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The Role of Religion in Korean Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examines the role of religion in Korean elite and higher education during the premodern and modern periods. The study focuses on the contribution of Buddhism and Confucianism to premodern elite education in Korea, particularly the interaction between Confucianism and Christianity with modern higher education in Korea and on the role of religion in current Korean higher education through descriptive analysis. Buddhism and Confucianism were either primary or secondary key institutions in informal and formal Korean elite education during the early and medieval times. Christianity had a significant impact on modern higher education in Korea through its role in harmonizing the religious and educational tradition of Confucianism. Now, Christianity and Buddhism play active roles in private institutions, whereas Confucianism is a core factor of organizational culture in higher education.

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Jeong-Kyu Lee, Ph.D.

Introduction

It is widely believed that religious thoughts, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity, had great effects on the entirety of Korean culture and society. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism were amalgamated into Korean culture and became in the main axes of Korean traditional religious thought, in addition to Korean folk beliefs and shamanism. From an educational point of view, Buddhism and Confucianism had a significant impact on formal and informal elite education on the early Korean states and still remains important up to the present time, whereas Taoism has affected internal and external life as opposed to Korean education. Christianity, a new grafted religion, has exerted an important influence upon the development of modern higher education. Therefore, the limitations of the study are Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity.

Throughout the history of Korean education, religion and education are inseparable. The examination of the role of religion in Korean higher education gives Western educators historically valuable ideas about religious components in Korean higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of religion in Korean elite and higher education during the premodern and modern periods. In this study, “premodern era” is defined as the fourth century to the late nineteenth century, and “modern period” from 1880 to 1910.

Numerous studies have shown that religious thoughts have affected the

spiritual and practical worlds in premodern and contemporary Korea. However, several studies examining the influence of religious and philosophical thoughts on Korean education (de Bary, 1996; Choo, 1961; Hahn, 1969; Kim, 1961; Kim et al., 1983; Kim et al., 1986; Lee, 1984; Park, 1996) indicate that the main religious thoughts, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, had an enormous impact on premodern and modern education in Korea.

In terms of Korean educational history and philosophy, there are few studies (Kim, 1972; Lee, 1997, 1998) that examine the religious and philosophical ideas that historically affect Korean higher education. Kim (1972) briefly analyzes the basic philosophy and organization of Korean higher education, and Lee (1997, 1998) reviews religious and philosophical factors influencing the development of Korean higher education in terms of educational administrative theory and practice. However, studies concerning the role of religion in premodern elite and modern higher education have yet to be conducted. For this reason, this study will focus on the contribution of Buddhism and Confucianism to premodern elite education in Korea, particularly the interaction between Confucianism and Christianity with modern higher education in Korea and on the role of religion in current Korean higher education through theoretical analysis.

Historical Synopsis

Buddhism and Confucianism in the early times were two main pillars of Korean religious history. Although both religions were transmitted from foreign countries, they were adopted by the state and were secondary key institutions in the early Korean kingdoms until the early twentieth century.

According to the two earliest historical records, *Samguk-saki* (Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms) (Kim, 1145) and *Samguk-yusa* (Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms) (Iryon, 1285), Buddhism was introduced by the Chinese Former Chin state in the late fourth century. Having been transmitted from China, Buddhism came to be strongly supported by the royal families because Buddhist teaching and dogma¹ were considered suitable doctrines which recognized the privileged sociopolitical position of the royal lines as well as a spiritual institution guiding socioethical principles for the Korean people. Throughout early and medieval eras, Buddhism, as a national religion during the early Three Kingdoms² and the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), dominated Korean society and culture practically and spiritually. From the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth century, Buddhism was suppressed by the Confucian Choson dynasty (1392-1910), which revered Confucianism³ as the state core ideology and alienated from the Confucian upper class. In the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Korean Buddhism was gradually revived due to the propagation of the Japanese Buddhism. After liberation of the country, Buddhism was actively disseminated among the Korean people, and Buddhist sects rapidly spread.

