

The Templestay Program of the Korean Jogye Order — Cultural Transformations and Adaptations —

Achim BAYER†

Abstract

The Templestay program was inaugurated in 2002 by the Jogye order, the largest order of Korean Buddhism, in order to accommodate foreign visitors to Korea and provide an experience of Buddhist practice and Korean culture. Set in the often scenic environment of the Jogye order's temples, the program was well received from the beginning. When it was extended to house Korean visitors, later in the same year, participant numbers rose dramatically, and it became clear that Koreans had a high demand for such a program. This article traces the early history of the project, along with reflections on the views of previous researchers, and contextualizes the Templestay program in the history of early Buddhist relations between monastics and the laity, in its cross-cultural aspects, and in its significance for the development of innovative programs by traditional Buddhist orders.

Keywords

cultural tourism, Korean Buddhism, Buddhist modernism, cross-cultural encounter, Templestay

韓国仏教曹溪宗の Templestay 事業について — 文化的変化と適応 —

バイヤー・アヒム†

キーワード

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1. Introduction⁽¹⁾

Since its establishment in 2002, the South Korean Templestay program allows visitors to stay overnight in traditional Buddhist temples and take

part in the routines of everyday temple life. The temples in charge of the program normally provide additional cultural activities, such as folding paper lanterns, as part of the daily program. As different

† bayer@seiryō-u.ac.jp (Kanazawa Seiryō University, Department of International Culture)

from other programs such as meditation retreats, the Templestay schedule includes a fair amount of free time. Over the last fourteen years, the participating temples have, with governmental subsidization, housed thousands of visitors, and the program is widely considered a major success.⁽²⁾

1.1 Sources and Previous Research

So far, the program has received a moderate amount of scholarly attention. Although Kaplan considers his 2010 article merely a “preliminary attempt at a critical academic inquiry” (p. 127), he presents, on twenty pages, a sound and solid introduction to the history, present, and cultural implications of the program. Wang’s 2011 thesis in Hotel Administration naturally focuses on Templestay as a “mature tourism product” (p. 47) but provides ample contextualization in cultural and historical perspective. Punsu (2014) focuses on the more abstract implications of the program’s cross-cultural elements. Furthermore, several theses on M.A. and PhD levels have been produced, in Korean, at Dongguk University, a university that belongs to the Jogye tradition (曹溪宗) of Korean Buddhism, which in turn is the Korean government’s partner in the implementation of the program.⁽³⁾ It can be expected that academic interest from this side will continue.

Government support for the program has brought with it a highly beneficial side-effect: the Jogye order has established a coordination bureau under the name of “Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism” (Kr. Hanguk Bulgyo Munhwa Saeobdan), which prepares a number of publications relating to the program and collects statistical data from the participants in order to report to the government.

2. Remarks on the History of the Templestay Program

As said above, the Templestay program allows

laypersons to stay in Buddhist temples and participate in much of the daily monastic activities. This is a relatively new development. Basically, the temples of the Jogye Order are homes to celibate monks and nuns. Although married Buddhist monastics played a significant role in various episodes of Korean history,⁽⁴⁾ especially during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945),⁽⁵⁾ celibacy has been strongly enforced in the Jogye order since 1970.⁽⁶⁾

2.1 Before Templestay

The temples of the Jogye order mostly house less than ten monks or nuns. Most of them being smaller establishments, the designation “temple” seems to be preferred to “monastery” in the Jogye order’s English-language publications.⁽⁷⁾

Before 2002, lay Buddhists and non-Buddhists would usually visit the temple during the daytime. The head monk was normally free to permit lay guests to stay overnight, and lay assistants could live within the temple’s precincts permanently. Some temples offered retreat programs to lay individuals and groups.⁽⁸⁾

2.1.1 Lodging Capacities of the Temples

Monks and nuns normally sleep in their own individual room. Apart from the living quarters, there are halls for various religious and practical purposes.⁽⁹⁾ In the decades up to 2002, many rural temples increased their activities in the cities and founded their own community centers in the city.⁽¹⁰⁾ As a result, lay groups from the city visited the corresponding rural temple and stayed overnight, for which the monastic facilities were adapted, in addition to the traditional guest rooms. On the other hand, the city centers provided rooms when monks and nuns visited, in which case their monastic quarters could be used to accommodate guests.⁽¹¹⁾

When considerations for the Templestay program began in 2002, it was probably well

known to experts in the field of Korean tourism that the temples held the space, the facilities, and the expertise to house a significant number of guests.

2.1.2 Hiking and Mountaineering in South Korea

Most of the temples are located in remote mountain areas. On the upside, this is a strong incentive for contemporary urban dwellers to visit the temple and enjoy the natural environment, clean air, mountain landscape, and tranquility.⁽¹²⁾ In recent decades, Korea's economic boom has brought with it a boom in hobby mountaineering and hiking, caused by such factors as the rise of densely populated cities, an affordable, highly modern railway system, increased automobile infrastructure, reduced working hours (in some sectors), a new culture of health-conscious and independently travelling women, and increased physical fitness of senior citizens. The popularity of mountain hiking in Korea is overwhelming, and many men relate that they became fond of it, and learned the basic skills, during the compulsory military service, which has only recently been reduced to 21 months.⁽¹³⁾

