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Buddhism and Family in East Asia

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Buddhism and Family in East Asia

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INTRODUCTION

Buddhism brought many new ideas to East Asia, innovations, some of which provoked criticism and resistance on the part of the peoples who were inheritors of long established patterns of social behavior and religious beliefs. No institution of Buddhism had more far reaching effect than the monastery with its inhabitants who took a vow of celibacy and separated themselves from their families. This career of Buddhist monk and nun constituted an alternative life style to the universally accepted belief that one of life's major duties was that of fulfilling obligations to the living parents as well as to the lineage of ancestors extending back through the generations. Since the Buddhist monastery was filled with those who had 'left home', given up their family name, shaved their heads and deliberately removed themselves from the ancestral lineage by not having children thus accepting the *sangha* as having greater call on their loyalty than the extended family, a tension was created between this religious tradition and East Asian society. Generations of Buddhist opponents have directed their criticisms at the monastic life which they characterized as the epitome of unfilial action.

The problem of family life as contrasted with the monastic one was not limited to East Asia. In India, the family was no less a part of the social fabric and the accounts of the early life of Sakyamuni are vivid descriptions of the trials and obstacles encountered by one who choose the life of the wandering ascetic over the responsibilities and rewards of the householder life. The story of young Sakyamuni deserting his father, wife and infant son in order to pursue his search for enlightenment is one which Indians still find unsettling and even unforgivable.

THE MONASTIC LIFE

"Leaving home" came to describe the process of initiation and inclusion in a monastic community; it was the advent of this monastic tradition in East Asia which was seen as a serious challenge to the extended family system. Those who were following this regime of 'leaving home' were not adopting the path of individualism, if by individualism we mean a separation of the person from community. Buddhism did not bring a model of behavior based on the idea of an anchorite existence, rather it introduced a form of community which was not based on blood lines of familial

relationships. The emergence of a powerful new group within China articulating new ideals of social behavior made it necessary for those who joined it to redefine their concept of self and society. The Buddhist monk and nun was not an isolated individual in a mountain wilderness; they were practitioners in a campus of monastic buildings, part of a group conforming to a pattern of life set forth in the Buddhist code of conduct (*vinaya*). For those who entered the consciously chosen community that had no tie to family or clan their life goals and purposes came to be defined within the ideals of the new community. There are ways in which this growth of the monastery in East Asia can be compared to the 12th century in Europe, an era that has often been described as a time when individualism developed [MORRIS 1972]. Recent scholarship questions the premise that the older form of European culture gave way in the 12th century to the 'individual.' Of more importance to this period was the "burgeoning thought..of new norms of communities with new rules" [BYNUM 1980: 2]. This is a good description of the time when Tao An (4th century) set up common rules of conduct for monasteries and changed every resident's name to the Buddha's clan name of Sakya. He, like the 12th century Europeans, was establishing a new mode of life centered on a community in which individualism was not the primary goal [CH'EN 1964: 100]. Hsu suggests that the Buddhists introduced the Indian idea of the *gotra*, an association of people not based on kinship but on rules and teachings [HSU 1972: 534]. It was the *gotra* that contrasted with the intricate kinship patterns which dominated Chinese life. The *gotra* in China had one form—the organization and structure of the monastery with its residents.

It was the discovery of the new group and the redefinition of self within the context of the monastic community that attracted so many East Asians. Without recognition of this appeal of the monastery life it is difficult to account for the fact that even though 'leaving home' did damage to the most sacred of social functions in East Asia, Buddhist monastic organizations thrived and became one of the most important features of the religious, economic and social life of China, Korea and Japan. The appeal of these various communities with special dress, demeanor, rules of conduct, ritual, religious teaching and yogic practices of meditation was sufficient to attract people even when joining was viewed by many as an unfilial action toward the family.

