The Formation of the Bhiksū Ordination in 19th Century Chosŏn Korea: Focusing on the Ten Wholesome Precepts of the Monk Paekp’ā

Ja-rang Lee

Department of East Asian Literature, Dongguk University, Seoul 04626, Korea; jaranglee@hanmail.net

Abstract: Ordination can be said to be the core of Buddhism and maintaining this tradition is the key to maintaining Buddhism. This was the realization of the monastics in early 19th century Korea by the 19th century Korean monks such as Paekp’ā (1767–1852), Tae˘un (1780–1841), and Manha (d.u.) who were the pioneers who revived the ordination tradition at a time when the sangha must have suffered a severe decline of this all too important tradition. Among these three monks, there were some commonalities such as the common geography of Chirisan area in the Hoam region where they started this movement and the fact that other than Manha, the other two, Paekp’a and Tae˘un, belonged to the Pyŏngyang lineal clan, the lineal descendants of the great masters Hyujジョン and P’yŏnyang. The effort to revitalize the ordination tradition by Paekp’a and other monks were successful in establishing their lineal clan and, at the same time, significantly contributed to securing their lineage within the history of Korea Buddhism. However, because Paekp’a’s method of the Ten Wholesome Precepts was seen to be quite different from the traditional methods of ordination, its influence was not as outstanding. Tae˘un’s methods, on the other hand, by borrowing notions from the Brahm¯a’s Net Sutra which allowed monks to revitalize their lineal clan through one’s own effect, drew support from eminent monks and became widely practiced. Similarly, the lineage that was formed by Manha by traveling to China being recognized for its legitimacy came to be established as part of the mainline of Korean Buddhism. While such methods were successful in responding to the dire situation of the early 19th century, this movement also provided the foundation for the continuation to the modern times of the traditional orthodox lineage that was started some 300 years earlier.

Keywords: monastic ordination; 19th century Chosŏn Buddhism; Vinaya tradition; Paekp’a; Tae˘un; Manha

1. Introduction

New developments in the study of early modern Buddhism in Korea has been unfolding recently. Previous approaches have considered Buddhism of that era mostly in light of the widely accepted anti-Buddhism state policy of “up-hold Confucianism, suppress Buddhism” and thus have regarded the Chosŏn period (1392–1910) as the “dark-ages” for Buddhism.¹ Current day research has widened the scope of research to various related areas such as temple renovations in the late Chosŏn period (1637–1910), development of dharma lineages, establishment of monastic curricular system, temple publications and ritual texts, and reconstruction of eminent monk steles.² These activities indicate monastic communities that have come out of a period of latency and embarking on revival including building institutional foundations and forming genealogy-based identities. This is

¹ Takahashi T¯oru was one of the first modern Japanese historians of Korean history to write on Korean Buddhism and is often identified as the originator of the degeneration thesis of Chosŏn Buddhism (Takahashi 1971). For a more current in-depth discussion on the effect of this perspective on modern study of Chosŏn Buddhism, see Kim (2013b, pp. 3–7).
² These endeavors to “reformulate the historiography” of Chosŏn Buddhism are discussed in a special guest issue in Kim (2020a), Journal of Korean Religions (vol. 11, no. 2).
especially notable from the beginning of the 17th century in the wake of the Imjin Wars (1592–1598) against the invading Japanese forces when the contributions of the monastic community in the war efforts were widely recognized.

Interestingly, it was also during this time that active formations of its genealogical identities took place. The newly established dharma lineages become the foundation on which the Buddhist community thereafter comes to structure lineal-based clans that continue to current times. However, after almost two centuries, and with the closing of the 18th century, the Buddhist community exhibits signs of decline. A modern Korean historiographer, Son (2015, pp. 292–93), in his periodization of the Chosˇon era differentiates the 19th century from the 17th and the 18th centuries. He explains that starting from the late 18th century there was a gradual decline in the activities of the Buddhist community and its relationship with the state. Despite the revitalization and new developments within the samgha in the early 17th century, the decline experienced by the samgha in the late 18th and early 19th centuries can be called the declining years which has yet to be explained fully by the modern historians of Chosˇon Buddhism.

Within this context, this paper will examine the restoration of the ordination tradition which emerges in the early 19th century as one of the central issues in the revival of the Buddhist community in Chosˇon Korea. Indeed, ordination is a fundamental and essential issue closely associated with maintaining a monastic community. When a monk is recognized through a clear set of requirements and procedures, it provides the basic foundation for maintaining the samgha, a semblance of an organization based on strict moral standards. An understanding of the revival of the ordination tradition at this time provides an essential historical background to the formation of the modern samgha in Korea.

However, there is a dearth of records of ordination or extant materials over the time period of the late 18th century. Thus, the question of why at the beginning of the 19th century the Chosˇon monastics took interest in reviving the ordination tradition is all the more difficult to examine. This effort to revive the system of ordination seems to have continued for the most part of the 19th century. Among the genealogies that were formed during that time, the lineage formed by the monks Tae˘un Nango 大隱朗旿 (1780–1841, hereafter Tae˘un) and Manha Sûngnim 萬下勝林 (d.u., hereafter Manha) had powerful influences on the greater monastic community to the extent that it had become the representative lineages of Korean Buddhism that continue down to the present.