2.1.3 Mountain Veneration and Pilgrimage

Korea further looks back on a tradition of mountain veneration and pilgrimage that has left quite visible traces: Korea is the home of a great number of hiking clubs, the members of which usually rent a bus once or twice a month and visit a mountain of their choice. On the first hike of the new year, members of the group usually build a kind of sacrificial altar in view of the mountain. The members then step in front of the altar one by one, donate a banknote and receive a sip of brandy (Kr. *seo ju*) and a white rice cake with red beans (Kr. *pat ddeog*). All this is performed with the explicit intention to prevent mountaineering accidents during the coming season. While for some, this is simply a traditional event for the sake of good luck, many clearly follow the traditional explanation

that is a ritual directed to the deity of this specific mountain.⁽¹⁴⁾

This tradition of mountain veneration bears an obvious significance for mountain temples offering Templestay: going to the mountain has a spiritual connotation in itself, for Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists.⁽¹⁵⁾ In the offering ritual to the mountain deity, hikers of all denominations participate, whether they are Buddhist, agnostic, or Christian, with some participants even belonging to Evangelist churches.⁽¹⁶⁾ The ritual of mountain veneration is open to all faiths, including monotheist faiths, and in so far it is similar to the Templestay program: it seems to be free from an underlying conception of exclusivism.

2.1.4 Korea's Temples Face the Tourist Boom

The boom in hiking and mountaineering brought with it, on the downside, some disturbance of the peace and serenity for a number of temples. It was no longer the occasional woodcutter or pilgrim who arrived at the mountain hermitage, but an unceasing flow of well-equipped hikers pouring over the newly established hiking trails, along the ancient paths that were once hardly traceable without a guide.

2.1.4.1 Opposition

In some cases, touristic development met with strong opposition on the part of the monastics. The seventh head monk of the Jogye Order, the Venerable Seongcheol (性徹, 1912–1993), famously said in the 1980s:

“[We are] against the idea of developing our temples as public amusement parks. We must assure our firm stand against such destructive development plans of the government.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Ven. Seongcheol was known and admired for his traditional ascetic lifestyle,⁽¹⁸⁾ which was allegedly much more strict than that of the average

monk or nun. Internally, some even accused him of a backward-oriented or revisionist (Kr. *bokgojeok*, 復古的) outlook,⁽¹⁹⁾ unfit to develop Buddhism into the future. Nonetheless, as I will discuss in my conclusions, the right balance between a conservative and a progressive approach is not easy to discern when shaping contemporary Buddhism. Finding the right proportion between tradition and modernization is a gradual process, not a simple choice between one or the other.

Ven. Seongcheol surely left a rich heritage as a charismatic leader and saint, and he is one of the few modern Korean masters to have a statue of himself installed for veneration. Still, with regard to preserving the reclusiveness of the Korean mountain temples, his views were only partly followed by the tradition.

2.1.4.2 Endorsement

Many monastics welcomed the stream of travelers arriving on the new trails. There were probably two major incentives for this endorsement of the touristic development projects, as will be outlined below.⁽²⁰⁾

2.1.4.2.1 The Dharma Gate: Access to Buddhism

Firstly, many monastics surely saw a need, or even an obligation, to enable Buddhists and non-Buddhists to encounter authentic Buddhist temples and monastic life.⁽²¹⁾ It is, again, a situation specific to Korea that there are very few monks and temples in the capital city, Seoul. During much of the Joseon (朝鮮) dynasty (1392–1897), Buddhist monks and nuns were banned from the city, as the royal house basically followed a neo-Confucian policy of restricting Buddhist expansion.⁽²²⁾ Before the onset of mass tourism, many Seoulites had never even seen a monk or nun in real life, and those who had, often came from the countryside or the cities south of Seoul: with the massive emigration into Seoul after 1953, many young professionals who

had been raised in Buddhist families came into an environment where they had not only lost contact with their traditional family temple, but where only few temples were available at all. When they took to back-to-nature mountain tourism, where one almost inevitably passes by an active temple, it was an opportunity for them to reconnect with their Buddhist roots, in passing, so to say.⁽²³⁾

2.1.4.2.2 Donations, Entrance Fees, and Other Means of Right Livelihood

Secondly, the monetary benefits of an increase in visitor's numbers are obvious, and the temples' financial situation was probably aggravated by the rural migration described above: as young people moved away from their country homes in order to receive higher education and then find the corresponding highly qualified jobs, the remaining donors to rural temples either belonged to lower-income groups (when compared to the national average) or died away. The urban travelers trying to get away from the bustling city for a day were often descendants of families, rich and poor, that had supported a rural temple in the past, to the best of their ability.⁽²⁴⁾

2.1.4.3 Acceptance and the Middle Way Between Rejection and Endorsement

The Jogye order designates itself as belonging to the Seon (禪, Ch. Chan, Jp. Zen) tradition (although it should be noted that school distinctions between “Seon,” “Pure Land,” “Flower Ornament” and so on are partly of Japanese origin and less applicable in Korea and China).⁽²⁵⁾ Kaplan (2010, p. 136) has noticed that a typical Seon doctrine might have played a role in the acceptance of monastics catering for the touristic needs of laypeople, namely the concept that every activity can be performed as meditation practice. This attitude partly voids the distinction between profane and religious activities.⁽²⁶⁾ It supports hospitality as an

expression of the fundamentally benevolent attitude of the “Great Vehicle.” Hospitality thus becomes an integral part of the monastic *vita contemplativa*.

On a more fundamental level, another version of this attitude might have led monastics to neither oppose nor endorse the touristic developments in their environment but simply go with the flow and adapt to a changing environment. In fact, even without invoking particular Seon doctrines, already the early Buddhist teachings on *impermanence* can be interpreted as to recommend neither initiating reforms nor opposing changes as they happen. Rather, contemplating impermanence should lead to “a spacious accommodation of whatever happens to arise” as one researcher in Theravāda Buddhism has phrased it.⁽²⁷⁾

Furthermore, such an attitude of opposing neither change nor continuity could have motivated some monastics to freely allow visitors into their temples while constructing new, private living quarters in walking distance from the ancient buildings.⁽²⁸⁾ In this way, the *museumization* (Kaplan 2010, p. 132) of ancient temples helped the modernization of Buddhist monastic lifestyle, in terms of architecture and modernized facilities: the bustling ancient structure filled with peace-seeking city dwellers helped finance the serene modern structure in which monks of today live.

