandment of the order assembly, two hundred fifty members of the

association entered a hunger strike as a service for protecting the Dharma and saving the order. After five hundred representatives of the NFBAUC from seventy-seven universities joined the hunger strike, at last, the secretary general resigned and the order assembly was disbanded.

The Council of Elder Monk Representatives (CEMR) declared the 'Emergency Incident of the Jo'gye Order' and announced that they would hold a massive, national conference of monks. 2,500 monks and nuns came to participate in the conference, declaring manifestoes for reform and passing a resolution to assign all powers to the CEMR. Afterwards, the CEMR revised the constitution of the order and cleared the road for emergency measures for the management of the order.

The appearance of the emergency order administration was a moment for Buddhist progressives, including monks and laymen, to divide depending upon their methods for the solution of the current emergency situation. Some people asserted that the power of the order should be used for the reformation of Buddhism while others insisted that the reformation of Buddhism would be impossible to bring about from inside the institutional order.

Radical activists asserted that the institutional order was centered upon the monastics and the participation of laymen was limited. Moreover, they indicated that the institutional Buddhist order could not achieve independence from government intervention. For this reason, the radical activists, both monastics and laymen, focused instead on the propagation of the Dharma.

Even though the progressive group was divided, the emergency order administration collected the progressive reformative opinions and prepared the six groups' saNgha system, which meant the addition of two groups of propagation lay priests, male and female, to the established four groups: monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. The introduction of the propagation lay priest system was to make a bridge between monastics

and laymen, to let the propagation lay priests engage in the Dharmic propagation to the believers, and to accomplish justice in society. As explained above, the system was basically suggested by the reformatory draft of the CBSC.

The emergency order administration took radical steps such as the establishment of the Seon center managed by the central order administration, the public management of temple finance, and the reform and rearrangement of established rituals. In addition, the administration reformed the system of the management of believers and suggested that believers register only in their own home temple. The administration planned to educate people in the united texts and rituals.

Needless to say, the radical measures of the emergency order administration, which had for the most part been put forth by junior progressive monks, were considered a challenge to the established monastic system by the senior Buddhist leaders of the Seon tradition with twenty four parish headquarter temples as their power bases. At last, the emergency order administration received a condemnation of no confidence from the CEMR. Even the highest spiritual leader of the Jo'gye order, His Holiness (Seog) Seongcheol, announced the direction for the reform from a conservative perspective.

The Federation of the Abbots of the 24 Parishes pushed to squash the bill for abolishing the parish system. The most decisive moment in the struggle was the resignation announcement by H.H. (Seog) Seongcheol on July 14, 1984.

After the resignation, the monastic order was divided into two. On October 1, the emergency order administration presided over a massive meeting, and on the same day, some conservative senior monks held a massive conference of the monks and nuns at Haein-sa temple in South Gyeongsang province. The conservative group demanded that their authority be recognized and formed the new order administration at

Bong'eun-sa temple in Seoul. More than one hundred monks and their lay supporters of the conservative group invaded Jo'gye-sa temple in Seoul, the headquarter temple of the Jo'gye order, and pushed the monks of the emergency order administration from the headquarter building.

In 1984, after losing power, the progressive junior monks established the Center for the Nation and Buddhism (CNB, director (Seog) Seongmun). The group widely assembled progressive junior monks and organized the Association of the Korean Youth Sangha (AKYS, president (Seog) Songsan). The association was constituted as an alternative to the institutional Buddhism of the conservative senior monks. The activity of the AKYS, strictly speaking, was centered on monastics. The lay activists who participated in the CNB and the AKYS played only a minor.

4. The Minjung Buddhist movement against the dictatorship and for democratization

4.1. The Federation for Minjung Buddhist Movement

On May 14, 1985, activists, including laymen and monastics who did not participate in the emergency order administration, met and founded the Federation for Minjung Buddhist Movement (FMBM, chair Yeo Ikgu). One hundred eighty activists participated in the foundation of the FMBM. The FMBM was quickly defined as an illegal organization by the government and one hundred four participators in the general assembly of the establishment of the FMBM were arrested.

The FMBM in its prospectus for its establishment described the masses of Korean society as being the serious situation in all fields: politics, economy, human rights, democracy, and so forth. The FMBM concretely revealed the following directives of the Minjung Buddhist movement. First was the construction of independent and democratic Buddhism, second the

promotion of Korean traditional culture, third the fair distribution of wealth, and fourth the accomplishment of the autonomous and peaceful unification between two Koreas, North Korea and South Korea.³⁰

The FMBM suggested the most concrete goals for any previous progressive organization and set about to carry them out. In June of 1985, members of the FMBM participated in a street demonstration to protest the unjust dismissal of female workers of the Seongdo Textile Company, and began to publish its own official magazine *Minjung Beobdang* (Minjung Dharmic Hall) for the propagation of Minjung ideology.

