Three essays on organizational paradox, history, and resilience: An ethnography of Buddhist temples

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates three organizational tensions that are most salient in Korean Buddhist temples: (1) finance versus religion, (2) change versus tradition, and (3) adaptation versus stability. Specifically, drawing upon paradox theory, my first essay examines how Buddhist monks address tension between business work to support the organization’s financial sustainability and Buddhist meditative practice to support their religious conviction. I report the findings at both organizational and individual levels of analysis, in an effort to unpack how an individual level paradox is manifested to an organizational level paradox. The second essay explores an enabling role of history in facilitating organizational change. Focusing on a Buddhist Master Monk’s historical narratives on changes, I analyze how the Master Monk selectively interprets the organizational history and develops it as a convincing storytelling tool to reduce organizational members’ cognitive resistance, thereby facilitating changes. The third essay investigates how Buddhist temples adapt to external environments while simultaneously keeping their core identity intact i.e., organizational resilience. The third essay aims to shed more light on a longitudinal process of organizational resilience.

Empirically, I have conducted multiple rounds of ethnographic fieldwork in Korean Buddhist temples to deeply immerse myself into the research context. Rich data from the fieldwork allowed me to develop the distinct essays on organizational tensions. In the end, the three essays characterize different methodological and theoretical colors. Each study aims to contribute to organizational paradox, history (and narrative), and resilience literature.

Lay Summary

This study investigates how Buddhist temples manage three types of organization tensions the temples face between (1) finance versus religion, (2) change versus tradition, and (3) adaptation versus stability. To deeply immerse myself into the context, I conduct ethnographic
fieldwork in Korean Buddhist temples, living with monks, meditating together, and following all the monastic rules and Buddhist moral precepts. The findings of this study contribute to organization and management theory, specifically organizational paradox, history, and resilience.

Keywords
Organizational paradox; history; resilience; ethnography; Qualitative study; Buddhist temple
Statement of Authorship

This is to certify that I am the principal author and have had a major role in the preparation and writing of the manuscript (per http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/8.html).

Acknowledgements

I would like to mention that this particular dissertation has benefited from both communities of management scholars and Buddhist studies researchers. First, working with Tima Bansal and having her as my Ph.D. supervisor has been the greatest learning experience of my career. I have been immensely privileged, and I owe Tima a tremendous debt, which can never be repaid. I also acknowledge the following Ivey scholars for their helpful advice in the development of this dissertation: Diane-Laure Arjaliès, Oana Branzei, and Mark Zbaracki. I thank to Ivey Business School, a great institution of learning, for all the opportunities provided to me. Thanks to the Ivey Ph.D. student community for their camaraderie and support.

I am also grateful to Korean Buddhist-Society Research Institute, International Seon Center, and Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism at The Jo-Gye Order of Korean Buddhism for their assistance in secondary data collection and general comments on monastic organizational life in Buddhist temples. Sustainability & Entrepreneurship Center at Sasin Graduate School of Business also helps extend my understanding on Buddhist approach to management studies.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overarching theme across the three essays: Organizational tension

A great deal of scholars has recognized the pervasiveness of tensions in contemporary society. They investigated tensions as their central research agendas. Several examples include tensions of economic system versus social system (Polanyi, 1944); economic growth versus ecological sustainability (Holling, 1973), morality versus rationality (Sandel, 1998, 2002); agents versus structure (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998); past versus future (Zerubavel, 2012); and religion versus science (Dawkins, 1970/2017). Even, historians and philosophers have long theorized that the nature of human history is essentially the product of tensions evolving between two elements of the contradiction (Hegel, 1816/1991). Recently, sustainability scholars propose that a core issue in sustainability of human civilization is an intergenerational tension in terms of resource use and socio-ecological well-being (Tima & Desjardine, 2014).

Given that people have different goals and values and that they need to work together in an organization, managing tensions has been one of the central research topics in organization studies (e.g., Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016). In an organizational setting, not only do people’s goal and value conflict, but also process to achieve the goal conflicts (Langley, 1999). This makes an organizational tension even more complex.

To understand such nature of organizational tensions, scholars investigate various types of tensions, based on different theoretical lenses and epistemological stances. For example, institutional theorists have long proposed that contradicting logics coexist in an organizational field (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The contradicting logics offer simultaneously legitimate belief systems, values, and material practices, all of which create tensions between people living in two valid-yet-conflicting social norms (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). Strategic management theorizes
the notion of exploitation and exploration to better understand a balancing mechanism of organization’s daily operation and innovation (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). The exploitation and exploration lead to tensions because the relevant activities require contradicting temporal perspectives and goals (Smith & Tushman 2005). In terms of corporate goal, shareholder theorists capture that shareholder value and stakeholder interest conflict especially when a firm involves in social responsibility issues (Jensen, 2002).

Given that such interest on tensions is widely embedded and shared in the field of organization study, it is not surprising that a body of ground-breaking organizational theories has been conceptualized and developed by exploring the tensions. The theories can include ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), corporate shared value (CSV) (Porter & Kramer, 2011), hybridization (Battilana & Lee, 2014), duality (Ashforth & Reingen 2014), paradox (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and dialectic (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Highlighting the nature of business and society relationship, Margolis and Walsh (2003: 280) even suggest that “social and economic tension should serve as a starting point for new theory and research.”

An overarching theme of this dissertation engages in the body of scholarship. Specifically, the three essays of the dissertation join a particular literature that deal with organizational tensions: (1) paradox (essay 1), (2) history (essay 2), and (3) resilience (essay 3). Although these literature investigate different types of tensions with different theoretical homes and levels of analysis, a common thread of the literature suggests that managing tensions implies managing dilemma, the dilemma that an organization faces in balancing two elements of contradiction. As a meta-theory, paradox suggests that two contradictory elements of dilemma can be kept in an organizational system rather than being removed and integrated (Fairhurst, Smith, Banghart, Lewis, Putnam, Raisch, & Schad, 2016); history literature suggest that an organizational leader
strategically use organizational tradition to facilitate change (i.e., history as an asset to change), yet the literature also recognize that the tradition structurally inhibits change (i.e., history as a burden to change) (Sudday & Foster, 2017); and resilience lens offers a fresh idea of organizational adaptation that a resilient organizational system can adapt to external environment while simultaneously protecting its core function and identity i.e., resilient (Holling, 1973). The resilience theory also posits a system’s level tension: that is, adaption to external environment (i.e., system change) conflicts protecting organization’s core function and identity (i.e., system stability) (Lengnick-Hall, Beck, & Lengnick-Hall, 2011).

In this dissertation, I am interested in extending these theories by deeply immersing myself into the tensions that Buddhist monks must address in their everyday organizational life. The tensions, I found and focused on, are the tensions of (1) finance versus religion (Essay 1 based on paradox lens), (2) change versus tradition (Essay 2 based on history literature), and (3) adaptation versus stability (Essay 3 based on resilience theory). The questions I aim to answer are stated below.

- Essay 1: How do Buddhist temple members manage the tensions in their everyday life?  
  - A focus on empirical phenomenon: the tension between finance and religion
- Essay 2: How do Buddhists organizational leaders facilitate organizational change?  
  - A focus on empirical phenomenon: the tension between change and tradition
- Essay 3: By what mechanisms and processes do Buddhists temples manage their resilience?  
  - A focus on empirical phenomenon: the tension between adaptation and stability

In the following, I sketch the three essays and their theoretical positioning in each literature. Details about the fieldwork and empirical work are provided in ‘Overview of the fieldwork’ section (p. 14 – p. 21). Technical details about the methods are also provided in each essay’s
1.2. Overview of the three essays

The first essay. Drawing upon organizational paradox theory, my first essay addresses how Buddhist monks deal with tension between organization’s financial sustainability (simply finance) and traditional meditative practice (simply religion). Whereas tensions have been considered as something managers must eliminate or at least mitigate in the previous studies, paradox studies have highlighted the value of seemingly contradictory tensions (Simith & Lewis, 2011). Paradox scholars suggest that some tensions need not to be reduced, eliminated, or reconciled (Smith & Lewis, 2011). They argue that the tensions themselves can create positive synergy and stimulate creativity (Putnam et al., 2016). The idea fundamentally shifts a research paradigm of tension management since it turned scholars’ attention to a new research question of how to keep tensions from a traditional paradigm of how to remove or reconcile tensions. Smith and Lewis (2011: 383) observe that seemingly conflicting elements of tensions are “contradictory yet interrelated” which can “exist simultaneously and persist over time.” A compelling question, here, is how organizational actors make the tensions persistent in a way that two contradicting elements can create synergy. In a sense, organizational scholars began to study use of tensions, rather than its removal mechanism.

The existing paradox studies tend to anchor on the organizational, or macro, level of analysis to reveal structural mechanism of handling paradoxical tensions (Schad et al., 2016). For example, studies on the tension between exploitation and exploration reported that organizations balance the tension by, first, separating departments, units, domains, or times that are designed to be dedicated to either exploitation or exploration and then coordinating them at a corporate level (Lavie, Stettner, & Tushman, 2010). Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) focused on a certain organizational context that encourages managers to divide their tasks and time between
exploitation and exploration. These findings showed how organizational variables, including structure, system, and context, determined a paradoxical interplay of exploitation and exploration. Other examples of structural mechanisms include a hybrid between the logic of care and the logic of science in medical schools (Dunn & Jones, 2010), Western and Eastern management systems at Samsung (Khanna, Song, & Lee, 2011), and dual headquarter systems that focus on Europe and Asia simultaneously (Birkinshaw, 2016).

Despite the previous works that show structural mechanism of handling tensions paradoxically, these past works seem to have overlooked individual-level cognitions. This omission is surprising because individuals experience “tensions, defined as stress, anxiety, discomfort, or tightness in making choices … Organizational actors see, feel, cognitively process, and even communicate about tensions as they experience them” (Putnam et al., 2016: 68). If individuals do not perceive tensions or perceive tensions negatively, then the organization will be structured accordingly. Understanding individual-level cognitions may then help explain the organizational structures that individuals create.

My first essay aims to fill this gap – the omission of individual level paradox – by showing how individuals deal with tensions in their everyday organizational life and how their cognitive tactic at an individual level is related to organizational-structural level paradox. To deeply understand Buddhist monks’ cognitive tactic to deal with tensions, I stayed in one of the most traditional Korean temples (K-temple hereafter) from May 1 to July 31, 2015 and conducted an ethnographic fieldwork.

The second essay. My second essay examines a role of history in legitimizing organizational changes. Classic organization studies suggest that a long organizational history makes change difficult and slower (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). A central thesis of population
ecology, for example, conceptualizes the past as a macro normative force, which reinforces mindless adherence to founding conditions. From a micro perspective, Kimberly and Bouchikhi (1995) showed that founder-based imprinting can be a persistent organizational legacy. Founders’ visions and decision making styles are used as templates for current strategy formation; adhering to past leaders’ ideas provides a sense of security and establishes legitimacy, thereby maintaining the status quo (Kimberly & Bouchikhi, 1995). In a similar vein, Miller (1992) found that firms with successful ex-leaders tend to focus on the “glory days” of the past and seldom try to innovate. In the literature, scholars conceptualize history as an exogenous variable, fixed entity or given context that leads to a specific organizational outcome in a linear fashion. Such an assumption considers the past to be something managers cannot control.

Recently, history scholars have taken a different epistemological perspective on temporality embedded in organizational history study, defined as “the ongoing relationships between past, present, and future” (Schultz & Hernes, 2013: 1). A growing body of literature suggests that the linearity assumption cannot capture “the role of managerial agency in shaping and representing history” (Foster, Suddaby, Minkus & Wiebe, 2011: 104). Ocasio, Mauskapf, and Steele (2016: 681) pointed out that “history is messy and non-linear…not least because memories vary widely in their interpretation and deployment, both over time and across peoples.” A set of empirical studies revealed that history can help infuse institutional change with legitimacy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), create an enduring organizational identity (Anteby & Molnar, 2012) and even become a source of competitive advantage (Suddaby et al., 2010). To study the past as a living archive in a managerial setting, these scholars argue that history should be understood as an “important symbolic resource in its own right” (Suddaby et al., 2010: 149). From this perspective, the research unit changes from past events to actors’ interpretations of past events.
This turn enables organization researchers to connect rhetoric and history in an organizational setting. Here, history is used as a source of narratives. For example, rhetorical history, defined as “the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm” (Suddaby et al., 2010: 157), can be a particular form of rhetorical strategy that managers can deliberately use as a rhetorical resource.

On the other hand, collective memory literature also report that skillful managers reconstruct collective memories of the past to imbue their decisions with symbolic meanings (Boje, 1991). Thus, a long history can be processed as a storytelling asset or narrative template to strengthen managers’ rhetorical content (Mena et al., 2016). Recently, firms have begun to build corporate museums and exhibit organizational artifacts (Clark, 1972). Corporate museums house tangible symbols of the past that can be translated rhetorically to core stakeholders. Rather than viewing history as a fixed entity or context, rhetorical history focuses on how actors rhetorically employ the past for their present purposes.

My second essay engages in this line of literature in which the past is conceptualized as a rhetorical asset, thereby challenging the idea that the past is a burden. The notion of rhetorical history offers a fresh lens for understanding the role of the past that contrasts sharply with the classic organizational literature.

Buddhist temple offers a useful empirical context for investigating this empirical phenomenon. In the essay, I specifically ask how an organizational leader uses historical stories to facilitate change, given that organizational members may have cognitive resistance to changes. Despite the longstanding effort to protect the tradition, the current societal changes including capitalism and urbanization enforce Buddhist temples to change, resulting in significant dilemma between change or not. From an organizational perspective, the long history can be either a
burden inhibiting change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984) or a narrative source facilitating change (Suddaby et al., 2010). In this context, unpacking a leader’s communicative ability or rhetorical strategy is a key to understand organizational change (Vaara, 2002).

To investigate a leader’s rhetorical strategy, I conducted a fieldwork in a Korean Buddhist temple (B-temple hereafter) in my stay in B-temple from January 1 to March 19, 2017 and conducted interview and survey to validate the inductive result.

The third essay. In the third essay, I focus on relationship between macro environmental changes and organizational response, drawing upon organizational resilience literature (Van Der Vegt, Essens, Wahlström, & George, 2015). Whereas the first and second essay examines individuals’ tactic or strategy to deal with tensions, a focus of this essay is organizational adaptation that allows organization to keep pace with changing environment and to protect its core function and identity simultaneously. Thus, this essay focuses tension of change and stability at an organizational level.

East Asia has experienced dramatic system changes such as colonization, dictatorship, democracy, radical economic development, technology and cultural change in the last five decades. Using this context, I aim to answer how Buddhist temples adapt to such changes, given that their tradition – conventional monastic life and strict meditation practice – often prohibits organizational change and innovation.

Systems root of organizational resilience suggests that an organization can be resilient if it keeps essential function, identity and practice while undergoing adaptation to changing macro environment. Systems science attempts to represent the complex, interconnected relationships among individual phenomena, rather than the direct, limited relationships between phenomena as measured by a set of variables (Holling, 2001). To reveal the whole system’s structure and
adaptive dynamics, systems science takes a holistic approach and suggests that systems are connected to other systems and layered within systems (Holling, 2001). Scholars have long indicated that a system can operate with some degree of order and stability, even though the systems elements appear to behave chaotically and unpredictably. The system can even adapt and self-organize in ways that individual elements cannot. Therefore, systems scholars often zoom out their lens to understand the whole system, rather than focus on its individual parts.

Drawing upon the system science lens, resilience scholars investigate system resilience defined as “the ability of systems to absorb and recover from shocks, while transforming their structures and means for functioning in the face of long-term stresses, change, and uncertainty” (Van Der Vegt et al. 2015: 972). They claim that systems can only be resilient if organizations would protect their core function and identity while changing some of their practice, function or even organizational rules to keep pace with the changing environment.

A significant gap of the resilience study is the lack of process view. Although the roots of organizational resilience theory is anchored to systems theory that examines a process of how a system self-adapts to external environmental changes, there are only scant studies that show the process. This essay uses ethnographic field data from three Korean Buddhist temples that I stayed over the multiple research periods: K-temple from 2015 May 1 to July 31, H-temple from 2016 November 1 to December 28, and B-temple from 2017 January 1 to March 19.

In this essay, I will also discuss an important critic about resilience theory. That is, some scholars point out that an adaptive mechanism of natural system (e.g., ecological system) differs from that of human social system (e.g., organizational system). They offer several reasons (e.g., Davidson, 2010; Olsson et al., 2015). I take one of the most important critics, which is human agency embedded in a system. Due to the agency, a human organizational system may evolve
differently from biological or engineering system. Power, politics, conflict and belief system are those that organizational actors create and recreate to change organizational ideology, structure and goal (Olsson et al., 2015). Some of mechanisms from human agency may prevent or enhance efficient and effective resource distribution and interconnectivity among system’s subparts. In the fieldwork and data analysis afterwards, I carefully examine this role of human agency in the process of system’s evolution, by taking the systems scholars’ critics more explicitly.

1.3. Overview of the fieldwork

At the early stage of my doctoral program, my primary research area lied at the intersection of corporate sustainability and Buddhist philosophy. I have long believed that business has the potential to resolve some of world-challenging problems such as poverty, climate change, and financial crises, but can equally exacerbate these problems. Thinkers and practitioners have claimed that business schools should provide completely new ideas and perspectives to resolve these problems. To me, Buddhist philosophy represents such a new idea, whose theory has allowed me to deepen my understanding of our economic, social, and ecological sustainability. Thus, my early interest in Buddhism and Buddhist monastic life was a theoretical one rather than an empirical one: in short, my motivation of this fieldwork was to understand potential intellectual relationship between Buddhism and sustainable development by living with Buddhist monks and learning Buddhist philosophy in a temple.

However, as I deeply immersed myself into the monastic life, I found that Buddhist monks’ organizational life, not necessarily their philosophy, seems to be also interesting and potentially make a contribution to a wide array of organization study. Buddhist monks experience various tensions in their everyday monastic life between their personal identity and vocational identity that are related to the tension between finance and religion (Essay 1). And, their organization
also faces a significant organizational dilemma such as between change and tradition (Essay 2 and 3). Throughout this fieldwork, I was sympathetic about their tensions, and often I also discussed my tensions between academic life and monastic life. So, as I became deeply familiar with monastic life, I began to see the nature of tensions they experienced and further wanted to understand some mechanism of handling tensions at different levels of analysis.

As I analyzed the data from the fieldwork, my focus has then turned to the three types of tensions I aimed to examine here. In the following, I describe a Buddhist temple as empirical context for organization study. Then, I sketch my research sites.

**Buddhist temple as an empirical context.** Siddhārtha Gautama called Shakyamuni Buddha formed an ancient assembly of monks with his five disciples in Northern India. Although there is only scant evidence that Buddha formally leaded the assembly, it is believed that numerous monks and believers followed him, and Buddha himself developed early monastic rules and organized an ancient cooperative system to practice Buddhism (Swearer, 2010; Wijayaratna, 1990). After his decease, Buddhism spreads to Southern Asia including Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia and Northern Asia including China, Korea and Japan. While monastic rules and organizational structures become varied to adapt to those regions’ natural characteristics and existing culture, their common tradition, Buddhist way of meditation, has been passed onto contemporary generation of monks.

Over more than 2,000 decades of history, a contemporary Buddhist temple has now became a very unique type of social system or organization. The organization has its own historical identity while being simultaneously embedded in a broader community (the Buddhist society) that share a system of belief (Buddhism), but it is also integrated to a wider institutional system of secular society. This context now generates a crucial dilemma to Buddhist temple. In Buddhist
society, entering the Buddhist priesthood immediately and completely means throwing away secular desire or value, the act Buddhist monks call ‘the great renunciation.’ Therefore, Buddhist monks must be far away from secular society to keep their distinctive philosophical identity. However, Buddhist organizations cannot survive without financial and political support, which means that they must maintain a relationship with the secular society, thus creating a dilemma.

Over several decades, macro societal changes have made the dilemma even more challenging. The dilemma sometimes enforces Buddhist temples to decide change or not. To illustrate, the 1998 Asian financial crisis greatly decreased the number of tourists and visitors to Buddhist temples, which subsequently exacerbated financial conditions of the temples. Since then, strategic choice of Buddhist temples has been largely varied: some temples strictly stick to isolation policy to protect traditional monastic life, yet others choose to change by adopting capitalistic market system. For example, historic Chinese temples, Puotuoshan and Shaoline, even attempted an initial public opening (IPO) to stabilize financial sources of monastic life. From an organizational perspective, adherence to tradition implies resistance to change, and adoption of secular practices implies change and innovation yet likely involves in modifying organization’s traditional identity, which even arouses moral controversy and social discomfort. It is not surprising that Buddhist Association of China declared “going public [IPO] in the name of faith is the sorrow of all society.” Thus, the tension that contemporary Buddhist temples face leads to the dilemma: keep the tradition or change the tradition to adapt to the environment even though societal disapproval and moral controversy. Overall, such context offers an useful context to investigate various tensions longstanding organizations typically face.

Fieldwork process. Among Buddhist temples in other regions, Korean Buddhist temples offer particularly useful empirical condition for this dissertation. Korea is religiously and
politically not a Buddhist country, which means that Korean Buddhist temples must rely on external donation or run their own business to sustain their organization. A radical economic downturn can be, therefore, significant for financial sustainability of Buddhist temples. There would be much pressure on financial viability, compared to other Buddhist temples in Asia including Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka where Buddhism and Buddhist culture are deeply rooted in secular society and considered as a national religion.

I conducted multiple rounds of ethnographic fieldwork in three Korean Buddhist temples (K-temple, H-temple, and B-temple) for this dissertation. The three temples are all registered with Jo-Gye Order of Korean Buddhism. In 2016, 92% of Korean Buddhist temples were registered with the Jo-Gye Order. The case temples are especially important in Korean history as well as Buddhist society because they are all historical ‘Chong-Lim’ temples of Jo-Gye Order. To be a ‘Chong-Lim’ temple, a temple must offer: (a) a systematic education program; (b) an independent monastery; and (c) a specialized graduate school for researching Buddhist ethics and monastic rules. Only eight temples are granted ‘Chong-Lim’ among approximately 900 registered Jo-Gye-Order temples in 2015. I stayed in three temples over the research period: K-temple from 2015 May 1 to July 31, H-temple from 2016 November 1 to December 28, and B-temple from 2017 January 1 to March 19. As I found a theoretical theme for each essay, I returned to the temples to validate our findings and collect new data.

Specifically, the first essay (paradox) is based on data from K-temple, the second essay (history) uses data from B-temple, and the third essay (resilience) relies on all the data from the three temples. Table 1 overviews some of information of the temples and dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Overview of the three temples and dataset</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overarching theme in dissertation: organizational tensions Buddhist temples are facing</td>
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<td>Research site</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Site descriptions</strong></td>
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<td>Founding year</td>
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<td>Population base within 50km</td>
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<td>Mountain height</td>
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<td># of Buddha's halls</td>
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<td># of monks ordained</td>
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<td># of regular employees</td>
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<td><strong>Data use</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Main fieldwork period</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Main activity</strong></td>
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<td>Ethnographer’s Role</td>
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<td>Chanting</td>
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<td>Meditation</td>
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<td>Monastic rule</td>
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<td><strong>Meditation progress diary</strong></td>
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<td>Senior monks’ diary</td>
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<td>Student monks’ diary</td>
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<td>Apprentice monks’ diary (note)</td>
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<td><strong>Formal interview</strong></td>
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<td>a Master Monk</td>
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<td>Senior Monks</td>
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<td>Junior Monks</td>
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<td>Employees</td>
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<td>Volunteers</td>
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<td><strong>Survey check-list data sample</strong></td>
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<td>a Master Monk</td>
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<td>Senior Monks</td>
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<td>Junior Monks</td>
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<td><strong>Other data</strong></td>
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Gaining research access to Buddhist temples is generally very difficult. I overcame this challenge by contacting a monk-professor, who had also meditated for over 10 years. The monk-professor introduced the ethnographer to several temples, most of which refused access. K-Temple that I visited first for this dissertation was different. Its external committee discussed the monk-professor’s request four times, finally permitting access for three months, providing I
participated in morning and evening worship. After my first monastic life in K-temple, I then moved other temples with K-temple monks’ recommendation.

This study is essentially an inductive-ethnographic study that iterates data and theory to build a grounded theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967). In ethnographic fieldwork, Bechky (2011: 1162) suggested that researchers need to “engage in direct encounters with organizations by watching how people do, what they do, and listening to what they say about what they do.” In this spirit, I shadowed monks’ life on a daily basis, listening to their voice directly to get much closer to Buddhist monks’ monastic life. Methodological details including data and the analysis process are described in each essay’s methods section.

1.4. Dissertation structure

This dissertation is structured and formatted following the Integrated-Article specifications of Western University’s School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The dissertation comprises five chapters, including the introduction (this chapter). The second chapter is Essay 1 that investigates K-temple’s tension between finance and religion, drawing upon paradox theory. The third chapter is Essay 2 that examines how a B-temple Master Monk uses history to facilitate changes, given that B-temple faces the tension between change and tradition. The fourth chapter is Essay 3 that aims to show a resilient process of K-, B-, and H-temple by exploring their chameleon-alike capability to protect organization’s core identity while changing itself to adapt to environment. In each essay, I provide independent introduction, method, findings, and discussion section. But, tables and figures are numbered continuously through the dissertation. I conclude this dissertation in the fifth chapter.

The first and second essay are structured and written in a manner that aids peer-reviewed academic journal publication. The third essay is also written potentially for the future submission.
The first essay has been submitted to academic journal as co-authored paper. Therefore, I use “we” and “our” rather than “I” and “my.” Given this structure, empirical data, and theme across the three essays, some repetition is unavoidable and often necessary. However, I minimize the extent. Table 2 summarizes the overview of each essay.

<table>
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<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>A multi-level exploration of paradox in a Buddhist temple</td>
<td>Historical narratives as a change facilitator in a Buddhist temple</td>
<td>Self-adaptive process as resilience: An ethnography of Buddhist temples</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research question</strong></td>
<td>How do Buddhist temple members manage the tensions in their everyday life?</td>
<td>How do Buddhists organizational leaders facilitate organizational change?</td>
<td>By what mechanisms and processes do Buddhists temples manage their resilience?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical background</strong></td>
<td>Paradox, Managerial cognition</td>
<td>Organizational history, Organizational narrative</td>
<td>System resilience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Ethnography (K-temple)</td>
<td>Ethnography and narrative analysis (B-temple)</td>
<td>Ethnography (K-, B-, and H-temple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of analysis</strong></td>
<td>Individual and organizational level (multi-level)</td>
<td>Individual level</td>
<td>Organizational level</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Multi-level approach to paradox theory: how individual level paradox (cognition) is related to organizational level paradox (structure)</td>
<td>History as a rhetorical asset that used to facilitate organizational change rather than as a burden to change: developing historical toolkit concept</td>
<td>Process of organizational resilience: developing the concept of pushing and pulling mechanism</td>
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1.5. References


**CHAPTER 2: A MUTI-LEVEL EXPLORATION OF PARADOX IN A BUDDHIST**
TEMPLE

2.1. Introduction

Seventeen senior monks in gray robes sat cross-legged in a circle at K-Temple (pseudonym) to plan the upcoming lantern festival in celebration of Buddha’s birthday. For the festival, visitors pay a fee to light a lantern, which they believe brings good wishes to friends and family. This festival provides an opportunity for the temple to connect with the community and fundraise. But, the planning was contentious. Monk S wanted to offer tea and coffee and to “treat visitors as valuable customers,” but Monk Y worried that “if we build a coffee shop and hold a music concert, visitors might doubt that this is a Buddhist monastery … the origin of Seon meditation.”

Seon meditation requires Buddhist monks to separate themselves from financial matters, including following the basic monastic rule. “Do not buy and sell” (Keown, 1991, p. 26). But, the central government and wealthy Buddhist believers were withdrawing financial support from Korean temples, which was creating financial pressures and conflicting with the principles of monastic rules. Thus, in Buddhist monastic organizational life, business activity and religious practice created tensions: the temple must meet the financial day-to-day needs of the residing monks, but traditional religious tenets and rules prohibit the handling of money.

Managing these sorts of tensions has become a central area of study in organizational research. Such tensions include the pursuit of exploration and exploitation (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009), economic profit and social mission (Margolis and Walsh, 2003), competition and cooperation (Chen, 2008), short-term and long-term goals (Slawinski and Bansal, 2015) and globalization and localization (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989). Whereas these tensions had at one time been considered a source of conflict that needs to be mitigated or removed, some scholars
are taking a paradox approach that offers a different perspective to tensions (For reviews: Putnam et al., 2016; Rothman et al., 2016). A paradox proposes that two seemingly contradictory yet interrelated elements of a tension can “exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith and Lewis, 2011, p. 382). Rather than searching for integration mechanisms of two elements of tensions, paradox scholars examine how tensions can persist in organizations. This research program is in stark contrast to the more mainstream conflict-oriented approach to tensions.

Much of the paradox literature shows how organizations can keep both sides of the tension alive within organizations. Scholars suggest that tensions should be separated by organizational structures, so that the tensions are paradoxically held in balance over time (e.g. Smith et al., 2013; Battilana and Lee, 2014). Once two elements of tensions are clearly separated, managers are then able to see how the two elements can be interconnected and interdependent.

However, these studies focus on organizational-structural mechanisms, which inadvertently neglect the multiple levels of paradox. In other words, this prior literature does not address how organizational members handle tensions in their everyday organizational life and how their cognitive ability to accommodate the tensions can affect the organization’s ability to maintain the tension. This omission is surprising because individuals experience “tensions, defined as stress, anxiety, discomfort, or tightness in making choices … Organizational actors see, feel, cognitively process, and even communicate about tensions as they experience them” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 68). Individuals need to perceive or cognize tensions in order for the organization to be structured accordingly.

Such multi-level theorizing may be important in helping to explain a significant puzzle in the existing paradox literature that focuses exclusively on organizational-structural mechanism of handling tensions. Ashforth and Reingen’s study (2014), for example, highlights the tensions
between moral idealists and financial pragmatists, which enabled a natural food cooperative to facilitate hybrid organizing. However, such strong group identities lead to organizational failure in Battilana and Dorado’s (2010) comparative case study of a microfinance organization. These two studies seemingly contradict each other: subgroup identities are generative in one setting and dysfunctional in another.

Rather than exploring organizational contexts, structures, or systems, we posit that key organizational members’ lived experiences in handling tensions contribute to the variance at the organizational level paradox. While some managers might be willing to embrace the tension in their everyday organizational life, others might not be able to do so or simply avoid the tension. If key organizational members cannot see the paradox in tensions, their organization would fail to handle tensions paradoxically. In this sense, a role of key organizational members can be significant in keeping paradox at an organizational level.

My fieldwork is based on an ethnographic study in a Korean Buddhist temple, which confronts the explicit tension between the need for money to pay for basic operations and the sacred value that prevents handling money. In the early fieldwork process, we were initially interested in answering how a Buddhist temple deals with the tensions of meeting financial obligations, when the organizations’ historically embedded aims conflict directly with handling finances. As we increasingly built trust with monks and unpacked this question, the individual-level question emerged: How do organizational members cognitively or emotionally manage the tensions in their everyday organizational life? That is, we were interested in how paradoxical tensions were manifested to both organizational-structural and individual-cognitive level.

We found that a set of K-Temple monks’ cognitive tactics plays significant role in ensuring the tensions to be paradoxical at an organizational level and that their mindset is also paradoxical
in keeping their dual role and dual identity. We, therefore, saturated the final theoretical insights at two different levels of analysis – the organizational and individual. We hope our findings not only help to frame past organization-level literature, but also help to fill in the whitespace at the individual-cognitive level of paradox.

