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# Asia Pacific:

# PERSPECTIVES

*an electronic journal*

Volume V · Number 1

December · 2004

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\* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

# Buddhism and State-Building in Song China and Goryeo Korea

by Sem Vermeersch, Ph.D.

## Abstract

This article explores the nature of state power and religion in Song China and Goryeo Korea by studying the state appropriation of Buddhism and the integration of Buddhism into the ideological, political and social order. It argues that Buddhism was an integral part of the state-building project in that it enabled the Song and Goryeo rulers to justify their rise to power and claim to legitimacy. The Chinese and Korean rulers acted pragmatically to secure the political support of the Buddhist establishment. However, their pro-Buddhist policies advanced Buddhist interests and contributed to the rapid expansion of Buddhism at the grassroots level. By examining the development of Buddhist institutions in the wider contexts of political, social and economic changes in Song China and Goryeo Korea, this study has probed more deeply into the inner dynamics of Buddhism in imperial East Asia than have many current studies. It has also gone beyond the dichotomy of Buddhism-versus-Confucianism to explore the negotiation of power between Buddhist monks and Confucian rulers from a comparative perspective.

The founding of the Goryeo dynasty in 918 heralded an era of stability and new power relations in East Asia. It was one of the first and the longest-lasting (918–1392) states to emerge from the shadows of the Middle Kingdom after the collapse of the Tang dynasty (617–907). Before the Mongol invasions of China and Korea, a relative equilibrium was achieved in which China and her neighbouring countries claimed more or less equal status (Rossabi ed., 1983). Yet if one looks at the current stage of scholarship on this period of East Asian history, one learns that the power of Song China far exceeded that of the other states. The Northern (960–1127) and Southern Song (1127–1276) dynasties appeared to be more powerful and advanced in terms of their overall population, cultural accomplishments and economic development than the Khitan Liao (947–1125), Tangut Xi-Xia (1038–1227) and Goryeo Korea. This interpretation, however, has been due to a lack of primary sources concerning the history of these states and a widespread perception that these states were located at the “periphery” of Song China. While these states merit attention in their own right, a closer look at their history will also throw light on the dynamics of Song China. When the Song state was founded in 960, its basis was far from secure. It was only in the next few decades that Song China gradually became a regional power. In building the new empire, the founder Song Taizu (r. 960–976) undoubtedly looked to previous Chinese dynasties for inspiration, and he was also most likely inspired by what had worked and failed to work in the neighbouring countries.

Given the lack of references to cultural contacts with Goryeo Korea in the early Song sources, one does not know the extent to which Taizu took into account what had hap-

pened in Goryeo Korea, a state founded forty-two years earlier than the Song. Nonetheless, a comparative study of the state-building process in both countries reveals the importance of Buddhism as a political ideology and the nature of state power and religion in imperial East Asia. Drawing on my extensive research on the history of Korean Buddhism, this article explores the interactions between Buddhism and imperial states in Song China and Goryeo Korea (Vermeersch, 2001). How did the Chinese and Korean emperors use Buddhism to define their political images and legitimise their rule in the state-building process? How was Buddhism gradually integrated into the fabric of the dynastic state? How did Buddhist institutions develop and change in both countries?

For a long time, it has been taken for granted that Buddhism was more dominant in Goryeo Korea than in Song China. Yet the early Song emperors were no less fervent in their support of Buddhism than the Goryeo rulers. The lack of scholarly attention to the importance of Buddhism in Song China has to do with the widespread misconception that Chinese Buddhism entered a period of continuing decline following its apogee in the Tang dynasty. Many scholars like Peter Gregory, Daniel A. Getz, and Huang Chi-Chiang have corrected this misconception by evaluating the role of Buddhism in Song China, but their works mainly concentrate on Buddhist doctrines rather than its impact on politics, economy and society in the Song period.<sup>1</sup> As with other world religions, Buddhism is a social and political construction that has to constantly define itself in relation to specific contexts. This article seeks to examine the development of Buddhist institutions in the wider contexts of political, social and economic changes in Song China and Goryeo Korea, and to address the nature of state power and religion at that time. In so doing, this study has probed more deeply into the inner dynamics of Buddhism in imperial East Asia than have many current studies. It has also gone beyond the dichotomy of Buddhism-versus-Confucianism to explore the negotiation of power between Buddhist monks (*Sangha*) and Confucian rulers from a comparative perspective.

## I. Buddhism versus Imperial Rule

Historically, the Chinese emperors derived their legitimacy from the Confucian idea of the Mandate of Heaven, but there were some exceptions. The founder of the Wei dynasty, a non-Han ruler, used Buddhism to legitimise his authority. When Empress Wu Zetian was in power from 655 to 705, she employed Buddhism to subvert Confucianism. The most famous Han Chinese emperor who sought political legitimacy through Buddhism would however be Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–549), who was severely criticized by Confucian scholars for ransoming himself to a Buddhist temple, a symbolic gesture showing the superiority of Buddhism to the imperial system. However, Andreas Janousch argues that the story of Emperor Wu highlights the complexity of Buddhist rulership in imperial China. What appears to be a humble act of submission was not the whole story. Emperor Wu tried to mould the Buddhist monks according to his needs, and imposed a bodhisattva ordination

ritual on the monks in which they saw the emperor as a bodhisattva and therefore had to be ordained by him (Janousch, 1999).