2.2 The Stadium and the Templum: Inauguration of the Templestay Program in 2002

Modernization and globalization drastically came upon Korean Buddhism when pilgrims of a different sort were bound to arrive: in preparation for the 2002 soccer World Cup, to be held jointly in South Korea and Japan, an inquiry by South Korean authorities found that affordable accommodation at an international standard was not sufficiently available. In this situation, the Jogye order was approached with a request to house visitors in their

temples. The request came on short notice, it seems, in early 2002,⁽²⁹⁾ with the games bound to begin on May 31.

As outlined above, reservations against visitors in temples were not uncommon, and certainly not unfounded, within the Jogye order. The dignitaries in charge could not accept their temples serving as mere camps for soccer fans. Instead, they suggested an elegant middle way, a program that was a mixture of spiritual retreat and cultural tourism, the first incarnation of the Templestay program, to be carried out from May 20 to June 30 of 2002.⁽³⁰⁾

It is quite significant that the initial outline of the Templestay program was designed particularly for foreign travelers, more particularly fans of an originally “Western” sport. That is to say, Templestay in a way originated from an encounter of Western Culture with Eastern Culture. The visitors could be expected to come from Europe and the Americas, where the majority of teams that had qualified came from (the Japanese team played all games in Japan). The jet set of Western soccer fans were offered a “light” version of a meditation retreat, tailored for their needs. Probably, none among this first group of participants was expected to be a Buddhist, and still, they were invited to recite the Triple Refuge along with 108 prostrations.⁽³¹⁾

Room was made for several thousands of participants, and by the end of the games, 991 foreigners had stayed in the temples,⁽³²⁾ taking part in the prostrations and recitations of monastic ritual.⁽³³⁾ This was already considered a great success, even though, from the sources consulted, it is not clear, how many of these had actually come to Korea because of the games. Among the participants, there was certainly a significant number of travelers who had come to see Korea and experience Korean culture, with no connection to the games.

Nathan (2010, p. 72) further records that “a

number of” foreign residents in Korea participated, wanting to enrich their experience of the country where they happened to live and work. Those participants were probably slightly beyond the initial intention of the program. Their participation did not ease the market for tourist lodging, and, as different from the average soccer fan, they had already experienced a solid amount of Korean culture in their private and professional lives.

According to official statistics, 33 temples had housed 991 visitors, that is, as an average of around 30 visitors per Temple, over a 42-day period.⁽³⁴⁾ If we assume hypothetically that each stayed for only one night, this would be less than one visitor per day. The actual stays were surely longer, and still, the resources were clearly sufficient.

2.3 A Note on the Lay Facilitators

Mention must be made at this point of the lay helpers at Buddhist temples, an important group that remains mostly unmentioned in Kaplan’s study. Although Korean Buddhist temples were, by 2002, basically the dwellings of celibate monastics (as stated above), lay helpers in the temples are a common sight, especially in those temples that offer services to visitors.⁽³⁵⁾ Some mountain temples, for example, offer free lunch for hikers, and the persons in charge of cooking and overseeing the dining hall are often exclusively laypersons.⁽³⁶⁾ While manual labor can undoubtedly be a meditative task for monastics, as Kaplan (2010, p. 136, discussed above) mentions, it must also be recognized that much of it is done by laypeople.

The helpers who stay in the temples for a longer time often receive a salary, and they are partly foreign workers from countries in which Buddhism has been established since pre-modern times, such as Nepal and China. Among the Korean voluntary helpers, the biggest proportion seem to be women who are either pensioners or housewives whose

children have already left the house. Among the male voluntary helpers, too, pensioners naturally occupy a huge proportion.⁽³⁷⁾

Kaplan (2010, p. 132) has already noticed that the Catholic church, managing tourism to its ancient sites, deals partly with the same challenges and opportunities as the Jogye order in Korea. The question of lay helpers is no exception: in Catholic monasteries that lodge visitors, elderly laywomen from the neighborhood often volunteer to take care of food and other services.⁽³⁸⁾

Therefore, it should not be overlooked that the first period of Templestay in 2002 did not only increase lay involvement on the part of the participants, it surely increased the involvement of lay facilitators, both professional and volunteer, too. When the Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism was established in 2004, with the main purpose of coordinating the Templestay program,⁽³⁹⁾ employment opportunities were created, and are still available, for Buddhist lay followers who wish to dedicate their professional life to Buddhism without taking the monastic vows.⁽⁴⁰⁾ According to Kaplan (2010, p. 131), the Cultural Corps is “a team of lay specialists in tourism, heritage, and marketing,” in a way, a team of highly educated professionals, like many others in downtown Seoul, where their office is located.

2.4 Journey to the East: The Asian Games 2002

After the initial success of the Templestay program, it was decided that the program should be repeated for the Asian Games held in the same year in Busan, in the very south of Korea. Once again on rather short notice, it was announced at the beginning of September 2002 that a Templestay program in the area would be available from September 26 to October 31.⁽⁴¹⁾ The short period between the conception of the program and its implementation is again remarkable and evidences

the resources that were available at the temples at that time.

Just as with the first run, the second run was probably intended to provide lodging and Buddhist/cultural experience to visitors who had come to see the games. This time, though, participants were expected to be “Asian,” and that would naturally imply a significant percentage of Buddhists. Notably, neither Kaplan (2010, p. 132) nor Nathan (2010, p. 72) find it necessary to mention this detail, nor do they mention any changes that were made to the program, even though the expected participants were no longer Western non-Buddhists.