2.2. Paradox in an organizational context

A paradox perspective offers a holistic, systematic, and dynamic worldview of tensions, which is often missing in analytical, causal, and linear thinking (Chen, 2008; Li, 1998; Smith and Lewis, 2011). A paradox perspective posits that individual elements that appear to operate independently can actually be tightly interconnected and co-evolve interdependently (Li, 2016). Two ancient Chinese philosophers, Laozi and Zhuangzi, found that the world consists of numerous sets of contradicting forces, often represented through the well-known symbol of yin and yang (Fang 2012; Peng and Nisbett, 1999). For example, darkness has meaning relative only to light, and these opposite forces feed living organisms’ bio-systems and even entire ecosystems (Li, 2012, 2014). From the yin and yang perspective, the contradicting elements “actually inform and define one another, tied in a web of eternal mutuality” (Schad et al., 2016, p. 6).

A careful read of the paradox thesis suggests that tensions such as yin and yang are predefined. Laozi and Zhuangzi separated yin and yang to realize their interplay (Fang 2012). Although yin and yang are tightly interconnected and interdependent, they must not be mixed or blurred so that their identity and function can be kept intact, engendering persistent tensions (Smith and Lewis, 2011). Keeping yin and yang distinctive reflects the central difference between a paradox perspective and dialectical thinking. In dialectical thinking, the thesis and antithesis must be integrated to generate a new thesis, and the new thesis is again integrated with a newly emerging antithesis. In summarizing the dialectical process, Peng and Nisbett (1999, p.
742) wrote that “its rational foundation is still the law of noncontradiction, so that a satisfactory solution to contradiction is a noncontradictory one.” Thus, the periodic integration is a source of evolution in dialectical thinking, whereas the persistent contradiction is a source of evolution in paradoxical thinking.

The central thesis of paradox has provided organization scholars with a fresh idea of understanding organizational tensions (Lewis, 2000; Poole and Van de Ven, 1989), but few studies examined both the organizational and individual level of analysis simultaneously. In their 25-year review of organizational paradox, Schad et al. (2016) show that most paradox studies tend to anchor solely on the organizational or macro level of analysis. Indeed, paradox scholars have primarily focused on the organizational structural mechanisms of handling tensions (Schad et al., 2016). Studies of the classic tension between exploitation and exploration reported that organizations structurally balance the tension by, first, separating the elements of tensions by department, unit, domain, or over time and then, second, coordinating them at a corporate level (Lavie et al., 2010). Successful managers recognize the contradicting elements of the tension and then separate the activities to see the interconnections among the activities by “shifting levels of analysis to identify potential linkage” (Smith and Tushman 2005, p. 527).

Other examples of structural mechanisms include hybrid logics, such as that between the logic of care and the logic of science in medical schools (Dunn and Jones, 2010), Western and Eastern management systems at Samsung (Khanna et al., 2011), and dual headquarters systems that focus on Europe and Asia simultaneously (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). These studies demonstrated that the tensions within an organization should be structurally separated at lower hierarchical levels in the organization, but linkages among the elements can be identified in organizational roles, identities, functions, and strategies at higher levels in the organizational
Recent inductive case studies dig even deeper into the social mechanisms that enable the reconciliation of these tensions. Battilana et al. (2015: 1658) found that organizations establish “spaces of negotiation” that enable two conflicting groups to freely discuss tensions and recognize the trade-offs embedded in tensions; Pache and Santos (2013: 986) illustrated “a selective coupling strategy” to choose among a pool of alternatives, which they argued is more effective than decoupling alternatives or compromising among them; Ashforth and Reingen (2014: 499) showed that “oscillating decisions and actions” helps avoid unsolvable conflicts among tensions; and Battilana and Dorado (2010: 1420) found that “common organizational identity” helped to avoid strong subgroup identities among people and reduce the tensions.

Although these studies focused more on people and their strategies to manage tensions, they abstracted away from key individuals’ role in creating, ensuring and maintaining tensions at an organizational level and more importantly their emotions and cognitions. In a sense, we still do not know lived experience of paradox in one’s organizational life and how it affects organizational system.

This omission is surprising because it is the individual who experiences tensions in an organization (Putnam et al., 2016). The concept of paradox is often described as a cognitively constructed concept (Hahn et al. 2014; Schad and Bansal, 2018). The managerial cognition literature has long suggested that managers make decisions neither in a complete vacuum nor with full information (Stubbart 1989). Managers develop a set of cognitive mental templates to make a decision (Walsh 1995). Some paradox scholars actually propose that paradoxes are constructed in one’s mind with the emergence of the mental templates (Miron-Spektor et al. 2018, Sharma and Bansal 2017). Since individuals differ in their mental representation of the
world (Walsh 1995), managers’ cognitive tactics or mindsets of tensions are also likely to differ. In this regard, Schad et al. (2016: 27) pointed out that “paradoxical tensions can spark myriad responses, potentially constructive or destructive.” Since we do not know individuals’ myriad responses to tensions, there remains a theoretical whitespace at across levels of analysis, which can help explain the organizational structures that individuals create.

We posit that digging deeper into the key individuals’ cognitions in paradoxical organizing can reconcile different findings in the literature. To illustrate, we compare two ethnographic studies that reported different results. Ashforth and Reingen (2014) found that members of a natural food cooperative tended to be either preferred moral idealism, or pragmatists who preferred financial viability. The study demonstrated that this duality “was kept continuously in play over time through oscillating decisions and actions” (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014: 474). This zig-zagging in decisions maintained the tension in the organization and permitted each group to keep its identity and functional role. Hence, the two groups did not mix their own belief systems and values with the other’s belief systems and values. In this case, the organizational tension was maintained over time.

Battilana and Dorado (2010) found different results in their comparative case study. They found that a microfinance organization, Los Andes, successfully hybridized a traditional banking logic and social mission logic when organizational members formed a common identity that struck a balance between logics, which prevented the formation of competing subgroup identities. The other microfinance organization, BancoSol, which was unsuccessful, was unable to hybridize both logics. The authors argued that the emergence of subgroup identities “may exacerbate tensions between logics, thereby making their combination untenable” (Battilana and Dorado, 2010: 1420). Thus, the tension is solved by common socialization practices designed to
promote the same organizational identity.

Strong subgroup identities with the oscillating decision-making processes worked for Ashforth and Reingen’s (2014) study, but exacerbated the ability to hybridize logics in Battilana and Dorado’s (2010) study. This puzzle can be at least partly resolved by unpacking the cognitive tactics used by individuals to deal with tensions. Some organizational members might realize the potential positive synergy from subgroup tensions whereas others do not. Presumably, individual emotions and cognitions are significant to understanding the individual level paradox that can illuminate the management of paradoxes at the organizational level.

At least part of the focus on organizational-structural level paradox may be because of the availability of data. Organizational structures, logics, culture, activities, and decision-making processes can be observed by researchers whereas an individual-level cognitions and emotions are more difficult to observe. To overcome the challenges, we undertook participant ethnographic research, which allowed us to see and experience the tensions at both the organizational and individual levels of analysis. Our empirical setting is a Buddhist temple in Korea that was confronting deep tensions between its religious mandates and its financial sustainability. We experienced quite a journey in our research program, as our quest to understand the organizational tensions described by previous researchers led us to even more profound insights into the monks’ worldview. We, thus, went up and down the levels of analyses from the structures of the temple to the individual monk’s cognition. This repeated cycling of up and down helped us to better understand our uncommon empirical setting and contribute to prior theory on paradoxical tensions.

2.3. Methods
Buddhist temple as an empirical context

A Buddhist temple is a unique organizational system that has its own historical identity while being simultaneously embedded in a broader socio-political environment. People entering the Buddhist priesthood must immediately and completely abandon their secular desires and values for what Buddhist monks call ‘the great renunciation’. Buddhist monks, for this reason, must distance themselves from even basic financial transactions, yet Buddhist temples must ensure their financial viability simply to survive. Korean Buddhist temples have been particularly exposed to this tension with the rise of mid-20th century capitalism in East Asia and the secularism in South Korea, which led to the withdrawal of financial support from the Korean government and from civil society donations. These financial pressures were exacerbated by the belief held by Korean society that Buddhist monks are ascetic and should not engage in revenue-generating activities.

To gain research access to a Korean Buddhist temple, we contacted a monk-professor who introduced us to people at several temples. Most temples do not welcome outsiders, but we were fortunate that one temple, K-Temple, permitted us access after the monks there discussed the monk-professor’s request four times.

K-Temple is one of the largest, most historical temples in Korea. It was established approximately 1,300 years ago and has achieved Chong-Lim status, which the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism grants to only a few temples that provide the following: 1) a four- or five-year program for educating and ordaining student monks; 2) a monastery for Seon meditation, and 3) a specialized graduate school for studying Buddhist precepts. Chong-Lim status is highly regarded in Korean Buddhist society and beyond because of its strict ordainment, systematic education, and long history. Among 940 registered Korean temples in 2013, only eight have
achieved Chong-Lim status and are referred to as Korea’s eight great temples. K-Temple is especially important in Korean Buddhist history because it is believed to be the origin of Korean Seon Buddhism where Korean monks aspire to meditate at least once in their lifetime.

**Research process**

The empirical work was conducted in two stages: the major fieldwork from May 1 to July 31, 2015 (Stage 1) and subsequent visits that involved additional interviews and group discussions in July 2016, January 2017, September 2017, March 2018, and November 2018 (Stage 2). In Stage 1, the ethnographer (first author) engaged in full-time participant observations at K-Temple, living with K-Temple monks. At first, the ethnographer observed the elements of paradoxical organizing, such as the organizational chart, subgroup identities and the recruiting system, which represented K-Temple’s structural and strategic responses to tensions (e.g., Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Jay, 2013; Smith et al., 2013). Over time, the research focus moved to individuals’ cognitive aspects of the tensions because of the close relationships with key organizational members handling tensions in their organizational life. The closer the ethnographer approached the monks’ lives, the better he grasped the relationship between organizational structure and strategy and individual cognitions. Bechky (2011, p. 1162) suggested that researchers need to “engage in direct encounters with organizations by watching how people do, what they do, and listening to what they say about what they do.” In this spirit, the ethnographer shadowed monks daily, listening to their voices directly, and experienced the personal and organizational tensions in managing K-Temple and Buddhist morality.

In Stage 2, the ethnographer returned to K-Temple five times to validate and deepen the emerging insights throughout the development of this paper. In this stage, he stayed temporarily
and conducted in-depth discussions with key informants again. These return visits generated wider interest in the ethnographer’s work among monks, which opened up several group conversations.

**Data sources**

**Participant observation.** The ethnographer immersed himself into the monks’ daily life, deep in the mountains to fully understand Buddhist monastic life. Although he did not need to shave his head, he wore the humble cotton cloth of monks, signalling to visitors and senior monks that he was staying at K-Temple as a semi-fellow monk. On the first day of May, the ethnographer met Monk S and Monk H who were his key informants and hosts during his visit. After a brief conversation, Monk S and Monk H showed the ethnographer to a small room where he was to sleep during his three-month visit.

In the first month, the ethnographer mainly worked with Monk S who was a disciple of Master Monk B. Monk S was the chief finance monk, responsible for finance and internal coordination. The ethnographer worked closely with Monk S, helping him with daily tasks, ranging from trivial physical labor to Korean–English translation. The ethnographer also joined Monk S during his meetings with important government agents and business partners. In the second month, the ethnographer spent the most amount of time with Monk H who had completed his law degree at one of Korea’s top universities. Monk H was responsible for public relations and scholarly work, mainly communicating with non-financial stakeholders. He generously offered to meet the ethnographer every morning during tea time. They discussed a variety of topics, including temple management, Buddhism, business, philosophy, art, and their personal lives. In the third month, Monk S and Monk H introduced the ethnographer to other senior monks and helped to conduct interviews.
During the three months’ fieldwork, the ethnographer tried to shadow the daily life of Monk S, Monk H, and other monks. Every evening, he wrote his daily observations. Even after the fieldwork had concluded, Monk H and the ethnographer often corresponded through mail and phone calls. In this way, Monk H played an important bridging role in connecting our research team to K-Temple and, in doing so, generously supplemented the data. Table 3 provides a detailed list of activities in which the ethnographer engaged during his visit to K-Temple.

Table 3. The Ethnographer’s Main Activities at K-Temple, May to July 2015

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<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
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<tr>
<td>Join in public religious ceremony</td>
<td>Set up supplies in room</td>
<td>Talk about research and participate at monks’ committee meeting</td>
<td>Start to work with Monk S as a semi-fellow monk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about my tasks with Monk S</td>
<td>Set up public religious ceremony</td>
<td>First meeting with Master Monk B</td>
<td>Continue to work with Monks S, L, J, and E as a semi-fellow monk</td>
<td>Join the international Seon meditation conference in Seoul with K-Temple monks</td>
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<td>Work with Monks L and J in preparation for Buddha’s birthday</td>
<td>Work with various monks and Buddhist believers (volunteers) in and out of K-Temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with Monk S</td>
<td>Work with various monks and Buddhist believers (volunteers) who work in the administrative department in K-Temple</td>
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<td>Go to K-Temple support-opera</td>
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<td>Work with Monk U</td>
<td>Work with Monk D</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Relax</td>
<td>June. 1 Focused meditation period starts</td>
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<td>Work with Monks H and S and discuss my participation in K-Temple’s focused meditation period</td>
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<td>Participate in the focused meditation period and have opportunities to interview other K-Temple monks</td>
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<td>Participate in the focused meditation period and have opportunities to interview other K-Temple monks</td>
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<td>Stop meditation due to health concerns and co-author’s suggestion</td>
<td>Observe monks’ committee meeting and interview various monks</td>
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<td>Interview Master Monk B</td>
<td>Work with Monk H</td>
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<td>Work with Monks S, D, and W</td>
<td>July. 1 Discuss participating in Master Monk B’s meditation program at Seoul meditation center</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Travel to Seoul to participate in Master Monk B’s meditation program</td>
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30
Participate in the meditation program and meet senior K-Temple alumni monks who meditate, work, and preach in Seoul.

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<td></td>
<td>Relax</td>
<td>Work with Monk Q and G mainly out of K-Temple</td>
<td>Help Monk H prepare for ceremony</td>
<td>Work with Monk J and other monks and participate in monks’ committee meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work mainly with Monk J and participate in monks’ committee meeting</td>
<td>Meet two meditation monks</td>
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<td>Work with Monk S in and out of K-Temple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relax</td>
<td>Discuss research issues with Monks H, S, L, J, P, H, and prepare for leaving</td>
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**In-depth interviews.** The ethnographer conducted 19 formal interviews with monks and 7 with K-Temple employees. The monks were adverse to interviews, so the ethnographer needed to build a strong trusting relationship with anyone he interviewed. Most interviews were conducted in the monk’s room, where the ethnographer and monk made tea together, drank extremely slowly, washed teacups, and repeated this cycle again and again. They would often drink 10 to 15 small teacups of tea over a period of one to even six hours. The process of making tea permitted the opportunity to start a conversation; and after trust had been established, the interviews were often long and friendly. Most interviews were conducted in the second and third months of the fieldwork.

**Documents.** Documentary data played a crucial role in supplementing the observations and interviews. We used two types of archival documents. First, we collected K-Temple’s historical records. For displaying its cultural assets and records, K-Temple had set up its own museum, which was governed by an independent committee and involved a government cultural agency. With the help of the museum curator and Monk H, the ethnographer was granted access to K-Temple’s historical records during the research period. Second, we accessed all bimonthly magazines that K-Temple had published since 1999. These magazines highlighted the important issues occurring in K-Temple. The ethnographer often used this information to help guide
discussions among interviewees.

Analysis

We iterated between field data and existing theory to develop a grounded theory, following the anthropological tradition of ethnographic fieldwork (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Van Maanen, 2011). Throughout the three months of fieldwork, the ethnographer communicated with the second author every Tuesday through an Internet-enabled audio call. Prior to the call, he sent his daily notes to the second author and, during the call, the two co-authors discussed the content. The discussions permitted the two researchers to express their distinctive cultural and intellectual backgrounds, namely their Eastern and Western perspectives, emic and etic approaches, and philosophical and scientific scholarly orientations. Methodologically, such approaches allowed us to embrace insights from both direct and indirect observations (Harris, 1976; Morris et al., 1999).

In the analysis process, what first emerged from the field data was that K-Temple monks formed two strong subgroup roles (e.g., Ashforth and Reingen, 2014; Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Glynn, 2000), which we labelled as ‘business monks’ and ‘meditation monks’. The role separation enabled K-Temple to structurally and simultaneously deal with ‘business activity’ necessary to sustain daily organizational operations and ‘traditional meditative practice’ to keep K-Temple’s historical tradition and sacred. Briefly, business monks mainly worked for their organization (through business activity) whereas meditation monks mainly meditated in their organization (through meditation activity). We started to analyze the field data by comparing the two groups because each held different social realities and developed different philosophical mottos in their own approach to monastic life. Table 4 summarizes the group characteristics by: (1) organizational task, (2) living space, and (3) philosophical motto with the supporting
The next emerging theme we found was the individual-cognitive mechanism for handling tensions. To reveal individual cognitions, we focused deeply on the lived experience of Buddhist

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 4. Structural Separation of K-Temple</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Monks (BMs)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Task</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Observation Data</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs spend considerable time developing their specialty in a specific organizational function.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs are willing to learn from secular people in running an organization.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs closely work with volunteers and employees and build good relationship.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs use cellphones for work purposes.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Living Space</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Observation Data</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs welcome secular Buddhist believers in their living space.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs use their living place as an office where they greet business partners and local people.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs use a main entrance of K-Temple, which exposes them to secular people.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BMs eat at various places outside of the temple. They sometimes eat at secular restaurants.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Some BMs commute to other places, including orphanages and schools, which separate their living place from their workplace.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Some BMs have offices located outside of the temple for better access to other workplaces.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophical Motto</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Observation Data</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs tend to think of the Buddhist temple as a cultural hub for local people.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs do not meditate on a regular basis.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs offer tourist services to outside people.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs tend to participate in religious events together with secular Buddhist believers.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BMs sometimes give lectures to people from outside of the temple.</strong></td>
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monks experiencing tensions in their organizational life. Thus, many of the ethnographic records and conversations about Monk S and Monk H’s emotions and cognitions were categorized as monks’ psychological tactics to deal with the tension. They were those key organizational members who recognized the subgroup tensions and were willing to balance the two poles of tension. We read through and triangulated the observations and interviews to allow the patterns to emerge at this individual-cognitive level of paradox.

We note here that, in reporting our findings from individual-cognitive paradox, we often show entire dialogues between the monk and the ethnographer in an attempt to grasp implicit meanings from this uncommon research context and fully understand monks’ cognitions (e.g., Anteby 2013; Bamberger and Pratt 2010; Whiteman and Cooper, 2000, 2011). Doing so is useful in comprehending monks’ implicit intentions in conversations, particularly in the culture of Buddhist temples. Eisenhardt et al. (2016, p. 1119) note that “analyzing narratives involves a more holistic assessment of the data ... Identifying [meanings of narratives] becomes difficult if the researcher is too focused on coding smaller portions of text, and not broader patterns of meaning.” In our setting, it is difficult to reduce a vast array of empirical evidence to a set of axiomatic codes because smaller theoretical themes are often systematically interconnected (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). Ethnographic fieldwork stands on a long anthropological tradition of thick description, which motivates field researchers to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and holistically develop novel insights about complex socio-cultural phenomena (Van Maanen 2011). Our data presentation also takes the holistic approach—that is, we do not separate texts, conversations, and narratives into a set of axiomatic codings, but report them as they are in an effort to grasp their rich meanings.

In the Findings section, which follows this section, we show the data in three subsections: (1)
organizational-structural level: separation of roles, (2) individual-cognitive level: cognitive separation, and (3) multi-level paradox. In the first subsection, we describe the role separation that K-Temple developed in an attempt to manage the tensions between business and meditation. The role separation formed subgroup tensions between business monks and meditation monks. We found that a handful number of business monks, we called paradoxical monks, were balancing the subgroup tension. In the second subsection, we relate the stories of the paradoxical monks’ tensions. It is through the stories of the paradoxical monks that we can best describe their individual-cognitive mechanism of handling tensions. In the third section, we show how the organizational level paradox is interrelated to the individual level paradox.

2.4. Findings

Organizational-Structural Level: Separation of Roles

Our initial question was how a Buddhist temple deals with the tensions of meeting financial obligations, when the organizations’ historically embedded aims conflict directly with handling finances. The principal observation the ethnographer made in the first two weeks was the role separation between two sets of monks: the business monks and the meditation monks. Business monks completed the 12 functions needed to run K-Temple: (strategic) planning, finance, social engagement, internal training & education, internal administration, construction, public relations, general affairs, missionary work, religious law, culture, and museum. One business monk was in charge of each function together with several fellow business monks, often called secretary monks. Meditation monks, on the other hand, spent most of their time meditating and pursuing meditation-related research. We found that the clear role separation allowed K-temple to simultaneously seek profit and protect historical meditative tradition of K-temple. In the remainder of this subsection, we describe the separation between business monks and meditation
monks. We observed that the separation often created group tensions.

**Separation of organizational tasks.** The works and routines of the business monks at K-Temple were very similar to the works and routines of secular people in any organization. Each business monk was assigned specific tasks that required specialized skills. For example, Monk S learned to read basic accounting statements and manage cash flows, Monk J earned a basic architect license to manage ongoing construction work in the temple, and Monk G took several MBA courses at a local business school to learn strategic planning skills before he began working in the planning department. Monk K was responsible for protecting Buddhist precepts and handling any crimes related to monks, so he studied religious law, often with Monk H. Further, Master Monk B encouraged all business monks to develop strong communication skills by requiring them to participate in weekly Buddhist believers’ meetings. These monks were also tasked with listening to visitors’ personal problems or worries and offering helpful teachings from Buddha. Thus, business monks were technically monks who stayed on a mountain far from society, but they spent much time communicating with society and conducting various managerial tasks for the organization.

Business monks also collaborated with secular employees in administrative and management department in K-temple. Six older female Buddhist believers volunteered regularly in the administrative department, and 13 employees worked in the management department. Business monks described the role of the two departments through a metaphor. The administrative department played the mother’s role by greeting Buddhist believers, handling small construction jobs around the temple, receiving non-Buddhist visitors, and cooking for monks every day, collaborating with junior student monks. In doing so, many Buddhist volunteers occasionally visited and helped the employees in the administrative department. The management department
played a father’s role by developing the strategic plan and engaging in issues related to globalization, the religious law, and external stakeholders such as government agents and business partners. For some projects, the volunteers and employees of both departments worked together as a team.

Whereas most business monks’ activities were for the organization, the main activity of meditation monks was meditation. So, meditation monks were entirely free from any organizational roles and functions to sustain organizational operations. Meditation began in the early morning at 5:00 a.m. and finished at 7:00 p.m. In their daily meditation schedule, the monks had several breaks to relax and times allocated for chanting and walking. Monk S and Monk H enjoyed relating stories about K-Temple’s legendary meditation monks who had arrived at the temple as teenagers, and meditated each day until they died alone, deep in the mountains. Numerous monks from Korea traveled to meditate at the K-Temple. Since meditation required such focused concentration, senior meditation monks often preferred to live in independent hermitages in a much higher and deeper location in the mountain. After several years, they reached a point at which they would continue meditating for their remaining lifetime.

Such meditation work was grueling. The maximum number of hours that the ethnographer could meditate was eight hours because of pain in his legs, hips, and torso, despite several 10-minute breaks. Ordained monks could meditate for 18 hours after only four hours of sleep. In extreme cases, meditation monks could meditate for a week without sleep. Indeed, K-Temple hosted a specific weeklong period for non-sleep meditation, called brave forward meditation.

**Separation of living space.** The living arrangements of the business monks and meditation monks were physically separated (Figure 1), which meant the two groups rarely met in their daily life, except during religious ceremonies. Business monks spent most of their time meeting
visitors and preparing for religious ceremonies around the temple. They also spent much time outside the temple in Korea for lectures, religious events, and business meetings. For example, Monk W commuted regularly between K-Temple and a K-Temple-associated orphanage, which he directed. In this regard, K-Temple was often seen as a home for some of business monks, who commuted elsewhere to work.

Figure 1. Simplified Map of K-Temple

Note: The star indicates the ethnographer’s room. This map omits small Buddha’s halls and pagodas.
The meditation monks lived exclusively in the K-Temple monastery. Tourists were strictly prohibited to enter their spiritual space. Even senior business monks and student monks, regardless of rank, required special permission from Seon Master Monk N to enter the monastery. When meditation monks walked around the mountain, they used a small east entrance of the temple instead of the main entrance. They walked very early in the morning, so they were rarely observed. Their living area was separated and blocked from most spaces in the temple, making the monastery appear to be an island within the temple grounds.

Whereas the space of business monks’ activities was wide and diverse, within and outside the temple, the space of meditation monks’ activities was narrow and restricted. Although all monks wore the same gray robes and followed the same religious rules, the separation in living space pointed to two distinct subgroups. Based on this initial observation, the ethnographer investigated any philosophical mottos to uncover how they approached the tensions between business (the secular) and meditation (the sacred) surfaced in their daily organizational life.

**Separation of philosophical motto.** Business monks and meditation monks were distinct in their approach-to-life motto as a Buddhist monk and in the meaning of Buddhism to them and to society. Their life style, life goals, and attitudes toward society were so different that they were often incommensurable: business monks tended to put more value on active social engagement, modernization, and the globalization of Buddhism and to focus more on society than on their inner mind; meditation monks sought discipline to achieve higher religious enlightenment so that their attention was always toward the mind. A Monk E, a senior business monk, said:

**Monk E:** What is work? In old times, a Chan master Huai Hai preached that unless you work every day, don’t even think about eating today \[\text{(4)}\] ... In old days, farming was our work that sustained an entire temple. It has been just changed to do various businesses you see for a living ... If we forgot the importance of work, we would go back to Joseon Dynasty. We need to lead our temple to keep our history and continue to spread Buddha’s teaching.
A few days later, a senior student monk, who hoped to be a meditation monk, offered a different perspective of business monks:

**A senior student monk:** I think business monks play a supporting role. The core of K-Temple here is meditation monks. We are here to search for something, something ultimately valuable in our life, not to make a temple bigger and bigger.

The senior student monk was softly criticizing the growing tourism of Buddhist temples, which, in his opinion, was not the purpose of Buddhism. During Buddha’s birthday ceremony, the ethnographer overheard one of business monks saying about a group of meditation monks, “Look. How white those monks’ skin is!” A different business monk looked at the ethnographer, smiled, and said, “Look. We are almost tanned. What poor [business] monks we are!” Business monks would sometimes tease meditation monks because some of them thought meditation monks did not work and just sat around all day in meditation hall, whereas business monks would often be exhausted at the end of their labors, which could extend late into the night. In this regard, business monks viewed meditation monks as those who did not work at all for their organizational operations, yet they could still eat, which was opposed to Huai Hai’s teaching.

Business monks described their work as a different form of meditation. They focused on the outside world and society, calling it an open-door policy, whereas meditation monks concentrated on the inner world of their minds, preferring isolation. Business monks were aware of the importance of business for K-Temple’s survival while the sole ambition of meditation monks was to meditate for the rest of their life.

The application documents of potential student monks to K-Temple also revealed insights into the differences between the philosophies of the business monks and the meditation monks. Nine applicants were accepted in 2015. Six of nine applications showed the focus of business monks
by engaging actively with society; the other three applications focused more on personal liberalization. One application from the first group started with “people are suffering from agony, stress, hostility…,” whereas an application from the second group read, “I want to know myself …” A member of the second group that the ethnographer interviewed responded to his question “What is Buddhism?” with “It is an effort to liberalize my mind if that thing really exists.”

In K-temple, the tension between business activity and religious sacred was managed by the structural role separation. Business monks were responsible for all the organizational works by searching for new ways of procuring resources, developing long-term strategic visions and actively communicating with society. Their activity sustained daily operations of K-temple. On the other hand, meditation monks kept intact K-Temple’s religious sacred, Seon meditation, by completely concentrating on the practice. They were the organizational members who inherited the historical tradition of K-temple.

However, the role separation inadvertently led to the group tension. Our data show that business monks and meditation monks even developed different approaches to Buddhist philosophy and monastic life. But, we also found that despite the group tension, both needed each other for performing their tasks and achieving their goals at K-Temple. Whereas business monks offered steady daily supplies to meditation monks, meditation monks spiritually supported the business monks by affording the social legitimacy that allowed the business monks to perform business activities in society. Thus, although we saw the group tension surfacing at K-Temple, the tensions were paradoxical because one survived only at the presence of the other.

Here, a compelling question still remains: how did K-temple manages the group tension? Strong subgroup identities form group tension, which leads to organizational failure in hybridizing conflicting logics in Battilana and Dorado’s (2010) study while the group tension
between idealists and pragmatists ironically makes hybrid possible in Ashforth and Reingen’s (2014) study. What makes the group tension being negotiated, balanced, or integrated in K-temple? In other words, how do a key set of individuals address the tension and manage it in their own organizational life?

**Individual-Cognitive Level: Cognitive Separation**

Over time, the ethnographer started listening to voices among the individuals mainly from business monks because business monks were those who conducted all the organizational works going back and forth between the sacred world and secular world. Later in the fieldwork, we labeled them as *paradoxical business monks* or simply *paradoxical monks* as we listened to sources of their tensions and their own way of handling the tensions. Not only were their life paradoxical, but also their cognitive tactics to tension were paradoxical. We found that such paradox played a significant role in addressing the group tension at an organizational level. We report their stories as follows.

There was a handful number of paradoxical business monks (Master Monk B, Monk S, Monk H, Monk D, and Monk U) who were in charge of major organizational functions. They were willing to embrace the tensions in their social reality. Specifically, we found that the need to manage the secular and spiritual tensions created two types of tensions to the paradoxical monks: the tension (1) between personal identity as a religious person and role identity as a businessman and (2) between monastic rules and secular activities. Monks initially joined temples in order to renounce all secular desires and lead a peaceful life, but the social reality of the paradoxical monks required them to work with business and engage secular society almost every day. They needed to handle tensions in their organizational life.

**Dual Identity.** In the first three weeks of the ethnographic fieldwork, the paradoxical monks
did not express any tensions in performing their ‘jobs’. The paradoxical monks appeared energetic and passionate in expressing the temple’s daily operations and ongoing business projects. After several weeks, Monk S and Monk H revealed new insights into being a K-temple business monk. Monk S talked about his first experiences as a business monk:

Monk S: When I was a student monk I was not interested in working at all. All I wanted was to find my true self. I just felt that something was missing in my life ... This is funny though. Now, I am doing the most secular stuff. Counting money is not relevant to finding a calm life at all. But, it is an important job, yet no monk actually wants to do it ... secular people do not expect monks to negotiate or count bills. Money is really a delicate issue in temples though. It is one of the most important things in temple management. If something goes wrong, people would blame me.

The ethnographer: What did you feel when you first started finance work here, Monk?

Monk S: When I first became a business monk, I always made big mistakes ... The most important mistake that most business monks make is that they treat secular people like monks or Buddhists. In fact, monks respect other monks and we have our manner, but secular people no longer respect monks. Even business guys do not care who their business partners are. So, it is important not to confuse the secular world with the monks’ world ... There is an old saying. Monks are the most gullible people.

Among all monks, Monk S was given the most secular of all work—the work related to handling money. Within K-Temple, Monk S was seen as a generous, good-humored Buddhist believer, but he changed his demeanor dramatically when dealing with other business managers on contracts, negotiations, marketing, and investments. Monk S could, depending on the context, morph his personality from being lighthearted and funny to being professional and stern. Around Buddha’s birthday ceremony, a Buddhist believer came to see Monk S and gave him a humble health tonic. On the product’s box, the Korean advertising read, “This is good for man.” Making a joke, Monk S said, “Well… this is embarrassing… it is useless to me. Take this,” and he passed the tonic to the ethnographer. Immediately after the conversation, Monk S’ new business partner entered the room, and Monk S immediately changed his posture to being more charismatic and rigid. The ethnographer was surprised to see a monk wearing a gray cotton monk’s robe so
enthusiastically and knowledgeably discussing management theory and practice. Monk S spoke to the ethnographer about his business role:

Monk S: One thing I learned from this job is that people out there want what they want. K-Temple sold a huge real estate property to a businessman for an unbelievably low price. Do you think it is mercy? That was simply a mistake, a lack of real estate knowledge. Old monks decided to sell the land. They did not check the real estate price and did not conduct market analysis. We even had to pay a huge tax for the transaction, which could have been dramatically reduced.