PARENTAL IMAGES

Buddhism appealed to certain of the faithful to give allegiance beyond the kinship ties, but at the same time the religion had to seek accomodation with local customs and in particular to have an acceptable relationship with the family. Buddhism is, after all, an institution which must secure its support from donations and it alienates the lay population only at the peril of becoming extinct. We see in the Buddhist canon as it is preserved in the Chinese language version, that parents receive a good deal of attention. In many of these scriptural passages the praise of the parents and the enumeration of the obligations due to them would satisfy the most vehement

proponent of ancestral worship. In the *Madhyamāgamasūtra* (T. 26: 641a) a son is told to revere his parents in five ways:

- (1) increase their wealth
- (2) take care of their affairs
- (3) provide for their wishes and needs
- (4) give up his own personal desires
- (5) offer everything owned to them.

In turn parents are told to be mindful of their son in five ways:

- (1) give loving care when he is an infant
- (2) always provide sufficient food
- (3) keep him from falling into debt
- (4) arrange a good marriage
- (5) leave all possessions to him.

A son who follows these proscriptions can be assured of good karma, great success and material prosperity. A number of texts go further in the glorification of the family. There are, say these texts, two people who can never be repaid the debt which is owed to them: the father and the mother (*Ekottarāgamasūtra* T. 125 : 601a; *Subāhupariṣṭhā* T. 895 : 729a). Even if one were to carry the father on the right shoulder and the mother on the left for eons of time, the debt to them could not be repaid. The reward for revering the parents goes beyond worldly success. The son who honors his parents can be assured of a future life in heaven (*Ekottarāgamasūtra* T. 125 : 601a). An important eighth century text, the *Ta ch'eng pen shen hsin t'i kuan ching* (T. 159 : 297a) goes into great detail about the role of the mother and the debt which is owed to her. She has carried the son in her own body for ten months, there the fetus has lived feeding off her blood and when born the child sucks her milk. No life could occur without this giving of sustenance and shelter on the part of the mother. Therefore the obligation to the mother is so great that doing homage to her brings more merit than giving homage to the greatest of brahmins or sages. A son who turns his back on his mother can expect to be condemned to one of the three evil rebirth destinies and will be born as a hell-being, a hungry ghost or an animal. A son or daughter, continues this text, could cut off a portion of their flesh three times a day for a *kalpa* of time and present it as an offering to the mother but could not in all of these extreme acts of asceticism repay one day of her kindness. Saving the life of a parent is an act which results in great rewards. The son who drowned while saving his mother and holding on to her in the water, even though it meant his own death, receives rebirth as a king. Therefore, concludes the text, on the day of the death of a virtuous mother, one should weep.

The *vinaya* texts of the monastic discipline of the Buddhists even while setting forth the rules for living apart from the family, provide solace to the sensibilities of the family oriented East Asians. The *Sarvāstivādivinaya* (T. 1435: 152c), the *Mahāsāṅghikavinaya* (T. 1425: 421b), the *Vinayavastu* (T. 1444: 1035a, b) are specific in setting forth the rule that no son should enter the monastery and leave

home without the permission of his parents. Those who enter the monastery without parental consent commit a great sin.

Parents are given a status that ranks them with the highest beings. A mother's loving kindness can be compared to the Buddha's compassion which prompts him to create Buddha realms for sentient beings (*Ta ch'eng pen sheng hsin t'i kuan ching* T. 159 : 297c). A son who quarrels with his mother creates the same situation as when kings fight with kings or nations attack nations, in every case there is destruction and suffering (*Madhyamāgamasūtra* T. 26 : 585a). Tantric texts equated parents with kings. The *Yü ch'ieh chin kang ting ching Su tzu mu p'in* of Amoghavajra (T. 880 : 338a) describes the ritual homage due to parents and the Four Guardian Kings. The *Chin kang ting ching yu ch'iehshih pa hui chih kuei* (T. 869 : 284b) provides us with a list of merits attained through performing rituals for the king, parents and relatives.

