South Korean Military Chaplaincy in the 1950-70s - religion as ideology?[1]

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Introduction: Syngman Rhee's regime and institutional religion

From its very beginnings in the wake of Japan's defeat and US occupation, South Korea suffered from an acute deficit of political legitimacy. Its lack of nationalistic credentials was mainly due to the fact that the privileged layers of the colonial society, tainted by their collaboration with the Japanese, conspicuously retained their positions. While South Korea's first Constitution (1948) went as far as to promise the workers their share in company profits (*iik kyunjŏm*), the reality of mass pauperism and hunger wages was only too obvious (Sŏ 2007: 22-43). The two mutually intertwined social strata that together constituted the ruling bloc in South Korea, state bureaucracy and bourgeoisie (in many cases, landlords-turned-entrepreneurs) suffered from acute lack of legitimacy, their controversial past being more of a burden rather than asset, and the newer achievements being conspicuous by their absence (Eckert 1990). One of the ways of compensating for the evident lack of socio-economic progress was to emphasise the "freedom and democracy" in South Korea – as opposed to

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[1] The initial version of this paper was presented at the XXVII International Conference on Historiography and Source Studies of Asia and Africa «Local Heritage and Global Perspective», the Oriental Faculty of Saint-Petersburg State University, April 24-26, 2013. It was later published under the title "South Korea's Christian Military Chaplaincy in the Korean War - religion as ideology?" (*The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 11 Issue 18, No. 1, May 6, 2013: http://www.japanfocus.org/-Vladimir-Tikhonov/3935). It is republished here with some additions and changes. The research was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2007-361-AM0005) as well as PLUREL grant (Oslo University, Norway). I am very grateful for the insightful criticisms and suggestions by Mark Selden (Cornell University), which contributed greatly in improving the initial version of the paper.

what South Korean propagandists termed the "totalitarian regime" in the North. But the claims to "democracy" were belied by the authoritarian behaviour of South Korea's first president, Syngman Rhee (Yi Sŭngman, 1875-1965), whose regime was by 1952 routinely characterized as "dictatorial" even by his conservative opponents from parliamentary Democratic Party (Pak 1998).

Facing a serious deficit of compelling ideology – aside from rabid anti-Communism and primordealist invocations of "Korean blood and glory" (Sŏ 1998) – the new-born pro-American regime turned to religious symbols to substitute for secular ideological tools. From a world-historical viewpoint, such a turn was hardly new or specifically Korean – in the late 1930s and early 1940s, a number of right-wing authoritarian regimes in semi-industrialized peripheral societies were ideologically reliant upon the dominant religious confessions, Franco's Spain or Antonescu's Romania being some of the best-known examples (Ebenstein 1960; Leustean 2007). By the late 1940s, Korea did not have a dominant denomination with the status comparable to that enjoyed in Spain by Catholicism or in Romania – by the Orthodox Church. However, religions in Korea were closely related to the nationalistic politics in the first half of the twentieth century. Protestant Christians, together with indigenous Ch'ŏndogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) activists, were among the main organizers of the March 1, 1919 pro-independence demonstrations (although none of them anticipated the degree to which the movement would eventually radicalize) (Lee 2000), and Protestant YMCA was among the many "cultural-nationalist" groups conducting the rural reconstruction work in the 1920s and 1930s (Wells 1990: 98-162). Kim Il Sung's father, Kim Hyŏngjik (1894-1926), was a Protestant nationalist, and, unsurprisingly, some elements suggestive of formative Christian influences surfaced in the *chuch'e* (self-reliance) ideology which came to substitute the classical Soviet "Marxism-Leninism" in 1960s-80s North Korea

(Ch'oe 1986). Raising the status of religious – mainly Christian – ideology to that of state ideology level was, however, somewhat new in late 1940s- early 1950s South Korea, although state Shinto of the colonial times (Grayson 1993) did provide a blueprint of sorts. Syngman Rhee's religious turn was greatly helped by a number of interrelated contextual circumstances:

1. The clashes between Protestant and Catholic establishments and North Korean authorities in 1945-1950 made the overwhelming majority of Korea's Christians North and South into hard-core anti-Communists, and guaranteed their loyalty to Seoul regime. The conflict was hardly inevitable, since North Korea was originally planned as a "people's democracy" where "progressive religionists" were ensured their rightful place as builders of a new society. Mao's China conducted a broadly similar policy too from its incipiency and until mid-1960s; in Stalin's USSR, by contrast, Orthodox Church was a target for state suppression in 1930-1941, although its position became more solid as a part of the wartime "national reconciliation" policy in 1941-1945 (Fletcher 1965). North Korea's initial, rather tolerant, position towards religion seems to have been influenced by the wartime improvement in the relations between the Orthodoxy and the Soviet state. In fact, as a result of the People's Committees'[2] elections in November 1946, 2.7% of their members (94 persons) turned out to be "full-time religion practitioners" (*sŏngjikcha*); approximately the same share of pastors, priests and monks was among the People's Committee members elected in June 1949 (cited in Kim 2012a, 400). However, already in January 1946, Christian

[2] Peoples' Committees were the main type of elected authority in early (1945 to 1950) North Korea. They originated from the spontaneously formed local self-governing bodies which mushroomed all over Korea immediately after imperial Japan's demise in August 1945. In the USA-occupied South Korea, however, these self-governing bodies were never officially acknowledged by the Occupation authorities. See (Armstrong 2003: 67-70).

political leaders in the northern part of Korea, led by the chairman of the Korean Democratic Party, Cho Mansik (1883-1950), defied the Soviet occupation authorities on the issue of the Allies' proposed trusteeship over Korea. The Soviet authorities – unwilling to establish a "friendly" state of their own in the North at this stage – were going to enforce the decision of the December 1945 Moscow conference of US, British and Soviet foreign ministers and put Korea under an Allied trusteeship for five years, something the right-wing nationalists were principally opposed to (although in reality it could theoretically be one way to keep Korea intact. See Lankov 2001). When Cho was placed under house arrest, a sizeable number of his followers fled south. The conflict between the majority of the Christian leadership and the Soviet and North Korean authorities afterwards was ostensibly ignited by such symbolic issues as Peoples' Committees elections on Sunday, November 3, 1946[3]; in the background, however, lurked the conflict between mostly middle-class and richer Christians, who comprised only about 2-3% of North Korea's overall population[4], and the new power-holders themselves mostly hailing from and reliant upon the poorer majority of North Koreans (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009, 45-50). In the end, around 25% of the Presbyterian and 59% of the Methodist pastors from North Korea migrated to the South, together with an estimated 70-80,000 lay Protestant believers and some 6,000 Catholics (Kang 2006: 410-431). Many of these migrants lost their possessions in

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[3] The conservative majority of both Presbyterians and Methodists – which already regarded the new, egualitarianist regime as "devilish" – was opposed both to doing anything else than prayer on Sunday and to the use of churches as polling stations in some districts. Kim Il Sung attempted to persuade the conservative church leaders to collaborate in the "historical national enterprise" – with the help of his maternal relative, Rev. Kang Ryang'uk (1903-1983) – but it did not seem to gain much result (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009, 48-49)

[4] On the phenomenon of the predominant Christianization of the enterprising population of north-western Korea in the 1900s and during the colonial period, see Kang 1999.