Along with Buddhism, Confucianism, an old foreign-oriented religion, has been dominant in Korean culture and society. An early Korean historical record, *Samguk-saki* (Kim, 1145), noted that the first Confucian elite institute was opened in AD 372. In consideration of this historical record, there is no doubt that Confucianism was already transmitted to Korea before the establishment of the Confucian institute. In the early and medieval epochs, Confucianism was a secondary key institution which established the sovereign's power, as opposed to Buddhism, a state ideology or religion

which affected Korean culture and society.

Until the late fourteenth century, there was little conflict between the two major religions in Korea. From the beginning of the Choson Kingdom, Confucianism was the state religion which cultivated bureaucrats to lead the people and to edify those who followed Confucian ethics and values. With introduction of Christianity in the seventeenth century, some reform-minded Confucian literati were interested in Western thought and knowledge, but Confucianism was still the ideological standard of Choson society. Furthermore, during the Japanese colonial period, Confucianism was not eclipsed despite the Japanese imperialists' suppressing of Korean nationalism based on the ideologies of Buddhism and Confucianism. In practice, the significant impact of Confucianism on Korean society continues within the present time spiritually and socio-culturally.

In addition to the two older religions, Christianity, as a foreign ideology integrated into traditional Korean religion, has been a driving force behind the modernization of Korean society since the introduction of Roman Catholicism in 1784.⁴ In practice, Roman Catholicism was first introduced by a group of literati called *Silhak* (Practical Learning) Confucian scholars through European Catholic missionaries residing in China during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Catholicism was gradually occupied by some common people, but most Confucian intellectuals were against the new religion because they believed Christianity to be a threat to the basic socio-political principles of Confucianism (Lee, 1984, p. 239).

Therefore, Catholicism was regarded as heresy and officially persecuted several times until the late nineteenth century. With the arrival of Protestant missionaries in 1884, Christianity experienced a turning point in its dissemination to the

general populace. Protestant missionaries established institutional missions in the form of medical and educational work, and embraced the lower class people and commoners as well as royal family. In particular, Protestantism tried to harmonize with Confucian sociopolitical orders and other traditional Korean religious culture. As a result of this effort, Christianity has grown to become the second largest religion in Korea despite its suppression during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) because of the link between Christianity and Korean nationalism.

Buddhism and Confucianism in Premodern Korean Elite Education

Buddhism and Confucianism were originally carried over from foreign countries by upper class people who had aspirations toward culture in the spiritual and practical worlds. As mentioned in the previous section, the two religions were the major and minor institutions which educated the elite group during the early times in Korea. Thus, those who could read and understand not only the Buddhist sutra but also the Confucian texts were the privileged classes. Thus, Buddhism and Confucianism during the premodern period maintained the elite their socio-political position and privileges through formal or informal institutions.

In terms of Korean elite education, very little is known about formal educational institutions of the early and medieval eras. The only sources of information are brief references in a few early records. Based on these sources, I would suggest that elite education in the early and medieval times was carried out dichotomously. One stream was concerned with Buddhist Sutras and monastic schools espousing Buddhism to build a centralized aristocratic state headed by rulers and to disseminate a national

religion, while the other was related to the classical Confucian education which adopted Chinese educational systems focusing on Confucian learning and Chinese Classics to establish the authoritarian political structure and socio-ethical values.

With regard to modern higher education, Buddhist institutions in the early period were closely related to monasteries to foster elite monks. Although I cannot confirm the administrative structure and organizational culture of that time because of a lack of historical records concerning the systems of Buddhist institutions, the brilliant Buddhist culture and many prominent Buddhist monk politicians were assumed to be authoritative leaders who exercised political and religious power in the hierarchically religious society. Thus, I suggest that the monastic Buddhist schools enforced an informal educational structure, closed order systems, and religious percepts for spiritual discipline. In addition, the Buddhist institutions held fast to their own organizational structure and culture under the rigid rules and regulations in order to hand down Buddhist traditions. I would also assume that the monastic Buddhist schools were closed systems that emphasized Buddhist rules and rites with coercive religious power. In the light of Korean religious history, Zen Buddhism in the early and medieval periods stressed severe physical and spiritual discipline in accordance with *Maitreya* (the Merciful Buddha or the Future Buddha) or *Bodhisattva* (a Buddhist saint) who attained Enlightenment.