Despite his Buddhist fervour, Emperor Wu was also keen to revive ancient Chinese customs and institutions. One can perceive a distinct blurring of the boundaries between Buddhism and Confucianism: the ancient Chinese sage-king paradigm became almost interchangeable with the *cakravartin*, the ideal Buddhist king who implemented the *dharma*.

Like Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, Taizu, the founder of the Song dynasty, showed a strong interest in Buddhism. Even though the mythologization of Taizu by Confucian scholars makes it difficult to discover the man behind the image, his policies indicated a positive disposition towards Buddhism. One of his first acts was to rescind the ban on Buddhist worship issued by the preceding Later Zhou dynasty (951–960) (Huang, 1994, 147). The Later Zhou state had attempted to suppress Buddhism by reducing the number of monks, confiscating bronze images for recasting, and demolishing temples, but it had been toppled by one of its generals, Zhao Kuangyou, who later became Emperor Taizu of the Song dynasty. More than tolerant towards Buddhism, Taizu went much further than the Tang rulers in promoting Buddhist interests. Whilst acknowledging and patronising Buddhism, the Tang rulers had treated it as but one religious system amongst others, which they supported only in so far as it conformed to the political rhetoric that represented the emperor as the Son of Heaven. Buddhism, in short, had been firmly controlled by the state, and any aspirations to independence had been swiftly blocked. The Tang rulers had preferred Taoism to Buddhism, whereas Taizu explicitly put Buddhism first and implemented policies favourable to the growth of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Some pronouncements by his successors suggest that all three teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) were to be treated as equal,<sup>3</sup> but in fact until the late eleventh century, all the Song emperors showed an overwhelming interest in Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

Taizu probably drew inspiration from the state of Wu-Yue (907–978). Located in present-day Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, Wu-Yue was a prosperous state. Many of its emperors were disciples of Buddhist masters and sponsored various Buddhist projects (Shih, 1992; Welter, 1993). Eminent Buddhist priests active at the Wu-Yue court, notably Zanning (919–1001), played an important role in negotiating the surrender of Wu-Yue to the Song government in 978 (Welter, 1999, 30; Dahlia, 1987, 146–80). In these negotiations, Taizu had to ensure Zanning that the newly established Song government was receptive towards Buddhism, and that the Buddhist institutions could maintain the same status and influence under the Song. After the end of the Wu-Yue kingdom, Zanning continued his ‘political career’ as an advisor to the Song emperors, apologist for the religion and administrator in charge of Buddhist affairs nationwide.

Although there were strong political motivations behind Taizu’s decision to recruit eminent Buddhist monks such as Zanning into the government, it is simplistic to interpret Taizu’s pro-Buddhist policies as merely pragmatic as Huang Chi-chiang has argued.<sup>5</sup> Taizu was clearly influenced by

Buddhism from an early age: there are numerous stories about his association with Buddhist monks for some years in his youth when he wandered around the country.<sup>6</sup> Most of these stories are possibly apocryphal, functioning as auguries that describe how these monks saw in him a future ruler. However, it is significant that his mother and wife also happened to be praying in a Buddhist temple when the news came that he had become the new emperor.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, Taizu welcomed “Buddhist” approval of his new dynasty. According to prophecies circulated in 963 and 966, the sixth-century *thaumaturge* Baozhi predicted that twenty-one rulers of the Zhao clan would reign for 799 years.<sup>8</sup> The prophecies were taken seriously. In 980, his successor and younger brother Taizong (r. 976–997) founded a new temple in the capital of Kaifeng to store the mummified body and silver staff of Baozhi, and in 982 he gave a posthumous title to Baozhi after seeing Baozhi’s apparition in the palace.<sup>9</sup> In this newly established state, then, appealing to Buddhist prophecies to justify their claim to legitimacy and consolidate their power proved an irresistible attraction for the founding emperor and his brother.

Throughout his reign, Taizu spent an impressive amount of resources on promoting Buddhism. He sent a group of 157 Chinese monks to retrieve more Buddhist scriptures from India, and set up a government bureau supervising the translation of these scriptures. Even before the arrival of the scriptures, however, he set in motion the project of carving the entire canon of Buddhist scriptures, commentaries and rules on printing blocks. This grand printing project, known as the *Kaibao tripitaka*, lasted from 971 to 983.

It was the first time such a large-scale printing project was ever undertaken in world history, and it was a milestone in the development of the Buddhist canon. Because the emperor had the final say in deciding which scriptures were orthodox and which ones were spurious, the printing project enabled Taizu to establish himself more firmly as purveyor of the orthodox version of Buddhist texts, thereby creating a stronger association between emperorship and the ‘right *dharma*.’