North Korea, often due to the egalitarian land reform there in March 1946 (on the reform, see Armstrong 2003: 75-85), and that too strengthened their support of the anti-Communist regime in South Korea.

2. A large part of the new ruling elite in South Korea (?) were Christians, especially Protestants, in a society where only slightly over 2% of the population (500,198 out of the total population of 20,188,641 in 1950) were Protestants. The three most prominent right-wing émigré nationalists who returned to (South) Korea by late 1945 and were contending for leadership – Syngman Rhee, Kim Ku (1876-1949) and Kim Kyusik (1881-1950) – either were devout Protestants or at least experimented with Protestantism at some point in their lives (Kim Ku's case), and all of them agreed that the "new Korea" should be grounded in "Christian ideals" (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009, 41). 21% of the parliament deputies elected in South Korea in the first-ever separate elections on May 10, 1948 –elections that were seen as illegitimate and were boycotted by most of the Left – were Protestants, a large part of them being wealthier right-wingers. Among the administrative elite, the proportion of Protestants was even higher. 38% of the 242 persons who served as ministers or vice-ministers under the Syngman Rhee presidency in 1948-1960, were Protestants, a large part of them being wealthy individuals with either American or Japanese educational background (Kang 1996: 175-178). Small wonder that in such an atmosphere, the majority of Protestant clergymen identified "democratic spirit", "anti-Communism" and "Christianity" as largely synonymous, and felt committed to "grounding our new country in the Gospels' message", with obvious encouragement from the political authorities who saw them as their strongest, most unwavering supporters (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009: 43-44). The "inseparable alliance" between the new

political and administrative elites and Christian, especially Protestant, leadership, was further cemented by the Korean War in 1950-1953, as right-wing Christians came to regard the South Korean authorities as their only protectors from the threat of "victimization by Communists". Buddhists felt more estranged from what they – with good reasons – tended to perceive as "Christian government", but the interests of the conservative *sangha* leaders, mostly abbots of the richer, land-owning temples, were well served by the very moderate South Korean version of the land reform (conducted in 1949-1950) which obliged the peasants to pay for the land they were to receive (Sŏ 2007: 38-43) and additionally protected the landholdings of the temples as long as they were tilled by the monks themselves (Kim 2000a: 108-111). Some renowned lay and monastic Buddhist leaders (Chŏn Chinhan, Paek Sŏng'uk etc.) joined Syngman Rhee's government too as ministers, although such cases were relatively rare.

3. Christianity was one of the main links between South Korea and its American sponsors. As Lee Chae-jin formulated it, South Korea as a separate state was a Cold War creation of the Truman administration which primarily viewed it as "a buffer to protect security and integrity of Japan in the larger context of America's regional and global policies" (Lee 2006: 23). As a gateway to Japan, South Korea was a global asset of the United States; at the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff came by autumn 1947 to the conclusion that South Korea's military-strategic value was relatively low. This conclusion was accepted by the Truman administration and was reflected in the famous January 12, 1950 speech by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, excluding both South Korean and Taiwan from the US "defence perimeter" in the Pacific, which otherwise included the Philippines and, very centrally, Japan (Lee 2006: 24-25). US entry into the Korean War, dictated by the general Cold War paradigm (Cumings 1990: 550), did

cement US commitment to its military protectorate in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, but relations with the Syngman Rhee government remained strained on many counts (Park 1975). In such a situation, the image of South Korea as a "Christian country" could serve as an important element in appealing to the American public an important consideration in obtaining badly needed humanitarian help through Protestant and Catholic churches in the US and elsewhere in the western world. No wonder then that a prominent lay Catholic elder, John Chang (Chang Myŏn, 1899-1966), was selected as South Korea's first ambassador to the US in January, 1949 (Lee 2006: 24). Another good example was the demonstrations organized by South Korea's National Christian Council in June 1949 calling for the adoption of the Korean Aid Bill by the US Congress. "Let the churches of the world unite their forces to protect the church in Korea" was one of the slogans carried, together with more direct appeals to American Christian brethren (Haga 2012). The chaplaincy in the military – the topic of this paper– was to become yet another link between South Korea and it's not fully reliable, but still indispensable American protector and sponsor. It was fully modelled on the American system – in fact, South Korea was one of the first non-European societies penetrated by American missionaries where such an institution took roots (Kang 2006: 346). US missionaries were also well represented among the pioneering chaplains in the South Korean army. For example, a US Maryknoller with Korea experience since 1931, George M. Carroll (1906-1981), was a chaplain to the United Nations' forces from the beginning of the Korean War and concurrently a member of the committee for the advancement of the establishment of chaplaincy in the Korean army beginning in September 1950. He was later charged with training of the Korean chaplains and translation of the relevant regulations of the US Army into the Korean language. Another pioneer of Korean chaplaincy was William E. Shaw, a prominent Methodist

missionary who worked in Korea since 1921 (Haga 2012; Kang 2006: 347). The US army employed 1618 chaplains by 1953 (Johnson 2013), and fighting side by side with it was a huge stimulus for the new-born South Korean army to develop a chaplain corps of its own, a key measure in uplifting Korean civilization.

As we can see from the above discussion, religion in the Syngman Rhee government's ideological policy, contained from the very beginning the seeds of a possible conflict between different religions. "Religion" meant first and foremost Christianity in both Catholic and (primarily) Protestant versions, but hardly "native" religions, Buddhism included. It is not that they were deliberately excluded: rather, the very situation in which Christian elites were to dominate the new state and obtain important advantages through their ability to communicate more directly with its chief international backer, led to marginalization of non-Christians. The dominant view of Buddhism as peripheral in relation to Christianity translated also into administrative measures which the Buddhist community – not without good reason – tended to perceive as religious discrimination. For example, the US military government in Korea made Christmas into an official holiday, but did not allow Korean Buddhists to take over the deserted Japanese Buddhist temples, although forty-three such temples in Seoul were immediately taken under the *de facto* control and management of Korean Buddhists after Japanese withdrawal. In the provinces, however, a number of former Japanese temples became the objects of embittered disputes between Korean Buddhists and other claimants (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2008, 25). Nor was the Syngman Rhee administration any more flexible on this issue. However, it conducted the 1949-1950 land reforms in a way arguably less ruinous for the monastic economy than more confiscatory – and thus more egalitarian – reforms in North Korea, allowing the temples to keep the land within a two km. zone around them. That was one of the factors beyond the willingness of the

mainstream *sangha* to collaborate with the perceived "Christian" government, and to marginalize the few radicals – who protested against the establishment of a separate South Korean state, and wished Korea to remain unified at any cost – within its own ranks (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2005: 162-174). In any case, the alternative – the North Korean regime, which was gradually radicalising on account of the general Cold War confrontation and especially Korean War – looked significantly worse, especially for monks who had collaborated with the Japanese colonial authorities, since the purge of collaborators was one of the main ways in which North Korea was establishing its nationalist legitimacy (on the collaboration between *sangha* and the Japanese colonial authorities, see Im 1993; on the purge of collaborators in North Korea, see Armstrong 1995). So, the only remaining realistic alternative was to try one's best to emulate Christian successes - first and foremost, their success in proselytising activities. This pattern of institutional behaviour was clearly recognizable in the issue of establishing the Buddhist military chaplaincy, to be treated below.