Judging from the assumptions, the Buddhist institutions of the early and medieval times were similar to the informal religious monasteries which preserved Buddhist traditions and upheld the criteria of both Buddhist teaching and monastic discipline. Considering the ecclesiastical function, Buddhist schools can be compared with Western monasteries in the Middle Ages. In terms of religious history in Korea,

Korean Buddhism was not merely a monastic organizational culture that stressed religious rites and rituals, but a dogmatic system with authoritative social and political power.

Thus, the Buddhist institutions educated the elite monks who espoused the Buddhist preaching to establish an aristocratic state controlled by Buddhists rulers as well as to disseminate a national religion. Overall, I assert that Buddhist institutions are related to informal schools in order to foster the elite group which is able to control their society and state because Buddhism occupied the whole national and social systems spiritually and practically in the early and medieval eras. From the late fourteenth century until the early twentieth century, however, Buddhist schools rapidly declined not only because Confucian Choson rulers suppressed Buddhism, but also because they revered Confucianism as the state religion.

In addition to Buddhist elite education, Confucian education was also a core institution during the premodern era. However, under the Three Kingdoms and the Koryo Kingdom, Buddhism as a prime institution dominated the entirety of Korean society and culture, whereas Confucianism as a minor institution for formal elite education diffused ethico-political values to the upper class. From the beginning of the Choson dynasty, Confucianism was adopted as a national ideology and religion, while Buddhism was regarded as pagan by the Confucian upper class.

In the history of Korean Confucianism, the first formal Confucian institution of the elite education was known as Koguryo's *Taehak* (National Confucian Academy) which was built in AD 372 (Iryon, 1285; Kim, 1145). The institution taught the Chinese letter and classics. The purpose of the institution was mainly to foster prospective aristocrats, and opened its doors only to the scions of the upper class. Following the

unification of the Korean peninsula in the seventh century, the new national academy (*Kukhak*) in the Unified Silla was established in 682 (Kim, 1145) after the pattern of the Chinese Tang Dynasty's (618-906) educational system. Like Koguryo's *Taehak*, the Silla's national academy taught the Chinese classics for the scions of the aristocratic class. In AD 788, the Unified Silla Dynasty held the first state examination named the "*dokseosampumkwa*" (three gradations in reading) in order to select governmental officials through tests in reading the Chinese classics on three levels of proficiency (Kim, 1145; Lee, trans. P. 165). Although the examination was modeled on the Chinese Tang's examination system, it was significant in that it was the first national examination that became a sample of the state or public examinations in the Koryo (918-1392) and Choson (1392-1910) Kingdoms.

Like the Three Kingdoms, Koryo was also a Buddhist state, but this Kingdom had a national Confucian academy (*Kukchagam*)⁵ to foster the elite who lead its aristocratic society. The institution was opened in 992 and consisted of three schools: Higher Chinese Classical School (*Kukchahak*), High Chinese Classical School (*Taehak*), and Four Portals School (*Samunhak*). Each school had different entrance qualifications, curricula, and instructors. The *Kukchahak* admitted the sons and grandsons of higher officials. The state examination system in Koryo, on the other hand, was established in 958 and composed of three basic examination types: the examination of Chinese literary composition pertaining to Chinese literature; the examination of Chinese classics related to Confucian canonical works; and the miscellaneous examinations regarding law, accounting, medicine, divination, and geomancy (Lee, 1984; Lee, 1986). The first and second types were given for the purpose of choosing government officials, whereas the third was held to select various specialists to serve in different government offices.

