

**Appropriation of Religion:
The Re-formation of the Korean Notion of Religion in Global Society**

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ABSTRACTS

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This dissertation explores the reconfiguration of religion in modern global society with a focus on Koreans' use of the category of religion. Using textual and structural analysis, this study examines how the notion of religion is structurally and semantically contextualized in the public sphere of modern Korea. I scrutinize the operation of the differentiated communication systems that produces a variety of discourses and imaginaries on religion and religions in modern Korea. Rather than narrowly define religion in terms of the consequence of religious or scientific projects, this dissertation shows the process in which the evolving societal systems such as politics, law, education, and mass media determine and re-determine what counts as religion in the emergence of a globalized Korea.

I argue that, ever since the Western notion of religion was introduced to East Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, religion was, unlike in China and Japan, constructed as a positive social component in Korea, because it was considered to be instrumental in maintaining Korean identity and modernizing the Korean nation in the new global context. In twentieth century Korea, the conception of religion was manifest in the

representation of the so-called world religions such as Buddhism and Christianity, which were largely re-imagined as resisting colonialism and communism as well as contributing to the integration and democratization of the nation-state. The phenomenal clout and growth of Korea's mainstream religions can be traced to an established twofold understanding that religion is distinctive, normal, and versatile, while indigenous traditions and new religious groups are abnormal, regressive, and even harmful. I have found that, since the late 1980s, a negative re-formation of religion has been widespread in the public sphere of South Korea, with a growing concern that religion may harbor a parochial attitude against the nation's new strategies of development. Religion has been increasingly signified as antisocial, conflictual, and sectarian in newly globalized South Korea, because structuralized religious power, in particular that of Protestantism, gets in the way of autonomous evolution of the secular societal institutions. As such, I conclude by suggesting that the definition of religion was multiply appropriated by the differences in local particularization in contemporary global society. Insofar as religion is regarded as incompatible with the changed location of the national society in the new global society, the semantics assigned to what is called religion continues to be degraded in contemporary South Korea.

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KEY TERMINOLOGY

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------|---|
| Asiajök kach‘i | 아시아적 가치 | Asian values |
| Chiguhwa | 지구화 | Globalization |
| Chonggyo | 종교 | Religion |
| Chonggyo ch‘egye | 종교체계 | Religious System |
| Chonggyo chöngch‘aek | 종교정책 | Religious policy |
| Chonggyo kanüi kaltüng | 종교간의 갈등 | Inter-religious conflict |
| Chonggyo kyoyuk | 종교교육 | Religious education |
| Chonggyo maech‘e | 종교매체 | Religious Media |
| Chonggyo pöp | 종교법 | Religion-related laws |
| Chonggyo tawönjuüi | 종교 다원주의 | Religious pluralism |
| Chonggyo üi chayu | 종교의 자유 | Freedom of religion |
| Chonggyo üi kaenyööm | 종교의 개념 | Conception of religion |
| Chonggyo üi yökhal | 종교의 역할 | Role of religion |
| Chongnip hakgyo | 종립학교 | Religion-affiliated school |
| Chöngch‘i ch‘egye | 정치체계 | Political System |
| Chönggyo pulli | 정교분리 | Separation of religion and politics |
| Hallyu | 한류 | Korean wave |
| Kaehyök | 개혁 | Reformation |
| Konggong üi yöngyök | 공공의 영역 | Public sphere |
| Kong‘ingyo | 공인교 | Officially recognized religions |
| Kündaesöng | 근대성 | Modernities |
| Kyoyuk ch‘egye | 교육체계 | Educational system |
| Minjok kukka | 민족국가 | Nation-state |
| Minjuhwa | 민주화 | Democratization |
| Misin | 미신 | Superstition |
| Mujonggyo | 무종교 | Irreligion |
| Panjonggyo | 반종교 | Anti-religion |
| Pijonggyo | 비종교 | Non-religion |
| Pömnnyul ch‘egye | 법률체계 | Legal system |
| Sagyo | 사교 | Evil religion |
| Saibi chonggyo | 사이비 종교 | Pseudo religion, or cult |
| Sesokchuüi | 세속주의 | Secularism |
| Sinjonggyo | 신종교 | New religion |
| Taejung maech‘e ch‘egye | 대중매체체계 | Mass media system |
| Tayangsöng | 다양성 | Diversity |
| Yangsimjök pyöngyök köbu | 양심적 병역거부 | Conscientious objection to military service |
| Yusa chonggyo | 유사종교 | Quasi religion |

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation concerns the conceptualization of religion in the context of modern global society. Contemporary global society is often characterized by the terms ‘de-secularization’ or ‘resurgence of religion’ (Berger 1999). In this global context, religion and religions exist as a significant resource to construct identity and also a marker of the differences between individuals and groups rather than as a trivial and disappearing social residue (Beyer 2006; Eisenstadt 2000; Huntington 1998). Defining the boundary between religion and the secular has become important for determining whether different traditions and civilizations will clash or coexist. Hierarchy among religions, the social form of religion, and/or location of religion in the modern secular world all have increasingly become disputed socio-political loci nowadays. How religion is observed and defined in the public sphere is critical in forming the religious regime as well as in determining the lives of religionists and non-religionists. Therefore, it is of momentous importance to recognize what kind of criteria or definition of religion is used among peoples or nations to distinguish between ‘true,’ ‘legitimate,’ ‘normal,’ or ‘our’ religion and ‘evil,’ ‘illegitimate,’ ‘abnormal,’ or ‘their’ religion. A hegemonic conception of religion has the potential to be favorable to particular religion(s), and religious institutions supported by that ‘formal’ notion of religion are likely to take the initiative to constitute the shape of national culture and identity as well as to hold a dominant position over other religions or non-religious organizations.

The established research on the notion of religion takes an approach that overlooks the change in the conception of religion in late-modern times, misses having modern global society itself as a strategic framework of analysis, and does not apply a theory that consistently describes religion as one of the components of contemporary secular society. It

tends to focus on the construction of religion in early-modern times, have nation-state as an inherent unit of analysis, and be preoccupied with theological or scientific conceptions of religion.¹ In order to overcome early-modern centrism, this dissertation looks into how the modern idea of religion has been re-conceptualized in Korea across the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. To overcome nation-state centrism, it approaches in a global comparative perspective the process of creating and maintaining a local neologism, i.e. *chonggyo* 종교,² corresponding to the Western notion of religion. And, beyond the religious and scientific imaginations of religion, I look for the ‘official’ notion of religion that is constructed and re-constructed by the functional operation of modern secular institutions. Based on the Korean case, this dissertation aims to expand the study of the conception of religion, beyond the conventions of ‘early-modern, national, and historical research,’ to ‘late-modern, global, and social systems approaches.’

This dissertation raises these questions: How has religion been characterized in modern global society? Is believing in a religion or having a religious membership an efficient way of becoming a ‘good’ citizen in modern Korea? Do modern Koreans consider it legitimate that the notion of religion is used to imagine and construct their traditional culture,

¹ In chapter one, I examine the previous research on the notion and construction of religion. Some examples of this are Chidester, David. 1996. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia; Dobbelaere, Karel and Jan Lauwers. 1973. “Definition of Religion – A Sociological Critique,” *Social Compass* 20(4), pp. 535-551; Fitzgerald, Timothy. 1997. “A Critique of ‘Religion’ as a Cross-Cultural Category,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9, pp.91-110; Geerts, Clifford. 1973. “Chapter 2. Religion as a Cultural System,” in Clifford Geerts. *The Interpretations of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp.87-125; King, Richard. 1999. *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East.’* New York: Routledge; Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in Mark C. Taylor ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 269-284. Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1991(1962). *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Spiro, Melford E. 1968. “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation,” in Michael Banton. *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*. London: Tavistock Publications, pp. 85-126.

² This dissertation uses the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system in transliterating Korean words and names except where another spelling is common, e.g. “Seoul” or “Chondogyo.” All Korean names are rendered in Korean order, surname first, unless the individual’s name is more widely known in another form, e.g. “Syngman Rhee.”

religious traditions, or national identity? To answer these questions, this dissertation examines the historical course in which the ‘official’ notion of religion has been constructed and re-constructed in modern Korea. In particular, my doctoral research is focused upon how Korean society has appropriated religion in contemporary global society. Specifically, problematizing the current formation in which (legitimate) religion is defined in the public sphere, this dissertation delineates how the category of religion has been socially constructed and how a transformation of such religious conception has reflected the advance of globalization in the context of late-modern South Korea. Using textual and structural analysis, I examine how ‘religion’ is structurally and semantically contextualized in the political, legal, educational, and mass media institutions of globalized modern Korea. This examination is based on the thesis that religion in modern secular society is primarily observed as a functionally differentiated and somewhat autonomous communicative system that is structurally coupled with other societal systems. I discuss how contemporary functional systems characteristically operate as self-referentially differentiated institutions and also culturally manifested perspectives to produce and re-produce a variety of imaginaries and discourses on religion and religions, by appropriating and re-appropriating the category of religion in modern Korea, particularly South Korea. Rather than narrowly define religion in terms of a consequence of religious or scientific projects, this study suggests that the differentiated societal systems determine what counts as religion in the emergency of modern secular society.³

³ Because religion and science are also constructed as distinctively separate institutions in modern Korea, those may influence the process of conceptualizing religion in that society. But this dissertation is focused on delineating the conceptual construction of religion in the secular public sphere of Korea where the political, legal, educational, and mass media systems produce a variety of texts and images of religion and religions. Beyer calls it the ‘official’ notion of religion (Beyer 2003f). In chapter one, I discuss this kind of conceptualization in detail in contrast to the ‘theological’ and ‘scientific’ conceptions of religion contended by religionists and academics. However, through ‘structural coupling,’ the communication systems of religion and science may influence the other secular social institutions producing their respective views and meanings of religion and religions.

This dissertation illuminates the historical characteristics of the conceptualization of religion in the context of Korea's incorporation into modern global society. Religion is a modern and global category that did not exist in East Asia before the eighteenth or nineteenth century. In the process of Western colonization of East Asia, China, Japan, and Korea all accepted the Western idea of religion that had Christianity as its inherent model. As it carried a sectarian and foreign connotation against the ideology of nation-state building in Japan and China, many Chinese and Japanese refused to re-imagine their important religious traditions as examples of 'religion' or 宗教 (*zongjiao* or *shukyo*). Unlike in China and Japan, however, the imported notion of religion was constructed as a positive category for Korean nation in colonial and post-colonial times. It was extensively imagined – particularly among a sizable portion of the enlightenment intellectuals and the founding fathers of the nation-state – that religion or the Korean neologism *chonggyo* 종교 would serve to help Koreans not only achieve civilization, but also secure the identity of Korean nation in crisis. Simply speaking, many modern Koreans, except atheists such as socialists or North Korean communists, believed that religion was helpful for making the Korean nation stronger. The explosive growth of Korea's religious population from about 3% in 1916 to about 54% in 2005 reflects the positive image that the the category of religion had in modern Korea (Baker 2006: 252-255).

Since the 1980s, however, signs of change in the conception of religion have been observed in South Korea in a similar manner to what occurred in China and Japan about a century ago. In recent decades, globally there has grown an idea that differences between civilizations and/or traditions are critically concerned with the cultural, social, and political dynamics of domestic and international conflict and violence (Huntington 1998; Juergensmeyer 2000). In parallel to this global awareness of religion as a source of dispute

and strife, there has appeared some skepticism about the role of religion in developing the Korea nation in the new century (Kang 2007d; Kim 2008b; Korean Federation of Christian Professor 2008; Pak 2008a). Increasing intolerance and impatience with Christian religion may reflect this change in the public notion of religion (Choe 2007; Choi 2000; Lee 2004; Ryu 2007a, 2004a, Statistics Korea 2006). The rise of 'negative' semantics toward the category of religion may also indicate a renunciation of applying the Western advanced industrial societies as the model of development and thereby a change in the strategy of building and positioning the nation-state in contemporary global society.

To understand the intricacies of this shift in the social formation of religion, this dissertation scrutinizes the historical process through which religion has been constructed and re-constructed in the public sphere of modern Korea. Drawing on the sociologist Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, I divide the secular public domain, in which a variety of discussions, practices, and propensities on religion and religions are produced and re-produced, into the political (chapter 2), legal (chapter 3), educational (chapter 4), and mass media (chapter 5) systems. By 'systems,' I mean the "centers of institution and social power that have the power to determine what counts as religion in today's society" (Beyer 2003f: 155). Therefore, upon the premise that each societal system is able to operate with its own code, function, program, and media, I analyze the re-formation of the notion of religion in the political, legal, educational, and mass media systems of modern Korea. Considering that each communication system operates self-referentially and characteristically, I distinctively organize each empirical chapter two, three, four, and five, after presenting chapter one that introduces previous research, theoretical framework, and research methods.

In chapter two, I examine a conception of religion in the political system of modern Korea. I attempt to describe the Korean formation of religion and its change in comparison

with the Western and also other Asian cases. In particular, I focus on the changing evaluation of religion in the political context through which a nation-state in the Korean peninsula of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was built. Regarding the political construction of religion, I try to answer these questions: When and how did the term religion appear in Korea? What was the historical nature of the appearance of religion in the European context? How has religion been conceptualized and re-conceptualized in Korea of the twentieth century in terms of Korean nation-building in modern global context? What is the Korean characterization of religion in comparison with the Chinese and Japanese ones?

Unlike chapter two, which examines the subject matter in a more synchronic and historical-comparative way, analysis of configurations of religion in other empirical chapters is divided into the structural and semantic parts from a more diachronic perspective of modern Korean history.

In chapter three, I deal with the construction of religion in the legal system of modern Korea. Although there is a clause forbidding establishment of ‘state religion’ in the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, many laws and regulations seem to have effectively recognized Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism as more important than other religions in this East Asian society. Why and how has this legal disposition occurred? What kind of conception of religion has defined the relations of religions in the Korean legal arena? It is, however, observed that legal challenges such as lawsuits against the conventional notion of religion that have ‘world religion’ as the implicit model of religions have increased in late-modern South Korea. Examples of these challenges include Korean Jehovah’s Witnesses’ conscientious objection to compulsory military service and the legal change for minority religions in the installation of military and prison chaplaincies.

Compulsory education is important part of the public sphere that maintains the official conception of religion. The focus of chapter four is on structural and semantic configurations of religion in Korea's official education. I accept that the field of 'religious education' and related religious bodies are critical in conceptualizing religion in the educational system. "Religious education" (*chonggyo kyoyuk* 宗教教育) is an important locus of analysis that produces and re-produces diverse discussions and structural situations on religion and religions in the compulsory school system. Religious education does not necessarily mean secular education about religion in schools; rather, it may imply sort of religious activity aiming at spreading religious knowledge and 'belief' in favor of a particular religion. Further, it seems that forced religious education in schools is common, and this has been very controversial in the educational circles in the South Korean society of today. To understand how the educational system shpes the Korean concept of religion, this chapter asks: What is the place of religion in modern education of Korea? How is religious education being conducted in the compulsory school system? How do educational authorities and secular educators recognize faith-based schools and institutions in the public educational system?

In chapter five, I examine the structural and discursive constructions of religion in the mass media of South Korea. The modern system of mass media that includes newspapers, broadcasting, the Internet, magazines, advertising, and so on produces and distributes information on an unlimited number of affairs, subjects, and issues that include religion. Mass media select, re-construct, and circulate many ideas, images, and discourses on religion and religions produced by various societal systems such as religious, political, legal, and educational institutions. Like faith-based schools in the educational system, religion-affiliated media, e.g. religious newspapers and broadcasts that are intended for unspecified South

Koreans, have played an important role in the development of both Korean society and Korean media industry. To explore the construction of religion in the Korean media system, I try to answer to these questions: How many media institutions do religions have in Korea? What is the location of religious media in the general media landscape of South Korea? What criteria do the Korean media apply to constitute newspaper articles and television programs about religion? What do religion and religions look like in the discursive construction of the mass media? Regarding these questions, it would not be too misleading to state that while the structural location of religion in the Korean mass media has been strong, the semantics of religion constructed by the mass media has greatly changed through the modern history of Korea.

In the next chapter, I will first examine the previous research on the concept of religion and then discuss the theoretical and methodological issues of this dissertation.

**I *THEORIZING RELIGION AND RELIGIONS
IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION***

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework and Research Propositions:

Theorizing Religion and Religions in Contemporary Global Context

This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological propositions on which this dissertation is built. After pointing out the significance of research on the conception of religion and thereby clarifying the purposes of this dissertation, I will first review a series of scholarly debates on the ‘nature of religion’ in the scientific study of religion. I will, then, give an explanation of the theoretical framework on which this dissertation is based, and will go on to discuss factors that bring on changes in the conception of religion in contemporary South Korea. Finally, I will clarify the research methods and data that are used for this doctoral thesis project.

This doctoral thesis researches the historical construction and transformation of the public notions of religion in modern Korea from a global comparative perspective. In particular, this doctoral research delves into the established conception of religion in the public sphere of globalized Korea and its change since the 1980s. The objectives of the thesis research are: Through analysis of various discourses on ‘religion’ and ‘religions’ such as Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Shamanism, and various religious movements in the secular official sphere of the Korean society, to address the question of the ‘universal’ notion of religion; examine a historical particularity of the notion of religion in the East Asian society; and, explore the new location and role of religion in South Korea as a particular place of contemporary global society.

At the turn of the ‘third’ millennium, the socio-political importance of religion has received new worldwide attention from the Third World to the last communist bloc, and to

Western advanced industrial societies (Beckford 1989; Casanova 2001; Juergensmeyer 2006, 2005). In this post-Cold War era, such ‘religious matters’ as the relations of religious organizations and religiously defined civilizations and the boundary between ‘religion’ and the secular are increasingly recognized as a decisive factor for unresolved conflict and peaceful coexistence in the dynamics of both domestic and international politics. Certain ‘hierarchies’ in the field of religion, the formation of religious domain, and the role and position of religious organizations have also become disputed social loci in today’s world. The form in which a religious regime is embedded in society as a whole has become a considerable factor in determining everyday lives of ‘secular’ individuals as well as the members of particular religious organizations.

In this global milieu, therefore, it has become crucial to recognize what *kind* of criteria – problematic as it may be – is applied to religious institutions and phenomena in order to distinguish between ‘true,’ ‘justified,’ ‘our,’ ‘normal,’ or ‘official’ religion and ‘evil,’ ‘unjustified,’ ‘others,’ ‘abnormal,’ or ‘popular’ religion.⁴ A prevailing conception of religion may have the potential to favor specific religious practices, discourses, and organizations in a society; those supported by the hegemonic notion of religion are likely to have a more considerable role than do the others in shaping the religious and secular environment of that society. Religions and the religious in modern Korea cannot be an exception to the application of this perspective. The re-construction of the Korean notion of religion may, therefore, critically reflect the general change in Koreans’ understanding of national culture, citizenship, and modern life in contemporary global society. From a larger perspective, this doctoral thesis research on the ‘official’ notion of religion in modern Korea is intended to contribute to a

⁴ Robert Orsi (1997) coined the term ‘lived religion’ built on earlier studies of ‘popular religion,’ a concept that embraces popular religion’s emphasis on the actions of the populace in creating their own religious practices from available cultural resources.

better understanding of not only how ‘religion’ as a generic category having a Western origin of etymology is introduced to and appropriated in the non-Western context of Korea, but also how contemporary Koreans understand their modern social environment.

Accordingly, my presentation here starts with an assumption that modern Korea is located in a specific position in the modern world order, and that the sphere of religion in this Asian context is distinctively conditioned and observed in relation to secular social systems such as politics, education, mass media, law, and so forth (Luhmann 1995, 1984). With that assumption in mind, this research takes as a theoretical and historical point of departure the idea that the form and function of various modern social fields in contemporary societies, including especially ones in non-Western regions, are highly influenced by those of Western advanced societies. I recognize that in the process of colonization, Western ‘invaders’ often imposed Western conceptions of religion on many non-Westerners. But in accordance with their different purposes and social contexts, Asian societies have in their own ways accepted, appropriated, or even refused Western ideas of religion (Beyer 2006; King 1999; van der Veer 2001). In this way, in turn, the non-Western societies have contributed to the global formation of religion or ‘religious system.’ It is obvious, then, that the notion of religion that modern Koreans currently use was originally one of the imported conceptions from the West, especially when Korea opened its ports to the West in the nineteenth century (Baker 2006, 2002; Jang 1992). Consequently, the main objective of my doctoral thesis research is to delineate the historical process of how the modern notion of religion introduced from the West has changed in contemporary Korea. The emphasis in this thesis will be placed on analyzing the transformation of such notion of religion in South Korea since the 1980s.

1. Previous Research on Religion as Concept, Category, and Social Reality in Modern Global Society

In the field of the scientific study of religion, there is abundant literature on the nature of religion as a concept, category, and social reality. From a sociological perspective, this dissertation is focused upon delineating the historical process in which the East Asian society of Korea has accepted and appropriated the term religion in modern global society. Having said that, I not only acknowledge as self-evident that what is counted as religion may be constructed and re-constructed in a specific historical context of human society rather than accepted as something transcendently taken-for-granted beyond human intelligence, but also that the genealogy of the formation of ‘religion’ in the contemporary world was often lead by Western civilization and powers. Among the scholars in the science of religion who discuss the contested nature of religion, Wilfred C. Smith, Daniel Dubuisson, Tomoko Masuzawa, Tala Asad, David Chidester, Benson Saler, Timothy Fitzgerald, S. N. Balagangadhara, Richard King, Jonathan Z. Smith, and the sociologists of religion, Meredith McGuire and Peter Beyer, and others, I think, deserve at least some attention in the literature-review section of the dissertation.

(1) The Contested Nature of Religion

In the discipline of religious studies, it is not just a recent phenomenon to point out the contested and even political nature of what is called ‘religion.’ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the scholar of comparative religion, was one of the first twentieth century scholars who entertained serious doubt about the validity of the term religion. As early as the 1960s, W.C.

Smith indicated, in his well-known modern classic *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1991), that the idea of religion was a product of debates and religious propaganda. He suggests that the term religion has a critical limitation as a ‘universal conception’; alongside ‘Christianity,’ ‘Buddhism,’ ‘Islam,’ and so on, the term religion is of little application for ascertaining a ‘reliable knowledge’ of the ‘truthful’ facts of religious ‘belief’. Thus, he laments that the ‘reification of the religious’ only encourages a vague, uncertain, superficial understanding of religion. About forty years after W.C. Smith’s seminal book, Daniel Dubuisson (2003) reveals his own reason why ‘religion’ cannot be a universally applicable notion: It is because of the underlying influence of Christianity in the making of the term religion. He contends that the conceptual effect of Christianity is so strong in the notion and realm of religion that the term religion does not rightly represent the varied characteristics of the sacred in the world, especially in non-Christian or non-Western regions. Quite like W.C. Smith, in the end, Dubuisson proceeds to suggest a new alternative title ‘cosmographic formation’ as replacement for the term religion. Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) joins Dubuisson, uncovering how the frame of Christianity was applied in inventing ‘world religions.’ According to her, the so-called world religions represent the projections of the Western form of religion onto ‘others’ in non-Western regions. World religions, in her view, are the constituents of the Western secular modernity that is based on historical and cultural elements descended from Christian tradition. Talal Asad (2003) argues that even if the current Western world mainly consists of secular national societies, the contemporary formation of Western secularity still largely contains the elements or images of Christian tradition at its heart, especially insofar as non-Christians, particularly Muslims, encounter the crisis of their civic identity because Western, especially European, liberal discourse of citizenship does not offer a social space for

them to keep the religious narratives necessary to construct their daily lives.⁵ Asad, then, sheds light on how the Western conception of religion is re-constructed in the colonized regions. He proposes religion as a generic category that has been under the shadow of a ‘dark’ history in which Christian conceptual elements merged with Western colonialist desires were imposed on non-Western societies. From such a perspective, accordingly, it would be seriously doubtful that ‘religion’ is a conception that can be evenly and fairly applicable to all ‘religions’ in the contemporary world.

According to a series of scholars, ‘religion’ for the first time appeared as a ‘global category’ from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, a universalistic but differentiated construction that was contrived to include different ‘religions’ in the modern world, especially ones that European Christendom, being internally transformed immensely since the Enlightenment, had encountered in the process of its colonial expansion. As indicated above, of course, Westerners’ observations led the formative process of the modern construction of religion.⁶ David Chidester (1996) brings to light how Europeans’ understanding of South African religiosity changed from ‘being without religion’ to ‘being with religion,’ as they proceeded with the colonization of South Africa. When the Westerners encountered four African tribes – Hottentot, Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho-Tswana – at Cape Town, those natives were first described as not having religion, but latter they were re-described as having religion. According to Chidester, the Africans were portrayed as having no religion, when they were an independent political force but were not yet colonized by the Europeans. However, after a

⁵ Especially since the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001, we have watched the increased sufferings of Muslims and the immigrants from the Islamic regions in the Western world whose ‘liberal societies’ are more intimately connected to Christianity or secularism based on the legacy of the Protestant Enlightenment.

⁶ There were ‘less’ differentiated and regionally used ancient notions of religion. For example, Daniel Boyarin (2004) points out the significance of the role of Christian heresiologists who were anxious to construct a distinctive Christian identity different from Judaism. He contends that by distinguishing ‘orthodox’ Christian beliefs and practices from Jewish or heretical ones, the second-century Gentile Christian invented the idea of religion pervading the Western civilization.

colony was built there and they came under European colonial control, those Africans were for the first time recognized as maintaining 'religion.' S. N. Balagangadhara (1994) puts forward India as an example of a culture without the term religion. He argues that 'religion' is an 'explanatorily intelligible account of the cosmos,' a term that does not apply to India's rich pluralistic traditions. India has many varieties of explanatory accounts of the cosmos, but has not made any attempt to give a definitive account. Rather, the term religion might just as well apply to the three Abrahamic traditions, i.e. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. He continues to argue that the idea that 'religion' is a generic or universal conception is a bias of the Christian tradition, and that the modern academic use of religion as a term uncritically accepts the biased idea that religion is a generic or universal conception. Richard King digs into the concept of 'Hinduism' that takes its conceptual locus under the larger generic concept of religion. King argues that "the notion of Hinduism as a single world religion is a nineteenth century construction, largely dependent upon the Christian presuppositions of the early Western Orientalists. ... [E]xclusive emphasis upon the role of Western Orientalists constitutes a failure to acknowledge the role played by key indigenous informants ... in the construction of modern notions of the 'Hindu religion' (King 1999: 146)." W.C. Smith (1991) already points out that various 'isms' in the science of religion were 'blank abstractions' that blocked what we truly had to study, namely 'cumulative tradition.' Therefore, here again Hinduism as a 'ism,' which is considered to belong to the generic category of religion, assumes a conceptual limitation or 'exclusivity' in counting out such principal religious natives as 'Brahmins' in the conceptual construction of 'Hinduism.' In the end, a number of criticisms on religion as a conception or category have reached the conclusion that the utility of 'religion' as a 'neutral' academic term is seriously suspected or even negated in the modern scientific study of religion.