So far, there has been no research to explain this sudden revival of ordination. One obvious reason for this lack would be the scarcity of relevant and related historical materials. The lineage that was revived in the early 19th century endured and played a significant role in maintaining the Korean Buddhist community through another crisis: the turmoil of the Japanese encroachment into Korea at the start of the modern era. From the fact that the two lineages of Tae˘un and Manha still have prominent positions in representing modern Korean Buddhism indicates the historical significance of the early 19th century revival of the ordination tradition. In the following, the current article will elucidate the context to the revival of the ordination tradition and attempt to provide an explanation to the reasons for the sudden efforts by the monks.

Lastly, despite the scarcity of historical materials, the Paragon of Rules for Buddhist Rituals (Chakp˘op kwigam 作法龜鑑, 1827, hereafter Paragon of Rules) by Paekp’a Kûngsôn 白
There is much research done on Paekp’a’s thought and writing, however, there has been no research done on his works on ordination. For extensive work in English on Paekp’a’s life and writings, see Kim (2013a). A brief discussion of Paekp’a’s biography in English can be found in Kim (2013a, pp. 41–42).

Based on the historical records such as the Biographies of Eastern Masters (Tongsa-yŏldch’ŏn 東師列傳) compiled by Pōmhae Kagan 梵海覺岸 (1820–1896) which contained information on the Chosŏn period monks, cases of ordinations in monastic precepts such as the full precepts, and bodhisattva precepts can be verified. This can be compared to modern research such as Kasan Chigwan’s 伽山智冠 (1932–2012) collection of the extant epigraphs and biographical records from the same period (Kasan 2005, pp. 364–453). In other words, the monastic tradition was sustained where bhikṣu ordination was continued by some groups within the Buddhist community throughout much of the Chosŏn period. Nevertheless, even with the dissolution of official precepts’ platforms, the tradition of ordination with full precepts was continued through private ordination platforms although in modified forms.

One of the questions regarding bhikṣu ordination is: Up to which point was the traditional method of ordination continued before it was carried on in modified forms? In the Biographies of Eastern Masters, a description of master Ch’ŏnghŏ Hyujŏng’s 清虛休靜 (1520–1604, hereafter Hyujŏng) reception of the full precepts notes the following: Sungin 崇仁 (d.u.) was the original teacher (insa 恩師), Kyŏngsŏng Ilsŏn 慶聖一禪 (1488–1568) was the preceptor master, and Puyong Yönggwan 焉容覺觀 (1485–1571) was the dharma master. 10

Traditional ordination method is referring to the method as prescribed in the Vinaya of the Four Categories, namely, receiving 250 and 348 precepts for a bhikṣu and a bhikṣun, respectively, with the participation of three masters and seven witnesses. See Lee (2014, pp. 180–87).
transmitter. Dharma Master Sŏk’ŭi 釋熙 (n.d.), Master Yukkong 六空 (d.u.), and practitioner Kagwŏn 覺園 (d.u.) were the attending witnesses at Hyujong’s ceremony for receiving the full precepts. In the traditions outlined in the precepts’ texts such as the *Vinaya of the Four Categories*, the requirements to become a bhikṣu include the reception of 250 precepts with the participation of “three masters and seven witnesses” 三師七證. Here, the original teacher, preceptor master, and the dharma transmitter who appear in the records were the three masters and the other three monks, Sŏk’ŭi, Yukkong, and Kagwŏn represent the witnesses required for the ordination. Although not the full number of seven witnesses were present, this fits the caveat that in case ten witnesses cannot be present, a provisional “five people” were required to be present, who would most likely have been three masters who were essential for the performance of the ceremony and two witnesses. It can be inferred that at the time, ordination in full precepts was carried out according to the traditionally accepted precepts’ texts. It follows that up to the time of Hyujong, the acquisition of the full precepts that was prescribed in the traditional Vinaya text seems to have continued in the private platforms.

Takahashi Toru, an early Japanese scholar of Korean Buddhism, accords with this view and has argued that Buddhism from the time of Hyujong had lost one of the fundamental bases of an institutionalized religion and had lost the socially esteemed role it once held during the Koryŏ period. Takahashi further claimed that in the ordinations that occurred after Hyujong, the role and the mention of the precepts’ master, a necessary member for proper ordinations, cannot be verified and thus the authority and the prestige of receiving the precepts had been compromised. Therefore, it appears that such ceremonies, with a lack of the core members needed for the ordination ceremony, brings into question the legitimacy of the ordination that had been performed after Hyujong’s time. Takahashi further argued that such questionable practices were continued which led Taehun to instead start ordinations using Auspicious Ordination (Sŏsang sugye 瑞祥受戒) methods (Takahashi 1971, pp. 1008–10).

Takahashi came to this abovementioned conclusion most likely because there was no existing evidence to support the possible continuation of the traditional forms of receiving the precepts after Hyujong. Takahashi was partially correct since there are mid-17th century publications of the three compilations of funerary rituals (喪禮集) where the minimum number of names of monks who took on the roles of the three masters and seven witnesses within the ordination ceremonies were found to be present—the preceptor master (授戒師), original teacher (養育師, 得度師), witnessing masters (證戒師), reciting preceptor (讀師), and instructional preceptor (授師). Therefore, it appears that the traditional method of ordination may have extended into the mid-17th century, about 50 years after Hyujong.

However, beyond the mid-17th century, historical materials regarding ordinations or even modern studies of Vinaya that can be references for the 18th century are far and few in between, which gives an impression that ordination was not one of the priorities of the Buddhist community at the time. This changes with the start of the 19th century when monastic ordination becomes a main concern evidenced by active revitalization efforts. These were not isolated cases of revival of only a few monks who took part, but rather, numerous monks participated in this movement that lasted for about a century to the end of the 19th century.