From the beginning of the Choson Dynasty, Confucianism was the state religion, and the highest national Confucian academy (*Seongkyunkwan*) was built in 1397. The Confucian academy succeeded the educational systems and traditions of *Taehak*, *Kukhak*, and *Kukchagam*. Practically, the Seongkyunkwan⁶ was a sanctuary of Korean Confucianism. Within the Academy, Confucian elite education was mainly viewed as an institution not only for building a strictly authoritarian bureaucratic society, but for preparing future civilian bureaucrats who rose to their socio-political positions through passing the state examinations: the *Kwa-keo* system. In this vein, the *Kwa-keo* system was the backbone of Confucian elite education in the Choson period. The Confucian educational system that depended on the *Kwa-keo* system was maintained until the late 19th century when the Choson Kingdom opened its door to the coercive foreign power and received the Western modern educational systems. The tradition of the *Kwa-keo* system is still alive and is viewed as a matrix of the present civil service examination, although the tradition of Confucian elite education almost vanished from the present educational system of Korea.

Interaction between Confucianism and Christianity toward Modern Higher Education in Korea

As reviewed in the previous section, Buddhism and Confucianism maintained a fairly constructive relationship during the early and medieval times. In other words, the former was viewed as a national religion, while the latter was regarded as an orthodox doctrine. In the Choson epoch, Confucianism was a traditional key institution, whereas Christianity was an adopted one. Since the 18th century, Christianity was integrated into

the traditional Korean ideological branches, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, and spread out new branches with heterogeneous leaves.

In the history of Korean religion, Roman Catholic mission activity started to reach the Korean peninsula in the early seventeenth century and attracted upper class intellectuals. On the contrary, the first foreign evangelistic Protestant agency began its mission in 1884 and embraced the lower classes and commoners (Grayson, 1985, 1989; Lee, 1984; Underwood, 1926). Owing to the disharmony with Neo-Confucian principles and norms, Roman Catholics were officially persecuted several times by the Confucian rulers and bureaucrats for 100 years from the late eighteenth century, whereas Protestantism sought to harmonize with Neo-Confucianism and Korean religious culture from the beginning.

With the introduction of Catholic doctrine, Western scientific and technical knowledge were welcomed by some reform-minded Confucian literati, but the majority of Confucian scholars did not break the power of oligarchic upper class ties that held fast to the intellectual narrow-mindedness of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy. Catholicism challenged and threatened the existing Confucian sociopolitical order and principles, especially ancestral rites.⁷ Protestantism, unlike Roman Catholicism, attempted to avoid antagonism with Confucian sociopolitical ideologies and values, seeking instead to harmonize with Confucianism and Korean religious culture. As Suh (1996) points out, the Protestant church intended to harmonize with Confucian principles and ethics, asserting that Protestant ethical teachings were no different from Confucian precepts aimed at advancing humanity through the promotion of love and virtue (p. 248).

In addition, Christianity has adopted many of Korea's superstitious and secular elements (Lee, 1971, p. 77). Chin-hong Chung (1996) writes:

The most important factors in Christianity's relative success have been the similarities between Christian theology and the Christian concept of God and the structures of Korea's traditional religions. Koreans' belief in a supreme being together with the presence of shamans as spiritual mediators, helped overcome cultural differences inherent in Christian teachings...Christianity introduced a god that native religions had failed to define sufficiently. Christianity provided the *theos* [god] missing from traditional religious thought. (pp. 225-26)

In other words, Protestantism attempted to harmonize with Confucian sociopolitical ideologies and traditional Korean religious culture. Furthermore, the equality of sexes and the dignity of labor based on Christian egalitarianism and humanism appealed to the Korean populace whose human rights and freedoms were violated by the Confucian upper class and royal families. During the Choson era (1392-1910), in particular, the most important factor contributive to Christian success was that Protestant missionaries planted Christian humanism and scientific knowledge in Confucian ground through medical and educational missions.