Based on the reasoned inadequacy of religion as an ‘impartial’ conceptual tool, McCutcheon and Fitzgerald go on to suggest their own perspectives for the study of religion. Timothy Fitzgerald questions whether ‘religion’ is a justifiable and stand-alone category that could be cross-culturally applied, in particular to non-Western cultures. He contends that religion is a “nonexistent object” and “cannot reasonably be taken to be a valid analytical category since it does not pick out any distinctive cross-cultural aspect of human life” (Fitzgerald 2003: 4). On top of that, he adds that “the confusion generated by the concept of religion cannot be explained only as a categorical mistake. Instead, it is better understood as a form of mystification generated by its disguised ideological function. ... The construction and dissemination of this myth of “religion” ... has begotten both liberal ecumenical theology and the so-called science of religion. ... It is a gentle, kind, and rather optimistic philosophy, but it hides from itself the relation between the institutions which it describes as “religious” and the exercise of power” (Fitzgerald 1997: 108). In the end, Fitzgerald even contends that scholars in the field of religious studies have to break with such ideological illusions, and instead turn to ‘cultural studies.’ Russell McCutcheon (1997) also criticizes the field of religious studies because it deals with religion too much as a *sui generis* isolated reality. He argues that this discipline has failed in observing how religion interrelates with other social dimensions in order to re-produce specific forms of power relationships working for specific individuals, groups, or nations. Instead, from the perspective that he calls the ‘naturalistic approach,’ McCutcheon attempts to analyze religion as an integral dimension of vast social processes rather than as an entity which one has to understand ‘only through its inherent condition.’ From that naturalistic approach, he proceeds to point out that today’s category of religion, a highly modern invention of the West, has served *in* the historical trajectory of global domination by Western imperialism. According to Beyer (2007a: 168-169), this viewpoint

that problematizes religion is important in that McCutcheon and his collaborators tend to defend their conclusion by performing global analyses that examine – from non-Western perspectives – the Western category and form of religion.

Suggesting Ludwig Wittgenstein’s conceptual framework of ‘family resemblance,’⁷ Benson Saler joins this critical approach to conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing religion. While advocating the rejection of traditional essentialist and monotheistic definitions of religion, Saler argues that “we self-consciously conceptualize ‘religion’ as an analytical category with reference to, but not in actual terms of, our personal and changeable understandings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – that we regard our understanding of those familiar cases as foregrounding what is notably prototypical of the category without attempting to draw sharp boundaries around that category” (Saler 1993: 214). In order to overcome these categorical limitations, he maintains a ‘family resemblance approach’ as an ‘unbounded analytic category,’ for, if all religions were compared, nothing would be found in common, but overlapping resemblances might be. In other words, the reason why religion cannot be easily defined is that it is too complex to only refer to a single defining characteristic, but may refer to things sharing a number of features. However, this approach is still not unproblematic, given that whether or not a religion is included in the ‘family’ of religions may continuously be problematic and unclear (Beyer 2003f: 150; Harrison 2006: 143-144).

(2) The Social Scientific Observation of Religion

⁷ Wittgenstein claims that it is fruitless to search for a single feature that all [language] games have in common, asking “*look and see* whether there is anything common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that” (1958: 66).

In the social scientific study of religion, it is well-known that the difficulty of conceptualizing religion even existed among the founding fathers of sociology. Max Weber refused to make his own definition of religion “at the start of a presentation,” suggesting that such a conceptualization could only flow out of “the conclusion of the study,” and that it was not even his concern (Weber 1978: 399). Émile Durkheim (1912) attempted to make his ‘functional’ definition of religion, which, from a ‘substantive’ perspective, could be so large that some might think this definition could include everything religious, including things not normally thought of as religious, while the ‘substantive’ one may exclude many others that may be considered religious. A little more recently, Melford E. Spiro (1968) and Clifford Geertz (1973) also made their own definitions of religion, which could not satisfy many, because they were all still ‘too big’ or ‘too small’, from various ‘perspectives’ and ‘purposes.’

In recognizing how the concept of religion is constructed in modern times, some scholars have noticed the importance of ‘observation’ on religion. Jonathan Z. Smith, a giant in the modern study of religion, describes a constructive characteristic of religion as follows: “[W]hile there is a staggering amount of data, of phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religious—*there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study. It is created for the scholars’ analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy” (Smith 1982: xi). By saying this, it seems that he is shifting the question of the nature of religion from the problem of data to the ‘perspectives’ of the scholar or the problem of ‘observation.’ Somewhat similar to this change of ‘standpoint’ on religion, thus, Meredith B. McGuire suggests the definition of religion to be a matter of ‘research strategy.’ She maintains that “[h]ow one defines religion shapes one’s explanation of its role in society. Different

definitions of religion result in different interpretations of issues such as social change, modernity, and non-church religion. Indeed, part of the problem in determining a satisfactory definition of religion is that the issue of what is ‘properly religious’ is a continuing controversy in modern societies. ... It is useful to approach sociological *definitions as strategies* rather than as ‘[scientific] truths’ (McGuire 2002: 8; my emphasis).

Kocku von Stuckrad constructs his own strategy of observing religion, saying that “we should scrutinize religions as systems of communication and action and not as systems of (unverifiable) belief. Not inner states of the mind or speculations about the transcendent are our issue, but the analysis of publicly communicated constructions (von Stuckrad 2003: 255).” He continues to argue: “There simply is no escaping the fact that the only thing scholars of religion have as a basis for scrutiny is visible and expressed religion, i.e., religious propositions that are communicated in sentences, signs, and symbolic action. Nevertheless, many scholars have long concerned themselves with ‘spiritual beings’ or the ‘belief’ in them and have disregarded the fact that it is only the communication of these beliefs that academic scrutiny can analyze. ... [S]cholars of religion are confronted with conflicting ontologies that derive from conflicting *a priori* assumptions. ... Since the truths of neither ontology can be proven, scholars of religion are limited to describing the conflict without adopting either ontology as generally valid” (*Ibid.* 263-264).

On the other hand, Danièle Hervieu-Léger does not think that religion in the modern world was just a remnant of culture, but rather suggests that it contains creative potential in a society and might function for the societies to awaken the memory of the past and reinvent it. In her highly praised book, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (2000), Hervieu-Léger holds that the definition of religion should not be limited to recognized religion but also include more ‘invisible forms.’ Different from extreme secularist modernists who think of religion as

something pre-modern in discord with the modern, both Peter Beyer (2007b) and José Casanova (2006) claim that religion should be observed as not only an opposite dimension of modern secularity, but also an intrinsic part of contemporary global society. In addition, Beyer points out that religion has become a political, conflicted, and contested social locus in contemporary global society, so much so that different conceptions of religion might be freely selected depending on the desire of carriers (Beyer 2006: 1-17).

All the scientific definitions of religion above, along with the various definitional assertions by many religions, are important loci to be scrutinized, because both are integral to the conceptual constitution of what is called 'religion.' Strictly speaking, however, all those criticisms and conceptions of religion are still left as an internal affair of scientific and/or religious activities. Outside of the two specialized domains of human communication, those scientific and theological conceptions of religion may be neither persuasively heard nor attentively understood. They may even be curtly counted as what theists and agnostics only argue about in order to make their living. Then, what alternative definition of religion is possibly available in the world for the mass of people to judge and distinguish religious individuals and groups in the society at large? Is there any sort of conceptual 'way out' that is not a consequence of the scientific or religious enterprise? Given that an operation of many modern societies is maintaining the premise of the secular public sphere, one can think of a possibility of the conception of religion that is constructed by the functionally divided secular parts of society. The very task of this doctoral research is to find and delineate the formation and re-formation of the notion of religion that is constructed by the publically managed secular fields in contemporary society, in particular modern Korea.

(3) The 'Official' Conception of Religion

As shown above, a great deal of research in the science of religion has been done on the concept or definition of religion. Peter Beyer classifies various attempts of conceptualizing religion into three types – theological, scientific, and official notions of religion (Beyer 2003a, 2001a). Among the three conceptions of religion, the theological conception has its own ‘religious’ purposes, because its primary reference is the ‘transcendent’ or ‘spiritual’ realm. Thus, such an ‘insider’ perspective – as opposed to ‘outsider’ – secures its priority in realizing certain ‘confessional’ or ‘ultimate’ understandings and intentions. Secondly, scientific or ‘naturalistic’ conceptions emanate from the system of modern science. Most scientific definitions of religion in the fields of religious, cultural, or social studies fall under this category. The purposes and strategies of the scientific research of religion determine what counts as religion (Beyer 2003f: 154-155). Beyer argues of the third type, calling it ‘official’ notion of religion:

“An important advantage in treating contemporary institutional systems as perspectives from which to conceptualize religion is that they provide the necessary theoretical purchase on the ‘folk category’. Not only can we thereby isolate the logic upon which certain of such categories are formed; the strategy permits one to take into account the power-dimension of knowledge production and category formation. Systems are centers of institutional and social power; they have the power to determine what counts, in this case, as religion in today’s society. Accordingly, for the third, the ‘official’ conception of religion, we can look to those systems – aside from the religious and scientific – that in their own characteristic processes have dealt with the question of religion most consequentially and most directly. These are the legal systems of various states, that is courts; the political systems of those states, namely governments; the mass media, especially news and information sources; and the educational systems of states, where religion becomes a subject of school curricula” (Beyer 2003f: 155-156).

Among the three different strategies of conceptualizing religion distinguished by Beyer, my presentation here about the Korean notion of religion is limited to the third one –

the official conception of religion that is formed in modern Korea and/or South Korea. That said, this research does not aim at constructing either academic or theological notions of religion, except in cases that these conceptualizations of religion require explanation in order to more clearly characterize the official notion of religion in the Korean context. Again, this doctoral thesis is to deal with the officially constructed concept of religion in the public sphere of modern and late-modern Korean society.

2. Luhmannian Framework: Religion as Self-Referential System in Modern Society

To explore the official conception of religion in modern times, I utilize Niklas Luhmann's 'systems theory' as a theoretical framework. The very virtue of Luhmannian systems theory for the scientific study of religion lies in its ability as an elaborated theoretical tool to consistently explain the modern context of religious diversity, along with other modern societal systems including politics, the economy, education, law, and mass media. Luhmann's social systems theory is useful in observing and uncovering how religion *as* a functionally differentiated system of communication is formed, operated, and conceptualized in contemporary global society. My use of the Luhmannian theory on religion and religions here draws in parts upon Peter Beyer's interpretation of it.⁸ Therefore, let us first look at the logic

⁸ Beyer's *Religions in Global Society* (2006) is a good example of the application of Luhmann's systems theory to an investigation of the distinctive roles and locations of religion and religions in modern global society. On this publication, Riesebrodt and Konieczny remark that "[d]rawing upon Niklas Luhmann, Beyer's conceptualization of religion as a functional system of communication is able to account for the diverse expressions and structures of religion in the contemporary world, as well as the very existence of this heterogeneity. His approach provides insight into the reasons for some of the enduring difficulties that have stymied previous debates concerning the nature and endurance of religion in modernity, and accounts for religion's frequently contested and ambiguous nature in historical conditions of globalization. Beyer's study is one example of how the sociological study of religion can be revitalized through the serious theoretical exploration of urgent contemporary questions" (Riesebrodt and Konieczny 2010: 160).

Other exemplary references are "Religion as Communication in Niklas Luhmann's *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*," *Soziale Systeme* 7, pp. 46-55, 2001a; "What Counts as Religion in Global Society? From Practice

of the Luhmannian systems theory and Luhmann's understanding of human society constituted by communications.

(1) Systems Theory as Another Paradigm

Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998) was a German social theorist who developed a social systems theory (Luhmann 2012, 1995). He established 'systems theory' as an interdisciplinary paradigm, and based on it, analyzed varied communication systems of modern society throughout his entire scholarly career.⁹ Luhmann classifies these communication systems into three levels of abstract layers or general phases, by distinguishing between 'system' and 'environment.' System comprises the environment of other systems. System means something 'composed' in contrast to something 'elemental.' First, systems consist of four general systems of 'machines', 'organisms (biological systems)', 'social systems,' and 'psychic systems.' Second, among these, social systems consist of 'interactions,' 'organizations,' and 'societies' that are comprehensive societal systems different from the former two. Third, through repetition of the system/environment distinction, society may be recognized as communication by functional subsystems such as

to Theory," in Peter Beyer ed. *Religion in the Process of Globalization*. Würzburg, Germany: Ergon Verlag, pp.125-150, 2001b; "The Modern Emergence of Religions and a Global Social System for Religion," *International Sociology* 13(2), pp. 151-172, 1998; "The Religious System of Global Society: A Sociological Look at Contemporary Religion and Religions," *Numen* 45(1), pp. 1-29, 1998b; Niklas Luhmann, translation with an introduction by Peter Beyer. 1984. *Religious Dogmatics and the Evolution of Societies*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.

⁹ Among his many works, *Soziale Systeme* (Social Systems) (1995 (1984)) established a general frame of social theory which may be applied to social systems or systems of communication such as 'interactions,' 'organizations,' and 'societies,' while his *magnum opus*, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (The Society of Society) (2012(1997)) deals with differentiated societal systems in modern society such as politics, science, law, mass media, politics, education, and religion. His other works on religion include *Funktion der Religion* (Function of Religion) (1977) or its English translation by Peter Beyer, *Religious Dogmatics and the Evolution of Societies* (1984) and *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (The Religion of Society) (2000) or its English translation titled *A Systems Theory of Religion* (2013) by André Kieserling, David Brenner, and Adrian Hermann.

politics, the economy, science, education, religion, and so on. Society is an encompassing social system which includes and re-produces all communication. Luhmann claims that systems can be compared at the same abstract level, and calls this comparative work 'functional analysis.'

The core of systems theory is the concept of 'autopoiesis.' The term 'autopoiesis' is a neologism made up of two ancient Greek components, 'auto (self)' and 'poiesis (production).' The concept of autopoiesis was introduced by Chilean biologists Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela (1980) in order to describe attributes of biological systems; Luhmann expansively applies this concept to psychological and social systems. Luhmann considers 'thoughts' for psychological systems and 'communications' for social systems to be same-valued components as 'cells' that maintain biological systems. Every system produces itself and thereby its own realities. Reality is not a comprehensive whole of everything. Rather, it is a variety of self-producing systemic realities, each of which forms the environment of others.

The principal characteristic of Luhmann's social systems theory is that it does not assert that society should be defined or analyzed on the basis that it is fundamentally humane or a set or community of humans. Luhmann considers this idea as a continuation of an old European philosophical tradition. According to Luhmann, rather, society is fundamentally the systems of autopoietic communications. Society is made of communications. Humans only constitute the environment of communications rather than constitute the subjects of communications. Human beings do not or cannot communicate; only communication can. Communication continues by communication, and is constructed by communication. That is, communications constitute themselves with reference to other, previous and/or subsequent communications. Human beings are needed to communicate; however, what operates communications is communications themselves. Human beings are the external condition for

communication, but are not an internal element of communication. In other words, the mind and body of humans construct the psychic system and living system respectively, and are distinguished from societies, i.e. communication systems.

The systems theory recognizes that social systems are operationally closed, because they are autopoietic systems of communications that are made up of the connecting of system-internal communication with system-internal communication. That said, once a system has established itself, it can only continue its self-production by its own means of operation. For example, economic communication can only connect to economic communication. Otherwise, it ceases to be economic communication. A system does not connect to its environment in order to operate itself. The operational closure of an autopoietic system formulates a mechanism that makes it observe its surrounding environment. Therefore, the observation of the environment depends on the differentiation of a system from its environment. Every system exists by its own differentiation; thus, each is different from other systems and also has an environment different from those of other systems. However, every system can also open to each other, because the operational closure does not prevent it from being open to its own environment. Such openness to the environment results from the internal activities of the autopoietic system. In this way, the complexity of the outer environment is reduced by the operation of a system, and such reduction brings about an enhancement of the internal complexity of that system.

Again, the operational closure of a system is the principal premise necessary for systems to be open to one another. Being ‘structurally coupled,’ systems can ‘interpenetrate’ each other. ‘Structural coupling’¹⁰ is a state in which different systems continue their

¹⁰ ‘Structural coupling’ is another concept borrowed from Humberto Maturana. Luhmann in his earlier writings used ‘interpenetration’ as the concept to describe how systems are tied to each other while being operationally

respective autopoiesis or self-production, and by doing so formulate the environment for other systems in a way in which they depend on each other. In this way, the structural complexity of each system is increased. In other words, communication cannot continue its operation without life and mind. Being structurally coupled to the living system and psychic system, a communicative system can irritate body and mind and vice versa. However, the operational closure of the autopoietic systems does not allow them to interfere with their environment. For example, the communication that consists in the word “HEAL!” cannot heal the mind or body except in so far as the psychic or living systems translate that ‘irritation’ into their own mental and biological systems. Structural coupling can also occur between social systems and even between societal functional systems. For instance, though remaining separate under the condition of operational closure, the economic and legal systems can be structurally coupled to each other in the form of contract or property. The scientific and political systems can also be structurally coupled through the mechanism of a government-funded research project.

I have, in this part, examined Luhmann’s understanding of society as well as the basic principles of his systems theory. Based on this, next I will show how modern society has become, in Luhmann’s perspective, a ‘world society’ where functionally differentiated communicative sub-systems construct and maintain their self-referential operations on the global level beyond geographical boundaries.

(2) World Society or Globalization

closed. In his later publications, he avoids using ‘interpenetration’ (Parson’s idea) in favor of ‘structural coupling’ (Maturana’s) (Moeller 2006: 203).

What, then, is communication? Communication is a component that constitutes society. Fundamentally, communication consists of the unity of ‘utterance’ (*mitteilung*), ‘information’ (*information*), and ‘understanding’ (*verstehen*). Social systems, that is, systems of communication can be classified into ‘interactions,’ ‘organizations,’ and ‘societal systems.’¹¹ Among these three principal categories of communication, societal systems or forms of social differentiation are explained as a combination of two differences: One is system/environment difference, and the other is difference of whether the relationship between social systems is equal or unequal (Luhmann 1995: 137-209; 1982: 69-89).

According to Luhmann, the combination of the two differences has historically produced four distinctive types of social differentiations: ‘Segmentary differentiation,’ ‘center/periphery differentiation,’ ‘stratified differentiation,’ and ‘functional differentiation.’ ‘Segmentary differentiation’ characterizes a society that is constituted and differentiated by such equal subsystems as lineage, tribes, families, and so forth. In contrast to segmentary differentiation, ‘center/periphery differentiation’ is based on the structural inequality of social subsystems. The center/periphery differentiation results from the differentiation of the center. Ancient Rome is an example of a society constituted by a center/periphery distinction. ‘Stratified differentiation’ is defined as the process through which society is differentiated by a series of social statuses or classes that constitute a social hierarchy. Examples include medieval Europe and the Indian caste system. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, modern society first appeared as ‘functional differentiation,’ replacing medieval European stratified differentiation. The decisive characteristic of modernity is this functional differentiation.¹² Functional differentiation is defined as a process in which society becomes

¹¹ Beyer adds a fourth type, ‘social movements,’ to the three (Beyer 2006: 36).

¹² The type of differentiation is a matter of which type dominates, not a matter of one type substituting for the others. Modern societies still exhibit differentiation along segmentary, core/periphery, and stratified lines, but

differentiated as a set of equally different societal subsystems, and each subsystem is distinguished by unequal functional reference to the whole society. Thus, politics, the economy, law, science, mass media, art, religion, and so on exist as functionally differentiated systems in modern times. An important characteristic of modern society is that subsystems of functional differentiation communicate and operate at the world level (Luhmann 1995: 187-194).

From the perspective of social systems theory, the term globalization means that functional systems transcend geography. The world society of today consists of communication systems that are differentiated in accordance with the function of each societal subsystem. With functional differentiation as its main structural feature, modern global society is no longer primarily divided by regional borders. Society now is a world society that is functionally differentiated into such societal subsystems as politics, law, science, education, art, medicine, and religion, each of which has its own formative ‘codes’ and ‘programs.’ Functional systems can be identified by their respective codes. The operation of the legal system, for example, is based on the difference of the legal/illegal code. Every legal expert begins from this very point. Functional systems develop programs on the foundation of the codes. In the case of the legal system, such programs are positive laws, constitutions, by-laws, and so on. A program allows code to be applied by supplying itself with certain guidelines for processing; without a program, code cannot do anything. For example, in the system of science, scientific communication can be realized in connection with such scientific programs as theories and methods that are based on the scientific code of true/false. In the end, societal subsystems create and maintain their individual functions in accordance with their respective codes and programs.

these are not the way the principal subsystems are formed and identified in modern times.

Today, social systems are globalized. In the modern era, societal subsystems process self-referential communication at the global level. The development of diffusing media beyond the chasms of physical environment and personal preference has caused a change in social structure in a way that allows the connection of communication to exceed the boundaries of territories and human groups. Thus, modern society as a functionally differentiated unit means a world society. World society may have resulted from the evolution of communication systems that are independently differentiated from human beings. The global function systems operate within their systemic boundaries, while being closed to other societal subsystems. The autopoiesis of a societal subsystem can only continue by internally communicating within the same communication system. That said, a societal system is a communication system that (re-)produces itself by referring to itself. Societal systems differentiate themselves in such a way as to be incompatible discourses by their respective codes, functions, media, and so on. Specialized communications within the individual subsystems of contemporary society are no longer interconnected or interchangeable across their boundaries, and any imposing activities of the systemic communications on other societal systems of communication must fail. Operationally closed function systems cannot be controlled by other societal subsystems.

The fact that function systems are operationally closed means that societal subsystems do not interfere with each other. The operational closure of societal systems is the premise from which the systems observe, respond to, and/or become open to their environment. Not only does this differentiate societal systems from their environment, but also connects them to it. Thus, each societal system and its own function cannot be properly described and understood without evaluating its links to other societal systems. Not only do societal systems continue their autopoiesis by observing other systems, but they also contact other systems by

being structurally connected to them. Every societal subsystem influences each other at various levels. For instance, religions, i.e. actors of religious system, may communicate on various issues of the political and economic systems such as presidential events or extreme economic inequality. The operational closure of societal subsystems is the condition that allows them to refer to and also understand other systems, but in their own terms. However, the structural coupling does not break such operational closure; rather, it establishes a certain relationship between autopoietic systems with different function and performance. For example, law and politics are linked through constitution, law and economy through ownership and contract, and politics and economy through tax and tariff. Societal systems come in contact with each other by irritating and resonating with each other. Thus, the development of societal systems is interrelated through the structural links. No system can influence other systems without being influenced, and a system cannot unilaterally dominate others. Inter-systemic influence is never one-sided, but dialogical and/or bilateral. The premise that makes such 'dialogue' possible is the 'difference' between systems, i.e. between a system and its environment. There exists no hierarchy among systems that allows a system to determine other systems. However, this does not necessarily mean that the functional differentiation of global society eradicates social ranks or strata. Differences still exist between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless; but, again, these are no longer the ways in which the principal subsystems are formed and identified. The very feature of modern society is a complex multiplicity of the system-environment realities. According to function, structural differentiation not only irreversibly continues to operate, but also has become more and more dominant and mature on a global scale. At the same time, semantics as an attempt to understand and describe the structural transformation has changed and developed, too. 'Social semantics' and 'social structure' resonate with one another.

From the viewpoint that functionally differentiated society is no longer primarily divided by regional boundaries, society now is a global society. That said, all the functionally differentiated communication systems operate and resonate with each other on a global scale. The political system still uses regional boundaries such as nation-states as its internal conditions, yet they are increasingly unable to evade the global effect of functional differentiation. Economic and scientific communications are global communications. On the basis of such functional differentiation, society is a world system. However, the fact that functional differentiation goes with 'globalization' does not necessarily mean the 'homogenization' of society. The functionally differentiated world society is never a unity of harmony. Function systems are universal in terms of their borderless operations, but their operations may be practiced in many particular forms. As a complex multiplicity of functional subsystems, global society is universal and also particular. Contemporary global society appears as a consequence of the globalization of communicative sub-systems. Globalization is a worldwide process of differentiation that produces functional equalities and inequalities. The operation of the differentiated function systems is obstructed, distorted, or appropriated by various cultural, ethnic, and/or local conditions so that they generate divergent consequences and patterns. Yet, those regional differences are different from the systemic differences. These differences impact the reality of the different systems. For example, the economy and religions of the United States of America may have data different from those of Iran; but, these differences are in the systems of the economy and religion. The societal subsystems still produce the differences. These differences may be explained as different participations in and/or resistances to the principles of the societal subsystems and their global expansions. Thus, such contextual varieties are the differences within a single social system. Under different local and cultural conditions, a system produces divergent consequences.

Certain forms of regional separatism or ‘fundamentalism’ can also be explained as a consequence of the globalization of functional differentiation. Function systems ignore the regional, religious, and/or cultural identities. Racial and ethnic conditions are allowed so long as these do not obstruct the operation of functional differentiation. So the globalization of functional differentiation produces a new form of ‘exclusion.’ Some people may be ‘included’ as successful carriers of the function systems, while others may be ‘excluded’ from the systems. In any case, the way that social systems operate globally is also locally critical (Luhmann 2012).