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13. *H. vol. 10*, p. 1015c.
14. *Vinaya of the Four Categories* (T. vol. 22, p. 184). See also Hirakawa (1964, p. 465).
15. *Vinaya of the Four Categories* (T. vol. 22, pp. 846a4–a5).
16. In Korea, early ordination platform was prepared at T’ongdosa Temple by a 7th-century monk, Chajang 寂藏 (590–658), wherein ordination was performed in the form of Platform Ordination (登壇授戒) up to the early Koryŏ period. This was the acceptance of the 250 precepts accompanied by three masters and seven witnesses, according to the *Vinaya of the Four Categories* (Han 1998, p. 353).
17. The three compilations are Pyŏgam Kakṣöng’s 輝巖覺性 (1575–1660) Sŏngmun sanginciple 釋門梵義抄, Naam Chihil’s 奈庵智—(fl. early 16th cen.) Sŏngmun garyech’o 釋門家禮抄, and Hyŏback Myŏngjo’s 惠白明照 (1593–1661) Sŏngga yeonimun 惠家儀文.
18. *H. vol. 8*, p. 277c.
To give an idea of the attempts to revive the ordination tradition, three representative examples will be discussed including Paekp’a and Tae˘un who started pioneering efforts at about the mid-1820s but through different methods. In the case of Paekp’a, he put forth the idea of ordination using the ten wholesome precepts (shipson gye 十善戒), which reduced the number of precepts from 250 to just ten, as explained in his Paragon of Rules. The Paragon of Rules was first published in two volumes in 1826 at the Unmunam Hermitage located at present-day Cholla-do province, which was an important place for the revival of the ordination tradition, as will be discussed more later. This is a comprehensive ritual compilation of all the ritual formulas that were needed in various Buddhist rituals, and the ordination ceremony was included at the end of the first volume. Included were descriptions of the requirements needed to become part of the four categories in the Buddhist community—ten precepts for monks, ten precepts for novices, five precepts for a householder, and eight precepts for nuns.\textsuperscript{19}

The items included in the ten wholesome precepts for monks are as follows: (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to commit adultery, (4) not to lie, (5) not to speak improperly, (6) not to speak harshly, (7) not to speak divisively, (8) not to be greedy, (9) not to be angry, (10) not to have wrong views.\textsuperscript{20} The acceptance of the ten wholesome precepts in an ordination, as espoused by Paekp’a, appear to be a unique method specific to Paekp’a’s socio-historical situation. That is because there is no scriptural basis to claim that the ten wholesome precepts can be used in place of the full ordination precepts. Moreover, the adoption of the ten wholesome precepts for ordination purposes cannot be found in Indian history or in any other region, other than some rare isolated cases.\textsuperscript{21}

Coincidentally, on the seventh month and in the same year that Paekp’a made claims of ordination using the ten wholesome precepts in 1826, Tae˘un initiated a new tradition of ordination based on Auspicious Ordination. Records can be found in the genealogical record of ordination (hogye ch’öpmun 護戒牒文) that were normally kept at established temples in Korea.\textsuperscript{22} For example, in the record of ordination of Haeinsa Temple, one of the three jewels of Korean Buddhism, it is recorded that in 1826, Tae˘un and his master Kûmdam Pomyöng 金澤普明 (1765–1848; hereafter Kûmdam) established the Auspicious Ordination method (伽耶冠冕 Kasan 2005, p. 152) at Togapsa Temple of the Yongam district, a method originally proposed in the Brahmás Net Sutra (梵網經).

According to this sutra, the precepts that must be received for the Auspicious Ordination are the precepts that bodhisattvas must follow—ten grave prohibitions and forty-eight minor precepts. An important aspect of the Auspicious Ordination is noted in the twenty-third minor precept: “If there is not a dharma master to transmit the precepts within a distance of a thousand li,\textsuperscript{23} then self-ordination can be performed in front of a statue of a bodhisattva, but an auspicious sign needs to manifest”. Here, auspicious signs include magical experiences such as being able to touch the forehead of the Buddha or seeing flowers falling from the sky. In this way, it describes a way to carry out a self-ordination.\textsuperscript{24}

According to the Haeinsa Temple record of ordination, Tae˘un performed a self-ordination and took a vow as he prayed, and on the seventh day after taking the ordination, it is described as a magical experiences similar to receiving a dharma master’s blessings. In this way, the precepts were transmitted to well-known figures of the Choson period

\textsuperscript{19} Paragon of Rules (H. vol. 10, pp. 573b–80a).

\textsuperscript{20} H. vol. 10, pp. 573b–75a. From the perspective of the traditional ordination, the newly formed ten wholesome precepts abrogates the traditional requirements. The ten wholesome precepts was originally a notion from early Buddhism referred to as the ten forms of wholesome behavior (sipson ोপ্ত +善業道 Skt. daśa-kusala-karma-patha) judged simply on the criteria of what is wholesome or unwholesome (Okimoto 1981, pp. 187–95).

\textsuperscript{21} There is a famous example of a Japanese monk Saichô 智鑑 (767~822) who attempted to establish the Mahayana precept platform based on the Brahmás Net Sutra. However, there is evidence that Saichô at an earlier time may have espoused an ordination method not based on the Brahmás Net Sutra but ordination through the ten wholesome precepts (Chodo 2014, pp. 98–102).

\textsuperscript{22} All of the genealogical records of ordination from the late Koryó period to the modern times have been translated into Korean and are available in Kasan (2005). The genealogical record of ordination of Haeinsa Temple that is being currently discussed is translated into modern Korean in Kasan (2005, pp. 149–54).