Bad karma results from treating parents in the wrong way. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (T. 1509 : 120a) points out that one who smashes images of the Buddha or of his parents will be reborn in a deformed body without limbs and with parts of the body missing. Subhakarasiṃha's translation of the *Subāhupariṣccha* (T. 895 : 729a) accounts for rebellious behavior toward parents by noting that one who acts in such a contrary manner does so because of past action and the karma accumulated in the former life. In the instance of parental rebellion the son is thought to have committed the heinous crime of killing an arhat. By hostile acts in the present life traced back to that murder, the evil son will in the future suffer terrible punishment and be reborn in hell. On the other hand the son who wants to have the love of his parents can assure this acquiring the good karma which results from revering the Prajñāpāramitā texts (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikaprajñāpāramitāsūtra* T. 223 : 289a).

From these examples of the praise which was heaped on the parent in a variety of texts, some translated from the Sanskrit and others probably compiled within China itself, it is clear that the Buddhists attempted to give support to the family. Even so, there are an equal number of passages which express the ambivalent nature of the Buddhist view of parents. The *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T. 220 (vol. 5): 251a; (vol. 7):466a) warns the monks that Mara the tempter may come in the form of a parent and this 'parent' will tell the Bodhisattva not to be too hard on himself, not to practice so as to achieve ultimate enlightenment but rather to take the easier road of the Hinayana. In other texts the glorification of the mother is replaced by descriptions which demote her to the level of being an ordinary sensuous woman. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (T. 1509 : 199a) describes the womb as an impure spot, sitting in a pit filled with feces and urine and if a child chooses to enter that womb it is an example of the perverted views which are held by all whose destiny it is to seek rebirth. The *Mahāratnakūṭa* (T. 310 : 323a ff.) give the detail of the thirty-eight weeks of pregnancy and sees birth as the child's freedom from the horrors of the womb. The *Yogācarabhūmiśāstra* (T. 1579 : 617a) speaks of the act of copulation as the time when parents are carried along on the wave of their passion and in the moment of conception the frenzy of the senses sends the sperm down the track

of urine and out of the father's body into the same path and up into the womb of the mother. Since the body is produced by passion and originates in the defilements of the male and female body it is considered to be little more than a stinking and rotting corpse. Parents who have played their role in this rebirth cycle are not worthy of praise because they have bequeathed to their child an impure body that is to be a life long source of pain and suffering. From this perspective there is little reason to honor parents or thank them for the gift of life and body.

It is obvious that the two types of passages were intended for different audiences: the monastic celibate taught to feel revulsion for the mother and father, to turn away from the process which brings about birth while at the same time the tradition urged that all sons should revere the parents and treat them as if they were higher than the kings and on an equal with the Buddha. Textually we can note that accommodation to the family was attempted and passages in praise of parents were used to counter the attacks which were directed against the monastic career that seemed to support unfilial acts. In many ways, the opponents of Buddhism were right; the monks and nuns did turn away from their parents, they did 'leave home', they did burn their scalps and shave their heads, thus desecrating the body given to them, they did fail to fulfill their responsibilities to the ancestors by taking a vow of celibacy. It is not surprising that Buddhists were never able to completely avoid censure on account of their monastic life.

RELATIONS WITH THE ANCESTORS

As indicated in these attacks, family was not limited to the living parents, it extended backwards for seven or nine generations of ancestors. The dead family no less than the living needed and demanded attention. There were a series of ritual activities centered around the ancestors. Serving them required that they be buried in a proper and auspicious place which was determined by divination; they had to be given assistance for some generations to assure that they did not suffer. This was interpreted to mean that food and gifts were to be provided to the dead by the living at appropriate times. The key to assuring that these ritual acts were performed for the requisite number of generations was to have an unbroken line of family lineage with sons who carried the name of the family, assumed the obligations of the kinship ties and in turn produced a son to perpetuate the system. The Buddhist career of monastic life ran directly counter to this duty because the monks removed themselves from the lineage and were consequently accused of unfilial attitudes with regard to the dead. The degree of feeling on this matter can be judged by the pressure on individuals which occur today (see also Koh, Chapter 16) Continuing the family line is such a major part of life that those who do not participate are excluded from family continuity. In China children who die young were considered to have committed an unfilial act by this early death. A boy in the Taiwanese town of Ch'inan who dies is held to be an incarnation of someone to whom the parents owed a debt and that person is thought to have returned to live with the couple only until