The ethnographer: I think it is difficult to act like a businessman since you are a monk, Monk. And, perhaps the old monks just sold it even though he knew the price was low and would not be profitable, Monk.

Monk S: Well… I spent several years agonizing that issue. But, people are just different. We should make our purpose clear. We live in the different world. Business guys do not act like a monk who has nothing to lose. Mercy is not mercy in business … To persuade businessmen and do business with them, we need good business skills. We need to learn more knowledge and tactics … But, people coming to the temple need to relax and listen to sincere life-advice … I know that I need to do so for our temple and my people. Everything I am doing cannot be for something like mercy.

Whereas Monk S navigated seamlessly between his two worlds, Monk H experienced much more difficulty. When Monk H first became a monk, he meditated for three years and never left the temple. The first time he left K-Temple, he suffered a panic attack and has regularly taken medicine to alleviate the panic. Monk H was an introspective person who wanted to be a Buddhist scholar, focusing especially on Buddhist moral precepts. But, Master Monk B had other hopes and expectations of Monk H. For example, Master Monk B asked Monk H to facilitate Buddha’s birthday ceremony, which draw more than 500 people and broadcast over local television, even though this activity was incongruent with Monk H’s introverted personality.

The ethnographer interviewed a psychiatrist who helped religious people, including Monk H. The psychiatrist said that the monks that he treated had difficulty changing their persona between monk and businessperson. A person’s persona is the character or personality perceived by others (Jung 1953/2014). The psychiatrist said that most religious people he had diagnosed suffered
from the tension between their true nature and their social role. Monk H presented a similar symptom.

At morning tea, Monk H spoke with the ethnographer about his diagnosis. He said that his work in public relations required communicating well and managing impressions, yet these activities reflected neither his strongest skills nor who he was. He believed that Master Monk B likely put him in this position to help him to overcome his own hurdles in order to one day become a venerable monk. Indeed, Monk H’s work, public relations, required good communication skills and impression management, but he had not been that type of person. Monk H told the ethnographer that Master Monk B had perhaps intentionally entrusted him with this personality-opposite role in an effort to help him to overcome his own hurdles so that he could one day become a venerable monk. The ethnographer asked Monk H and Monk S about this story as they returned from a business meeting.

**Monk H:** I was a young monk who did not know what is meant by temple work. I suffered from mental illness due to the work. I hated my work at first. I did not know how to have conversation with people. I was scared of them. I just wanted to escape from my tasks.

**Monk S:** Yeah. I know your life story. Your good mind could not apply to your work. I know… I know… People do not know what it means. I think that is why Master Monk B gave you this job, Monk. I saw you overcoming your dilemma though. It is important for us to make a sort of different room for working stuff. We cannot maintain the same mind doing work and preaching Buddha’s words. We need to be brave, monk. You suffered from your pure mind—that is irony—but the fact that you act like a secular advertiser and entertainer does not mean that your mind is going to be impure.

After returning from a walk during which Monk H and Monk S discussed Monk H’s internal conflicts with the ethnographer, Monk H and the ethnographer continued the discussion late into the night.

**Monk H:** Monk S helped me a lot when I had a hard time. Monk S looks like a very funny person, but he is really one of the strongest people who I’ve ever met … It is
difficult to overcome your belief whatever the belief is. Even junior monks do not feel what real dilemma is. The stronger a monk immerses himself into Buddhism, the stronger he would suffer from this dilemma … I was young and did not know how to deal with it. I did not know how to make two independent rooms, one for business work and for Buddhism.

**The ethnographer:** Are you better now, Monk?

**Monk H:** Since I need medicine for my mental illness, I may not be well. But, it is interesting to see how I have changed. All Chong-Lim temples need capable business monks, and it is important to do business well and work well. They must overcome their own dilemma at some point of their lifetime, which will be hard for them. But, now it is important to understand what society wants from us and how we can act as a monk for our job and society. My attention was toward my inner world before, but I now realize that monks should see the real world out there.

**The ethnographer:** Then, the dilemma is gone now, Monk?

**Monk H:** I don’t know. Monk S always said that monks should live within society, and he emphasized that we need different mindsets. To some extent, the world moves slowly, but in a different world the world moves so fast. My world is slow and people are peaceful … But secular people often deceive each other. It is understandable because they need to protect family, property, and other precious things … It is an irony. I wanted to be far from the secular world, but here, I find that the secular world out there is the real world about which we should care.

Business monks faced a tension between being a Buddhist monk for their religious commitment and being a clever businessperson for their organization. This is the social reality that created a dual identity that business monks must deal with.

When the ethnographer finally met Master Monk B of K-Temple, the ethnographer was surprised that Master Monk B wore an Apple Watch. He said that Buddhism is not like old asceticism, in which all social and economic material life must be abandoned. His interview pointed out the very nature of paradox:

**K-Temple Master Monk B:** Human civilization evolves from different types of endeavors. People who have passion and courage and those who have peace and calmness. A complete man has both qualities but in a clear separate form. You may think that you will lose a spiritual mind by making money, but do not worry. Good businessmen have good minds, and good monks have lots of money.

**Breach of Monastic Rule.** We now move to the second tension the paradoxical monks faced.
The tension was also related to their particular social reality that they lived as Buddhist monks in a temple and simultaneously worked as business people in secular society. As noted, their living place was K-Temple, but they needed to work outside of the temple to meet with business partners and other stakeholders. Because K-Temple was located deep in the mountains, paradoxical monks often needed to go into a village to do their work, which meant they symbolically crossed a physical boundary between the monastic world and the secular world. The dual physical setting for living and working forced them to follow contradicting institutional norms or rules—one set in the secular society and the other set in the monastic community. K-Temple monastic rules are especially very strict, compared with other temples in Korea, so that a Buddhist monk breaching the rules has technically engaged in a serious misconduct. However, paradoxical monks were required to breach those rules in order to work effectively with secular people.

In the late fieldwork stage, some business monks confessed to the ethnographer that they breached monastic rules without guilt because, for a moment, they forgot their monks’ identity. The breaches were sometimes small and simple, such as failing to wake up early in the morning, and sometimes more fundamental, such as the language they used and failing to maintain a peaceful mind. Similar to their different approaches to identity tensions, junior and senior business monks reacted differently to situations where they needed to potentially break monastic rule. Monk G spoke to his dilemma in using a smartphone to connect to believers.

**Monk G:** I need to keep using this phone, but I am not sure if I really need to use this. It is good to talk to people whenever they need me. But well… Technically, we should not use this in a focused-meditation period.

**The ethnographer:** It is a good tool already, Monk. I mean why does it matter, Monk?

**Monk G:** I mean, yes, there are a lot of good tools to connect to society. People use social network services. But, monastic rules are basically designed to disconnect ourselves from secular society at least in the focused-meditation period. But, the
devices we are using for our work allow us to connect to secular society whenever we want. I know the temple might encourage us to do that, but I am not sure if this is really a right thing.

Some junior business monks even gave smartphones to K-Temple administrative employees. They thought that by doing so, they followed the monastic rules themselves and were able to work with secular people through the administrative staff.

When the ethnographer asked one of paradoxical monks, “Do you not worry about breaking monastic rules?” the monk answered: “It is convenient. Why not?” Monk D, who was present during the conversation, even laughed and commented further.

Monk D: Let’s not mix oil and water. It is not even good for your [mental] health. Rules are made for you to be a particular “you” where you are in some environment you stay. If you work out there, then you follow work rules. And, if you are in temple, then you follow monastic rule. Does your father always act like a businessman in your home as well?

When faced with contradicting rules between the secular and the monastic, junior business monks carefully considered what to do. But, a set of paradoxical monks seemed to instantaneously forget their religious identity and follow business norms. Paradoxical monks often talked to the ethnographer seemingly casually, stating, “I violate my precepts every day,” “I cannot wake up at 3:00 a.m.,” “I cannot always say good words to people I am working,” and “It is nonsense to treat business people in the same way I treat monks ... we should be very strategic and strict at every moment even though those behaviors are not what Buddha said.”

We found that paradoxical monks realized at some point in their career that it was more important for them to work well for their organization than to keep all the moral precepts of an ascetic Buddhist monk. Monk H said:

Monk H: It is really hard to keep all precepts we were given. I also really hate myself when I know I have broken or I will break so many precepts ... I think we are like a brick that is still building K-Temple. Look around the temple again. See how many bricks have been used to make this peaceful temple for more than a thousand years. Now, I think ignoring something much more valuable in order to keep the precepts for
one’s spiritual benefit is another form of obsession and self-egoism.

Monk U seemed a little upset in his response. The tension had besieged him many times.

**Monk U:** You know better than I do about how to do business. It is all about competition. Who now respects monks? If you go to Rome, follow Roman law ... Gee... Sometimes, I don’t want to do this job. It is better to sit in a monastery. If you go out to fight, follow fighting rules. People do not respect monks no matter how careful we are about our behavior.

Although these conversations might be seen to justify breaching monastic rules, paradoxical monks could sustain the organization by separating the mindset to of business work in the secular world and sacred work in K-temple. To some extent, paradoxical monks sacrificed their religious conviction in order to support their organization. By building a cognitive boundary between the dual roles (businessman and Buddhist monks) and dual rules (business world and K-temple), skillful paradoxical monks intentionally separated the two worlds and maintained their dual identity. We further iterated this finding with the existing literature in the following as the notion of separation was a theme emerging through our field data.

**Building Cognitive Boundaries.** The paradoxical monks’ social reality as both a Buddhist monk and a businessperson created tensions between the sacred and secular worlds and required active management. We already described the cognitive boundary they built between the two worlds in order to follow the rules and principles of each world, damming their emotions between domains to avoid inadvertent spillovers. Specifically, they drew a role boundary described as “whatever delimits the perimeter—and thereby the scope—of a role” (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 474). The role boundary helped business monks form two role identities that are “the socially constructed definitions of self-in-role” (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 475). The boundary created two psychological domains separated by being both a monk and a businessperson. As noted by Ashforth et al. (2000), highly separated domains reduce psychological swings between contradicting values, goals, and belief systems, thereby enabling organizational actors to
embrace the two worlds as they are. We found that every time paradoxical monks faced a potential dilemma, they were able to handle the dilemma with agility because of the clarity of the cognitive boundary. Once the boundary was built, the paradoxical monks could see the differences in two worlds and move between the two worlds almost seamlessly.

After the fieldwork, the ethnographer discussed these insights at a particular tea time with a former K-Temple business monk, Monk O, who had returned to the secular world. He agreed that there are two worlds: one world where people candidly pursue their desire, or the world “out there,” and a second world where people are peaceful and have nothing to lose, or the world in the temple. Thus, they viewed the boundary as real. They also agreed that two worlds offered advantages and disadvantages for the actor embedded in each world. The four monks believed that monks should embrace each of these worlds equally even though they became monks to renounce the secular world.

Thus, a handful business monks, we call paradoxical business monks, applied a “paradoxical mindset” (Miron-Spektor et al. 2018, p. 28) and “paradoxical frame” (Hahn et al. 2014, p. 464) to their social realities. In this approach, “cognitive processing becomes schema-driven” (Weick 2010, p. 541). Paradoxical monks were comfortable to schematically hold the two elements of tensions in their everyday life by building boundaries between the two worlds. They did not consider business as a means to achieve a religious end, they did not try to mix business and religion, and they did not ignore the tensions. In their interviews, they suggested that they believed the two worlds, secular and spiritual, were different and needed to be separated in order to maintain their daily life, yet were important to each other—an idea described by yin and yang (Fang, 2012; Li 1998, 2014; Peng and Nisbett, 1999). Paradoxical monks recognized the duality of business and religious activities, and simultaneously pursued both activities despite their
contradicting nature. They could choose one side, blend both sides into one, or just ignore the tension—but they choose none of these.

**Multi-level paradoxes in K-Temple**

Taking both organizational-structural level and individual-cognitive level of analysis together, we found a nested paradox in K-Temple. Paradoxical phenomena are layered across levels of analysis through the structural role separation in K-temple’s organizational structure and cognitive boundary in paradoxical monks’ mind. At the organizational level, K-Temple exhibited a structural paradox: both business monks and meditation monks coexisted at K-Temple although their coexistence sometimes caused conflict. But, the structural paradox enabled two groups to perform their goals separately and simultaneously. At the individual level, a handful number of business monks, the paradoxical monks, exhibited a cognitive paradox that was nested in the structural paradox: the paradoxical monks managed their tension cognitively by separating their mindset as monks from their mindset as businessmen. They build a cognitive boundary to manage their dual life, which created tension yet allowed them to maintain the tension in their organizational life.

In the second stage of fieldwork, the ethnographer further interviewed paradoxical monks regarding their understanding of the group tension, and if so, how they managed it. In answering the ethnographer’s question, Master Monk B used analogy of the two-wheel of wagon to compare the role separation in K-temple with the function of wagon.

**K-Temple Master Monk B:** A wise and strong man pulls the wagon in front and two wheels of the wagon add momentum, supporting the man easily going forward. So, who is the man? It is me. And, the two wheels help me go forward. Do you understand what the two wheels mean? … They are business monks and meditation monks here.

**The ethnographer:** Who takes the wagon, monk?

**K-Temple Master Monk B:** People … It is like democracy. The president is the man
pulling the wagon, and the conventional party and the progressive party are the two wheels. People take the vehicle, don’t they? … The two parties always fight, but they should be separated with equal size to make the vehicle go forward.

The old wagon requires two wheels, which is more stable than a single wheel. K-Temple’s business monks and meditation monks were also separated. The two wheels should be of similar size with sufficient distance between them to safely support the wagon. K-Temple did not elevate the business monks or meditation monks over the other, as the two wheels must be same size and weight. Master Monk B is aware of these principles of the wagon to move it forward in the right direction. He draws the wagon, but needs help to keep propelling it forward. The wagon will move forward only if the three parties play their own role well—the left wheel, the right wheel, and the pullers.

Paradoxical monks tried to place equal value on business work and their commitment to religion. The conversation on the two wheels of wagon illustrated that they did not choose value on one side over the other, even though they could. They did not believe that business value destroys religious value. Rather, they saw the links in pursuing both values. They transcended moral precepts to maintain a dual identity. Since business monks saw the dual values as neither integrated nor avoided, they were able to pursue profits. As a result, the paradoxical monks such as Master Monk B continued to encourage separation between business monks and meditation even though they recognized the group tensions at the organizational level. As a result, the two groups maintained their own identity and function. Figure 2 (next page) illustrates these multi-level findings.
Figure 2. Multi-Level Paradoxes in K-Temple

- Organizational task
- Living space
- Philosophical motto

K-temple

Business monks
- Focusing on business activity
- Securing daily organizational operations and finance

Meditation monks
- Focusing on meditation practice
- Securing historical tradition and religious identity

Balancing

Paradoxical monks

Businessman
- Dual identity
- Dual world

Secular norm

Buddhist monk
- Monastic rule

Structural separation
- Group tension between business monks and meditation monks

Paradox between mediation and business activity – persistence of tension in an organization

Sources of tensions
- Cognitive mechanism of handling tensions

A set of business monks, paradoxical monks, face the tensions in their everyday organizational life.
- They recognize that the two elements of tensions inevitably contradict by nature.
- They intentionally build cognitive boundary to keep the nature of the contradicting elements intact from each other.
- Two independent psychological rooms created by building the boundary enable the monks to embrace the duality in their minds.
2.5. Discussion

In this research, we were interested in unpacking multi-level tensions in a Buddhist temple. We asked two questions across the organizational and individual levels of analysis: (1) How do organizations deal with the tensions of meeting financial obligations, when the organizations’ historically embedded aims conflict directly with handling finances? (2) How do organizational members cognitively address the tensions in their everyday organizational life? In recent years, Korean Buddhist temples are required to raise money to fund their activities, yet conventional Buddhist moral precepts dictate that temples should not be involved in business activities. Buddhist Monks must cope with such tensions because they are the organizational actors who contemplate, feel, and experience them in their organizational life.

We investigated these questions in the context of K-Temple, one of Korea’s great eight remote temples that practice Seon meditation. We analyzed the data by investigating the organizational structures and the voice of Buddhist monks. We show how paradox surfaced in organizational structures and how organizational actors addressed tensions in their everyday life. In this section, we describe each of the contributions from different levels of analysis.

The First Theoretical Implication: Paradox at an Organizational-Structural Level

We compared our results with the findings of prior work that describes how hybrids reduce conflicts, tensions, and contradictions such as through “spaces of negotiation” (Battilana et al., 2015, p. 1658), “a selective coupling strategy” (Pache and Santos, 2013, p. 986), “oscillating decisions and actions,” (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014, p. 499), and “common organizational identity” (Battilana and Dorado, 2010, p. 1420). We did not uncover these mechanisms in our study; instead, our findings aligned with the tensions among groups uncovered by Ashforth and Reingen (2014) and Battilana & Dorado (2010). The tension between business monks and
meditation monks was formed by the clear role separation in K-temple. We wanted to know how this group tension could persist paradoxically and why this tension was not removed.

As we deepened our findings into this puzzle, we found that key organizational actors’ cognitions played a pivotal role in managing this group tension. This insight can explain the differences in findings between Battilana and Dorado (2010) and Ashforth and Reingen (2014).

Battilana and Dorado (2010) argued that their successful case, Los Andes, adopted an apprenticeship approach to hiring that “combines a tabula rasa hiring approach with a means-focused socialization approach” (Battilana and Dorado, 2010, p. 1435). This hiring method reduced potential conflict because new staffs had few preconceptions or belief systems regarding the contradicting dualities and logics. Further, means-focused socialization solidifies organizational members to develop one hybrid organizational identity, rather than two loosely integrated identities (Battilana and Dorado, 2010). But, in K-Temple, a means-focused socialization was difficult because monks already had firm beliefs about the role of monks even before ordainment. People applying to be monks in Korea had a very strong sense of purpose before ordainment. Therefore, K-Temple monks were not tabula rasa.

Ashforth and Reingen’s (2014) case on natural food cooperatives presented an image of structural hybridity similar to that of K-Temple. Their study showed that subgroups of people identified either as pragmatists or idealists, much like business monks and meditation monks in K-temple. The pragmatists and idealists in the natural food cooperative mingled at various rituals and displayed oscillating processes of decision-making that allowed the organization to mitigate the tension between the two subgroups. In this sense, we confirmed Ashforth and Reingen’s observation (2014, p. 505) that “what looks to be dysfunctional at the group level actually facilitated the functioning of the organization.” The group tension was persistent in both natural
food cooperative and K-temple.

But, there is also a significant difference between our work and that of Ashforth and Reingen’s (2014): the role of key individuals in addressing the group tension. For Ashforth and Reingen (2014), core individuals that valued either side of the tension accelerated the formation of subgroups. They described that “intrapersonal conflict was thus transformed into intergroup conflict; it is often easier, after all, to fight with others than with oneself” (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014, p. 504). However, paradoxical monks in K-Temple were willing to embrace the tension in their everyday organizational life despite having difficulty managing the tensions in their inner mind. They did not transform their own interpersonal conflict into the group conflict. For instance, Monk H and Monk D regularly visited a psychiatrist to deal with the tensions they experienced. But, they ultimately recognized that the tensions were normal and willing to live with them. Thus, the individuals at K-Temple internalized the tensions. This observation motivated us to focus on the handful number of business monks’ responses to the tensions—the story of paradoxical monks.

**The Second Theoretical Implication: Paradox at an Individual-Cognitive Level**

Paradoxical monks tried to put equal value on the work of business and meditation. They did not consider business as a means to achieve a religious end, they did not try to mix business and religion, and they did not just ignore the tensions. Their story suggests that they believed the two worlds needed to exist together. We found that the paradoxical monks tried to do their best to adapt to the different behavioral norms in the two worlds separately.

Prior research shows that managers often face a dilemma when forced to choose between values or practices, yet a paradox perspective suggests that the duality can be useful. Paradox studies have conceptualized the cognitive duality as a “paradoxical mindset” (Miron-Spektor et
al., 2018, p. 26), “paradoxical frame” (Hahn et al., 2014; 464), “cognitive flexibility” (Rothman et al., 2016; 41) and “double think” (El-Sawad et al., 2004, p. 1180). A common thread of this research suggests that contradictions, dualities, and tensions can create positive synergy. We empirically demonstrated that paradoxical monks recognized the importance of the duality of business and religious activities. In everyday life, these monks even transcended moral precepts in keeping the dual identity of monk and businessman. Since they viewed the dual values as separated, those values were also seen separately and were simultaneously pursued despite their contradicting nature: hence, a paradox exists in their mind.

Although this individual-level perspective is largely missing from the paradox literature, a stream of identity literature informs such duality in a different theoretical framework (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Creed et al., 2010; Kreiner et al., 2006). We thus shed more light on the cognitive and emotional aspects of embodying paradox that appear as a form of stigmatization when organizational actors cope with tensions. Some of the business monks, not paradoxical monks, considered their temple work as “dirty work,” referring to “occupations that are viewed by society as physically, socially, or morally tainted” (Ashforth et al., 2007, p. 149). Our data consistently show that business monks’ religious identity as a Buddhist monk and their vocational identity as a businessman severely conflicted in their social reality. Clever business ideas—such as raising money by offering tea service and musical entertainment, as described in the opening paragraph; inviting tourists to the temple; and real estate transactions that could avoid taxes—could help the temple’s finances, but risked contaminating the business monks’ religious identity. Thus, the organizational role taints the business monks’ core identity as ascetic Buddhist monks.

We identified the cognitive tactic used by paradoxical monks among other business monks in
response to their particular organizational life. This finding echoed the implications by Kreiner et al.’s study (2006) regarding Episcopal priests’ efforts to balance their personal identity as being unique and their vocational identity as a priest. Episcopal priests employed five differentiation tactics (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1038), one of which included “flipping the on/off switch” that allowed priests to flip their identity for the job and for Him. As noted by one of priests, “I’m always a priest, and especially when dressed as a priest, I’m aware of my role … there are times when I deliberately take off the ‘role’ so as to just ‘be’” (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1044). In K-Temple, we observed that business monks used such tactics to change their persona (Jung, 1953/2014). What was surprising to us was that their cognitive tactic not only helps them to address tensions in their own life and feel comfortable to work for the organization, but also helps to keep the role separation at an organizational-structural level despite the group tension they saw every day.

Not all business monks, however, were willing to internalize and embrace the tension. Only five monks—the paradoxical monks—were willing to do so, based on our observations and interviews. Those monks were Master Monk B, Monk S, Monk H, Monk D, and Monk U. The common ground among the latter four was that they were all disciples of Master Monk B, a paradoxical monk himself, who wore an Apple Watch and assigned jobs to his disciples to help them learn how to embrace the tension. These disciples were expected to become ambidextrous—to paradoxically manage the tensions in their own mind and contribute to maintain structural role separation at an organizational level to allow the temple to operate effectively.

2.6. Limitations

Fourteen months after we finished our initial data analysis and the first draft of this
manuscript, the ethnographer returned to K-Temple to discuss the findings with K-Temple monks. As much as possible, we tried to address their comments in the manuscript, but as described below some issues remain and remain inherent limitations.

First, our understanding of Seon meditation might be insufficiently thorough to grasp its core meaning. In fact, according to some meditation monks, meditating is experiencing, not understanding. In this regard, some meditation monks fundamentally disagreed with our idea of researching Buddhist monks’ monastic life. Therefore, we only reported what we observed and clearly talked with monks. But, we acknowledge that we are unable to fully express the meditation monks’ experience, and to attempt to do so would do them a disservice.

Second, we did not formally interview or analyze the broad set of stakeholders associated with K-Temple, such as employees, major Buddhist believers, local community members, local government officials, and those affiliated with other temples. Data from such stakeholders would be particularly important in analyzing the dynamic relationships of business monks and multiple stakeholders, yet we mainly paid attention to the monks themselves because they were the ones who experienced tensions. How K-Temple business monks interact with diverse stakeholders might be interesting in addressing the tension, but fell outside the scope of this project.

Third, K-Temple monks consistently pointed out that our study was conducted independent of Korean Buddhism’s historical context, which would have offered rich insights into role separation. Business Monk B mentioned that the conflict between the two groups is deeply historical, and the tension that we described should not be decontextualized from this historical context. For example, throughout the period of Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945, business monks and meditation monks were also conflicted about permitting Buddhist monks to marry. Business monks wanted to permit marriage, but meditation monks strongly disagreed.
Such historical conflicts between the two groups make our findings even more salient, yet were omitted in our fieldwork.

2.7. REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AS A CHANGE FACILITATOR IN A BUDDHIST TEMPLE

3.1. Introduction

Since Buddha developed an ancient form of monastic life 2,500 years ago, Buddhist temples have made long-standing efforts to maintain an original form of monastic life. But, the temples are now initiating dramatic changes as they experience macro environmental transformations such as capitalism, urbanization, and the rise of a new religion. For example, Shaolin, a historic temple in China, attempted an initial public offering (IPO) to diversify its sources of financial support; a Japanese temple collaborated with Amazon to launch a ‘monk delivery service’ to connect urban believers with monks to lead in-home funeral ceremonies; and Korean temples sent their monks to master of business administration (MBA) programs to address the growing challenges of temple management. However, these changes can lead to an organizational dilemma: keep the tradition or change the tradition to adapt to the environment. Adopting secular business techniques such as pursuing an IPO or implementing a monk delivery service provokes significant moral controversy and social discomfort because even a small change is likely to transform traditional monastic life.

Organization studies offer contradicting lenses to frame this phenomenon. On the one hand, classic organizational literature has proposed that the past constrains actors’ choices in formulating a new strategy and practice (e.g., Boeker, 1989; Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1984; Stinchcombe 1965). For example, Stinchcombe (1965) posited that current organizational forms are imprinted with their founding environment, and that those forms persist over time despite significant environmental changes. Similarly, Kimberly and Bouchikhi (1995) showed that founder-based imprinting left a strong legacy that provides a sense of security and legitimacy for being status quo, thereby constraining new strategic choices. In the classic literature, a long
organizational history is converted to a time-yielding structure such as tradition, legacy, or imprinting, which has been characterized as being beyond the control of managers. Thus, the longer the history, and therefore the more deeply rooted the tradition, the greater the burden managers need to overcome to change.

Recent advances in historical narrative literature propose a different perspective on the past in general and on organizational history in particular. A body of works suggests that a long history can be a source of managerial narratives that the present actors can draw from to construct their own actions and initiate changes (Basque & Langley, 2018; Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg, 2016; Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014; Suddaby, Foster, & Quinn Trank, 2010; Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016). Scholars claim that classic assumptions that are based on linear temporality cannot capture “the role of managerial agency in shaping and representing history” (Foster, Suddaby, Minkus, & Wiebe, 2011: 104) because the linearity assumption views the past as a given context or exogenous variable. Recent studies, however, have revealed that managers interpret organizational legacy in their own way and then make it rhetoric to infuse legitimacy for change (e.g., Kroeze & Keulen, 2013). In these studies, rather than viewing organizational history as a source of rigidity, it is conceptualized as a living archive that actors can use for their purposes (Suddaby & Foster, 2017).

Drawing on the historical narrative literature, I investigate how an organizational leader systematically uses historical narratives to facilitate organizational change initiatives. Despite early theoretical underpinnings on historical narratives (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Suddaby et al., 2010) and recent advances (Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016), a paucity of knowledge remains in terms of a systematic micro-level narrative mechanism. Specifically, untapped research questions persist, regarding what managers intend to achieve through the use
of historical narratives, to whom they are speaking, and how they construct shared meanings.

I was motivated in this project to answer these research questions through ethnographic fieldwork in one of Korea’s most traditional Buddhist temples (referred to hereafter by the pseudonym B-temple). During my stay in B-temple from January 1 to March 19, 2017, I often observed that B-temple Master Monk T repeatedly used a set of historical narratives on former Master Monks and on particular periods of Korean Buddhism to facilitate his change initiatives. This observation motivated me to collect more archival data to unpack the narrative mechanisms that Master Monk T used in various settings.

My analysis shows that rather than recognizing the past as a series of events that predetermine an organization’s path, Master Monk T skillfully employed three types of historical narratives to mitigate internal resistance to changes. My findings show how an organization’s past can help to facilitate changes by its systematic use as a rich storytelling tool (Suddaby et al., 2010) or a living archive (Rowlinson et al., 2014).

In inductively integrating the findings with the cultural toolkit literature (Swidler, 1986), I further conceptualize the notion of a historical toolkit, which I define as a repertoire of historical myths, storytelling, legends, and anecdotes that actors deliberately interpret and strategically draw on to construct or justify their actions as systematic narrative forms. The concept elucidates how an organization’s historical agents develop novel insight on the past and use their storytelling ability to translate factual historical data to living achievements.

3.2. History as a rich source of managerial narratives

The notion of historical narratives contains two central concerns of organization study: history (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014) and language (Vaara et al., 2016). On the one hand, organization scholars have long proposed that the past does not necessarily constrain present
organizational behavior (Kieser, 1994; Zald, 1990). Managers mediate the influence of the past through their interpretation, as Schrempf-Stirling, Palazzo, and Phillips (2016: 703) commented, “The past is not a ‘database’ of objective information awaiting retrieval by disinterested actors; rather, it results from current interpretations of past stories.”

Studies have found that organizational members deliberately construct their collective memory, either reinforcing or manipulating it for their present purposes (Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Basque & Langley, 2018; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Olick & Levy, 1997). Schultz and Hernes (2013) found that managers evoke various forms of organizational memory to reconstruct present organizational identities. Clark (1972) used the term ‘organizational saga’ to explain the strategic use of organizational tradition. This line of studies reveals that managers reconstruct collective memories of the past to imbue their decisions with symbolic meaning.

Scholars opting for a narrative approach, on the other hand, suggest that skillful narratives can be a cognitive persuasion tool in both facilitating an organizational action and smoothing interest-laden conversation (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Fenton & Langley, 2011; Vaara, 2010). Mintzberg (1973) described managers as discursive beings who spend three-quarters of their time polishing their speech and effectively engaging in verbal conversation with corporate stakeholders. This perspective has been theorized as storytelling organization (Boje, 1991, 2014), rhetorical strategy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Zbaracki, 1998), discourse construction (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Vaara, 2002), and narrative infrastructure (Deuten & Rip, 2000), all of which describe the language-based view (Jalonen, Schildt, & Vaara, 2018).

This stream of studies suggests that managers strategically use various forms of narratives to construct new meaning systems or destroy existing ones to facilitate change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010) and to nurture innovation (Bartel & Garud, 2009). For
example, Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) found that managers use rhetoric to infuse a new organizational form with legitimacy. In a context of institutional change, they defined rhetorical strategies as “the deliberate use of persuasive language to legitimate or resist an innovation by constructing congruence or incongruence among attributes of the innovation, dominant institutional logics, and the broader template of institutional change” (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005: 41).

The two lines of studies have long recognized that history and language play a central role in explaining the way managers construct new meanings through the use of memory and narrative. However, the two research streams are typically explored in isolation, despite a potential theoretical linkage. Recently, a set of theoretical works highlighted that an organizational history can be a rich source of managerial narratives (e.g., Maclean et al., 2016; Mena, Rintamäki, Fleming, & Spicer, 2016; Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Suddaby et al., 2010). Specifically, Suddaby et al. (2010: 157) defined rhetorical history as “the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm.” Here, the past is constructed as a form of historical myth and storytelling that “functions to galvanize social interconnectivity within a community as members draw on narratives of the past to crystalize present objectives” (Mena et al., 2016: 723). As an institutionalized form, firms often build corporate museums to house both tangible symbols of the past and historical records that can be translated rhetorically to core stakeholders (Duncan, 1991; Nissley & Casey, 2002). Rather than viewing history as a fixed entity, a given context, or an exogenous variable, these studies highlight how managers can employ past stories and narrate them for present purposes.