\textsuperscript{23} One unit of li 里 is equivalent to about 500 m.

\textsuperscript{24} “若千里無能授戒師 得佛菩薩形像前受戒而要見好相” (T. vol. 24, p. 1006c14–15).
In this genealogical record of ordination, the dire situation of the time was described as a “disruption in the training of precepts” and does not give a more detailed account but nevertheless signifies the possible cessation of the ordination tradition. The reality may have been that the three masters and the seven witnesses needed to perform the ordination were not so easily arranged, and in order to overcome this critical situation, the method of Auspicious Ordination was adopted. From the perspective of traditional ordination methods, Tae˘un’s Auspicious Ordination was, of course, not fully legitimate because the essential three masters and seven witnesses were absent, and clearly, full precepts were not received in the ordination.

Although Paekp’a and Tae˘un were similar in that both of their methods of ordination did not correspond with traditional methods, it was Tae˘un’s lineage that became widespread and successfully established in the Buddhist community. However, despite the successful reception of Tae˘un’s method of ordination, there were various subsequent efforts using different methods. One method in particular, that proved to be successful and which resulted in the formation of new lineal clans was to travel to China and receive ordination from a Chinese master. The reason for this was the desire to receive the full precepts and also because of doubts on the various modified methods that were practiced at the time such as the Auspicious Ordination.

Another important factor for traveling to China was the ideal of Sino-centric orthodoxy, which gave greater legitimacy to the ordination that was directly transmitted from Chinese masters by a monk who actually traveled to China. Among the monastics who traveled to China, the lineage transmitted by Manha in the late 19th century had the greatest influence in Korea. According to the genealogical record of ordination of T’ongdosa Temple, Manha crossed into Qing China in 1892 and returned to Korea after having received ordination from the Vinaya master Changdo Hanpa (昌濤漢波) (d.u.) who had been appointed as the grand preceptor at Fayuan-si Temple in 1869. Manha received his ordination at the same temple in 1892, after which he returned to Korea. The 19th century was a busy time when many monks attempted to establish a stable system of ordination. In addition to Paekp’a, Tae˘un, and Manha, there were other monastics through whom many lineages were established. According to Unh˘o Yongha, a modern historian of Buddhism, there were, altogether, a total of eleven prominent lineages that were active in the late 19th century, including the two lineages of Paekp’a and Tae˘un (Unh˘o 1961, p. 694).

3. The Revival of the Ordination Tradition: Historical and Geographical Factors

3.1. The Historical

Despite the scarcity of historical sources, we can at least determine that both Paekp’a and Tae˘un were intent on reviving the ordination tradition. Although almost a century later, both Paekp’a and Tae˘un in fact follow in the lineal footsteps of the 17th century monk P’yŏnyang On’gi’s (1581–1644, hereafter P’ŏnyang) who is known for his claims of genealogical identity based on the Chinese Linji lineage. P’yŏnyang was himself a lineal descendent of Hyujiang, arguably the most famous Sŏn (Ch. Chan, Jp. Zen) master of the Chosŏn period. This is particularly noteworthy since it is through the efforts of P’yŏnyang’s claims to orthodoxy where Hyujiang was inducted into the orthodox lineage of the Chinese
Kim Yongtae, a modern scholar, explains the context surrounding the rise of the claims of dharma lineage as follows:

In the early 17th century, when the claims of dharma lineage were espoused, it was a time of transformation in the East Asian Sino-centric system of order, otherwise called the Ming-Qing transition period. It was when Chosŏn (scholars and officials) emphasized loyalty towards Ming China based on the doctrine of civilized and barbarian. Within the context of the time, the claims of orthodoxy that Chosŏn Buddhism inherited as the essence of Chinese Buddhism, was projected onto the claims of dharma lineage, which was no different from the Confucian theory of transmission of the Way 道統論. (Kim 2015a, p. 73)

There were other developments in the monastic community in the early 17th century, together with the establishment of dharma lineage. For instance, practice and training became systematized through the establishment of the monastic curriculum and a system of practice that amalgamated meditation, doctrinal study and Pure Land chanting. This added to the increased societal recognition of the Chosŏn samgha experienced in the wake of the Imjin Wars. However, towards the late 18th century, there appears to be a decline in the Buddhist community.

Song Sŏngp’il notes that the Buddhist community at this time experienced institutional decay and distancing of its relationship with the state. Song argues that after the peaking of monastic activities such as the publication of Buddhist scriptures and collected works of eminent monks, including the erection of eminent monk memorial steles from the 17th to the 18th century, it remarkably began to decline towards the very end of the 18th century. Moreover, records of the declining number of monks and the dilapidation and destruction of temples in the late 18th century are found in the Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty (Chosŏn wangjo sillok 朝鮮王祖實錄). To add to this decline, we find in the records of the Complete Compilation of the National Code (Taejŏn t’ongp’yŏn 大典通編) published in 1785, enactment of prohibitions on monks and nuns from entering the capitol and the “Prohibition [of monastics] from all private and public affairs” (Son 2015, pp. 292–93). Such state policies further added to the decline of the samgha by severely barring the monks from contact and interaction with the cultural and political elites in the capitol.