In the light of Christian education in Korea, medical and educational missions were the most important elements contributing to the success of Christianity. Roman Catholic missionaries were educational pioneers who taught Korean letters to the Korean masses, whereas Protestant missionaries opened many secondary and collegiate institutions for commoners, including women. During the Choson times, Korean women did not have the opportunity to receive public education, nor to enjoy their personal

rights. Most Korean women's freedoms were trampled by male dominant Confucian norms and values, whose tasks were limited to the delivery of children and housekeeping for their family members. Under these circumstances, Christian missionary education was a detonating fuse not only for emancipating Korean women, but for giving commoners a valuable chance to recognize human freedom and equality.

For the approximately 500 years of the Choson Kingdom, elite education had been monopolized by the upper class. Thus, Christian missionary education was welcomed by the Korean populace who had intense aspirations toward education. Several missionary collegiate schools in the late Choson period (1880-1910) were modeled after American colleges and loosely based on the American higher educational system (Underwood, 1926, p. 113). Christian missionary educators emphasized both religious and liberal attitudes which encouraged an educated citizenry to dedicate Christianity and Korea. Therefore, they taught not merely the Bible and English but also traditional Confucian learning and western practical subjects. However, above all, Christian collegiate institutes stressed the evangelical ministry.

In the late Choson period (1880-1890s), most Koreans did not demonstrate an interest in the governmental education⁸, nor did they willingly follow the Japanese-controlled governmental reform⁹ (Lee, 1984). Indeed, many conservative upper class intellectuals wanted to maintain the Confucian educational tradition rather than to accept Western education instigated by foreign missionaries and Japanese. Some Korean nationalists were interested in the institutes founded by the national patriots, while the Confucians still kept their conservative tradition (Lee, 1984, p. 335; Son, 1985, p. 117). However, traditional Confucian education gradually decreased because of the Japanese political pressure and the increase of Christian missionary schools. At that

time, the highest national Confucian elite academy, Seongkyunkwan, did not sustain the Confucian educational tradition and authority.

While the existence of traditional Confucian schools decreased, the numbers of Christian missionary schools gradually increased. Most students of missionary collegiate schools were the lower class people as well as women, but in the late 1890s some liberal Confucian intellectuals who fostered progressive and reformatory thoughts entered the Christian collegiate schools. Within two decades, after Protestant missionaries began their institutional work, they contributed much to the emancipation of women as well as to the recognition of human rights and freedoms through sowing the seeds of Christianity and Western thought to the Korean people. In terms of the interaction between Confucianism and Christianity toward modern higher education in Korea, Confucian education was substituted by Christian missionary education regardless of the religious complement.

During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Japan established the prime policy of ruling Korea that aimed to let the Korean people have capacities and personalities as loyal citizens of her imperialism (The Government-General of Choson, 1935, p. 167). To achieve this goal, education was regarded as one of the significant political issues. In 1911, the Japanese colonial government proclaimed the Korean Educational Ordinance. Since the Ordinance of 1911 let higher education institutions, such as Christian missionary colleges, lose their college status and be downgraded to non-degree granting schools. Moreover, during World War II (1937-1945), the Japanese colonial administration took a hard line against Koreans and Western missionaries, eliminating freedom of speech, bring undue pressure upon Christian missionaries, and paying homage to Shinto shrines (Palmer, 1977, pp. 139-40). In addition, they forcibly

demanded that the Korean people should use the Japanese language, instruct all classes in Japanese, and change their traditional family names into Japanese styles (Meade, 1951, p. 213).

However, the liberation of Korea from Japanese occupation on August 15, 1945 was a turning point in the history of Korean education and Christianity. The U.S. Military Government virtually not only planted the seed of democratic higher education but also opened the freedom of religion in South Korea. In 1948, over 30 national, public, and private institutions of higher education were up and going. In particular, Christianity played a leading role to expand Christian-founded institutions. Overall, the U.S. Military Government greatly contributed to the development of Korean higher education, introducing American educational thought, Christian humanism, curriculum and instruction, and management systems.