(3) Religion as Autopoietic Communication System

From the perspective of Luhmannian systems theory, the principal logic of the ‘world’ is neither the progress of substructure preceding a development of superstructure, nor the dialectic relationship between the spiritual and the material, nor an extension of certain groups consisting of human beings. The world – society that is a system of communications – takes on a religious character by itself because it is ‘plenty but void.’ Society invents religion as a form or system of communications that de-paradoxizes the ‘paradoxical world’; religion incorporates contradictory or paradoxical meanings of the world. The religious meanings depend upon the fact that forms of religion organize their contexts by referring to themselves. Differentiation of formations having special religious functions initiates the development of certain social systems that serve a religious purpose. The paradox of the self-reference of religion becomes possible by differentiating a religious system from its environment. One can say that the history of religion is the history of such a religious evolution. However, this

history is contingent; it can and did happen, but it need not have and any given society does not have to have differentiated religion (Luhmann 1985: 8-9).

In pre-modern society, unequal subsystems of society, e.g. strata, were combined by a fundamental symbolic structure of the whole society that was characterized by rank and direct interrelationship – the ontological rank of a hierarchical world that was primarily based on religion. The ‘stratified differentiation’ began, as ancient society drawn on blood relations transitioned into a more complex societal body. It is the social principle of internal differentiation that defines the period from classical Europe and ancient Asian and American civilizations to pre-modern Europe of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The decisive principle of differentiation in stratified societies is the division of society into unequal strata. These subsystems are hierarchically connected with each other. The selectivity of the whole system, or something that bound the world most deeply, was described as somewhat homogeneous but unrelated to observers’ views. Particularly in the European context, no matter what one’s social status was, something that applied to anyone was the view that the universe took meaning due to the existence of God and also that one must live fearing this ultimate being. Of course, individuals re-discovered themselves at other places in society. In their individual lives, the way in which they made a living between the two poles of ‘salvation’ and ‘damnation’ produced a great distinction. As such, setting internal positions within a society needed a central semantic code. Such a code could give ‘meaning’ to the society as a whole across many boundaries inside the society and also could impact the ordinary communications of the society. This function was attained by the generalization of morality, in particular the generalization of religion.

During the sixteenth to eighteenth century, religion, i.e. Christianity, which had given meaning to every sphere of medieval European society from the top down, was increasingly

transformed into a differentiated social sector that operated according to its unique code and programs. It not only became independent of other societal systems, but also came to have those systems as its surrounding social environment. The evolution of religious forms and other social systems greatly depended on the epoch-making development of writing systems – the invention of printing. The new facilities of writing and reading caused the change of form in which religion managed its self-referential system. Referring to previous or later communication became independent of the spoken word as an actual event, presence of persons, gesticulation, and so forth (*Ibid.* 10-11). The development of printing not only emancipated the books known as the origin of religious truth from a limited number of religious elites, but also helped ‘re-discover’ as sublime style the ‘classical way’ of forming religion. Therefore, it reinforced this bookish attitude to religion, making the arranging of texts very important in the field of religion.

The modern development of printing and textual system resulted in extending the difference between religious semantics, e.g. theologies, dogmas, and other religious narratives, and religious structure, e.g. temples, churches, or other religious institutions. The co-evolution of semantics and structure for religion was largely based on the structural differentiation of modern society.¹³ The separation of religion and other societal subsystems, which was accompanied by the evolution of religion, was the premise for the self-referential autonomy of differentiated social systems. In other words, in modern society, ‘state religion’ as an ideological system, to which all people must subscribe, should be rejected; instead, freedom of religion should be guaranteed as long as religion is not formulated as society’s prime

¹³ ‘Structure’ refers to the forms through which a society is differentiated into sub-societal systems; through the social structure, the sub-societal systems enter into a relation with each other, with the society as a whole, and with themselves. So it restricts an infinite number of possibilities to certain *expected* limitation for connective activities (Kneer and Nassehi 2008: 156-161). ‘Semantics’ is the general understanding of ‘things’ or the ‘world’ that a society has and uses in communication. Social semantics and social structure resonate with each other, but there is no strict causal relation between the two (Moeller 2006: 50-52; Reese-Schäfer 2002: 44-46).

system of self-reference. Through such a historical transformation, often called secularization, the religious system came to acquire its own autonomy at the cost of recognizing the autonomy of other communicative systems. Since then, religion has existed as a societal subsystem of a functionally differentiated society.

In fact, until the occurrence of this great religio-social transformation, European civilization was not recognized as the 'highest' civilization of the world; China held a better position in this regard. After this period of time, however, Western civilization achieved radical social development. Such historical change was often accompanied by the development and expansion of the so-called 'nation-states,' ones that took as (secular) frames of state 'imagined communities' to be called the 'nation' (Anderson 1983). Eventually, European colonialism played a role in extending worldwide this form of the social differentiation. At the same time, from the European perspective, the new role of religion was also identified since religion not only characterized nations and ethnos that Europeans had encountered in the course of colonization, but also was discovered to be a critically programmatic resource to civilize the savage, barbarian, uncivilized, and/or the like (Chidester 1996). The 'natives' also used the Western idea of religion to re-construct and re-imagine their religious traditions by accepting, refusing, or appropriating it (King 1999; Jensen 1997). Now, religion is globally considered a matter of individual choice as well as a differentiated sub-societal system through which individuals and groups communicate and identify each other.

Therefore, modern society is a world societal system in which the communicative subsystems are globally differentiated according to their respective functions, or is itself a process of globalization of those function systems. In this modern global society, religion is an autopoietic system of communication that is functionally specialized from its environment.

Religion exists as a functionally differentiated subsystem within contemporary global society. At the cost of respecting the autonomy of other subsystems, religion obtains its own recognized autonomy. Thus, the form of religion is self-referentially constructed, being differentiated from the secular fields of social life. With its binary code of imminence/transcendence and programs such as dogma, rituals, holy books and sacred places, religion is closed off from other societal systems. The religious system cannot control other systems and vice versa; however, the religious system and other societal systems can influence each other, because the closure of the communicative systems, according to Luhmann, is a premise of systematic openness. In other words, through ‘structural coupling,’ closed self-referential systems can impact each other. For example, through its distinctive programs, such as religious education, faith-based welfare or media institutions, and sermons supporting specific political figures or issues, religion can make some impact on other societal subsystems. At the same time, other societal subsystems such as politics, education, mass media, and law, can produce, magnify, and combine certain ideas and images on religion and religions through their respective or collaborative programs within the society as a whole (Beyer 2005; Lee 2000; Luhmann 1985: 14-15).

(4) The Transformation of the Idea of Religion in Late-modern Society

The dynamics of contemporary society is often determined by its plurality of levels, forms, and socio-historical conditions in conformity with region, tradition, and culture. Both structure and semantics of every societal subsystem are open to change, because the societal systems are differently contextualized by the multiplicity of locality. For example, the structure of the political system and its accompanied terms or ideas such as ‘democracy,’

‘freedom,’ and ‘liberation’ can vary globally and take multiple forms in different regions and civilizations. ‘American-style’ democracy and ‘Malaysian-style’ democracy may all be considered democratic, but the two would present considerable difference in terms of focus, methods of governance, and/or semantics. Likewise, the societal system for religion and religions may diversely be structured and signified depending upon differences in place, culture, and/or historical memory; both qualitative and quantitative changes can be made possible with the religious system.

The notion of religion among the public at large is not fixed and monolithic, but may be changeable and multiple in accordance with given social and cultural contexts. From the Luhmannian perspective, religion as a social construction is formed and re-formed in society through the structural coupling process by which functionally differentiated societal subsystems operate and so influence and irritate each other. While the religious system may stand for a series of ‘theological’ conceptions of religion that monks, imams, or pastors respectively contend that “mine is genuine,”¹⁴ the science system may contain ‘scientific’ definitions of religion that researchers and academic institutions produce in constant search of better ones.¹⁵ Along with religious and scientific efforts to conceptualize religion, the

¹⁴ A ‘theological’ definition of religion made by certain religious groups can be influential for ‘religions’ to be recognized as ‘religion’ in the public sphere. A certain “imminent frame” of codes and programs, which is inherently embedded in the official notion of religion, may work as a ‘hidden’ mechanism that classifies ‘religions,’ ‘religious traditions,’ or ‘religious organizations’ into ‘religion’ or ‘something that seems religious but is not religion,’ in accordance with whether they have religious codes and programs the same as, or similar to, those of the imminent frame. In order to be recognized as ‘religion’ that conforms to the official notion of religion, therefore, religions would struggle for taking the initiative in forming the ‘notion of religion’ that works as the criteria for distinguishing between ‘legitimate’ religion and ‘illegitimate’ religion. For instance, Christianity or Islam may claim that obedience to an omnipotent God is the true practice of religion, while Buddhism may regard endless self-devotion to enlightenment to be a condition of what counts as religion. These religious claims belong to the religious system, because these theological definitions of religion argued by religions are ultimately ‘proselytizing activities.’

¹⁵ An important characteristic of a ‘scientific’ conception of religion is that in the science system, an ‘ultimate’ or ‘final’ definition of religion cannot be laid down, but religion should always be re-defined, because the ‘nature’ of religion is contested and eventually de-constructed by other scientific observers whenever inaccuracy or falsity of the previous one is found. As mentioned above, scholars in the study of religion have defined religion from different perspectives and historical experiences, criticizing the previously used definitions; some

‘official’ conception of religion is formulated by the collaboration of secular societal subsystems that concern the religious, especially the communication systems that ranges from the mass media and political system to the legal and educational system, together which form the secular public sphere in modern society. Since the societal “systems are centres of institutional and social power,” the official conception of religion would play as a defining criterion for including certain ‘religions’ in the formalized category or excluding them from it (Beyer 2003e: 155-156).

The political, legal, educational, and mass media systems have great power in determining what counts as religion in the public sphere of modern secular society. According to Beyer (2003f), each of these societal systems, equipped with its own code and programs, consequentially and directly contributes to the formation of the official notion of religion in their characteristic processes. In fact, the conceptualization of religion in the modern public sphere is one of the results of the communicational operation of the function systems.

First, the political system self-referentially operates as one of the functionally differentiated communication systems in contemporary global society. Relying on the medium of power, modern politics fulfills the function of making collectively binding decisions. This function is important to resolve conflicting interests and problems among the different communication systems such as the economy, law, mass media, and medicine, thereby offering broad orientations to them. The functioning of the political system is guaranteed and closed by the binary code of ‘government’ that has power to rule and ‘govern’ what is ruled. The state, the nation-state in particular, is one of the institutions that constitute the modern political system. A sub-political system of state administers religion and religions

have refused to define religion or have even argued to discard it. Like other societal systems, thus, it is recursive that the observation of such de-constructive observation in turn goes on to re-enter into scientific debates on the notion of religion. Here again, the science system is also a self-referential communicative system.

and many other related religious affairs. Certain religions may or may not be of benefit to constructing a nation-state in the modern political system. In a variety of ways, agents of the nation-state come to see and conceptualize religion from the perspective of the nation-state building in the historical process of globalization.

Secondly, in the legal system that functions to maintain a socially expected order by resolving disputes and conflicts, the problem of religion, including the matter of the legal definition of religion, deals with religion on the basis of its binary 'legal/illegal' code and programs such as positive laws and judicial precedent. In many local systems of modern jurisprudence exists a twin constitutional spirit – 'separation of state and church' and 'freedom of religion' – as a principal criterion on religion and religions, from which positive laws and legal discourses are constructed on the relationship between state institutions and religious organizations. It is important to recognize that in particular global and regional contexts, legal programs are diversely applied to religion within such a constitutional boundary, allowing other institutional and social power to influence legal practice.

Thirdly, based on the code of 'good/bad grade,' the educational system maintains the function of 'choice of education and career.' For religion, in particular religious education, i.e. secular education about religion, the educational system offers learning or teaching programs such as religion classes, religion textbooks, and other extracurricular activities on religion. However, it has been a critical issue that many local educational institutions supported by public funding have practiced religious education emphasizing a particular religious belief or tradition. Such educational situations for religious education are largely institutionalized and thereby have constantly created issues and debates regarding how to keep or remove religious elements in the educational system in contemporary societies (Broadbent and Brown eds. 2002).

Fourthly, the system of mass media has the function of ‘information and conversation’ for modern society. In accordance with the ‘information/non-information’ code, it produces and delivers images and narratives on religion and religions, which are often already present in various societal subsystems such as religion, law, education, politics, and even science. Different printing and audio-visual media, e.g. newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting, are used as the programmatic means of conveying information on the religious. In order to conceptualize religion in the mass media, it is important to notice that religious institutions may occupy a constituent part of the media system in modern times. At the beginning of each chapter, I will discuss in detail the theoretical framework and issues that are specifically related to the different conceptualizations of religion in the respective societal systems of modern Korea.

As presented at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the transformation of the ‘official’ notion of religion that has seized definitional power in the public sphere of contemporary South Korea. In so doing, this dissertation will focus on delineating how the category of religion, which was first introduced into Korea in the process of accepting Western modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has changed within the context of the general transformation of the nation’s socio-political situation and understanding of modernity. Then, what drove the re-conceptualizing of religion in later-modern Korea, in particular contemporary South Korea? Next, I will discuss a series of critical factors that have played a central role in changing the official conception of religion in the Asian context of South Korea.

3. Three Axes of the Religious Change in Late-modern South Korea:

Democracy, Globalization, and Multiple Modernities

It seems that the worries, anxieties, and disturbances that humanity projected on the coming future in the last decades of the twentieth century have quickly been forgotten in this ‘third’-millennium world. This is rather surprising, given various newer religious groups and their activities anticipating the world-wide apocalyptic cataclysm around the year 2000.¹⁶ The terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists in the United States of America on September 11, 2001 and the following military operations of the U.S.A. and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan also served as important triggers for both scholars of religion and citizens of the world not only to realize that we live in a globally extended society, but also to increase interest in religion, especially the phenomenon of global resurgence of religions.

In the religiously charged global society at the turn of the century, what are the key conceptions to characteristically describe contemporary South Korea and its religious situation? ‘Democratization,’ ‘multiple modernities,’ and ‘globalization’ have been receiving greater attention among the critical factors that have extensively affected the socio-religious condition in late-modern South Korea.¹⁷ At the end of the 1980s, democracy was resumed in South Korea as thirty years of military dictatorship ended. Democratization has caused liberalization and the concurrent necessity of reform in many domains of Korean society. The democratization of national society was joined by an emergence of new cultural and technological change. Popularization of such slogan as “the Most Korean, the Most Global” (*Kajang han’gukjŏgin kŏsi kajang segyejŏgin kŏt* 가장 한국적인 것이 가장 세계적인 것) in

¹⁶ Some examples are the collective suicide of the Peoples Temple in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978, the apocalyptic immolation of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas in 1993, the ritual murders and collective suicides of the Order of the Solar Temple in Switzerland and Quebec between 1994 and 1997, and the Sarin gas attack of the Aum Shinrikyo in the Tokyo subways of Japan in 1995.

¹⁷ According to Song Hogŭn, a South Korean sociologist, the three axes of the structural transformation of contemporary South Korea are ‘democratization’ (*minjuhwa* 민주화), ‘globalization’ (*segzehwa* 세계화), and ‘informatization’ (*chŏngbohwa* 정보화) (Song 2004a: 5-9).

the 1990s effectively implied an idea that the cultural and geographical location of South Korea in the globalized world was obviously distinctive, and ‘western modernity’ was no longer the Korean model of development, and thereby that the re-formation of modernity based on Korean cultural resources is desirable and necessary. Folk discourses that multiple or alternative modernities should be based more on indigenous and regional elements were backed by the globalization of life-world caused by the radical progress of information and communicational technologies, e.g. the Internet and popularization of long-distance travel. I argue that these social and technical advances in contemporary South Korea have brought about change in the official conception of religion. I discuss in detail below not only how these phenomena have caused the conceptual transformation of religion in the public sphere of late-modern South Korea, but also how and why the change in the conception of religion is important in Korean society at large as well as in its differentiated religious system.

(1) Democracy

Referring to what he calls the “twin tolerations,” Alfred Stepan, a scholar of comparative politics, contends that “the minimal core institutional and political requirement a polity must satisfy before it can be considered a democracy ... [is] freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions *vis-à-vis* religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups *vis-à-vis* political institutions” (Stepan 2001: 213). As South Korea became one of the modern democracies, the principles of twin tolerations were introduced into this East Asian regime. An institutional foundation for the free exercise of religion advocated by modern secular democracy has promoted the growth of religious

population and diversity in many modern societies including contemporary South Korea (cf. Baker 2012; Casanova 1994).

The June Popular Uprising of 1987 was a watershed moment in the history of South Korean politics. It paved the way for direct presidential elections and the renewal of the constitution by successfully ending the three-decade military dictatorship (Kim 2007d). With the advance of a democratic government in the early 1990s, expectation and demand for social reform escalated throughout almost every part of the national society, ranging from the military and government to the press, to corporations, and even to religion. Political democratization has subsequently provided many opportunities for religious change. The civil society newly opened by the 1987 democratization has played a role not only in propagating religious pluralism, but also in urging a more thorough separation of religion and state in South Korea. Inclination toward the world religions in the public notion of religion has somehow changed to the extent that many religious traditions or organizations, which were once considered ‘quasi religion’ (*yusa chonggyo* 유사종교), ‘idolatry worship’ (*usang sungbae* 우상숭배), and most notoriously ‘superstition’ (*misin* 미신) or ‘evil religion’ (*sagyo* 사교), have been considered ‘legitimate’ parts of Korea’s religio-cultural landscape or even ‘national heritage that must be preserved and protected’ (Kang 2009a; Kang 2002; Kendall 2009: 1-33). Such political progress has increasingly questioned where the boundaries between religion and the state or secular public sphere should be drawn, creating many new religio-political issues, e.g. conscientious objection to military service due to religious belief, forced religious education in religion-affiliated secondary schools, and tax exemptions for religious professionals.

The revitalization of election politics via democratization also tends to help religious organizations secure greater political clout. Korean Protestantism, which grew rapidly during the Cold War era, has since the 1990s manifested its dissatisfaction with the liberated cultural milieu through political mobilizations. This has provoked other religion traditions, Korean Buddhism for example, to increasingly politicize itself in the religiously charged public sphere. Meanwhile, civic activists and groups increasingly demand a clearer separation of religion/church and politics/state and even warn of the growing influence of religious groups and institutions on various public issues, such as the North Korean crisis, general and presidential elections, and immigration policies. The 1987 democratization has also roused the nation's consciousness on civil or human rights of religiously identified minorities and the 'religious right' opposing social reform and liberalization. Statistics on religious population shows that in this politico-religious milieu, the configuration of the religious market in South Korea has significantly changed (Gallup Korea 1998; Statistics Korea 2006). I argue that the re-formation of the official conception of religion reflects and responds to this religious transformation in post-democratization South Korea.

(2) Globalization

Globalization is another critical factor in bringing about the re-formation of the official notion of religion in today's South Korea. By globalization, I mean the historical process in which the world becomes a single unit of living and analysis, with increasing interconnectedness of all societies, peoples, and cultures of the world (Robertson 1992). According to Niklas Luhmann (1997, 1995), the functional differentiation of modern society sets forth globalization as a premise because the functionally and self-referentially

differentiated societal systems are supposed to globally operate beyond inter-state borders and geographical distances. The global expansion of functional differentiation may be more appropriately expressed as ‘global localization’ or ‘glocalisation,’ given that such modern transformation is not characterized by a unilateral communication that a global core has one-sidedly exerted on peripheral regions in the globalized world, but is rather a reciprocal or dialogical process of communication in which the core and periphery regions exchange influences with each other. The so-called ‘global standards,’ which originate from the global core, should become ‘localized’ in other parts of the world. For example, transnational economic corporations try to adopt their administrating and marketing tactics to the locally sensibilities of different regions, even while they are still part of a larger global economic system.

Globalization causes religious communication to be more extended and complex in many societies including Korea. In fact, religion is a critical component in this entire process. The modern rise of ‘world religions’ and the ‘discovery’ of strange religions in the New World, African, Asia, and other non-Western places are all the consequences of colonial globalization. At the turn of the new millennium, religious globalization seems to be closely related to an increased situation of religious plurality. In the disenchanted modern world where knowledge of existence of plural religions could lead to a crisis of religious authority and authenticity (Berger 1979, 1967), religious firms competing with each other may rather effectively contribute to the dynamics and expansion of the religious market (Iannaccone 1992; Stark and Finke 2000; Stark and Iannaccone 1994). Religious hybridization, religious bricolage, religious tapestry, syncretism, regardless of what one calls it, it is clear that a certain reciprocal learning process between religions has become commonplace. The case of Pentecostalism, i.e. the global success of Charismatic Christianity, provides an illustrative

example of this religious phenomenon, because the religions somehow include and use local and aboriginal cultural and spiritual elements they encounter in the process as fertilizer for quantitative expansion. All of these exemplify that religious globalization is a global *interactive* process. These consequences allow one to assume that the notion of religion is also re-defined, refracted, and re-formed in such dialogical processes of religious communication (Beyer 2003c, 1998a; Cox 1995; Robertson 1992).

In addition, I recognize the power of communication and information technologies (CITs) on religion in post-modern times (Lyon 2000).¹⁸ The development of global media and CITs not only have re-configured socio-political structure and institutions, but also have made it more and more possible for religions to be re-constructed as globally imagined communities across cities and nation-states (Hoover 2006; Meyer and Moors 2006). Images and discourses of religion in the public sphere must be changed in that complete transformation. Global migration accompanied by popularization of intercontinental transportation has also contributed to this religious shift.

Christianity was long considered a model of ‘modern religion,’ which was good and helpful for modernizing and civilizing the Korean nation. In the post-modern global context, however, Korean society has increasingly lost public confidence in Protestant Christianity in particular. Many Koreans believe that Protestant overseas missionaries, who are making the

¹⁸ ‘On-line’ and ‘off-line’ spaces created by the Internet and mobile communication technologies have emerged as important strategic locations to make such social changes in South Korea. For example, a series of occurrences in the country in 2002 – from the intense anti-American sentiment after a U.S. armored vehicle accidentally killed two middle school girls, to the extremely heated nationalist pride around the Korea/Japan World Cup soccer game, to the rise of the influential Internet media as “OhmyNews,” and to the unexpected election of president Rho Moo-hyun, the ‘political maverick’ – would not have been realized without the aid of cyberspace and CITs. On February 22, 2000, OhmyNews (<http://www.ohmynews.com>) was founded by liberal and progressive journalists with the goal of “citizen participatory journalism.” The 2002 presidential election in South Korea was a series of turnovers to the very last minute. The unexpected victory of Mr. Roh was greatly indebted to the influence of this new online newspaper, through which the “Internet generation” of twenty- and thirty-somethings urged people to vote for the eventual winner. As of February 2006, it has about 41,000 ‘citizen journalists.’

best use of media and the CITs, lower the prestige of the nation in the international community and unnecessarily cost the nation wasted resources when they are abducted and killed in remote missionary sites such as Iraq or Afghanistan. Another example is that a rapid influx of foreigners through international marriages and labor migration from South and Southeast Asia, many of whom are Muslims, Hindus, or Theravada Buddhists, which has raised a critical concern that the Korea nation will not be homogeneous in terms of national identity as well as an awareness of urgent necessity of applying multiculturalism in the country (Kang 2010; O et al. 2007).

(3) Multiple Modernities

According to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, modernity or form of modernization cannot be defined as singular and monolithic, but rather are multiple and diverse. He wrote,

“The actual developments in modernizing societies have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity. While a general trend toward structural differentiation developed across a wide range of institutions in most of these societies—in family life, economic and political structures, urbanization, modern education, mass communication, and individualistic orientations—the ways in which these arenas were defined and organized varied greatly, in different periods of their development, giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns ... Such patterns were distinctively modern, though greatly influenced by specific cultural premises, traditions, and historical experiences. All developed distinctly modern dynamics and modes of interpretation, for which the original Western project constituted the crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point” (Eisenstadt 2000: 2).

Depending on place, time, culture, and other contextual differences, therefore, modern structural differentiation should be of the plural formation, although it has Western modernity as a critical point of reference. In line with Eisenstadt, José Casanova adds that the theoretical

framework of ‘secularization’ – another way of saying the ‘functional differentiation’ of society (Casanova 1994) – in which general society is disenchanted from the overarching authority of religion,¹⁹ cannot be indiscriminately applied to every society in the modern world. Rather, it should be understood that secularization has historically multiple and diverse patterns in contemporary global context (Casanova 2008: 101-119; Martin 2005). In sum, forms and strategies of modernization or secularization are varied in different regions and civilizations of the contemporary world.²⁰

As with most European nation-states, Korean society has gone through the modernization process since opening its ports in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, its form of modernity cannot be the same as those of the Western societies. Its modernization began in a rather disruptive form of colonization. Uniquely, Korea, along with Manchuria, was not colonized by Europeans imperialists, but by Japan, a neighboring Asian state. As Korea became a protectorate of Japan in 1905, colonial modernization began. It was not for the benefit of the Korean people, but to make the Korean peninsula serve as the strategic base for Japan’s imperial invasion in other parts of Asia. The Japanese colonial rulers installed this dependent, imperialist, anti-nationalist, unbalanced, violent, and “Asian way” of modernity in the Korean peninsula in the first half of the twentieth century (Cumings 2005: 139-184).

The most critical consequence of the colonization was the division of Korean nation into North and South. After liberation in 1945, the two separate regimes of the same nation

¹⁹ Casanova contends the “the core and the central thesis of the theory of secularization is the conceptualization of the process of social modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular sphere – primarily the state, the economy, and science – from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere (Casanova 1994: 19).