A part of this "religious turn" was reliance on military chaplaincy - initially purely Christian, established in 1951 – for a large part of the indoctrination effort inside the army. Chaplaincy, a time-honoured institution utilized by the European powers and the US already in the time of the First World War to give some religious legitimacy to the world-wide slaughter on completely unprecedented scale, obtained renewed significance as the global Cold War was setting on. In the US military, the chaplains were not only to prevent the soldiers from being "mentally and spiritually contaminated" by the radical doctrines of whatever – but especially leftist – fashion. They were also to aid in the "moral strengthening" of the occupied areas of Europe and Japan through active proselytising, and at the same time to play increasingly important role in implementing the "moral training" programs instituted throughout the armed

forces in 1951. These programs were to forestall the development of criminal behaviour and venereal diseases in the ranks, ultimately contributing to making the US military – already notorious for rapes and attacks against civilians, especially in occupied Japan – more popular among the "free world" populations and to winning the "hearts and minds" in the Cold War (Gunn 2009, 87-91). US military chaplaincy was indisputably the primary model for its South Korean counterpart; and, not unlike the US chaplains, especially Evangelicals, the South Korean chaplains were also regarding their mission as a proselytising one, young and vulnerable men in the uniform experiencing considerable dangers and hardships being a more than desirable target for the missionary activity. As for the Korean Buddhist efforts at the religious propagation inside the military ranks, the pre-1945 Buddhist chaplaincy in the Japanese imperial military (Victoria 1997) was an obvious role model. While there were no Korean Buddhist chaplains during the Pacific War, the pro-Japanese Korean Buddhist leaders were actively encouraging the younger monks to volunteer for the service in the Japanese imperial military – telling them, for example, that they were to "wield the sword which will refute the false and disclose the correct, and to become military missionaries of the Korean Buddhism in the battle" (Cited in: Im 1993, Vol. 2, 441). Most of these people retained their influence after 1945 and were keen to utilize once again the past experiences of the wartime collaboration with the state.

In the South Korean case, the establishment of the field chaplaincy was an initiative of Christian leaders, lay and ordained, including some leading military figures in the newly established South Korean army and navy. It was, however, quickly embraced by the Syngman Rhee administration, assumedly in hope that it would ideologically cement the army of the new state lacking nationalistic legitimacy and broadly perceived as externally imposed (*oesapchŏk*) (Chin 2000: 108-139). However, once established, the chaplaincy played several

roles. In addition to spreading the message of Christian anti-Communism – which belonged to the ideological mainstream of the new state – it also functioned as a tool of Christian proselytising, and was partly responsible for the strong numerical growth of the Christian churches in the 1950s and 1960s. As Christians were enlarging their share of the religious market (on this theoretical approach, see, for example, Hadden 1987), their exclusive right to military chaplaincy was increasingly seen as an expression of unduly state favouritism – that is, unfair competition – by the Buddhist community, eager to emulate Christian proselytising methods. In the end, institutional Buddhism succeeded in establishing the military chaplaincy of its own, an event which signified further strengthening of its cohesive ties with the authoritarian anti-Communist state.

This chapter will explain how the military chaplaincy was established and functioned in the 1950s, how it fulfilled its ideological roles, and what were the competing influences in the process of its institutionalization. It will hopefully help to improve understanding of the role of such a state-sponsored institution as military chaplaincy in the functioning of religious markets under conditions of religious pluralism and relatively activist state building – but it was not fully able to dominate civil society (on "semi-competitive authoritarianism" in 1950s South Korea, see Han 1990). It will also shed some light on the role religion and religious ideology played in the global Cold War, on the forefront of which both parts of divided Korea found themselves by the late 1940s.

Christian Chaplaincy and its roles

The Committee for the Advancement of the Establishment of Chaplaincy in the Korean Army (*Kunjong chedo ch'ujin wiwŏnhoe*) was formed on September 18, 1950. Together with George M. Carroll, mentioned above as one of the "fathers" of Korean chaplaincy, its members included the most prominent hard-line anti-Communists in the Korean church world,

Rev. Han Kyŏngjik (1902-2000) from Presbyterian Church and Yu Hyŏnggi (1897-1989) from the Methodist Church. Both were refugees from North Korea, and were appalled by what they deemed a lack of fighting spirit in South Korean soldiers – forcibly conscripted by the government, which most still had difficulties to recognise as their own. The anti-Communist churchmen obviously hoped that the chaplaincy would strengthen the *élan* of the South Korean troops, and their hope was shared by Syngman Rhee who quickly endorsed their proposal. In fact, a *de facto* chaplaincy, under the name of "spiritual training" (*chŏnghun*), was already run by the South Korean navy from 1949 onwards, its chief, Admiral Son Wŏn'il (1909-1980), a son of famed Methodist pastor, Son Chŏngdo (1872-1931), being a firm believer in "Christian spirit" as the only way to effectively lead the South Korean military (Kang 2006: 348). In considering the plan, Syngman Rhee was, however, fearful of opposition within the ranks of the army commanders (Haga 2012). A large part of the middle- and high-ranking officers of the South Korean army were ethnic Koreans with Japanese imperial army experience. Among army officers who received military training before 1948 and eventually reached the full general rank, 226 served in the Japanese army, 44 served in the army of Manchukuo and only 32 fought against the Japanese, predominantly in Korean military units attached to the Guomindang (Han 1993: 130). Some of the former Japanese and Manchukuo officers, notoriously colonel (in 1952 promoted to full general) Paek Sŏnyŏp (b. 1920), infamous for his brutal suppression of the Communist guerrillas in South Korea in 1948-1950, were Christians, but the majority were not. Syngman Rhee feared possible negative reactions in the military ranks to what could appear to be imposition of his own faith onto the soldiers. Thus, when the Bureau of Military Religion (*Kunsŭngkwa*, later *Kunmokkwa*) was created in the Personnel Department of the Infantry General Staff on February 7, 1951 (general order no. 31), it was supposed to be staffed by civilians who were to be paid by their own denominations. The first Korean chaplains, trained by Shaw and

Carroll, were dispatched to military units in early April 1952; the number reached 139 by June 1952 (Hwang 2008: 193-194).

Rhee's worries notwithstanding, the new institution quickly proved its usefulness to South Korean army commanders. Chaplains and their field churches were instrumental in increasing the number of active, practicing Christians inside the army – under conditions when being Christian practically implied being a committed anti-Communist, and thus, by extension, an active supporter of the South Korean regime rather than a passive victim of forcible conscription. The absolute majority of chaplains were Protestants, mostly Presbyterians and Methodists. By April 1954, out of 296 military chaplains, 35 were Catholics and the rest were Protestants, 209 of them being either Presbyterians or Methodists. The Protestant chaplains built 186 military churches, and succeeded in raising the percentage of Protestants in the army to 20%, almost five times higher than the share of Christians in the general population at that time (Kang 2006: 349). Especially important for Syngman Rhee's anti-Communist cause was the ministry to the North Korean and Chinese prisoners of war incarcerated – under rather appalling conditions (Lee, Kang and Huh, 2013) - in a specially built concentration camp on Kŏje Island near the southern coast of Korea. There, Harold Voelkel (1898-1984, Korean name: Ok Hoyŏl), an experienced missionary who first came to Korea in 1928, and some twenty of his Korean colleagues in chaplaincy were busy converting the prisoners to Christianity and anti-Communism. The results were considered excellent: 15,012 out of some 140,000 North Korean POWs became believers by April 1952, and several tens of thousands more showed at least some interest in the evangelization activities in the camp, some evidently in hope of receiving better treatment, and some genuinely adopting Christianity as a personal way, both psychological and socio-political, out of the predicaments of national