In summary, in addition to harmonizing the religious and educational tradition of Korean Confucianism, Christian missionary work in Korea had a great effect on the transformation of the Korean social and educational environment toward modern higher education in the following ways: the planting of Christianity, the role as an educational mediator establishing modern higher education in Korea as opposed to traditional Confucian elite education, the harmonizing with Confucian humanity and ethics, the initiator of native language education, the opener of democratic and female education, recognizing of the importance of Western practical and scientific knowledge, introducing Western institutional administrative systems as well as curriculum and instruction, teaching the spirit of independence and self-reliance, and introducing Western thought, such as Christian humanism, Puritanism, egalitarianism, democratism, utilitarianism, and pragmatism.

The Role of Religion in Current Korean Higher Education

Since the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, both Korean higher education and Korean Christians have greatly expanded. In 1995, the number of religious people comprising the total Korean population (44,553,710) was 22,597,824 persons (50.7%): Buddhists were 10,321,012 (45.7%); Protestants were 8,760,336 (38.8%); Roman Catholics were 2,950,730 (13.0%); Confucians were 210,927 (0.9%); and others were 354,819 (1.6%) (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1998). As shown in Table 1, in 1999 there were 279 religious denominations in South Korea: 69 Buddhist, 162 Protestant, 1 Roman Catholic, 1 Confucian, and 46 other denominations or sects; and there were 846 Buddhist temples, 63,275 Protestant churches, 1,152 Roman Catholic churches, 234 Confucian regional shrine schools, and 5,484 other churches or meeting houses (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1999).

Table 1. The Condition of Religion in Korea

Classifications Religions	Number of Denominati- ons or Sects	Number of Temples or Churches	Number of Clergy Persons	Number of Believers (95. 11. 1)	Number of Religious Coll.& Uni.
Buddhism	69	18,511 (846) (Temples)	34,063	10,321,012	3
Protestant	162	63,275	114,952	8,760,336	64
R. Catholics	1	1,152	10,879	2,950,730	12
Confucianism	1	730 (234) (Confucian Temples)	31,833	210,927	.

Others	46	5,484	295,340	354,819	6
Total	279	89,152	487,067	22,597,824	85

Source: The Condition of Religion in Korea (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1999)

* On November 1, 1995, the total number of Korean population was 44,553,710, and the religious population was 50.7 percent of the Korean people.

According to “The Statistical Yearbook of Education” (The Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute, 1999), there were 51 national, 11 public, and 292 private schools among 354 higher education institutions in 1999. In 292 private institutions, 85 were religious-founded institutions: 64 Protestant, 12 Roman Catholic, 3 Buddhist, 4 Won-Buddhist¹⁰, and 1 other religion. As Table 2 shows, among 76 Christian-founded institutions, 64 were Protestant-founded (84%): 38 colleges or universities, 12 junior colleges, 9 graduate colleges, and 5 theological seminaries; and 12 were Roman Catholic-founded (16%): 9 colleges and universities, and 3 junior colleges (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1999, p. 91). In 1999, about 21.5 percent of all formal tertiary institutions in Korea belonged to Christian-founded institutions, and 89.4 percent of all religious-related tertiary institutions was Christian-founded schools.

Table 2. The Condition of Religious Tertiary Institutions

Religions Classi.	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Buddhism	Won- Buddhism	Others	Total
Colleges & Universities	38	9	3	2	1	53
Graduate Colleges	9			1		10

Theological Seminaries	5					5
Junior Colleges	12	3		1	1	17
Total	64	12	3	4	2	85

Source: The Condition of Religion in Korea (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1999)

In a case of Confucianism, however, although there is no organized Confucian tertiary institution, despite the statistics demonstrating that two million Confucian believers maintain 234 Confucian temples now, almost all of Koreans are affected by Confucian norms, values, customs, and manners. In other words, the majority of the Korean people are Confucians, regardless of their belonging to other religious denominations. Therefore, we may say that Confucianism is a prime factor dominating organizational culture in Korean higher education as well as in Korean society (Lee, 2000).