²⁰ Similarities and connection as well as subtle differences of focus are found among a series of conceptualizations such as Luhmann (2012, 1995)’s differentiation of systems,’ Eisenstadt (2002)’s ‘multiple modernities,’ and Beyer (2007b) and Robertson (1995)’s ‘glocalization.’

were soon incorporated into two mutually hostile global parts of the Cold War system; hence, Cold War modernity began (*Ibid.* 185-236). The North proceeded toward a relatively more independent socialist way called *Juche* (주체 self-reliance) (*Ibid.* 404-447; Park 2002). The South went forward with the capitalist world-system led by the U.S.A., Japan, and other Western industrial countries. South Korea became a pro-American, anti-communist, and military-dictatorial society. Modernity was often considered Westernization, and anti-communism was the state's foundational philosophy during the Park Jung-hee (r. 1961-1979) and Chun Doo-hwan (r. 1980-1988) military regimes for about thirty years. The dictatorial state pushed South Koreans to focus on economic development. Meanwhile, most South Koreans migrated from rural areas to big cities. In the end, this Cold War modernization was more or less a process of re-colonization in that not only was Korea divided into two by the world powers, but also the sovereignty of both Koreas was frequently limited whenever a regional crisis occurred (Cumings 2005: 299-341).

Since the end of the Cold War, the global understanding of modernity has increasingly transformed into a sum of plural modernities. This transition of the main point of reference for collective life from ideological difference to difference of civilizations or traditions has more and more motivated East Asian societies including South Korea to construct an 'East Asian civilization community.' The Asian Values debates, the *Hallyu* (한류 The Korean Wave) trend in popular culture, and discourses on Confucian modernity are examples of such a change (Kim, 2011b; Paek 2005). In this context, what has become visible in South Korea since the end of 1980s is a variety of socio-cultural efforts to form an 'alternative modernity' closely based on indigenous and regional cultures, values, and resources. For many South Koreans today, the modernity which Korean nation desires to maintain cannot be something founded on Western culture and values, but something 'uniquely Korean but also universal.'

Such social transformation toward ‘Korean cultural modernity’ has increasingly introduced individuals and groups to discourses of diverse, untraditional, and even marginal identities, representations, and/or ‘rights.’ Critical individuals and voluntary organizations have collectively attempted to create a more liberal and culturally diverse socio-political circumstance, making and utilizing public discourses such as *Asiajöck kach ‘i* (Asian Value 아시아적 가치), *ch ‘amyö minjujuüi* (participatory democracy 참여 민주주의), *tayangsöng* (diversity 다양성), *kaehyök* (reformation 개혁), *Kajang han ‘gukjögin kösi kajang segyejögin köt* (the most Korean, the most global 가장 한국적인 것이 가장 세계적인 것), and ‘think global, act local.’ In this cultural milieu, South Koreans, especially younger Koreans called the 386 generation,²¹ elected liberal political leaderships in the two recent presidential elections in 1997 and in 2002.²²

The increasing public discourses of Korean alternative modernity have triggered a late-modern transformation of South Korea’s religio-cultural landscape. The dissemination of a new frame of ‘multiple modernities’ has re-configured not only the constellation of religious diversity,²³ but also the official conception of religion in contemporary South Korea. The rise of multiple modernities has vitalized religious experimentations, undermined the ideas and views maintained by established religions, and broken down traditional boundaries between religions and also between religion and non-religion. These include the spread of ‘*Chi*

²¹ ‘386 generation’ is a Korean neologism coined in the 1990s, which refers to the thirty-somethings who went to college in the eighties and were born in the sixties. Members of the 386 generation have been solid supporters of the democratization movement since the eighties when much of the generation was involved in student activism and radical movements. In South Korea, the 386 generation is often compared to the students and citizens who participated in a series of strikes in France in May 1968.

²² Since the end of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations between 1998 and 2008, South Korean conservatives have been calling this period *Iröbörin simnyön* (잃어버린 십년 The lost decade).

²³ South Korea may be the only country in the world in which Buddhism (about 23%) and Christianity (about 29%) are evenly represented within the population. According to the 2005 government census, about 53% of South Koreans are affiliated with a religious organization; that is the highest figure in history. Yet South Korea became a majority religious country only in the 1990s. South Korea still has a vibrant Confucian tradition (over 230 Confucian academies are still open) and also has over 100,000 practicing shamans.

training' based on the oriental religious worldviews, the representation of 'folk belief' through Internet divination or cyber fortune-telling cafés, and the increase in religious hybridity such as Buddhist-Christians or *Salimist* (Korean eco-feminist) Protestants. Contemporary Koreans cannot adequately deal with these new religious phenomena and appropriately locate them in the late-modern cultural context, if they rely on the established conception of religion built on the past modernity taking Western advanced societies as its model of development. Therefore, the new religious phenomena, in turn, come to bring about certain adaptive change in the process of the conceptualization of religion.

It is observed that the national transformation of the interpretation of modernity is never a unilinear process of firm separation from 'Western modernity.' The western frame of modernity has still endured in the East Asian society. The nation-state has not been fully convinced that it can create a new form of modernity by exclusively relying on aboriginal resources and its regional neighbors. What has emerged is, I contend, a more complex process which is accompanied by die-hard nostalgia for the past form of modernization, strong attachments to its inheritance, and serious doubts as to whether or not the attempts toward multiple modernities will succeed (König 2000). This reality is illustrated by the fact that many Korean conservatives including religious fundamentalists have continued to consider such ideologies as 'anti-communism' and 'pro-Americanism' as foundational elements of the 'true identity' of *Taehanmin'guk* (대한민국 the great Republic of Korea).

4. Research Methodology

As a methodological beginning point, this thesis takes as axiomatic the following proposition: The conceptual forms of religion, which individuals, groups, and institutions

utilize in their everyday activities, irrespective of their own ‘theological’ insistence, are not trans-historical and trans-empirical realities that are delivered from somewhere outside human intellectual reach. Rather, socially approved ideas of religion and religions are, I argue, manufactured and presented under specific historical, cultural, and socio-political conditions by the help of a diversity of actors such as political leaders, jurists, educators, ideologues, state bureaucrats, professional journalists, and/or religious practitioners. This doctoral thesis research employs sociological methods in order to empirically approach the Korean conceptualization of religion and its possible transformation in the context of contemporary global society.²⁴

Both quantitative and qualitative sources of information are used. I conducted content and structural analysis, interviews, and participant-observation. I carried out major fieldwork between March and August in 2008. While I was staying in South Korea for six months, specifically Seoul and its surrounding area, I visited places where the public conceptions of religion are presumably formed, and collected various primary data such as government documents, Gallup statistics, published legal data, historical literature, survey reports, and religious textbooks. I also conducted in-depth interviews with scholars, public servants, educators, and social activists. To recruit interviewees, I used my personal human network, snowball sampling, and publicized contact information. I interviewed authors who had written curriculum for religious education and memoirs on well-known religious events, government

²⁴ For this purpose, I will utilize the methodologies of the Sociology of Religion, specifically those exemplified by such sociologists as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, both of whom are the fathers of the modern academic discipline of sociology, as well as contemporary distinguished sociologists of religion, such as Peter L. Berger, Robert N. Bellah, Bryan S. Turner, José Casanova, and Peter Beyer, all of whom have extensively examined the location of religion and its peculiar roles in late-modern social contexts.

Michael Hill points to the three divergent methodological inclinations in the Western Sociology of Religion. The North American sociologists of religion have quantified their data, relying on large-scale survey much more than do the British researchers who have contrastingly been more inclined to use historical material, community studies and the micro approach of small and closed religious groups. On the other hand, the continental European scholars, especially the French sociologists, have frequently resorted to longitudinal studies, by utilizing large-scale demographic statistics (Hill 1985: 90-97).

officers who had participated in implementing religious policies, teachers in charge of religious education in schools, and activists affiliated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to religion. During the field research, I also engaged in participant-observation with members of religious organizations and NGOs working on religious issues, spending time in demonstrations, observing their political activities, and attending public hearings on religio-political issues. South Korea is well known for its strong Internet infrastructure, and a lot of information on religion and religions is exchanged through the Internet. So I visited many Internet sites and forums and collected data through the Internet. Throughout this dissertation, I explicitly and implicitly used those collected data both in and of themselves and also as supplementary information to clarify, complement, and balance other primary and secondary documents.

I rely on a variety of statistical data to understand the general religious landscape of modern Korea, in particular contemporary South Korea. These include the 2006, 1996, and 1986 *In'gu chut'aek ch'ongjosa* (인구주택총조사 General Population Censuses) conducted by Statistics Korea, the 2004, 1998, and 1992 Gallup Korea survey reports, *Han'gukin ūi chonggyo wa chonggyo ūisik* (한국인의 종교와 종교의식 Koreans' Religion and Religious Consciousness), and varied published survey reports such as *Han'guk kidokgyoin ūi chōngch'i sahoe ūisik chosa* (한국기독교인의 정치·사회 의식 조사 Research on Socio-Political Consciousness of Korean Protestant Christians) (2004), *Chōnjugyo wa han'guk kŭnhyōndae ūi sahoemunhwajōk pyōndong* (천주교와 한국 근현대의 사회문화적 변동 A Study on the Socio-Cultural Influences of Korean Catholic Church during the 20th Century – Final Report of Questionnaire Survey for Evaluation and Vision of the Catholic Church) (2004), and *Han'guk kaesin'gyo wa han'guk kŭnhyōndae ūi sahoe munhwajōk pyōndong*

(한국 개신교와 한국 근·현대의 사회문화적 변동 A Study on the Socio-Cultural Influences of Korean Christianity during the Modern Korean History (1875-2000)) (2003).

Drawing on the framework of Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, I analyze the way in which the 'official' notion of religion is formed and re-formed in the public sphere of globalized Korea. To understand the re-formation of religion in modern Korea, this thesis research deals with the secular sectors of politics, law, education, and mass media, and each empirical chapter directly concerns one of these four sectors of the public sphere. Each chapter requires different data that respond to the different constructions of religion in those relatively independent communication systems. The role of each empirical chapter for the entire thesis research determines the directions of choosing data. To make sure that the selection of data is unbiased and well-balanced, I use different historical and empirical materials that may unfold dimensions of the Korean configuration of religion, documents that were produced through the operative process of each functionally differentiated communication system.

Chapter two is focused upon the conception of religion in the political system of modern Korea from a global comparative perspective. It intends to locate the Korean construction of religion within the larger East Asian context, particularly in the processes of building nation-states in the modern global context. In the political system, this approach not only helps delineate the characteristic *Korean* notions of religion in comparison to Western and other Eastern cases, but also makes it possible to clarify how the Korean way of appropriating the category 'religion' has contributed to the reconfiguration of religion in the globalized modern political process. Data used for this chapter include the official records of the National Assembly (<http://likms.assembly.go.kr/record/index.html>), newspaper articles, and other secondary sources, all of which show remarks and statements on religion and

religions made by important political figures, nationalist activists, and state institutions. I extensively use secondary data to compare the divergent constructions of religion in the East Asian context.

Unlike chapter two, which juxtaposes the Korean case with other Western and non-Western manifestations of religion, chapters three, four, and five adopt a different presentation strategy of vertically distinguishing the ‘structural’ and ‘semantic’ dimensions of the Korean conception of religion. This ‘dualistic’ approach toward the construction of religion is required to better portray and verify the contrasting, fluid, and somewhat paradoxical nature of ‘religion’ in this Asian context. Again, while chapter two is devoted to horizontally clarifying the Korean construction of religion vis-à-vis the Japanese, Chinese and Western conceptualizations of religion, the next three chapters are focused on showing the longitudinal change in the legal, educational, and mass media conceptions of religion in modern Korea.

For chapter three, which delves into the conception of religion in the Korean legal system, I analyze laws, regulations, and legal precedents and arguments. The main primary source for this chapter is *Pōpgoŭl LX DVD 2008* (법고을 LX DVD 2008) published by the Supreme Court Library of Korea in 2008, which contains all the South Korean legislations, case laws, and other legal documents such as ordinances, regulations, and precedents from 1948 to 2007. I collected primary legal documents on religion developed between 2007 and 2012 through the official website (<http://glaw.scourt.go.kr/jbsonw/jbson.do>) of “General Legal Service” (Chonghap pōmnyul chōngbo 종합법률정보,) of the Supreme Court of Korea. To search necessary data in *Pōpgoŭl LX DVD 2008* and the General Legal Service, I used a series of key words such as ‘religion,’ ‘evil religion,’ ‘pseudo religion,’ ‘quasi religion,’ ‘Shamanism,’ ‘Christianity,’ ‘Buddhism,’ ‘religious education,’ ‘objection to military

service,’ ‘freedom of religion,’ and ‘separation of religion and politics.’ I supplementarily made use of three government manuals, “Kongjikcha chonggyoch‘abyöl yebanggyoyuk kyojae” (공직자 종교차별 예방교육 교재 Public Servant’s Textbook for Education to Prevent Religious Discrimination) (2009), “Kungnaeoe chonggyoch‘abyöl saryeyögu” (국내외 종교차별 사례연구 Case Studies on Domestic and Foreign Religious Discrimination) (2009), “Chonggyo haengjöng p‘yöllum” (종교행정편람 Handbook of Religious Administration) (2006), and two volumes, *Chonggyo hwaltong kwa punjaeng üi pömyul chisik* (종교활동과 분쟁의 법률지식 Legal Knowledge on Religious Activities and Disputes) (2002) and *Han’guk üi chonggyo wa chonggyoböp – chonggyo tanch‘e üi pöbinch‘e tǔngnok* (한국의 종교와 종교법: 종교단체의 법인체 등록 Religion and Religious Law in Korea: Registration of Religious Organization as Corporation) (1991). These sources have almost all the South Korean laws and important case laws in direct connection with religion. *Ilje kangjönggi chonggyo chöngch‘aeksa charyojip* (일제강점기 종교정책사 자료집 Sourcebook of History of Religion Policy during the Japanese Colonial Era, 1910-1945) (1996) is another source of religion-related laws made during colonial Korea. In the course of the fieldwork in 2008, I also interviewed one government official attached to the education department of Seoul Metropolitan Government and two activists of non-governmental organizations about the legal situation of South Korea on religious issues such as ‘freedom of religion,’ ‘forced religious education,’ and ‘conscientious objection to military service.’

In chapter four, I examine the ways in which the educational system has conceptualized religion and religions in modern Korea. I employ statistical and empirical data that show the educational construction of religion, particularly in South Korean public

education. During the fieldwork I collected eight different kinds of religion textbooks for middle or high schools, curricula for in-school religious education, other government guidelines for religious education, newspaper articles, and the Internet texts. They include “Söngsimi, hanŭnim ũi sarang anesö kidohada” (성심이, 하느님의 사랑 안에서 기도하다 Söngsim Prays in God’s Love) (unknown year) which is a manual of religious education prepared by Söngsim High School, *Han’guk jonggyo kyoyuk chedo chosa yŏn’gu* (한국종교교육제도 조사연구 Research on Institutions for Religious Education in Korea) (1983) that is a survey report published by the Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Society, “2006 hangnyŏndo hakkyo kyoyuk kyeho” (2006 학년도 학교교육계획 Plan for School Education in 2006) (2006) prepared by Ehwa Woman’s High School, and Kang Donku and his collaborators’ “Chonggyo kyoyuk ũi hyŏnhwang kwa kaesŏn pang’an” (종교교육의 현황과 개선방안 Current Situation of Religious Education and the Methods for Reformation) (2006), a government-funded comprehensive survey report that offers many statistics related to religious education in school. I also gathered a couple of memoirs written by an ex-religion teacher, and interviewed this informant in 2008. In addition, I interviewed five religion teachers (two teachers for Protestant high school, one teacher for Catholic middle school, one teacher for Buddhist high school, one teacher for the Unification Church middle school, all of whom take charge of religion courses in their respective schools) and one university professor who participated in making the current government curriculum for religious education in school.

Chapter five is focused upon the construction of religion in the mass media system. In modern society, mass media appear to be a critical social system that is specialized to produce and circulate information and knowledge on almost any parts and issues of society including

religion and religions. To examine the construction of religion in the mass media of modern Korea, my analysis relies on such data as newspapers, current affairs magazines, television programs, and various statistics and survey reports. During the 2008 fieldwork, I interviewed one religious studies scholar who specialized in religious media and public opinion on religion. I collected necessary newspaper articles through the Korean Integrated News Database System (KINDS, <http://www.kinds.or.kr/>) of the Korean Press Foundation (Han'guk ōllon chaedan 한국언론재단), "Chosun Daily" (Chosŏn ilbo 조선일보), "Donga Daily" (Tong'a ilbo 동아일보), "Joongang Daily" (Chung'ang ilbo 중앙일보) "Hangyoreh sinmun" (Hangyŏre sinmun 한겨레신문), "Kyunghyang sinmun" (Kyŏnghyang sinmun 경향신문), and so on. I also obtained a booklet entitled "Chonggyo kwallyŏn kisa mongnok" (종교관련기사목록 List of Religion-Related Newspaper Articles) (1987) produced by Yun Yihŭm, which has most titles of religion-related articles published by "Donga Daily" and "Chosun Daily," the two largest South Korean newspapers, between 1948 and 1983. For statistics on religion-related newspaper articles, I extensively used Chang Honggŭn's survey report, "Yŏron maech'e e pich'in chonggyo munhwa" (여론매체에 비친 종교문화 Religious Culture reflected in Mass Media). A government report "Han'guk ūi chonggyo hyŏnhwang" (한국의 종교현황 Religious Situation of Korea)(2008) prepared by Ko Byungchul and his collaborators, with the support of the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism, informs the general structure of current religious media in South Korea such as broadcasting, newspapers, and/or magazines.

II. THE KOREAN NOTION OF RELIGION IN MODERN GLOBAL SOCIETY

CHAPTER TWO

The Re-formation of the Korean Notion of Religion in the Political System

Based on the literature review and also the theoretical and methodological framework presented in chapter one, this chapter will focus on the conception of religion and its transformation in the political system of modern Korea. The function of this chapter is in juxtaposing the Korean construction of religion *within* the context of global history through which East Asian societies accepted the notion of ‘religion’ from Western civilization. In contrast to chapter three, which focuses on its diachronic transformation throughout twentieth-century Korea, particularly its legal system, this chapter intends to offer a more synchronic description of the process in which the three East Asian nations – China, Japan, and Korea – appropriated the category ‘religion’ in their respective political enterprises of building nationally-based independent states in a modern global society.

To understand how religion is conceptualized in the making of the modern nation-state of Korea, it is necessary to comprehend the construction and operation of this specific communicative system of politics in the contemporary social world. This chapter admits and approaches the political system as one of the functionally differentiated societal systems, one that does not have any values or significance superior or inferior to those of the other sub-societal systems, but has its unique tools and methods to operate itself self-sufficiently. As is described in detail in chapter one, Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory offers a comprehensive framework through which one can analyze such a political system in an ‘organic’ relationship with its surrounding social environment. According to Luhmann, modern society consists of functionally specified communicative systems, and the political system has evolved as one of the sub-societal systems by a process of societal differentiation.

While performing its own function, the political system distinctively relates with the religious system so that it comes to form a series of ideas and principles on religion and religions.

Historically, there was no conception of religion as a generic category in the pre-modern world. The occurrence of the modern construction of religion was critically related to the rise of the modern political system. In early modern times, the emergence of the ideology of a 'secular nation-state' was accompanied by newly defined principles related to the idea of 'distinct' religion, because the new secular regimes eventually had to be protected by separating its sovereign system from the 'sui generis power' of powerful religious institutions in then European Christendom. In particular, inter-religious conflicts between rising Protestant forces and the Catholic churches in Rome and other parts of the European continent ended up concluding a series of treaties such as the Peace of Westphalia that recognized a specific sphere of 'religion.' The new conception of religion allowed those opposing religious groups to maintain and practice their own religious beliefs freely as long as they respected not only the other religious individuals and institutions, but also the sovereignty of nation-states that were often supported by one of the two Christian traditions.

As the European nation-states proceeded to find new lands for colonization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Westerners came to use the idea of 'religion' in order to realize a series of colonial purposes and projects in many regions of the world such as Africa, the Americas, and South and East Asia. In that context, the term religion was commonly accepted and also gradually adopted by each East Asian nation. In order to realize their respective projects of building different nation-states, religion was for the first time perceived as something separated from the other social spheres including the state. However, the accepted conception of 'religion' from the West was not uniformly understood in the different East Asian regions. Rather, it depended on how each East Asian nation decided to build and

re-build its own political state in the new global context. Furthermore, the values, meanings, and structure of religion and religions such as Christianity and Buddhism were differently constructed. For example, some regional or national politicians thought that religion would critically contribute to realizing this crucial task of nation-state building, or would disturb the secular efforts of building a new country.

In this chapter, I will first present theoretical issues on politics as a distinctive societal system of human communication. I will delineate the Western construction of religion in the political development of early modern European society, and then describe how not only China and Japan accepted this notion of religion from the West, but also re-defined *zongjiao* and *shukyo*, the Chinese and Japanese variants of the shared word ‘宗教’ that is equivalent to the term ‘religion,’ in their respective processes of building a nation-state in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Finally, I will examine how Koreans recognized and appropriated the term religion – *chonggyo* in Korean – in the middle of building their own political system of state. In doing so, I will attempt to show similarities and differences in terms of how these three East Asian nations understood the category religion in the emergence of modern global society.

1. The Modern Political System, the Nation-State, and Religion

This chapter illuminates the official notion of religion constructed and re-constructed in the political system of modern Korea and South Korea. I will present such a conceptualization of religion within the larger political context in which East Asian nations have accepted and appropriated the category ‘religion’ from the West since the nineteenth century. This chapter also conducts an analysis of the political construction of religion on the

premise that politics in the modern world has mostly emerged as a secular sphere of power that closely interacts with the surrounding social environment such as law, education, and media. Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory offers a well-knit theoretical framework, which shows how the modern political system self-referentially operates in contemporary global society where other differentiated societal systems are also able to play and maintain their distinctive roles, and produces various discourses and images of religion and religions in the course of its own operation.

In Luhmann's social systems perspective, politics in modern times appears one of the functionally differentiated communication systems of world society. The political system, like other self-referential communication systems, is able to construct itself and relates with other autopoietic societal systems, by employing its distinct function, code, media, and roles. The political system is the function system of modern society which provides *power* as a universal medium. The function of the political system is the production of *collectively binding decisions*, for which power is necessary for their implementation. The political system cannot do anything more than apply power to issues and problems which can be regulated by power. By using the medium of power, the political system plays a critical role in providing broad orientations in questions which cannot be adequately resolved in the other sub-societal systems such as the economy, law, education, and so on. It operates around the binary distinction between the *government* and the *governed*. The primary code of the political system is focused on the relation between the two different bodies, i.e. ones who participate in *government* and the others who do not participate in government but are *governed* by it. Exercise of power is thus only possible for those in government who may apply power to those who are not in government. Since the modern political system is structurally coupled

with other social communicative systems, the shape of applying power might be varied by the differences in local conditions and influence of the surrounding sub-societal systems.

The political system in differentiated societies is a function system for making decisions, and the state is one of the units constructing the political system that has the ability to self-referentially re-produce itself. In other words, the state is itself a kind of formula for self-description of the political system. Especially, the modern nation-state is not a local unit that includes a variety of the modern function systems into an imagined territory-based community, but one of the distinct sub-systems that perform the function of the world political system in accordance with local needs and demands. The state thus emerges as an important actor in the emergent order of the world political system. As a center of power, the state uses politics and administration together to make better decisions between conflicting individuals, organizations, and/or functionally differentiated societal systems. From the perspective of the modern nation-state, religion is one of the principal objects of governing in terms of both politics and administration. I think that the form of governing religion and religions may be diversified in accordance with various historical and political conditions such as whether the ‘secularity’ of state is secured from the religious institutions and whether the government is authoritarian or democratic toward religion and religions.

How the nation-state of Korea has been incorporated into global political system is significant in forming and re-forming the political conception of religion in modern Korean society (Beyer 2006; 2003c; 2001b). Many nations in Asia and other non-Western regions came to be part of the modern political system through the historical process of colonization. Confronted with the crisis of being colonized, those nation-states considered the modern category of religion as a critical element as to whether to protect or not protect the ‘fatherlands’ from the colonizing outer forces. In this process of constructing a modern

nation-state, religion, i.e. the religious system, was observed from divergent political perspectives. The conceptualization of religion was often concerned with whether ‘religion’ was defined as constructive or disruptive to the building of a nation-state in the challenging context of colonial globalization. Thus, if something that was ‘religion’ was determined as disrupting the building of a modern nation-state in the new global society, such as indigenous religious traditions, certain nation-states refused to recognize it with the term religion, and such other categories as ‘philosophy,’ ‘culture,’ and/or ‘education’ were instead suggested to classify it.

In addition, depending on differences in ‘ideological’ orientation, the form of differentiating religion from the secular public sphere, especially the political system, has varied, and this was also critical to conceptualizing religion in the political system. For example, an assertive way of separating religion from the secular politics in a nation-state would not be favorable to constructing a positive conception of religion. On the other hand, a need of passively separating between religion and the various secular fields would contribute to constructing a more positive construction of religion in the political system.²⁵

²⁵ José Casanova points out that, depending on different religio-cultural background, there are plural forms of secularism, i.e. different patterns of drawing the boundaries between the secular and the religious. He wrote:

“[W]hile the religious/secular system of classification of reality may have become globalized, what remains hotly disputed and debated almost everywhere in the world today is how, where, and by whom the proper boundaries between the religious and the secular out to be drawn. There are in this respect multiple competing secularism, as there are multiple and diverse forms of religious fundamentalist resistance to those secularism. For example, American, French, Turkish, Indian and Chinese secularism, to name only some paradigmatic and distinctive modes of drawing the boundaries between the religious and the secular, represent not only different patterns of separations of the secular state and religion, but very different models of state regulation and management of religion and of religious pluralism in society” (Casanova 2009: 8).