division, war and detention. Voelkel and his Korean colleagues made a sizable contribution to making more than 80,000 North Korean POW decide to reject repatriation to the North (Kang 2006: 349-351; Yi 2010). As a reward, the status of chaplains was quickly raised. On June 16, 1952, all 139 active-duty chaplains were given the status of salaried civilian employees of the South Korean military and in December 1954, were further promoted to active-duty military officers (*hyŏn'yŏk changgyo*) (Kang 2006: 347). By this time, the South Korean military chaplaincy fully resembled its US prototype. With one significant difference – while the US military had non-Christian (namely Jewish) chaplains already from 1862, South Korea – in which, unlike the US, Christians were numerically a tiny minority – at first did not allow any non-Christian denominations in its chaplaincy services. This fact testifies to the degree of Christian influence inside the South Korean elites of the 1950s, and also to the paramount importance of Christianity to Syngman Rhee's state, as well as the degree of Christian loyalty to the militantly anti-Communist South Korean regime.

Buddhist competition with Christians – an uphill battle

Buddhists found themselves in incomparably more difficult circumstances than Christians during the Korean War for a number of reasons. First, they did not dispose of any comparable resources, since, unlike Christians, they received no significant financial or other help from abroad. Foreign humanitarian, financial and technical help was of huge importance in a country almost completely destroyed by the war, and almost half of the foreign aid organizations which joined the Korean Association of Voluntary Agencies (KAVA), were Christian. US Presbyterians alone raised USD 1,800,000 for Korea in 1950-1954 (Rhodes and Campbell 1965: 322), and much of this money was channelled through Korean churches, which gave them an enormous advantage in the domestic religious market. By contrast,

institutional Buddhism lacked not only any aid from outside, but also international network of contacts aside from its leaders' participation in the World Fellowship of Buddhists' meetings beginning from the second meeting in Japan in 1952 (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2000: 69). Second, as described above, the Buddhists were much more alienated from the new state's power centres than Christians. Third, the three year war destroyed a large number of richer temples (Pongsŏnsa, Kŏnbongsa, Naksansa, Wŏlchŏngsa etc.) which before the war had contributed significantly to the Korean Buddhists' Central Executive Committee (Taehan Pulgyo Chung'ang Ch'ongmuwŏn), further undermining its economic position (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2000: 69). Finally, Syngman Rhee, in his populist attempts to position himself as a devoted anti-Japanese patriotic fighter, initiated on May 20, 1954, a campaign for expulsion of the married ("Japanized") monks from Korean temples. Since the married monks were in the majority, the campaign opened the gates for embittered struggles between celibate and married monks over control of the temples, and left little room for other concerns until the early 1960s, when the state started to intervene more systematically to sort out the conflict (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2005: 196-228). All this explains why institutional Buddhism was in no position to forcefully protest the discrimination to which it was subjected as a result of establishment of a Christian-only chaplaincy in the country in which the majority of the actively religious population was predominantly Buddhist, especially in the countryside. The inability to forcefully protest on the level of organized Buddhism did not mean, however, that some individual monks, temples and monastic groups did not attempt to challenge the newly established Christian monopoly on such an important institution in a hard-core conscription society (Moon 2005) as military chaplaincy. Some of these attempts are also noteworthy for the ideology deployed to legitimise the state violence of the Korean War in the name of Buddhist religion and traditions.

For example, the official mouthpiece of Korea's institutional Buddhism, *Pulgyo Sinmun,* editorialized in 1964 – in an attempt to persuade the military to allow the Buddhist chaplaincy in their ranks – that only Buddhism, "the essence of our national tradition", with its "brilliant traditions of state protection", was to imbibe the "view of life and death acutely needed by the soldiers" into their minds. Buddhism – in addition to being a good "spiritual weapon" making soldiers more willing to die for the state – was also advertised as the "religion of harmony best suited to the military chain of command", since, unlike Christians, Buddhists were not supposed to take distance from the non-believers (cited in Hwang 2008, 206). In a way, the Buddhist leaders were struggling for the attention of the military bureaucracy, begging to utilize them as a "weapon" in the anti-Communist crusade.

The first to attempt compete with the Christians in the field of military chaplaincy were middle-level Buddhist leaders based in Southern Kyŏngsang Province, especially those based in areas around Pusan, which were never occupied by the North Korean army and were the least devastated by the war. Mansan (O Kwansu, 1900-1971), a married monk who worked as a missionary at Southern Kyŏngsang Provincial Buddhist Executive Committee (Kyŏngnam Chongmuwŏn), took the initiative and secured the cooperation of several local monks, some of them, as abbots of temples in and around Pusan, were able to mobilize resources needed for chaplaincy. Some of these monks later came to play an important role on the Korean Buddhist scene – Yi Pŏphong, the Japanese-educated and married abbot of Pusan-based Kŭmsusa, is currently the spiritual head of *Avatamsaka-sutra*-based Wŏnhyojong (Wŏnhyo Order), and Tŏg'am (An Hŭngdŏk, 1912-2003), also a Japanese-educated married monk, was to become one of the leaders of the separate order for married monks, the T'aegojong (T'aego Order), which would be established in 1970. The activist monks were able to visit at least some front-line military units due to help rendered by some commanding officers who were either

Buddhists or favourably inclined towards Buddhism. One of them, then colonel (later general) Ch'oe Honghŭi (1918-2002), became well-known as a systematiser of *t'aekwŏndo* (a Korean martial art) in the late 1950s; another, Sin T'aeyŏng (1891-1959), a lieutenant-general, was to become the South Korean Minister of Defense during the last period of the war (March 29, 1952 to June 30, 1953). Both had Japanese military experience. Sin, who entered the Japanese Imperial Army Academy in 1912, was often mentioned as one of the "elders" of one of the influential groups inside the South Korean military, namely the network of Japanese Imperial Army Academy alumni. Ch'oe, a Hamgyŏng Province native who was proud of his mastery of Confucian classics, seemed to intensely dislike the "Christian general" Paek Sŏnyŏp, who was especially favoured by fellow Christian Syngman Rhee. Yet another important helper was a married monk, Posŏng (Chŏng Tusŏk, 1906-1998, later the supreme spiritual leader of T'aegojong), who served as a Korean Army Academy teacher during and after the Korean War, and was seemingly alienated by Christian hegemony there. In the end, either pro-Buddhist sympathies or antipathy towards Christianity on the part of some important military figures laid the foundation for an "informal" chaplaincy conducted by some Buddhist clerics during the war. With the assistance of friendly commanders, they were even able to build the first, short-lived military Buddhist temple, Towŏnsa (Kangwŏn Province, Yanggu County), close to the DMZ, in a mountainous area where several military units were based (Ch'oe 1997: 301-302; Han 1993: 167-173; Hwang 2008: 192-198).