The social contribution of the FMBM can be summarized in three points. First, the FMBM led the movement against the dictatorship and for democratization by uniting most of the progressive activists in the Buddhist order.

Second, the FMBM embraced all the progressive Buddhist activities in the name of Minjung Buddhism. That is, the FMBM popularized the term Minjung Buddhism and even used the term to designate their organization. Thus, the term Minjung Buddhism was introduced to almost all Korean intellectuals and activists in connection with Minjung theology, the Korean version of Liberation theology.

Third, the FMBM suggested the reunification of Korea even though the organization did not give a concrete method for bring this about. Because the issue of reunification later became one of tremendous importance for Korean progressives, the FMBM's introduction of the issue is seen as important in the development of Minjung Buddhism.

After less than one year, the activities of the FMBM began to radically decline. There are three major reasons for this. First, the leaders of FMBM were arrested or wanted by the police because of their participation in a massive street demonstration for workers' right in the large industrial city

³⁰ Hong Saseong *op. cit.*, 103.

Incheon near Seoul.

Second, as a result of their radical struggles in the field, the FMBM became isolated from the established Buddhist order. This was because the leaders of the established Buddhist order strongly disagreed with the use of violence by members of the FMBM.

Third, the established Buddhist leaders believed that the Minjung activists were interested in usurping their own power rather than in true reform. It was from this perspective that they viewed the NYMCSH massive rally on the CSC campus in Seoul in 1981, the NFMYB conference at Beom'eo-sa temple in Busan in 1983, the hunger strike at Jo'gye temple, the Jo'gye order headquarter temple, in Seoul in 1983 after the murder of a monk by a monk at Sinheung-sa in Gang'weon province, and in the same year the start of the emergency order administration. In fact, the established monks were seriously worried about the loss of their positions if the progressive junior monks succeeded in gaining power. The conservative senior monks had already seen the type of measures that could be implemented by the radical Buddhist monks during the time of the emergency order administration.

4.2. Major Minjung Buddhist monastic activities

As the FMBM began to decline, on June 5, 1986, two hundred twenty one monks split into a faction called the National Sangha Association for the Construction of Pure Land (NSACPL, advisor (Seog) Jiseon, president (Seog) Cheonghwa, and vice presidents (Seog) Mog'u and (Seog) Jin'gwan). In early 1986, fourteen monks signed a statement requesting the revision of the Korean constitution in order to change the basis of presidential election system from an indirect election to a direct election. Later, one hundred fifty two monks announced a manifesto demanding democratization, which accelerated the formation of the NSACPL.

The departure of the NSACPL meant that the main body of the Minjung Buddhist movement changed from a united force of the monastics and laymen (FMBM) to the monastics. This was in contrast to the initial stage of Minjung Buddhism, during which the movement had been dominated by laymen. The NSACPL organization declared forty times the manifestoes concerning contemporary social and political issues and demanded the social democratization and the sovereignty of the Buddhist order. The central figures of the NSACPL, advisor (Seog) Jiseon, president (Seog) Cheonghwa, and vice presidents (Seog) Mog'u and (Seog) Jin'gwan, became the leaders in the Buddhist movement for social democratization.

After the mid-eighties, the most striking event to occur in the Buddhist order was the national monastic conference held at Haein-sa temple in South Gyeongsang province on September 7, 1986. Two thousand monk participants demanded the examination in a alleged sexual torture of a female student leader at the Bucheon police station in Gyeonggi province, the fair investigation in the October 27 Buddhist Persecution of 1980, and the abolishment of laws related to the discrimination of the Buddhist order. Among these three demands, the fair investigation in the October 27 Buddhist Persecution was the most sensitive issue for the ruling regime because it was directly responsible for that action.

The demand was strikingly accepted by the majority of Koreans because they knew strongly conservative reputation of the leaders of the institutional Buddhist order.³¹ Even the secretary general, the highest ranked administrator in the Jo'gye order, (Seog) Euhyeon, defined the

³¹ The event attracted the attention from the public. Nearly all of the major daily newspapers dealt with the national level monastic conference on September 7, 1986. The monthly magazine *Sindong'a* dealt with the conference as one of the most striking sixty events in the contemporary Korea in the January 1988 issue. See the issue, 328-333.

October 27 Buddhist Persecution as a violent measure which tramped the holy temples with the military shoes. Taking this a step further, he demanded a change in the concept 'State-protecting Buddhism' to be interpreted as protection for the citizens rather than a specific regime. Considering the conservative inclination of the institutional Buddhist leaders, this suggestion was radical beyond imagination.