The notion of secularism is one of the constitutive principles that maintain modern democracy. According to Alfred Stepan, a comparative political scientist, the core institutional requirement for democracy is “twin tolerations” between state and religions – freedom of action both for political institutions *vis-à-vis* religious authorities and for religious individuals and groups *vis-à-vis* the political institutions (Stepan 2001: 213). On the top of this, pointing out that the state regulation of religions or religious issues is result of ideological struggles,

In the end, the Korean construction of ‘religion’ in the political system is directly connected to the construction of the nature of the Korean political system. In particular, the conceptualization of religion in the Korean political system deeply concerns how religion contributes to the formation of the Korean nation-state. Would religion play a positive or negative role in collecting and allocating resources to form the nation-state? Does religion play a role as a hindrance to the unity of the Korean nation or as a route for foreign powers to intervene in Korea? Would religion contribute to modernizing and enlightening the Korean nation, or just remain as a symbol of pre-modernity? Would religion be recognized as a sympathizer with North Korea, the most significant force possibly harming the South Korean system, or rather a resistant against the ‘main enemy’ of the communists? Has religion in democratized South Korea been viewed as a major cause of social division and conflict as well as a symbol of corruption, or rather a pioneering apostle for the nation’s integration and harmony and moral uplift? These questions are used as important references for this chapter to delve into how the category religion, which had been formed through the peculiar

Ahmet T. Kuru divides ‘multiple competing secularisms’ into the two patterns – “assertive secularism” and “passive secularism.”

“[Modern states] experience certain struggles between leftist and rightist groups to shape state policies on issues such as the elimination of religion from state identity cards, multiculturalism, and state neutrality toward all religions. ... In secular states, ideological struggles to shape state policies generally take place between two different notions of secularism – what I call “assertive secularism” and “passive secularism.” Assertive secularism requires the state to play an “assertive” role to exclude religion from the public sphere and confine it to the private domain. Passive secularism demands that state play a “passive” role by allowing the public visibility of religion. Assertive secularism is a “comprehensive doctrine,” whereas passive secularism mainly prioritizes state neutrality toward such doctrines” (Kuru 2009: 10-11).

For more discussions on different forms of secularism, refer to Bhargava, Rajeev. 1999. ed. *Secularism and Its Critics*. Delhi, India: Oxford University Press; McClay, Wilfred M. 2002. “Two Concepts of Secularism,” in Hugh Heclo and Wilfred M. McClay eds. *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; Warner, Michael, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun eds. 2010. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; “The Religious-Secular Divide: The U.S. Case” of *Social Research* 76(4), 2009; and the Social Science Research Council’s “The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere” (<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/category/secularism/>), in particular its sub-part “Rethinking Secularism” (<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/category/secularism/>).

modernizing course of European Christendom, was accepted and appropriated in the process of building the Korean nation-state in the East Asian context.

2. The Emergence of Religion and Religions in the Modern World

In chapter one, I pointed out that in modern secular society, religion not only exists as a distinct concept, sphere, and/or category that people by and large take for granted, but also is perceived as a contested field so much so that its meanings and characteristics greatly vary. It was also mentioned that some even contend that there is no religion or no data for religion (Smith 1988, 1982). In the Luhmannian perspective, religion in modern times is constructed as a self-referentially differentiated societal system, along with other sub-societal systems such as politics, the economy, medicine, education, law, art, and mass media, all of which together constitute the dominant institutional structures of modern society. Therefore, it can be said that religion today not only exists, but also is observed as a critical form of communication (Luhmann 2013).²⁶ In this section, I will examine the political characteristics of what counts as religion, with a focus on its formative process in early modern Europe and its colonial expansion to East Asia.

In the history of humankind, religion has not always been imagined as a distinctively differentiated system. It can be said that before modern times, religion as a generic category did not exist, but religious traditions existed as forms closely merged with other spheres of human life that together constructed society as a whole, even though they maintained a certain degree of distinctiveness. For instance, cathedral schools and universities in medieval Europe

²⁶ The first few pages of chapter one introduce in detail a variety of debates and controversies of religion and religions in modern times.

not only re-produced theological knowledge of the divine, but also strove to pass down to future generations ‘scientific’ information such as the law of causality in nature and the cosmos carrying some degree of rationality and the political technique of how to incorporate individuals and groups into Christendom. In the end, the authority of religion, i.e. ‘state church,’ that had transcended and amalgamated everything came to be significantly challenged, as European Christendom reached the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Talal Asad argues (2003) that the modern category of religion emerged through the process of modern state formation in Europe, especially as European political leaders embraced ‘secularism’ as a principal ruling philosophy. As the Middle Ages ended, European societies underwent a series of epochal social changes that ranged from the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation to the Enlightenment, the Age of Discovery, and colonialism/imperialism. Internally, Western societies experienced a colossal historical conversion to the ‘disenchantment’ or ‘secularization’ of society²⁷ – the great transformation that transferred it *from* God’s world, represented by the Pope and his holy church which transcended vernacular political powers *to* a set of secular societies in which ‘religions’ including the Christian churches had to remain as one part of the entire social system. Around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the prevailing understanding of the term religion that

²⁷ The term ‘secularization’ cannot be taken as a given notion. Like modernity or globalization, it has been a source of intense scholarly debate for decades, even till now. For various ways of appropriating the term and history of the conception, one may refer to the following: Beckford, James A. 2003. *Social Theory and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Oxford: Blackwell; Dobbelaere, Karel. 2002. *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*. New York: Peter Lang; Martin, David. 2005. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate; Pecora, Vincent. 2006. *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. For the concept of ‘disenchantment’ that was originally coined by Max Weber to describe the rationalized, modernized Western world, one may refer to Gauchet, Marcel. 1997. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

had a long pedigree in the history of European languages²⁸ underwent a significant shift that corresponded to structural change in European societies.²⁹

Molnár points out that new European political forces contributed to the settlement of the conception of religion in early modern Europe. The notion of religion, which was rarely used before the Reformation Age, evolved from the older Christian ideas of *conscientia* and *universitas fidelium*. In Christian thought, sinful humans need ‘control’ both from within and from without. The former was offered by *forum internum*, i.e. *conscientia*, the latter was ‘worldly magistrates.’³⁰ While Pope had been the ‘ultimate judge’ above worldly power in medieval Europe, individual *conscientia*, therefore, became the ‘ultimate judge’ above secular rulers in early modern Europe. And the Protestant Reformation spread the idea that *conscientia* was the ultimate authority because it came directly from God. The close relation of *conscientia* with the divine was the origin of the sense of individual dignity and confidence. As *conscientia* became something solely individual and emotional and the image of *universitas fidelium* based on *conscientia* slowly faded, the word religion took the previous

²⁸ “The English word *religion* clearly derives from the Latin word *religio*, as do its cognates in other European languages, but the derivation of the Latin noun is uncertain. It is most commonly linked to one of two Latin verbs, *religare* (to bind or fasten) or *relegere* (to collect again, to go over again)” (Alles 2005: 7702).

²⁹ According to Gauchet, once God departed their terrestrial abode, humans, i.e. Europeans, for the first time began to exercise control over their own world through the political state. To understand modern history, it is essential to recognize how humans attempted to possess themselves in politics by dispossessing themselves of a connection to religion. Gauchet goes on to argue that the history of civilized forms of thinking, of philosophy working its way from myth through theological speculation to practical science has its beginnings in making the divine transcendent and its consequent disenchantment of the world. Our democratic, individualizing, state-based, technological, capitalist world was formed by humans daring to fill the void left by the retreat of God. As the first monotheistic religion founded on the notion of divine incarnation, Christianity exemplifies this process most clearly in that Christianity is ‘the religion of man’s exit from religion’ (Gauchet 1997: 51-53, 103; Martin 2002: 117).

³⁰ “During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and following from Luther and Milton, as *conscientia* came to be understood in highly individualized and emotional terms, and rebellious people referred to *conscientia*, the slowly-emerging political thought and political theology needed to replace this term with any other word, one that meant a control that came from within but was at the same time intersubjectively shared, common among the people. The replacement term became ‘religion’ and the meanings—control from within, which is shared, common, and independent from the worldly power of any person—of ‘religion’ were taken from the notion of *conscientia* and *universitas fidelium*. The construction of the notion of ‘religion’ was partly a side-effect of the Reformation and the religious wars of Europe, but this notion was nevertheless generated by and taken from republican thinking. The notion of ‘religion’ was created from the point of view and interests of politics and political society by lay ‘politicians’ and by political theology” (Molnár 2002: 47-48).

role of *conscientia* in socio-political thinking, a shared intersubjective knowledge referring to a set of common moral rules. In this sense, the term religion had little to do with doctrinal differentiations, truth argument, and salvation. ‘Religion’ meant this-world moral rules with this-world consequences. It was a form of opinion or a way of thinking, which was seen as useful for keeping the peace from the viewpoint of the political or ruling societies.

European lay politicians and intellectuals such as Machiavelli and Bodin used the word religion, without reference to theological content, to convey ideas of a common morality that help build civil society and functional statehood. Molnár also points out as follows:

“Machiavelli’s problems were concerned with issues of freedom and success, while Bodin focused on harmony, peace, and integrity in a state. Thus Machiavelli addressed the masterless renaissance person, for whom he advocated some control from within by means of virtue and ‘religion’ – and ‘religion’ was as important for him as virtue. Bodin, on the other hand, lived in the midst of a religious civil war and, like Montaigne, he saw the masterless enthusiasts and therefore argued that religion was a common, shared moral rule indifferent to dogmatic tenets” (Molnár 2002: 57).³¹

The rise and expansion of imagined communities called ‘nations,’ which were backed by the development of vernacular print capitalism, played an important role in developing the

³¹ Theologians also played an important role in the emergence of the notion of religion. At the time, a central meaning of religion was a set of common, intersubjective moral rules that defined duties without regard to personal feelings. During the Reformation, many Europeans referred to their *conscientia* in order to find unquestionable ground for making their own judgments. The experience of this age was that schism arose from errors of conscience as well as due to corrupt reasons. In this context, Anglican Latitudinarian clergymen, who were criticized because of their indifference to doctrinal, dogmatic questions, used the notion of religion to combat civil disorder and upheaval arising from theological debates in England. They argued for worldly socio-political peace and harmony and against the disorder of civil society arising from doctrinal fights about the truth. This import of the notion of religion from political into theological discourse is important, because religion not only had to refer to ‘truth’ and ‘salvation’, but also clerical experts and institutions. In the end, the word religion stole matters of divinity from the clergy and gave them to the lay people (Molnár 57-59).

From a somewhat different perspective, Peter Harrison (1990) argues that not only did the modern construction of the notion of religion emerge from religious controversy, but also that religious discussions were often determined by the flood of new knowledge about the world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The ‘deists’ began to compare Christianity impartially with other systems of belief and practice, making ‘religion’, which was once a technical term referring to monastic life, a generic term in the sense that it represented a distinct realm of human practices. By their contributions, the term ‘religion’ gradually came to for the first time take on a generic conception that allowed for a variety of historical expressions, i.e., *religions*.

notions of religion and religions.³² At that time, European forces expanded their dominion across the world in search of new resources to build up their young ‘nation-states.’ This process called ‘colonialism’ was accompanied by encounters with different ‘religions.’ Europeans before had known a limited set of religious groups, which had often been categorized by the term ‘heathens,’ ranging from Islam and Judaism to various heresies that included ‘witches’ and ‘wizards.’ However, in the global process of colonization, they came to recognize ‘great religions,’ now called ‘world religions,’ as well as all sorts of ‘minor’ and ‘less’ institutionalized religions, e.g. folk religion, native religion, and so forth. The category of religion was an instrumental colonizing device for many European empires not only to identify various nations and ethnic groups, but also to discriminate between independent and colonized natives.³³

In the nineteenth century, European expansion reached its acme. European nation-states held colonial control over the continents of South America, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. In the ‘age of imperialism,’ European colonization often proceeded in the threefold form of soldiers (politics), merchants (economics), and missionaries (religion). That said, along with a desire for territorial strength and a need for cheap raw materials to fuel Europe's industrial development, there was also a religious passion to civilize or ‘christianize’

³² For further details on the relationship between nation, religion, and ethnicity, one may refer to Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; Hastings, Adrian. 1997. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; van der Veer, Peter. 2001. *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Van der Veer, Peter and Hartmut Lehmann eds. 1999. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

³³ For instance, David Chidester (1996), as mentioned in the previous chapter, describes how European colonizers’ ideas of African natives’ religions changed, from the condition of “they had no religion” before colonizing them to the state of “they had religion” after being colonized. Four African tribes that the Westerners met in Cape Town in southern Africa, i.e. Hottentot, Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho-Tswana, were portrayed at first as being ‘without religion,’ but later appeared as ‘having religion.’ Chidester states that, when the four African tribes were independent but not yet colonized, they were described as being uncivilized without religion; but after the colonization was completed and the four tribes were under European control, the natives were for the first time recognized as possessing a religion.

other ‘uncivilized’ nations and ethnic peoples.³⁴ Thus, the political importance of religion was articulated in various colonizing discussions and images of the colonizing European groups.

However, it is not accurate enough to explain the invention of the modern notion of religion simply as Westerners’ unilateral imposition of the European notion of religion on the non-Western world during the formative period of modern global society.³⁵ Peter Beyer (2006, 1998a, 1998b) informs us that ‘non-Westerners’ also greatly contributed to the formation of the global system of religion and religions, by positively accepting, compromisingly appropriating, or even simply refusing the Western notion of ‘religion’ across the modern global society of which the West has taken the lead since about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Richard King (1999) exemplifies the role that the Indian intelligentsia from the *Brāhmana* caste played in constructing ‘Hinduism’ by positively accepting Christian presuppositions of Western Orientalism. In contrast, modernizing Chinese and Japanese elites refused to recognize respectively their aboriginal Confucian and Shinto traditions as examples of ‘religion’, but instead went on to regard each ‘national’ tradition as ‘culture,’ ‘civilization,’ or a ‘system of morality.’ Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) also finds the determining power of European Orientalism despite the appearance of pluralism. By the early twentieth century, the list of ‘world religions’ came to include eleven great world religions – Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Sikhism. However, she recognizes differences in the process of including

³⁴ For more discussion and details on this, refer to Berger, Stefan ed. 2006. *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe, 1789-1914*. Malden, MA: Blackwell; Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1987. *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*. New York: Pantheon Books; van der Veer, Peter ed. 1996. *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*. New York: Routledge.

³⁵ Beyer (2003e, 1997) considers religion to be a part of the constituting process of today’s global society. He argues that to be recognized as a religion is a highly selective and somewhat accidental process; the relationship between ‘religious system’ and other differentiated social systems is not parallel in many cases. From a slightly different perspective, van der Veer (2001) examines how Britain’s colonization of India influenced both Indian and British culture. He argues that modern culture in both nation-states was developed in relation to their colonial experiences and that notions of religion and secularity were crucial in constructing the nationalism of *both* nations.

Buddhism and Islam in the canon of ‘world religions.’ The assimilation of Buddhism became possible through the analysis of Indo-European languages linking Greek, i.e. European civilization, to India, the home of Buddhism. However, Islam was seen as an Arabic ‘national’ religion rather than a world religion, because of elements of antisemitism within it. In this way, Indo-European religions would outstrip Judaic and Islamic religious traditions by the early twentieth century.

In sum, the emergence of the modern notion of religion was fundamentally conditioned by a series of critical political developments, ones that range from the emancipation of European society from overarching Christian power, the rise of nation-states, and the advent of vernacular press capitalism, to the colonial expansion of European nations and the various encounters between the West and the non-Western regions. Based on these early modern stories on the formation of religion, I will next discuss how the conception of religion constructed through such a complicated process was accepted, refused, and appropriated in the three East Asian societies of China, Japan, and Korea.

3. The Appropriation of Religion in Modern China and Japan³⁶

In the East Asia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a good portion of reformist politicians and enlightening intelligentsia regarded that the acknowledgment of their countries as independent nations in the Western-dominated world depended on how well they accepted Western modernity and built a strong nation-state based on new knowledge and technologies

³⁶ ‘East Asia’ or ‘Eastern Asia’ (*Tongasia* 東亞細亞) is a sub-region of Asia which usually includes mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, North and South Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, and Vietnam.

from the West.³⁷ ‘Religion’ (宗教) as a generic category had not existed in pre-modern East Asia especially until the East Asian countries opened its ports to Western imperializing powers. The Western category of religion was accepted into the East Asian countries of China, Japan, and Korea, as they embraced Western modernity in the nineteenth century.³⁸

Before the emergence of the modern notion of religion in Korea, the term *chonggyo* 宗教 already appeared in such government document of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1897/1910) as the *Diary of the Royal Secretariat* (*Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 承政院日記), which recorded the activities of receiving and delivering the king’s order from 1623 to 1894. Rather than presenting the modern notion of religion, however, the term *chonggyo* 宗教 in the Chosŏn government document actually meant ‘Confucian teaching’ or ‘Confucian truth,’ particularly within the neo-Confucian tradition (Pak 2005b: 66-67). Some reformist Confucian scholars, for instance Choi Han-ki (崔漢綺, 1803-1879) and Eo Yun-joong (魚允中, 1848-1896), also referred to a variety of ‘religions’ such as *kidokgyo* (Christianity 基督教), *togyo* (Taoism 道教), *yugyo* (Confucianism 儒教), *pulgyo* (Buddhism 佛教), *yutaegyo* (Judaism 犹太教), and *hwogyo* (Islam 回教). Although these words mentioned individual religious traditions, they did not mention and use religion as a distinctive generic category in then early modern Korea (Jang 1992: 39).

³⁷ However, this did not necessarily mean that all the advanced knowledge and technologies of the West had to be accepted by Korea. These were supposed to be introduced in so far as to help the country become a strong nation-state and to secure its own identity. *Tongdosŏgiron* (Eastern ways Western technology theory 東道西器論) is one of the most well-known concepts that formulates alternative modernities based on the indigenous cultures in East Asia. At this juncture, the primary subject of the acceptance of Western knowledge and machines was the nation, but not individuals in Korea (Jang 1992: 85-86).

³⁸ The East Asian term ‘宗教,’ which is now used as the translation of the Western term ‘religion,’ existed before the nineteenth century, but it did not originally refer to the meaning of the Western term religion as a general category that includes all religions. Rather, it was used as a Buddhist technical term that meant a ‘sect’ and ‘principle’ or a Confucian term that implied ‘truth’ (Isomae 2003; Pak 2005b: 66-67). On the other hand, Thierry Meynard (2005) contends that the modern concept of religion was shaped through the mutual exchanges between the West and China, indicating that the three moments of construction of religion are the late-Ming and early-Qing periods, the European Enlightenment, and the end of the Qing dynasty and Republican era in China.

On the other hand, a series of words, which might correspond to certain partial characteristics of the modern notion of religion, happened to exist in pre-modern East Asia. In Japan, in which the East Asian translation of ‘religion,’ i.e. 宗教 (*shukyo* in Japanese), first appeared among the East Asian countries, the term ‘*shu*’ 宗 had been used to mean “universal principle” in Japanese Buddhist tradition (Pak 2005: 66). In pre-modern Korea and China were the terms *to* (way 道), *hak* (learning 學), *kyo* (teaching 教), *sul* (art 術), *pŏb* (law 法), and these may correspond at least partially to the conception today represented by the word religion or 宗教 (Company 2003; Jang 1992: 32-37). Of course, these traditional ideas cannot replace the modern category of religion – a comprehensive conception that gives rise to a complex set of images and context that are transcendent, institutional, functional, conflictive, and/or equivocal.

As pointed out above, the modern notion of religion emerged from the great transformation of European Christian civilization, an unprecedented historical change often characterized by the Enlightenment, the Reformation, secularization, and global expansion of colonizing European states since roughly the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Religion appeared in the course of the European disenchantment (Gauchet 1999) as a generic category that included a variety of practices, ideas, and traditions that were in some respects analogous to those of Christian tradition (Masuzawa 2005). Again, the term religion that East Asian countries, i.e. China, Japan, and Korea, accepted from the Western world referred to a distinct communication system that took Christianity and its linguistic and cultural elements as the implicit model. In the end, the introduction of the category religion brought about a radical religio-political change in East Asian societies.

The differentiation of ‘field of religion’ or ‘religious system’ was a defining characteristic of the overall transformation in the modern religious culture of Japan, China, and Korea (Ashiwa and Wank 2009; Isomae 2003; Kim 2006b). Before the introduction of the modern category of religion, there was no separate and distinct realm that was referred to as ‘religion’ in traditional East Asian societies (Baker 2006: 257-264; Goossaert 2005: 14-15; Pye 1994: 122). In modern times, therefore, imported religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism, ‘nationalist’ religions such as Shinto and Tonghak (i.e. the Eastern Learning) and traditional religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism, all began – for the first time in the history of East Asia – to construct their self-identities not only by recognizing themselves as ‘religion,’ something that is distinct from the other secular social sectors, but also by mutually learning from each other within the differentiated sphere of religion. In many parts of the East Asian region, the ‘model religion’ that showed how to act as ‘a religion’ in this process of modern differentiation appeared was Christianity, in particular Protestantism (Ama 2000: 87-89; Baker 2006; Isomae 2007: 93-94).

The West initiated the modern transformation of society that was accompanied by the differentiation of religion from other ‘secular’ societal fields. This social phenomenon of modernization is widely observed in non-Western societies around the contemporary globalized world. According to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2000), the formation of modernization or ‘modernity’ is not singular, but rather diverse and multiple, depending on the given particular political, cultural, or even religious situation. In accordance with differences in societal contexts, therefore, the term religion, which presents a differentiated social sphere for individual belief, may produce different socio-political ideas and attitudes, and may also be accepted *differently* in a specific political context. In certain nation-states, the title of religion may be considered more extensive and pervasive; in other societies, it can be relatively

limited and restrained, depending on the political and historical condition of the societies in question.

The notion of religion was accepted from the West in nineteenth-century East Asia in a way that its social meaning was substantially appropriated and even strategically rejected by many enlightened elites, government officials, nationalist politicians, and other political players and elements (Beyer 2006: 225-253).³⁹ In the cases of Japan and China, the term religion, though accepted, has carried a more ‘sectarian’ connotation as being possibly against the common and national good, one that can be a critical hindrance to building a modern nation-state. Although religion and religions have existed, they have not been fully and positively recognized as a constructive participant in formulating unique and independent nation-states in modern China and Japan. Rather, many nationalist political elites and modern intellectual-bureaucrats have considered that religion is *de facto* and *de jure* an object of control and surveillance in their respective countries. Even though religious elements have been extensively mobilized in forming the Chinese and Japanese nation-state especially as the cases of Maoist socialism and State Shinto, these ‘political’ or ‘civil’ religions were constructed under many different titles of ‘ethics,’ ‘national morality,’ ‘culture,’ ‘civilization,’ and ‘patriotism,’ rather than that of ‘religion.’

³⁹ The appropriation was different in other regional societies. In contrast to East Asia, especially China and Japan, India and many Islamic countries are the non-Western nations that take religion as a constructive core of modern nation-state building. In constructing their modern national identity, most Hindu Indians take as primary Hindu religion before (secular) Indian nationalism. For example, such Hindu nationalist groups as Rashtriya Swayamasevak Sangu (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) envisage Hinduism as a core principle in their version of Indian nation. In the case of Indonesia, complete citizenship can only be secured when believing in a religion. That is, religious belief is a civil duty of nation building in Indonesia. Interestingly, however, Indonesia is similar to China in that the state, i.e. the political system, officially defines what count as *agama* or religion, but the model of religion is not Christianity but Islam. Under the spirit of *Pancasila*, the official philosophical foundation of Indonesia that consists of ‘five points,’ one of which is ‘belief in the one and only God,’ the Indonesian government recognizes as religion five religions only, i.e. Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Like Indonesia, Egypt, which is a Sunni Muslim nation, limits freedom of other religions, by using Islam as an implicit model for the nation’s formal definition of religion. As in China, France recognizes religion, but at the same time is severely skeptical of it. The French religious life and freedom is largely regulated by ‘laïcité,’ a notion that state and society should have a governing public principle that opposes the influence and even the visibility of religion in public life (Beyer 2004).

In this chapter, I argue that the political system of modern Korea has observed ‘religion’ as a modern category that is highly positive, nationalist, and modernizing, inasmuch as it was signified as an indispensable and universal source that helps save the Korean nation in crisis. Unlike in the Chinese and Japanese cases, the Korean civil society has extensively shared the idea that religion must play an affirmative role in civilizing and developing the Korean nation in modern global society (Clark 2007: 167-172). On the other hand, since the introduction of the term religion into Korea, an ‘anti-religious conception,’ which classifies the religious system as a pre-modern obstacle to a modernized Korean nation, has been circulated particularly by such secular modernists as socialists or communists and some enlightened pioneers. However, a greater portion of Korean nationalist leaders and other religio-political pioneers have considered the modern category of religion to be a constructive factor in building a strong modern nation-state in the Korean peninsula. By and large, religion has been observed as a ‘symbol of civilization’ opposing such political ideologies of colonialism and communism in Korea during the colonial and Cold War era (Jang 1999b).

In short, how the category of religion was constructed in China, Japan, and Korea is directly related to divergent strategies and conditions of building those nation-states in the modern global political system (Jang 1999a). In other words, a principal element in these contrasting realizations of religion in modern times has stemmed from the different political landscapes under which the three East Asian nations have been located in the world political system. Bearing this in mind, I will first describe the cases of China and Japan and then will proceed to the Korean example, which is the focus of this dissertation.