Whereas a set of previous works offers a fresh insight on the role of historical narrative in explaining the present organizational phenomenon, the mechanism of how historical narratives
are actually used remains a theoretical whitespace. History is manifested as an organizational phenomenon, as it is interpreted and systematically narrated by the present organizational actors (Basque & Langley, 2018; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). In the process, narrative speakers deliberately select factual historical events and infuse a set of meanings and values, depending on their purpose, the narratives available, and the target audience. Then, the interpreted history can be carefully delivered to audiences, tempered by the speakers’ systematic word choice and rhetorical strategy.

Such a linguistic, discursive, and rhetorical mechanism calls for a systematic analysis of narratives because the form of narrative determines the way history is interpreted, delivered, and received. Linguistic anthropologists suggest that visionary speakers such as politicians and religious leaders skillfully change how audience members construe the world around them based on even a short address or preaching (e.g., Duranti, 1997). Using skillful rhetorical strategy, top managers can subliminally implant a new cognitive-mental representation of certain strategic practices in employees’ minds (Jarzabkowski & Sillince, 2007; Sillince, Jarzabkowski, & Shaw, 2012). Some skillful managers would then be able to coax organizational members to rhetorically rethink past leaders’ achievements and the historical context. In a sense, a key mechanism of historical narratives would be “how speakers express themselves rather than what they say … because the same objective reality can be described in different ways” (Crilly, Hansen & Zollo, 2016: 708, emphasis in original).

Empirically, however, unpacking a systematic narrative mechanism would be challenging in a conventional organizational setting because it may be difficult to observe a patterned form of historical narratives. In general, firms with a short history may mean that managers have scarce sources of historical events, myths, and legends available to manipulate into various narrative
forms, whereas a nation with a long history offers rich historical sources that national leaders can exploit (Hobsbawm, 1983). For this reason, existing studies on historical narratives tend to draw on long-standing organizational histories (e.g., Basque & Langley, 2018; Hatch & Schultz, 2017). That is, to systematically capture managers’ historical narratives, the empirical context should be reasonably long, so that the accumulated time marks multiple organizational myths, legends, and legacies available for managers’ potential use.

The empirical setting in this study is a Korean Buddhist temple that has more than 1,400 years of history. Its core practice, meditation, traces back to 500 BCE. In this context, the rich history can be either a burden inhibiting organizational change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Miller, 1992) or a rhetorical asset facilitating organizational change (Mena et al., 2016, Suddaby et al., 2010). The role of narrative speakers is, therefore, a compelling research agenda because organizational actors’ understanding of the past and their rhetorical skills can make the history either a burden or asset when renewing an organizational system.

3.3. Methods

Research Site: Buddhist Temple as an Empirical Context

A Buddhist temple (Saṅgha in Pāli) is a unique social system where Buddhist monks live together, collectively ordain, and meditate. Siddhārtha Gautama (approximately 563–483 BCE), also called Shakyamuni Buddha, formed an ancient assembly of monks with his five disciples in Northern India approximately 2,500 years ago. Despite scant evidence that Buddha formally led the assembly, it is believed that numerous monks and believers followed him, and Buddha himself developed ancient monastic rules and organized a cooperative organizational system to practice meditation (Swearer, 2010; Wijayaratna, 1990). After Buddha’s death, Buddhism spread across Southern and Northern Asia. Whereas monastic rules and structures varied as Buddhism spread, its core philosophy and meditation tradition have passed onto generations of monks.
The long history of Buddhist temples offers a useful context for this study—the role of historical narratives in facilitating organizational change. Change is inevitable for contemporary Buddhist temples to simply survive, yet their long-standing history inhibits any change (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). Similar to what prior works on Christian churches have shown (Bartunek & Ringuest, 1989; Beckford, 1985), Buddhist temples have also secularized some of their conventional monastic rules and moral precepts to reflect changing societal environment; however, due to their history being held sacred among organizational members, even small changes can spark moral controversy. That is, Buddhist temples confront a dilemmatic challenge—to maintain a distance from society in an effort to preserve their traditions while simultaneously enabling access to sufficient societal resources to ensure their survival.

To deeply immerse myself in the context, I chose to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in one of the most traditional Buddhist temples in Korea (the B-temple), where I stayed from January 1 to March 19, 2017. B-temple, which has been highly regarded in Korean Buddhist society because of its long history and strict monastic rules, is one of the eight great temples granted Chong-Lim status from the Jo-Gye Order of Korean Buddhism, Korea’s representative Buddhist order. To qualify as a Chong-Lim temple, a temple must offer (a) a traditional-systematic ordainment program; (b) an independent monastery; and (c) a specialized graduate school for researching Buddhist ethics and monastic rules. Accessing Chong-Lim temples is extremely difficult. I overcame this difficulty by receiving multiple references from Buddhism scholars and monks at other Chong-Lim temples.

Fortunately, my stay in B-temple coincided with the period during which Master Monk T was conducting various experimental changes. To facilitate these changes, he told patterned historical narratives to defend his change initiatives in various settings. The real-time changes
and Master Monk T’s patterned narratives provide a rich empirical setting for investigating the role of historical narrative in organizational change. As my analysis advanced, I returned to the temple to collect additional data, discuss my findings, and potentially receive new insights from B-temple senior monks. This second visit took place from September 14 to 30, 2017.

**Data Sources**

**Participant observation.** My primary data source was participant observation. While living with the B-temple monks, I tried to immerse myself into the monks’ daily life, listen to their voices directly, and meditate and work with them (Van Maanen, 2011). Although I did not need to shave my head, I wore the humble cotton cloth of monks, signaling to visitors and senior monks that I was staying at B-temple as a semi-fellow monk. Every evening, I wrote my daily observations and conversations. When necessary, I asked monks to discuss particular observations.

The work carried out in B-temple varied, ranging from completing miscellaneous labor tasks to providing managerial advice. In the later stage of my stay, I took a fellowship to act as a secretary to Master Monk T. Furthermore, I was put in charge of a small business project that B-temple was launching, which required Korean–English translation and basic knowledge of strategic management and marketing. Such real-time participant observation allowed me to obtain micro accounts of phenomena—what Hargadon and Douglas (2001: 480) described as “the concrete details” and “actions of a particular situation” and what Rowlinson et al. (2014: 266) described as a “living archive” and “ethnographic history.” Even after completing my stay at B-temple, I continued to work with B-temple monks online and received feedback in real time, regarding how Master Monk T and his fellow monks were implementing changes.

**In-depth interviews.** I conducted two rounds of interviews for different purposes. First, I
conducted 17 interviews with B-temple monks and 12 interviews with temple employees during my first stay at B-temple (January 1 to March 19, 2017). I focused my inquiry in an attempt to understand the motivations of the ongoing changes and their implications for temple management. Most interviews were conducted in the monk’s room or in an employee’s office. Second, I returned to the temple to discuss my findings with B-temple members, including monks, employees, members of the believers’ committees, and volunteers (September 14 to 30, 2017). My focus was to capture the overall reactions to Master Monk T's historical narratives. During my second visit, I also conducted three focus group interviews with monks and 11 in-depth individual interviews.

Archival documents (1): Master Monk T’s historical narratives. This study’s research question began to emerge during my first stay at B-temple, as I noticed that Master Monk T repeatedly related the same stories of former Master Monks and on the particular period of Korean Buddhism. My focus soon centered on his rhetorical strategy for legitimizing his introduction of changes, which motivated me to collect additional archival data on Master Monk T’s past speeches and written commentaries.

Specifically, four archival sources showed his repetitive narratives: (1a) formal speeches to believers and the public at various religious rituals and event settings; (1b) conversations with monks in B-temple’s regular committee meetings, where secretary monks recorded or wrote discussion agendas; (1c) formal conversations in various tea time settings; and (1d) formal interviews by Buddhist newspapers and local newspapers to discuss Master Monk T’s change initiatives. For each data source, I documented the place, time, and audience to specify the narrating context. All data were available online or in printed documents from April 5, 2016, to March 19, 2017. The beginning point of the archival data was April 5, 2016, when Master Monk
T was appointed Master Monk of B-temple.

**Archival documents (2): Supporting records.** I also collected several supporting documents that offered relevant information about Master Monk T’s narratives. The data included (2a) issues of B-temple’s monthly magazine; (2b) historical records archived in B-temple’s museum; and (2c) secondary scholarly works, including Buddhist scholars’ writings, reports, and books that studied historical events in Korean Buddhism and past Korean monks’ achievements, published by the Jo-Gye Order of Korean Buddhism. All scholarly works, reports, and books were available online, enabling me to search for specific events using keywords. Hard copies were also available in the central library of Jo-Gye Order in Seoul. In addition, B-temple’s museum curator helped me identify important historical records, including (2d) an official record of temple history; (2e) anonymous monks’ ordainment diaries; and (2f) writings and drawings created by previous B-temple Master Monks.

**Data Analysis**

The purpose of this research was to systematically analyze how organizational history (e.g., organization’s historical figures, events, myths, or legends) is interpreted and manipulated into narrative forms and then effectively used to facilitate change. My analysis is, thus, based on an interpretive approach to narratives to inductively develop a grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss 1967, Van Maanen 2011) or a new way of seeing existing organizational phenomena (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018). The interpretive approach centers researchers’ attention on “the description and elaboration on narratives that play a central role in the social construction of organizational reality” (Vaara et al., 2016: 505) and “the meanings of actions in context” (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016: 642). Although the inductive analysis is an iterative process across the whole research period, I progressed through three distinct phases of analysis.
**Phase 1: Identification of real-time changes in B-temple.** Before analyzing Master Monk T’s historical narratives, I first created a list of organizational changes that B-temple had initiated. In doing so, I mainly iterated my observation data with literature on Christian churches (e.g., Bartunek, 1984; Bartunek & Ringuest, 1989; Iannaccone, 1994; Kelley, 1986; Marwell, 1996). This iteration was necessary to identify the changes in B-temple that were meaningful to investigate. Indeed, most changes B-temple conducted were related to whether or not to secularize the organization. Specifically, three categories of changes emerged from this analysis: changes in monastic (organizational) rule, changes in the role of Buddhism in society, and changes in resource procurement. For the rest of the analysis, I labeled the three categories C1 for changes in monastic rule, C2 for changes in role of Buddhism in society, and C3 for changes in resource procurement. For example, B-temple changed the formal wake-up time from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. This change is a significant relaxation of monastic rule because the 3:00 a.m. wake-up time held the symbolic meaning of strict monastic discipline that differentiates monastic life from secular life. In my coding notes, I categorized this change as a change in monastic rule (C1).

**Phase 2: Identification of Master Monk T’s historical narratives on a specific change.** The purpose in this phase of the analysis process was to identify what Master Monk T said in facilitating his specific change initiatives identified in phase 1. In an attempt to systematically unpack his narratives, I conducted multiple steps of analyses in this phase. First, I manually sorted out historical narratives from all his formal narratives spoken and recorded from April 5, 2016 to March 19, 2017. To do so, I printed out all Master Monk T’s formal speech data and written record, and then identified any historical story or quote he used in his speech and conversation. His narrating contexts were various (e.g., an interview setting with newspaper
reporters, a regular speech during a religious ritual, and formal tea time conversations). In some situation, other temple monks or reporters directly asked about the motivation behind a specific change at B-temple. Master Monk T then responded with a specific historical narrative. In religious rituals and events, he deliberately spoke of past stories and myths to justify his change initiatives. In doing so, Master Monk T sometimes simply mentioned a historical event or quoted the previous Master Monk, or spent considerable time describing the story to draw a specific lesson. Regardless of the length and specific content, I counted all the history-related stories he spoke, which resulted in 78 historical narratives. In other words, he used history as a source of narratives 78 times in the period from April 5, 2016, to March 19, 2017.

Second, I carefully reread the 78 historical narratives to move them into aggregate conceptual dimensions. As a result, three aggregate narrative dimensions emerged. I labeled them as ‘Re’, ‘Ca’, and ‘Fr.’ The aim of the narratives is described as below.

(1) Reinterpretation of tradition (Re): Reinterpretation narratives aim to change narrative audience’s belief that a strict approach to monastic rule and meditation posture is actually not an original tradition that organizational members must follow.

(2) Category change (Ca): Category change narratives aim to change monks’ mindset that the Buddhist temple must be a unique, distinctive organization to a new mindset that the Buddhist temple shares common attributes of the secular organizational system, including the need to fulfill social responsibility and follow secular institutions.

(3) Frame change (Fr): Frame change narratives aim to change organizational members’ cognitive frame on the issues of ongoing changes from “tradition versus change” to “survival or not.”

Third, I re-analyzed the 78 narratives to identify any particular rhetorical pattern the Master Monk T spoke to defend, justify, or explain his specific change initiative. In other words, I tried to answer an emerging question in this step: Did Master Monk T speak a particular story for a particular category of change—‘changes in monastic rule (C1)’, ‘changes in the role of Buddhism in society (C2),” or “changes in resource procurement (C3),” or was the stories
randomly narrated? For example, in one interview with a local newspaper, he quoted monastic life in Buddha’s era to justify the wake-up time change. That is, he reinterpreted traditional monastic rule (through Buddha’s story) to justify the current wake-up time change. If the narrative on Buddha is consistently and deliberately used to specifically facilitate changes in monastic rule (C1), then a match can be created between the aggregate narrative dimension (e.g., the reinterpretation of tradition, or Re) and a specific category of change (e.g., change in monastic rule, or C1). By doing so, I created a set of matches among the three aggregate narrative dimensions: reinterpretation of tradition (Re), category change (Ca), frame change (Fr) with the three categories of change I coded in phase 1—(C1), (C2), and (C3). The result was nine matches: (C1-Re), (C1-Ca), (C1-Fr), (C2-Re), (C2-Ca), (C2-Fr), (C3-Re), (C3-Ca), and (C3-Fr). A match of (C1-Re) means that Master Monk T tried to reinterpret an element of tradition (Re) to facilitate change in one of the traditional monastic rules (C1).

**Phase 3: Identification of systematic patterns in Master Monk T’s historical narratives.** I conducted an additional analysis to develop a grounded theory of how a historical agent (i.e., Master Monk T) systematically used historical narratives to facilitate changes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During my third reading of the 78 narratives, I additionally noted the timing, source, and audience of narratives to uncover any further systematic patterns. For example, Buddha’s story on the wake-up time change was a part of Master Monk T’s interviews to a local community newspaper on January 13, 2017. In this case, information on the interview article could be divided into three types: timing (January 13, 2017), source (Buddha), and audience (local community). Next, I used this set of information to incorporate with the nine matches I created in the phase 2. All 78 narratives were re-analyzed in this way, which allowed me to systematically identify the narrative patterns I ultimately attempted to answer. In this final process, a fresh
theoretical insight was emerging with a broad, relevant set of existing organizational and sociological literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

3.4. Findings

The Current Organizational Changes Master Monk T Initiated at B-Temple

Over the main fieldwork from January 1 to March 19, 2017, some visiting Chong-Lim temple monks told me that Master Monk T was known as “the monk of administration.” He had served as a Master Monk in Korean temples of various sizes and had successfully transformed each of those organizations. A senior monk in one of the Chong-Lim temples even described him as having “the Midas touch,” noting, “regardless of which temple he joins, he ultimately revives the temple.” Master Monk T’s managerial philosophy was to give the temple back to society and remove a firmly taken-for-granted boundary between the temple and secular society. He described his philosophy in one of my interviews:

I think that regardless of religious beliefs and history, all religions should be rooted in society. If religion tried to rule over society, both religion and society would collapse altogether ... Buddhist temples only exist within society. In order to coexist, monks should pay attention to society and think about what benefits we can give to people ... It is not a problem of religious doctrines or monastic rules. It is a problem of how we live together.

His philosophical motto in running a Buddhist temple was a service mindset. His mission—to offer various religious services to people—was reflected in the change projects he initiated, which inevitably involved modifying elements of traditions and launching new temple business projects. His change initiatives, categorized as C1, C2, and C3, were implemented approximately a month after he moved to B-temple in April 2016. I illustrate them below. Table 5 summarizes the types of change.
Changes in monastic rule (C1). First, Master Monk T changed some deeply internalized monastic rules that had been taken for granted in Korean Buddhist history. A striking example was a change in B-temple’s wake-up time, from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. The earlier 3:00 a.m. remains the formal wake-up time in all other Korean Buddhist temples. In monastic life, the wake-up time has a significant symbolic meaning that reinforces strict discipline and historical tradition. Monks following the 3:00 a.m. rule show seriousness, strictness, and distinctiveness in their ordainment, the elements that Kelley (1986) and Iannaccone (1994) found in their studies of conventional Christian churches. I expected a certain philosophical motto behind the change, but remarkably, Master Monk T simply responded:

Do you wake up at 3:00 a.m. and go sleep at 8:30 p.m.? Nobody wakes up at 3:00 a.m. these days. People are much busier in the evening. Then, why do monks need to wake up at 3:00 a.m.?

The change essentially aimed to make monastic life relatively easier and more relaxed. It obviously aligned with secular people’s routines, assuming that most people start their daily routine after 5:00 a.m.

For conventional eating manners, on the other hand, Master Monk T decided to offer monks jam, butter, and some humble bread, and allowed them to listen to classical music during

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Table 5. Tradition and Ongoing Changes in B-temple

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Change</th>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in monastic rule (C1)</td>
<td>• 3:00 am wake-up time&lt;br&gt;• Total silence during mealtime&lt;br&gt;• Restricted choices of food&lt;br&gt;• Monks and believers separated at mealtime&lt;br&gt;• Meditation practiced in isolation</td>
<td>• 5:00 am wake-up time&lt;br&gt;• Free conversation and classical music at mealtime&lt;br&gt;• Bread and coffee allowed at mealtime&lt;br&gt;• Monks and believers together at mealtime&lt;br&gt;• Believers and monks meditate together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in role of Buddhism in society (C2)</td>
<td>• Buddhist temple as a meditative place&lt;br&gt;• Buddhist monk as a meditator</td>
<td>• Buddhist temple as a community hub&lt;br&gt;• Buddhist monks as a religious service provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in resource procurement (C3)</td>
<td>• Donation-based economy</td>
<td>• Collaboration with firms for profit-seeking activities</td>
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breakfast. More strikingly, senior monks and young Buddhist believers dined together and, during mealtimes, even talked to each other, albeit quietly. This observation offers three pieces of information on changes in monastic rule at B-temple. First, the choice of food was relaxed; second, eating manners were relaxed; third, the separation between monks and believers disappeared, at least during breakfast. Typically, Buddhist monastic mealtimes were extremely quiet and governed by strict Buddhist manners and food choices, often based on traditional Buddhist kitchen rules and diet, but B-temple mealtimes seemed very relaxed. Furthermore, the fact that secular people and monks ate together meant that B-temple monks were willing to lower their authority to mingle with the people. In other temples I observed in Korea, monks and believers were strictly separated at mealtimes. They sat in separate spaces or at separate tables to mark the different status within temples.

By implementing these changes, Master Monk T tried to bridge the gap between society and the temple; however, doing so was not easy because even small changes could send strong signals, often negatively, to both monks and secular members of the temple (e.g., Yue et al., 2018). In a sense, relaxing monastic rules was a double-edged sword, which related to an important question regarding how B-temple built relationships with the secular world. Master Monk T’s motivation behind the change was to provide a rather positive signal that the temple intended to get closer to society. For example, removing a cognitive boundary between monks and secular people in a breakfast setting contributes to people breaking solemn mood on the sacred and comes closer to monastic life.

The rule changes were related to Master Monk T’s distinctive philosophical views on the temple and society. He believed that Buddhist monks should develop a service mindset and that temples should completely open their doors to society and equally share responsibility for
running their organizations with members of local communities. His second change initiative explicitly supports this philosophy.

**Changes in the role of Buddhism in society (C2).** Master Monk T’s philosophy directly led to the second category of change. I labelled these change activities ‘the role of Buddhism in society,’ while Master Monk T and his fellow monks referred to these changes as ‘active community engagement.’ Through this engagement, Master Monk T began to conceptualize and implement the religious social responsibility of Buddhism. He often mentioned that he had come up with the idea a decade earlier, when he had discussed the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with a popular Korean business leader. The conversation seemed to have motivated him to think about the role of Buddhist temples in society. He explained his thinking: “If corporations that are created to make profits are willing to do something good for society, then what are we doing for society?” He argued that focusing on meditation has limited utility for helping others; only a few people interested in mindfulness can benefit from the practice. He often said, “We should give true help to society. Poor people need immediate financial needs. Local businessmen need ideas and resources. Students need scholarship.”

Based on his philosophy, he implemented unprecedented changes at B-temple on the basis of his approach to religious social responsibility. First, he opened Buddha’s meditation hall to the public and allowed people to freely meditate with the monks in the same space and with the same status. B-temple not only offered people a meditation-learning opportunity but also provided classes in traditional tea ceremony, temple food cooking, and gardening, which introduced community people to a unique cultural experience. Second, he benchmarked a common CSR metric (i.e., donations back to society) and proclaimed that, every year, B-temple would donate 10% of its annual budget to the community. Applying the concept of CSR from the
business world to temple life was not only innovative but also potentially controversial for monks. Although a nuance of adopting such a CSR practice differed from pursuing an IPO or the monk delivery service illustrated in Chinese and Japanese cases, respectively, it was still controversial because most monks tended to avoid secular practices and disliked incorporating them into monastic policy.

Overall, Master Monk T vigilantly sought ideas from the outside world and adopted practices or strategies that he felt might help renew the role of the temple in society over time. After the appointment of Master Monk T, B-temple began to develop new online education programs for believers, grant regular scholarships for community students, and offer free accommodation for elders. It made sense to him to apply concepts from the corporate world to temple management because, from a managerial perspective, he viewed running a temple to be a similar task to running a business. While concepts such as CSR are not new to the business world, applying them to temple management was an entirely new experiment.

**Changes in resource procurement (C3).** The most substantive change I observed in B-temple was a collaboration between B-temple and local companies, which aimed to create shared value. In the context of for-profit organizations, management scholars have long developed a novel idea of how for-profit organizations can create a shared value with non-profit sectors (e.g., Kramer & Porter, 2011). Conversely, as a religious organization, B-temple began to seek shared value with for-profit organizations, as an ongoing collaboration.

Master Monk T consistently claimed that Buddhist temples should play a hub role in local economies. He tried to revitalize the local economy by frequently offering local business leaders opportunities to collaborate with B-temple. During my stay at B-temple, seven local business leaders came to visit Master Monk T to discuss collaboration projects. Whereas collaboration in
most temples was limited to maintaining the temple building, operating the souvenir shop, or setting up religious events, the collaboration at B-temple was clearly aimed at profit and religious value for both parties.

For example, I participated in a specific collaboration project between B-temple and a local brewery that had a long history of offering traditional alcoholic beverages to local residents. The company faced potential bankruptcy because market share for a major product had declined dramatically. Master Monk T decided to revive this brewery despite the anticipated controversy. With support from Master Monk T, other senior monks and brewery executives created an independent team for this project. As a team member, I suggested some ideas related to new-product development and strategic positioning. The team ultimately decided to keep the original recipe and change their bottles from a traditional Korean shape to a narrow wine bottle shape. Accordingly, the target market changed from older consumers to the younger generation, and thus the positioning of the alcoholic drinks changed from traditional alcohol to upscale wine, to highlight exclusivity. This level of collaboration between monks and business leaders was highly unusual, but productive from a strategic perspective.

In sum, Master Monk T implemented significant changes at B-temple by modifying monastic rules, implementing a philosophy of religious social responsibility, and encouraging collaboration between religion and business. The underlying motivation behind all these changes was to give the temple back to society, which redefined the very meaning of traditional monastic life and the role of Buddhism in society.

Throughout the change process, however, both external and internal concerns arose because the opponents of change cautioned that the changes would ultimately destroy B-temple’s long historical traditions. During informal conversations, they often used specific words to describe
their reactions to current changes in B-temple, including strictness, legacy, identity, history, foundation, tradition, succession, and isolation. Therefore, to facilitate changes, Master Monk T also needed to address this resistance. He used historical narratives to mitigate the resistance and convince the opponents.

**Master Monk T’s Historical Narratives to Facilitate the Changes**

The 78 historical narratives Master Monk T spoke were aggregated as the three conceptual dimensions (narrative forms): reinterpretation of tradition (Re), category change (Ca), and frame change (Fr). Master Monk T systematically developed and used these aggregate narrative forms as “a way of sharing meaning during strategizing activity, of constituting an overall sense of direction or purpose, of refocusing individual and organizational identities, and of enabling and constraining the activities of actors” (Fenton & Langley, 2011: 1173).

Through the matching analysis between the current change initiatives and the three forms of narratives, I found that Master Monk T used a specific narrative form for a specific category of changes. Table 2 presents the result with the frequency statistics. As presented in the Table 6, Master Monk T used the reinterpretation narrative form mainly to facilitate monastic rule changes (C1-Re) (19 times), the category change narrative form to facilitate changes in role of Buddhism (C2-Ca) (12 times), and the frame change narrative form to facilitate changes in resource procurement (C3-Fr) (31 times). Overall, he made more efforts to transform monks’ cognitive frame on ongoing changes from ‘tradition versus change’ to ‘survival or not’ (37 times). This finding shows that Master Monk T strategically used narratives for a specific purpose, not randomly in random contexts. That is, he tended to carefully pick a historical story for a category of change. When someone was concerned about specific change, he immediately related a prepared narrative to convince the person who had raised the concern. In a sense, he
used the narrative as if it were a tool for a specific problem-solving task (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Bartel & Garud, 2009). Based on the results, I illustrate each case in more details.

| Table 6. Frequency Statistics of Matches between Change Codes and Narrative Codes |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                 | Reinterpretation (Re) | Category Change (Ca) | Frame Change (Fr) | Total Frequency |
| Monastic Rule (C1)              | 19 (C1-Re)         | 3 (C1-Ca)         | 2 (C1-Fr)        | 24 (30%)        |
| Role of Buddhism (C2)           | 2 (C2-Re)          | 12 (C2-Ca)        | 4 (C2-Fr)        | 18 (22%)        |
| Resource Procurement (C3)       | 0 (C3-Re)          | 5 (C3-Ca)         | 31 (C2-Fr)       | 36 (48%)        |
| Total                           | 21 (27%)           | 20 (26%)          | 37 (47%)         | 78 (100%)       |

**Reinterpretation of tradition to facilitate monastic rule changes (C1-Re).** Master Monk T’s first narrative strategy was to reinterpret the traditions held by most monks and believers at B-temple. Two salient traditional beliefs related to the meaning of monastic rule and meditation practice. Maintaining strict monastic rule and meditation practice were considered to follow an original form of Buddhist ordainment. To push his change initiative of relaxing monastic rules and opening the meditation hall to the public, Master Monk T mainly referred to past monks’ remarks. By doing so, he tried to change the meaning of monastic rule and meditation.

First, Master Monk T used Buddha’s story, arguably the most powerful authority on the tradition of Buddhist monastic life. To justify the new wake-up time, Master Monk T invoked historical anecdotes about Buddha in statements such as: “We are not changing our rules. We are going back to Buddha’s age,” “Buddha himself never woke up at 3:00 a.m.,” and “There is no evidence that monks in Buddha’s era woke up at 3:00 a.m.” Master Monk T intentionally avoided using the words *change, modernization, or innovation.* Instead, he rhetorically focused on why the 3:00 a.m. wake-up time is not a tradition that all Buddhist temples must follow. Thus, Master Monk T framed his change initiative not as change, but as a returning to the roots of differently interpreted tradition of Buddhism. He recognized the power of language during one of
our conversations:

Yes. What you see is something new. It is change. But, you should never make people feel that it is something new ... You shouldn’t say “I want to change old streets in Paris,” or “It is time to renovate the city.” Instead, you could say: “What I am doing is not something new for change. This is the way we keep tradition.” The action is the same, but language changes how people think [about the action].

He also used Buddha as a source of historical narrative to justify the open-door policy along with his religious service mindset. In doing so, he also questioned the taboo: why Buddhist temples should be far from secularism, noting that

Buddhism has become too much isolated from society. It is not what Buddha tried to achieve. Yes, we should rethink our tradition. That is why we are going back to the origin. Buddha himself did a lot of collaboration that aimed to help others. Many people came to temple and engaged in temple work and of course meditate together ... Farmers, merchants, engineers and bankers... These people enjoyed meditating with monks, and monks welcomed them. Buddha said: “The Buddhist monastery is not ours. It exists for all of us.” We should open our sacred to people as Buddha did. That is the true shape of Buddhism.

Master Monk T used Buddha’s anecdotes to encourage people to rethink the true meaning of tradition. He highlighted that in Buddha’s time, the monastic organization was, compared with today, more dynamic and open to secular society. In a sense, Master Monk T went back to Buddha’s age and used his anecdotes to legitimize the new wake-up time and the open-door policy.

The second source of the reinterpretation of tradition narratives was the previous B-temple Master Monk M, which Master Monk T used mainly to change the conventional meaning of practicing meditation. Master Monk M had been ordained at B-temple in the early 1900s and was known for his idea that “every human activity could be meditation if he truly concentrated on whatever he is doing.” Master Monk M viewed a meditation practice as being present in a chef’s efforts, a singer’s practice, an artist’s agony, a scholar’s work, and even a cartoonist’s drawing. He even believed artists, singers, and actors could teach meditation. From his perspective, it was
not necessary to be a monk to teach meditation, an idea that aimed to both lower the authority of Buddhist meditators and redefine the traditional meaning of meditation practice.

Master Monk T used Master Monk M’s philosophy to help reinterpret the traditional meditation view that practicing meditation should be conducted with a strict posture. His aim was to encourage monks to increase their participation in social services instead of spending too much time on their strict posture meditation in a meditation hall. During speeches in senior monks’ committee meetings, Master Monk T asked his audience to define the meaning of meditation, and then rhetorically used Master Monk M’s idea that everything can be meditation, as in the following excerpt:

> Our Master Monk M spoke that monastic life is just a tool for meditation. He sometimes practiced meditation in restaurants, schools and here and there...He liked calligraphy and said that doing calligraphy can be a different form of meditation, too. Drawing calligraphy, Monk T realized that anything can be meditation...We don’t need to approach meditation in that way [a strict posture with formal guidelines]. If calligraphy is a kind of meditation, why shouldn’t cooking, running and other activities we do be meditative activities?

The conventional way to practice meditation is to keep a strict posture under the formal guidance of a meditation Master, which reflects the tradition of Korean meditative Buddhism. Master Monk T slightly changed Master Monk M’s philosophy to frame meditation as a fun activity that can be related to other secular activities.

**Category change to facilitate changes in role of Buddhism (C2-Ca).** While Master Monk T related stories of Buddha and Master Monk M to facilitate changes in monastic rules and in the meaning of meditation by reinterpreting tradition, he used a specific period of Korean Buddhism to change monks’ firm mindset that religious organizations must be distinctive and unique so that temple management needs a different way of management and administration. In B-temple’s regular committee meetings, monks often highlighted the distinctiveness of the Buddhist temple, thereby mildly challenging Master Monk’s change initiatives, including the adoption of CSR and
the new tourist business.

The distinctiveness argument fundamentally aligns with the conventional view on managing religious organizations (Beckford, 1985). Senior B-temple monks who held conventional views reinforced the traditional identity of the Buddhist temple and monks’ traditional role in society. From their viewpoint, Buddhist temples are considered a monk’s community, encouraging strict and collective meditation practice. Also, Buddhist monks are assumed to be meditators. In this view, the role of a Buddhist temple should be to support the monks’ meditative progress, and the monks’ role should be to meditate. However, Master Monk T claimed that all religious organizations must be embedded in secular society by rhetorically removing boundaries. He viewed Buddhist temples as general organizations that need to fulfill their social responsibility to serve society and respond to external demands on organization. A strong signal of this change was his idea of adopting a CSR practice.