A massive conference was planned to bridge a compromise between the progressive junior Buddhist monks and some of the conservative senior Buddhist monks. The progressive juniors participated in the conference in the advocacy of the subjectivity of the Buddhist order and the democratization of the society. On the other hand, the conservative seniors tried to use the massive conference to drive away the incumbent rival politicians from the administration with the help of the progressive juniors. When the incumbent secretary general, (Seog) Nog'weon, resigned his post, the newly launched executives had accomplished their goal of political hegemony. Thus the conservative seniors no longer had a need for compromise with the progressive juniors.

4.3. Other important Minjung Buddhist activities

The influence and effect of the conference had been tremendous. Korean intellectuals and journalists applauded and supported the demands of the massive conference and the Buddhist organizations everyday announced manifestoes for the support of the demands. Based upon this public support, the progressive junior monks, in collaboration with lay activists, held a conference for the denouncement of the October 27 Buddhist Persecution on October 27, 1986 at Bong'eun-sa temple in Seoul. Participants of the conference, including student monks and lay students, threw stones and demanded the punishment of specific persons. The Minjung Buddhist movement became more radicalized and even monk

activists adopted violence as a method.

The evaluation of the use of violence by the Minjung Buddhist activists was varied in the Buddhist order. Extreme conservative Buddhists asserted that the religion should be separated from politics. Moderate conservative Buddhists asserted that they generally agreed with the view of Minjung Buddhists but criticized the use of violence as a method to accomplish their goals. In the end, the controversy over the use of violence increased the gap between the conservative senior monk group and the progressive junior monk group.³²

On March 31, 1987, the Minjung Buddhist organizations attended the Buddhist memorial service for late student activist Bag Jongcheol, which was performed on the 49th day after he was tortured to death. The fact that the late Bag Jongcheol was a Buddhist prompted the Minjung Buddhist organizations to earnestly participate in the service and to confront the dictatorship.

On May 18, 1987, the anniversary of the massacre of Gwangju citizens in 1980, Buddhists gathered to commemorate the Gwangju Incident and perform a sacrifice service for the dead spirits who were killed in the massacre at Weon'gag-sa temple, located in the downtown of Gwangju. At the time, the police shot the tear gas bombs to the temple. One day after the event, eighteen student monks of Donggug University entered a hunger strike without limit. Seven hundred student monks belonging to the parish seminaries, announced a manifesto and held a sit-in protest demonstration. On May 27, the massive demonstration was in charge of

³² See (Seog) Beobdal's "Minjung Bulgye e daehan si'gag" (Perspectives on Minjung Buddhism) in the October 28, 1988 issue of the weekly newspaper *Bulgyo sinmun*. And the conservative newspaper, published by the Jo'gye order, dealt with the Minjung Buddhism as a special topic both in the February 24, 1988 issue and the March 3, 1988 issue. And in the progressive journal, *Minjung beobdang* 5 (1988), the progressives rejected the conservative argument and vindicated their use of violence.

the Federation of Temples of Gwangju in the downtown of Gwangju. At the time, five thousand Buddhists attended the protest. The Minjung Buddhist group held a pan-Buddhist conference for the condemnation of the use of the tear gas bombs and demanded the cessation of the suppression of Buddhism on May 31 at Gae'un-sa temple in Seoul.

When another student leader died by torture, the Korean populace could not endure anymore from the anti-democratic dictatorship regime and masses of people poured into the streets. The demonstration was called as the June 10 Masses Resistance of 1987. Frightened, the dictatorship finally accepted the main issue, the revision of the constitution for the change of presidential election system from an indirect election to a direct one. Many Buddhist monastics and laymen had participated in the demonstration.

On December 16, 1987, the presidential election was held. Generally, the Minjung Buddhist group agreed to positively engage in the election. But, the opposition group was divided into two camps. Two longtime rival opposition leaders, Gim Yeongsam and Gim Daejung, announced their candidacy in the presidential race. Some Minjung Buddhists declared support for the comparatively progressive candidate Gim Daejung. Other Minjung Buddhists asked that the two opposition presidential candidates join forces. Because of the failure of to singularize, the opposition group did not succeed in changing the regime.

5. The reunification movement

5.1. Historical background

After the presidential election, conservatives escalated their criticism of Minjung Buddhism. They especially criticized the NSACPL monk leaders who backed the candidate Gim Daejung and some lay leaders of the

FMBM who entered institutional politics by becoming congressional candidates. The conservatives contended that, even though the Minjung Buddhists claimed that they were the advocates of Mahayana Buddhism, the Minjung movement was a political movement.

In fact, the issue 'anti-dictatorship and democratization' had functioned as a common factor for a variety of groups to unite. But with the presidential election and the general election groups for democratization became difficult to unite. The progressive Minjung Buddhist group was also divided.