the debt is paid [AHERN 1973: 125]. In Japan one who has no descendants cannot become an ancestor but lives in the state of being a ghost (*gaki*) and the children who die without issue are called the *muenbotoke*, those toward whom one does not have an obligation [YONEMURA 1976: 178]. In Taiwan the ancestral spirits may become unhappy ghosts (*preta/gaki*) if not properly remembered and cared for and in this state are a source of potential trouble to the family [JORDAN 1972]. If there is such strong feeling and so little hope for the young and unmarried who die without producing sons, one can image the strong resentments which can be aroused toward monks who removed themselves from the lineage. The Buddhists had to address themselves to this issue because it was of equal importance to the debt owed the living parents. In some ways the Buddhists were more successful in answering the complaints about their treatment of the ancestors than they were in the situation regarding their relationship to the family and parents. In the pre-Buddhist ancestral cults it appears that the dead were thought to live near their graves or in near-by mountains. During the seasonal rituals these ancestors would gather and receive the offerings [YONEMURA 1976: 180]. While this tradition has never been completely supplanted, the Buddhists did bring a new notion to the area, that of the underworld and the eight or ten hells into which the dead descended there to be punished for sins committed. These hells proved to be of great interest and much attention was paid to them and the drama of judgment and meted out punishment. As Ahern points out in her study of the Taiwanese village, there is not always a clear view of the underworld but villagers do have compassion for their dead and want to help them escape from the punishment which awaits [AHERN 1973: 225]. Having introduced the East Asians to the idea of the hells and the torments being suffered by ancestors who had committed evil deeds, the Buddhists removed the ancestors from the grave site and the mountains and placed them far away in the depths of the underworld or in heavens above. Such ancestors, as hell-beings, required different treatment than the usual grave centered rituals, and so the Buddhists had put themselves in a position to perform a signal service for these dead. In the T'ang dynasty tales of assisting such dead ancestors were widespread. The most famous of the legends was that of Maudgalyana, a disciple of the Buddha who was famous for his magical power. He could travel to distant world systems as a result of this power and made the decision to visit his parents in heaven. Transporting himself to heaven he located his father but was dismayed to find that his mother was not in that blissful realm; she was in one of the lower hells undergoing terrible torture for her misdeeds. Maudgalyayana immediately flew down to hell and found his mother hanging upside down and starving. Distressed by this suffering he took food and tried to feed her but it turned to ashes and she could not eat it. Unable with all of his famed power to accomplish the feeding he sought out the Buddha and asked how he might aid his mother. The Buddha told him that there was only one way to assist her and that was to present food on the day when rainy season retreat ends and monks are allowed to come out of the monastery. On that day the food can be presented to the monks and they can dedicate it for the ancestors and even a mother in hell can be fed. The

popularity of this tale and its implications should not be overlooked. It was a Buddhist solution to the problem of their relationship to the dead ancestors. By the introduction of the idea of the hells, the Buddhists had created a situation in which only they held the key to securing food and assistance. Monks who had left the lineage and removed themselves from the normal pattern of providing assistance to the ancestors who lived at the graves, could now claim the ultimate act of filial attention for those ancestors who were being judged in hell.