Moreover, the monasteries increasingly lost independence and came under state power with increased use of the monastics for labor in public projects, becoming customary and fixed over time. This became evident with the involvement of the monastic soldiers in the wars with the Japanese invaders (Imjin Wars), and in the military conflict with Qing China (Chŏngmyo invasion of 1627; and Pyŏngmyo invasion of 1636) when the samgha was forced to provide not only soldiers but also provisions and supplies for the regular army. Though the involvement of the monastics in the war efforts resulted in the improvement of the status of the samgha, this also resulted in the greater subordination of the monastic community under government control such as the enforcement of heavy labor for public works, a contributing factor in the decline of the samgha in the late 18th century (Kim 2016, pp. 106–13).

When Paekp’a and Tae˘un attempted to revive the ordination tradition in the beginning of the 19th century, the Buddhist community seemed to have entered a state of atrophy. It is in this situation of crisis that monks, mostly from the P’yŏn’yang lineal clan, took to reviving the ordination tradition. It is also these same monks whose earlier masters had established claims to orthodoxy identity such that the descendent monks continued to hold the position of lineal orthodoxy within the Buddhist community.

Intermingled with the movement among the monks of the P’yŏn’yang lineal clan was the geographical locality of their activities. Not only were these monks active in the same general region of Hoam located in the south-west part of Korea, but there were active developments in doctrinal studies at the major temples specifically around the

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28 It is claimed that the Chinese Linji line was transmitted from China to Korea by T’aego Pou 太古普愚 (1301–1382) by obtaining the dharma lineage from the eighth Linji patriarch Shiwu Qinggong 石屋淸珙 (1272–1352) and returning to Korea (Kim 2020b, pp. 214–18).

29 For a full discussion on the establishment of the monastic curriculum and the incorporation of chanting into cultivational methods, see Kim (2015b).
Chrisan Mountain range. Coincidently, it is also in the coastal area of this region where a shipwreck occurred in 1681 by which the Jiaxing Canon from Qing China on route to Japan was deposited which inadvertently brought fresh ideas in thought and practice, but also on ordination, triggering new efforts.

3.2. The Geographical

Paekp’a, after entering monastic life, made up his mind to travel to meet the master of the Huayan tradition, Šolp’a Sangôn 雪磣尚彦 (1701–1769), who was residing at Yongwônsa Temple located in the Chirisan Mountain, the center of Buddhism of the Hoam region. Paekp’a later receives monastic precepts under Šolp’a Sangôn and continues the lineage of the Vinaya school. Tae˘un, on the other hand, entered monkhood at Togapsa Temple of Wölch’ulsan Mountain in the Yôngam region and was later ordained under the meditation master Kûmdam, as earlier noted.

Including Paekp’a (1767–1852) and Tae˘un (1780–1841), many of the monks of the P’yŏnyang lineal clan trained and were also educated in the monastic curriculum in the main temples in the Chirisan Mountain area. This region was the central area of activity for the two main lineages of the Chosôn period, the Hyujong-P’yŏnyang lineage and the other, Puhu Sŏnsu 浮休善修 (1543–1615) lineage, whose descendent monks were also well-known for developing the monastic curricular system. In particular, in the late 17th century, Paegam Sŏngch’ong 柏庵聡 (1631–1700), a descendent of the Puhu Sŏnsu lineal clan, significantly increased the dissemination and systemization of the traditional lecture hall curriculum through the publication of texts used at the lecture halls. This led to the flourishing of the lecture hall education in the 18th century, largely by means of the central temples that were located in the Chiri-san Mountain area, such as the temples of Hwaomsa and Ssanggyesa (Yi 2017, p. 293).

The abovementioned is of great significance for various reasons because, in the Hoam region in the late 18th century, there was also active re-carving of printing boards for Buddhist texts including the manual of precepts (Kor. kyepon 戒本, Skt. prātimokṣa) and other Vinaya texts. Such vitality would likely have been spurred by the arrival of the Jiaxing Canon. In fact, Paegam Sŏngch’ong overlooked a project to copy and reproduce the printing boards of the Jiaxing Canon from the shipwreck, which took fourteen years to complete, from 1686 to 1700. Among the 242 printed volumes from the Jiaxing Canon printing boards, the Commentary to the Code of the Bodhisattva Precept (Kor. Posal gyepon so, Ch. Pusa jieben shu 菩薩戒本疏) in two fascicles, and the Sifen jieben rushi (Kor. Sabun gyebon yŏsŏk 四分戒本如釋) in twelve fascicles, both printed in 1769, are still extant (Yi 2013, p. 337). The printing of such texts are an indication of increased activities related to the study of precepts and most likely were receiving them in ordinations in the late 17th century and the early 18th century in the Hoam region. Another book regarding precepts that were published at about the same time, but in the Yôngam region, is the Shou pusa fa 受菩薩法 (Receiving the dharma of the bodhisattva), inscribed with a record of its printing in 1797 and Song Chan master Yanshou 延壽 (907–975) and others as the editors. It was a ritual manual on methods of receiving the bodhisattva precepts (Mizutani 1994, p. 112), an indication that activities related to ordination took place also in other regions in the 18th century.