What was the message that activist monks sought to extend to the soldiers? The declaration of intentions drawn up by the 15 member-strong Society for Buddhist Missionary Work in the Army (founded March 7, 1951), mentioned such standard themes of South Korean propaganda as "sacred war" (*sŏngjŏn*) and "unification of the country through the destruction of Communism" (*myŏlgong t'ong'il*). It also mentioned, however, military chaplaincy as the

"first step toward making of a Buddhist world" (*segye purhwa*), as well as the "spirit of *hwarangs*" as the "guiding philosophy" of the South Korean army (Hwang 2008: 197). It was indeed so, in a way. The Japanese-educated historian Yi Sŏn'gŭn (1905-1983), one of the chief ideologists of the Korean military (appointed chief of the Spiritual Training Department *Chŏnghunkwa* of the Ministry of Defense in February 1950), wrote and published in 1950 a book in which he – as an admirer of *bushido* – suggested that the *hwarang* organization of aristocratic youth in the sixth-tenth century Silla Kingdom (on this organization, see Lee 1993: 101-107), with its distinctive culture of battlefield self-sacrifice, was the source of a "genuinely Korean spirit", as well as a "spirit of anti-Communism" (Yi 1950). Since two of the *hwarang* organization's early seventh-century members were known to have received their "five commandments" from a well-known Buddhist preceptor, Wŏn'gwang (541-630?), and the fourth of these commandments prescribed never to retreat in battle (for English translation of the commandments see Lee1993: 100), the self-styled Buddhist chaplains would claim that the brave South Korean soldiers were indeed upholding *Buddhist* priest Wŏn'gwang's "five commandments" (Hwang 2008: 197). In a way, the ample appropriation of Korean ancient history – in which Buddhism did play a crucially important role – for the sake of developing South Korea's distinctive brand of cultural and historical nationalism helped the activist monks to root their claims to nationalistic legitimacy in the military's own ideological guidebooks. The traditional-style Buddhist chant written and put to music by Mansan, *Chonggun hoesimgok* (The Melody of Converting one's Heart while Following the Army), again mentioned Wŏn'gwang's "five commandments" as the "greatest spiritual weapon" the South Korean army possessed. In reality, however, much of the "ideological work" by the Buddhist monks in the army was about distributing the amulets and pictures of Avalokiteshvara (Kwan'ŭm) and rings with Amitabha's image, all supposed to assuage the

loneliness and fear the soldiers felt, and conducting funeral services for fallen soldiers, 65% of whom reportedly were from Buddhist families (Hwang 2008: 198-199).

The enthusiasm of some Buddhist figures notwithstanding, the May 6, 1952 petition of the Society for Buddhist Missionary Work in the Army, in which it asked the Defence Ministry to grant Buddhist chaplains the same status as their Christian colleagues, was rejected. Given both the political and diplomatic weight of the Christian community and its unwavering support for the Syngman Rhee regime, it was deemed wiser to keep its lucrative monopoly on religion inside the army ranks intact. The Buddhist community was in no position to protest, for reasons enumerated above, and concentrated on missionary work in units whose commanders were supportive. Ch'oe Honghŭi was reportedly one such commander who used his military authority and connections to help rebuild an important temple, Naksaksa, in Kangwŏn Province. Yet another crucially important field of Buddhist missionary work was the Korean Army, Naval and Air Forces Academies, whose graduates could potentially help institutional Buddhism in a society in which the military was among the most dominant institutions (Hwang 2008: 200-201).

From the very inception of the service academies, Christians dominated them, and Buddhist activists had to fight an uphill battle. By 1966, at the most technologically advanced Air Force Academy, Protestants comprised 34.7% of the student body, and Catholics an additional 20.5%. In the largest and most influential Army Academy, Protestant students accounted for 24.2% and Catholic students for 17.1% of the total respectively (Kang 2006: 355). Christian churches were quickly expanding in the 1950s and 1960s, and by 1970, Protestants alone constituted approximately 10% of the South Korean population (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009: 116), but even taking this into account, the share of Christians among the academy students greatly exceeded that among the general population. The main reason for

such a phenomenon was the strong position of Christians among the academies' teachers, as well as among the South Korean elite in general; Christian faith counted as one of the factors of personal success. Sometimes, Christianity was even forcibly promoted – both by teachers and senior students (*sŏnbae*) who wielded significant power over younger students. Yu Sangjong (brigadier general) – the Buddhist officer who later made decisive contribution to the establishment of the Buddhist chaplaincy in the late 1960s – remembers that his school seniors made church attendance obligatory to him and his fellow students. Christianity was seen as "American/civilized religion" and a symbol of state loyalty. Buddhist monks could not enter the Army Academy unless they changed the traditional robes for "civilized" Western suits (Pak 2009). Despite all odds, and, significantly, with the help of the two future military dictators of South Korea, Chŏn Tuhwan (Chun Doo-hwan) and No T'aeu (Roh Tae-woo) – both were Yu's seniors at the same academy at that time, and both were Buddhists – Yu succeeded in organising the first-ever Buddhist students' society at the Army Academy in 1954. The Naval Academy followed suit in 1959 and the Air Force Academy – in 1960 respectively (Pak 2009). Some former members of this society – Pak Hŭido (b. 1934, the Army Chief of Staff in 1985-1986), Yi Sŏkpok (former commander of Army's fifth division, currently chairman of the Buddhists Society for Defending the Republic of Korea *Taehan Minguk Chik'igi Pulgyodo Ch'ongyŏnhap*), Sŏn Yunhŭi (former commander of the South Korean military police) and others – later played central roles in developing cohesive ties between the military and Buddhist establishments (Pak 2009).

Christianity, military and church growth

The Christian – especially Protestant – church growth drive launched in the 1950s through a variety of institutional mechanisms including military chaplaincy, did continue further,

basically until the mid-1990s (some cultural factors that may have played in role in these developments, are explored in Kim 2000b). The attitudes and actions of Syngman Rhee's government contributed significantly to this phenomenon. Although the Syngman Rhee regime's favouritism towards Christians in general and especially close ties with Protestants did not save it from a relatively easy demise in April 1960 as a result of a "student revolution" – grounded in the frustration of the middle classes, and especially younger, educated urbanites at the lack of socio-economic development, the "privatisation of power" by ruling groups and their underlings and subsequent corruption (Sŏ 2007: 266-300) - it did have important consequences. The number of Protestant believers alone grew thrice in 1950-1960 (Han'guk Kidokkyo Yŏksa Hakhoe 2009: 116), and the Christian chaplaincy system in the military contributed significantly to this growth. Under the "Christian president" Syngman Rhee, most commanding officers, their own personal religious affiliation notwithstanding, provided chaplains with privileged access to barrack life, and chaplains made use of the resources made available to them by their congregations to win soldiers' "hearts and minds" (Kang 1996: 352-353). The soldiers who became Christians in such a way, tended to have long-lasting loyalty to the denomination they first encountered while undergoing the deprivations of military service, and, by extension, to become loyal to the hard-core anti-Communist state that the churches whole-heartedly supported. Consequently, the South Korean state, its initial externally imposed characteristics notwithstanding, was able to gradually win a sort of Gramscian "ideological hegemony" in society. "Christian presidents" did not emerge in South Korea after Syngman Rhee's overthrow in 1960 and until Kim Young-sam's (Kim Yŏngsam) assumption of presidential powers in 1993. However, conservatively interpreted Christianity, especially in the form represented by the "mammoth churches", with their message that "God blesses the rich" and extreme anti-Communist rhetoric, did become one of the important ideologies of the quickly developing industrial capitalism in South Korea (Kim 2012b). A

small minority of left-wing Protestants in pre-1950 South Korea was mostly forced to relocate to North Korea either immediately before or during the Korean War, as their survival in the anti-Communist "fortress state" in South Korea was close to impossible. Rev. Kim Ch'angjun (1890-1959), a US-educated Methodist pastor who, ironically enough, ended up as one of the foremost critics of the US war crimes in 1950-53 in the Anglophone publications abroad and was ultimately buried in the Patriotic Martyrs' Cemetery in Pyongyang, is a case in the point. The interest in the issues of labour, human rights and unification reappeared among a minority of Korean Christians only in the 1970s, in the course of the struggle against the semi-fascistic Yusin (revitalization) system (1972-1979) (Yi 2001, 374-380).