(1) China: “The Chinese Nation Cannot Be Represented by Religion”

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, China entered a newly changed world, in which the China-centered worldview no longer made sense even in East Asia. The West was the rising center of knowledge, technologies, and material powers. People in other non-Western spheres had to somehow accept, refuse, or appropriate new standards and forms put forward by Western civilization. China could not be an exception to this. By accepting the Western category of religion, China began in its own way to participate in the global construction of the religious system. However, it seems that many enlightened intellectuals and socialist nationalists have shared a very virulent anti-religious agenda throughout the developments of Chinese nation-state building (Fairbank and Liu 1980; Beyer 2006: 225-226, 2004: 21-22).

a. Refusal and Appropriation of *Zongjiao* in Modern China

The Chinese way of accepting the modern notion of religion shows some similarities to the Japanese case. One of the most visible resemblances is that the exact same word ‘宗教’ is selected in both China and Japan for the Western term ‘religion’, although the Chinese pronunciation *zongjiao* 宗教 is different from the Japanese *shukyo*. As the modern category of religion was introduced to China in the nineteenth century, Buddhist and Confucian traditions came to have different fates as far as the label ‘religion’ was concerned. Modern Chinese ended up taking Buddhism (*fojiao* 佛教: the teaching of Buddha) as religion, which was ‘foreign’ and also more monastic, while refusing to count Confucianism as religion, (*rujiao* 儒教: the teaching of the scholars) which was indigenous and also more secular and public. Rather than formulating it as religion that was considered a generalization of non-Chinese

phenomenon, they chose to define Confucianism by such ‘secular’ conceptions as ‘culture,’ ‘civilization,’ and/or ‘philosophy,’ all of which were deemed to be more readily identifiable with “China’s national features” (Jensen 1997).⁴⁰ That said, modern Chinese have refused to represent Confucianism as ‘one of the religions,’ rather retaining the indigenous tradition of Confucianism without imposing the title of religion on it. In the context of early modern China, it was believed that the critical problem imminent within what counted as ‘religion’ was that it was something highly ‘individual,’ ‘superstitious’ or ‘non-progressive’ so that it would be against the Chinese nation’s advancement toward a strong modern state in a newly forming global society. Many modern thinkers, nationalist pioneers, and communist revolutionaries, extensively maintained the anti-religious spirit that their ‘Confucian’ heritage should not be conceptualized by the label of religion throughout the turbulent modern history of China.

b. Attempt and Failure of Manufacturing Confucian Religion

At the turn of twentieth century, nevertheless, there emerged attempts to re-construct Confucian tradition as a ‘Confucian religion’ (*kongjiao* 孔教), particularly a state religion (*guojiao* 國教). Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) proposed making Confucianism China’s official religion as well as a world religion. To do this, Kang first wanted to re-create Confucius (孔子, 551 BCE-479 BCE) as a great religious founder. He thought that by making Confucius a prophetic source of classical ‘revelation’ along the lines of Christ, Buddha, and/or Muhammad, Confucianism could become a modern religion beside such other

⁴⁰ The Chinese case is sharply contrasted with the case of India that accepted the term ‘Hinduism’ as a unified religious system in order to signify a set of diversified native traditions in India (King 1999).

religions as Christianity, Buddhism, and/or Islam. He believed that, to make Confucianism a religion, it is necessary to reform the Confucian examination system, create Confucian missionary groups, and to publicly declare that Confucianism was the state religion of China. For this, Kang encouraged his followers to establish Confucian ‘churches’ that would spread ‘Confucian religion’ to overseas Chinese and eventually to all the people of the world. This religious reformation was, from Kang Youwei’s perspective, significant and necessary in restoring China’s power and dignity in the new modern world in which China was sinking. The Japanese nation-building that included the transformation of Shinto into a state religion was a good model for Kang’s deliberate suggestion for Chinese nation-building (Beyer 2006: 231-233; Keum 2000: 261).

Kang Youwei’s proposals for making Confucianism the Chinese nation’s religion as well as a world religion failed to receive the support of the majority of modern Chinese. To understand his failure, it is important to look at the reasoning of those opposing him. Liang Qichao (梁啓超, 1873-1929), Kang’s early disciple, was a prominent figure among those who opposed his suggestion of making Confucianism a religion. Like Kang and other Chinese reformers, the most important motivation of Liang’s efforts was to make China great again. Liang’s support for the ‘humanistic’ character of Confucianism is crystallized in his book, *The Collected Works of Yinbingshi* 飲冰室全集 (1902). There, Liang argued that Confucianism was not religion, but philosophy and also ethics, both of which were superior to religion because it went beyond superstition and captured the basic human truth that religions pointed to less clearly. Particularly, Confucianism seemed to have an ability to offer the cohesive power for confused and disunited Chinese nation to be strong and great again in the situation in which China would inescapably be incorporated into the global political system

that the Western powers dominated. To accomplish its purpose of building a strong nation-state in this new world, China needed to adopt Western knowledge, technologies, and other modern forms, yet in a way that China could still preserve the Chinese ‘spirit’. Liang thought that religion would only create problems in this process, and eventually lost his confidence in religion for the sake of Chinese nation-state building. He ended up criticizing religion as a declining force in the West as well as something that would only continue to make China weak and subordinated (Jang 1999a: 204-207; Kūm 2000: 274).

On the other hand, Liang regarded the West as powerful, but one-sidedly materialistic, while China was materialistically weak, but spiritually strong. So, something that China could contribute to the world was the superior aspect of China in comparison to the West, that which was spiritual or mental. The best of Confucianism was China’s unique contribution to the world society, one that Western religions and philosophies could not deliver. But Daoism (or Taoism) 道教, another native Chinese religion, from Liang’s perspective, was only ‘superstitious,’ ‘emotional,’ or ‘motivational,’ so it was not an aspect of which China could be proud, and in fact was simply ‘not Chinese.’ He argued, deploring Daoism, as follows:

“[T]here is no religion among the indigenous products of China[;] what makes up Chinese history of religion are mainly the religions introduced from foreign lands ... Taoism is the only religion indigenous to China ... but to include it in a Chinese history of religion is indeed a great humiliation” (Yang 1967: 5).

In the end, Liang stated that though religion undeniably existed in China, it did not constitute the genuine identity of the Chinese nation (Beyer 2006: 233-235).

c. Modernism, Chinese Socialism, and the Difficulty of Religions

A variety of similar but more combative ideas toward religion are found among other enlightenment Chinese intelligentsia in the early twentieth century. Critical Chinese thinkers who participated in the New Culture Movement 新文化運動⁴¹ in the 1920s expressed more negative opinions toward not just religion, but also classical or traditional Chinese culture in general. The new Chinese intelligentsia thought that the ‘Chinese heritage’ of the last imperial kingdom must be eradicated in order for modern Chinese to modernize and re-build China. For example, Hu Shih (胡適, 1891-1962), a student and life-long advocate of John Dewey, was one of the representatives of the New Culture Movement. He rejected the view of China as more spiritually advanced than the West, and was also suspicious of the insistence on the so-called ‘traditional Chinese essence.’ In *A Madman’s Diary* (*Kuangren Riji* 狂人日記) that established him as one of the most influential writers of his day, Lu Xun (魯迅, 1881-1936), another representative of the New Culture Movement, strongly criticized that ‘Chinese traditions’ as well as feudalism had gnawed at Chinese people like ‘cannibalism.’ These sorts of critical approaches to religion, Confucian heritage, and traditional culture have been solidified by the Chinese communist propaganda throughout the twentieth century.

Since 1949, mainland China has chosen a further secularist path that casts religion and religions in an entirely negative light, making an effort to build an independent socialist nation-state. Rather than unconditionally push forward with the official anti-religious agenda, however, there have actually been far more ambiguities and complexities in its practice. With the exceptions of the Cultural Revolution 文化大革命 era (1966-1976) and some parts of the

⁴¹ Disillusionment with the outdated traditional culture of China following the failure of the Chinese Republic triggered the New Culture Movement in the latter 1910s and 20s. Lu Xun, Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu, and so on were the leaders of the movement who led a revolt against traditional Chinese values, in particular Confucian heritage. Based on modern standards such as democracy and science, they tried to reform China’s culture and society. Their agenda included vernacular literature, freedom of individuals, women’s liberation, re-examination of Confucian texts and classics, and democracy and egalitarianism.

Maoist period, religion and religions have been grudgingly accepted in China under the socialist regime. Since the Cultural Revolution, the official anti-religious propaganda has never been straightforward. It argues that in modern China, religions do exist, though they do not represent the way forward for China. The Chinese communist government has eventually ended up restricting what can be counted as 'legitimate religion' in Chinese society. Thus, socialist China's religious policy only recognizes five religions as legitimate, i.e. Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. These are the members of the world religions, which are already well established and popular in China. Meanwhile, 'Chinese socialism' such as Maoism has been used to occupy a somewhat religious position that is similar to Confucianism, functioning as a system of Chinese culture and values. It has played a role in the nation's integration process as a sort of 'national religion' like Japan's State Shinto (Yang 2007).

The political system of contemporary China acknowledges that religion is a legitimate category, albeit a problematic and contested arena, particularly in relation with such political and international issues as ethnic diversity and human rights. The laws and state policies, e.g. Document No. 19 and Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities,⁴² are prepared and allowed to systemically regulate and control religious individuals and organizations. Although freedom of religion is considered one of the requirements to constitute a modern state system in China, the Chinese communist government has suspiciously observed religion and related issues such as Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhism in order to advance the project of Chinese nation-state building in contemporary global political circumstance and eventually recapture past glories (Ryu 2007: 54-70).

⁴² The Center on Religion and Chinese Society of Purdue University, which is led by Dr. Fenggang Yang and his collaborators, presents People's Republic of China (PRC)'s legal and policy documents on religion through its website, <http://www.purdue.edu/crcs/itemResources/chinaDocs.html>.

(2) Japan: “The National Polity Must Go beyond Religion”

Among the three East Asian countries of China, Japan, and Korea, Japan is the first to accept the term religion from the West and translate it into *shukyo* 宗教 for its modern application in East Asia. In modern Japan, there are many religious organizations that the category of religion embraces; however, it should be pointed out that realities presented by the term religion exist as social constructions that individuals may choose or not, rather than as an ‘inherent’ aspect of human existence. A survey on religiosity of contemporary Japan reveals that about seventy percent of respondents answered that ‘they have no religion,’ though seventy-five percent of the same respondents who had no religion also replied that ‘religious spirit is important’ (Ama 2000: 1). According to Ama Toshimaro, most Japanese present themselves as being *mushukyo* (irreligion 無宗教), although they have lived within the boundary of Shinto and Buddhist cultures since ancient times. This national ‘non-religious’ attitude has been consistent since the term religion or *shukyo* was introduced to Japan in the nineteenth century.

This ‘non-religiosity’ of Japan reflects a critical aspect of the Japanese religious landscape – that a sizeable portion of the Japanese population consider religion to be a somewhat ‘suspect’ and ‘narrow’ entity. Both religion and religions are largely imagined as being uncertain, mistrustful, negative, or even dangerous to the nation, because the term religion is nationally regarded as taking on a parochial position that may significantly violate the general interests of Japan as a whole national community. In short, religion as a category as well as a social sphere has been quite reluctantly accepted and constructed in the process of making Japan a nation in modern global society.

The negative discursive construction of religion was first created with the help of historical events that are critically related to Japanese nation-building, events such as state Shinto, emperor worship, and the emergence of Western imperialists and missionaries in the nineteenth century. It should also be pointed out that the Japanese national understanding of religion was formed along with the newly introduced standards on religion such as ‘freedom of religion’ and ‘separation of church and state’ that had proliferated since the nineteenth century (Isomae 2007: 93-94). The Japanese imperial government before World War II was instrumental in initiating a series of distinctive ideas, attitudes, and policies on religion in the public sphere of modern Japan (Kisala 2006: 6-8).

a. How the Notion of Religion Was Introduced into Japan

In ancient Japan, there was no word exactly corresponding to the modern conception of religion. The term *shukyo* 宗教, which is now equivalent to the Western term religion in modern Japan, was originally not a generic category that included various religious phenomena, but a Buddhist technical term to indicate specific Buddhist sects in pre-modern Japan (Ama 2000: 87). The Western term religion was imported to Japan in the historical context of Japanese responses to the opening of the country and the influx of Western influences. Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Western colonialists had eagerly traveled to other parts of the globe to find new sources of trade and conquests for their burgeoning capitalism. They usually reached a ‘new place’ in an associated set of three bodies, i.e. militaries, merchants, and missionaries, and Japan was no exception to this. In order to secure Christian missionaries’ proselytizing activities in Japan, Western colonial powers pressed the Japanese government to declare the principles of ‘freedom of religion’ and

‘separation of church and state,’ but Japan long refused to accept them, since this could hinder the social order of Japanese society. There was a critical concern that Christianity could endanger the ‘ultimateness’ of the Japanese nation. In 1858, in the end, the term religion was entered into the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce. It was included in Article 8 of the Treaty titled “Clause on Religious Liberty.” To translate the term religion, *shuho* 宗法 and *shushi* 宗旨 were used in the Treaty, but the Buddhist term *shukyo* 宗教, which roughly meant “group or sectarian teaching,” was later established to translate the Western term religion in the Japanese language (Hardacre 1989: 63-65; Pak 2005b: 69-75).

It was not really Japan’s own will to add the term religion in the treaty with the U.S.A. Again, the term religion was included in the treaty at the strong behest of the Western powers in order for their Christian missionaries to have the freedom of proselytizing in early modern Japan. The 1873 withdrawal of the directive that had banned Christianity paved the way for the settlement of the translated diplomatic term *shukyo* in the then Japanese society (Pak 2005b: 72). However, Meiji Japan (1868-1912) had to build and maintain itself as a tightly centralized nation-state in order to catch up with the advanced Western societies. Japanese ruling elites realized that the introduction of Western religions and ideologies, Christianity particularly, could impair Japan’s spirit and identity, and this would become an obstacle to the achievement of a strong nation-state. Therefore, even though Japan accepted the notion of religion along with the two related rules of ‘freedom of religion’ and ‘separation of church and state,’ this process had to be adroitly controlled in such a way as not to spoil the identity and social order of Japanese nation.

In the end, the notion of religion in Japan came to be constructed in a specific way to exclusively mean ‘institutional religions’ or ‘denominational religions’ such as Christianity,

Buddhism, and new religious groups. This means that the term religion, i.e. *shukyo*, has been transformed into a category that does not include a variety of other religious cultures or phenomena, e.g. folk beliefs and State Shinto. In modern Japan, again, the term religion has meant a series of religious organizations or sects that are somewhat disconnected from the general national society. Behaviors and institutions characterized by the word religion were exclusively entrusted to the limited zone of individuals' interior freedom, but not to the general and public sphere (Ama 2000: 21-41). How, then, has modern Japan constructed 'religion' and 'religions' in this way?

b. Shinto, Christianity, and the Religious Landscape

Irrespective of whether or not they are recognized as 'religion' by the official notion of religion, religions have been largely subordinate to the state in modern Japan. The necessity of establishing a mighty centralized nation-state, even once accompanied by the state religion system called *Kokka shinto* (State Shinto 國家神道) or *Jinja shinto* (Shrine Shinto 神社神道) before World War II, has been a fundamental reason for establishing a comprehensive legal system to tightly control and regulate religious organizations in Japan. In the nineteenth century, Japan was still governed by feudal lords called *shogun* 將軍,⁴³ and the Japanese emperor only maintained nominal power. In the context that Western imperial nations dominated the world, new enlightened Japanese elites decided to newly build a powerful nation in the islands. They realized that the emperor must be located at the center of nation-building in order to reunite a feudal nation divided by local powers for hundreds of

⁴³ Shoguns were the leading Samurai warriors who in effect ruled Japan for most of the medieval and early modern period, while emperors exercised only symbolic authority. Subordinate to Shogun, Daimyos (大名), the local lords, ruled most of the country from their hereditary land holdings.

years. They believed that in this way, Japan could keep its own identity, while accepting Western modernity to develop the Japanese nation. Then, their largest and most imminent task was to find out how to persuade Japanese people to accept the once forgotten emperor as an ultimate and absolute ruler of Japan. To do this, the Meiji government (1868-1912) enforced the national indoctrination policies based on such nationalist ideologies as the divinity of the Japanese emperor and the uniqueness of the Japanese “national polity” (*Kokutai* 國体). This was the very process through which State Shinto was invented (Isomae 2007: 94-99).

Meanwhile, ‘morality’ (*dotoku* 道徳) nationally emerged as an important public issue that comprised the collective foundation of the Japanese nation, while ‘religion’ was entrusted to the private sphere for individuals. A clear boundary between ‘morality’ and ‘religion’ was soon made in the form of the public-private dichotomy. From this dualistic perspective, State Shinto was not regarded as a matter of individual choice; rather, participating in the rituals of State Shinto was understood to be a matter of national and public morality. This religio-political development produced a result that all Japanese nationals, including adherents of different religions such as Buddhists and Christians, should participate in the national rituals of State Shinto. In the end, the public moral system of State Shinto came to be formulated as a national obligation that all Japanese citizens must follow regardless of religious preference or membership. It meant that the boundary between ‘religion’ and ‘not-religion’ was uniquely constructed in the sacralized process of Japanese nation building before World War II.

In modern Japan, the term religion came to largely imply ‘organizations’ equipped with specific belief systems, many of which were somewhat similar to Christian religions. In the process of nation building, religion was regarded as something that must remain as being solely personal, but not public. Again, from viewpoint of this religious understanding,

religion was deemed to be exclusively private, individual, and/or parochial. In perspective of State Shinto, therefore, religion was seen as a possible obstacle to the ‘common good,’ in particular the integration and development of the Japanese nation-state. To deal with religions that might oppose the sanctity of the Japanese emperor, the central symbol of Japanese nation building, because of their monotheistic or exclusive worldviews, the term religion was set to confine Christianity and other religious organizations to the private field of religion. Christianity was the religion that most clearly represented the nation’s understanding of religion. As a result, during the Meiji era, Christianity was considered to be ‘foreign’ to the Japanese nation that was uniquely represented as the emperor and State Shinto.

c. “Non-Religion” as Japanese Essence

Since the end of World War II in 1945, the conceptualization and institutionalization of religion has tremendously changed in Japan (Shimazono 2007, 2005). A noticeable characteristic of the religious change in post-war Japan was a re-assurance of freedom of religion and the abolition of State Shinto by the General Headquarters of Allied Forces (hereafter GHQ)’s ‘Shinto Directive’ in 1945 and the enactment of Japanese constitution in 1946.⁴⁴ Through this process, Japan became a modern secular society in which government and religious organizations had to be separated from each other, at least officially. This religio-political change, which was mixed with both old religious traditions and new modern

⁴⁴ In December 1945, the GHQ issued ‘the abolition of governmental sponsorship, support, perpetuation, control and dissemination of State Shinto.’ However, there is no agreement about the effect of the reform brought by the Shinto Directive and the new constitution as a dismantling of State Shinto. Susumu Shimazono suggests that if we carefully look at the current relationship of state and religions in Japan, one may notice that the state still has a special relationship with State Shinto to the extent that the nation is integrated by it. He argues that Jinja or Shrine Shinto which is related to the Japanese emperor system has played an important role in creating the Japanese form of modern secularism. In short, State Shinto has survived in post-War Japan (Shimazono 2007).

experiences, created a new voluntary realm of religion in post-war Japan. Such particularization of the religious system in the Japanese context has produced some unique features (Beyer 2006: 247-250).

One of the most distinctive features is that in the middle of the modern transformation of Japanese religious culture, the national intention to see Japan as a great family-like community has still continued in a unique form (Bellah 1965; Davis, 1998). The reconstruction of Japanese national identity seems to have relatively little to do with any conventional institutional religion. Rather, contemporary Japanese tend to contend that they believe in *mushukyo* (irreligion 無宗教). This concerns the distinction between ritual and belief. Many Japanese participate in an array of recognizable religious rituals, but the majority does not consider that such 'religious' participation makes them 'religious people.' An important dimension of the national 'non-religious' nature is that although the Japanese constitution has enshrined provisions on freedom of religion and separation of church and state in post-war Japan, Shinto and the system of the imperial rituals and buildings are still positioned at an important juncture in the formation of contemporary Japanese nationalism. The GHQ deemed that if there was no group that could use the rites for political purposes, Imperial House rites would remain as matters of private belief which would presumably not exercise much influence over people's lives. Thus, the system of Imperial House rites has effectively survived as an important component of State Shinto in contemporary Japanese society. This is evident in various forms such as daily and seasonal rites in the Imperial House, rites of passage for the emperor and other family members, and the relationship with Shrine

Shinto (Shimazono 2007: 701-704).⁴⁵ Contemporary Japanese do not regard these practices as ‘religious,’ rather arguing that “we are not religious.”

This formation of ‘non-religious’ in post-war Japan seems to be related to their less or non-exclusive sense of religious belonging. Contemporary Japanese tend to be not exclusive in their religious identification and practice. This religious situation produces a meaningful statistical result in that the total figure for religious adherents far exceeds the number for total Japanese population.⁴⁶ Most of the cases of double or multiple religious belonging appears in Buddhism and Shinto. This phenomenon of cross-religious membership, at least partially, comes from traditional custom as well (Ama 2000: 21-38). However, the Japanese way of managing belonging and organization does not necessarily mean that the religious system in contemporary Japan does not operate well. In fact, the post-war era saw the revival, continuation, reformation and foundation of a large number of new religions in Japan (Shimazono 1997).

4. The Case of Korea: From “Civilized Religion” to “Suspicion of Religion”

East Asian nations have created their respective forms of presenting and practicing religion and religions in a modern global context. With many exceptions though, political elites, challengers, and intellectuals in modern China and Japan have largely regarded the modern category of religion as possibly hindering their projects of building their respective

⁴⁵ Shimazono wrote “[w]ith regard to its approach to State Shinto, [the General Headquarter] attempted to reduce the potential for shock and dissatisfaction among the Japanese people by framing the Shinto Directive in such a way that it was kind to the Imperial Family and the Imperial House rites. Inadvertently, this helped to ensure that confusion about the meaning of State Shinto is still with us (Shimazono 2007: 702).”

⁴⁶ Population statistics from the Japanese government usually say that the total religious population outnumbers the total population, mainly because many Japanese believe in Shinto and Buddhism together. As of 2004, the total Japanese religious population is 213,826,700, which exceeds the total Japanese population of 127,687,000 (Ryu 2007: 46).

nation-states. In contrast, religion was accepted in the process of adopting Western thoughts and technologies in order to realize the serious political object of building a strong nation-state in modern Korea. Since the acceptance of the modern notion of religion from the West in the nineteenth century, modern Korean pioneers and politicians, both in Korea and abroad,⁴⁷ have imagined and conceptualized religion not just to be compatible with the project of Korean nationalism, but even to be an indispensable element for the Korean nation to enlighten and empower itself in modern global society. ‘Religion’ in modern Korea is relatively well accepted and also constructed as a distinctively differentiated communication system. At the same time, it is closely coupled with other ‘secular’ spheres of national society such as politics, education, medicine, the media and social welfare. Enlightenment intellectuals, nationalist fighters, influential politicians and state officials, school educators, and other modernist elites have largely believed that religion is taken-for-granted and essential in modernizing or even saving their fatherland from various problems and ‘enemies’ inside and outside. In other words, throughout the twentieth century, religion was by and large considered to help Koreans not only achieve ‘civilization,’ but even secure Korean identity in a newly unfolding political system (Jang 1999b, 1992).

(1) How the Concept of Religion Was Constructed in Modern Korea

In the nineteenth century, the term religion was imported to Korea from the Western world via Japan. According to Jang Suk-man, the Korean variant *chonggyo* (宗教, 종교) first

⁴⁷ Since the beginning of the Korean diaspora, Korean ethnic churches have always been at the center of Korean immigrant communities in North America (Cho 2004; Min 1992).

appeared in the second issue of *Hansŏng sunbo* (Seoul's ten-day report 漢城旬報)⁴⁸ on November 10, 1883 (Jang 1992: 39). It can be said that as in Japan and China that the modern notion of religion in Korea took the Western form and experience, in particular Christianity and its modern change, as its principal referential point. Before it was introduced to Korea, there had been no concept through which to see religion as something *sui generis* and fundamentally different from the 'secular' part of the world. Kim Chong-suh suggested that the defining characteristic of a conceptual transformation of religion in early modern Korea was differentiating the sphere of religion from other sub-fields of Korean society⁴⁹ (Kim 2006d: 163-176). With the emergence of 'differentiated religion,' it has been reasonably expected that religious traditions and organizations will primarily stay within a specialized field that is detached from the secular public sphere, especially state institutions. The new conception of religion has also allowed liberty for religious individuals and groups to be safely included in the special domain for religion (Casanova 1994: 11-39).⁵⁰

Through an analysis of literature published in the Opening Era (1876-1910), Jang Suk-man (1992) distinguished four conceptions of religion in his doctoral dissertation – “deistic conception of religion,” “religion-as-civilization-symbol conception,” “religion-for-

⁴⁸ *Hansŏng sunbo*, the first modern newspaper founded by Koreans, published its first issue on October 31, 1883.

⁴⁹ The differentiation of religion was the result of the secularization of society, or social differentiation. That said, since Korea opened its ports, religious life, which was not differentiated until modern times, has been conceived as something that should belong to the private sphere of individual lives which were differentiated from the public sphere. However, Casanova considers the process of social differentiation to be a conceptual frame that is not unconditionally applicable to all other societies, but has multiple and diverse forms in modern global context (Casanova 2007). Therefore, one of the critical tasks in this work is to describe 'what kind' or 'what form' of conceptualization and/or differentiation of religion is constructed in modern Korea. The degree of differentiating religion from other secular fields can be very strict so that religions are assertively limited to the field of religion, or be passive so that they can easily translate their 'religious' impulse into terms that would be effective in other secular social systems.

⁵⁰ Quite like the notion of religion, there was also no conception of 'civil society' *vis-à-vis* the Confucian state in pre-modern Korea. So the modern principle of 'separation of church and state' did not exist in Chosŏn dynasty, the enshrined element of modern democracy that defines the relationship between state institutions and religious organizations.

enlightenment conception,” and “anti-religious conception.” The “deistic conception of religion” (*Isinnonjök chonggyo kaenyöm* 이신론적 종교개념) is the hegemonic idea of religion in modern Korea. This conception considers religion to be something belonging to the private and/or individual sphere rather than to the public sector. From this view, religion is perceived as negative or even dangerous if it excessively appears in the public domain or if a state religion is established in Korea. At the same time, this conception of religion claims that individuals’ freedom of religion should be protected from state power and/or public force. During an interview with him in Seoul in March 2008, Dr. Jang mentioned to me that he had searched for a better expression for the ‘*deistic*’ conception of religion because it might be misconstrued; yet, he had not found a better one. Secondly, the “religion-as-civilization-symbol conception” (*Munmyönggihojök chonggyo kaenyöm* 문명기호적 종교개념), which may be seen as opposing the “anti-religious conception,” is the perspective that religion is needed to civilize the nation. From this viewpoint, for example, Christianity is located at the root of the modern success of Western civilization, and the Religious Reformation in Europe exerted a definitive influence upon the advent of Western modernity. Thirdly, the “religion-for-enlightenment conception” (*Inmin'gyohwajök chonggyo kaenyöm* 인민교화적 종교개념) sees religion as an indispensable factor for the integrity of the nation and continuity of social order rather than achievement of civilization. In the Opening Era, a series of Confucian intellectuals thought that they had to make Confucianism a religion in order to secure a national identity in the context in which external ideologies and influences poured into the Korean nation. Finally, the “anti-religious conception” (*Panjonggyo kaenyöm* 반종교개념) is the idea that views religion negatively. It claims that the wealth and power of the West is not due to religion, but due to the study of things, i.e. science. From this perspective, modern

Koreans should overcome the delusion and restraint of religion in order to achieve civilization and also modernize Korea. It can be said that Korean socialist or communist thinkers and activists recognized religion from the view of the “anti-religious conception” (Jang 1992: 39-53).