In doing so, Master Monk T drew on events from specific historical periods, especially to legitimize his adoption of CSR policy as a different form of religious social responsibility. He used stories from the Goryeo Dynasty period (918–1392) to illustrate how Buddhism can serve as a dynamic hub for diverse ideas and cultures. Under the Goryeo Dynasty, no strict boundary separated secular and monastic life. Buddhist monks actively engaged in arts and music, various scholarly pursuits, construction, politics, and even military activities. For example, Buddhist scholarly works from the time demonstrate that Buddhist monks freely collaborated with scholars, artists, and writers. Buddhist philosophy was enriched through intellectual debate and shared among various social classes. Historical evidence shows that, during this period, even women participated in scholarly debates with Buddhist monks. Master Monk T remarked to a local newspaper reporter:
In the period of Goryeo Dynasty, Buddhist temples were located in city, so that people come and go temple freely. It was not a strict meditation hall. Temple at the time was a school, hospital, and community hub. But, still, nobody questioned Buddhist temples were secularized at the time. Nobody questioned that the openness was not Buddhism ... Temple was a community hub, not an isolated place only for practicing meditation.

During the Goryeo Dynasty, the interdisciplinary exchanges of scholarly ideas from the realms of art, literature, and economics and across social classes enabled Buddhism to become a cultural focus in people’s daily lives. Meditation was only a part of monastic life at the time. Thus, Master Monk T drew heavily on stories from this period to change current beliefs about the temple and its role. By reframing of the identity of organization and the role of organizational members, Master Monk T shifted the conventional definition of Buddhist temple and monk to a new definition that temple is also a common organization that can take the role of a school, a hospital, and even a for-profit organization.

**Frame change to facilitate changes in resource procurement (C3-Fr).** The last narrative repertory Master Monk T used was to change the dominant cognitive frame, “tradition versus change” to a new frame—“survival or not.” While the prior narrative forms (the reinterpretation of tradition and category change) were still spoken under the frame of “tradition versus change,” his effort, here, fundamentally aimed to transform organizational members’ cognitive frame on changes from somewhat philosophical and religious issues to simply a matter of survival or not. By doing so, he could avoid a philosophical debate on change, framing it practically and simply as a survival issue.

His narrative source of the frame change was the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). He referred to this period in multiple ways and in multiple settings. Specifically, he described how Buddhism had survived for 500 years, despite harsh persecution under the rulers of the Joseon Dynasty, who had introduced China’s Neo-Confucianism as a ruling philosophy. Many Buddhist temples
were reduced and even destroyed by the Dynasty in the process of reinforcing Neo-Confucianism. Master Monk T systematically used this period to stress the importance of current business works. In an interview with a Buddhist newspaper, he noted that:

Monastic communities in Joseon could be self-sufficient because they work very hard. Nowadays, I could not see monks working hard with people like volunteers and employees. They just spend too much time in meditation hall. I don’t mean it is wrong, but, we need to carefully think about the meaning of labor at the time ... Why did monks work very hard at the time? They knew that unless the worked, Buddhist temples will disappear.

This quote is consistent with my informal conversations with Master Monk T, who often remarked that hard work was an important aspect of monastic life. He mildly criticized the current emphasis on the meditation practice as being biased, adamantly declaring that one reason why Buddhist temples are struggling to survive is simply because monks do not work hard. By relating stories about hard times under the Joseon Dynasty period, he tried to justify why monks should engage in business work, even if it means sacrificing their meditation schedule and violating conventional monastic rule. He stressed that Buddhism survived under the Joseon Dynasty because the monks worked hard.

On the other hand, Master Monk T also interpreted the same period, the Joseon Dynasty, to illustrate the reason behind prosecutions during that Dynasty. His selective interpretation of the period shows how history can be differently interpreted and used as a form of rhetoric for the present actor’s purpose. Thus, whereas Master Monk T focused on the survival of Buddhism during the Joseon Dynasty to highlight the importance of current business-related works he initiated in B-temple, he attributed the harsh prosecution by rulers of the Joseon Dynasty to Buddhist society’s failure at the time to accept other ideas and assimilate with society. His narrative repertory was that, under the Joseon Dynasty, Buddhist temples simply failed to adapt to the changing environment because they had lost sight of the external environment. At one of
the committee meetings, he said:

History always gives us a lesson. At that time [the Joseon Dynasty period], Confucianism was the principle of society. It was the way people lived. Buddhism collapsed because it failed to accept Confucian values ... Nowadays, capitalism is a principle of society, and it is the way people live. The fact that it cannot be aligned with Buddhism does not mean that we should get away from that. It is always easy to deny something different, but sometimes we need to accept a different idea just to live together. If not, we will repeat the Joseon period again.

He often ended conversations or speeches by saying, “Accepting opposite values is the ultimate mercy Buddhism has taught.” In justifying collaboration with for-profit organizations, he said that “Prosperity sometimes requires finding a creative way to work with those who have different beliefs and aims.” Thus, Master Monk T focused on different aspects of the Joseon Dynasty based on his rhetorical goals: he focused on the resilience of Buddhism during a long period of persecution to justify the importance of doing work, and the failure of Buddhism during the same period to stress the importance of accepting external ideas and values. Although doing well in business is not a core Buddhist teaching, Master Monk T believed that business success was necessary to survive.

3.5. Interpretation and transferability of Master Monk T’s historical narratives

To explore the role of historical narratives in facilitating organizational changes, I chose an unconventional context—located high in the mountains, a Korean Buddhist temple that confronts the dilemma between change and tradition. Recent ethnographies have reported insightful findings from various unconventional contexts such as local tea producers in East Africa (Kim, Bansal, & Haugh, 2018), Canada’s first daycare facility (Lawrence & Dover, 2015), the United Nations climate conference (Schüssler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), a natural-food cooperative (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014), a Finnish city (Jalonen et al., 2018), and a drug court (McPherson & Sauder, 2013). Although such unconventional settings enable organization scholars to expose their theoretical patterns more visibly (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010), the transferability of the
finding has been a controversial issue (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). For these reasons, I devote more space to articulate how the finding can be interpreted and transferable to other organizational settings.

The fundamental insight of this study is that Master Monk T used the three historical narrative forms—the reinterpretation of tradition (Re), category change (Ca), and frame change (Fr)—systematically and strategically, not in an emerging and improvisatory way. He developed the narratives from different sources of history and used them to facilitate a specific area of changes

First, the *reinterpretation narrative* is intended to encourage organizational members to rethink the present organizational rules and practices that they have deeply and firmly taken for granted. An interpretive approach to history posits that the past can be converted to history only when interpreted by actors in the present (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). In an organizational setting, it is often an organizational leader who infuses meanings into the organizational past.

Drawing upon 80-year archival data of a Canadian financial cooperative (Desjardins Group), Basque and Langley (2018) documented five modes of founder invocations, showing how the present managers strategically used the founder’s ideas in different contexts for different purposes. Progressive invocations among the five modes of invocations were used to refresh enduring elements of organizations and thus promote changes, as the managers “recast” the founder’s ideas for their present purposes (Basque & Langley, 2018). In a similar vein, Hatch and Schultz (2017) theorized a micro-process model of how managers “rediscover” and “recontextualize” historical evidence ultimately for “re-embedding” artifacts in the Carlsberg Group history.

The mechanism of recasting, rediscovering, recontextualizing, and reinterpreting the past
largely contradicts the classic organizational theory that implies the longer the history, the greater
the burden managers need to overcome to implement change (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1984;
Stinchcombe, 1965). Conversely, my findings suggest that the longer the history, the richer the
resources that managers can manipulate to develop narratives and use them to facilitate change.
Scholars suggest that long-standing organizations inevitably experience numerous environmental
changes and are influenced by the legacies of multiple founders and rebuilders; and that, over
time, those legacies form multiple organizational traditions (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). The
process often creates confusion among present organizational actors who search for a single,
clear organizational tradition. Some traditional values and rules that the organizational actors
mindlessly follow might even turn out to be merely invented (Hobsbawm, 1983). Consequently,
present actors would do well to skillfully find the space to develop their own collective memory
by drawing on their interpretive and narrative skills.

Steve Jobs, the late CEO of Apple, for example, effectively used narrative skills to launch
new products. When he conducted one of his iconic new-product presentations, he would trace
the company’s innovative history and spend considerable time relating how the new products
both built on previous Apple products and simultaneously destroyed the tradition. In doing so, he
reinterpreted the past innovations and past values to differentiate the fresh values in the new
products. The newness became salient through his presentation, which was literally a historical
narrative show. His reinterpretation narrative took advantage of Apple’s relatively long history in
the IT industry. Similar tactics were essentially at play when the leaders of Desjardins Group and
Carlsberg Group recast or recontextualized the past.

Second, the category change narrative form, which aims to cognitively change internal
members’ self-categorization of their organization, is useful for enhancing a strong collective
identity because the act of self-categorization involves members in a cognitive process of considering “who we are” and “what we do” (Albert & Whetten 1985; Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 2011). Glynn and Navis (2013: 1127) note that “a categorical perspective defines the organization’s identity in terms of its membership in one or more groupings (or categories) and, in particular, its embodiment of (or assimilation to) the categorical prototype.” Often, top managers’ rhetoric formulates the self-categorical prototype (Verge & Wry, 2014). In this sense, Master Monks can variously self-categorize their Buddhist temples from a very narrow, specific category e.g., a Buddhist meditative community to a broad, general category, which may include a religious organization, a non-profit organization, or even just a long-standing organization. Such categorization is linked to definitions of “who we are” and, in doing so, can also determine “what we do” (Glynn & Navis, 2013).

My findings show that most conventional B-temple monks tended to self-categorize their organization as a distinctive meditative community i.e., the narrow organizational category that requires separation and even isolation from secular society. They believed that Buddhist monks should not adopt secular norms, cultures, and rules because such secular attributes would damage the sacred. Although I did not find any indications of systematic collective action, these monks reacted negatively to internal changes related to secularization. Master Monk T, recognizing their cognitive resistance, tried to change the firmly rooted category of religious organizations from being considered distinctive to being accepted as a common organizational citizen of the whole society. His narrative, here, rhetorically broadens the core stakeholders of religious organizations from a narrow community of loyal believers and local members to a wider, general socio-political environment. The narrative encourages organizational members to eliminate their cognitive discomfort and accept new tasks that have not yet been cognitively categorized into
This finding aligns with the change movement among North American churches in the 1960s. Church priests seemed to use a similar rhetorical strategy, although their narratives were not necessarily based on historical stories. Beckford (1985: 133) described “a declining sense of the distinctiveness of religious organizations as social phenomenon. They are treated little differently from other kinds of organization; and they are expected to perform like other organizations.” In illustrating the U.S. Catholic change movement in the 1970s, Bartunek and Ringuest (1989: 546) commented that “many of these [Roman Catholic Women’s] orders have changed from being somewhat closed organizationally to considerably more open.”

These works reveal the role of priests’ rhetoric in changing the self-categorization of church from “distinctiveness” to “openness.” The change resided in “the church’s understanding of its relationship with the world” (Bartunek, 1984: 358), whereby, through repetitive rhetorical strategy, priests and monks cognitively changed the self-category of religious organization. Whereas external stakeholders still categorized both Christian churches and Buddhist temples as distinctive religious organizations, internal members’ self-categorization would change. By rhetorically redefining the organizational category in much broader settings internally, organizational members are more comfortable in accepting new tasks and norms, thereby facilitating new trials and changes.

Third, the *frame change* narrative form transforms members’ cognitive framing on issues of ongoing changes—for example, from a value-laden issue such as “tradition versus change” to a technical issue such as “survival or not.” Walsh (1995: 281) defines a cognitive frame as “a mental template that individuals impose on an information environment to give it form and meaning.” The cognitive frame involves a series of cognitive mechanisms or processes,
determining which information actors initially pay attention to (Ocasio, 1997), how they interpret the information (Daft & Weick, 1984), and finally the meaning they assign to the interpreted information (Sonenshein, 2010). In this process, Walsh (1995: 281) noted that “the cognitive structures generated from experience affect individuals’ abilities to attend to, encode, and make inferences about new information.” The conventional B-temple monks framed the ongoing changes by anchoring their frame at the issue of “tradition versus change,” which may be based on their past experience on similar issues. By framing ongoing changes not as a philosophical, religious issue, but as an issue of survival, Master Monk T effectively aroused awareness of the current situation and avoided religious debates around the changes.

The notion of framing resonates with the central idea of interpretive schemes (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988). Organizational members tend to act in alignment with “a set of ideas, beliefs and values that shape prevailing conceptions of what an organization should be doing, of how it should be doing it and how it should be judged” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1988: 295). The framing of an organizational issue is linked to how organizational members cope with the issue and evaluate their actions. Through storytelling related to a particular historical period, Master Monk T shifted the current issues of changes from the framing of morality to the framing of survival. In other words, his narratives triggered organizational members to anchor their interpretive scheme not on religious justification but on survival.

More broadly, moral problems and financial concerns lead to tensions in organizational growth, especially in hybrid organizations (e.g., Ashforth & Reingen, 2014). Scholars have explored how managers deal with the tensions cognitively (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014) and structurally (Smith & Besharov, 2017). Framing the tension as a survival issue is a powerful rhetorical tool since it diverts members’ attention to solely an issue of financial sustainability.
Then, even an organizational tradition can be understood as a source of competitive advantage or disadvantage (Miller, 2002). The frame change narrative led Master Monk T to effectively shun the philosophical argument, which has been also seen in recent CSR literature (see Bansal & Song, 2017; Frederick, 1994; Kramer & Porter, 2011). For example, the concept of corporate shared value (CSV) enables managers to shift the moral component of CSR to become solely a strategic issue, by changing the dominant cognitive frame of CSR as a moral issue to a newly emerging cognitive frame in which corporate responsibility can be strategically fulfilled.

3.6. Discussion

This research was motivated by repetitive observations that a Master Monk at a traditional Korean Buddhist temple used patterned narrative forms to defend, explain, and justify his various specific change initiatives. To systematically analyze his narratives, I developed a series of research questions to explore how an organizational actor interprets historical myths, stories, and legends; develops them as narrative sources; and systematically narrates these interpretations to facilitate organizational changes.

Organizational actors are those historical agents who reinforce or reconstruct their collective memory and use it to alter the path dependency of organizational future (Maclean et al., 2016; Mena et al., 2016; Rowlinson et al., 2014). This perspective allows scholars to explore even the distant past as a living archive and thus helps capture the importance of non-linear temporality in understanding present organizational phenomena (Kieser, 1994; Kipping & Üsdiken 2014; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016; Zald, 1990).

The traditional Korean Buddhist temple, B-temple, has approximately 1,500 year of history. This context is highly unconventional in management studies (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010), yet offers a useful setting to unpack the role of historical narratives in organizational change. Miller
(2002: 438) pointed out that “regardless of the origin and nature of their beliefs, the survival and growth of religious organizations depend on access to resources from the external environment.” Similar to other organizations, Buddhist temples cannot survive unless their organizations adapt to the changing environment. Such adaptation inevitably involves organizational change and innovation.

When B-temple Master Monk T initiated changes, he confronted implicit opposition from those who adhered to tradition. In response, he developed three forms of historical narratives to mitigate the opposition. By systematically analyzing his narratives, this study provides an explanation of how the past offers managers a rich storytelling tool (Suddaby et al., 2010) or living archive (Rowlinson et al., 2014) that can facilitate changes. This finding both confirms and extends our understandings on an enabling role of the past in organizational changes.

In extending this study, I develop the concept of a historical toolkit, integrated with relevant organizational and sociological literature. The idea of historical toolkit should be subjected to future research. Thus, I further discuss potential directions of the future research.

**Theorizing the Historical Toolkit as a Change Facilitator**

In integrating these findings with the relevant literature more broadly to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I now conceptualize the notion of a historical toolkit, which I define as a repertoire of historical myths, storytelling, legends, and anecdotes that actors deliberately interpret and strategically draw from to construct or justify their actions through systematic narrative forms. In doing so, I draw on the cultural toolkit literature, which has been well established in sociology (Swidler, 1986). My final iteration between data and theory ultimately saturated around the potential intersection of historical narrative and cultural toolkit literature, which I hope best frames my findings on the historical agency of organizational study.
A central idea of historical narratives suggests that history can be a source of change. This idea sharply contrasts with the classic organizational theory that conceptualizes the past as a fixed entity, a given context, or an exogenous variable that managers cannot control (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1984). This study contributes to the historical narrative literature by offering a novel agency mechanism of how organizational agents who are physically and societally constrained by linear-temporal structure inversely use the structure to facilitate change.

In Buddhist temples, 1,500 years of time have been inscribed into their structure, fossilized as symbolic legacy, monastic rule, and ritual. Whereas the structure supports actors’ predictable and legitimate behavioral patterns, it simultaneously constrains agents’ choice (Parsons, 1951). In Buddhist temples, the structure has been historically codified as three independent texts: the teachings of Buddha and his fellow monks (Dhamma in Pāli), the law-like regulatory rules for monastic life (Vinaya in Pāli), and a set of Buddhist moral acts (Sīla in Pāli). The texts have been passed down to subsequent generations of monks as strong and sacred. In this regard, history is explicitly structuralized in long-standing organizations, which undergo multiple generations of enactors, thereby formulating a tension between “structure” and “agent” or between “determinism” and “free will.” My findings, in this context, demonstrate how agents draw on historicality or temporality to overcome the structural-temporal constraint. This study, thus, raises further discussion of the age-old problem of sociology—the tension between structure and agent (Battilana, 2006; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Seo & Creed, 2002).

In sociology, culture has been quite differently conceptualized. On the one hand, classic structuralism suggests that a social system presents a single dominant culture and that the culture gradually becomes a macro societal structure by shaping individuals’ desires and deeply held
assumptions, and offering social actors socially acceptable values and behavioral patterns (Parsons, 1951; Schein, 1985; Wrong, 1961). On the other hand, cultural sociologists suggest that agents can strategically use culture to seek their own purposes (Swidler, 1986). Here, culture is described not as an abstract macro structural force but as a tangible tool-like asset, as if individuals can keep it in their toolkit and use it anytime it is needed. In her founding article, Swidler (1986: 273) described that “culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or ‘toolkit’ of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action.’” Drawing on Swidler’s thesis, Weber (2005: 228) suggests that organizational culture also “supplies actors with the means—the tools—for solving practical problems and for navigating their environment.”

In a sense, the notion of a cultural toolkit shares a similar epistemology with the historical toolkit, in that both concepts fundamentally highlight the role of agent choice. Agents’ narratives translate both culture and history into cultural and historical toolkits, but an important difference is that the former analyzes the structure’s spatiality, whereas the latter focuses on the structure’s temporality.

In organization studies, for example, research on the cultural toolkit has centered on how organizational actors draw from and utilize a subculture outside of the organizational boundary as a set of cultural tools (Harrison & Corley, 2011; Kellogg, 2011; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011). Binder (2002) detailed how teachers in a public education system used the external Afrocentrism movement as a cultural toolkit when introducing a new curriculum to a dominant European-based curriculum. Katzenstein (1998) examined how women in military service embraced the external feminist movement and used it to support equal opportunity treatment rather than continuing the existing institutional framework, which afforded special treatment to
women. These studies demonstrate how specific organizational actors have actually used external cultural changes, which are often triggered by activists, for their purposes.

The cultural toolkit literature shows that the source of the cultural toolkit exists in space outside of an organizational boundary as a form of culture, whereas the source of the historical toolkit exists in time outside of the present temporality as a form of history. This contrast raises entirely different discussions on agency and an agent’s capability. Whereas the usability of the cultural toolkit depends on both individuals’ rich cultural background or experience and their ability to capture cultural changes in the external environment (e.g., activists’ movements), the usability of the historical toolkit lies in developing both novel insights on the past and the storytelling ability to translate factual historical data to living archive. Here, temporality itself refers to an agent’s capability rather than a context to explain other organizational phenomenon.

In fact, the sociology of time has long emphasized the importance of temporality to explain an agent’s action (Adam, 1994; Ancona et al., 2001; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Mead, 1932; Zerubavel, 1981). One approach suggests that time is a sort of socio-materiality that is socially and cognitively constructed as a result of agents’ subjective cognition rather than a physical entity that is standardizable, measurable, and context-free. Mead (1932), for example, defined time as a multi-level flow of nested events, rejecting the mechanical Newtonian perspective on temporality. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) theorized time as a relative notion that emerges through intersubjective processes between the situational context and actors’ subjective cognition toward the context. Drawing on such a perspective, Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 970) define human agency as follows:

The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing
historical situations

Interestingly, when Master Monk T initiated his change plans, his temporality was toward the future imaginary state of Korean Buddhism and B-temple; yet, when he facilitated the ongoing changes, he did not appeal to the imaginary state of the future. Rather, he returned to the past, found historical stories, and developed them as persuasive narrative tools to realize the future trajectories of action in the present.

Based on the temporal perspective of agency, this study essentially identifies the toolkits that organizational actors can use to justify changes while they are simultaneously constrained by time-yielding structures—tradition and legacy. Here, the toolkits potentially available for actors can be a cultural toolkit that utilizes spatiality (Swidler, 1986), a network toolkit that exploits relationality (Burt 2009), an institutional toolkit that uses legitimacy (McPherson & Sauder, 2013), and a political toolkit that relies on external power (Kellogg, 2011). Among them may be the historical toolkit I theorize in this study on the basis of temporality.

3.7. REFERENCES


Studies, 32: 1171-1196.


CHAPTER 4: SELF-ADAPTIVE PROCESS AS RESILIENCE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF BUDDHIST TEMPLES

4.1. Introduction

A Buddhist temple is a unique organizational system that still retains its historical identity and particular belief system. Entering the Buddhist ordination means immediately and completely throwing away secular desires, values, and moral systems, the act Buddhist monks call ‘the great renunciation.’ The symbolic meaning of ordination including shaving hair means that monks reborn in a monastic community. However, their organization is historically integrated to a wider institutional system of secular society from which the organization can obtain financial and material resources. Such nuanced relationship of the secular and the sacred presents a practical dilemma to Buddhist temples, especially as the relationship becomes highly interdependent in contemporary society. If a Buddhist temple is too far away from the secular world, it would lose the support from the society. If it is too close, it is likely to be secularized and even corrupted.

Macro societal changes can make the dilemma even more challenging. The dilemma sometimes enforces Buddhist temples to decide change or not. To illustrate, the 1998 Asian financial crisis greatly decreased the number of tourists and visitors to Buddhist temples, which subsequently exacerbated financial conditions of the temples. Since then, strategic choice of Buddhist temples has been largely varied: some temples strictly stick to isolation policy to protect traditional monastic life, yet others choose to change by adopting capitalistic market system. Here, the 1998 financial crisis was an exogenous trigger or disturbance Buddhist monks must address to sustain their organizational system.

The concept of resilience offers a useful theoretical compass for understanding such phenomenon (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; Linnenluecke, 2015; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe,
Resilience is defined as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedback” (Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004: 4). According to the definition, resilience means an adaptive process of organizational system to cope with the dilemma of ‘system rigidity’ and ‘system flexibility’. The system rigidity enables an organizational system to maintain its core identity and functioning whereas the system flexibility allows the system to buffer environmental changes over an adaptive process.

A number of ecologists shows that an ecosystem can be resilient by completing an adaptive cycle that allows the system to keep its core identity and functioning rigidly (i.e., system rigidity) while simultaneously changing to adapting to external changes (i.e., system flexibility) (Carpenter, Walker, Anderies, & Abel, 2001; Holling, 1973). The process takes an extended period of time because the system needs to reorganize existing resource distribution and reconfigure tightly coupled interconnectivity to renew system’s regime (Carpenter, Kinne, & Wieser, 2003; Gunderson & Holling, 2002). New system’s structure and order are often emergently formed as a result of this process (Carpenter et al., 2003). But, the adaptive process is largely missing in the existing literature. The past studies focus on how organizations quickly bounce back from a specified external shock. The studies certainly shed light on recovery aspect of resilience, yet neglect its adaptation aspect.

Drawing upon an ecological lens on system resilience, I explore the adaptive process of organizational system when an organization experiences a set of significant external changes. I specifically ask: how do organizations adapt to environmental changes while simultaneously protecting their core identity over an adaptive process? In an attempt to dig deeper into internal mechanisms of the process, I conducted an eight-month ethnographic fieldwork in three Korean
Buddhist temples. I analyzed our field data to investigate how the three temples have adapted to changed societal landscape since the 1998 financial crisis while still remaining as a traditional monastic community.

I begin by specifying how management researchers use the resilience concept to reflect the resilience of organizational system and pinpointing what is missing. I, then, present empirical context and findings. I close this paper by discussing implications of ecological perspective on organizational resilience.

4.2. Two different ways of conceptualizing system resilience

Resilience has been applied to various fields of research including ecology (Holling, 1973), metallurgy (Callister 2003), engineering (Hollnagel et al. 2006), strategic management (Carmeli & Markman, 2011) and organization studies (Sutcliffe & Vohus, 2003). Although the concept is described as the same term, these studies imply contradicting conceptual spaces of resilience both theoretically and empirically. Under the same concept, some studies focus on withstandingness of system against a specific external shock whereas others aim to reconstruct a long-term adaptive process of system over environmental changes.

One of the early commentators, Holling (1996), observed such bifurcation and explicitly relabelled the concept as engineering resilience and ecological resilience. He argued that the two concepts now share very different assumptions, theoretical mechanisms and empirical implications. Whereas engineering resilience contains engineers’ desire for a system’s permanent stability at a single equilibrium, ecological resilience assumes that a certain range of fluctuation between multi-equilibria is the nature of resilient system (Holling, 1996). Thus, resilience is one word, yet it contains contradicting meanings and implications. Scholars accordingly ask a different set of research questions.
Taking Holling’s argument (1996) substantively into account, I view that organizational resilience literature is largely skewed to engineering resilience thereby missing another conceptual space—ecological resilience. This is a significant problem because by reflecting a limited conceptual space of the concept, the whole field of studies misses much richer conceptual meanings of organizational resilience. I further articulate this point by juxtaposing ecological resilience with engineering resilience. Table 7 compares the two concepts.

**Table 7 Engineering Resilience and Ecological Resilience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Engineering resilience</th>
<th>Ecological resilience</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>“The ability of a system to <em>return</em> to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance; the more rapidly it <em>returns</em> and the less it fluctuates, the more stable it would be” (Holling, 1973: 14, italic added).</td>
<td>“The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedback” (Walker et al., 2004: 4).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“The capacity to cope with unanticipated dangers after they have become manifest learning to <em>bounce back</em>” (Wildavsky, 1988: 77, italic added).</td>
<td>“The capability to self-renew over time through innovation” (Reimmoeller &amp; Van Baardwijk, 2005: 61)</td>
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<td>“The positive psychological capacity to <em>rebound</em>, to <em>‘bounce back’</em> from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002: 702, italic added).</td>
<td>“The dynamic capacity of organizational adaptability that grows and develops over time” (Gittell, Cameron, Lim, &amp; Rivas, 2006: 303).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“The capacity to <em>rebound</em> from adversity strengthened and more resourceful” (Sutcliffe &amp; Vogus, 2003: 97, italic added).</td>
<td>“The capacity of a system to absorb change yet maintain identity and a certain degree of integrity” (Desjardins, Barker, Lindo, Dieleman, &amp; Dussault, 2015:163).</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conceptual implication</strong></th>
<th>Bouncing back</th>
<th>Paradoxical capacity of change and stability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumption</strong></td>
<td>Stability, a single equilibrium</td>
<td>Fluctuation, multiple equilibria</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Measure</strong></td>
<td>Return time</td>
<td>Whether a system balances system rigidity and flexibility simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphic</strong></td>
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![A single equilibrium](image1.png)  

![Multiple equilibria](image2.png)
What a particular set of organizational factors lead an organizational system to be less fluctuated and to quickly bounce back from an external shock to an initial equilibrium state?

How do organizations simultaneously maintain their core identity (and/or functioning) while changing to adapt to external environment?

**Research focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empirical implication</td>
<td>Organizational resilience is system’s recovery capacity against an exogenous shock.</td>
<td>Organizational resilience is system’s adaptive capacity over an evolutionary process in the midst of (often multiple) external changes.</td>
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* adopted from Desjardins et al. (2015) and King (AMR, 1995)

**Engineering resilience**

The etymology of resilience traces back to the Latin word of *resilire*, meaning to ‘rebound’, ‘bouncing back’, or ‘return’. Engineering resilience defined as “the capacity to rebound from adversity” (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003: 97) precisely reflects the etymology. According to the definition, a system is resilient as it is less damaged and fluctuated from an exogenous shock: thus, resilient organizations quickly return to an initial state. In this definition, stability is assumed and even desired. System stability indicates that a system’s governing regime, pattern or variable is technically fixed at a single equilibrium. A single equilibrium is internally given when a system is designed. All internal interactions are basically designed to achieve the given equilibrium to fully function as a whole system. In this sense, Holling (1994: 14) defined the engineering resilience as “the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance.” Aligning with Holling’s idea (1991), Desjardins et al (2015: 152) in their recent review described that from an engineering perspective it is desirable for a system to quickly turns back to stay “at or near a single global equilibrium”.

A single equilibrium assumption highlights system stability against an external shock rather than system change and adaptation. That is because change inherently arouses internal fluctuation, and the fluctuation causes system instability. System scholars demonstrate that searching for a new adaptive fit involves in resource redistribution at a system’s level. This
process is inevitably instable. Thus, the faster a system turns back to a single equilibrium, the more resilient a system would be since the quick turning back arouses less internal turbulence and fluctuation.

In organizational study, scholars borrow a resilience concept from such engineering resilience perspective. Mostly, resilience has been used to explain organization’s recovery power when the system experiences a significant external shock. Scholars often operationalize resilience by return time that measures how quickly an organizational system returns to an initial state (equilibrium) (e.g., DesJardine, Bansal, & Yang, 2015). This way of operationalization explicitly reflects engineering resilience. Scholars first specifies an exogenous shock including Spanish flu (Rao & Greve, 2017), university shooting incident (Powley, 2009), 2008 global financial crises (DesJardine, Bansal, & Yang, 2017) and extreme climate change (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2012) and then identify what organizational factors enable a system to stabilize at an equilibrium thereby bouncing back from the disturbances quickly. Then, variance can be founded: some organizations with specific attribute quickly bounces back while others without the attributes suffer much longer and more from the disturbance.

As a result, a number of the past empirical studies allow scholars to establish a causal mechanism between a set of organizational attributes and the bouncing back time. Engineering resilience, therefore, means a recovery capacity of organizational system. It is not surprising that organization scholars use the concept integrating with risk management and crisis management.

**Ecological resilience**

Whereas engineering resilience implies a system’s *recovery* capacity, ecological resilience implies system’s *adaptation* capacity. Engineers tend to view external change as an exogenous variable and focus more on a focal system’s functioning whereas ecologists aim to understand
how a focal system coevolves with its surrounding systems on which the focal system relies (Holling, 2001). In system ecology, for example, exploring potential mutuality between a focal system e.g. a small pond ecosystem and its macro system e.g. global weather system is one of the central research agendas, rather than finding a causal mechanism among a set of variables (Holling & Gunderson, 2002). From such a perspective, an organization is seen as an autonomous system, yet also nested in much larger systems such as macroeconomic, political, and broader socio-cultural system that provides organization with resources. To be ecologically resilient, a small system needs to keep its core functioning and adapt to external changes, thereby simultaneously remaining as a part of the large system and an independent entity with a clear boundary.

The different approach to the concept is also related to setting different research questions. The engineering approach to resilience aims to reveal a causal relationship of a certain organizational attribute and quick bouncing back time, in an effort to search variance in explaining organization's recovery capacity. But, ecological resilience asks how a system deploys seemingly contradicting capacity— system rigidity and flexibility, both of which should be balanced simultaneously (Walker et al., 2004). In ecosystem’s resilience, too much flexibility for adaptation risks maintaining a system’s identity and core functioning while too much rigidity makes a system potentially falling into structural inertia. Therefore, a resilient system needs to secure a reasonable range of flexibility to absorb external changes as well as a certain level of rigidity to keep its identity and core functioning. Understanding the paradox of the rigidity and flexibility is, thus, key to unpack a resilient process of organizational system.