As mentioned in the previous section, although modern higher education was substituted for Confucian elite education in the modern period, Confucian organizational culture still remains in the present Korean colleges and universities being classified into public and private institutions. Among 85 religious tertiary institutes belonging to the private sect, several prestigious Christian universities, such as Sogang University which has a short history, as well as Yonsei University and Ewha Woman's University which have long traditions, have achieved their institutional missions--the dissemination of Christianity and the establishment of religious identities—as well as national and social services through maintaining the academic excellence in a Confucian society.

On the other hand, every religious college and university, regardless of religious sects or denominations, is designed not merely to practice its religious ideology but also to foster clergy persons, which consists of religious departments or schools¹¹. In addition, most religious colleges and universities manage religious research institutes for the fulfillment of religious uniqueness and medical institutions or colleges for the promotion of community activities. According to “The Condition of Religion” (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1999), in 1999 there were 133 religious research institutes: 66 Buddhist, 29 Protestant, 27 Roman Catholic, and 11 others; 72 religious medical institutions: 8 Buddhist, 13 Protestant, 31 Roman Catholic, and 20 others. As shown in Table 2, Protestant has emphasized educational rather than medical mission, whereas Roman Catholic has stressed medical rather than educational work.

Considering the general missions of universities, the significant problems of the religious institutions in Korea are the identity as well as the lowering of academic quality because of a concentration on the expansion of educational quantity. In practice, contemporary Korean higher education has been intent on expanding the demand and supply of students, instead of enhancing its identity and quality, for 54 years (1945-1999)¹². Therefore, the urgent task of current religious colleges and universities is how to change religious identities into generalization for national and social services.

In current Korean higher education, the large number of young faculty members who had studied in the United States and Europe brought their own unique syntheses of West and East into their colleges or universities (Reed, 1995). Sometimes, however, they conflict with senior faculty members or administrators who possess authoritative attitudes based on an age-ranking system and male dominant Confucian principles (Lee, 1999a). In addition, the traditional and the new paradigms frequently cause conflicts

between the old and the young.

In spite of the frequent conflicts of these two ideologies, the culture of the Korean higher education system still sustains the hierarchical structure of interpersonal relationships between administrators and subordinates, as well as teachers and students under the traditional Confucian values¹³, but Christianity and western thoughts have been gradually combined as the main organizational culture in current Korean society and higher education. The organizational culture in current Korean higher education is characterized by informal democratism and Western individualism based on Christian norms as well as formal authoritarian and traditional collectivism based on the traditional religious values, such as Buddhist and Confucian ideologies (Lee, 1999a; 1999b).

Religion plays a significant role in the building of organizational culture as well as in the development of religious schools in current Korean higher education. Christianity and Buddhism have become the two representative religions¹⁴ in contemporary Korean society and lead the private colleges and universities in current Korean higher education although the two religious communities maintain a mutually exclusive relationship because of the differences in their fundamental beliefs and the competitive attitudes. Confucianism did not establish Confucian institutes in Korean higher education, but it maintains a constructive relationship with Buddhism and Christianity. Confucianism and Buddhism have coexisted in Korean society as primary or secondary institutions from the early historical times, and Christianity has mainly followed Confucian socio-ethical ideologies as a new adopted cultural mediator from the late nineteenth century. In the present Korean higher education, Confucianism and Christianity are two main factors dominating organizational culture as well as

administrative structure, whereas Buddhism does not have an important influence on the administrative system today.

Conclusion

In current Korean society, the above three heterogeneous religions coexist under the aegis of democratization and industrialization. Christianity and Western ideas, especially democratic and scientific approaches, brought great economic and educational accomplishment. However, despite this positive aspect, a negative side also exists. In particular, mammonism and egoistic individualism threaten the traditional values and norms. With a rapid expansion of Korean higher education, however, the valuable traditional religious thoughts, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, have gradually diminished, whereas individualism, materialism, utilitarianism, and scientism based on Western ideas have broadly augmented in Korean society and education. Nevertheless, Christianity has overall played a significant role not only in the development of religious education but also in the enhancement of the spiritual world of the Korean people.