Furthermore, it was decided to open the program to Korean citizens, too. The monastic authorities seem to have anticipated a huge number of visitors from Seoul staying in Busan, more than three hundred kilometers to the south. When the second run of the program was over, it had yielded a total number of 1,567 participants. The majority among them were Koreans (at 1,299), and only 268 were foreigners.⁽⁴²⁾ Again, it is not recorded how many of the guests had actually come to the Busan area in order to see the games, and how many were, for example, residents of the area (in which Buddhism is much stronger than in Seoul). At any rate, it had become clear that Koreans had a huge demand for the program, and this discovery had been made to some extent accidentally.

2.5 Consolidation of the Program

The third run of a Templestay program was again held on the occasion of an international sports event, the 2003 international university games (Universiade), held in Daegu, a city half way between Busan and Seoul. The program lasted significantly longer than the first two and housed 3,755 visitors over a period of six months (ratio of foreigners vs. Korean citizens not recorded).⁽⁴³⁾

In 2004, the Templestay program was made

an all-year institution for most of the participating temples, against a minority opposition within the Jogye order. The Cultural Committee (later: Corps) of Korean Buddhism was established as a part of the administration of the Jogye order, in cooperation with the government.⁽⁴⁴⁾

As related above, when Korean participants were admitted for the first time, this led to a ratio of 1,299 Koreans vs. 268 foreigners, that is, about 21 percent foreigners. Although the total number of participants exploded to 36,902 in 2004, the ratio remained roughly in the same range, with about 9.5 percent foreigners. Among the 51,561 participants in 2005 were 14.5% foreigners, among a total of 70,914 in 2006, 13.4%.⁽⁴⁵⁾ In 2007, there were 16.6% foreigners among a total of 81,652 participants; in 2008, 17.8% of a total 112,800; in 2009, 13.8% among 140,893; in 2010, 11.6% of 172,982; in 2011, 11.6% of 212,487; in 2012, 13.9% of 170,392; in 2013, 11.7% of 186,596; in 2014, 13.2% of 193,388; in 2015, 13.2% of 212,289.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Thus, with an average of about 13 percent in recent years, foreigners form a significant group, but clearly a minority among the participants.

The early history of the program was no longer widely known by 2010, when the author of the current article came to Seoul in order to teach Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University (2010-2016) and first learned about it. Eight years after its inauguration, Templestay had become a central element of the Jogye order’s lay and monastic life, in which foreigners were simply welcomed to participate. The original situation during the World Cup and the Asian Games 2002, nonetheless, was quite the reverse, namely a program for Westerners in which Koreans were eventually welcomed. As of 2016, the history of the program does not figure prominently on the official Templestay website and is most likely unknown to participants today.

3. The Buddhist Monastic Order and Its Outreach to the Laity

After this short outline of the establishment of the program, I would like to consider the Templestay program in the framework of a larger issue, namely the role of the laity in Buddhist religious life. The issue deserves to be mentioned since the question of outreach, of involving the laity in religious life, could be one of the most decisive factors for the continuation of traditional Buddhist orders into the future.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Let us first take a look at the issue from a historical perspective.

Whatever we know about the beginnings of the Buddhist order, we know it from very scant sources, archaeological and textual, about India in the fourth century before the Common Era. Still, it is quite certain that the Buddhist order was originally a group of itinerant ascetics who aimed at liberation through the contemplative path outlined by the Buddha. Giving themselves the title of “beggar” (Sanskrit *bhikṣu*), they were one among various ascetic groups who roamed the land and came to the villages in search for alms, alongside “real” beggars. Laypeople would give food to these beggars and ascetics, and they would sometimes ask the spiritual itinerants for blessing or spiritual instruction. For the Buddhist ascetics, it was not important that the laity would identify themselves as “Buddhists” or even as Buddhists exclusively. Involving and engaging the laity in religious life was initially not a major agenda of the Buddhist order.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Even in their role as donors, the importance of the laity for the survival of the order is not consistently acknowledged in the books of monastic discipline (Vinaya) and their later commentaries.⁽⁴⁹⁾

When the Buddhist order had become an established social institution, in the last centuries before the Common Era, many monks had settled in monasteries under the patronage of kings or wealthy

donors, and their communal life became even more remote from the life of the laity. Especially in the far north of India, monks ceased to go on their daily alms-round and lived on food prepared inside the monastery,⁽⁵⁰⁾ a tradition that was transmitted to East Asia through the Silk Road.

In a kind of counter-movement, the books of the “Great Vehicle” (Māhāyana) within Indian Buddhism often stress the importance of the laity and their capability for active religious self-actualization. They also emphasize altruistic deeds on behalf of others, such as mentoring the laity.⁽⁵¹⁾

Korean Buddhism is heir to both traditions, the Vinaya and the Great Vehicle, and still, young Koreans often find it difficult to find a meaningful place for themselves in Buddhist religious life, and conversely, a place for Buddhism in their own lives. The account of an American-born daughter of a Korean mother and an American father seems to be typical of what many young Koreans experience: “When I was a child, my mother took me to the temple some times. There were many statues, but I did not understand anything that was going on.”⁽⁵²⁾

This lack of involvement of the laity stands in stark contrast with the practices of Christianity, especially Protestantism, that have taken South Korea by storm after 1953. In a Protestant service, and similarly in a Catholic service after the Counter Reformation, the faithful clearly stand in the focus of the ritual. It is their active singing, praying, and their edification through the sermon, that make up the very substance of the service, and the role of the preacher is mostly to inspire and guide the brethren.