In addition to the printing project, Taizu allowed himself to be identified with a *cakravartin*,<sup>10</sup> a universal monarch whose authority was commensurate with his ability to spread Buddhist law. Whereas the *cakravartin* originally referred to the secular counterpart of the Buddha, who reigns in the spiritual world, Taizu, and especially his younger brother Taizong, now arrogated some of the power normally reserved for the Buddha. When Taizu asked Zanning, the leading priest of the time, whether he should bow to the Buddha, Zanning is said to have replied, “The present Buddha need not bow to the Buddha of the past.”<sup>11</sup> Taizong displayed the same attitude by writing his own treatises on Buddhism, stating in one decree that his work could show monks “the proper way to enter the Buddhist realm (Huang, 1994, 155).” In Song China, then, religion and politics were closely linked to each other. While employing Buddhism to legitimise their rule, Taizu and Taizong frequently crossed political and religious boundaries, presenting themselves as guardians of the Buddhist religion and imperial state.

The early Song emperors went so far as to control the Buddhist monks. Taizu, for example, forbade the casting of new bronze images. He allowed those temples that had not been destroyed by the Later Zhou dynasty to exist, even if they did not have official status, but forbade the re-construction of those temples that had been demolished. He reinstated an examination for postulants to the monk-hood to test their quality and reject those not deemed sufficiently serious about their vocation (Chikusa, 2000, 367–73). Some Song emperors even took it upon themselves to personally examine the senior Buddhist monks' knowledge of the scriptures before granting them any important titles and positions.<sup>12</sup>

While these examples give the impression that the Song emperors acquired their political legitimacy through Buddhism, it is important to look at these church-state relations in their proper historical context. If one reads the sources with a Buddhist frame of reference, one will support the notion that the Song emperors were devoted Buddhist rulers. However, as the dynasty progressed, the main audience for their legitimising strategies was officialdom. The emperor had to prove himself capable of running the empire, while government officials viewed his support for Buddhism as an aberration. In the dynastic order, Buddhism constituted just one element to which the emperor directed his attention, albeit an important element. As an ideology, Buddhism was a very powerful instrument in spreading the image and power of the emperor across the empire. The plaques bestowed on the officially registered monasteries always reminded worshippers of the benevolence of the emperor (Huang, 1989, 302–5). Many temples served as halls of remembrance for the imperial lineage and displayed the portraits and sculptures of deceased emperors and empresses (Ebrey, 1997, 42–92). With the emperor's blessings, the temples not only allowed commoners to worship the Buddha and the emperor but also provided a point of contact between the rulers and the subjects.

Let us now shift our focus to the importance of Buddhism in the state-building process in Goryeo Korea during the reign of Taejo (r. 918–943). Before he usurped the throne, Wang Geon, posthumously known as Taejo, was a general in the kingdom founded by Gung-ye, one of the three rival kingdoms on the Korean peninsula following the collapse of the Silla state in the late ninth-century. Based in the north, Gung-ye's state closely identified with the ancient state of Goguryeo, and after his rise to power, Wang Geon continued this strategy, choosing the name "Goryeo" for his state in honour of Goguryeo.

Wang Geon's family established a stronghold in Gaeseong prefecture. As with many local strongmen in the last few years of the Silla dynasty, Wang Geon acted almost independently from the centre. Another distinctive feature of his political career was his close association with Seon (Chan/Zen) Buddhism. Wang Geon grew up in a predominantly Buddhist environment. In politics, Gung-ye, Wang Geon's overlord, saw himself as a bodhisattva with supernatural power and wrote his own sutras. The most important Buddhist connection in Wang Geon's rise to power was the prediction made by the Seon monk, Doseon (827–898).

However, this augury was made on the basis of the environment in which Wang Geon was living. Provided that he made a few alterations, Doseon said, the resident terrestrial force was such that it would produce a future ruler (Rogers, 1982–83). It was a Buddhist monk, not a geomancer, who made the prediction on the basis of geomantic principles (*fengshui*).

After his accession to the throne, Wang Geon became the dynasty's founding father (Taejo), but continued to show considerable favour to Buddhism. Unlike Taizu in Song China, Taejo did not have to rescind any anti-Buddhist policies. He actually dampened overzealous support for Buddhism. In one of the policy injunctions to his successors, Taejo attributed the fall of the Unified Silla kingdom (668–935) in part to excessive temple building. He forbade the construction of any new temple and required abbots to be appointed by the state. This decision was undoubtedly based on economic and political considerations, and it was also justified in terms of geomantic reasoning – building temples randomly would affect the harmony of the terrestrial forces, which had conspired to bring Wang Geon to power. Therefore, the government only permitted the construction of temples in a limited number of locations selected by Doseon.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Taizu in Song China had applied the same geomantic argument to justify the reversal of his predecessor's anti-Buddhist policies. According to one legend, the Later Zhou dynasty fell because the destruction of images "greatly harmed the blessings of the earth and grain [gods]."<sup>14</sup>

Although Taejo used Doseon's geomantic theories to restrict temple construction, this approach proved to be counter-productive in the long run. Soon it was argued that new temples were needed to replenish and aid (*bibo*) the dynasty. In that case, the geomantic theory could just as easily be used to justify the construction of more temples. Apparently Taejo recognized all existing temples and only built new ones in the new capital. He was particularly concerned lest too many officials and strongmen build their private temples. By donating land to these private temples, families could get tax-free status for their land.