Buddhists remained in the majority among South Korea's religious population in the 1950s, but were in a comparatively weaker position due to their relative alienation from state power, relatively weaker economic position vis-à-vis the Christian churches lavishly supported by the Korean state and from abroad, weaker nationalist legitimacy (on account of their full-spectrum collaboration with the colonial powers from 1910 to1945 and the well-known images of the "Japanized" married monks), and preoccupation with internal affairs from the beginning of the purge against the "Japanized" monks initiated on May 20, 1954 by Syngman Rhee himself with devastating effects on institutional Buddhism. Thus, it lacked the negotiating power vis-à-vis the state needed to formally challenge the Christian monopoly on military chaplaincy. As is described above, some activist monks did attempt, however, to make local, de facto challenges to the Christian monopoly by mobilising a network of sympathetic non-Christian officers, and by deploying Buddhism's own version of religious legitimization for state violence, deliberately linked to state-promoted nationalistic discourses on "*hwarang* spirit". In a way, instead of trying to resist the state which openly engaged in practices of religious discrimination in favour of Christians, Buddhists – the monastic

establishment being just as anti-Communist as their Christian counterparts – entered a "competition in loyalty" of sorts against the Christians.

The 1960s: Buddhism leaps forward

The successes were limited in the 1950s, but more pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s. The new, non-Christian dictatorship – the Park Chong Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi, 1917-1979) regime (1961-1979) - was led by the officers of predominantly rural descent, many of them hailing from the north-eastern areas in South Korea (Northern and Southern Kyŏngsang Province) where Buddhism had relatively strong standing. In addition, the new rulers were interested in winning the allegiance of the predominantly Buddhist rural and lower-class urban populations. As a result, they willingly entered into an ideological alliance of sorts with the conservative monastic establishment. Their primary allies were the celibate monks' leaders, whose drive to "purge" the Korean Buddhism from the "Japanized" married monks was given crucial support and encouragement by Syngman Rhee regime. The struggle to reverse the supposed "Japanization" of Buddhism during the colonial period was to strengthen the nationalist credentials of the new regime, the leading personages of which, Park Chong Hee himself included – served in the Japanese imperial military and had to risk their nationalist mandate in the process of normalizing the diplomatic relations with Japan (1961-1965) where they planned to otain the funds and technologies needed for the economic development. Thus, the married monks, who managed to win a number of lawsuits against their celibate rivals during the democratic interlude of April 1960-May 1961, were forced by the military government into the new, unified Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism, to be led mostly by the celibate monks (while formally its governing bodies were based on the principle of parity between the celibate and married monks). The new, unified Chogye Order was launched in April 1962 with the crucial support from the military regime, which promulgated the Law on the

Management of Buddhist Properties (*Pulgyo Chaesan Kwalli Pŏp*, May 24, 1962) which mainly favoured the celibate monks. One of the leaders of the new-born Chogye Order was the activist abbot of Seoul-based Tosŏnsa, Yi Chŏngdam (1902-1971), who later successfully developed close ties with Park Chong Hee and his entourage (Kim 2000a, 130-137; Kim 2006, 170-193). Park's wife, Yuk Yŏngsu (1925-1974), a devout Buddhist, considered herself a lay disciple of Yi Chŏngdam, who gave her a Buddhist name, Taedŏkhwa, and preached to her "the benevolence towards sentient beings" explaining that Yuk's exalted position in the present life was a result of her meritorious deeds in the past reincarnations. Yuk reciprocated by paving an asphalt road to Tosŏnsa and voicing her wish that South Korean Buddhism would become a "national religion", just like state-protected Buddhism in Thailand which she managed to visit once together with her presidential husband (Yi 2002). As a part of the newly emerging military-Buddhist alliance, the Buddhist leaders were allowed to fully deploy its doctrine of "state-protected Buddhism" (*hoguk Pulgyo*) through several institutional channels including the military chaplaincy.

The Buddhist chaplaincy in the military was established in 1968, first and foremost because Buddhists were a significant group among South Korean troops sent to fight in the Vietnam War since 1965. It was calculated that Buddhist chaplains would "strengthen" their spirit and help them to build some understanding with the largely Buddhist Vietnamese (Hwang 2008: 212-241). For the anti-Communist monastic establishment, any criticism of the Vietnam War and Korean involvement in it was unthinkable. The establishment of Buddhist chaplaincy in the wake of the dispatch of Korean troops to Vietnam was celebrated as an "achievement" in the Buddhist missionary field, indeed as a "milestone" of sorts for contemporary Korean Buddhism (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong P'ogyowŏn 1999: 234). The process leading to its

establishment did begin, however, already in the early 1960s. Hopeful about the perspectives of radically enhancing Buddhism's status under the new administration, Chogye Order leaders – with Yi Chŏngdam as their representative – started to lobby both the granting of Christmas-like official holiday status for Buddha's Birthday and the establishment of the Buddhist chaplaincy. As we can easily see, in both cases the activist Buddhists were trying hard to outrival the success of Christians in establishing themselves as the "modernization pioneers" in the South Korean society. The Buddhist press campaigned feverishly for the establishment of the Buddhist chaplaincy in 1962-65, and in 1965, as Chogye Order officially requested the Defence Ministry and Parliament to institute the Buddhist chaplaincy, the issue was at last sent to the Defence Ministry for a year-long "study". The Christians criticised the idea alleging that Buddhism, as a non-theistic religion, might not be a good antidote against "atheist Communism", while the Buddhists argued for their military usefulness by referring to the Thai Buddhist chaplaincy and the Buddhist chaplaincy in the South Vietnamese army, just established in 1964. Since South Korea was to begin sending its troops en masse to Vietnam in a year, the latter argument did carry much weight! (Hwang 2008: 212-215).