Buddhism traditionally lacks such a compact format of singing, prayer, and edification. Rather, laypeople come singly to the temple in order to pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and to give donations to the monks who pray on their behalf.⁽⁵³⁾

In part, this approach to religiosity still reflects

pre-modern agricultural society where the illiterate peasant hardly had any chance to take an active role in his own life or in society, but simply followed the ways of the authorities. These authoritative rules were mainly the customs and values about marriage and agriculture handed down from one's ancestors. For decisions on a larger scale, the orders of the king were to be followed. This passive role was basically mirrored in religious life, where one would depend on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for the well-being of one's ancestors and the recently deceased. The monks and nuns would help to read official documents, provide advice with the rather few decisions one had to make, and conduct the respective rites of passage.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The modern urban professional, on the other hand, is expected to take an active role in important decisions as a part of everyday life, provide innovative solutions in the workplace, manage marriage and child raising according to the newest standards, and elect the next government. Naturally, such subjects want to play a more active role in their spiritual life, too. Doctrinally, they might be primarily interested in ethical and metaphysical questions that do not form part of their professional education.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Quite certainly, communion, a sense of belonging, seems to be quite important in our hire-and-fire society, and that would include, for example, clarity about one's own role in the religious ceremony.

Since the Protestant service forms an ideal setting for fulfilling such needs, the Jogye order has already taken steps to incorporate elements such as a melodious singing of the Triple Refuge and regular sermons (Dharma talks) in some temples.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Templestay, although a somewhat accidental discovery, can fulfill some of these needs, though not in the time frame of a Christian service (one or two hours), but stretched out over a whole day.

Taking an active role in religious life, the participants become “monk for a day” or “nun for a day”, pray, sing, and meet the resident monk or nun for an informal conversation over tea, a firm part of the Templestay program in most temples.⁽⁵⁷⁾

This advantage of active lay involvement applies not only to the participant side. On the side of the facilitators, too, lay volunteers can take an active role, for example in practical services such as cooking and cleaning. As part of the program, temples offer classes in traditional crafts such as the folding of Buddhist paper lanterns, printing Buddhist scriptures from woodblocks, carving wooden boards, or making rice cakes and kimchi.⁽⁵⁸⁾ These practices are presented as relaxing, or even meditative, as being a part of Buddhist life, on an equal footing with traditional chanting and formal meditation.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Notably, the instructors in these crafts are not always monastics but often lay volunteers. By handing down traditional lore to fellow Buddhists and non-Buddhists, they, too, become authorities of the tradition and find themselves as responsible agents in religious life.

4. Concluding Reflections: East and West, the Profane and the Sacred, and the Middle Way

Previous researchers have already observed a certain hybridity in the Templestay program, with its combination of traditional and modern elements, Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements, and so on. Especially Punsu (2014, unpaginated) reflects at length on the “in-betweenness and hybridity between the binaries”, such as “tourist attraction and national heritage..., popular culture and the religious, the local (South Korea) and the global,” etc. Punsu is right in so far as the Templestay program is indeed formed by a confluence of a variety of pre-existing cultural currents. Still, which “item” of culture is

not? Without wanting to sound all too Buddhist, there are, as far as I see, no absolutely, inherently existing binaries in the natural world. Rather, they are a mental construct.

4.1 Interdependent Dichotomies and What Arises from Them

There is of course no fixed rule that national heritage should not be a tourist attraction, as Punsu (above) seems to imply. Quite the contrary, this is rather the rule than the exception. In the same way, ancient pilgrimage routes were often established along trade routes, ancient monasteries often had an administrative, military, or educational function, and so on: hybridity seems to be hard to avoid, even when trying to establish purely religious institutions. For example, Buddhists in Thailand and Sri Lanka often consider their form of Buddhism as a combination of Buddhism and Hinduism, even though this was probably the way it was transmitted by Buddhist monks. There are probably more temples dedicated to Indra in Japan than in India, where his veneration has mostly ceased. The history of Buddhism and of human culture is not a history of transmitting or inventing monolithic cultural items. Rather, it is a constant flow of combination and separation, an insight that has become quite popular through Michel Foucault's "discourse analysis", claiming that an author is never truly original but rather synthesizes text that he has received from his predecessors.⁽⁶⁰⁾

In this way, hybridity, as we can find it in the Templestay program, is nothing new in the history of Buddhist culture. In fact, the original announcement of the Templestay program (2002) contains an allusion to an ancient Buddhist concept quite similar to Foucault's discourse analysis, namely the concept of "origination in dependence" (Sanskrit *pratīyasamutpāda*, Ch. 緣起):

"Korean Buddhism is opening the doors of temples, which have preserved 1700 years of history and tradition, to guests from all over the world. We are inviting you to this traditional space, which strives for perfect harmony between nature and Buddha's teaching of Dependent Origination, the concept that my neighbor, nature and myself are not separate, but are all one."⁽⁶¹⁾

At first sight, the reference to "Dependent Origination" may seem as a simple declaration that race, class, gender, and religion will not be an issue for visitors, especially since the author, Ven. Do-yeong (道永), stresses the teaching that *all are one*. The interpretation of origination in dependence as *oneness* is taught, most prominently in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Ch. 華嚴經), and it is an important doctrine in the Jogye order. Still "dependence" is obviously not simply oneness, and other Buddhist *sūtras* focus more on the principle of interaction and interdependence, as outlined above.⁽⁶²⁾ As a subtext, Ven. Do-yeong's declaration seems to contain the concession that the hosts of the program could learn something from the guests, just as the guests learn from the hosts, in a dynamic interaction for mutual benefit. Here, origination in dependence functions, as Harvey (2013, p. 73) puts it, as "a network of processes which could not exist apart from each other, yet are not the same as each other." The Templestay program "itself," to be sure, depends on its hosts just as much as it depends on its guests. Without either, it would be like the clapping of one hand.