On March 25, 1988, the Mahayana Buddhist SaNgha Association (MBSA, president (Seog) Songsan) was founded. The constituents of the association were the junior monks who had participated in the emergency order administration in 1983 and the national massive conference of monastics held at Haein-sa temple in South Gyeongsang province on September 7, 1986. They were politically moderate in comparison with the leaders of the NSACPL and contended that the monastic Buddhism and Minjung Buddhism should be united. As an alternative, they suggested Minjog (Nation) Buddhism. It is not clear how Minjog Buddhism was different from Minjung Buddhism. However, it seems likely that Minjog Buddhism intended to make national problems appear as their main focus rather than the class or masses struggle, which was the main issue in Minjung Buddhism.

The Institute for Buddhist Social Education (IBSE) was established on March 5, 1988 to educate Buddhist activists through the reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist doctrines through social scientific theory and methods. The IBSE was managed by lay activists and intellectuals in their thirties.

Some lay members of the FMBM and the NFBAUC established the Center for the Research of Buddhism and Society (CRBS) on April 9, 1988. The center took on the same characteristics as the IBSE and concentrated on the activities and research in labor issues, human rights, unification,

and so forth.

After the presidential election, the Minjung Buddhist group was split into several organizations by early 1988, even though there were no special and particular differences among these organizations. The newly established organizations such as the MBSA of the monastics and the IBSE and CRBS of the laymen and the previously established organizations such as the NSACPL of the monastics and the FMBM of the laymen sometimes cooperated with one another. However, each organization mostly worked independently. It can be said that the split basically originated from the desire of the organizations to gain hegemonic acceptance of their own leaders in the Minjung Buddhist circle.

5.2. The reunification movement ³³

On June 12, 1988, most of independent Minjung Buddhist organizations began to unite under the name of Buddhist Headquarter for Joint Exhibition of the 1988 Olympic Games with North Korea (BHJEOGNK, general manager (Seog) Jiseon). The BHJEOGNK was participated in by ten organizations including the NSACPL, the CSC, the NFBAUC and comparatively conservative organizations such as the Seoul district branch of the Korea Buddhist Youth Association (KBYS), the Buddhist Youth Association of Seoul, and the Youth Association of the Jin'gag order. The FMBM, the MBSA, the IBSE and the CRBS did not participated in the BHJEOGNK. The BHJEOGNK was begun as a Buddhist branch of the general social democratization movement for the joint exhibition of the 88 Olympic Games.

³³ See (Seog) Beobta's "Nambug bulgyo gyoryu wa jeonmang" (The exchange of Buddhism between two Korea and its prospect) in *Han'gug bulgyo chongnam*, 123-129 and the "Gingeub jeomgeom—bulgyo'gye eu tong'il non'eu" (Emergent examination—reunification issue in the Buddhist organizations) in the June 22, 1988 issue of the weekly newspaper *Bulgyo sinmun*.

Even though the FMBM, the MBSA and the CRBS did not participate in the BHJEOGNK, the organizations practiced Minjung Buddhism in their own ways. For example, CRBS held a symposium for the reunification of North and South Korea and the MBSA opened a Dharmic service for the reunification. Similarly, the BHJEOGNK founded an institute for reunification.

The progressive Buddhist groups regularly advocated reunification and demanded the pullout of the American military from the South Korean territory. The issue provoked the controversy between the progressives and the conservatives in South Korea. Conservatives fiercely criticized the demand for the pullout of U.S. military forces, claiming that this was identical with the demand of North Korea. Progressives contended that they had finally begun to deal with the issue of the reunification in concrete terms.

The issue of reunification may prove to once again unite diverse groups. Though the debate has been ongoing among all groups, methods are considerably different for conservatives and progressives.

Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Korea

Ho Nam Park¹

1. Thoughts of Sri Lanka and Korea

Sri Lanka, the land of Buddha, the land of a thousand breathtaking spectacles, the land of jewelry, the land of teas has finally get to meet Korea. The disciples of Theravada school are proud of their orthodox traditions. I want to give my heartfelt thanks to the participants from the land of peace.²

Most Koreans remember the country as a glory of thoughts. Sri Lanka is filled with deep thoughts, philosophy, and natural abundance. They preserve the peaceful mind and devote their life to the ultimate enlightenment.

We Koreans find the similarity to Sri Lankans in the history of Buddhist philosophy. We identify us with Sri Lankans in Buddhist thoughts and rituals. In comparison of Buddha's images, pagodas, and temples in two countries, we can find the transformation of original form of Buddhism.³ It is the beginning of new era of mutual cooperation as

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² This writing is designed to introduce Korean culture for the Sri Lankan educators. It mainly focused on the common elements between two countries, especially on Buddhism.

³ The four patterns of reinterpretation and response are:

1) Protestant Buddhism: the response of the early reformers who began the revival by both