In the process of institutionalization of the Buddhist chaplaincy, different groups inside the Buddhist community played varied roles. While the Central Executive Committee (Chung'ang Chongmuwŏn) of the Chogye Order was too preoccupied by the issues related to the married monks who joined the Order at that point, and especially by the distribution of the abbotships, the Buddhist Tongguk (Dongguk) University scholars took upon themselves the preparation of the ideological foundations for the Buddhist collaboration with the Defence Ministry. In1965, a group of the distinguished scholars, mainly from Tongguk University, including professors Yi Kiyŏng (1922-1996, an authority on Wŏnhyo ideas), U Chŏngsang (1917-1966, a pioneer of Korean Buddhist history studies), Sŏ Kyŏngsu (1925-1986, wrote

extensively on both Indian and Korean Buddhism) and Hwang Sandŏk (1917-1989, a law scholar, minister for culture and education in 1976-1977), was commissioned to write an extensive report for the Defence Ministry, in which the "correct" Buddhist attitudes towards the issues of private property, class struggle, materialism, state and war were to be outlined. The task was clear – Korea's best authorities on Buddhism were to prove, with the use of all relevant sources, that Buddhism supported private property system and the "legitimate" state warfare, while opposing the "illegitimate" class struggle and "dangerous" materialist thought ((Hwang 2008: 216-218).

The Buddhist newspapers – which hoped that this report would become a basis for the ideological training of the Korean troops in the future – played even more prominent part. *Pulgyo Sinmun*, the main mouthpiece of the Chogye Order, was editorializing that only Buddhist chaplains would be able to "explain" to the Buddhist Vietnamese that "Communism veiled into nationalist slogans" supposedly "contradicts the spirit of Buddha" (October 3, 1965) and publishing the letters from the Buddhist officers serving in the Korean detachments in Vietnam who mentioned, for example, that "even Viet Cong and South Vietnamese troops observe truce on Buddha's birthday" in Vietnam and thus Buddhist chaplains' services are more than essential in such a devotedly Buddhist land (May 14 and May 28, 1967). Ironically, on one of these letters the author, a major working at the ideological work department at the Staff, mentioned that, as a practicing Buddhist, he observed the five basic precepts prohibiting killing, alcohol consumption and illicit sex, during his 14 years-long service in the army. Obviously, killing "Communists" did not constitute a breach of the basic precepts from his viewpoint. Even the Korean Student Buddhists' Fellowship (Han'guk Taehaksaeng Pulgyo Yŏnhaphoe, founded in 1963), the organization which later, in the 1980s, gained a reputation for being relatively progressive, joined the melee in late March, 1967, and proclaimed that

Buddhist chaplains were "urgently needed for the spiritual armament of the army" and for satisfying the spiritual needs of young Buddhist draftees; "desperate struggle" was promised unless the government would not speed up the process of Buddhist chaplaincy institutionalization. While different sectors of the mainstream Buddhist community were demonstrating both their loyalty to the anti-Communist cause and their usefulness to the Korean military in such a way, the most decisive help came from Ch'ae Myŏngsin (then major general), the commander-in-chief of the Korean troops in Vietnam. Observing that one of the best ways to mend the relations with the local population in Vietnam was to repair the Buddhist temples destroyed in the battles against guerrillas or buy clothes for local monks, he decided that he needed as many Buddhist chaplains as possible (himself being a devout Protestant). Already in July 1966, before the Buddhist chaplaincy was instituted in the South Korean army, a joint Korean-Vietnamese Buddhist service took place in Biên Hòa near Saigong, with ca. one thousand South Vietnamese Buddhists and 380 Buddhist soldiers and officers from Korea present. Buddhism was to make the South Korean participation in one of most brutal US offensives against resistant Asian nationalism into an act of "mutual help between two Buddhist peoples" (Hwang 2008: 219-229).

Vietnam was a main concern of the South Korean military in the late 1960s, and the Buddhist "ideological work" in Vietnam took place even before the first-ever Buddhist chaplains were deployed there in December 1968. Already in 1965, the South Korean 100th Logistic Command of the Marine Corps (deployed on December 22, 1965) established a prayer hall where the votive tablets for the fallen Buddhist soldiers were to be kept (*yŏnghyŏn pong'anso*). This prayer hall was eventually extended and rebuilt in March 1967 as Pulgwangsa, the first Korean military Buddhist temple in Vietnam (Nha Trang City). *Pulgyo*

Sinmun was glad to report that General Ch'ae Myŏngsin himself took part in the Dharma assembly on the event of dedicating a Buddha statue in the temple (Anonymous 1967). It was also reported that the second abbot of Pulgwangsa, Major Pak Hongsu, was a celibate monk with a graduation certificate from Tongguk University's Indian Philosophy Department, whose formal monk's ordination did not prevent him from serving as an army officer for 14 years before taking over Pulgwangsa abbotship in 1968 (Anonymous 1969). Obviously, ordained monk's Vinaya precepts were not considered an obstacle to serving as a military professional in South Korea at that point, both military and Buddhist community sharing the common belief in the absoluteness of anti-Communist commitment. In a way, statist anti-Communism acquired in the Cold-war era South Korean society a religious dimension of its own, being seen as superseding any other religious and personal commitments. The main occupation of monk/officer Pak Hongsu – aside from developing friendly ties with the local monks - was praying for better afterlife of the fallen South Korean soldiers, very much in the same was as Korean monks used to pray for Pure Land rebirth of the Japanese imperial army soldiers and officers during the Pacific War. In January 1969, Pak was replaced with a newly dispatched Buddhist chaplain, Yi Chihaeng, and the temple expended even further, becoming a must-see destination for all the guests of the unit, and a place of rest for the Marine officers (Hwang 2008: 236).

After the Buddhist chaplaincy was fully institutionalized in 1968, and first five chaplains were commissioned (December 1968), four of them were almost immediately (January 1969) dispatched to Vietnam. After this, a small boom in the construction of Korean field temples ensued. On August 5, 1969, the Ninth Infantry Division, popularly known as Paekma (White Horse) Unit and then stationed in Ninh Hòa (Khanh Hoa Province), has gotten its own temple, fittingly named Paekmasa. Two years later, on June 17, 1971, the same division built and

opened in Ninh Thân ward yet one more temple, given the heavily ideologically laden name of Hwarangsa – *hwarangs* being the ancient Silla youth organization seen by the South Korean nationalists as the very origin of Korea's "national spirit" (Yi 1950; Yi 1971). The Buddhist chaplains stationed in Saigon tended to use the existing local temples. Officially, the main occupation of the chaplains and the activist Buddhist officers and soldiers who assisted them, was holding Sunday Dharma talks and teaching basic Buddhist doctrines, bestowing precepts on the Buddhist neophytes and thus contributing to the Buddhist proselytising cause, praying for the salubrious rebirth of the fallen, as well as "strengthening of Korean-Vietnamese friendship" by networking with the Vietnamese monks, rebuilding their temples destroyed by the war, providing them with "humanitarian assistance" and food aid and listening to their complaints and wishes. In a way, the Korean Buddhist chaplains – who saw Vietnam being "just as poor as we were in the 50s" – were performing there the same repertoire of "benefitting the backward locals" that the US Christian chaplains used to perform in Korea during the Korean War, in an act of what we can define as a sort of semi-imperialist self-assertion. It also appears that, since some chaplains (for example, First Lieutenant Yi Chihaeng mentioned above) learned Vietnamese, the army commanders needed the intelligence they could gather among the locals (Hwang 2008: 236-241). In fact, such fluent Korean speakers as chaplains William Shaw or George Carroll, mentioned above, played a strikingly similar role during the Korean War.