Taejo expressed his devotion to Buddhism in all the writings attributed to him. His first injunction attributes the success of his dynasty to "the power of Buddha."<sup>15</sup> This belief re-emerges in a prayer-text he composed for the completion of Gaetaesa, a temple built to commemorate the final victory over his archenemy Later Baekje in 936. The prayer text was a thanksgiving to all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly kings, sea and water spirits etc, in which Taejo vowed to recompense their favour by transmitting the Buddhist teaching and spreading compassion.<sup>16</sup> The third and last extant piece of his writings, an epitaph for an eminent monk, throws light on his personal relation with the monks. It expresses the ruler's sadness at the passing of his Buddhist mentor, and records his pledge to cultivate the karmic bond between the ruler and his Buddhist preceptor throughout the dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Taejo invited many monks to court, and discussed with them how to use Buddhism to strengthen and pacify the country. Through his interactions with monks, he portrayed himself as a Buddhist disciple. There is no evidence that Taejo ever arrogated any superior status to himself vis-à-vis the

monks. Instead, he stuck to a clear distinction between the secular and religious realms. Taejo was of course more than just a Buddhist disciple. Although he is never explicitly identified as a *cakravartin* or Buddhist ruler, there are clear elements in his policies that appeal to the *cakravartin* ideology.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to Song China where the emperor had a final say in administering secular and religious matters, Taejo and his successors in Goryeo Korea were willing to acknowledge their limited knowledge of Buddhism, their commitment to Buddhism, and their gratitude for the Buddha's intercession in securing the dynasty. This does not mean that their role was completely passive in this scheme: in fact, they had the very important task of protecting the religion. Epitaphs for eminent monks frequently reminded the reader that in the "latter days of the law", the law had been entrusted to the king for protection and safeguarding. In other words, because of the confusion and decadence that were supposed to occur in this period, even within the monastic community, it was up to the king to ensure that the *Sangha* was pure and practiced the true *dharma*.<sup>19</sup>

One last thing to be mentioned about Taejo's Buddhist rulership is its visual expression. Like the Song dynasty, the Goryeo rulers sought to give tangible expression of their devotion to Buddhism by building two types of temples. The first type were the so-called *bibo-sa* (remedial temples), which were built in reward for the monks' assistance to the dynasty. The second type were memorial temples, mainly located in or near the capital. Every deceased king was designated a memorial temple, in which a statue or picture of the king was placed. His son or another relative who had succeeded him to the throne came to this memorial temple to pray for the deceased king on his memorial days and during some specific festivals. Remarkably, the statue of Taejo was recently discovered near his tomb west of Gaeseong, the capital of the Goryeo dynasty. It had been buried there after the Joseon dynasty abolished the temple.<sup>20</sup> We do not know how exactly the statue was used, but according to the Song descriptions of imperial statues, the image would have been placed in a separate hall within the temple precinct as the focus of veneration. Images of the founder of the dynasty were also placed in other temples across the country. Besides these portraits, statues were also made to illustrate Taejo's previous lives, including one of his incarnations as a temple attendant.

Another way through which Taejo enforced Buddhist rulership was to compile a complete collection of the Buddhist canon. Following in the footsteps of Wendi of the Sui dynasty in China (r. 581–604), Taejo sought to compile and copy a whole set of the canon.<sup>21</sup> His ambition made Goryeo become the first country outside of China to undertake such a grand printing project. The printing of the so-called first Goryeo *tripitaka* between 1010 and 1083 should be understood as an attempt to use Buddhism to legitimise the new dynasty. After the failure of King Hyeonjong (r. 1009–1031) to stave off an invasion by the Khitan forces, the king vowed to the Buddha to carry out this printing project if the invaders withdrew – which they did. The printing project was of great political significance. The ability to undertake the project not

only demonstrated the wealth and power of the new dynasty in Korea but also cultivated a sense of national pride against the Khitans, who only printed their own set of the Buddhist canon two decades after the Koreans. It is not known whether the Goryeo *tripitaka* had the same normative power as the Song canon did. In terms of content, the texts that the Koreans included were the same as those included in the Song canon. Only for the second Goryeo *tripitaka*, compiled between 1236 and 1247, did Goryeo monk-scholars put together a completely new edition of the Buddhist texts. Whereas the Song court gradually lost interest in Buddhism as a means of political propaganda – it relinquished its exclusive rights to print the Buddhist canon in 1071 – the Goryeo court virtually monopolized the reproduction of Buddhist scriptures. Because of this state support, the second Goryeo *tripitaka* became the standard East Asian edition and was used as the main source text for modern editions.