Historical records indicate that the use of Jiaying Canon became widespread especially among the monks of the Pyŏnyang and the Puhu lineal clans, among whom various

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30 This is the area currently known as Cholla-do province located in the south-west region of Korea.
31 The Yôngnam region indicates the area south of Choryong 鸟嶺, or currently known as the Kyŏngsang-do province located in the south-east region of Korea.
32 H. vol. 10, p. 1030b.
33 The Commentary to the Code of the Bodhisattva Precept is a text of Mahayana precepts that was composed by a Sui Dynasty monk, Zhiyi 智 (538–597) and a Tang Dynasty monk, Guanding 灌頂 (561–632), as commentaries. The Sifen jieben rushi, on the other hand, is the exegesis on the Vinaya of the Four Categories by a Ming Dynasty monk, Hongzan 洪贊 (1610–1685).
commentaries from the Jiaxing Canon were printed in the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Kim 2015a, pp. 81–83; Kim 2014, p. 209). These surrounding facts and direct records indicate that Paekp’a and Tae˘un had accessed the scriptures and commentaries from the Jiaxing Canon (Yi 2013, pp. 329–30), and most likely would have adopted notions and methods of monastic precepts and ordination that would have stimulated new ideas and methods.34

4. The Revival of the Ordination Tradition and the Establishment of a Lineage

It appears that the two most fundamental reasons for the efforts to revive the ordination tradition were the disarray within the monastic community at the time and, arising from this, the self-reflection and desires to establish a legitimate sam. gha. Based on the records of Paragon of Rules and the genealogical records of ordination, full ordination ceremonies were not continued, and due to this problem, the debasement in the quality of monastics appear to have been an issue. This prompted a movement to maintain the lineage through reformulating a stable tradition of ordination. Furthermore, it will be noticed that new forms of ordination were established that were aligned to the core theme of repentance, as will be discussed.

The chaos that arose from the issues of ordination was not a situation that arose all of a sudden early in the 19th century, but had previously been an apparent issue. Nevertheless, conditions of decline at the beginning of the 19th century led the monks such as Paekp’a to pursue a resolution. Although there have been ordinations performed throughout the 18th century, they were done through private ordination platforms and not following the traditional ordination methods. Without a set standard such as those outlined in the Vinaya of the Four Categories, private ordination platforms would have led to less emphasis on the strict adherence to the Vinaya rules and therefore, loosening of standards of morality and practice. This was also noted by Paekp’a in his Paragon of Rules, where we can gather the situation of confusion in the tradition of ordination and the earnest intention to revive the system of regulations needed to bring order and stability within the sam. gha. Paekp’a explains it as follows in his Paragon of Rules.

Since the ten precepts that are being received today are the precepts needed when entering monkhood from being a novice, it is none other than the three categories of pure (bodhisattva) precepts 三聚淨戒. In order to become a monk, the full precepts of 250 rules need to be received but here in the Eastern [country of Chos˘on]35 only these ten precepts are needed. The reason that a person can become a monk in this way is because the ten [wholesome] precepts make up the fundamentals of the full precepts. (H 10. 574)

According to Paekp’a, despite being aware of the need for the full precepts of 250 rules, a person claimed to be able to become a fully ordained monk by receiving just the ten wholesome precepts. Moreover, it is evident that the traditional monastic ordination based on the Vinaya of the Four Categories was not being practiced. More details can be inspected through another chapter of the Paragon of Rules, the “Ten Precepts for Novices”.

At the central hall, three days of teachings had been given on the rules of conduct: The first day was a teaching on the five precepts for householders, on the second day there was a teaching on ten precepts for novices, and on the third day there was a teaching on the 250 precepts for monastics. However, today in our country, only the precepts for novices are taught and two sets of precepts for

34 The method of ordination adopted between Paekp’a and Tae˘un are obviously different. It appears logical that depending on the need of the monastic community at the time, different methods may easily be adopted especially since such customs were not standardized. It would be no different from the adoption of different philosophical thought. Before Paekp’a composed the Paragon of Rules in 1811, he expounded on the three types and meanings of different forms of meditation, patriarchal meditation, Tath¯agata meditation, and ˘Ui-ri S˘on 義利禪 (benefit meditation), and by doing so, created much debate within the monastic communities where counter arguments came from Tae˘un’s disciples including Ch’o˘ui. In such fashion, and perhaps based on such differences, the arrangement of the ordination ceremonies also varied (Mizutani 1994, p. 113).

35 The East 東, or the Eastern country 東國 is a common appellation for the Chos˘on state, which is in reference to the middle, the Middle Kingdom, China.
the householders and monastics are not taught. Although not giving a teaching on the householder does not matter, not giving a teaching on the precepts for the monastics is gravely wrong. Additionally, it is surely wrong to receive the begging bowl and then having worn the ceremonial robe, to refer to the person as a monk. That is because [even] the novices wear the five precepts robe 繭衣. It is for this reason that the past masters have created a ceremony of repentance for the ten evil acts 十惡懺悔式 and used this as the ten precepts for the monks. (H 10, 577b)

Even despite the awareness that previously, householder, novice, and the monastics received five precepts, ten precepts, and 250 respectively, there was not, at the time, a separate ordination ceremony for monks that was different from that of a householder. As claimed, there was only the ordination ceremony of receiving the ten precepts. After joining the monkhood, a person can pass as a fully ordained monk once the ten precepts for a novice are received. This was not only different from the traditional methods, as it did not involve the ceremony for receiving the bhiksū precepts.36

Paekp’a expresses his disappointment in the situation and explained that venerable monks suggested a method of using the ten wholesome precepts in place of receiving the full precepts of 250 rules.37 It was obvious that the situation of monastic ordination was in disarray, and according to Paekp’a, explained in the introduction to his Paragon of Rules, there were many books on the procedures on performing the ritual but there were many deficiencies in those books. That is why he examined many sources and included corrections on any mistaken points found in those sources and supplemented any missing items.38

Although Paekp’a was critical of the given situation, what was important to him was the ceremony of repentance for the ten evil acts, which to him signified ordination in the full precepts by way of the ten wholesome precepts. Given its appellation as a ceremony of repentance for the ten evil acts, we can realize that Paekp’a put highest importance in repenting as a foundation in becoming a monk. Paekp’a makes a special note in the beginning of the chapter “Ten Precepts for Monastics”, that, “In previous times it was referred to as a repentance ceremony.”39

The ceremony of ordination of the ten wholesome precepts comprises of a six-part of ceremonial procedures: (1) offering verse (供養偈), (2) ritual for venerating the Buddha (禮懺悔佛), (3) correct teaching of the ten precepts (正說十戒), (4) verse of repentance (懺悔偈), (5) repentance dharani (懺悔眞言), (6) verse for raising intentions (立志偈).