In point of religious education, however, higher education is reduced to the level of being simply a tool to accomplish individual's socio-economic desire while ignoring human ethics and morality. As a result of these phenomena, the traditional humanitarian spirit based on Buddhism and Confucianism is threatened by educational acculturation and pragmatic scientism. Now, the task of harmonizing traditional religious thoughts with the new heterogeneous ideologies in current Korean higher education remains a dilemma.

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Notes

¹ Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, asserted that personal craving or desire is the origin of suffering and that overcoming *samsara*, the external karmic round of existence, is the ultimate way to salvation from the circle of birth and death, and then eventually reaching nirvana.

² The Three Kingdoms were Koguryo (37BC-AD668) in the north, Paekche (18BC-AD660) in the southwest, and Silla (57BC-AD935) in the southeast.

³ Confucianism generally stems from classical Confucianism, which stresses the sociopolitical and socio-ethical moral guide and rites, whereas the reformed Confucianism is called Neo-Confucianism. The latter was influenced by Buddhism, Taoism, and supernaturalism. In the Choson period (1392-1910), Confucianism belonged to Neo-Confucianism.

⁴ In 1784, the first Catholic Church was established by Koreans in the Choson Kingdom (Lee, 1984, p. 239).

⁵ In the early twelfth century, the academy added three more schools: Law School (*Yurhak*), Calligraphy School (*Seohak*), and Accounting School (*Sanhak*). The six schools all came under the *Kukchagam*. The *Kukchagam* was changed into *Kukhak* in 1271 and then to *Seongkyunkwan* in the early fourteenth century.

⁶ The Academy maintained the Confucian educational tradition for 500 years. However, it did not sustain the highest Confucian educational authority and finally closed its educational tradition due to Japanese political power.

⁷ Ancestral rite was traditionally based on the Confucian concept of filial piety, and brought serious social and political incrimination. The Catholic Church regarded ancestor worship to be an act of idolatry prohibited by God in the First Commandment of the Old Testament.

⁸ At that time, the Choson government did not have sufficient finances to establish the highest educational institution as a Western modern university, nor was it acquainted with Western higher educational systems well (Bishop, 1897).

⁹ The Japanese imperialists controlled the 1894 Reform, which was the first step of encroachment on Korea's national right, and overwhelmed the Choson government with oppressive political power. In 1895, the Japanese planned the "Draft of Reforming the Internal Affairs of the Choson Kingdom" and forcibly demanded that the Choson royal government implement educational reform. They occupied the Korean peninsula and controlled the Korean people for 35 years (1910-1945).

¹⁰ Won-Buddhism was founded by Taesan So who achieved significant awakening in 1916. The symbol of Won-Buddhism is the circle, which seeks the meaning of Buddhism in our daily lives and endeavors to implement Buddhist teachings in life (Park, 1983, p. 40).

¹¹ For instance, Buddhist affiliated universities opened several religious departments,

such as Buddhism, Zen, Buddhist art, and Indian philosophy, or schools of Buddhism. Similarly, Christian colleges or universities opened some religious departments-- theology, Christian education, and Christian music-- schools of theology, seminaries, or graduate colleges.

¹² Between 1945 and 1999, Korean higher education expanded from 19 schools, 1,490 teachers, and 7,819 students to 354 schools, 55,718 teachers, and 3,154,245 students (Education in Korea [Seoul: Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 8]; Statistical Yearbook of Education [Seoul: Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute, 1999, pp. 584-85]).

¹³ “Traditionally, the Korean people have maintained the Confucian values and principles: encouragement of learning, emphasis on self-cultivation and social morality, stress on family or clan regulation, insistence on class notions and male authority, reverence for rulers, parents, teachers, and the old, worship of ancestors, and accent on rules and rituals” (Lee, 1999b, p. 11).

¹⁴ In 1999, Buddhists make up 45.7%, and Christians comprise 51.8% of the Korean believers. The number of believers was 22,597,824 (50.7 percent of Korean population). Although Confucians only consist of 0.9 percent of Koreans, Confucianism remains a core culture in Korean society.