Taking an ecological resilience perspective, some organizational scholars recently suggest that resilience is an adaptation process. Williams et al. (2017: 742) in their review define
organizational resilience as “the process by which an actor (i.e., individual, organization, or community) builds and uses its capability endowments to interact with the environment in a way that positively adjusts and maintains functioning prior to, during, and following adversity.”

According to this view, the empirical study should examine how interconnectedness and interdependency between organizational system and environment are reconfigured (Van der Vegt et al., 2015). Then, scholars can turn their attention to an adaptive process of how a new regime or equilibrium is emergently created in a system.

An ecosystem often moves to multiple equilibria, regimes or governing patterns of system. From an ecological perspective, multiple equilibria are inherent in system since repetitive interactions between the system and external environment emergently creates new adaptive fits (Carpenter, Walker, Anderies, & Abel, 2001). Multiple adaptive fits are assumed as the interrelationship of environment i.e., large system and the organizational systems i.e., small systems are changed. In organization studies, Williams et al. (2017: 742) further commented that a resilient adaptive process “accounts for the dynamic nature of resilience as an interaction between the organization and the environment.” This emphasis on the interaction highlights the dynamic nature of ecological resilience. Here, fluctuation is a necessary condition to build an emerging adaptive fit with changing environment, rather than being described as risk.

Due to skewed attention to engineering resilience, however, there are only scant empirical evidences demonstrating that the dual capacity of system rigidity and flexibility is an important aspect of organizational resilience. The past studies tend to conceptualize resilience as a recovery capacity, the bouncing back or engineering resilience. To the best of our knowledge, this essay is the first empirical study to explore ecological resilience in organizational setting. Rather than focusing how quickly an organization returns to an initial state from an external shock (i.e.,
engineering resilience), I center my attention to an adaptive process of how an organization secures a core identity and simultaneously adapts to changing landscape after the shock (i.e., ecological resilience).

4.3. Methods

Research site

Since Siddhārtha Gautama (approximately BC 563–BC 483) called Shakyamuni Buddha formed an ancient assembly of monks in Northern India around 2,500 years ago, following Buddhist monks have collectively developed the ancient monastery into a formal cooperative-organizational system that spread across Asia (Swearer, 2010; Wijayaratna, 1990). Historians have reported that ancient monastic rules and structures have evolved varied as Buddhism spread to different local climate and culture. But, one that still does not change is its core identity, Buddhist meditation practice. Buddhist monks have persistently passed onto the next generations of monks the meditation technique, which makes various forms of Buddhism as oneness today regardless of different forms of monastic life over Asia.

I conducted two rounds of ethnographic fieldwork in three Korean Buddhist temples (K-temple, H-temple, and B-temple) (See Table 1 in p. 20 for details of the three temples).

Data sources

Participant observations. Our primary data source is participant observation through the ethnographic fieldwork (Van Maanen, 2011). Participant observations can gain in-depth understanding of how local people create and exchange meanings and values. To understand various social realities organizational members confront, Bechky (2011: 1162) suggested that organization researchers need to “engage in direct encounters with organizations by watching how people do, what they do, and listening to what they say about what they do.” In this spirit, I
actually lived with monks, shadowed their everyday life, and worked as a team, following all the monastic rules and Buddhist manners.

My monastic work ranged from miscellaneous labor and English-Korean translation to simple managerial advices. Depending on the given role, the ethnographer could experience various organizational functions across the multiple sites. In K-temple, he mainly followed senior monks who were in charge of finance and public relation. In H-temple, I worked with apprentice monks and students monks under supervision of a senior training monk. The duty in the H-temple included cleaning, cooking, and laundry. In B-temple, I played a semi-secretary monk role to B-temple Master Monk TJ. I wrote a daily note before I slept.

**Monks’ meditation progress diary.** As I deeply immersed himself into monastic life in K-temple (the first research site), a K-temple senior monk permitted him to read the past K-temple monks’ meditation diary. Based on the experience in K-temple, I also requested to read diaries, as he moved to the other temples. Most monks wrote about their meditation progress for the six or twelve months apprentice period and stop writing. But, four monks kept writing after the apprentice period, which spans over 10 years. Monks described intense meditation progress or simply daily anecdotes. Reading the diaries became an important daily task as the ethnographer stayed in the temples. I read them as a textbook of monastic life in adjusting himself to strict monastic life or ultimately as data for this study. I printed any impressive writing for later analysis process. The printed page was 382 pages.

**Formal interviews and conversations.** While I stayed in the temples, I rarely conducted formal interview. Buddhist monks extremely hesitated to speak about their life directly. Even some of them were trained not to speak. Due to such constrain, I tried to make informal conversation sometimes. As I became closer to monks, I then tried to talk much deeply about
current or past organizational issues that can be related to resilience of Buddhist temples. I only conducted formal interviews after the fieldwork period mainly to validate my observations and ask how Buddhist temples immediately reacted to the 1998 financial crisis. Senior monks relied on their memory to trace back to the crisis and described how they coped with the situation. With secondary archival data, I used the interview to reconstruct adaptive processes of the temples.

**Survey check-list data.** I conducted a simple, unstructured check-list survey requiring answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’. A major aim of conducting the survey was to validate the ethnographer’s observation and interview data. For example, I observed that group of monks differently approached a recent expansion of tourist business: One group positively viewed the temple tourism whereas the other group hesitated to participate in the tourist program. Based on the observation, we asked ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions related to the issues of tourist program and broadly the relationship of temples (organization) and secular world (environment). The questions included: ‘Do you use smartphone and its applications when working?’ and ‘Do you give lecture for tourists or visitors?’ I collected the check-list data from 12, 32, and 27 monks respectively from K-temple, H-temple, and B-temple. Note that the purpose of this survey was not to do statistical analysis. My initial aim was to validate the observation and interview data.

**Secondary data.** I collected three types of secondary data. First, I collected photocopy of historical records in the three temples. All Chong-Lim temples have a library independently operated, which preserves historical materials including books, cultural artifacts, event records and temple magazine collections. I had an opportunity to read such data and even take photos. Second, I collected relevant scholarly works and newspaper columns written by monks or Korean Buddhist scholars. In fact, monks suggested that I should look at the works to deepen our analysis. Indeed, some of the data offer rich descriptions regarding how internal reactions to
societal changes since the 1998 financial crisis have been changed and separated. Third, some
descriptive statistics were available both online and offline by Jo-Gye Order of Korean
Buddhism that coordinates all Buddhist temples of Jo-Gye Order. After all the fieldwork process,
I requested annual statistical data such as the number of newly recruited monks and of tourists
visiting temples’ tourist program. The data help us triangulate our field data.

Analysis

Overview. Overall, I took three phases of data analysis. The first phase was centered on
searching for an overarching theme across the multi-sites by repetitively iterating the field data
and a set of theoretical lenses. The theme I found was organizational resilience in the midst of
societal changes triggered by 1998 Asian financial crisis. In the second phase, I wanted to
investigate internal reactions to the changes, especially focusing on choice between protecting
tradition and adapting to external changes or both. In the third phase, I finally reiterated all the
data and resilience theory to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In doing so, I
develop the concept of pushing and pulling as a balancing mechanism of the system rigidity and
flexibility. But, I did not see a fit between this finding and the engineering resilience. I, therefore,
turn our attention to ecological resilience conceptually and empirically less explored in
organization study.

Phase 1 Identifying organizational reactions to external changes. The first phase of the
analysis was broadly to identify how external changes triggered by a significant external shock
influenced on Buddhist organizations. One of the most significant external shocks monks
repetitively mentioned was the 1998 Asian financial crisis, so that I focused on the period since
then. The financial crisis radically changed economic and societal landscape of Korea as a
whole, which largely influenced on religious realm of people’s life. Market-based principle,
individualism, globalization, and merit-based management became a set of taken-for-granted principles in everyday life, which were, in turn, introduced to both profit and non-profit organizations as a restructuring process. Buddhist temples also began to change: Some of them seek profit-oriented religious businesses or remodel Buddha’s buildings to recruit new members who tended to maintain individualistic lifestyle.

My analysis in this phase showed that monks reacted to the changes dividedly. The different pattern of the reactions was represented by two groups of monks. I labelled the groups respectively ‘pushing group’ meaning the group of monks trying to protect a traditional way of monastic life by blocking (pushing) secular practices, systems, and materials out of organizational boundary and ‘pulling group’ meaning another group of monks intending to adapt to external changes by adopting (pulling) secular practices, systems, and materials into traditional organizational life. Rather than formally moving the data to aggregate conceptual dimensions, I created a list of pushing and pulling activity in four areas of monastic life. The areas I coded were Business (no. 1), Economics (no. 2), Health (no. 3), Education (no. 4), Geography (no. 5), Politics as a decision making system (no. 6), Construction (no. 7), Culture (no. 8), and Technology (no. 9).

Phase 2 Reconstructing self-adaptive process. My analysis in this phase was moved from divided group reactions to organizations’ self-adaptive process that enabled organizations to manage the group conflict and that ensures system rigidity and flexibility at the same time. Specifically, I reconstructed the self-adaptive process by analyzing changes in the three temples’ organizational form, defined as “an archetypal configuration of structures and practices given coherence by underlying values regarded as appropriate within an institutional context” (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006: 30). In doing so, I used my observation and survey data to
measure dyadic connectedness between two groups and their characteristics. This analysis presents distinct organizations forms the three temples develop. A central task in this phase was to capture how the pushing and pulling activity evolves internally as an organizational mechanism, the mechanism that results the organizational form. This finding is reported with subheading with ‘self-adaptive process’.

**Phase 3** Theorizing pushing and pulling mechanism as self-adaptive process. In this phase, I tried to interpret and theorize the dynamics of pushing and pulling mechanism as self-adaptive process of resilient organizations that simultaneously balance system rigidity and flexibility. In doing so, we re-iterated the evidence of the pushing and pulling activity and organizational resilience theory (ecological resilience lens) to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Rather than framing a few part of data with established theory, I tried to let the data speak themselves, so that theory can speak the whole data. This theorizing process is reported with subheading with ‘interpretation of pushing and pulling mechanism’

**4.4. Findings**

**Descriptive overview on research context.** In 1998, Korean economy almost fell into national bankruptcy due to a series of failed economic policy, spillover of Japanese real estate bubble, and on-going economic downturn from South-East Asia around mid-1990. Korean government finally requested external international agency such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and Asian Development Bank (ADB) a total of 55 billion USD emergent relief loan to revitalize the economy. Harsh mandates for restructuring were immediately implemented with IMF’s strict guidelines. Later, economists reported that the restructuring entirely changed financial structure of country. Market-based principle and merit-based human resource practice were quickly introduced and institutionalized. Korean sociologists, on the other
hand, pointed out that collectivism-based societal systems became rapidly westernized and individualized since then. People’s perception on religion, especially Buddhism, was also changed dramatically (See Table 7). Religious donation was greatly reduced.

**Table 7. Religion Ratio in Korea**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Atheists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1,990</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importance of religion in believers’ daily life (%) – A ratio of ‘Very important’ plus ‘Important’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1,990</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commitment to religion (%) – A ratio of ‘Visit more than one per a week’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Visit more than one per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1,990</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Korean Ministry of Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Atheists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>All population</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>All population</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>All population</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sudden economic downturn, market-based principle, individualism, and the anti-religious movement triggered by the financial crisis were all the set of macro environmental changes Buddhist temples needed to address. My initial observations were, therefore, centered on how organizations reacted to the changes. I found that Buddhist monks of each temple began to split
either to renew traditional organizational system or to resist to change to protect organization’s
historical identity. The split causes group conflict because the renewing potentially threatens the
identity, and the group conflict reflects the conflict between the secular and the sacred. This
conflict seemed to persist in the three temples. Whereas pushing group tended to protect a
traditional form of monastic life by marking a sharp boundary between temple and secular
society, pulling group tended to try to do new trials and experiments that often require changes in
the tradition and blur the boundary.

Specifically, the group split was manifested into nine areas of monastic life: Business (no. 1), Economics (no. 2), Health (no. 3), Education (no. 4), Geography (no. 5), Politic as a decision making system (no. 6), Construction (no. 7), Culture (no. 8), and Technology (no. 9). Table 8 presents the group conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of conflict</th>
<th>Data (Episodes)</th>
<th>Pushing secular system (Keeping monastic system)</th>
<th>Pulling secular system (Changing monastic system)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Through system contact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Launching or expanding tourist businesses</td>
<td>Financial procurement at the moment</td>
<td>Financial procurement for a long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Pricing ancestral tablet placed in Buddha’s hall</td>
<td>Buddhist equality</td>
<td>Market system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Differentiating courtesy money to monks after seasonal meditation period</td>
<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>Incentive system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Introducing external studies and lecturers</td>
<td>Old educational system focusing on Buddhism studies</td>
<td>New educational system from different expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Expanding and renewing public transportation and road condition</td>
<td>Low accessibility</td>
<td>High accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Deciding decision making system</td>
<td>Unanimity</td>
<td>Democratic vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Through new recruited monks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Renovating buildings for better living condition for recruited monks</td>
<td>Keeping traditional construction</td>
<td>Compromising for convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Providing newly recruited monks with privacy</td>
<td>Buddhist way of Communitarianism</td>
<td>Westernized individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Using advanced IT such as smartphone and applications in a temple</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Pushing and pulling secular system that conflicts traditional monastic system
Conflict between monastic system and secular system

Overview. A nuanced relationship of monastic system and secular system was first emerging in all three temples, which turned out to be an important preliminary finding throughout the analysis process. I present two different types of conflict: (1) inflow of secular objects such as material things, beliefs, and practices to monasteries by monks and (2) inflow of new members who bring the secular objects to monastic system. The areas of conflict broadly include food, culture, academics, business, education, economics, and technology, which can potentially threaten monastic system’s traditional rule, identity and practice. First, I report the first way of inflow.

The conflict occurred through inflow of secular system. In the first meeting of the three temples, monks always asked me coffee or tea. I preferred coffee. Then, the monks made roast coffee and passed it to me. In K-temple, for example, monk SS said “coffee is suddenly diffused to all temples and becomes a new trend among monks now.” In fact, I could enjoy some luxury food at least in the early period of my staying in each temple. After finishing hard work together, monks often introduced me rare foods including roast coffee from Columbia and Thailand, macaron from France, and high-quality Puer tea from Southern China. The food seemed even unaffordable or unavailable for Korean average-salaried people, which shows that temples I visited overall enjoyed rich donation.

On the other hand, I also observed that there was a debate regarding whether sudden richness helped sustain a traditional way of monastic life. H-temple Senior Monk GM and I had conversation on the point.

H-temple Monk GM: When I was ordained, monks had only a piece of kimchi and rice. So, we always recognized how precious even the humble food we had in every single minute. But, it seems that monks would not appreciate the meaning of food these days. A lot of nice food is available in temple. If all the external things come along this way,
there would be no difference between monastic life and secular life.

**The ethnographer:** You said that ‘external things come along’, Monk. What does that mean, Monk?

**H-temple Monk GM:** That is, secular things permeate monastic life. If we can see, taste, feel and touch things in the same way we used to do in secular life, the meaning of monastic life would wither to monks who decide to be a monk in order to renounce secular life.

Early interview data disclose such nuanced relationship of monastic system and secular system. The words such as ‘distance’, ‘external things’ and ‘inflow (from secular society)’ often appear in my interview note. These words show that Buddhist organization is unique, in that it has been somehow formed to be isolated from secular society while it needs support from the society. H-temple Monk GM summarized the relationship finishing our conversation: “There is an old saying. Buddhist temple should maintain a proper distance from secular society. That proper distance is the one where a temple can hear of a rooster’s morning crying from village.” But, an appropriate distance seemed hard to determine, which led to explicit group conflict.

In K-temple, I was invited to observe monks’ committee meeting where a group of monks discussed preparation for Buddha’s birthday ceremony. Among other agendas, monks were spending a considerable time to decide a period of lantern festival around the ceremony: the longer the festival would be, the more visitors come and likely purchase lanterns and donate. A K-temple senior monk BG suggested that a temple could even build a temporary Buddhist tea shop in front of the temple entrance to offer visitors refreshment, which could also offset some amount of cost spent for Buddha’s birthday festival. K-temple Monk SS spoke that

**K-temple Monk SS:** Sometimes, we need to treat visitors as our valuable customers. If people would feel uncomfortable in hot weather, we should do something for them even though we go over budget … In fact, it is not our ceremony. It is for all of us, citizen here.”

Monk SS and I often talked about limited budget allocated for religious events. In an informal
conversation later, most monks who worked with him consistently emphasized service mindset as a religious person. They argued that monks should serve secular people by welcoming them and listening to people’s suffering, which they think is religious responsibility of Buddhist monks.

The other side, however, claimed that a temple should play a role of peaceful meditative community that must aim to improve monks’ meditation progress. A Monk YM spoke very gently that

**K-temple Monk YM**: if we build a coffee shop and hold music concert for Buddha’s birthday, visitors might doubt who we are as a Buddhist monk … There are already a lot of constructions and events going on in temple … What we truly need is probably to keep this temple as an origin of Seon meditation, not to make temple a tourist spot.

Monk YM and his group consistently highlighted meditative mindset that implies more isolation from secular society and meditative philosophy. They tended to be against on-going projects for travelers or at least argued that a size of the projects should be reduced.

Through these observations, my initial empirical question was immediately emerging, regarding what extent and what type of ‘inflow of external things’ could be permitted to temples, given that the inflow even likely transforms a traditional way of monastic life. In the previous conversation with the H-temple Monk GM, the external things were luxurious foods. In the observation on the K-temple committee meeting, the external things were coffee shop and secular music. The essence of the emerging question was where the boundary between monastic life and secular life should be demarcated in a temple.

As I moved to B-temple, I found that the inflow was not limited to physical things. In B-temple, Master Monk TJ wanted to teach newly recruited monks diverse knowledge from many different disciplines. In monks’ committee meeting, B-temple scholarly Monk TQ spoke an agenda on ‘inflow’ of external lecturers. He argued that by introducing external lecturers with
diverse expertise, a temple can teach monks how they apply Buddhism to other intellectual areas. The list of academics were social welfare study, cognitive psychology, ethics and mindfulness study, which is generally related to particular needs from secular society for Buddhist monks. Learning these areas was also expected to be helpful for monks when they would go out to contribute to secular society and spread Buddhism. But, a few monks were opposed to the idea. Similar to the meditative mindset I observed in K-temple, the argument was centered on the possibility that the external studies likely disrupt concentration of meditation practice. I carefully interviewed a monk who opposed to the inflow of external studies.

**Anonymous B-temple Monk A:** In fact, many monks make a contribution to various fields of academia. I do not disagree with the idea per se. I am just worried if the external studies flow in the boundary of temple ... In my opinion, it is not late for student monks to be exposed to other academics after the whole discipline period. Other monks supported this idea with a different reason.

**Anonymous B-temple Monk B:** Actually, the more important matter is a person from somewhere let’s say university who might be able to teach monks. All lecturers will try their best to follow Buddhist manners, but it is hard ... It is not good to bring up a subject that is happening in secular society and make a joke with it in a temple.

This debate was also related to the inflow. In this case, it was an inflow of new academics and external people, the lecturers.

In H-temple, I found that the boundary issue between temple and society could be a certain ‘system.’ All three temples faced a delicate issue of pricing mechanism of ancestral tablets, but it was far more salient in H-temple. Almost all Buddhist temples across Asia offer secular people funeral service. As a part of the service, temples often place Buddhist believers’ ancestral tablets into Buddha’s hall. Here, an issue was whether the price of the tablets should be differentiated. The tablets can be priced by their place, size and quality. There would be little concern if the price is reasonably set: certainly, a big tablet with more shiny decoration and bigger size can be probably expensive. But, this way of pricing seemed to be problematic because differentiating
price of ancestral tablets is directly against a core teaching of Buddhism, equality. In fact, it was reasonable to me that if one would pay more, then the one could have a right to place the tablets nearby Buddha in a central Buddha’s hall. But, H-temple Monk JM’s interview stroke me.

**H-temple monk JM:** Much growing problem is that even monks get used to this (the pricing mechanism). If a temple is run by that way, Buddhism would fall into elite religion only for people who have a lot of money ... Buddhism was born against Brahmanism that endorsed an elite class, but current (Buddhist) temple looks like Brahman.

He argued that temples should equally treat people and remove the current price gap. After this conversation, I could see believers’ worshiping behavior in a different way, which I used to observe every day without any special notice. Buddhist believers with relatively nice outfit worshipped in front of a big illuminated tablet in the most central Buddha’s hall, yet those with old and poor outfit went to the corner of small Buddha’s hall since their ancestral tablets were placed in the corner. Here, there could be two different ways of interpretation on this observation, either based on Buddha’s teaching or completely market perspective. Value judgment might be different, depending on which principle an interpreters applies.

The issue of ancestral tablet was not one-time inflow of external things such as an object, person or study. It was an inflow of ‘system.’ The system is market-based pricing mechanism. It has a significant symbolic meaning. Once a temple adopts this mechanism, it could justify possible future inflows related to market principle. Therefore, it is an immediate challenge for contemporary Buddhist temples to decide whether to permit the inflow of secular market system. If temples find their ontological embeddedness in secular system where market system is a taken-for-granted transaction norm, then ethics of free market system may be easily permitted to monks’ everyday life. H-temple Monk YH, however, lamented the market-based pricing:

**H-temple monk YH:** In old day, there was burrier custom. It was expensive to bury a body and perform a whole process of ceremony, so that undertakers against their will were sometimes blamed to be sellers of death. I am worried that temples selling the
tablets would receive the same blame too.

Finally, the inflow of market-based mechanism even permeated into meditation practice that is a core activity of monastic life. It was a matter of motivation, which was too subtle to capture even from an insider’s perspective. As I practiced regular meditation over the fieldwork period, I learn that meditation practice in temple is separated to regular meditation and seasonal meditation. Regular meditation literally refers to monks’ regular meditation activity usually practiced in their living space or a particular Buddha’s hall everyday, and seasonal meditation means focused-meditation period in the summer and winter. In the seasonal meditation, temples invite monks living in other temples and let them mingle and meditate together in a meditation Buddha’s hall. Invited monks receive some courtesy money after the seasonal meditation period. The courtesy money sets up for covering their health issues possibly due to extensive meditation practice. The money is given to monks, right after the seasonal meditation period. The courtesy money is especially important for old meditation monks’ health care because they preferred to be isolated and less exposed to secular society, which means they receive extremely lower personal donation from people.

At some point, however, the courtesy money began to be considered as a monetary incentive at least among some of monks. In other worlds, the meaning of the money began to be distorted as an incentive although it is hard to capture when this distortion exactly started. I talked to H-temple Monk JU about this finding. Other monks in the three temples spoke similar stories.

**H-temple Monk JU:** In fact, this problem stems from the fact that secular welfare system for monks is not quite systematically developed. In secular society, people could enjoy a lot of sophisticated insurance, but monks rarely have those insurance. In old days, monks often passed away even for pneumonia. Rich temples can afford a large amount of courtesy money, and in reality, monks may want to practice meditation in the rich temple ... Some strict monks even deny the courtesy money, but well… health is important for any serious activity, especially in one’s old age.

S-temple Monk JM and HS also spoke on this issue
**H-temple Monk JM:** Monks are not supermen. Health care is a very important part of monastic life, especially for old monks, but it is hard for us to use commercial insurance company. But in reality, we have no choice but should rely on the courtesy money. If a particular temple gives more courtesy money, then why not? Go there and get it. It is nothing like a moral issue. It is very immediate survival issue.

**H-temple Monk HS:** Some monks do exploit the courtesy money, but there are a very few. Consider that there are always bad people in any group. (…Laugh…) Anyway that (the courtesy money) motivates some bad monks to meditate whatsoever it is called the incentive system you (the ethnographer) said.

K-temple Monk HS commented that “I think it depends on monks’ interpretation whether it could be considered incentive or courtesy. But, it is true that some monks begin to consider the courtesy money as a kind of compensation or reward.” Through this set of interview and informal conversation, I identified that monks’ approach to courtesy money was different. To some, it is indeed a symbolic meaning of courtesy, but to others, it can be considered a monetary incentive to maintain strict meditation practice in monastic system.

The second point from the courtesy money I found was the fact that temples competed to draw renowned monks through the money regardless of how monks thought about the money. It was similar to sport clubs or universities that often compete to recruit talented players or productive scholars through incentive system. It is important for a temple to invite prestigious meditation monks to motivate incumbent monks and to promote the temple reputation. As reputation of universities matters among researchers, reputation of temples matters among monks. Junior monks often want to meditate in a particular temple where prestigious monks have mediated for a long time.

‘Competition’ and ‘incentive’ are terms used to describe business world, which seems now permeated to monastic system. The courtesy money that was created to show respect and protect monks’ health began to be seen a monetary incentive to some of monks that were accustomed to market mindset. Further, some temples used money to attract more renowned monks. Market
system for pricing the ancestral tablets and incentive system for promoting meditation or protecting monks’ health are strong evidence demonstrating how external systems (market system and incentive system) flow even into the core activity of temple. It is hard to imagine that prestigious monks meditate for the courtesy money, but it helps even slightly for temples to attract the monks.

Other than those observations and interview data, I could observe many different types of ‘inflow’ such as a monk’s long-term car rental issue, road expansion toward temple, development issue of temple tourist business, admission ticket for entering mountain that arouses mountain hikers’ demonstration, and introduction of temporary vote system to temple’s decision making. All of these inflows are about conflict between keeping somewhat isolated monastic life and adopting the inflows that might be necessary to adapt to environmental changes. At the later stage of the fieldwork, I could observe the other mechanism of inflow, which was more direct and immediate. That was an inflow of new members.

The conflict occurred through inflow of newly recruited monks. As I stayed in temples, most young apprentice monks and student monks were so-called elite who studied in a prestigious university or even had years of work experience in global corporations. A H-temple student monk who was my mentor graduated from one of the top public universities in U.S. and decided to become a monk. Other monks in H-temple had worked in financial industry, law firm, R&D department of Korean global electronics company, and even academia for many years with a PhD degree. Compared to senior monks who didn’t much benefit from Korea’s rapid economic growth and educational boom, young student monks seemed to receive higher education and enjoyed material well-being, even travelling or working in global context before they ordained in a temple. It was not certain how this experience leaded them to be a monk, but it was certain that
their ‘inflow’ to temples played a significantly potential stimulus of organizational change and sometimes caused conflict with strict conventional monastic rules.

The first salient observation happened in H-temple. I tightly worked with eleven apprentice monks. The regular works included preparing meals, washing dishes, and cleaning a temple garden. One day, after mountain walk, one of their parents waited for an apprentice monk around a temple. An apprentice monk no. 4 greeted them in an open place in a temple and shared humble food that the parents brought together. H-temple administrative Monk GO responsible for internal administration permitted parents’ visiting. But, in fact, the one-on-one meeting with a parent is not acceptable in monastic community. Any food donation should be given to an administrative monk first, and then the food is distributed to all apprentice and student monks equally. So, an individual meeting broke the rule of equitable distribution. I was permitted to interview H-temple administrative Monk GO on this point.

**H-temple administrative Monk GO:** Recently, that climate (parents meet monks individually who were their son) is quickly diffused. But, think about it. In the old days, people gave birth to five and eight children. In these days, only one or two children per a house … If we prevent a personal meeting, then it could be too much harsh for both apprentice monks who just started ordainment and their parents.

Table 9 presents the number of newly recruited monks who started the apprentice period and their drop frequency. Not only were there many cases where temples disappeared due to a lack of financial resource, but there were also several cases due to a lack of appropriate number of monks to sustain their organization. Even though a temple has enough financial resources, if it would not secure future organizational members, then it would not survive, which remains a big problem to all Buddhist temples.
Table 9. The number of newly recruited monks and drop frequency during the apprentice period in 25 district and case temples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>~ 19 (age)</th>
<th>20 ~ 24</th>
<th>25 ~ 29</th>
<th>30 ~ 34</th>
<th>35 ~ 39</th>
<th>40 ~ 44</th>
<th>45 ~ 50</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B-temple</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>The case temples total</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>~ 19 (age)</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H-temple</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B-temple</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
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One of the sources of giving up monastic life was related to student monks’ initial motivation to be a monk. As I spent more time with apprentice monks, I could see that their monastic life was much focused on individual achievement, regardless of what social role of Buddhism means to them. H-temple apprentice monk no. 5 and student monk B spoke this point.

**H-temple apprentice Monk no 5:** I am not interested in Buddhist doctrine. I am just interested in something behind physical phenomenon. I couldn’t find something similar in science, god and pleasure. It seemed to me that Buddha may find something. I decide ordainment to systematically study (meditate), not to worship Buddha or become an eternal member of Sanga.

**H-temple student Monk B:** I think it is not that important to count how many bow I did or to discuss whether drinking Coca-Cola is right or wrong. I think an important thing is whether all the rules could actually help our meditation progress. If not, I think it must be changed. Most monastic rules were developed a long thousand years ago, some of which no longer matches contemporary life.

Focus group interview data with student monks of the three temples consistently suggested that some of monastic rules or even Buddhist moral precepts are not necessarily aligned with contemporary religious life. Through several deep discussions, young monks somehow thought that some part of monastic rules actually did not help better and stable meditation progress. Note that monks need to do challenging labor work and organizational duty over their monastic life.
while following all the traditional monastic rules.

The difference of motivation in understanding the nature of the monastic life was originated by cultural difference. The generation gap between young monks and senior monks seemed to be even more salient in monastic life. Strong communalism was historically infused to Korean monastic life. For the last decades, however, individualism has been infused to new generation of monks coming to temples. Here, an external thing is cultural system, the individualism against the communalism, which has been diffused to monastic life through ‘inflow’ of new members of generation. The inflow sometimes conflicted with existing monastic rules that were designed to promote a traditional communal living. I sometimes observed that new members pin a name tag on some objects such as desk, pencil or cup, wanted to spend some amount of time for private purpose, and demarcated a psychological distance between private and communal life.

According to multiple senior monks in all three temples, this phenomenon did not happen even three decades ago. New members’ individualistic tendency is definitely a product of social change as Korea highly adopted westernized life style around 1970’s. Further, after 1970’s, the birth rate of Korea dramatically decreased.¹ Monks from the current generation were more exposed to the cultural change than existing monks who became a monk decades ago or decided to be a monk in their very early age. From existing members’ perspective, newly recruited monks were flowed into them by bringing external changes, which is culture in this case. To the existing members, the newly recruited monks were another type of inflow from external environment. B-temple Monk JS pointed out that:

**B-temple Monk JS:** We have a certain period of apprenticeship for training apprentice monks. In the past, we made the period even three years, but still it was hard to change them (new recruited monks). It is hard to detach habit they learn from secular society. I sometimes think if it (living in a temple with the habit) is really a bad thing. Unless they

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¹ According World bank database, an average birthrate in Korea is 6.10 in 1960, which is dramatically decreased to 1.24 in 2015.
would start ordainment at their teenage, how could we completely detach their habit? The inflow of the new members looked not necessarily a desirable thing to existing monks because their inflow might inadvertently change a long traditional way of communal monastic life, but temples needed to recruit them for the next generation of Korean Buddhism.

Another conflict due to the new members’ inflow also shows the difficult choice of Buddhist temples between the isolation from secular society and embeddedness in the society. A group of senior monks who consistently preferred the service mindset said that newly recruited monks were helpful in running organization. By recruiting new members equipped with new and diverse cultural background, the three temples were benefited from technological advancement of secular system. That is, new members could be seen good human resource in terms of organizational learning. From a managerial perspective, temples have been extremely disadvantageous in adopting new technology. In fact, interview data suggest that temples did not even recognize a significant reason why advanced technology is necessary for meditation practice. In reality, by the inflow of new members who experienced Korean information technology (IT) rapidly developed in 2000’s, existing monks responsible for missionary, public relations, or internal administration have a chance to learn useful IT from the newly recruited monks.

