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Jin Park. *Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim Iryŏp.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017. 280 pp. $65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8248-5878-0.

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The most pervasive image of philosophers is that of old, and largely white, men with beards. It is considerably more rare to encounter studies that break with this iconography. In this much-needed book, ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim Iryŏp***, Jin Y. Park problematizes traditional modes of philosophizing—androcentric and Western-centered tendencies—and attempts to deconstruct the stereotypical image of philosophy and philosopher. Park tackles these issues by thoroughly examining the life and philosophy of Kim Iryŏp (1896–1971), a Christian-born feminist activist, writer, and Buddhist nun. As a leading female intellectual in colonial and postcolonial Korea, almost every phase of Kim Iryŏp's life intersects with significant moments of colonialism, feminism, and modernity in Korea. In a way, her life itself is the integral embodiment of modern Korean history.

The study of women in Buddhism is a rather more recent subject of inquiry. The slowly growing interest in the topic has produced a number of significant works that examine Buddhist nuns.[1] While these previous studies mostly deal with the challenges that Buddhist females encountered in the patriarchal Buddhist order, ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** sharpens the focus on the philosophy of a particularly noteworthy Buddhist nun. ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** is the product of the author's long and in-depth engagement with Kim Iryŏp's literary writings. Park has also translated Iryŏp's collected essays into English, which came out as ***Reflections of a Zen Buddhist Nun: Essays by Zen Master Kim Iryŏp*** (2014). As I explained in the review of this translation, there have only been a handful of studies on modern Korean Buddhist nuns—a doubly marginalized topic.[2] ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** marks a major breakthrough in the research on Iryŏp in any language, since even in Korean scholarship her Buddhist side has been less explored. The book likewise goes beyond the field of Korean Buddhism because this is also one of the first book-length studies to engage the philosophy of modern Buddhist nuns more broadly.

Just like the life of Iryŏp, ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** is multifaceted. While the book follows a conventional structure of biography, it is organized by themes, which reflect different stages of Iryŏp's life. This format invites the reader to "think with Kim Iryŏp as much as about her" (p. 2). While closely following the life experiences of Iryŏp, throughout the book, Park argues that Iryŏp's philosophy is "narrative philosophy, a philosophy that engages itself with the narrative discourse of our daily experiences instead of relying heavily on theorization and abstraction" (p. 6).

The book consists of seven chapters, divided into two parts. The bipartite structure of the book deliberately mirrors the two distinctive phases of Iryŏp's life: before and after she becomes a Buddhist nun. Part 1 focuses on Iryŏp's life as *Sin yŏsŏng* (New Woman), whereas part 2 deals with her life as a nun. The two parts not only represent her two seemingly contradictory lives, but also parallel the "small-I" and the "great-I" that constitute a central realization of Iryŏp's understanding of Buddhism and her life as a whole.

Following a clearly written overview of the project in the introduction, chapter 1 opens with Iryŏp's literary works that reflect her childhood and young adult life. Iryŏp experienced a series of deaths of close family members during this period, and Park identifies these tragic events as a major force for shaping her philosophy in later life. The chapter also introduces her involvement with the New Women, an elitist feminist movement that flourished in colonial Korea. As a leading New Woman, she even published the first feminist magazine, *Sin yŏja* (New Woman) in 1920. Through her numerous articles and essays, Iryŏp publicly challenged Confucian-prescribed norms, especially the ideology of chastity. One of the most famous arguments that she made was that the core of chastity lies not in the body but in true love and individual happiness. Chapters 2 and 3 further examine Iryŏp's feminism within the broader feminist movement. But her involvement with the activist movement quickly faded away. When she began to find herself detached from the feminist movement, Iryŏp became more interested in the philosophical question of searching for one's identity, or in her terms, a "new individualism."

Part 2 moves to Iryŏp's life as a Buddhist nun. Chapter 4 deals with her first encounter with Buddhism. Here, the author contextualizes Iryŏp's decision to renounce the world by focusing on what it meant to be a Sŏn/Zen Buddhist nun in 1920s Korea and offering a brief history of Korean Buddhism. As the core parts of the book, chapters 5 and 6 present the main philosophy of Iryŏp. In chapter 5, based on Iryŏp's collected essays published in 1960, the author compares the nun's understanding of Buddhism with two modern Japanese thinkers, Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) and Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962). Chapter 6 continues the discussion of Iryŏp's ideas, and Park demonstrates here that 1) her writings themselves prove that she was still engaging in social issues and that she used them as a medium to teach Buddhism to her readers; 2) Iryŏp's recounting of her life can be best understood when it is viewed as her unique way of doing "narrative philosophy." Chapter 7 ends with a discussion of the larger implications of the experiential dimension of Iryŏp's philosophy by emphasizing, with a nod to Jacques Derrida, how lived experiences are the essential source of one's philosophy.