Christianity, and especially Protestantism, was the defining Other of Korean Buddhism – establishing of the military chaplaincy too being to a large degree an act of competition, an attempt at catching-up with the Christian rivals. The "catching-up game" required a large amount of cultural borrowing, and the military chaplaincy, in which the competition was especially direct – field temples and field churches were often located side by side – went in

the vanguard of such borrowing. Sunday prayers were appropriated as Sunday Dharma talks, the equivalent of the Bible and Psalm Book was Dharma Essential Collection (*pŏbyojip*) with the most important sutras and recitation texts, the Psalms (*ch'ansongga*) were countered with "Buddha-praising songs" (*ch'anbulga*) often to a very similar piano music, and sermons were translated into Buddhist doctrinal lectures (Hwang 2008: 239-241; Kim 1991). The underlying condition of such a "catch-up competition", however, was the joint ideological basis, both Christians and Buddhists not simply subscribing to the state religion of militant anti-Communism but also fully internalising it and accepting it as the fundamental part of their own religious teachings. The mainstream Buddhists – typically, Yi Chŏngdam, who made the name for the temple of Hwarangsa and even himself wrote the temple's name plate (Yi 1971) – regarded the Korean Buddhist participation in the orgy of death and destruction in Vietnam as a manifestation of inherent "state-protective spirit of Korean Buddhism" which was first embodied in Wŏn'gwang's "five commandments" to *hwarangs*, and as an act of helping a "fellow Buddhist nation" in a "sacred anti-Communist battle". Christians, on their side, were hardly less apologetic about South Korea's Vietnam adventure. A number of Protestant and Catholic chaplains served too in Vietnam – the first were often telling in their letters published by the Korean Protestant press, that Korean troops, "universally welcomed by Vietnamese", were learning "anti-Communism, patriotism and democracy" while playing "good Samaritans", "defeating Viet Cong almost without causalities", "demonstrating the might of *t'aekwŏndo* to the enemy" and helping to turn the Vietnamese from "idolatry" to the Gospel. The Protestant press was, in sync with these reports, editorialising that "our army, armed with Christ's spirit, will gloriously shine by destroying the satanic hands of the Red Devils, the atheistic armies" (*Kidok Kongbo*, August 20, 1966), and Christian leaders called the South Korean troops in Vietnam "freedom's crusaders who will plant the authentic, ever-lasting peace in Asia" (Kim Hwallan, President of the Protestant Ehwa Womens' University),

or “soldiers in the war of liberation against the Communist slavery” (Rev. Kim Chun’gon, the founder of the Campus Crusade for Christ) (cited in: Yu 2009: 263-282). The state anti-Communism, with all its religious traits – “Communism” was seen as implacable, “satanic” evil, and anti-Communist struggle equated with the very basics of human ethics – was merging together with the existing conventional religions into the religious-ideological complexes in which the state, with its anti-Communist warfare, was seen as the embodiment of the central religious values. The chaplaincies, both Buddhist and Christian, were to symbolise these complexes, and to help to turn the acts of anti-Communist warfare into the religious acts.

Conclusion: Institutional religions’ alliance with the military and its fruits

The alliance with the military-run state which the institutional Buddhism entered into in the late 1960s – Vietnam War and the launching of Buddhist chaplaincy on account of Vietnam War participation being its symbols – did bring its fruits. Despite almost unending conflicts inside the leadership – both spiritual leaders (*chongjŏng*) of Chogye Order in the 1970s, Yun Koam (1972-1974, 1978-1979) and Yi Sŏong (1974-1978, 1979-1981) had strong rivals at the Central Executive Committee (Chung’ang Chongmuwŏn) who prevented them from assuming absolute power they strove for – Buddhism could “mainstreamise” itself, closely following its Christian rivals. The newly founded Association of Buddhist Lawyers and various lay Buddhist associations, mostly based in the increasingly developing Pusan area, succeeded by 1975 in pressurizing the state, mainly through administrative lawsuits and media debates, into promulgating Buddha’s Birthday a national holiday (January 14, 1975), on equal footing with Christmas. One of Christians’ main advantages was their superior educational infrastructure, and Buddhists were trying hard to catch up. On April 1, 1976, Yi Sŏong – clearly emulating Park Chong Hee’s semi-fascist Yusin (Revitalisation) dictatorship (1972-1979) slogans –

proclaimed "Buddhism's Yusin", and named the establishment of Sangha University (Sŭngga Taehakkyo, for monks' training) and Buddhist broadcasting as the main tasks of his own "Yusin reforms". The latter had to wait until 1990, but the former was already opened in 1979. The new lay believers' organizations were emerging: influential Purilhoe (Buddha's Sun Society), with its monastic basis in famed Songgwangsa, was founded on September 5, 1969, and made considerable efforts at popularizing the traditional meditation methods among the increasingly affluent educated middle-classes. Meditation did become fashionable among some sectors of urban middle-class society – to 39 pre-existing meditation centres in 1969, 16 new ones were added throughout the 1970s. Hanmaŭm Meditation Centre, founded in 1970 by a prolific female Buddhist practitioner and writer, Ven. Taehaeng, managed to build up a reputation among both female and male, mainly middle-class meditation fans. Finally, Buddhists managed to acquire prestige by advancing into the place from which their Protestant rivals originally entered Korea, namely into the USA. On October 22, 1972, a Korean Buddhist missionary centre, Hongbŏbwŏn, was opened in Providence, Rhode Island. By 1973, an international meditation centre was established in Songgwangsa as well, and was used by at least ca. 50 Europeans and Americans before the end of the decade. However, all the successes in "catching up" with the Christians notwithstanding, the basic problems beyond the ideological alliance between Buddhism and dictatorial state remained almost untouched in the Buddhist circles in the 1970s, while a minority of socially conscious Christians were very prominent in the democratization struggle from the beginning of the decade. The first, preliminary discussions on the possibilities of Buddhism serving "people" (*minjung*) rather than the state which oppresses them, took place in April-May 1975, but only inside a very close circle of progressive Buddhist intellectuals, such as famed poet Ko Ŭn or dissident novelist Hwang Sŏgyŏng (Kim 2000a: 150-167; Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn

Purhak Yŏn'guso 2000: 96-115; Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong Kyoyug'wŏn Purhak Yŏn'guso 2005: 228-250).

The dominant paradigm of anti-Communism and "state-protective Buddhism" was challenged only by *minjung* ("People's") Buddhist activists in the 1980s, but even then, the legitimacy of the Buddhist chaplaincy in the military was rarely, if ever, questioned (Jorgensen 2010). While it was widely recognized that, as a matter of principle, Buddhists should totally abstain from bad *karma*-generating violence, even the *minjung* monks approved of "altruistic violence" ("for the purpose of saving other sentient beings"), and were perhaps too nationalistic to question the very institute of the *national* army – as opposed to the obviously "anti-national", USA-dependant military dictatorship (Jorgensen 2010). Thus, not unlike mainstream Catholics and most Protestant denominations, the majority in the South Korean Buddhist community came to perceive the institute of military chaplaincy as a fully legitimate missionary tool, essential for "competition in the acquisition of believers" since religious loyalties gained in the military by the conscripts in their early twenties tend to stay long (Taehan Pulgyo Chogyejong P'ogyowŏn 2007: 203-205) – without much thought given to the Cold War origins of this institution in South Korea, its ideological underpinning, or its essentially problematic relationship to Buddhism's original teachings on *ahimsa* (non-violence).

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