The Ven. Do-yeong continues his above declaration by inviting international visitors to "reflect on your inner self" and "experience a slice of Korean culture." Interestingly, Punsu (2014, unpaginated) identifies the prospect of "finding one's authentic self" as a "modern and Western

ideal” that has been embraced by the Templestay program, in a somewhat hybrid manner, in a dichotomy between “modern and Western” on the one side, and “traditional Koreanness” on the other. Quite differently, Kaplan (2010, p. 133) sees the mention of the “inner self” as a “Buddhist universal intention” that stands opposite a “touristic nationalistic intention” in the announcement of the program. Both authors are right, and still, it needs to be recognized that the encounter with one’s true self (Sanskrit *ātman*) is not completely “Western” in so far as it is a central theme of the Indian *Upaniṣads* of the early first millennium BCE.⁽⁶³⁾ In fact, ancient Indian Buddhism gained much of its identity from the holding that there is ultimately no *ātman*, as other spiritual traditions claimed. Rather, that which we wrongly conceive as our self is only a temporal combination of factors that originated in dependence on other factors.⁽⁶⁴⁾ “Non-self” (*anātman*) is one of the marks of authentic Buddhist teaching,⁽⁶⁵⁾ it is the litmus test of whether a doctrine can still be considered Buddhist. Although purists could hold that the Ven. Do-yeong’s mention of an “inner self” places this statement beyond that which can properly be called Buddhism, the conundrum can be easily resolved if we assume that reflecting on one’s inner self will inevitably lead to the realization that there is ultimately no independently, inherently existent self. At any rate, this example shows that perceived dichotomies between “Western” and “Eastern” are often not what they seem at first sight.

4.2 Getting There and Being There

Ancient pilgrims and ancient mountain hermits had, in a way, quite different outlooks on their sacred places. While the pilgrim was concerned with *getting there*, the hermit who permanently withdrew from the world was concerned with *being there*. As said above, pilgrimage routes were often trade routes, such as, for example, the famous Tōkaidō

from Edo (Tōkyō) to Kyōto,⁽⁶⁶⁾ said to represent the adept’s journey described in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (Ch. 華嚴經). Accordingly, the pilgrims were often traders, a profession with a need for goal orientation, innovation, and personal initiative.

On a less physical level, one of the most fundamental debates of East Asian Buddhism is concerned whether or not Buddhahood would be reached “gradually” or “in an instant.”⁽⁶⁷⁾ One might wonder what could possibly be so interesting or important about this question, since, either way, the adept will experience it the way it is once the time has come. As such, the question did not play a major role in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Still, when viewed under the aspects of “being there” and “getting there”, as fundamental attitudes in one’s present life, the question becomes quite essential. Unfortunately, it is rarely discussed in these terms. In the Jogye order, the Venerable Seongcheol (mentioned above) is credited with having decisively settled the issue in favor of the “sudden” approach,⁽⁶⁹⁾ although this still leaves room for interpretation as far as the practical implementation of this doctrine is concerned.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The Templestay program invites participants to a space in between *being there* and *getting there*. Of course, physically, the program requires the participant to get to the temple at first, but it also requires that he or she *is there* for at least a day, and has a cup of tea with a monk or nun in the afternoon, letting the busy hikers and pilgrims pass by.

In the same way, participants are invited to stay there, relax and enjoy the rituals and meditations without necessarily pursuing a long-term goal of systematic meditation practice or a high number of recitations and prostrations. In a rather relaxed attitude towards these practices, finishing the Templestay program sets participants free to decide, depending on their momentary whim, whether or

not to practice meditation at home and/or come back to another Templestay.

4.3 The West as a Test Market for the East?

Looking back on the inauguration of the Templestay program in 2002, it seems quite significant that a cultural program that was initially designed for Westerners should find such a rapturous reception among Koreans. In conclusion to this article, I dare say that this could teach us something about a successful strategy in developing traditional Buddhism into the future: Buddhist practices and teachings that are well received in the West could often prove to be well received by the young, and even the old, in the East.

What might appear as a “Westernization” of traditional Buddhism could very often be a change in traditional practices that simply fits modern man, all over the world, whose culture is always changing due to increased education levels, new technologies, a changing natural environment, and new challenges and opportunities in the family and the workplace.⁽⁷¹⁾

Evangelist Churches in Korea are constantly looking out for change and adaptation, and some offer, for example, two separate Sunday services, one gospel-oriented service with more modern instrumentation (electric guitars, drum set) for young followers, and a rather solemn service (with organ or piano) for more mature audiences.

Ever since traditional Korean society came to an end with the decline of the Joseon dynasty, there were Korean Buddhists who realized that adapting to modern society was the only way that their tradition could survive. Even though Buddhism partly lags behind many Protestant churches in Korea, much has been done in order to offer new programs for the continuation of the doctrine. Nathan (2010) describes and discusses these programs extensively under the generic term *bo gyō* (布教), which can be translated as “donating (or, distributing) the

doctrine,” and which probably contains an allusion to the donations (*bo si*, 布施) that the laity provides.