Illustrative of the divergent development of Buddhism in China and Korea after the eleventh-century is the case of the *Bizang quan*, a Buddhist tract written by Emperor Taizong. The tract was included in the Chinese Buddhist canon and often printed in China, but it was later lost in China. The compilers of the *Quan Songwen* had to refer to the Goryeo *tripitaka* to retrieve this work.<sup>22</sup> That this particular tract was preserved in Korea suggests that the legacy of Buddhist kingship remained stronger in Goryeo Korea than in Song China, where after the eleventh-century a Confucian revival obliterated the Buddhist agenda of early Song emperors.

## II. State Control of Buddhism

In China, the official legislation on Buddhism served as a political instrument to reduce the number of monks. Viewed from a Confucian perspective, Chinese officials regarded conversion to monk-hood as an act of treason against one's parents, who would lose their bloodline and prospect of care in their old age, and against the state, which would lose its subjects and thus tax income and corvée labour. It is against this background that the Later Zhou state attempted to impose strict quotas on temples and monks. Initially, Taizu did not alter these principles but merely refrained from taking any drastic punitive action. Right after his accession and on special occasions, Taizu authorised mass ordinations. Throughout his reign, however, the government tried to impose strict quotas regarding ordination numbers. In 967, Taizu required those devoted Buddhists wishing to become monks to be tested on the sutras, after which the Board of Sacrifice (*sibu*) would give them certificates.<sup>23</sup> In 973, a firm quota was set on the number of monks to be ordained in each prefecture. When the register of monks reached one hundred, the new decree stipulated, one new monk could take the examination to be ordained. That is, the ordination quota was set at one per cent of the total number of the monks in each prefecture.<sup>24</sup> In the examination, the candidates had to recite 300 pages of Buddhist texts fluently.<sup>25</sup> Local government officials rather than Buddhist monks supervised the examination procedure. Nonetheless, the examination system was rife with abuse as the problem of officials selling the certificates to raise money soon resurfaced. This problem can be discerned

in the available census figures. At the beginning of the Song dynasty, the census counted 67,430 monks, slightly up from the figure of the Later Zhou dynasty (Chikusa, 2000, 368). By 1021, the figure had increased six-fold to 397,615 monks and 61,240 nuns. The dramatic increase in the numbers of monks and nuns suggests that the quota system was not enforced effectively. What made the situation worse was that the officials circulated contradictory regulations on the quota system. Some sources say that 1,000 monks could be ordained every year, but others say as many as 8,000 could be (Chikusa, 2000, 368). According to Zanning, between 976 and 982 more than 170,000 new ordinations took place. When the local officials were attentive to the pro-Buddhist signals from the central government, they probably decided to go with the flow by issuing as many ordination certificates as possible.<sup>26</sup>

In Goryeo Korea, the government imposed restrictions on the number of ordinations according to different criteria. First, people from certain areas and social sections were excluded from the monk-hood altogether, such as the border provinces, and those villages (*hyang*) and boroughs (*bugok*) populated by base people (*cheonmin*), the lowest social status group apart from slaves. This official policy reflected the existing social and political structure in Korea. Furthermore, an additional restriction was imposed, allowing only the fourth, and in some cases the third, son in each household to become a monk. In effect, it was a widespread habit among the royal family and Goryeo elites to have the fourth son ordained. The lack of knowledge about the demographics in Goryeo Korea makes it difficult to assess whether these policies were more restrictive than those in Song China. What is known is that there were more members of the elite and less commoners who became monks in Goryeo Korea than in Song China. However, it is most likely that the state failed to enforce these restrictions: examples can be found of families where more than one in three sons ordained. Towards the end of the Goryeo dynasty, some of the lower echelons of the elite flouted the restriction on the first three sons, and throughout the dynasty many commoners lived at temples in a half-monk-half-lay status.<sup>27</sup>

In China, the Song government compiled several volumes of law codes, most of which contain chapters about legislation on Buddhist monks. The purpose of these laws was to define the legal status of the monks and their rights, privileges and duties. With detailed information about the official procedures on how to obtain and keep the status of monk, these laws showed that local officials ought to be informed of all that happened inside temples, and had the right to 'defrock' the culprit or mete out other punishments in cases of infractions of the correct procedure, falsification of documents, and crimes committed by the monks.<sup>28</sup> It is not known whether a similar code existed in Goryeo Korea, but the Treatise on Law from the *Goryeosa* reveals that laws and decrees concerning the status of the Buddhist monks were frequently issued by the state. These laws were designed to regulate the public behaviour of monks and could be understood as attempts to impose decorum. Laicisation was sometimes threatened, but seldom if indeed ever carried out.