According to Jang, the purpose of constructing ‘religion’ in modern Korea was fundamentally different from that of the West. The rise of the modern category of religion in the West was closely related with the expansion of the understanding of ‘individuals’ whose roles and identities were divergent in the newly burgeoning modern society; those individuals included rising bourgeoisies such as merchants and industrialists, modern intellectuals and scientists, and various ethnic, religious, and political minorities. One mission assigned to the new conception of religion was to give them the freedom of choosing and believing their respective religions by minimizing the clash and conflict that resulted from differences in religious identity. However, the acceptance of the modern notion of religion to early modern Korea was primarily for the Korean nation as a whole rather than individuals, because the primary purpose of accepting Western thoughts and technologies lay in saving the nation in crisis from the world powers that wanted to colonize it. The modernization of Korean society was required not for ‘individual Koreans,’ but for ‘Korea as a group,’ which was often presented as ‘royal family,’ ‘government,’ and/or ‘nation.’ Thus, it was widely thought that an excessive increase in individualism could aggravate the crisis of Korean nation. Since the subject of the adoption of West’s modern culture and idea was the national community as a whole, but not private individuals, the conceptualization of religion was related to two important purposes for Korean nation building, i.e. “to achieve civilization” and “to continue the national identity” (Jang 1992: 54-58).

At the turn of the twentieth century, “enlightenment intellectuals” (*Kaehwa sasangga* 開化思想家)⁵¹ in Korea came into contact with modern ideas and technologies with the advance of the Western powers into East Asia. It rid them of Koreans’ traditional worldview that regarded China as the center of human civilization. They agreed that to confront the Western powers, who possessed overwhelmingly superior military strength, Koreans had to build a strong nation-state by learning the principles and technologies that had made the Western countries strong and prosperous.⁵² They realized that the West had achieved its wealth and power through the scientific technologies that allowed people to control ‘nature’ (*chayŏn* 自然). In that perspective, religion was considered to belong to the ‘supernatural’ (*ch’ojayŏn* 超自然), the left over space that did not belong to the realm of nature.

Such contextualization of modernity had a significant impact on how religion was conceptualized in the political system of modern Korea. The term religion came to harbor a definite ideological orientation that religion should serve to aid in the achievement of civilization as well as to ensure national identity in the transitional period through which the traditional worldview regarding China as the center of civilization was collapsing at the same time when the West was rising as the new center of human civilization. Under these two precepts toward religion, Korean enlightenment thinkers and political leaders tended to consider religion to be a critical resource in enlightening the Korean nation and regaining the nation’s independence from Japanese colonialism and the Western powers (Jang 1992: 47-58).

This kind of religio-political understanding was pervasive among Korean religionists in the twentieth century. Korean Confucians intermittently tried to ‘religionize’ Confucian

⁵¹ Some examples of enlightenment intellectuals are Yu Gil-Jun (俞吉濬, 1856-1914), Seo Jae-Pil (徐載弼, 1862-1951), and Yun Tchi-Ho (尹致昊, 1864-1945), all of whom directly experienced Western civilization while studying in the U.S.A.

⁵² This agenda was widely practiced under the slogan *Puguk kangbyŏng* (prosperous nation with strong military 富國強兵) at that time.

tradition from the late nineteenth century (Kŭm 2000).⁵³ Likewise, Christians, in particular liberal Protestant nationalists, were reluctant to see their religious organizations as a religious sect, rather believing that their belief was a sort of modern universalism that would rescue the Korea nation from the ‘enemy’ both outside and within, e.g. poverty, illiteracy, sexism, superstition, colonialism, communism, and imperialism (Jang 1999b; Ryu 2009: 44-106).

In sum, as Korea entered modern global society where the Western powers and values began to dominate, various modern notions such as nation, society, economy, and religion were introduced into the Korean Peninsula. The sphere of religion, which had been fused into other social fields in pre-modern Korea, had for the first time become constructed as a differentiated and autonomous communicative system. Rather than imagining ‘religion’ as a serious barrier to building a nation-state in the modern global political system, the modernizing nationalist leaders and elites in Korea increasingly viewed and conceptualized it as an essential subject and resource in integrating, civilizing, and developing the nation in the colonial and post-colonial contexts.

(2) The Religious Landscape and Protestantism as ‘Model Religion’ in Korea’s Political Change

Before the Western notion of religion was introduced into Korea, religious traditions had all existed without being identified as distinctively differentiated religions. Being fused, instead, they had multi-dimensional relationships with other undifferentiated social institutions and strata that ranged from political, economic, and educational to cultural,

⁵³ Kim Sung-hae has argued that the concept of religion should be extended in light of the East Asian religious phenomena, particularly Confucian tradition (Kim 2003: 342-352, 1994).

medical, and artistic. In pre-modern times, the Korean religious landscape was made up of such traditions as Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shamanism, and other folk beliefs, all of which were ‘communal,’ ‘ritualistically oriented,’ and ‘polytheist.’ For example, Korean peasants performed Confucian ancestral rituals, patronized shamans, and prayed at Buddhist temples without a sense of exclusive religious affiliation during the Chosŏn Dynasty. Again, there was no clearly defined boundary between the religious and the non-religious, but these were rather colligated and embedded into each other in pre-modern Korea (Baker 2006: 257-264, 2002; Kim 2006d: 163-168; Korea Institute for Religion and Culture 1998: 261-266).

The distinct construction of a religious system in modern global society shows that to be recognized as a ‘religion’ is a highly selective and even contested process (Beyer 1998a, 1998b). In the political context of Korean nation building, it has been a highly controversial, political, and/or even military issue in defining the boundary between ‘religion’ (*chonggyo* 종교) and ‘non-religion’ (*pichonggyo* 비종교) or between ‘normal religion’ (*chŏngsang chonggyo* 정상종교) and ‘abnormal religion’ (*pijŏngsang chonggyo* 비정상종교). Being officially accepted as a (normal) religion by the state authorities has usually meant being cooperative or at least neutral to the nation building process. That said, the term religion is by and large an honorable and approving title in the process of the Korean nation building. This means that the notion or category of religion has been a sort of discursive mechanism through which to include or exclude specific religious groups, traditions, and/or individuals. Those religions which are identified as not suitable to that modern paradigm of religion have been often stigmatized as ‘asocial’ or ‘selfish’ in the political and civil sphere of modern Korea. The terms granted to religious traditions or organizations that do not satisfy the established paradigm of religion were ‘evil religion’ (*sagyo* 사교), ‘superstition’ (*misin* 미신), ‘pseudo-

religion' (*saibi chonggyo* 사이비종교), 'quasi-religion' (*yusa chonggyo* 유사종교), and so forth.

There are many examples of this religio-political dichotomy. The Western Protestant missionaries and their Korean collaborators often despised the traditional religions, calling them "superstition"; the Japanese colonial government in Korea stipulated that the nationalist new religions were "quasi-religions"; the North Korean socialist government carried out anti-religious propaganda; Korean conservative Protestants branded the Unification Church and other 'heresies' as an "evil religion" in the 1950s. Since liberation in 1945, Japanese new religions such as Soka Gakkai 創価学会 and Tenrikyo 天理交 have been occasionally referred to as "cult" in South Korea,⁵⁴ so in 1965 the Ministry of Interior of South Korea placed limits on their religious activities, labeling them as "quasi-religious organizations that blinded people and endangered the national identity." The Syngman Rhee (1948-1960) and Park Chung-hee (1961-1979) governments even conducted the "breaking-down-superstition campaign" (*Minshin t'ap'a undong* 미신탈파운동) of folk beliefs, which were primarily represented by Shamanic rituals and activities.

These cases indicate that before liberation from the Japanese colonialism in 1945, being recognized as 'religion' was directly related to the colonial rule and policies of the Japanese government in Korea; after the 1945 liberation in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, it was associated with the state's anti-communist and nationalist agenda and various modernization projects. In this colonial and post-colonial context, religious traditions included under the modern category of religion were mostly 'world religions' such as

⁵⁴ As of 2005, Korea has 18 religions originating from Japan, and their total population is about 1,920,000. Soka Gakka, the largest one, has 1,480,000 adherents, and Tenrikyo, the second largest 270,000. For more information, see Won-bŏm Lee. 2007. *Han'guk nae ilbon'gye chonggyo undong ūi ihae 한국 내 일본계 종교운동의 이해* (Understanding of Japanese Religious Movements in Korea). Seoul: Chei aen ssi.

Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. However, Confucianism, Shamanism and other ‘new religions’, which fell short of meeting the criteria for a world religion, were mainly referred to as philosophy (or civilization), superstition, and pseudo-religions respectively.

Not only did the introduction of the modern category of religion initiate and secure a differentiated social place for Korean religious traditions and organizations, but also the ‘positive’ understanding of religion dramatically invigorated the market of religion in modern Korea.⁵⁵ Newly imported religions, e.g. Protestantism and Catholicism, indigenous religions, e.g. Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way 天道教) and Taejonggyo (Religion of the Great Progenitor 大倣教), and other religious traditions, e.g. Buddhism, Shamanism, and Confucianism, all together entered the religious market in which religions must compete with one another ‘for the sake of survival.’ In so doing, each religion for the first time in the history of Korea began to construct its self-identity as one of ‘religions,’ not only by recognizing itself as a ‘religion’ that is different from other ‘secular’ social organizations and institutions, but also by mutually comparing and learning from other ‘religions.’ Success or failure of a religious organization in the religious market – a self-referentially differentiated communication system of society – would depend on not only internal resources including its programmatic dynamics,⁵⁶ but also its communicative relationship with its surrounding environment – other societal systems such as politics, education, law, and mass media. The

⁵⁵ From a synchronic perspective, Yoon Yihŭm, a Korean historian of religion, conceptualizes the characteristic of the religious culture in Korea as *chohwa* (harmony 調和).” According to Yoon, harmony implies “meaningfully ordered reality” among heterogeneous elements, and Korean religionists generally pursue harmony – their intellectual and practical ideal – in the context of experiential secularism. I see that Yoon’s conclusion coincides with the nationally ‘positive’ understanding of religion in Korea that underlines the universality of religions. He goes on to argue that it is also a conception that locates ‘interfaith relationship’ at the conceptual center (Yŭn 2001: 261-266).

⁵⁶ The religious nature of modern Korea is often described by the phrase ‘multi-religious context’ (Kim 2006: 180-184; Yŭn 2001: 237-266). However, given that particular religions, i.e. Christianity and Buddhism, take up most of the religious marketplace and that specifically inclined viewpoints on religion and religions are recognized as being ‘official’ in modern Korean society, the descriptive phrase ‘multi-religious context’ should be used more selectively, carefully, and with differences in nuance. Thus, individuals’ ‘rational choice’ between religions should incline toward certain official or hegemonic religious view in this modern religious system.

competition between religions has significantly contributed to the radically quantitative expansion of religious sites and population. The religious population increased from 3% in 1916 to 53.1% in 2006; the number of buildings for religious rituals or ‘services’ also increased from 10,357 in 1962 to 74,607 in 1997. The introduction of the new ‘deistic’ notion of religion played a significant role in provoking the transformation of the idea and field of religion as well as religious populations and buildings in modern Korea (Baker 2006: 251-255).

Taking into consideration these significant religious shifts in the modern nation-state, Donald Baker contends that a “religious revolution” took place in the twentieth century Korea. This religious change is not limited to the quantitative expansion of the Korean religious market. Another characteristic of the religious revolution emphasized by Baker is that the ‘confessional,’ ‘monotheistic,’ and ‘congregational’ religion of Christianity, as well as the Buddhism greatly influenced by those Christian characteristics, have accounted for most of the Korean religious population (Baker 2006: 255-257, 2002).⁵⁷ In modern Korea, the religion that appeared to be most suitable to the category of religion was Christianity, in particular Protestantism. Since its introduction to early modern Korea, political leaders and nationalist elites have often noticed that Christianity, especially Protestantism, holds a leading position in the religious system, acting as the institutional model of religion. Being well differentiated from, but closely connected with, other societal systems such as politics, the economy, and

⁵⁷ To some extent, Baker’s argument coincides with those of others such as S. N. Balagangadhara (1994) and Tomoko Masuzawa (2005), both of whom suggest that Christianity has held a constitutive hegemony over the formulation of the modern conception of religion, a perspective through which both Westerners and non-Westerners come to observe other ‘religions’ in modern times. Particularly regarding the idea of so-called ‘world religions,’ Masuzawa argues that it is effectively a Christian conception in which the Western conceptual elements of religion are projected onto the ‘others’ in other parts of the world, and they have appeared as the principal representations of religion in modern European thought. Masuzawa is right with her ‘Christian modeling’ argument, but wrong in saying that this invalidates the term religion for non-Western context.

education, as well as efficiently readjusting its qualitative and quantitative purposes, Protestantism has rapidly made ‘inroads’ in Korean society.⁵⁸

Once Protestantism was introduced to Korea at the end of nineteenth century,⁵⁹ it was soon welcomed by Koreans, even being called ‘civilized religion’ (*munmyōng chonggyo* 文明宗教). Remembering the tragic history of early Catholic missions in Korea of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that produced many ‘martyrs,’ Protestant missionaries carefully began proselytizing activities through a series of ‘indirect’ methods. For example, they founded many modern medical and educational institutions in Korea during the early twentieth century. Unlike Catholicism, these efforts helped Protestantism maintain a positive image in Korean society, and the modern Protestant schools themselves produced nationalist leaders and liberal intellectuals (Jang 1999b). Protestant believers often emphasized that Protestantism was the religion of America, a very wealthy and strong country, which had no intention of invading the Korean nation, but would help Koreans rid itself of all pre-modern remnants. Some expected that by accepting Protestantism, Korea would be civilized and brought to the level of the Western powers (Jang 1992: 51-54).

⁵⁸ The influence of Christianity even went beyond the field of religion. According to Baker, prior to the introduction of Catholic Christianity in the eighteenth century, there was no understanding of ‘civil society’ in pre-modern Korea, since all aspects of the society were subordinate to the ultimate authority of Confucian Kingdom. Christianity brought with it a whole new concept of religion, together with that of church-state relationship. About a century before the introduction of Protestantism, Catholicism spread to Korea and soon conflicted with the then Confucian state so much so that it was identified as the ‘religion of European imperialists,’ because as elsewhere in the world, Catholicism refused to honor state control over its ritual expression and moral code. This eventually contributed to the rise of civil society, as Catholicism affirmed that there were legitimate limits to the authority that the state had over its subjects (Baker 1998; Yūn 2007). In chapter three, I discuss in detail how Catholicism contributed to the legal construction of the relationship between church and state.

⁵⁹ Horace Newton Allen (1858-1932) was the first Western Protestant missionary to be dispatched to Korea in 1884 from the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. Allen was a medical missionary and also a diplomat from the American government. He established *Kwanghyewon* (House of Extended Grace 廣惠院), the first modern medical facility in Korea, by aid of the royal family of the Chosŏn dynasty. He became King Gojong’s personal doctor as well as political advisor. He was instrumental in lifting the nation’s anti-Christian policy to allow the influx of Protestant missionaries to evangelize Koreans, build modern schools, and maintain Western-style hospitals in the deteriorating environment of Chosŏn Korea.

During the period of Japanese occupation (1905/1910-1945), Protestantism, the ‘religion of America,’ could secure a higher political position and thereby a larger social space than other religions, because Western Protestant missionaries to a certain degree enjoyed diplomatic immunity in colonized Korea, receiving systemic supports from their home churches in the West (Lee 1996: 56-57). The Japanese colonial government in Korea recognized only Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity (Protestantism and Catholicism) as ‘official religion.’ All the other religions⁶⁰ were called “quasi religions” (*yusa chonggyo* 유사종교) that were considered a sort of suspicious ‘political force.’ As pointed out above, the Japanese way of modernization put the god-like emperor at the apex of Japanese nationalism, while accepting Western ideas and technologies the development. Thus, religions including Protestantism in colonized Korea could have their freedom of religion recognized so long as they did not conflict with the Japanese political religion, i.e. State Shinto.

Protestantism, one of the official religions that secured some degree of freedom of religion even under the colonial rule, occupied a special position in the Korean society that did not have its own independent state, because it was seen as a modern programmatic system that intended to provide some socio-political space for oppressed Korean nationalism. Lead Korean nationalist pioneers took notice of religion, especially Protestant churches, as a significant institution that not only secured a certain degree of safety and autonomy for Korean nationalism from the Japanese colonialism, but also placed its center of authority within the Korean nation, unlike Roman Catholicism which had its geographical and spiritual core outside of the Korean peninsula. In the end, unlike Chinese and Japanese nationalists,

⁶⁰ They were about sixty indigenous religions including Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way 天道教) and Taejonggyo (Religion of the Great Progenitor 大宗教), all of which fell under the jurisdiction of criminal law (Korea Institute for Religion and Culture 1998a: 378-383).

representative Korean nationalist leaders⁶¹ considered religions, particularly Protestantism, to be a principal modern program that contained critical resources that could save the Korean nation then under colonial rule. In this context, the political value of religion was greatly recognized by Korean nationalists who were prevented from mobilizing the secular form of Korean nationalist movements in colonized Korea.⁶² Religion and religions were largely required by the anti-colonial activists who were prevented from mobilizing the secular form of the independence movement; on the contrary, the “anti-religious conception” was preferable to the Japanese colonial administration that wanted to closely unite Korea to Japan, the inner land. Therefore, this political context was in itself a fertile soil in which religious groups such as Christian churches and Taejonggyo became a base for Korean nationalist force, in particular its social reform and independence movements. Several major Korean nationalist politicians such as Syngman Rhee, An Chang Ho, Kim Ku, and Kim Kyu Shik all counted religion as the bastion for the revival of Korean nation in their difficult modern context.

While the making of a Korean nation-state in the Korean peninsula was directly related to overcoming Japanese imperialism during the colonial era, since the 1945 liberation it has become deeply connected to the Cold War context and anti-communism, industrialization, and democratization. Contrary to the cases of China and Japan, the modern

⁶¹ Some examples are An Chang Ho (安昌浩, 1878-1938) and the “three leaders” – Kim Ku (金九, 1876-1949), Syngman Rhee (李承晩, 1875-1965), and Kim Kyu-sik (金奎植, 1881-1950) – all of whom were representative modernizing nationalists. The three leaders became the most important political leaders in South Korea after the 1945 liberation.

⁶² Protestant nationalists tended to think that to gain Korea’s independence from Japan’s intensive colonialism, modest enlightenment movements such as ‘V narod (go-to-the-people) Movement’ was more efficient than direct military conflict. From a Gramscian perspective, a ‘war of position’ was preferred when ‘war of maneuver’ was not a realistic strategy for the liberation of Korea. In this situation, the political value of religions including that of Protestant churches was found among Korean nationalists. On the other hand, Western missionaries and conservative Protestant leaders made it taboo for their churches to show interest in politics and instead emphasized individualistic (or petit-bourgeois) faith. One of its reasons was that if they were engaged too deeply in politics, the Japanese government in Korea could deprive Protestant churches of freedom of religion which was only allowed under certain restrictions. After being suppressed by the Japanese government in Korea, Taejonggyo, a new nationalist religion, changed its main field of activity from the Korean peninsula to Manchuria in order to conduct the ‘war of maneuver’ against Japanese imperialism.

category of religion was continuously accepted as a ‘positive’ or ‘essential’ element in establishing a modern nation-state in the southern part of Korea. The rapid growth of Korean religious population was a sequential realization of such an understanding of religion in post-war Korea. In that religio-political context, Protestantism rose as the ‘model religion,’ maintaining a high affinity with the political conditions of South Korean society.

The amplification of the social foundation of Protestantism under the United States Military Government (USMG, 1945-1948) and the Syngman Rhee government (1948-1960) greatly contributed to making Protestantism one of the mainstream religions in post-war Korea. The USMG in South Korea appointed to its bureaucratic posts many Korean Christians, particularly those who once studied in the United States,⁶³ and also gave preferential treatment to Protestant churches when disposing of “enemy property” (*Chōksan* 敵産) that Japanese colonizers had left behind (Institute of the History of Christianity 2009: 32-35). Protestantism soon became the ‘*de facto* state religion’ of the First Republic (1948-1960) (Kang 1997a, 1993a). The Rhee government whose higher circle was occupied by many Protestants not only allowed the Constitutional Assembly to begin with a prayer by Methodist minister Lee Yŏnyōng, but also treated Protestantism preferentially. 38% of 242 ministers and vice-ministers of the First Republic were Protestant believers, while the Protestant population vis-à-vis the total Korean population in the South did not even reach 5% at the time (Kang 1996: 162, 176-177).

⁶³ As of August 30th, 1945, the South Korean population was 19,190,877, while the total number of Protestant believers was about 100,000, which was 0.52% of the then entire population. However, among 11 Korean administrative advisors whom the USMG appointed on October 5th, 1945, 6 (55%) were Protestants including three pastors. Among the first 13 Korean directors appointed to departments of the military government by the USMG from December 1946 to August 1947, 7 (54%) were Protestants, all of whom had studied in the U.S.A. (Kang 1996: 175-176). Until the early 2000s, chaplains in the South Korean military were limited to Buddhists, Protestants, and Catholics.

After the Korean War (1950-1953), South Korea became one of the nations that fought against communism at the front lines of the American-led “free world.” Protestant churches earnestly internalized an anti-communist agenda such as “we must win the ‘holy war’ against the communist countries that do not recognize religion.” Together with other major and minor religions, Korean Protestantism greatly and systemically contributed to building an anti-communist state in the South. Protestants who had to defect to the South due to the establishment of an anti-religious socialist state in the North played a pivotal role in making Protestantism anti-communist (Kang 2007b: 513-567).⁶⁴

The anti-communist military governments, i.e. Park Chung-hee (r. 1961-1979) and Chun Doo-hwan (r. 1980-1988) regimes, attempted to justify its authoritarian rule through rapid economic development. The growth of Protestant churches in this period of “developmental dictatorship” (*Kaebal tokjae* 개발독재) was deeply related to its compressed style of the industrialization process that was accompanied by an ideology that equated modernity with Westernization. The aggressive modernization drive of the authoritarian regimes provoked urbanization and social polarization in South Korea. Such social changes suddenly uprooted most South Koreans from their rural village communities and their communal cultures so much so that many of them were confused and depressed in a new arid urban social environment. Protestant churches’ feverish religious rallies, in which traditional

⁶⁴ Young Nak Presbyterian Church founded in 1945 by Rev. Han Kyung-chik (韓景職, 1902-2000), the recipient of the 1992 Templeton Prize, and the Presbyterian Church of Korea, a.k.a the *T'onghab* denomination led by him and his colleagues, many of whom defected from the North after the 1945 liberation, are one of the groups that have most strongly internalized anti-communism in South Korea. In the aftermath of democratization in 1987, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK, *Han'guk kidokgyo kyohoe hyöbühoe* 한국기독교교회협의회), the then only national body of Korean Protestantism, officially declared at its thirty-seventh general assembly in 1988 that North Korea was no longer an enemy but fellow countrymen. Rev. Han and his colleagues opposed this change in the NCCCK and took the lead in the foundation of the Christian Council of Korea (CCK, *Han'guk kidokgyo ch'ong yönhap'oe* 한국기독교총연합회). Currently, the CCK is the largest Protestant organization and one of the groups that represents the right wing in today's South Korea (Kang 2007b: 280-296).

Shamanistic elements were syncretized, and their tight-knit ‘cell groups’ effectively offered the Korean populace a new sense of belonging, life orientation, and confidence and identity. Thus, by the end of the 1980s, Korean Protestantism accomplished an amazing religious feat – in 1945 the Protestant population was less than one percent against the entire population in the South, but within half a century one-fifth of the entire South Korean population became Protestant believers (Kim 2006c: 309-311, 318-325). The remarkable development of Protestantism has not just influenced other religions by showing how a religious institution maintains, organizes, and operates itself in modern secular society, especially in relation to the secular state, but also transformed the structure of the religious landscape by changing Koreans’ official conception of religion.

(3) The Re-construction of Religion in a Globalized Korea

Above, I pointed to the political imperative for the construction of religion in Korea in modern global society: The modern category of religion was accepted into Korea *in* the process in which Koreans embraced Western modernity in order to build a strong modern nation-state in the late nineteenth century, when Western imperial powers were ascendant in their colonization of East Asian nations (Jang 1992: 39-58). Korean modern and political elites believed that, by accepting modern knowledge and technologies from the West, the Korean nation could realize the two imperative purposes of national modernization – the “achievement of civilization” and the “establishment of national identity.” A good portion of enlightenment nationalists contended that religion was an important part of the new global world, which was necessary for Korea to transform into an independent and strong country. That positive idea of religion has been largely exemplified by the West-originated religion of

Christianity, particularly Protestantism, which was deemed an integral agent of the modern civilization. In the historical process of globalization through which Korea became its part in the twentieth century, religions in Korea and South Korea were greatly considered to be playing a constructive and comprehensive role in building and strengthening the Korean nation, by maintaining a civil society, fighting against Japanese colonialism, helping develop the public fields of education, medicine, and social welfare, opposing communism, consoling a Korean populace exhausted by rapid industrialization and urbanization, and even helping establish democracy (Buswell and Lee 2006).

