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Kim Iryŏp. *Reflections of a Zen Buddhist Nun*. Translated with an introduction by Jin Y. Park. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014. 301 Pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-3878-2.)

This is a translation of Kim Iryŏp's (1896–1971) work, first published in 1960. The translator, Jin Park, also offers an excellent introduction to the life, thought, and legacy of this eminent Zen nun, providing a rich resource for further study of her metaphysics, ethics, and *Weltanschauung*. Born a daughter of a fundamentalist evangelical Christian pastor from the vicinity of P'yŏngyang, the hotbed of Korean Protestantism (now the capitol of North Korea and the nemesis of Christianity), Iryŏp was a "new woman" who received her education at the prestigious Ewha Hakdang school in Seoul, and, after her study in Tokyo, pioneered in women's right movement, journalism, and writing career. Twice married and divorced, she was a devotee to a brand-new conception of chastity, according to which a woman could claim to be a virgin if she was ready to fully devote her love to a new partner regardless of her past. The book presents a great love story: her love for a man, the Buddha's teachings, and above all, her life. It includes Iryŏp's long letter to Paek Sŏnguk, a pioneer in modern Buddhism with a doctorate in philosophy from Germany and her lover, whose eventual decision to terminate the relation could very well have prompted Iryŏp to join the monastery and become a nun.

We learn that Iryŏp was at the cultural center of Korea's transition from a traditional to modern society in the 1920s and 1930s. She interacted with many prominent figures, including the giants of Korean Buddhism and the towering intellectual Ch'oe Namsŏn (pen name, Yuktang, 1890–1957). Chapter 8 is a letter addressed to him. "Iryŏp," her pen name, by the way, was given to her in Tokyo by the famous novelist Yi Kwangsu (1892–1950), after Higuchi Ichiyō (1872–1896), whose pen name "Ichiyō" is pronounced as "Iryŏp" in Korean.

The bulk of the book is about Iryŏp's Buddhist outlook. We observe Iryŏp's engagement with her monist metaphysics of the Great Self, as opposed to the Small Self, which may be identified as the source of "creativity." According to Iryŏp, however, most of the time, not being able to attain this Great Self, we end up living a pseudo-life with a pseudo-mind, thus living in the era of the lost self (*silsŏngin*). The unity of the self and non-self is then presented as the urgent goal and ideal. This forms the "original mind (*pon maum*)." She also offers succinct illustrations of the fundamental categories in Buddhism, such as "Nirvana," the meaning of life, value of humanity, "nothingness (or void/emptiness)," "impermanence," "meditation," *inter alia*.

As for the general structure of the book, Part One contains the translations of the Korean original (minus two chapters). Chapter 1 is the "Preface" that describes Iryŏp's ultimate goal, followed by two chapters devoted to the theoretical foundations of Buddhism. Chapter 4 is a memoir of her mentor, the distinguished Zen monk and reformed-minded Man'gong. Chapter 5 contains her own reflections on becoming a nun on the occasion of her twenty-fifth-year mark since her tonsure. Chapters 6 and 7 present her view on social issues, especially the "purification" movement in Buddhism initiated by Man'gong. Chapter 8 is her extended apologia on behalf of Buddhism and criticism of Ch'oe Namsŏn, a Catholic convert from Buddhism. Chapter 9 is her musings on faith. The mood turns personal in Chapters 10 and 11. Chapter 12 and 13 are letters addressed to Iryŏp. The remaining chapters in Part Two are excerpts from her Dharma talks. All in all, we can see that she is unabashed about her devotion to Buddhism. The whole volume is designed to proselytize its readers.

Additionally, we not only catch a glimpse of life as a nun in the monastery but also the various aspects of Buddhist practices and rituals, including chanting (e.g., the chanting of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva or Amita Buddha) and *hwadu* (Chinese, *hautou*) meditations. Her polemics against Christianity can be found here, too. According to Iryŏp, while Christianity's unilateral emphasis on the faith in Jesus as savior cannot cure the disease of the mind or heal the suffering of the world, Buddhism is a religion that overcomes the dichotomy ("polarization," "dualism," "duality") of various opposites such as good and evil, existence and non-existence, heaven and hell, the self and the other (the non-self), life and death, and so on. Furthermore, the Christian faith does not see that it is ultimately the mind that has faith, and it is this mind that one has to recover as the foundation of all things, including God and heaven. This foundation turns out to be none other than the Buddha. As she puts it, "the Buddha is the entirety of the inside and outside of the world" (p. 100). In fact, both the Christian God and the historical Buddha are mere idols. From our familiar experience, we learn that time has no end, thus being eternal, and so the apocalyptic doctrine of Christianity, together with its emphasis on the Day of Judgment, must be seriously mistaken. Finally, if everything in the world is the product of a good God, how do you explain the problem of evil? Even though these are all interesting arguments in favor of Buddhism, her views, in the last analysis, are less than completely convincing because, in spite of her stress on the autonomous, self-reliant nature of Buddhism and its practice, some schools of Buddhism also show "reliance on other-power," for instance, the medieval Japanese Zen monk Shinran's (1173–1263) doctrine of other-reliance (*tariki*).

The translation is reliable and presented in easily readable English. Many episodes in the account of Iryŏp's private as well as public life have the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945) as its background. Perhaps some historical background of Japanese colonialism in Korea could prove useful for readers. For example, in the "Letter to B.," Iryŏp mentions "The March First Movement," but without any information on its historical background, it is hard to tell exactly what went on. The Romanization of Korean by means of the McCune-Reischauer system in the book is all flawless, with minor exceptions on p. 21, where "ch'aegim" (responsibility) should instead be "ch'agim," and on p. 269, note 26, where "Hamhô Tŭtong" should be "Hamhô Tŭktong."

In a nutshell, this book provides some persuasive viewpoints for taking Buddhism seriously; they reject a practical/pragmatic approach but see the value inherent in the doctrine and meditational practice. Iryŏp is at once modest and grand in her Buddhist apologetics, and what is more, the book brilliantly gives insight into Iryŏp's motives that led to her later writings and suggests intriguing possibilities for the significance of Buddhist philosophy as a whole. In important ways, it adds to our general understanding of the not-so-major writers working in the first half of the twentieth century in Korea.

Indeed, I think Iryŏp's monistic reflections on the nature of the self provide some excellent material for a chapter on the nature of the mind in an anthology for a multi-culturally oriented course in philosophy, such as an introduction to the philosophy of mind. Although Jin Y. Park does not mention it, in the 1960 Korean edition of the book, the title appears as *Reflections of the One Who Lost Herself* (*silsŏngin ŭi hoesang*), with the subtitle of *Reflections of a Zen Buddhist Nun*. I want to close by noting that in the context of colloquial Korean language, "*silsŏngin*"—"the one who lost herself"—can also mean a lunatic. Perhaps it was against the "age of lunacy" that Iryŏp dearly and valiantly hoped to recover the true self in each of us and cultivate our humanity.

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