### III. The Creation of State Buddhist Institutions

The Song dynasty continued the tradition established by preceding dynasties of instating a special bureau to deal with monastic affairs. In theory, the Bureau of Monks' Registration (*Zuoyou Senglisi*), staffed by monks, was in charge of governing "all the monks of the empire" but in practice, it only dealt with strictly religious matters such as the carrying out of religious rituals and organising the printing and translation of sutras. The examination of monks and the appointment of abbots to state temples were administered by the state. At the beginning of the Northern Song dynasty, the supervision of monastic affairs was under the Court of State Ceremonies and in the Southern Song, this duty was transferred to the Board of Sacrifice. Besides these government institutions, the Department of the Secretariat or the Chancellery was responsible for the appointment of abbeys and other important religious positions.<sup>29</sup>

Three important features of the institutional history of Buddhism in Song China are worthy of attention. The first feature concerns the complexity of the system. Those monks working for the Bureau of Monks' Registration were divided into five ranks, each subdivided into left and right.<sup>30</sup> The role of these monks was largely ceremonial but the ways in which they were selected and promoted by the state were as complicated as those of officialdom. The second feature concerns the active involvement of the early Song emperors in the appointment of monk-officials. Initially, there was no adequate system for the selection and promotion of monk-officials. It was only after the prefect of Kaifeng requested official permission in 1003 to personally examine a number of monks about to go on a foreign mission that emperors started to examine those monks seeking government positions.<sup>31</sup> Of all the Song rulers, Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) and Renzong (r. 1022–1063) most frequently summoned monks to the palace for interviews.<sup>32</sup> As a result, a system based on seniority and academic accomplishment was created for promoting monks, and a selection test different from the ordination examination was instated.<sup>33</sup> The Song emperors also controlled the appointment of abbots at major state temples. As the bureaucracy began wielding more authority in the late eleventh-century, the emperors had less input where the selection of monk-officials was concerned. The final feature concerns the importance of the lower level of government. Throughout the Song dynasty, local authorities played an important role in recommending monks for official positions, especially abbeys of public temples. Abbeys of public temples (*shifang siyuan*) open to monks of all Buddhist lineages and schools were often determined by the other local temples or by influential local officials.<sup>34</sup>

The bureaucratic system supervising Buddhist communities in Goryeo Korea was similar to the Song system. At the beginning of his reign, Taejo created the Bureau of Monks' Registration, but it was not until the end of the tenth century that the Bureau began to take shape (Vermeersch, 2001, 228–40). By that time, all the monks intending to move beyond the rank and file had to take a placement test. This was a regular event to be held frequently throughout the dynasty, and as

such the Goryeo monastic examination was more fully institutionalised than the irregular testing of monks in China.

Another difference between Chinese and Korean Buddhist institutions was that the selection examination during the Goryeo dynasty was an oral test or a debate on certain topics. The most skilful and knowledgeable debaters were given a rank that qualified them for the abbacy of a temple or for a senior position in the Bureau of Monks' Registration. The jury that made the final decision was often though not exclusively chaired by a scholar-official.<sup>35</sup> Upon getting the initial qualifying ranking, a monk had the opportunity to be promoted to five different ranks, and the promotion was usually made by royal decree or instruction. After attaining the highest rank, a monk could then be appointed royal preceptor and eventually state preceptor. None of these titles was conferred in Song China. The Goryeo system was more elaborate and comprehensive than the Song system. The Song ranks were only relevant to the staff at the Bureau of Monks' Registration, but the Goryeo ranks were used for any appointment in Buddhist institutions, which in turn allowed the Korean rulers to have much more effective control over the appointment of abbots than their Chinese counterparts.<sup>36</sup> In Korea, almost all the important temples were organised into a system of remedial temples, whose abbots were often appointed by the king or influential officials, although temples sometimes had the right to appeal.<sup>37</sup>

## V. Conclusion

This article has explored the nature of state power and religion in Song China and Goryeo Korea by studying the state appropriation of Buddhism and the integration of Buddhism into the ideological, political and social order. As far as Song Taizu and Goryeo Taejo were concerned, Buddhism was an integral part of the state-building project in that it enabled them, as rulers, to justify their rise to power and claim to legitimacy. On the surface, these two emperors acted pragmatically to secure the political support of the Buddhist establishment, and their pro-Buddhist policies sought to regulate Buddhist teaching, practices and institutions. However, no matter how questionable their motives were, they also advanced Buddhist interests and contributed to the rapid expansion of Buddhism at that time. Even if they were not genuine Buddhists, they were convinced that only by defining their leadership within the Buddhist worldview could they consolidate their power.

By comparison, Goryeo Taejo went further than Song Taizu in dedicating the success of his dynastic enterprise to the action of the Buddhas (and other spirits and deities). Taejo made his own position if not subservient to, at least dependent on the Buddhist religion. The Song emperors, on the other hand, approached Buddhism from a position of strength. While supporting the construction of temples and taking instruction in Buddhism, the Song rulers had supreme authority over the Buddhist monks. One explanation lies in the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the respective dynasties. In Goryeo Korea, winning over influential temples was a key to Taejo's success in integrating the three rival kingdoms into his new dynastic state. After the

end of the military conquest in 936, Taejo ruled over what was essentially a confederation of local power-holders. Honouring influential Buddhist monks and bestowing them with titles and abbacies allowed him to establish at least a symbolic foothold on the central power in those provinces not yet under his direct control.<sup>38</sup>

In Song China, the Buddhist monk Zanning, whose ideas were very influential at court under the first two emperors, "argued for a full acceptance of Buddhism within the administrative structure of the Chinese government."<sup>39</sup> Although Zanning had the ears of the emperors, his proposals never fully materialized and the Chinese Buddhist bureaucracy remained weak. The system of appointing serious monk-aspirants was seriously diluted in the late eleventh-century because of the sale of ordination certificates. The system of promoting monk-bureaucrats and temple administrators never developed into a full-fledged working system. In Goryeo, on the other hand, the institutionalisation of Buddhism went much further, as if Zanning's ideas were wholeheartedly carried out. The system enabled the Goryeo dynasty to be closely identified with Buddhist aspirations throughout the country.