As a part of these efforts, the Templestay program has increased the portfolio of the Jogye order, and some temples are probably on the right path by offering Yoga, Vipassana, and similar programs *within* the framework of the traditional Jogye order. These programs are certainly hybrid, but while Punsu (2014) seems to view hybridity with some irony, there is probably nothing wrong with it. Innovative programs can offer a certain amount of “heterotopia,” a sphere in which symbols, programs and people of various cultures assemble. Without innovative programs, followers of traditional orders will continue to depart towards new groups, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, that are quick at adapting to new circumstances.⁽⁷²⁾

Traditional Korean Buddhism has the advantage of offering a firm grounding in the tradition of one’s family, a firm grounding in the past through its ancient temples and transmission lineages, and a firm grounding in the present by stepping out, for a while, of one’s goal-oriented work and family life, towards the more ancient values of *being there* and waiting for the crops to grow. Therefore, traditionalist positions, such as the one by Ven. Seongcheol, mentioned above, do in fact contribute a lot to the appeal of Buddhism.⁽⁷³⁾

Such a static rooting in the past and present needs to be combined with dynamic programs befitting the health-conscious, goal-oriented, highly educated professional of today. In the Templestay program, the fusion of such elements has proved highly successful.

The program has so far not only served to introduce foreigners to Korean Buddhism and to provide local Koreans with the opportunity to get closer to living Buddhism. In the meantime, Templestay has also been utilized in programs addressing second and third generation Koreans in

the US,⁽⁷⁴⁾ a target group which, as Buddhist monks working overseas repeatedly report, is generally difficult to reach without such incentives.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Notes

- (1) I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Robert E. Buswell Jr., Michelle Frankfort, Uri Kaplan, Marshall Klassen, Ralf Kramer, Kwon Seon-a, Ryan Ward, and Woo Je-son for their help with this article.
- (2) Kaplan 2010, pp. 133, 140.
- (3) See, for example, Seok 2009, Kim Min-ja 2014. See also the brief discussion in Kaplan 2010, p. 142, n. 3.
- (4) See Kim Hwansoo Ilmee 2014. See also Harvey 2013, p. 298.
- (5) See Wang 2011, p. 17.
- (6) Kim Hwansoo Ilmee 2014, p. 18. For more details on the events surrounding the establishment of mandatory celibacy, see Kim Yong-tae 2014b, pp. 166–169.
- (7) See Cultural Committee of Korean Buddhism 2009, p. 10. Kaplan (2010, p. 142, n. 1) uses “temple” and “monastery” interchangeably.
- (8) Personal observation and interviews, field research, Korea 2014. See also Kaplan (2010, p. 145, n. 49) on lay “training assemblies,” and Galmiche (2010, p. 50) on a week-long lay group retreat.
- (9) Personal observation and interviews, field research, Korea 2014.
- (10) Robert E. Buswell, personal communication, 2016. The respective lay groups naturally feel an affiliation with both, the urban Buddhist center, and the corresponding rural temple. See Galmiche 2010, p. 49.
- (11) Personal observation and interviews, Korea 2014.
- (12) Nathan (2010, p. 3) emphasizes the role of the mountain temples as keepers of ancient artefacts and other items of historical value.
- (13) Personal observation, field research, Korea 2014.
- (14) Personal observation, field research, Korea 2014.
- (15) These observations seem to be confirmed by the characterization of Korean religious life by the Korean scholar Shim Jae-ryong (1943–2004, rendered in Nathan 2010, pp. 22–23). According to Shim, “Korean people have lived under the guidance of three major religions in premodern Korean society: shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism in that order.” Shim sees these three forces at work not only diachronically, but also synchronically, as “an ongoing process of paradigm fusion and amalgamation.”
- (16) Personal observation, field research, Korea 2014.
- (17) Quoted after Kaplan 2010, p. 131.
- (18) See the foreword to Seongcheol 2010 (p. ix).
- (19) See Senécal 2011, p. 188.
- (20) The dual motivation outlined here basically matches the observations by Galmiche (2010, p. 50).
- (21) On this motive, see, for example, Kaplan 2010, p. 140.
- (22) On the complex history of this policy, see Kim Yong-tae 2014a, pp. 196–200, and Chung 2007, pp. 139–144, 155–157, 177–181. See also Nathan 2010, pp. viii, 8, 10–14.
- (23) Personal observations, field research, Korea 2010–2016. In his discussion of the onset of “modern” Korean Buddhism, Nathan (2010, p. 22) recounts the views of the Korean scholar Jeong Pyeong-jo who considers the 1980s a highly important period in the propagation of Buddhism to the laity.
- (24) See also Kaplan 2010, p. 131.
- (25) As for the differentiation of Buddhist sects in pre-modern Korea, see, for example Chung 2007, p. 179: “Buddhism without sects ... continued in the last period of Joseon.” Buswell (1998, p. 104) reflects upon contemporary scholars speaking of “the unique ecumenical Buddhism of Korea.” Hodous (1924, p. 15) clarifies that in China around the end of the Qing dynasty, “the various tendencies for which [the Buddhist sects of China] stood have been adopted by Buddhism as a whole and the various sectaries, though still keeping the name of the sect, live peacefully in the same monastery. All the monasteries practice meditation, believe in the paradise of Amitābha, and are enjoying the irenic calm advocated by the T’ien T’ai,” while the sects “in Japan are very active.” For a recent study of the issue, see Schicketanz 2016.
- (26) See also Schmidt-Glintzer 2007, pp. 102, 107.
- (27) See Harvey 2013, p. 336.