To summarize the six parts, an offering verse is initially chanted; second, a ritual dedicating one’s body and mind to the Buddha of the ten directions and the three worlds is performed, through which one’s sins are cleansed; third, the Vinaya master gives a dharma talk on the ten wholesome precepts; fourth, a verse of repentance is chanted for all the evil deeds with the intent of erasing its karmic effect; fifth, repentance dharani is chanted and a ritual is performed for the trikāya; fourth, the verse for raising intentions is chanted while vowing to keep the golden precepts.

Furthermore, in the explanation of the ten wholesome precepts in the aside notes of the text, Paekp’a further explains:

36 The Haeinsa Temple record of ordination also warns of the dire reality of the studies of precepts where a person can pass as a fully ordained monk once the ten precepts for a novice was received, shortly after joining the monkhood.
37 The current author was unable to find any reference of others, other than Paekp’a, using the ten wholesome precepts at the time, meaning that this was unique to Paekp’a.
38 H. vol. 10, p. 552b.
39 H. vol. 10, p. 573b.
40 Trikāya (The three bodies, Kor. samsin 三身) is a Mahayana concept on the nature of Buddhahood that claims three manifestations of the Buddha body: dharma body (Skt. Dharma-kāya), often referred to as the cosmic body; reward body (Skt. saṃbhoga-kāya), the divine incarnation of the Buddha; and transformation body (Skt. nirmāṇa-kāya), the physical manifestation in response to the needs of the sentient beings. See Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, s.v. 三身.
41 H. vol. 10, pp. 573b–75a.
In many regions, original meaning is not known and various nonsensical words are created, and watching such acts of repentance, [they] are like children playing. Therefore, the sutras and commentaries of the Mahayana and Theravada, and Vinaya texts are investigated and compared and corrected. Especially, the system of “karma of confessional ritual” reveals that the precepts for the monastics have been received, which indicates that this cannot be carelessly ignored. (H 10, 574b)

Based on this, it was evident that Paekp’a was reflecting on the situation of disorder in the system of ordination and the arising outcome of a lack of any visible lineage and a lack of guidance that allowed for shameless behavior by the monks. Paekp’a lamented the situation of the rampant fornication, meat consumption, and alcohol drinking by the monks due, in large part, to their ignorance on the monastic precepts. The plight of the practicing monks at the time was described by Paekp’a as the same as a blind monk leading numerous blind monks into a pit of fire. As a result, he took interest in organizing the ordination procedure as one of the measures to overcome the evident situation. In particular, the reason he chose the ten wholesome precepts was because they were claimed to be a method for managing even the defilements in the mind.

In other words, although the ten precepts for novices and the five precepts for householders are regarding only the karmic seeds produced through bodily actions and words, the ten wholesome precepts also included karmic seeds produced through the mind. These are, as pointed out by Paekp’a, the eighth, ninth and tenth rules—(8) not to be greedy, (9) not to be angry, (10) not to have wrong views. According to Paekp’a, “If these ten precepts are not received, one cannot cease the three poisons of the mind. Then, even if the [practitioner] was 100 years old he or she can only be a novice and would not gain the title of a monk.” In this way, the three poisons of greed, anger, and wrong views were also considered to be important methods for the recovery of the sangha.

Given the focus on the deeds of the mind of the monks, Paekp’a was attempting to accomplish internal stability of the sangha by way of the ten wholesome precepts. For example, the purpose of receiving precepts was for the monk to live a life of purity, and by receiving the precepts, it was thought that even the community of monks that was in disorder was able to revive their lost identity and self-worth. In this sense, Paekp’a decided that rather than being held down by traditional methods that were difficult to carry out and fulfill in a time of disorder, it would be better to sincerely carry out the ten wholesome precepts which can address the new and the old karmic seeds even only with the ten precepts. Similar to the three categories of pure (bodhisattva) precepts, repentance was the foundational aspect of the practice of the ten wholesome precepts.

In this sense, it was similar in the importance ascribed to repentance which was also an important criterion in Tae˘un’s Auspicious Ordination. This element of repentance can be witnessed in the Brahmā’s Net Sutra where the description of the Auspicious Ordination is found, in the twenty-third item.

When after the Buddha has entered Nirvana, if a renunciate desires to receive with great effort the bodhisattva precepts, [the renunciate] can on their own receive the precepts by taking a vow in front of the statue of the Buddha or a bodhisattva and must repent for over seven days in front of the statue.

This indicates the foundational aspect of repentance in Auspicious Ordination and tells us that in Tae˘un’s method of reviving the ordination tradition, repentance was an important criterion in becoming a legitimate monk. Unfortunately, there is no material that will give us detailed information on Tae˘un’s description of the Auspicious Ordination.