Let me end this article with the story of the Goryeo monk Jijong (930–1018). In 968, on a trip to China, Jijong met with Zanning in the capital of the then still independent Wu-Yue kingdom.<sup>40</sup> Jijong had taken the Goryeo monastic examination in 954 and was known to be the first graduate of the examination. After his return from China, Jijong became the first monk to have obtained all the ranks of the monastic bureaucracy in Goryeo Korea. One can only speculate about what Jijong had told Zanning about the Goryeo monastic examination system, and how these two Buddhist thinkers exchanged ideas about the role of monks in their respective countries. Jijong's encounter with Zanning was part of the wider cross-cultural interaction between Goryeo Korea and Song China. It was through such interaction that Buddhism continued to shape the political, social and religious order in both countries.

## ENDNOTES

1. Gregory and Getz, eds., *Buddhism in the Sung*. The only Western-language study that addresses the central government policy on Buddhism in the Song dynasty is Huang Chi-chiang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism in the Early Northern Sung," in Brandauer and Huang, eds., *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*, pp.144–87. However, there is a considerable body of literature on this subject in Chinese and Japanese. A good example is Chikusa Masaaki, *Chūgoku Bukkyō shakaishi kenkyū* [Studies in the Social History of Chinese Buddhism].
2. In 967, Taizu decreed that Buddhist monks should always take precedence over Taoist monks at the imperial court. Zhipan, *Fozu Tongji* [General Account of the Buddha] (hereafter FZTJ), T.2045, vol.49, p.396a. On the Tang preference for Taoism, see Weinstein, *Buddhism under the Tang*. Of course, some later Tang emperors were fervent patrons of Buddhism.
3. "Emperor Zhenzong valued Taoism and Buddhism equally," FZTJ, p.403b.
4. In 998, Emperor Zhenzong wrote that Buddhism and Confucianism differ in their external trappings, but that the meaning (*dao*) is the same. FZTJ, p.402a.

5. Huang Chi-chiang's view that Taizu's attitude towards Buddhism was half-hearted is not entirely convincing. His argument is based on the story of Taizu's attempt to burn a Buddha relic to see whether or not it changed colour. When it did not, Taizu saw it as a miracle. Yet the story does not indicate why Taizu wanted to burn the relic. Indeed, Taizong repeated the very same experiment with the same result. Huang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism," p.146.
6. Chikusa Masaaki, *Sô-Gen Bukkyô bunkashi kenkyû* [Studies in the History of Buddhist Culture during the Song and Yuan Dynasties], pp.364–67; FZIJ, p.393a-b.
7. FZIJ, p.393a.
8. FZIJ, p.407a and p.401c.
9. FZIJ, p.398a and p.464b; *Fozu lidai tongzai*, T. 2036, vol.49, p.659b; Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, "Eine Ehrenrettung für den Süden: Pao-chih (418–514) und Fu Hsi (497–569), zwei Heilige aus dem unteren Yangtse Tal," in Gert Naundorf et al., ed., *Religion und Philosophie in Osatien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger*, pp.247–65. Baozhi's mystical power was again invoked by the founder of the Ming dynasty. See Soper, "Hsiang-kuo-ssu, an Imperial Temple of Northern Sung China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol.68 (1948), pp.19–45.
10. FZIJ, p.394c.
11. This statement is problematic because Zanning only joined the Song court after Taizu's death. For a discussion of this problem, see Welter, "A Buddhist Response," 31. This response is not original because the Northern Wei rulers used the same argument to avoid showing submission to the Buddha or Buddhist monks. Zanning probably quoted a historical precedent rather than making a doctrinal statement.
12. Huang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism," p. 161. No sources are given. See FZIJ, p.403a.
13. Jeong In-ji et. al. *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo] (hereafter GRS). Reprint. 2: 15a.
14. FZIJ, p.393b.
15. GRS, 2: 15a.
16. Yang Eun-yong, "Goryeo Taejo chinje Gaetaesa Hwaom peophoe so ui yeon'gu [Research on the Gaetaesa Hwaom Assembly prayer text written by Taejo]," *Han'guk Bulgyo munhwa sasang sa: Gasan Yi Ji-gwan hwagap kinyeom nonchong* [The History, Culture and Thought of Korean Buddhism: Festschrift for Yi Chi-gwan], vol.1, pp.810–22.
17. "Heungbeopsa Jin'gong Daesa bi [Stele for Jin'gong Daesa]," in Han'guk yeoksa yeon'guhoe [The Society for the Study of Korean History] (ed.), *Yeokju Namal Yeoch'o geumseongmun* [Annotated and Translated Epigraphy from the Late Silla-Early Goryeo Period] (hereafter NYGSM), vol.1, p.85.
18. On Taejo's representation through Buddhism, see Sem Vermeersch, "Representation of the Ruler in Buddhist Inscriptions of Early Koryô," *Korean Studies* vol. 26, no. 2 (2002), pp. 216–250.
19. This was of course a contentious issue. The *Renwang jing* states that the scripture is to be entrusted to the king, not the whole dharma. See Vermeersch, "Representation of the Ruler," pp. 226–8.
20. *Sekai bijutsu daizenshu, dai 10-kan: Kôkuri, Kudari, Shiragi, Kôrai* [Complete Collection of World Art, Vol. 10: Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla, Goryeo], pp.405.
21. *Bongam-sa Jeongjin Daesa bi* (965) [Stele for Jeongjin Daesa], NYGSM, vol. 1, pp.268–69.
22. Although at least one Song offprint (dated 1108, now in the Sackler Museum of Harvard University) remains of this text from the first Song *tripitaka*, otherwise it didn't circulate in China. This paragraph is based on my unpublished paper "Ancestor Worship and Buddhist Politics: A New Look at the Origins of the First Goryeo *Tripitaka*," presented at the Harvard Korea Colloquium on May 17, 2003.
23. FZIJ, p.396b.
24. Chikusa, *Sô-Gen Bukkyô bunkashi*, p.371. Quoted from *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, p.14. According to *Zhaoling ji* (*Quan Song wen*), the initial decree states vaguely that one [extra?] monk could be "released" for every 70 to 138. This is followed by a clearer decree, which stipulates that for