- (28) See Kaplan 2010, p. 131.
- (29) See Kaplan 2010, p. 132.
- (30) Kaplan 2010, p. 132.
- (31) Galmiche (2010, p. 05, n. 10) notices the same acceptance in the context of a meditation retreat organized for Korean Buddhists. Although she participated in all rituals, there was a widespread acceptance of her mainly academic interest, and she does not record any attempts to make her a confessing Buddhist. In a similar way, Hodous (1924, p. 2) reports the story of a Christian missionary in China who was invited to have his wrist branded during a Buddhist vow-taking ceremony, to which he replied “To be branded without inward faith would be an insult to your religion as well as treachery to mine, would it not?”
- (32) Kaplan 2010, pp. 133, 135.
- (33) Transliterated texts for recitation during a Templestay can be found in Cultural Committee of Korean Buddhism 2009, pp. 102–107.
- (34) Kaplan 2010, p. 135.
- (35) The conspicuous presence of lay helpers seems to have a long tradition on the East-Asian mainland and was noticed, for example, by Hodous (1924, p. 20) during his travels in China 1901–1917.
- (36) Personal observation, field research 2014.
- (37) Personal observation, field research 2014.
- (38) Personal observation, Italy 2009.
- (39) Kaplan 2010, p. 134.
- (40) Personal observation, field research 2016.
- (41) Kaplan 2010, p. 133.
- (42) Kaplan 2010, p. 135.
- (43) Kaplan 2010, p. 135.
- (44) Kaplan 2010, p. 134.
- (45) Kaplan 2010, p. 135.
- (46) Data kindly provided by the Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism.
- (47) See also Nathan 2010, p. 2.
- (48) Cf. Harvey 2013, pp. 287–289.
- (49) See Bayer 2012, pp. 17–18.
- (50) See Harvey 2013, p. 303.
- (51) For more details, see Harvey 2013, p. 112.
- (52) Personal conversation, Seoul 2015.
- (53) See also Galmiche (2010, p. 49) on the more recent situation in South Korea.
- (54) See Bayer 2013, p. 84.
- (55) See also Galmiche (2010, p. 49): “It has become a priority for a large number of monks and laypersons to elaborate new forms of religious organisation that will fit the needs and constraints of urban life. Many programmes towards laity have emerged, and occasions to study Buddhism have markedly increased.”
- (56) See also Nathan (2010, p. 6) on the adoption of various Protestant methods in Korean Buddhism. Nathan (*ibid.*) further mentions the influence of Japanese Buddhist missionary methods, as first propagated by the Jōdo-Shin (浄土真) missionary Okumura Enshin (奥村円心, 1843–1913) who arrived in 1877 (see Nathan 2010, p. 10). Of course, it must be noted in this context that religious policies in Japan were under a strong influence of European ideas since the beginning of the Meiji Restoration (1868), and that especially the Jōdo-Shin tradition, with its emphasis on the unconditional salvation of the faithful and its rejection of celibacy was naturally close to Protestantism (the denomination of the royal house of Prussia, from where much of Japan’s legal code was imported). Cf. Deal and Ruppert 2015, pp. 211–215.
- (57) Galmiche (2010, p. 44) observes a current trend in South Korean Buddhism, namely that “the distance between Buddhist monastics and lay devotees tends to reduce,” and “the current intensification of their relationships brings important redefinitions of their respective identities.”
- (58) Kaplan 2010, p. 136.
- (59) As for the question which of these crafts should be considered primarily “Korean” or primarily “Buddhist”, it seems quite significant that Buddhist monks were exceptionally allowed into the capital for the reconstruction of the royal palace from 1865 to 1868 (Nathan 2010, p. 13, n. 8). At that point, it seems the royal house had recognized that Buddhist monks were important carriers of cultural heritage. It is probably not a mere coincidence that this happened at the same time that neighboring Japan strove to transform itself into a nation state, following European models, with the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

- (60) See Foucault 1971, pp. 28–30.
- (61) Statement by the executive director of missionary work of the Jogye order in 2004, Ven. Do-young, quoted in Kaplan 2010, p. 133.
- (62) The less unitary presentations of origination in dependence can be found in the *sūtras* of the “lesser Vehicle”, as well as in Mahāyāna *sūtras* preceding the *Avataṃsaka*. See Harvey 2013, p. 147. See also Buswell and Lopez 2014, s.v. *pratītyasamutpāda*, Nakamura 1980, pp. 67–70, 176, 199, 248.
- (63) See Harvey 2013, p. 10.
- (64) See Harvey 2013, pp. 58–60, 67.
- (65) Harvey 2013, p. 57, Buswell and Lopez 2014, s.v. *trilakṣaṇa*.
- (66) Usui 2007, p. 31.
- (67) See Schmidt-Glintzer 2007, p. 99–102.
- (68) For more details, see Jackson 1994.
- (69) See p. x in Hwang Sun-il’s foreword to Seongcheol 2010.
- (70) See also Buswell 1998, p. 104.
- (71) As for “Western” Zen Buddhism, Schmidt-Glintzer (2007, p. 115) notices that, in recent decades, many of the impulses that were well received in Europe originated from the Pacific Coast of the USA. Earlier influential authors, such as the Jesuit scholar Heinrich Dumoulin (1909–1995) came predominantly from Europe. Interestingly, especially Jesuits became important “missionaries” of Zen Buddhism to the West, and this was probably a side-effect of their efforts to revitalize the Catholic church in the face of Protestantism. These efforts were an important aspect of the Jesuit order since its establishment at the beginning of the Counter Reformation. In so far, one cannot help but notice a certain parallel between the early Jesuit order and Buddhism in contemporary Korea, even though many Korean Protestants are highly sympathetic towards Buddhism.
- (72) From a slightly different angle, Kim Young-tae (2014b, p. 169) states: “Buddhism was branded as torpid and obsolete, as well as violent and irrational. The place it held in Korean history was occupied by Catholicism and Protestantism, which represent Western civilization.”
- (73) Galmiche (2010, p. 49) notices that along with the growth in modernized programs, “demands and offers for more traditional forms of transmission have grown as well.”
- (74) See Jogye 2016 (unpaginated).
- (75) Personal observation and interviews, field research, Korea 2014.

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