Buddhism in East Asia achieved a working relationship with the family system by praising the living parents and creating for them good karma, in addition the Buddhists were seen to care for the ancestors in a way that was unique and unmatched by any of the previous rituals. While accommodation was going forward, the monks and nuns were weaned away from filial responsibilities of the sort commonly practiced by the laity and these ordained members transferred loyalty to the Buddhist community in which no kinship ties existed. Although the monastery was set up as a counterpart to the family, it could not be totally separated from the social patterns of life. In China many monasteries began to mimic family organization. Across China public monasteries were supplemented by thousands of 'Father-Son' ones in which two or three monks might live with the oldest playing the role of 'father'. In these living units, the monk would adopt a young boy as his 'son' and would pass on to that 'son' the hermitage in which they practiced. For some of these monastery families, ancestral tablets were kept and appropriate rituals were performed by the monks who were adopted into the lineage, even though no blood line kinship existed between the members of the group. In this way even the celibate monks could expect to have the advantage of care and remembrance after death. The large public monasteries played a dominant role in the histories of Chinese Buddhism, for they were the places of ordination, training and scholastic programs, but the 'Father-Son' hermitages were of equal importance. In China one could join the new group and break the bonds of the family system and yet find within Buddhism a re-creation of the family.

JAPANESE ADAPTATIONS

In Japan there were developments which gave Buddhism a distinctive form with regard to the family; the Japanese established sectarian divisions within the *sangha* and they started the practice of married monks. With regard to the sectarian development, Korea and China had held only one ordination for monks and even though there were 'schools' these never became sects in the sense of being restrictive about membership. Joining one of the sects is the only way to become a Buddhist in Japan and entering the clergy is specifically related to a particular group. Along with this division of Buddhism into a number of distinct units, the Japanese added the practice of having monks marry and produce families of their own. These married priest/monks established themselves as heads of households and following the mores of the society began to pass on the family occupation from father to

eldest son. The filial piety was expressed when the eldest son accepted his responsibility and continued the family tradition by assuming his place as head of the temple/monastery. 'Leaving home' was changed to 'staying home' for the Japanese priests who lived this life of householder and cleric. Obviously the tensions between family and monastery life were removed and Buddhism became family centered even within the living units of the meditators.

Having done away with the monastic celibate life and establishing family as a recognized part of the sects of Buddhism, the Japanese were faced with the question of dealing with the ancestors. Just as in the rest of East Asia, Buddhism created for itself a unique and significant role in the situations which related to the dead. In every home the ancestor worship was carried on by veneration and daily offerings on the Buddhist altar where the dead one was referred to as 'Buddha' (*hotoke*). The dead became the major business of Buddhism in Japan. A symbol of this relationship between the living and the dead can be seen in the difference between Shinto and Buddhist shrines. The two names which are given to every individual, the birth name (*zokumyō*) and the death name (*kaimyō*) are written on different tablets; those birth names find a place on the Shinto shrine and the death names on Buddhist ones. The ancestral tables (*ihai*) and mortuary tables (*toba*) have the death name and both are associated with Buddhist rituals. The family reverse its *hotoke* and ancestors by daily offerings at home, visits to the grave in the spring and autumn and observation of the *obon* festival. There are, in addition, the special memorial services for the dead: the 3rd, 7th, 21st, 33rd, 49th and 100th death day celebrations. All of these events are said to be performed for the purpose of acquiring merit (*kudoku*) for the ancestors [OOMS 1976: 78]. In *Nichirenshōshū*, we can observe the practice of the recitation of the sutra specifically for the peace which it can bring to the dead.

As strong as funeral functions are at present in Japanese Buddhism, they may have been of even more importance in the past. Takeda expresses the opinion that the popular temples of Buddhism in the pre-Tokugawa period were established primarily for funeral events; it was the Tokugawa policies which tended to establish the uniform Buddhist temple style known today [TAKEDA 1976: 135]. Takashi Maeda sees in Buddhist practices the remains of a more ancient method of worshipping ancestors. He points out that the practice of *obon* in Japan while connected to the *Ullambanasūtra* [CH'EN 1964: 282] and the story of Maudgalyayana which had such an influence in China, nevertheless reflects a theme which is more ancient than the text. In *obon*, the ancestors are not in the Buddhist hells but are residing near by and come to the festival to join in the entertainment and receive offerings [MAEDA 1976: 140]. In this case the Buddhists have maintained the idea of feeding the dead at the specified time of the rainy season but they have located the ancestors outside of the hells described in the sutra.