- every 100 monks, one new monk can be ordained every year. *Quan Song wen*, vol. 1, p.151 and p.159.
25. FZIJ: 400a. In 986, Taizong set the amount of pages to be recited at 300. However, this number could fluctuate. In the south, where there were more monks already, stricter conditions were imposed. See Huang Qijiang, *Beisong Fojiaoshi lungao* [Essays on the History of Buddhism in the Northern Song], p.36.
  26. "Lintan fa," *Seng shilüe* T. 2126: 252b.
  27. On the Goryeo legislation on monks, see Sem Vermeersch, "The Status of Monks: State Regulations Concerning Buddhist Monks in the Koryô Dynasty," *Buddhist Studies Review* vol. 20, no. 2 (2003), pp. 145–168. In China too there existed a category of people who stayed at monasteries illegally because they could not afford the price of an ordination certificate. See Chikusa Masaaki, "Sodai bai choko [Study of the Sale of Ordination Certificates in the Song]," in *Chûgoku Bukkyô shakaishi kenkyû*, 65. It is not clear whether the sale of ordination certificates also occurred in Goryeo.
  28. For the translation of one of these law codes, see W. Eichhorn, *Beitrag zur rechtlichen Stellung des Buddhismus und Taoismus im Sung-Staat. Übersetzung der Sektion "Taoismus und Buddhismus" aus dem Ch'ing-yüan t'iao-fa shih-lei* (Ch. 50 und 51).
  29. Xie and Bai, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi* [History of the System of Monastic Offices in China], pp.158–70.
  30. To be more precise, these were not ranks, but offices. In the Song bureaucratic system, job titles were often an expression of personal rank, which had to be followed up by a job assignment. If this did not happen, the office (personal rank) was only an empty title. See Xie and Bai, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidushi*, pp.158–70.
  31. FZIJ, p.402c; Huang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism," p.155 and p.176, n.56.
  32. Huang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism," p.161.
  33. The only clear reference to this senior exam is an imperial communication for 1056, indicating that besides monks who had been ordained more than forty years, younger monks could take an examination in order to be qualified for the office. See *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* [Universal Mirror to the Aid of Government, Continued and Enlarged], p.109, 4a. However, other evidence suggests that the examination had never been an effective policy. See Huang, "Imperial Rulership and Buddhism," p. 182, n.89.
  34. In theory, the local monks' registry had to convene abbots to decide vacant abbacies. See Eichhorn, "Beitrag zur rechtlichen Stellung des Buddhismus," p.38. In practice, local magistrates often proposed monks with whom they were familiar. See Huang Chi-chiang, "Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou," in Gregory and Getz, Jr. (eds.), *Buddhism in the Sung*, p.301.
  35. Vermeersch, "The Power of Buddha: The Ideological and Institutional Role of Buddhism in the Koryô Period (918–1392)," pp.213–28.
  36. This does not necessarily mean that monks were at the mercy of the administration. To the contrary, it helped the pro-Buddhist rulers to make sure that eminent monks were not thwarted by local bureaucrats.
  37. Vermeersch, "The Power of Buddha," p.238.
  38. *Ibid.*, pp.272–74.
  39. Welter, "A Buddhist Response," p.42.
  40. "Geodon-sa Weongong Guksa bi, [Stele for Weongong Guksa]," Yi Ji-gwan (ed. and trans.), *Gamju gyoyeok yeokdae goseung bimun* [Annotated and Translated Epitaphs of Eminent Monks], vol. 3, p.216.

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