The most striking observation was related to smartphone and its numerous applications. Its ramification was consequential in monastic society. Smartphone made monks to access social network service (SNS) on a daily basis, made communication among monks easier, and helped to organize Buddhist believers’ gathering, which overall helped missionary work. Further, new members happened to teach senior monks what kinds of applications were available and how to use them. Thus, not only did the new recruited monks change a way of doing temple management, but changed existing members by letting them being exposed to new IT,
experiencing, and learning it.

However, the widespread use of smartphone, wireless internet, and IT overall is highly debatable because monks can be so easily connected to the secular society. All of those high-tech inflows can dramatically remove the boundary between monastic and secular system. Thus, Korean advanced IT infrastructure is not necessarily good news to temples, in that it can disrupt traditional monastic system. The group conflict also formed on this issue.

So far, I captured two general ways in which monastic system conflicts with secular system: (1) inflow of external objects (material, conceptual, axiomatic, and procedural) and (2) inflow of new members who bring external objects to temple. The essence of the conflict was to what extent monastic system accepts secular system’s things including food, culture, academics, business or economic principle, and technology, which can potentially threaten monastic system’s traditional rule, identity and function. Monks with meditative mindset consistently defended their position by strongly arguing that a core identity of Buddhist organization is meditation and accordingly the core activity must be meditation practice.

In a later stage of analysis, I developed technical terms ‘pulling’ and ‘pushing’ from a temple’s perspective rather than somewhat neutral term, ‘inflow.’ This coding was helpful to juxtapose the role of two groups regarding whether a temple accepts the inflows. Pulling is a force that drives temples to embrace external practices or values while pushing refers to an opposite force that pushes them.

Pulling monks group attempted to stabilize temples’ economy and lead to organizational change by proactively adopting secular system. The group often used a word ‘rational’, ‘make sense’, ‘change’ and ‘adaptation’ in their interview. However, pushing monks group wanted to protect historical monastic tradition and identity by rejecting embracing the changes. Their
interest in the monastic economics was low obviously because they did not much involve in economic activity in a temple. As a result, while the pulling group prefers adopting secular objects and people, the pushing group tends to consider the adaptation of secular system as an environmental threat. While some monks stood on a subtle boundary between the two forces, most of them stood on the end of the two extremes, thereby reinforcing the group conflict.

With this finding at an organizational level, I wanted to explore how individual monks approach the difference between secular and monastic system in their monastic life. Answering this question offers a different angle of evidence that can explain why some of monks become the pushing group and others join the pulling group. I discovered somewhat unexpected approach to Buddhism, which is complicated yet an essence of Buddhist philosophy. That is the different stance toward human desire. It was the question that cut across the difference of secular and monastic system and the group conflict.

**System conflict at an individual level**

**Overview.** As I became familiar with monastic life, I could have more opportunity to talk to monks personally both from pushing or pulling group. The conversation was mainly about why they decided to become a monk and spend so much time on meditation. The finding here at the individual level deepens my understanding on monks’ religious motivation and philosophical aim behind their choice to be a pushing group or pulling group. In the following, I describe the pushing group’s story first.

**Pushing group.** Recent movement of engaged Buddhism and globalization open up various vocational opportunities for monks in such areas as academia, art, society, culture and education. Despite these opportunities, meditation monks, the pushing monks I name for this particular study, constantly prefer to live in a deep mountain and take the path of Seon meditation, the path
that their former pathfinders have paved for more than 1,000 years. A very question one can ask is: for what reason behind Seon meditation philosophy makes the pushing group rigidly refuse to adopt secular system? So, what is the Seon? It turned out that answering this question meant to understand their life and their organization’s resilience.

My interest in Seon began when I could access a legendary meditation diary of other Chong-Lim temple Monk EK, which has been come down to all next generation of apprentice meditation monks. In the diary, Monk EK wrote his meditation progress every day since he started ordainment and finally went back to secular society after his eleven years of monastic life. The diary shows a secular man’s gradual progress to be a meditator and his all hardship very plainly, but the reason it becomes a textbook-like writing for all meditation monks is the last twenty pages where he writes his sincere struggle to get rid of sexual desire. He had meditated in a deep mountain and never saw young woman for many years. One day, he visited a neighboring temple and accidently saw a voluntary Buddhist believer working in a temple. What he noticed was her belly skin as she tried to find something on the upper shelf. The last twenty pages were about details of the scene and his thought of it.

I cannot stop thinking [about The woman’s skin]. I do not know the reason I keep thinking [about] that ... I thought that I can control myself. But, today it turns out that it is not. I completely failed. It was a stupid my confidence ... Something still controls me. There is something that harshly controls me. Why is [the sexual desire] still there? Something is wrong.

He thought that the sexual desire that might govern him as he had lived in secular system was still in his deep ego despite his years of hard meditation. Then, he thought that the whole years of meditation was completely wrong. Several months later after the moment, he finally concluded that he is no longer qualified to be a Seon meditation monk, disrobed himself, and descended a mountain to secular society. For the purpose of this study, it is less important to understand that the monk’s awareness of sexual desire violates Buddhist moral precepts or arouses any
psychological shock to him. The more important implication should be the reason why the diary is widely remembered among meditation monks’ communities. I found that the last twenty pages are crucial evidence showing the nature of secular system and monastic system. The evidence demonstrates how the two systems are disparate.

Meditation monks, the pushing group, see the secular system as the enormous desire system where the desire governs all of human cognition, thought, and behavior while they think of Buddhist monastery as a particularly designed system that offers a way of escaping from the desire or already the pure space itself that deviates from the secular system. Thus, monks’ entering the Buddhist priesthood can be understood in a way that a secular person gradually feels skeptical about human desire and further the whole secular system, and then he simply moves to a monastic system to lead different way of living instead of pursuing the desire in secular system. I often talked to the old B-temple Monk CG. His analogy explained well on this point.

**B-temple Monk CG:** I think your decision to study in foreign country is essentially the same with the decision to be a monk. You and I move to other system where different value, language, culture, and norm operate. I don’t think becoming a monk is a big decision. By moving to the foreign country, you also change the system in which you want to stay.

The common ground between my decision and his decision is that both of us wanted to stay in a system in which we wanted to stay to pursue whatever we value more. Monks could not find a certain value or meaning in the secular system, so that they moved to monastic system hopefully to find the value or meaning they are searching.

The next question, then, would be why monks feel skeptical about the fact that the secular part of the society brought them with the right set of beliefs and values in life. Simply, why did they move? Again, the answer was the human desire that automatically initiate and operate the whole secular system. B-temple monk AD spoke that:

**B-temple Monk AD:** If an ultimate aim of human being is happiness, then what is
happiness? That is satisfaction of the five senses ... In the world, nothing is real. There is only floating information inputted by the five senses. Through the information, a thing called ‘self’ feels satisfaction. As the satisfaction is getting stronger, the thing feels that something ‘self’ really exists.

With this conversation, I was curious about the relationship of human desire and the secular system. I went to see K-temple Monk GS who has meditated for a very long time. He spoke that

**K-temple Monk GS:** Desire is really an ironic thing. That brings happiness, but makes human being fall into constant suffering. Once, you fall into that swamp, then others are immediately seen competitors who take the desire which you think should have been yours. If all [secular] people think that way, the world out there [secular system] becomes the arena of the constant struggle where people only follow their desire. But, the sad thing is that people don’t realize this is a source of suffering.

In a writing of H-temple meditation monk SD,

All organisms crave for survival. They hunt only when they are hungry. But, human being is different. Human’s craving does not stop ... the thing that sustains human society is not only a craving for survival, but also craving for obtaining something more and more. The craving plays an engine role to move human civilization forward, but the engine ultimately entraps all people to destruction.

Whereas Aristotle, long ago, argued that a very aim of human life is happiness and studied what people need to do to obtain the happiness (Aristotle, trans. 1962), pushing group monks take one step further and explore where the source of happiness come from. They explain that human desire brings hedonism. However, desires are also a source of social conflict, a reason why society becomes a place of the war of all against all as Hobbes (2006) argued. Ironically, pursuing desire is the reinforcing feedback that keeps sustaining secular system. Insatiable desire becomes the engine of the secular system moving forward according to pushing group monks.

Pushing group tends to suggest that the secular system, i.e., the desire as the source of happiness and progress, continues to exist in the background. This worldview was also related to what Buddhist temples needs to do. Anonymous B-temple Monk meditating in a deep mountain gently answered about the current popularity of temple food. His answer pointed out the very
nature of meditation monks’ worldview.

**Anonymous B-temple Monk A:** Temple food does not aim to excite monks’ appetite. That someone praises the food in a way it is delicious or beautiful is not a compliment for a monk who made the food. Those words are seen as if the monk cooks the food for satisfaction of taste and sight. Satisfaction of senses is not all about food. ... If there are monks who intentionally try to make food delicious, that monks would be better to be chef.

The definition of food in monastic community just differs from secular society. To meditation monks, food, art, and fashion are essentially the same thing if they are made to only satisfy human desire and sense. This thought process educes what is the meaning of eating food, wearing cloth, and listening to music. They can be understood all similar activities with having intercourse if a person intentionally does all of those activities only to feed his or her desire.

Then, how is their worldview related to meditation practice they perform for their life time? Seon meditation means to become free from senses and desire that govern him- or her-self. In English, Buddhist monks’ enlightenment is often interpreted as liberalization whose meaning is the freedom from desire that govern ‘self’ as if he or she is a slave of the desire. Desire keeps calling more desire. Because a human being cannot be fully satisfied over his life time, it brings incessant frustration and suffering. Once human can escape from the deepest desire in his or her inner ego, human can truly escape from the suffering. Thus, liberalization is not a state that one can satisfy all desires with his or her willingness, but conversely a state that one can control desire and no longer pursue it if unnecessary. To some extent, it means an effort to overcome biological limitation given to human being.

Now, the very reason that pushing group monks do not adopt secular system is revealed at an individual level. To them, the secular system is the world where people fight each other for undried desire that is however never be satisfied. If things invented in such system come into a boundary of monastic system, the initial motivation of forming meditative community to remove
secular desire would disappear. Moreover, there have been many historical cases that even monks fall into the slave of desire as temples have been frequently exposed to secular system. With the historical lesson, the present pushing groups keep watching if a close relationship with secular system may lead to moral corruption. To them, temple tourism, monastic food, music or lantern festival could be a distorted service for secular people in a form of Buddhism, which is performed to satisfy their senses. Pushing group monks began ordainment to free from such things, yet if they see that their community becomes a place of satisfaction of the five senses, they must feel immediate animosity.

**Pulling group.** Given that the two groups’ philosophical approach to Buddhism and monks’ role have evolved in very different ways, how does the pulling group think of the pushing group’s worldview in an organization? The pulling group has attempted to build an intimate relationship with secular society. Surprisingly, interview with them revealed that they did not think too much about desire. More specifically, they were not much interested in searching for an answer about any source of happiness and the nature of five senses. Then, an immediate question is why they become a Buddhist monk.

While meditation monks choose to be a monk to resolve their own problem, pulling group monks tended to be motivated to help less unfortunate people in society. Two of nine apprentice monks in K-temple, five of eleven apprentice monks in H-temple, and one of three apprentice monks in B-temple began ordainment for this reason in my observation period. In K-temple, I could have a chance to access another legendary story of K-temple Monk AS that has been transmitted into the pulling group monks. K-temple Monk AS wrote that “I felt something wrong when Monk SD [meditation monk-teacher] said that a meditator must exclusively focus on one’s deep mind although you see somebody is about to die beside your seat.” When Monk FS listened...
to this comment, he immediately felt a sense of disapproval and decided to be a type of monk who intimately helps others rather than a monk who deeply explores his own inner mind. He wrote that “meditation monks seem to be obsessed with some kind of metaphysical problems, so that they miss many other important problems.”

During my staying in B-temple, a story of Korean Catholic priest was often discussed in monks’ casual tea time. The priest was also a physician who went to Africa alone and spent his whole life to conduct voluntary medical treatment, built a school, taught students, and even leaded school orchestra. But, he suddenly died of Malaria in Africa. Regarding the story, one of main agendas monks talked in the tea time was a role of religious person. Anonymous B-temple Monk B spoke that:

**Anonymous B-temple Monk B:** I think Buddhism is not a religion in that our core activity is meditation.

**Ethnographer:** Why isn’t Buddhism a religion, Monk?

**Anonymous B-temple Monk B:** I mean meditation is not related to the contemporary concept of religion at all. It is a sole journey like study. Studying is not an activity for helping others. You do study for your personal curiosity. Then, other activities like going to Africa and helping the poor are a side menu for monks. But, to be a religious person, I think we should also give some benefit back to our society.

H-temple Monk CI who built orphanage around H-temple and took a directing role commented that:

**H-temple Monk CI:** Discourse on scholarly and psychological approach to the Buddhism philosophy [Five senses and Human desire] pushes away discourse on monks’ social role. The fact that we adopt secular society does not mean that we immediately become a slave of desire. If so, that monk should meditate more ... Whatever kind of religious philosophy is, helping others should be a common responsibility of all religions.

K-temple Monk SS in charge of finance and accounting spoke that:

**K-temple Monk SS:** It is important to remember that a man is not a god. Buddha is not a god too. He also enjoyed a particular food. Many venerable monks I know enjoyed food too. Human being is a biological being, so that it would be impossible to suppress desire that is naturally given to us. Meditation practice aims to be mindful about my
body and mind. It does not aim to remove all the desire or such thing at all.

Contents of interviews on desire and meditation were quiet different with the pushing group.

According to the pushing group, the aim of meditation was to realize that the five senses are unstable tools that catch information from the world and then try to remove all the desire that are initiated by the five senses. But, the pulling group tends to admit the biological reality of human being, claiming that mindfulness should be the aim of meditation.

Such different approach to desire and meditation drives them to develop different thought on the meaning of religion and more importantly a role of Buddhist monks in contemporary society.

In B-temple, I spent much time with B-temple Master Monk TJ. He often talked about the very core of the pulling group’s worldview, which allowed me to further dig deeper into their thought.

**B-temple Master Monk TJ:** It [reflection of human desire and sense] is not only a problem for monks. It occurs when you withdraw into yourself so deeply. But, that is also a trap. Monks should get out of there too. Monks think too much because monks do not need to make money for a living and do not have things to work hard. Look around you. There are a lot of people suffering. Healing others’ pain should be proceeded than healing yourself.

He also spoke his opinion on the popularity of the temple food, which is very different from the pushing group’s perspective.

**B-temple Master Monk TJ:** By seeing the temple food as a food culture instead of a perspective of a certain monastic rule or philosophy, we can think about it differently. All religions, although their root is the same, have developed in various forms, adjusting them with natural geographic characteristics and existing local culture. Religious food is such a product of culture. If it is seen special from a secular perspective, that is because people cherish cultural characteristics of the food.

Historically, pulling group’s role has been relatively salient in B-temple. As a hub of local community, many community members such as slash-and-burn farmers, itinerant vendors and woman came to the temple and sold their agricultural products and manual works. The products were trivial often with low quality, but local people earn a living with them. Monks who came to practice meditation in B-temple spent several years, but when they accidently saw the miserable
life of people, they began to question themselves ‘what should I do for them?’ Such question is gradually ringing in their mind, and finally some of monks decided to look after people’s life first before heading for their own journey to liberalization.

Pulling group monks also interpret the authority of liberalization state by lowering its metaphysical achievement to intellectual understanding that could be something learnt through text or teaching. They argue that once one can clearly realize the reason that the five senses are unstable and that desire causes endless suffering, then servant of people must be the life of monks. Because people live in secular system, monks cannot understand their suffering if they keep living in a deep mountain. A much better way is that the secular society comes into monastic society. As the boundary between the secular and monastic system removes, monks can embrace more people and lead monastic community altogether. That is why they wanted to adopt secular systems.

At least in Korea, Buddhist temples have evolved with the two distinctive groups: one party rigidly adhere to Seon meditation despite any secular changes and the other party captures the changes and swiftly adapts to friendly come into people’s real life. Here, the pulling group monks highlighted communication with diverse stakeholders and contribution to secular society. Their interviews showed that an ultimate goal of Buddhism should be to care of people’s suffering so that temple can become an open religious place like any other institutions and organizations embedded in secular system. To them, meditation monks might be seen conservative monks who keep the protection of tradition and inadvertently miss the stream of changes in secular society. Pushing group monks, on the other hand, might see the growing position of pulling group as implicit threat if it finally threatens Seon meditation tradition. Their argument is based on the fact that the core activity of Buddhism is still meditation and thus
temple continues to remain a meditative community, not a public place as a cultural space or tourist spot.

Further, the conflict between the pushing and pulling seems essentially to be originated from irreconcilable views on human desire, which is ultimately related to different understanding on an organizational core activity -- the aim of Seon meditation. Admitting the given reality of biological aspect of human being suddenly motivates monks to look around the external world. This ‘turn’ legimizes the pulling in designing a monastic system. But if that is not the case, monks firmly remain as meditation monks and try to keep a traditional form of monastic system. The lesson through this finding is that the two groups have their own right and philosophical underpinning to be the pulling and pushing group, so that their perspective on a role of monks and Buddhist temples is different. Table 10 summarizes the conflict surfaced to organizational phenomenon and the philosophical difference with implication on organizational resilience.

| Table 10. Sources of difference between pushing and pulling force in monastic system |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Organizational level**                        | **Pushing force**               | **Pulling force**               |
| Stance on secular system                        | Completely prohibit             | Partially adopt                 |
| Temple’s role                                  | Quiet meditative place          | Open community hub              |
| **Individual level**                           | **Desire**                      | **Mindset**                     |
| Tend to fully deny                             | Meditative mindset              | Service mindset                 |
| **Monk’s role**                                | Meditator                       | Social contribution             |
| **Implication on resilience**                  | **Role separation**             |                                |
| Protecting core identity                       | Adapting to external environment|
| **Characteristics**                            | System rigidity                 | System flexibility              |

My analysis is now moved from the secular and monastic system conflict manifested to the two groups of monks to organizational mechanism that enables the groups to coexist in an organization, given that the persistent conflict may internally threaten organizational resilience.
What I found next shows that the source of the resilience is adaptive organizational form defined as “an archetypal configuration of structures and practices given coherence by underlying values regarded as appropriate within an institutional context” (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006: 30). The organizational form has evolved quite differently in the three case temples. As a result, their organizational forms are a product of adaptive process largely by varied dynamics of pushing and pulling force in an organization. Although the organizational forms were different over the adaptive process, the common ground was that pushers have kept protecting organizational meditative identity against environmental pressure on change while pullers played a gatekeeper role to search for environmental changes and absorb them to keep pace with secular society. Such a role separation makes a monastic system still resilient. Then, the form is understood as an adaptive structural tool mediating the role separation.

**Adaptive organizational form of monastic system**

**Overview.** The present organizational forms of the three temples are reported in Table 5, constructed by observation and simple survey check list data. The data first show three dyadic connectivity between ‘pushing group and pulling group’, ‘pushing group and Upasika (in Sanskrit)”2, and ‘pushing group and Upasika’, and then provide the three group’s characteristics relevant to relationship with secular society (external environment). In H-temple, for example, all pushing and pulling monks came to a designated dining room and ate altogether at the same time while Upasika freely had a meal time and a separate place to eat. However, K-temple and B-temple pushing group tended to eat in their meditative room, separated from pulling group while pulling group of the two temples ate in the same time and same place with Upasika because they closely worked together. Eating together has symbolic meaning in monastic life. By

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2 Upasika is a non-monk group that consists of loyal Buddhist believers, old local people, regular workers, or hired professionals.
checking this variance, one can develop a degree of connectivity or intimacy among
organizational members of Buddhist temple. Table 11 shows the adaptive organizational form.

Table 11. The present organizational form of the three case temples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present organizational form</th>
<th>H-temple</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>K-temple</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>B-temple</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectivity between groups</th>
<th>Push/ Pull</th>
<th>Push/ Upasika</th>
<th>Pull/ Upasika</th>
<th>Push/ Pull</th>
<th>Push/ Upasika</th>
<th>Pull/ Upasika</th>
<th>Push/ Pull</th>
<th>Push/ Upasika</th>
<th>Pull/ Upasika</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating together</td>
<td>O X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X O O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditating together</td>
<td>O X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee meeting together</td>
<td>O X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanting together</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning cleaning together</td>
<td>O X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in events together</td>
<td>O O X</td>
<td>X/O X</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>X/O O</td>
<td>X/O O</td>
<td>O X O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X X O</td>
<td>O X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectivity to secular system</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushing group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free entrance to meditation hall</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture outside of temple</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact to outside people</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal donation</td>
<td>X/O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X/O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to media</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist service</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X/O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X/O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X/O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Pulling group                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Concurrent office out of temple | X/O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O |
| Time spent more out of temple | X | X | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |
| Lecture outside of temple     | X/O | X | O | X/O | X | O | X | X | O |
| Independent decision making   | X/O | X | O | X/O | X | O | X | X | O |
| Independent management team   | X | X | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |
| Wake-up time relax            | O | X | O | O | X | O | X | X | O |
| Food choice relax             | X | X | O | X/O | X | O | X | X | O |
| Exposure to media             | X/O | X | O | X/O | X | O | X | X | O |
| Tourist service               | X | O | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |

| Upasika                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Staying in a temple           | X | X | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |
| Buddhist believer             | O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O |
| Past ordainment experience    | X | X | O | X/O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O |
| Join missionary               | X | O | O | X/O | X/O | O | X/O | X/O | O |
| Regular meditation            | X | X | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |
| Tourist service               | O | O/X | O | X | X | O | X | X | O |

Note: Pushing group monks, Pulling group monks, Upasika (non-monk group)

A notable finding in this analysis is Upasika, a non-monk group that consists of loyal
Buddhist believers, old local people, regular workers, or hired professionals. The composition of
Upasika group and its role varied in each temple, yet the group was organized to help pulling group’s work as a volunteering or formal job. In this particular analysis, I found that Upasika played a considerable role in managing temple. Their role was increasingly important with pulling group’s implicit and explicit support. As a result, Upasika expanded a boundary of Buddhist temple by helping pulling monks bring secular systems to monastic system and spreading Buddhism to secular system.

Each groups’ characteristics are also presented in table 11, in an attempt to show an additional aspect of the connectivity to either monastic system or secular system. For example, it was strictly prohibited for H-temple and K-temple pulling monks to enter a meditative Buddha’s hall that is pushing group’s living place without permission of Seon Meditation Master Monk of the two temples, yet the access is even possible for Upasika in B-temple. Further, B-temple pushing group was often exposed to local media, but the other temples tended to discourage themselves to be exposed to media unless it was necessary for organizational needs. These two observations demonstrate certain characteristics of pushing group. While B-temple pushing group had at least some degree of intimacy to secular society, H-temple and K-temple pushing group preferred exclusively to concentrate on meditation.

In the following, I report H-temple’s organizational form first. It turned out that H-temple was considered as a typical model of contemporary Korean Buddhist temple. K-temple and B-temple, however, took a different path with the growing influence of pulling group. In other words, agency of the pulling group is stronger in the two temples than H-temple. I conclude this section by constructing all these processes where pulling monks’ agent role largely determines variance of the present organizational adaptive form.

**H-temple.** H-temple organizational form is considered a stable form among Korean Buddhist
temples. Korean monks tend to call H-temple a typical prototype organizational form that they try to benchmark to keep tradition while adapting to changing environment. In its form, pushing group rigidly maintains Seon meditation identity at the core of the organizational form, which ensures system’s continuous rigidity. A notable point is a division of pulling group. Most monks who used to be a strong pulling group finally chose to support pushing group while multiple small number of pulling monks worked entirely separately out of temple. I label each of them as ‘H-temple inside pushing group’ and ‘H-temple outside pulling group’.

Historically, H-temple pushing group and pulling group monks have shared significant historical memory that they once stood on the opposite sides in approaching secular system. However, the present data show that H-temple pulling monks’ own philosophy and functional importance was not salient enough to be independent. In other words, a strong subgroup identity of pulling monks was not formed in an organization. Connectivity of pulling group toward pushing group (i.e., meditation monks) is much stronger than toward Upasika (non-monks group), and the group characteristics also show that pulling group tended to stick to traditional monastic life. Note, however, that a small number of the outside pulling group was independently active in secular society, entirely separated from organizational core. The outside pulling group’s independent activity included building home for orphans, leading Buddhist art and food programs for community, and developing tourist programs for foreigners, which is all related to Buddhism culture and community welfare. But, the group was somewhat pushed from organizational boundary because pushing monks tended to oppose to the group’s work.

K-temple. Compared with H-temple, most K-temple pulling group monks attempted to increase strong connectivity to secular society. Such difference is also revealed in a relationship with Upasika. H-temple can be viewed as a meditative community, in that the connectivity
between pushing group and pulling group is much stronger than the connectivity between pulling group and Upasika, but K-temple presents exactly the opposite case. K-temple pulling group tried to remove a boundary between monastic community and secular system in an attempt to be fully embedded in local community. In doing so, pulling group monks actively searched for administrative experts from secular society and even hired high position administrators who just retired from public sector. Pulling group monks themselves sometimes learn advanced administrative skills and strategic planning, using various educational opportunities offered in secular society.

Such growth of pulling group further catalyzed the growth of Upasika. Most Upasika in K-temple were professional managers or administrators hired by temple rather than Buddhist believers or regular volunteers from local community. From interview with them, Upasika considered a temple as rather a workplace for their living and job as a professional work without strong religious conviction. While Upasika at least recognized distinctiveness of religious organization management, they basically aimed to rationalize organizational system, which was what K-temple pulling group wanted them to do. I often observed that K-temple Upasika were directly engaged in developing strategic vision of temple. This observation implies that K-temple has evolved a broader meaning of social-religious organization through role extension of pulling group and Upasika while H-temple remains as monks’ meditative community.

**B-temple.** B-temple has evolved much closer to the evolutionary path of K-temple than H-temple in terms of connectivity to secular society. Three notable points were (1) the high connectivity among all the groups, (2) pushing group monks’ characteristics that demonstrate relatively high connectivity to secular society, and (3) Upasika’s growth that ultimately becomes an independent organization in monastic system. Altogether, the three points demonstrate that the
three groups somehow internally retain both characteristics of pushing and pulling.

Whereas H-temple developed a core-periphery model with the small number of gatekeepers (the outside pulling group) and K-temple formed the two pillars of pushing and pulling model, B-temple evolved fully as a confederation-alike community that consists of three independent groups or organizations. Individual monks and even Upasika took both roles of pulling and pushing at an individual level. For example, personal donation to pushing group was allowed in B-temple, so that meditation monks could ensure their financial sufficiency by themselves, which shows evidence of relaxed monastic rules. Upasika and pushing monks also meditated with the meditation monks as many times as possible, which contributed to keep the Seon meditation tradition altogether. Upasika meditated regularly with B-temple monks, even following most Buddhist moral precepts and monastic rules as much as monks did. Thus, their role was not only administrating or managing, but also seriously practicing Seon meditation. They sometimes invited monks from other temples to B-temple meditation hall, and launched various meditative activities for monastic community. In this sense, they were semi-monks standing on a subtle line between monastic and secular system, forming an independent group in an organization.

4.5. Interpretation of pushing and pulling mechanism

In this essay, I approach resilience as an adaptive capacity of simultaneously balancing system rigidity and flexibility—the very nature of ecological resilience—rather than recovery power or persistence. In doing so, I further ask how a dynamic process of the rigidity and flexibility is presented in an organization. In detailing the answers, I conceptualize pushing and pulling mechanism I found from Korean Buddhist temples. By doing so, I hope to shed a new light on resilience research, not only by summarizing the results but by iterating even broader
I define *pushing* as agents’ collective behavioral pattern that aims to keep organizational system’s core identity by blocking inflows coming from environmental changes, thereby reinforcing organizational boundary and ensuring system rigidity. As a pair concept, I define *pulling* as agents’ collective behavioral pattern that aims to keep pace with environmental changes by adopting at least a part of inflows, thereby blurring organizational boundary and ensuring system interdependency with macro external environment. Here, inflows can refer to anything coming from changes in external environment. My findings vividly show how various inflows including secular food, technology, study, culture, and transaction mechanism conflict a traditional form of monastic life. Pushing monks rigidly deny adopting the inflows, arguing that a temple should remain as a traditional meditative community whereas pulling monks try to build a close relationship with secular society by adopting secular materials, values, and norms.

On the subtle boundary between monastic and secular life, pushing force is presented through a collective behavioral pattern—pushing the inflows—by conventional meditation monks. What they persistently protect is an original, absolute wisdom and the organizational identity historically formed around the wisdom. To them, the wisdom is an individual enlightenment or liberation (*nibbāna* in Pali), defined as “amoral or supramoral [status] … experienced either above or below morality in the sense of thought, word and deed” (Stephen, 1970: 109 quoted by Keown, 1991: 10). If a Buddhist monk is believed to achieve enlightenment, then he is called “enlighten one (*Arahant* in Pali).” Bush (1960: 196f) quoted by Keown (1990) describe that the enlightened one “is not primarily concerned with the moral life … The fruit of Arahanship are certainly not to be found in any new service to mankind, any heightening of the love for one’s neighbor, any good deeds done by a new person.” From such a
Perspective, monastic life is nothing but an individual journey. Pushing monks of K-temple, H-temple and B-temple commonly share this philosophy. Their daily monastic life demonstrates that they are willing to take the journey, rather than spending much time aiming to achieve noble social good for mankind. Pushing monks claim that a Buddhist monk should be a meditator to complete the journey. They believe that Buddhist temples should be nothing but an organized community for sustaining meditators’ journey.

Pushing monks define their organizational identity on the basis of such internal philosophy, history and legacy that have been fossilized as ‘tradition.’ In other words, their legitimacy source of building up organizational identity is the tradition they have historically dedicated. Organization scholars report that organizational members give a particular meaning to their organization, by collectively infusing their memories, values, belief systems and ideologies, which makes the organization more than a legal entity (Anteby & Molnar, 2012; Ocasio, Mauskapf, & Steele, 2016). The collective meaning system inscribed to an organizational system is revised numerous times going through trial and error and codified into a formal organizational vision, mission and rule (Barnard, 1938; Simons & Ingram, 1997). A social philosopher, Edmund Burke (1890), described such process and outcome as ‘tradition’. The tradition gives symbolic meanings back to existing societal institutions that provide social actors with behavioral norms (Burke, 1890). He viewed the tradition as a source of societal stability because it has been proved an effective tool to prevent radical social changes and political anomy in a social system (Burke, 1890). He argued that although the tradition can be manifested in different forms such as symbolic rituals, myths or even laws, it plays somewhat desirable functional role to strengthen organizational solidarity that persists for an extended time (Burke, 1890).

My observations demonstrate that pushing monks consider the tradition-based organizational identity...
identity as something that must be protected from the inflows. They try to make only a necessary relationship with secular society because they conceive the inflows as threats to the identity. Here, a theoretically important question that arises when one connects pushing monks’ behavioral pattern to resilience of organization is their unintended role in resilience. They are a guardian of tradition that enables an organizational system to rigidly protect a core identity, practice, and functioning of organization. System ecologists precisely articulate that “in all cases, it is crucial to specify what system state is being considered (resilience of what) and what perturbations are of interest (resilience to what)” (Carpenter, Walker, Anderies and Abel, 2001: 777, italic original). From pushing monks’ perspective, resilience of ‘organization’ means resilience of ‘tradition-based organizational identity’, given that the identity speaks who Buddhist monks are, what they do, and why they initially form organization. Through their pushing, a core historical identity still exists in Buddhist temples while environment continues to force them to change. This interpretation turns my attention to ecological resilience rather than engineering resilience and more importantly to the role of pulling monks.

Whereas pushing group plays a role of system rigidity by protecting the historical identity, pulling group challenges the pushing group by arguing that even the absolute wisdom of liberalization can be changed. In our conversation with them, pulling monks argue that the absolute wisdom should be interpreted differently to keep pace with changing environment or more broadly changing history. Their initiatives demonstrate that Buddhism does not necessarily require solitary Buddhahood through a long painstaking meditation: Buddhist temples should open door to ordinary people, and monks’ contribution to public benefits should be considered one of the most important religious responsibilities. They see themselves as a service provider rather than a meditator and their organization as a community hub rather than monks’ home.
Such self-identification conflicts with pushing monks’ definition on monk’s identity and what Buddhist temple should mean to monks.