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42 H. vol. 10, pp. 549a–b.
43 H. vol. 10, p. 574a.
44 H. vol. 10, p. 574b.
45 The three categories of pure (bodhisattva) precepts 三聚淨戒 are also together called Yogacāra precepts (Kor. Yugagye 瑜伽戒). Together with the Brahma’s Net precepts, the Yogacāra precepts have been quite influential.
46 “若佛子 梵滅度後 欲心好心受菩薩戒時 於佛菩薩形像前自誓受或 當七日佛前懺悔” (T. vol. 24, pp. 1006c514–157).
and this limits us from more in-depth analysis other than to say that repentance was foundational in Tae˘un’s conception of monastic ordination.

Of course, repentance has had an important role in monastic life. Even as early as the mid-8th century, the establishment of the monastic assembly for repentance by the well-known Silla monk, Chinp’yo (fl. 8th century) had an important influence on the formation of early monastic communities. Furthermore, in the history of the monastic communities, monastic assembly for repentance has become essential in various Buddhist rituals (Ch’ae 1977, p. 505). The conceptualization of the notions of monastic ordination as a form of repentance by Paekp’a can be understood as a form of development in the ordination tradition, and Tae˘un’s adoption of the Auspicious Ordination can also be understood this way.

However, in comparison to Paekp’a and Tae˘un’s ordination methods, Manha’s method of reviving the ordination tradition was, in fact, often practiced in the Buddhist communities in other Asian regions. The method of reviving ordination by inviting foreign masters or visiting neighboring countries with similar ordination traditions to transfer the ordination tradition, have historically been used in places such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. From this point of view, Manha’s method of traveling to China to receive an ordination seems a natural course of action. It is also natural in the sense that it was in line with the long continued tradition of perceiving China as the source of orthodoxy that was based on the notion of Sino-centric orthodoxy. Including Manha’s adopted actions, the sense of crisis felt within the early 19th century led the monastic community to revive one of the most important traditions for the continued existence of the samgha. In effect, it was the actions of these three monks and others which have allowed the Chos˘on monastic community to continue into the modern era.

5. Conclusions

Ordination can be said to be the core of Buddhism and maintaining this tradition is the key to perpetuating the Buddhist tradition. This was the realization of the monastics in early 19th century Korea of such monks as Paekp’a, Tae˘un, and Manha who were the pioneers in reviving the ordination tradition. Among these three monks, there were shared commonalities such as the geographical location of Chirisan Mountain area in the Hoam region where they started this movement of revival. Another important shared commonality is that Paekp’a and Tae˘un belonged to the Py˘ongyang lineal clan, whose monks were active especially in the development of the monastic curriculum and a system of practice.

Of course, there were also differing elements that were adopted, for example, between Manha and Paekp’a where Paekp’a decided not to follow traditional methods, but to focus on avoiding its pitfalls by establishing the ten wholesome precepts. Tae˘un also departed from traditional methods and adopted the Auspicious Ordination as dictated in the Brahm¯a’s Net Sutra. Despite individually adopted forms of ordination, Paekp’a and Tae˘un, in particular, shared a fundamental acceptance of repentance as an important way of leading the monastics closer to a life of purity.

Furthermore, the importance that was placed on repentance reveals the situation where religious self-introspection through repentance was called for by at least the two monks, Paekp’a and Tae˘un. Paekp’a further judged that the Buddhist community was not in any condition to be able to accept the traditional ordination methods. Such methods

47 See McBride’s discussion of Chinp’yo’s repentance rituals that were related to the worship of Maitreya (McBride 2008, pp. 47–50).
48 When problems in the ordination tradition arose in the Theravāda Sthaviravada Buddhism, they invited monks from neighboring countries with the same ordination tradition or the monks traveled to those countries to be ordained and returned (Gombrich 2006, p. 139; Gunavardhana 1979; Panabokke 1993).
49 Although it seems to have gone unnoticed at the time, but when in 1892 Manha traveled to China and returned five years later having received ordination from a Qing Vinaya master, Changdao Hanbo昌濤漢波, it was, in fact, the Auspicious Precepts that he had received (Kasan 2005, p. 94).
50 This was also the case of T’aego Pou 太吉普愚 (1301–1382) who traveled to China to receive transmission of the lineage in order to lay claims to orthodoxy of Linji lineage. It was based on the newly claimed genealogy where the dharma lineage was received from the Chinese Linji master Shiwu Qinggong 石屋淸珙 (1272–1352) by the Korean monk, T’aego (Kim 2020c).
were obviously judged to have been difficult and even futile and meaningless. Tae˘un, on the other hand, judged the situation to be so dire that he chose Auspicious Ordination which allowed for self-ordination.

Such efforts of the early 19th century monks, given the benefit of hindsight, were successful in revitalizing the ordination tradition and in establishing their lineal clans. However, although Tae˘un and Manha’s lineages prospered into the modern era, Paekp’a’s lineage failed to lay its roots in the coming generations of monks. Ironically, it was judged that Paekp’a’s method of the ten wholesome precepts did not have close connections to recognized traditions of ordination. Tae˘un’s methods, on the other hand, being based on the Brahmanas Net Sutra tradition, were able to draw support from other recognized monks and became widely accepted. In a similar way, Manha’s lineage was recognized for its legitimacy and came to be widely accepted becoming one of the main lineages of Korean Buddhism. While such methods were successful in responding to the dire situation of the early 19th century, the movement of these monks allowed for the continuation of the orthodox lineage that was started by Ch’ônghŏ Huỳnhông some 300 years earlier. This effectively reveals the vitality of the Chosôn samgha that was essential in its survival through the many tribulations and into the modern era.

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