In Japanese Buddhism we can see that the family was dealt with in several ways. First, the living family becomes a part of the organization of Buddhism as married priests remain within the kinship system and create a regular family life centered on the continuity of the father-son control of the temple. In addition to this establish-

ment of family life within the temple, the Buddhists of Japan have taken over a major role of caring for the ancestors and the dead. The priests find in this service to society a filial role for Buddhism that is both religious and economically essential for the support of the temples. There can be little conflict today between the family and Buddhism except in those cases where the son does not wish to fulfill his duty by assuming his position in the operation of the temple.

KOREAN CONTINUITIES

Korea provides us with a very different model of East Asian Buddhism. In Korea the traditional form of monastic life has been maintained, even though the nation and Buddhism have suffered from proscriptions, wars and invasions. During the Yi dynasty, King Injo (1623–1649) issued a decree that Buddhist monks could not enter the city of Seoul [PARK 1964: 7]. This was but one example of the suppressions instituted by the Confucian ruling group. The Buddhists were seen as being a destructive element in Korean society and the rulers of the dynasty did much to destroy the place which Buddhism had held during early periods. King Hyonjong (1659–1674) would not allow anyone to become a monk and destroyed monasteries located in the capitol or converted them to Confucian halls. In 1765, King Yongjo struck a blow at the Buddhist role of handling death ritual by demanding that all ancestral tablets be removed from the monasteries. King Chongjong (1776–1800) again denied the monks admission to Seoul and his proscription lasted until the end of the 19th century [YOSHIKAWA: 1920: 46]. These strictures on Buddhism in Korea caused the monasteries to shrink in number of residents as well as in their importance within the cities. Yoshikawa attributes the survival of Buddhism under these hostile rulers to the fact that the women of the royal house and the upper classes remained devout believers and gave it support. Around the city walls of Seoul there were small hermitages housing monks who performed prayers for the women who came to the monastery asking to receive forgiveness for whatever sin had caused them to be born as women [YOSHIKAWA 1920: 47]. While the men gave their full support to the Confucian tradition and its rules of living within the family and nation, the women found Buddhism to be more attractive. This meant that many of the Korean families were split with regard to religious allegiance.

When Japan took over control of the government of Korea in 1910, the role of the celibate monks and nuns took on a political significance. The Japanese gave support of Buddhism and saw in it an institution which had the potential for creating a cultural bond between the two nations. It soon became apparent that if this role was to be realized, something had to be done with the situation of married priests in Japan and celibates in Korea. As long as the rules governing the Buddhist groups of Japan were in conflict with those of Korea little in the way of cooperation was possible. Pressure was put on the Korean *sangha* to follow the form of married clergy so it would be in step with Japanese groups. It was ruled that monks in positions of leadership should have wives and later decrees indicated that only married monks

could receive support. For a time it appeared that Korean Buddhism would become similar to Japanese with the married group taking the place of the celibates. The end of Japanese rule in 1945 left the Korean *sangha* with the major problem of what to do with the married monks. The battles which were fought over this matter were bitter and at times marked by physical violence. President Yi Sung-man tried to settle the legality of the question by issuing a statement in 1954 that all married monks should leave the monasteries. He also decided that only celibates could hold major positions of authority and have control over finances and policy decisions. While power was shifted to the unmarried monks, the anguish of rejecting the married ones continues even today, although the unmarried group completely dominates the *sangha*. As the monastery has returned to the ancient rules of conduct, it now faces the problems of tensions between the family and those who 'leave home.' There are more than 20,000 monks and nuns in South Korea occupying nearly 7,000 monasteries and hermitages and they are often in conflict with families that are oriented to the Confucian ethics of family responsibilities and the role of father-son models.