Then, where does their legitimacy of such role identity and organizational identity come from, given that the tradition-based identity passed down to organization is historically deeply rooted in an organizational system? The source of their legitimacy is paradoxically originated from the secular society. Rather than pushing group relies on the internal tradition, pulling group pays more attention to external world to find their existence as a religious man. They are willing to spend more time to listen what secular people want and why they suffer and then try to figure out how they can help them. In this sense, their religious identity is presented as ‘healing’ toward to external world rather than ‘liberalization’ toward inner mind. It is the secular world that offers religious legitimacy to them. To pulling monks, a Buddhist monk is rather a job to provide good-quality religious services to people. Pushing force conflicts pulling force, as the internal tradition conflicts the external secular. The tradition is not changeable, yet the secular is always changing. Pulling group considers the tradition as something to overcome in understanding the secular society while pushing group tries to protect it.

Then, one might be able to see that pushing monks can be somehow also the threats to the resilience of the tradition-based organizational identity because they are the ones who deliver the inflows into organizational boundary. Interestingly for this reason, a specific role of pushing monks is slightly-but-systematically different in the three temples while pushing monks’ role tends to be quite identical. I focused on a degree of agency that pulling monks take to alter a path dependency of their organization. Battilana (2006: 657) define agency as “individuals’ ability to intentionally pursue interest and to have some effect on the social world, altering the rules or the distribution of resources.” The degree of agency we define is the degree of effect performed by
agents who try to alter organizational structure, practice, and strategy. Below, we explain how the
degree of agency is manifested as a different set of pulling roles, and how the agency of the
pulling is evolved with the pushing in a temple.

First, I interpret that H-temple pulling monks play a gatekeeper role. They consistently
search environmental changes to keep pace with the society, yet they still partially share the
tradition-based organizational identity with H-temple pushing monks. I observed that H-temple
pulling monks only selectively and passively accept secular attributes once they decide that the
adoption would help sustaining organization. In K-temple, however, pulling monks have formed
a different philosophy toward society and Buddhism. They actively adopt the secular attributes to
form their own identity. Somehow, the relationship of the two groups is paradoxical: K-temple
pulling monks still help their organization adapt to environmental changes and insure that the
material needs of K-temple pushing monks are met. K-temple pushing monks, on the other hand,
at least symbolically afford the pulling monks tradition-based identity through the strict
meditative discipline in K-temple. The pushing and pulling monks in K-temple much frequently
conflict on organizational issues, yet each group knows that one needs the other party to
simultaneously sustain K-Temple’s historical identity and the organizational system financially.
Hence, the group relationship ensures system rigidity and flexibility paradoxically despite
internal group conflict. In B-temple, pulling monks’ philosophy has much fully evolved and
blossomed. They are now distinct from B-temple pushing monks, redefining their tradition and
role identity coupled with needs and changes from secular society. The aim of embracing the
secular is often to innovating organization rather than merely sustaining the organization. By
adopting the opposite values and practices, B-temple pulling monks try to create a new regime in
the future. Hence, their pulling is much relevant to innovators’ role than gatekeeper or adopter.
Their degree of agency is the strongest among the three temples.

Chameleon changes pigment of skin to match its appearance to external climate system, but that does not mean that it also changes its identity. In Buddhist temples, the pulling group plays the pigment role to adjust their organization to match external system although their specific role varies in an organization. On the other hand, the pushing group takes a long journey to explore their inner mind like an ancient Buddhist monk in Northern India. Their continuous journey enables an organization to keep its historical identity and root, so that Buddhist temples have not forgotten who they were. Despite occasional group conflict, Buddhist temples have managed the given duality of rigidity and flexibility.

4.6. Discussion

Being a Buddhist monk means a person abandons a secular life given to him and enters the monastery to lead an entirely different way of life to seek his own question. Through the years of discipline, the man would be qualified to be a member of Buddhist temple (Sangha in Pali) and inherited to follow the 2,000 years of history of Buddhist tradition. But, as he actually begins to live a monastic life as an organizational member, he soon realizes that the secular world he was raised and left is the organizational environment that can sustain their organization or not. Because the secular society offers the Buddhist organizations material resource and social legitimacy, Buddhist monks should swiftly respond to changes in secular society and build a good relationship with secular stakeholders. However, it is also true that excessive intimacy to the secular world likely commercializes and secularizes the temple, thereby destroying organization’s distinctive identity. Historically, the secular world and Buddhist monastic society have coevolved as if they are yin and yang or thesis and anti-thesis. Our study presents that a very question of resilience existed somewhere in this historically paradoxical or dialectical
By deeply immersing myself into three traditional Buddhist temples in Korea, I asked how Buddhist monks handle organizational issues in the relationship ultimately to adapt to changing society while simultaneously protecting their core meditative identity, the tradition-based organizational identity. A situation of Buddhist temples in 1998 Asian financial crisis provides a useful context making the paradoxical relationship more salient. On the one hand, Buddhist monks are willing to accept secular values, practices, and materials to keep pace with changing societal landscape. They propose that commitment to the general public should be a new vision of organization often summarized as ‘open door policy.’ This policy even requires modifying a part of monastic rules and meditation philosophy. On the other hand, number of monks is still concerned about the new vision and policy. They claim that protecting an original form of meditative tradition is not something to be reconcilable. According to them, managing societal change and dedicating meditative tradition are entirely different areas in leading monastic life.

The differences in their philosophy, historical perspective, and the ways of approaching the external change together form the pushing and pulling force in an organization. By analyzing monks’ interviews on the 1998 financial crisis and our careful observations at the present, we explore the dynamics over an adaptive process. As I carefully investigate pushing and pulling monks’ philosophical conflict and their different understanding on Buddhism at an individual level, I soon realize that the prior resilience literature explain only a part of my findings. Our core findings were much relevant to system’s adaptive capacity – balancing the system’s rigidity and flexibility. I found that the notion of ecological resilience, as opposed to engineering resilience, provide more explanation about the resilience of Buddhist temples.

Most existing studies are based on engineering resilience, which conceptualizes resilience as a
recovery capacity to bounce back from a disturbance to a single equilibrium. Scholars operationalize ‘the bouncing back’ by ‘return time’ to measure organization's recovery power in response to an external shock. This way of conceptualization and operationalization is certainly useful to examine causal relationships between a set of organizational attributes and system's stability. But, the literature had difficulty capturing an adaptive process of how an organizational system internally balances the system rigidity and flexibility after the external shock.

Some studies even conceptualize resilience as survival. An assumption behind the rational is that the longer the return time, the more possibility the system would lose a core functioning and finally die out. Empirically, however, the notion of survival was operationalized as an outcome variable of evolutionary process at a population level (Hannan and Freeman, 1993), often measured through mortality rate (Carroll and Delacroix, 1982) and survival time (Brüderl, Preisendörfer, and Ziegler, 1992). But, the survival does not tell us anything about a process of adaptation. It is merely an outcome variable of adaptation: hence, it does not necessarily mean resilience. A resilient system should retain “essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedback” (Walker et al., 2004: 4) while surviving. That means survival is only a necessary condition of resilience. A resilient system is obviously surviving, but not all surviving systems are resilient.

Therefore, our main contribution to the literature is to introduce ecological resilience lens on organizational resilience literature, rather than using the current conceptualization to reflect organization’s recovery capacity or survival. By doing so, I draw system’s dual capacity on the basis of ecological resilience mechanism, the mechanism that describes how internal agency emergently, paradoxically, and spontaneously balances the rigidity and flexibility. Below, we discuss the theoretical implications of our contributions in more details.
Theoretical implications to resilience theory

The concept of system resilience is rooted in system theory that views individual entities are tightly interconnected and nested in higher levels of system. The perspective has long provided a distinctive lens on relationships of an organization and its environment. The early management scholar, Peter Drucker (1954, p. 81), for example, wrote that “society is not just the environment of the enterprise. Even the most private of private enterprises is an organ of society and serves a social function.” In a recent editorial call for organizational resilience, Van der Vegt et al. (2015) describe that “only if business is resilient, can society be resilient.” In these quotes, an organization is seen as a small system nested in much larger systems such as societal, ecological and macroeconomic systems, so that macro systems’ resilience ensure a small system’s resilience and vice versa.

A fundamental question of resilience is, then, how the system theory substantively provides an explanation on an adaptive process of a small system in a large system’s change? We borrowed system ecologists’ works on this question. The system ecologists suggest that internal dynamics emergently drive adaptation of ecosystem. Empirical studies found that a resilient ecosystem experiences four distinct adaption processes: exploitation, conservation, release and reorganization. In the process of release and reorganization, a new equilibrium of internal resource distribution and interconnectedness is spontaneously created by dynamic relationships of internal agents. A new order, structure and pattern emerge spontaneously from internal dynamics of agents in the system, which system theorists describe as ‘homeostasis’ ‘autopoiesis’, ‘self-organization’ or ‘dissipative system’ (Nicolis & Prigogine 1977; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984; Kauffman, 1993). A role of agents is, therefore, an important factor to explain the adaptive process, which has been rarely discussed in the engineering-based resilience literature. We add
the role of agents by articulating the pushing and pulling force.

The internal agents’ role in system’s adaptation is not entirely new in organization study. Scholars develop the notion of complex adaptive system to investigate an internal emergence of a new regime (Anderson, 1999; McKelvey, 1999). Simon (1996) describes that a complex adaptive system consists of large number of subsystems and activities that are highly interconnected and interlocking. He suggests that emergence of orders and patterns takes place through internal agents’ spontaneous actions, rather than natural selection at a population level (Anderson, 1999; Siggelkow, 2002). A critical set of small actions described as ‘driving factor’ (Meadows & Wright, 2008), ‘initial factor’ (Plowman et al., 2007), or ‘critical mass thresholds’ (Dent, 1999) creates a new regime. In my study, I show that an external incident triggers the internal drive. The drive forms a different degree of pulling forces that adds a different level of complexity to the way of organizational change and adaptation. The agency of the pulling groups determines organizational form and redefines interdependency with the secular system i.e., organizational environment.

Out of organizational study, some critics even suggest that the agent role is simply missing in the existing resilience study since social scientists do not even consider the different nature of adaptive process between natural system and social system (Olsson, Jerneck, Thoren, Persson, and O’Byrne, 2015; Davidson, 2010). For example, Olsson et al. (2015: 1) pointed out that there are incommensurability and miscommunication “rooted in ontological and epistemological differences between the social and the natural sciences.” A major theoretical jump occurs due to “inappropriate extension of concepts from the natural science to society” (Olsson et al., 2015, p. 9). Given that system resilience is initially conceptualized in natural science (e.g., Holling, 1973), it might be erroneous to apply the same logics used for explaining a resilience of the
natural system to explain a resilient process of social system without considering any potential difference.

Despite multiple boundary conditions between social and natural system, scholars highlight that agency is one of the most important ones (Olsson et al., 2015; Dietz and Burns, 1992). Olsson et al (2015: 4) described that “feedback mechanisms in social systems are primarily determined by agency, or structured agency, rather than by structural forces.” Indeed, agency has been a core concept in explaining changes in organizational structure and change (Battilana, 2006; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Agency generates knowledge, ideology, social capital, authority and power, which is arguably observed in human social systems that add more complexity to a system’s change and evolution (Davidson, 2010; Olsson et al., 2015). As I see in pulling monks’ distinctive philosophy on Buddhism in the all three temples, organizational actors have their own ideologies, belief systems, and values, which often more likely influences on system’s adaptive process than environmental disturbance itself directly (Olsson et al., 2015).

Organization scholars have long proposed that such internal inconsistency generates persistent conflict (Smith and Lewis, 2011), politics (Mintzberg, 1985) and group tension (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014). As I observe in Buddhist temples internally, the conflict makes a resilient process slower, varied, or even hindered over a long-term adaptive process. Considering the agency is, thus, critical to explain an adaptive process of social system. In this study, by deeply immersing ourselves into monastic organizational life, we show how Buddhist monks, agents in monastic organizational system, confront their social reality, why they choose to maintain or change their traditional monastic life, and finally how their contradicting actions enable the system ecologically resilient.

Theoretical implication to broad organization study
The findings in this study help reinterpret existing organization literature much richer by adding the language of pushing and pulling. For example, the pushing and pulling mechanism adds richer explanation of organizational inertia (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). Long organizational history tends to legitimize pushing agency over pulling agency in favor of status quo, resulting in structural inertia because longstanding organizational identity is deeply rooted in organizational routine (Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000). In other words, exclusive endorsing pushing inadvertently weakens and discourages internal growth of pulling force. Tripsas (2009: 441) note that “organizational members notice and interpret external stimuli in a manner consistent with the [existing] identity.” Strong organizational identity plays a filter role in searching environment and interpreting which environmental cue is more important (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Tripsas, 2009). Tripsas (2009) found that even though pulling new technology is a matter of survival issue, firms hesitate to pull it over if adopting the technology would challenge historically formed organizational identity. For example, in a context of rapid technological regime change, Tripsas and Gavetti (2000) found that senior managers (pushers) rigidly keep a core business model that has historically shaped their organizational identity by constantly reminding ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do.’ But, they discourage newly hired members (pullers)’s new technology-pulling effort, which ultimately leads an industry-leading firm to fall (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000). Evidence even show that the pullers of the Polaroid committed to learning and adopting new digital imaging technology dramatically decreased from 300 in 1992 to 50 in 1998 approximately (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000).

On the other hand, Khanna, Song and Lee (2011) illustrate a successful case of balancing pushing and pulling force internally. In explaining the rise of Samsung, Khanna et al (2001: 144)
claim that Samsung “injected some highly incompatible business practices into its business model” while maintaining a strong Confucian tradition of managing people. The past president Mr. Kun-Hee Lee actively pulled some of market-based Western management systems while pushing them if the systems conflict with Samsung’s core organizational identity. Over the process, Samsung becomes neither Eastern nor Western organizational system, but a unique cultural system where organization’s tradition still remain yet its external pigment is completely changed to match global environment (Khanna et al., 2011). The case of Samsung shows how an organizational system achieves the duality by pushing and pulling, thereby resilient despite the rapid environmental changes. The Samsung’s case illustrates that resilience is an adaptive process through pushing and pulling that some industry-leading firms including Nokia and Polaroid failed to do so (Tripsas & Gaveti, 2000; Vuori and Huy, 2016).

This essay also informs hybrid organization literature (Battilana and Lee, 2014), by demonstrating a process of how a strong ideological organization evolves to be a hybrid organization (B-temple case) that finally pursues two distinctive goals explicitly. Social enterprises, for example, need to manage persistent goal conflict, given that they pursue profit and social mission simultaneously. Subgroup identity is often formed as organizational members ultimately highlight either finance or social mission (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014; Battilana and Dorado, 2010). Ashforth and Reingen (2014), for example, found that organizational members of natural food cooperative become either idealist who consistently emphasizes moral idealism or pragmatists who focus more on organization’s financial operation. The members ultimately ask ‘who we are’ as a natural food cooperative. The similar conflict between pushing and pulling in our case gradually formulates dual vocational identity as a meditator and religious service provider. What this result adds to hybrid organization literature is that even an organization with
a strong single identity can evolve to be a hybrid identity organization through dynamics of pushing and pulling mechanism as pulling force becomes stronger.

4.7. REFERENCES


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CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION OF THE THREE ESSAYS

In this dissertation, I investigated three organizational tensions: (1) religion and finance, (2) change and tradition, and (3) adaptation and stability. These are the tensions contemporary Buddhist temples are facing as their external environment changes. Specifically, drawing upon paradox, history, and resilience theories, I aimed to unpack the nature of tensions and the mechanisms of handling the tensions in each essay. In the first essay, I was interested in understanding the mechanisms behind paradoxical tensions at multiple levels of analysis. I asked the question: How do organizational members cognitively or emotionally manage the tensions in their everyday organizational life? I positioned my empirical work in K-temple, which was facing the tension between religion and finance. I collected data through three months of participant observations, interviews with monks and other informants, and documentary evidence to answer the question. I found that the experience of organizational actors in managing these tensions informed our understanding of the tensions at the organizational level of analysis.

In the second essay, my research question was: how does an organizational leader systematically uses historical narratives to facilitate organizational change initiatives? Rather than approaching the past as objective fact or given context that linearly leads to the present outcomes, I approach the past as collective memory that “can function to galvanize social interconnectivity within a community as members draw on narratives of the past to crystalize present objectives” (Mena et al., 2016: 723). The organizational members are those actors who historically construct their collective memory and either reinforce or manipulate it (Anteby & Molnar, 2012; Olick & Levy, 1997). This perspective allows me to examine even the distant past as living archive and therefore to capture the importance of non-linear temporality in understanding the present organizational phenomenon (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; Lord, Dinh, &
Observing B-temple, which faces the tension of ‘change or not’, was useful to answer the question. Although Korean Buddhist temples prefer to protect tradition, radical external changes enforce temples to decide whether to adapt to the changes or still stick to tradition. B-temple Master Monk T chose change. When he initiated change, he saw that two social forces collided: his effort to change and the opponents’ rigidity to tradition. A part of his solution was to develop a set of rhetorical history to mitigate the resistance of the change. Master Monk T shows how the past becomes a rich source of storytelling asset in a managerial setting, implying that effective rhetorical history should be developed in a careful, skillful and deliberate manner, not an emerging and improvisatory way: hence, it is strategic.

The third essay investigates the tension between adaptation and stability. Buddhist organizations have protected their original form of monastic life while constantly changing themselves to adapt to external environment. Buddhist monks enter monastery to essentially forgo secular desires and materials, yet their organization must be embedded in secular system to simply sustain daily operations. Such duality historically forms a significant dilemma to contemporary Buddhist temples between sticking to an orthodox creed and adapting to secular system that might threaten traditional monastic life.

By completely immersing myself into monastic life, I explored how Buddhist organizations deal with the dilemma. I asked: how do organizations adapt to environmental changes while simultaneously protecting their core identity over an adaptive process? The findings from the three Korean Buddhist temples shed light on agent role in resilience by showing how, Buddhist monks, face their social reality and manage the dilemma in their own organizational life. At the end, managing dilemma spoke the very nature of resilience that enabled a system to be rigid
enough to protect core identity and to be flexible enough to adapt to environmental changes simultaneously.

The three essays of this dissertation all address organizational tensions with different theoretical lenses and epistemological stances. In fact, these tensions are omnipresent in contemporary organizational life. The tensions can emerge between the organizational pursuit of economic profit and the individual’s intrinsic values in such non-marketable aspects of life as religion, health, education, loyalty, and the natural environment (Polanyi, 1944; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Sandel, 1998). Margolis and Walsh (2003, p. 280) commented that “social and economic tension should serve as a starting point for new theory and research.” How organization scholars expand our understanding of such tensions is a compelling research focus salient to organizational theory. I hoped that the three essays of this dissertation contribute to the scholarship of understanding various types of organizational tensions. Concluding this dissertation, I introduce the concept of Sunyata (Suññatā in Pali) that might further help us understand tensions from a Buddhist perspective. Although I do not use the concept in my essays, this view offers us a compelling alternative (Buddhist) angle to look at the tensions that all contemporary organizations may face.

**Sunyata: Buddhist approach to tensions**

The Buddhist texts have long conceptualized Sunyata (Suññatā in Pali) to understand tensions people experience. Academics have translated Sunyata as nothingness, emptiness, voidness, and vacuity (e.g., Harvey 1995). Yet, the monastic community refers to it as liberalization, enlightenment, and Nirvana (Nibbāna in Pali) – the state that Buddhist monks ultimately hope to achieve through their meditative practice. Although the academia and monastic communities approach this concept differently, the common element is the relationship
between non-separation and attachment (Keown 1992, Rāhula 1974). Attachment occurs because people seek to satisfy their senses or uphold their beliefs, or *Dharmayatana*.

In this sense, Sunyata state refers to “amoral or supramoral [status] … experienced either above or below morality in the sense of thought, word and deed” (Stephenson, 1970, p.109 quoted by Keown, 1991, p. 10). So, Sunyata is neither a religious faith nor a moral state. It is a ‘perspective’ that gives humans the ability to shape their world without biases and separations. Sustainable development, for example, assumes that the survival of the human race is desirable and so advocates for intergenerational equity. Yet, if development is not sustainable and the human race is compromised, other species will likely survive. If one does not separate humans from non-human species, as in the case of Sunyata, there is no tension. Viewing a thing as it is, not relying on biased language, is Sunyata. In this regard, Sunyata explains how epistemology of the separations inadvertently transforms into ontology of the separations through linguistic separations.

In Buddhist world, meditation practice cultivates a Sunyata perspective. Sri Lankan Venerable Gunaratana (2002, p. 138) described meditative mindfulness: “when you first become aware of something, there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it.” Good et al. (2015, p. 117), in their review on organizational mindfulness, commented that meditation cultivates “experiential processing” that “permits the individual to attend to a stimulus as it is, without immediate attempts to derive meaning from it, which are often of a habitual nature.” Jon Kabat-Zinn (2002, p. 69), a Western student of Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and medical science researcher, teaches that “you don’t seek such an experience [separation] or turn it into a concept. You just sit, not pursuing anything.”

We often describe something by understanding the opposite, such as in *old* and *young*, *death*
and life, better and worse, and love and hate. The problem is that once we identify a category, we tend to value one category over the other. ‘Young’, ‘life’, ‘better’ and ‘love’ are generally more desirable than ‘old’, ‘death’, ‘worse’ and ‘hate’. In organizational sociology, “categories provide an anchor for making judgment about value and worth” (Vergne and Wry 2014, p. 58). In doing business, such boundaries and categories are demarcated in one’s mind, for example, between ‘business and society’, ‘economics and ethics’ and ‘Buddhism and business.’ Social actors engaging in these boundaries and categories often infuse opposite meanings to two differentiated elements, which creates tensions. Zerubavel (1993, p. 5) further describes that “we transform the natural world into a social one by carving out of it mental chunks we then treat as if they were discrete, totally detached from their surroundings”

A Sunyata perspective offers a unique insight of tensions in everyday organizational life. Some existing studies seem to have described Sunyata, even though they did not mention it explicitly. For example, Battilana and Dorado (2010) described the significant tensions between commercial banking and social mission with two microfinance organizations, Los Andes and BancoSol. Los Andes had successfully hybridized the two logics when organizational members formed a common identity, whereas BancoSol was unable to hybridize. The study found that the emergence of subgroup identities “exacerbate tensions between logics, thereby making their combination untenable” (Battilana and Dorado 2010, p. 1420). Battilana and Dorado (2010) suggested that Los Andes’ recruiting system was key to their hybridization because they hired fresh university graduates who were not steeped in either logic. Even though the new recruits lacked financial skills and exhibited little passion for social mission, they entered Los Andes tabula rasa. Without a professional ideology toward either banking or development, the newcomers did not separate, which is more consistent with a Sunyata approach than a paradox
Sunyata also offers a unique perspective on separation of success and failure: non-separation between success and failure cognitively helps organizational actors concentrate what they are truly performing. To illustrate, Eugen Herrigel, a German philosopher, who experienced Zen during his stay in Japan wanted to learn archery from a Japanese Zen master. The Zen master taught Herrigel to stop thinking, as it is his mind that separates ‘success (hitting the target area)’ from ‘failure (hitting the non-target area).’ Thinking about the target leads to a mental obsession of the target, and the obsession erodes performance. A great archer pulls the bowstring not in an attempt to hit the target, but only to release an arrow (Herrigel and Tausend 1948). The archer should not think about the target, but simply concentrate on the process of pulling back the bowstring (Herrigel and Tausend 1948). Success (hitting the target) is merely a result from the process. By momentarily forgetting the target—i.e., not pursuing an objective—the archer focuses on the action, not the outcome. This anecdote illustrates that management-by-objective practice (MBO) (Drucker 1954/2012) is completely differently understood in Zen-based management. Kazuo Inamori, often named as a god of management in Japan, underscores management-by-concentration instead of MBO because he thinks that a clear objective setting inhibits what employees are actually performing (Inamori 1995 2010). Japanese craftsmanship is completed by repeated concentration, not by sophisticated management practice and index that aim to achieve a series of objectives (Inamori 1995 2010).

Sunyata suggests that all tensions one can possibly imagine can be revisited and reexamined. A fine line between even well-established concepts in the management field can be challenged from Sunyata perspective. For example, Helfat and Winter (2011, p. 1243) explained “why the line between these capabilities [the distinction between dynamic and operational
capabilities] is unavoidably blurry” (italic added). They pointed out that “dynamic and operational capabilities differ in their purposes and intended outcomes. But … it is impossible to draw a bright line between these two sorts of capabilities” (Helfat and Winter 2011, p. 1243, italic added). Although both authors neither used the concept of the separation work nor rely on Buddhism, a core thesis of their argument was to question why there has been the fine boundary between the two concepts and why strategic management scholars have made such great effort to differentiate one another. By questioning the meaning of change, they concluded the article by arguing that “because things are always changing to at least some extent, identifying a precise threshold level of change that separates an operational capability from a dynamic one is likely to be fruitless, or to produce answers that vary erratically across cases” (Helfat and Winter, 2011: 1246, italtic added). This argument directly resonates with Sunyata.

My own concluding remark

This dissertation is a part of my ethnographic fieldwork in Buddhist temples across Asia (see Table 12). K-temple was the first temple I stayed. When I stayed in K-temple, Buddhist temple was just an empirical context, and my interest in meditation practice was very limited. In fact, before starting this fieldwork, I took a very critical position on spiritual activity including Buddhist meditation. Even, I thought mysticism and religion could be potentially dangerous in leading healthy social life. However, as I spent more time in temples, I became gradually convinced by meditation monks’ worldview. And, ironically, for some reason, strong skepticism grew about knowledge system scholars produce in academia and the process of producing the knowledge. So, I found myself experiencing a significant tension between academia and monastic life. At some point of time in the fieldwork, my object of research suddenly changed from monks’ tension to my own tension.
Table 12. The whole fieldwork project in my doctoral program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term stay (more than two months)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea K-temple</td>
<td>2015 May 1 – July 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea H-temple</td>
<td>2016 Nov 1 – Dec 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea B-temple</td>
<td>2017 Jan 1 – Mar 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand R-temple</td>
<td>2018 Jan 9 – Mar 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term visit</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea 13 temples</td>
<td>2015 May 1 – 2018 Mar 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan 5 temples</td>
<td>2016 Sep 19 – Oct 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong-Kong 2 temples</td>
<td>2017 Oct 3 – Oct 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand 19 temples</td>
<td>2017 Oct 8 – 2018 Mar 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos 1 temple</td>
<td>2017 Feb 2 – Feb 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1 temple</td>
<td>2018 Mar 23 – Mar 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I did not include such change for formal analysis of this dissertation because including authors’ voice and involvement is still debatable (Anteby 2013). However, by describing my change in this independent section, I believe one could see how the result of this study influences on the ethnographer’s perspective on tensions he also faced through this study. At first, I firmly excluded any mysticism (meditation) from research, which I call rigid mind. Then, I began to recognize and even embrace the mysticism, by juxtaposing, differentiating, or polarizing science and meditation, which I call paradoxical mind. Finally, I tried to remove a firm boundary between them, by deconstructing my cognitive boundary that generates bias, which I call Sunyata mind. At the end, I began to identify that researchers’ activity and monks’ activity might be the same type of activity that contains both aspects of institutional mysticism and objective knowledge producing system.

**Rigid mind.** When I began this fieldwork, my aim was to research Buddhist monks’ organization, not to dig deeper into Buddhist philosophy. As I stayed in K-temple, I mainly worked with business monks, and soon realized that it is extremely hard to access meditation monks. I often needed to pretend to be interested in meditation practice merely to have more interview opportunities. However, I never thought that one can find truth or anything by sitting...
on a cushion with eyes closed. Meditation monks said that meditation is beyond language, and the language cannot explain anything about Sunyata. But, we know that Wittgenstein (1922/2013) concluded his work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, by stating that “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (Proposition 7), and that Popper (1959/2003) theorized falsifiability as the criteria to demarcate science and non-science: If a certain statement is unfalsifiable, then it should be rejected to be a scientific knowledge. Taking these perspectives, I treated Buddhist meditation as nothing but a religious or ethnological ritual that comes down for thousands of years without questioning the authority.

In my temple life, without realizing it, I thought of meditation as one of the common mysticisms or religious rhetorics. In my mind, there was a strong cognitive boundary between science and non-science. Zerubavel (1991, p. 34) labelled such mind as a rigid mind and described its characteristic: “the most distinctive characteristic of the rigid mind is its unyielding, obsessive commitment to the mutual exclusivity of mental entities … a mental process that leads to the practical partitioning of reality into discrete ‘mutual ghettos’ that never ‘touch’ one another.” It is true that I could not reconcile my researcher’s position with the mysticism. My line was sharp and clear-cut. I put all non-science things to a totally separated ghetto and simply ignored it in my fieldwork in K-temple.

**Paradoxical mind.** As I got used to monastic life, I could not but question why monks keep meditating and how they know they see Sunyata. Unexpectedly, a series of deep conversations with monks leaded me to be skeptical about system of scientific knowledge. While the skepticism was broadly and deeply capturing me, my belief on the way meditation monks pursue knowledge was getting stronger. As time went by with this transit, I suddenly found myself who was neither a researcher nor a monk. A researcher’s position toward meditation and monk’s
position toward science were entangled in my mind, which leaded me to form a tension. When I leave K-temple, I often communicated this issue with Monk BM-H, and I realized that it is impossible to embrace the tension unless I clearly draw a line between the monastic life and academia. My cognitive tactic was the separation work I saw from Monk BM-H in K-temple and read from the priest in Kreiner et al. (Kreiner et al. 2006) and from Jung (1953/2014). I did the same tactic by switching on and off when I went back and forth between school and temples. I drew a firm and fine line to completely exclude the other side of the tension (monastic life or academic life) in the rigid mind, while at this time I drew the line to maintain my mental health to live as a semi-monk in temple and a researcher in academia simultaneously. Forgetting the other side indeed helped deal with the tension.

**Sunyata mind.** Finally, I gradually realized that the line drawing did not work well in my case. As time went by, I felt I had another strong negative rigid mind toward academia and science. The negative mind all covered my thought toward science that further motivated me to receive much longer Buddhisthood ordainment. At the time, a German meditation monk staying in a Thailand temple told me that “actually, a secular person is a true meditator. No one cannot sustain their mental health without meditative mindfulness in such a complex world where numerous information, noise, and stress come and go. In the sense, contemporary people are all meditators at a certain level. Mindfulness shines in complexity. It is silent in peacefulness.” This remark completely hit my head. It reminded me of Master Monk BM-B who wore iWatch, saying that “the secular is the temple, and the temple is the secular.” I also reminded the first encounter with the meditation monk, the complete silent moment of the twenty minute that I had with an anonymous Meditation Monk in K-temple, and I asked myself: Would he try to teach me the unnecessity of language and try to collapse barrier between ‘me’ (the secular) and ‘him’ (the
sacred) by saying nothing? Language might be unnecessary to know each other at the moment. Sunyata was there. Paradoxical thinking is often described as Eastern thought in organization literature, but in fact, it is also found in Western intellectual tradition (Harris 1996, Schad et al., 2016). Although there are some differences between Eastern and Western culture (Hofstede 2003), would there be something really like Western thought and Eastern thought? Would that be another fine line that scholars create? I believe Sunyata is found everywhere. William Blake started his poem, *Auguries of innocence*, as follows, which best described the nature of Sunyata as far as I know:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour
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Organization theory; Sustainability; Corporate Social Responsibility

PUBLICATION

Tima Bansal and Hee-Chan Song.* (2017). Similar but not the same: Differentiating corporate sustainability from corporate responsibility, Academy of Management Annals, 11(1), 105-149.  
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