Women and Buddhist Philosophy exhibits a carefully constructed organizational schema and sophistication in writing. A couple of parts from chapters 5 and 6 stand out as points for further discussion and perhaps as future research avenues. First, Iryŏp's philosophy is profoundly mediated by Japanese thinkers in the context of colonialism. In chapter 5, her Buddhist philosophy is compared to that of Inoue and Tanabe. The author states: "I place Iryŏp's religious thoughts in the context of the emergence of philosophy and religion in East Asia and contextualize her ideas with two Japanese thinkers in order to consider an East Asian philosophy of religion" (pp. 137–138). While readers might want to know more about why Inoue and Tanabe, in particular, were chosen for this comparative project, it would also have been interesting if another influential Chinese thinker, Liang Qichao (1873–1929) was considered in this discussion. Considering the popularity of Liang's works among the intellectuals in colonial Korea and his role as the leading Buddhist figure in China, Liang would seem to be a missing piece of the puzzle in the intellectual to-

pography of Buddhist modernity and East Asian philosophers of religion.[3]

Second, while readers might be left wondering whether Iryŏp had been exposed to or directly influenced by any of Inoue's works, as a point of convergence between the two thinkers, Park contends that his "discussion of the logic of the 'contradiction' and 'mutually contained identity' reminds us of Iryŏp's claim that contradiction is the principle of the universe. The logic of contradiction and mutually contained identity was the ground on which Iryŏp built her notion of the 'small-I' and the 'great-I'" (p. 141). This dual concept of the self—the "small-I" and the "great-I"—seems to demand a fuller treatment in future scholarship, for the terms have an intriguing background in the intellectual history of modern East Asia. The idea of the two types of self and the terms themselves originate in the Buddhist scriptures. For instance, the "great-I (大我)" is a term found in numerous Buddhist texts, including the *Nirvana Sūtra*, and the practice of contrasting the small-I and the great-I is prominent in several Buddhist commentaries in the Chinese Buddhist canon. But, the modern rendering (either religious or sociological) of the term transcends the original connotation. The earliest modern usage of these terms is found in the writings of Liang Qichao as early as 1900 and in the writing of Watanabe Yakuzen, a Japanese Zen Buddhist whose first publication appeared in 1916.[4] As part of the East Asian circulation of knowledge, intellectuals and religious figures in Korea widely incorporated these concepts into their thinking and writing. Thus, these terms frequently emerge in the numerous opinion essays published in magazines and newspapers of colonial Korea (such as an editorial article by Shin Ch'aeho [1880–1936], titled "The Great-self and the Small-self," published in the *Taehanhyŏphoe hoebo* 5 [August 25, 1908]). Mangong (1871–1946), the renowned Buddhist Sŏn master and also Iryŏp's teacher, also used this terminology in his dharma talks. Given the complexity of these terms and their centrality in Iryŏp's philosophy, further contextualization of their usage would seem to be merited.

Another intriguing point is found in chapter 6, where the author discusses a Korean scholar's harsh criticism of Iryŏp's life. In her defense, Park argues that Kim Iryŏp played an immense role in the lives of Korean nuns, Buddhist practitioners, and other women in Korea. Park makes it clear that Iryŏp's several publications themselves prove her social engagement and feminist commitments. But Iryŏp's life as a Sŏn (Zen) master and her role as a teacher for the monastic communities would be another point that deserves more scrutiny. For instance, Iryŏp was quite active in promoting Buddhism as a lay Buddhist before she joined the convent in 1933.[5] Yet, we do not know much about how influential her philosophy has been and her legacy in contemporary Korean Buddhism. Lastly, related to this point, in this same chapter readers are told of contradictions that appear in Iryŏp's attitude toward Buddhism in her writings, but only in passing (p. 168). Considering that the bulk of the discussions in ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** are centered on Iryŏp's Buddhist philosophy, her inconsistent attitude toward Buddhism is a rather significant point. Perhaps future studies can further illuminate Iryŏp's role as a leading Buddhist nun by examining her other publications and thus generate fruitful discussions.

Women and Buddhist Philosophy undoubtedly is not just a study of the philosophy of an individual Buddhist female, but a new theorization of experiential philosophy and gender critiques on the traditional mode of philosophy, as well as a comparative philosophy of religion in a transcultural frame. ***Women and Buddhist Philosophy*** provides nuanced ways to recover female experience and reevaluate women's status in philosophy.

Notes

[1]. Lori Meeks, ***Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan*** (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010);

Elise A. DeVido, ***Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*** (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); Eun-su Cho, ed., ***Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen: Hidden Histories, Enduring Vitality*** (Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2012); Yushuang Yao, ***Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism: Origins, Organization, Appeal and Social Impact*** (Leiden and Boston: Global Oriental, 2012); Chün-fang Yü, ***Passing the Light: The Incense Light Community and Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Taiwan*** (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013); and Barbara Ambros, ***Women in Japanese Religions*** (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

[2]. Sujung Kim, review of ***Reflections of a Zen Buddhist Nun: Essays by Zen Master Kim Iryŏp***, by Jin Y. Park, in ***Frontiers of Philosophy in China*** 10, no. 3 (2015): 522–524.

[3]. For Liang Qichao in English scholarship, see Xiaobing Tang, ***Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao*** (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[4]. Watanabe Yakuzen, ***Jinsei kōjō satori no michi*** (Tokyo: Kōbundō Shoten, 1916).

[5]. Gwang-sik Kim, "A New Understanding of Kim Ilyeop's Buddhism," ***Bulgyo Hakbo*** 72 (2015): 229–259.