From 1976-80, I conducted extended interviews with 128 monks and nuns representing a variety of age groups and backgrounds. Out of those interviews came a definite pattern of friction between the families and those who had been ordained in the monasteries. Ninety (70%) of those interviewed indicated that they were in the monastery against the wishes of their families. This opposition on the part of the family ranged from expressions of unhappiness from parents to active attempts on the part of family members to remove the monks and nuns from their chosen life. Many of the residents (51%) recounted wrenching experiences of having family members come to them to beg that they return home. Sometimes these arguments had erupted into physical wrestling as brother or cousins tried to get them to leave the life and take up a regular position in the family. One of the primary complaints expressed to them by their siblings was the fact that they owed a debt to the aging parents which was not being met. Quite often these scenes took place in the kitchen areas where the young novices are normally engaged in cooking and working during their first months within the monastery. But the contact is not limited to the young or the new recruits; many of the interviewed group who had been in the monastery for more than ten years (40% of this group) still had visits from unhappy family members. One of the most important and senior meditation teachers in Korea told of his family coming to see him thirty years after he had 'left home.' They had no knowledge of his whereabouts and some had thought him to be dead until he achieved fame and his picture appeared in the newspaper. When they came as a group to the monastery, he preached them a sermon and asked them to support Buddhism. Because of his position, they accepted his commitment to remain a monk. Some of the novices (20%) go to the monastery without the permission of parents, even though it is officially required. But this may not be a true response considering the amount of concern shown by parents and family toward the career. In a small number of cases (20 of 128), the monks and nuns had approval and support of their families for the choice of becoming a Buddhist mendicant. Fifteen of the twenty who told

of this parental support also indicated that the support was given because they had a childhood marked by illness and chronic poor health. When the parents sought the advice of shamans they had been told that the only hope for survival or long life of the young person was to put them into a monastery. All of these who had come to the monastery for health reasons said that they no longer had problems and their decision to remain was based on wanting to practice and study. Three did admit that they suspected their health would decline if they left the life. Only three of the 128 (2%) said that their parents were devout Buddhists who had urged them to consider the monastic career for religious reasons.

Admittedly, this is a very small sample of the monastic community of Korea, but it does suggest that there is conflict between the family and the monastery. One of the impressive aspects of interviewing the monks and nuns was their resistance to answering any questions regarding the family. They often (85%) complained that my questions about the family were disturbing to them because having 'left home' they no longer wanted to be concerned about it. Using questionnaires proved to be ineffective because so many would refuse to answer or if they did so would give random 'yes' and 'no' responses that had no relationship to facts. Some gave deliberately misleading information as a means of teaching the interviewer that such an interest in the family was of no value. It was only possible to secure what appears to be reliable information from interviews that lasted in some cases for several days and involved time spent in discussing Buddhist doctrine. While dealing with doctrinal matters, they often could be led to deal with the implications of the family life, a life they were always anxious to characterize as inferior to the state where one could have time and energy for meditation.

CONCLUSION

From the survey of some of the encounters that have occurred in East Asia between family members and the Buddhist monks and nuns, we see how complex the relationship is between the family and Buddhism. The Buddhists alternately praise parents and denigrate them; copy the family organization and reject ties to the family; absorb the family framework into its rules and order and ridicule such relationships. The householder, Confucians, Taoists, Shintoists, laymen, non-Buddhists (and Buddhists themselves) have a similar mixed reaction to Buddhism, criticizing it on occasion and on others using it to secure such things as assistance for ancestors, giving monasteries significant support while issuing proscriptions against the celibate life. Time, place and situation create the context in which Buddhism and the family have interacted. Of one thing we can be assured, neither has been able to ignore the other or maintain an unchanging attitude. It is the dynamics of this interchange which promises much to the disciplines that have scholars willing to investigate the relationship of these two social institutions.

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