At the turn of the new millennium, in what form, then, is that conception of religion constructed in a new South Korea? Has the notion of religion which first appeared in the late nineteenth century held consistent without any change? If not, how has the modern category of religion been re-formed or re-conceptualized in the nation-state? What political implications does the re-formation of Korean religion have in contemporary global society? In addition, what role do religion and religions play in forming an alternative modernity in present-day South Korea? I argue that given that the modern concept of religion was embraced as a part of a larger historical process of adopting Western modernity in the late Chosŏn Korea, the transformation of the nation's apprehension of modernity has had some impact on the Korean understanding of religion in the late-modern era.⁶⁵ The transformation of the notion of religion has significantly contributed to the dynamics of a multi-religious situation in the nation-state. In particular, the expansive structure of 'positive secularism' toward religion has helped mainline religions, i.e. the world religions, to have had a great impact on the formation of the notion of religion in the public sphere. On the other hand, that

⁶⁵ The form of Korean modernity in twentieth century, I contend, has changed from 'colonial modernity' under Japanese occupation to 'Cold War modernity,' and to 'Korean cultural modernity.'

construction of religion has constricted religious minorities and dissenters. In post-democratization South Korea, however, there has grown a national consensus that requires enhancing equality among religions. This change has been reflected in the political semantics toward religion (Baker 2006; Kang 2009a; Kendall 2009: 1-33).

Since the 1980s, critical changes have been observed in Koreans' view of modernity, which once unquestioningly accepted Western advanced societies as the model of modernizing Korea. A series of social changes, ranging from democratization,⁶⁶ globalization,⁶⁷ and the end of the Cold War, to continuous economic growth and radical development of communication and information technologies (CITs) and its related culture, are significant in changing the nation's 'modernity understanding' – the discursive construction of modern life.⁶⁸ These recent social developments have increasingly altered South Korea into a culturally diversified, politically liberal, and religiously novel society. These changes and developments have increasingly forced Koreans to seek a different form of making a nation-state.⁶⁹ The popular slogan "the most Korean, the most global" directly reflects this socio-political transformation (Tak 2000: 53).⁷⁰ In the previous chapter, I

⁶⁶ Kang In-Cheol argues that the more revitalized the election politics is in the newly democratized South Korea, the more 'the political importance of religion' increases (Kang 2002: 55).

⁶⁷ Although globalization or *segvehwa* in Korean is widely publicized as an ideology of the national development strategy under the Kim Young Sam administration (1993-1998), South Korea suffered from the economic depression known as "IMF era" from 1997 to 2001 as it had not hold back on the flow of global venture capital. Globalization here refers to the process in which the globe itself becomes a unit of social life (Robertson, 1992), and may be defined as a social process in which the core and periphery of global society interactively influence each other rather than just the core unilaterally impacting the periphery. Of course, the formation of religion as a global concept as well as a critical social sphere is a consequence of such a dialogical process in modern times (Beyer 2009).

⁶⁸ Song Hogūn suggested that 'democratization' (*minjuhwa* 민주화), 'globalization' (*chiguhwa* 지구화), and 'informatization' (*chōngbohwa* 정보화) are the three principal characteristics of the structural changes in today's South Korean society (Song 2004: 5-9).

⁶⁹ Shmuel Eisenstadt regards modernization or modernity as not singular but plural or multiple modernities. Since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, various regions of the world have practiced diverse levels, forms, and natures of the modern; Western modernization is very influential, but is in fact simply one of the modernities (Eisenstadt 2000).

⁷⁰ T'ak report that the slogan "the Most Korean, the Most Global" has appeared as the guideline of globalization in South Korea, and any Korean involved in the cultural industry ingeminates this ideology whenever she or he g

suggested that such a shift in understanding modernity has particularly centered around the three axes – the advance of democratization, the intensification of globalization, and the popularization of Korean cultural modernity.

The democratization of the Korean political system triggered a general institutional change in South Korean society. After students, workers, intellectuals, and other liberal and progressive citizens worked to end the military dictatorship, a great breakthrough in Korean democracy was finally achieved in June 1987.⁷¹ In the wake of June Democracy Movement, the Republic of Korea revised its constitution to include a direct election system. Along with the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, Koreans elected the first civilian president Kim Young Sam in 1992 after about thirty years of military rule (Koo 2007; Kim 2007d; Lee 2007b). In the rapid economic growth for which Korea earned the nickname “Asian Tiger economy,” various endeavours for development based more on indigenous cultural elements have increased in the renewed Asian democracy. Such rising discourses and phenomena as “Asian Values,”⁷² “Confucian modernity,” and “Korean Wave”⁷³ have reflected Koreans’ passion to formulate an alternative modernity to that of the West.

ives an interview to the media. The globalization of the ‘Korean style’ has been the direction to make movie or product (*Ibid.* 64-76)

⁷¹ ‘June Democracy Movement’ refers to the anti-dictatorial democracy movement which occurred nation-wide in South Korea from June 10 to June 29th, 1987. It led to the direct presidential elections in 1987 and also the transition of the Sixth Republic in 1988. After reviving a direct presidential election system by the revision of the constitution in the aftermath of the June Democracy Movement, Koreans directly elected the first civilian president in 1992 after the military dictatorships that began in 1961. Since then, various programs to reform South Korean society have proceeded (Yun 1997: 108-143).

⁷² Similar to the significant role of the Protestant ethic in the early development of European capitalism, Confucian cultural elements – “kin culture” in Samuel P. Huntington’s word to signify the strong attachment to family, corporation, and/or nation – have played an important role in developing national societies in East and South Asia, e.g. Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. However, this area of world’s major religious tradition should not be understood as being univocal. When the former prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, attempted to appropriate “Asian Values” as a fundamental prop of his regime, he was challenged by the former president Kim Dae-jung of South Korea and Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan. Kim insisted that Lee Kuan Yew’s version of Asian values was little more than a self-serving excuse for authoritarian rule and devoted two pages to citing Confucian and neo-Confucian tenets that supported democracy and legitimated dissent (Stepan 2001: 229-232).

⁷³ The “Korean Wave” (*Hallyu* 한류) or “Korea fever” refers to the global popularity of South Korean popular culture. The term was coined in China in mid-1999 by Beijing journalists surprised by the fast growing

The category of religion, which was deemed a 'symbol of modern civilization' during the Japanese colonial and Cold War eras, has been re-signified with the socio-political change in post-1980s South Korea. The transition of the nation-state to the 'new modernity' resorting to its own cultural heritage and regional resources in proposing alternatives to 'Western-centrism' has increasingly caused a conceptual transformation of religion. Again, such a reconstruction of religion refers to the transformation of a late modern social environment that surrounds Korean religion and religions. Therefore, the key advocates of the changed notion of religion can be found among the 'new generations' that aim for native, alternative, or multiple modernities rather than the people who are on terms of intimacy with the 'past modernity' whose method of building Korean nation is based on the ideas of the foreign, especially Western, model of development, anti-communism, and economy-centrism.

The religious system can influence the re-conceptualization of religion in the public sphere through the structural couplings with such other differentiated societal systems as politics, laws, educational, and mass media (Luhmann 2004: 381-422, 2000: 63-70, 1995: 210-254). Yet religion and religions primarily perform the role in forming and re-forming the official notion of religion, by just being observed by those secular communicative institutions in their respective functional perspectives. For instance, contemporary South Koreans recognize and publicly discuss these religious phenomena: the Korean Christian Right and fundamentalists displeased at the liberalization and democratization of South Korea have mobilized themselves to reverse the political reformation and progress; Taejonggyo, Chondogyo, and Shamanism, which were once called 'pseudo-religions' or 'superstitious'

popularity of South Korean popular culture and South Korean goods in China, e.g. Korean pop music, Korean soap operas, Korean films, Korean food, and Korean fashion, hairstyles, and even plastic surgery. While popular throughout Asia, it is reported that the Korean Wave's influence is most visible in China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, spreading to India and Pakistan, the Middle East, Central Asia, Kurdistan, Turkey, and Russia. A series of critical Korean scholars interpreted the Korean wave as a product of globalization and also an example of capitalistic consuming culture in late-modern Asia (Cho-Han et al. 2003).

during the Japanese colonial era and the military dictatorial era, are no longer located within those notions of ‘superstition’ and/or ‘abnormal’ religion; and, such religious minorities as Jehovah’s Witnesses have conducted a series of socio-political campaigns in order for them to be recognized as a ‘normal’ religion. Outside the religious system these religious phenomena may be observed as not only conflicts, debates, enmities, confusions, and tensions, but also exemplary consequences of the political progress of South Korea. Here is not the best place to describe the transformation within the religious system any further, but I wish to mention that the democratization and related political reformations since the late 1980s have made the Korean political system observe the changing religion system from a new perspective.

Secular liberalists, progressive ideologues, and critical activists, in particular, who have a sense of intimacy with the ‘multiple’ and ‘diverse’ interpretations of ‘modern life’ have increasingly come to find religion to be a significant obstacle to the project of ‘nation rebuilding’ in order to fit with the new democratic post-Cold War era. In their politically defined eyes, religion and religions are closely related to the ‘past modernity,’ particularly the ideological structure of the Cold War system (Kang 2009a: 34-39; Kim 2006c). What has been extensively increasing regarding religion in the democratized public sphere of South Korea is an “anti-religious perception,” based on the idea that political conflicts and social divisions caused by religious differences or reasons, or simply “religious pollution,” crucially obstructs the realization of the new modernization of the national society.⁷⁴ In fact, the anti-religious conception has always been in modern Korea since the acceptance of the term religion. Secular enlightenment intellectuals during the Opening Era (Jang 1992: 41-47), both socialists and socialistic nationalists during the Japanese colonial era (Korea Institute for

⁷⁴ Pak Kwangsö, a joint representative of the Korea Institute for Religious Freedom (KIRF, *Chonggyo chayu chöngch’aek yön’guwön* 종교자유정책연구원, www.kirf.or.kr), contends that in the public sphere of South Korea, there are many cases of religious discrimination that can be called “religious pollution” (*Chonggyo konghae* 종교공해), so that it is urgent to secure religious neutrality in that public sphere (Pak 2008).

Religion and Culture 1998: 335-341, 378-383), anti-religious North Korean communists and revolutionaries after the 1945 liberation (Kim and Ryu 2002), and anti-governmental student and political circles in the 1970s and 80s (Jang 1992: 99-105), all observed religion as an undeniable obstacle to building and reforming the Korean nation. Yet this anti-religious conception was never constructed as an unconditional objection to the religious system, but rather as a social criticism to religious traditions and organizations that, beyond the differentiated field of religion, interfere in the secular public sphere of the modern society. Thus, it was never their intention to consider religion as the ‘primary enemy’ against the ‘genuine completion’ of Korean nation in modern global world, while modern Japanese and Chinese, especially their political elites, have remained largely suspicious about the possibility of religion disrupting national integration and threatening public security.

However, concern about religion has increased extensively in the secular public sphere of late-modern South Korea. The success of democratization accompanied by steady economic growth since the late 1980s has triggered the nation’s desire for a new form of modernity that is built on a reunited Korean nation, one that fully secures human rights, is culturally diversified, and is respectful of various minorities.⁷⁵ Whether or not religion contributes to the ‘ultimate’ project of nation re-building in today’s global society has become increasingly questionable, as religion has arisen as one of the most critical causes of social

⁷⁵ Examples of this observation are: for reunification of the nation, Kim Dae-jung (r. 1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (r. 2003-2008) from the South and Kim Jong Il (r. 1994-) from the North held summit meetings in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, in June 2000 and in September 2007 respectively, and adopted the “North-South Joint Declarations” that concerned principles and methods for the independent and peaceful reunification of the Korean nation; as for human rights and multiculturalism, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (www.humanrights.co.kr) was established in 2001 as a national advocacy institution for human rights protection. It is committed to the fulfillment of human rights in a broader sense, including dignity, value and freedom of every human being, as signified in international human rights conventions and treaties to which Korea is a signatory; regarding the minorities issue, in May 2006, the government of South Korea announced the Charter of Culture that suggested “all citizens ... should have equal rights that without any discrimination by religion and the like, they create culture, participate in cultural activities, [and] enjoy culture. ... Religious minorities and minor groups including sexual minorities should not be coerced into cultural identity opposing his/her own intention (Kang 2009a: 33).”

divisions and conflicts in South Korea. The question about religion as a possible source of global violence, e.g. ‘clash of civilizations theory’ (Huntington 1998), has helped formulate a public doubt that religion may take a sectarian, but not ‘patriotic’, position on the nation’s continuous development in the twenty-first century. In today’s South Korea, there exists a growing concern that socio-political conflicts and clashes triggered by religious causes can undermine the formation of alternative modernities that leads to the establishment of a complete and united nation-state in the Korean peninsula.

On the other hand, the ongoing growth of the Korean religious population, especially Catholic adherents, seems to disprove the thesis of the popularization of a negative religious perception in the politically charged public sphere of contemporary South Korea. The chart below displays the change in religious affiliation for the twenty-year period between 1985 and 2005:

<Table 1> Religious Population in South Korea from 1985 to 2005

| | 1985 | | 1995 | | 2005 [†] | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------|------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Population | Rate | Population | Rate | Population | Rate |
| Total Population | 40,419,652 | 100.00% | 44,553,710 | 100.00% | 47,041,434 | 100.00% |
| Religious Population | 17,203,296 | 42.56% | 22,597,824 | 50.72% | 24,970,766 | 53.08% |
| Buddhism | 8,059,624 | 19.94% | 10,321,012 | 23.27% | 10,726,463 | 22.80% |
| Protestantism | 6,489,282 | 16.05% | 8,760,336 | 19.66% | 8,616,438 | 18.32% |
| Catholicism | 1,865,397 | 4.62% | 2,950,730 | 6.62% | 5,146,147 | 10.93% |
| Confucianism | 483,366 | 1.20% | 210,927 | 0.47% | 104,575 | 0.22% |
| Other Religions | 305,267 | 0.75% | 354,819 | 0.79% | 379,143 | 0.8% |
| No Religious Affiliation | 23,216,356 | 57.44% | 21,953,315 | 49.27% | 21,865,160 | 46.48% |

[†] The number of “the unknown” (205,508; 0.43%) in 2005 is not included in the chart. (Statistics Korea 2006)

These government statistics shows that the population of Protestants, which was known to take the lead in the construction of religion as both ‘conception’ and ‘market’ in contemporary South Korea, decreased for the ten-year period between 1995 and 2005. This is

the first ‘minus growth’ in the history of Protestantism in South Korea, which is very meaningful in my account. These government statistics on religions in South Korea also reveals the critical fact that, although the population of “no religious affiliation” has shrunk by approximately 11% for the twenty-year period, about half of the entire Korean population (46.48%) is still not affiliated with any religion. From some perspective, these statistical facts seem to prove a continuation of ‘lack of religiosity’ or ‘popularized non-religiosity’ in the country now. However, if one takes a closer look at these statistics *within* the entire Korean religious landscape, it becomes clear that this relatively higher ratio of ‘non-believers’ cannot be used as sheer evidence for the vulnerability of religiosity (Kang 1997b). Rather, it shows the extent to which contemporary South Koreans refuse exclusive belonging either to a particular religious organization that demands steadfast loyalty or a worldview that takes priority over all else.⁷⁶ In my account, what these statistics most meaningfully indicate is a regression of social confidence in not only the established notion of religion that informs ‘differentiated and proselytizing religion’ not corresponding with the nation’s public interests, but also the very religious organizations that represent such a conception of religion. In particular, the decline in the leading role of Protestantism clearly demonstrates a general fall in public confidence in Protestantism. I already mentioned above that Protestantism, which was once deemed a symbol of ‘modern civilization’ in modern Korea, has since the late 1980s been increasingly regarded as an obstacle to the alternative development of the Korean nation,

⁷⁶ Regardless of whether they have exclusive membership to a specific religion or not, Koreans are by and large religious. That an individual is not an adherent to a specific religious organization cannot be definitively interpreted to mean that s/he is not religious. According to the Gallup surveys, more than ninety percent of Koreans perform ancestral rites. Though they are not genuine adherents, a good number of Koreans sometimes visit Buddhist temples, go to Catholic Mass, or visit Protestant churches. Performing exorcism (*kut* 乩), practicing divination (*chōm* 점), choosing an auspicious day for special events like marriage, asking a fortune-teller about marital compatibility, figuring out geomancy, and so on are prevalent in contemporary Korea, even flourishing in cyber space specifically. Religious desire and belief are largely fulfilled without religious belonging in late-modern Korea (Kim 2008).

to the extent that it is even called “dog-Christianity (*kaedokgyo* 개독교)” (Kim 2006c: 325-327).⁷⁷

In twentieth century Korea, Protestantism influenced other religions in such a way that it defined the role of religion in modern secular society.⁷⁸ Contrary to Catholicism, which produced many martyrs in its beginnings in the Korea of the eighteenth century (Kim 1996: 212-220), Protestantism got off to a smooth start, and, as the model of ‘modern religion,’ has most well represented the modern notion of religion in modern Korea (Jang 2000: 216-218, 1999b: 256-261). In the 1970s and 80s, Protestantism rapidly grew, helping Korea’s democratization and social development (Chang 2006; Park 2003: 171-199) as well as offering a ‘modern direction for life’ such as ‘positive thinking’ to Koreans who suffered a sense of deprivation in the middle of radical industrialization and urbanization (Kim 2006c: 319-325). In democratized South Korea, however, freethinkers, critical intellectuals, social reformers, and so forth have criticized the ‘fortune-first,’ ‘a-historical,’ ‘otherworldly oriented,’ and ‘individualist’ characteristics of Korean Protestantism, in particular their conservative, evangelical, and/or Pentecostal forms (Lee 2006b: 340-345).

As South Korea has increasingly become liberalized since the end of the Cold War and the democratization of the 1990s, such criticism and negative perceptions of Protestantism have been extensively disseminated in the public sphere of South Korea (Choe

⁷⁷ Christianity is translated into the Korean term *kidokgyo* 기독교. Although Christianity (*kidokgyo*) largely includes Protestant (*kaesingyo* 개신교), the Roman Catholic (*ch’ŏnjugyo* 천주교), and the Orthodox churches (*chŏnggyohoe* 정교회), Korean Protestants often call their religion *kidokgyo* (Christianity) but not *kaesingyo* (Protestantism). Maybe influenced by this, South Koreans in general tend to think that Christianity equals Protestantism. By replacing ‘ki’ of *kidokgyo* with ‘kae,’ which means ‘dog,’ South Korean objectors to Protestantism coined a new term *kaedokgyo*, although they do not usually object to the Roman Catholic church and the Orthodox tradition, two different Christian traditions.

⁷⁸ The ‘syncretism’ between Christianity and indigenous religions is not an uncommon phenomenon in the Third World. Refer to Cox, Harvey. 1994. *Fire from the Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company and Martin, David. 2002. *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Oxford: Blackwell.

2007; Lee 2006b). Since the 2000s, the public image of Protestantism as a ‘civilized religion’ (*munmyōng chonggyo*) or a ‘universal religion’ has completely disappeared, as it has come to be directly connected with critical socio-political issues and scandals. Some examples are Korean Protestants’ excessive missionary work in the Islamic world that engendered the nation’s diplomatic policy and also put fellow Koreans in danger of international terrorism,⁷⁹ forced religious education that suppresses students’ freedom of religion in Protestant-affiliated educational institutions, mainstream Protestantism’s overwhelming support for anti-communist conservative forces and far-right groups (Roh 2005: 283-288; Ryu 2004a),⁸⁰ many schisms among Protestant churches and denominations, and its religiously closed stance that engenders a clash between religions nationally and globally. All of these show that Protestantism does not harmonize the rights of fellow Koreans who believe in other religions or have no religion. From the perspective of critical civil society, Protestantism is no longer the subject of modern civilization that saves and develops the Korean nation in the late-modern global context, but has become the object of careful supervision of the state institutions and civil society.⁸¹

⁷⁹ South Korea is not only the country with the largest ratio of Protestant population vis-à-vis the entire population in Asia, but also ranked as the second in the world after the U.S.A in sending missionaries abroad. However, many South Koreans, particularly non-Christians and non-religionists, are unhappy about this fact, especially when South Korean ‘missionaries’ become the example of the ‘clash of civilization.’ For June to August 2007, 23 South Korean ‘short-term’ missionaries were kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan. South Koreans were mostly angry at the hostages rather than sympathizing with their countrymen because they decided to travel to such a dangerous region despite South Korean government warnings, and eventually made the nation spend a lot of resources to rescue them (Choe 2007).

⁸⁰ On December 19th, 2007, breaking off the currents of localization, democratization, and liberalization of South Korea over the last twenty years, Mr. Lee Myung-bak, the conservative who was known as a devout Protestant, was elected the president of the Republic of Korea with full support of Korean conservative Protestants. He is an ‘elder’ of Somang Presbyterian Church in Seoul.

⁸¹ Civic society in post-democratization South Korea has actively offered the critical opinion that ‘freedom of religion’ should be replaced by the new social agenda of ‘equality of religion.’ Some exemplary civic groups focusing on religious issues include the Solidarity for Enactment of Religious Corporate Law (*Chogyo pōbinpōp chejōng ch’ujin simin yōntae* 종교법인법제정추진시민연대, <http://www.rnlaw.co.kr>), the Korea Institute for Religious Freedom (*Chongyo chayu chōngch’aek yōn’guwōn* 종교자유정책연구원, <http://www.kirf.or.kr>), the Solidarity for Freedom of Religious Criticism (*Chongyo pip’an chayu silhyōn simin yōndae* 종교비판자유실현시민연대, <http://www.gigabon.com>).

The increase in critical concern about religion is not restricted to Protestantism. The decline of public credibility in other religious traditions such as Buddhism and Catholicism has expanded as well. The recent success of the political mobilization of anti-communist, conservative Protestant forces has become an important factor in facilitating the politicization of Buddhism, which is in a competitive relationship with Christian religions, especially Protestant churches. Consequently, the ‘clash of religions’ has been deemed one of the most important and negative determinants in post-democratization politics in South Korea. The impressive growth of the Catholic population has been deemed as a result of its contribution to democratization and social development, its efforts of naturalization, its image as the religion of highly educated people, and so forth. However, ceaseless criticism has also been raised regarding its sexism, conservatism, and authoritative structure, all of which do not fit the liberal milieu of contemporary South Korea (Kang 2007b: 17-27). The religious liberty and human rights of religious minorities and even non-believers are known to be frequently ignored in this religio-political context in which the government of South Korea has treated Protestantism, Catholicism, and Buddhism as ‘*de facto* official religions’ which enjoy a lot of ‘unfair’ benefits such as tax exemption, government chaplains, and religious education (Kang 2009a: 34-39). All the debates, conflicts, and criticisms surrounding the field of religion have engendered a great national suspicion that religions will not contribute to the new development of the Korean nation in contemporary global society, but may only take a parochial stance to it. Thus, the view that sees religion as an unstoppable source of social problems disturbing the nation’s reformation process has been greatly popularized in today’s South Korea, in particular its liberal and critical civil society.

4. Concluding Remarks: The Convergence of the Religious Idea in East Asia

The term 'religion' was originally invented in the context of the disenchantment in Western Christendom, and was gradually disseminated to other parts of the world in the dialogical process through which the European colonialists encountered natives of the non-Western world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the modern category of religion, there are cumulated elements that are descended from the modern heritage and experience that ranges from the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation, to the rise of nation-states, colonialism, and the globalization of Christian religions.

In the nineteenth century, the three Asian nations of China, Japan, and Korea all accepted from the West the modern notion of religion that had the Christianity as its implicit model. However, what was different among the three East Asian states was the *form* in which each used and appropriated the term religion in building their respective modern nations, preserving 'national culture,' and abolishing or rehabilitating indigenous religious traditions. In Japan and China, the term religion was by and large deemed a 'suspicious' or 'negative' category that would disturb their nation-building processes in modern global society. Thus, active participation in the global religious system has been extensively regarded as sabotaging the modernization of the Chinese nation, especially the socialist nation building in contemporary China. Since State Shinto has become an official system of national morality or public ethics in which all citizens of Japan should have participated regardless of their individual religious membership, 'exclusive' religious affiliation was deemed 'dangerous' for Japan to ensure its unity and security before 1945. Contemporary Japanese and Chinese political elites remain reluctant to use the label of 'religion' to identify representative national tradition, culture, and/or identity, regardless of whether they practice some kind of religious

life as ‘Confucian,’ ‘Buddhist,’ or ‘Shintoist,’ because this modern category was nationally regarded as being too close to ‘foreign,’ ‘sectarian,’ or even sometimes ‘pre-modern.’

Unlike the cases of Japan and China, a good portion of modernizing intellectuals and leading politicians considered religion to be a requisite that could save the Korean nation in crisis in early-modern and colonial Korea. In the pro-religious milieu, Christianity as the model of religion, along with Buddhism, grew remarkably in South Korea in the latter half of the twentieth century. The category of religion has played a pivotal role in forming Korean civil society, while a variety of political powers and factions have positively tried to use major and minor religious organizations for their own agenda and purposes. By the late twentieth century, religion and religions had been largely understood as one of the indispensable elements in constructing the Korean nation in the modern world. Therefore, the label of religion in the case of modern Korea, unlike in China and Japan, was a useful symbol to show one’s loyalty to ‘our nation’ under the oppression of Japanese colonialism as well as to secure citizenship in the South that ‘fought’ vestiges of pre-modernity and atheist North Korean communists. The ‘religious problem,’ therefore, came to belong to such subaltern categories of ‘heresy,’ ‘superstition,’ and ‘evil religion.’

However, since the success of democratization in 1987, religious organizations have been increasingly perceived as no longer leaders of the modernization of the nation-state, but rather as obstacles in the construction of a new modernity that is more based on indigenous, national, and/or regional resources in the new global era. In late-modern South Korea, social discourse on religion is being increasingly re-constructed in such a way as to see it as one of the significant sources of social problems that the national society must overcome in the age of the “clash of civilizations.” The three major religions – Protestantism, Catholicism, and Buddhism – have been a common target of ‘public’ criticism in the current laissez-faire

milieu of post-democratization South Korea. Protestantism in particular, the one-time model of 'modern' or 'civilized' religion, has become a target of everyday public criticism. Therefore, current South Korean political elites and public figures, particularly liberal and left-wing ones, tend to not recognize or imagine the nation's cultural heritage as 'religion.' It even seems that the new social meaning of religion in the public sphere of late-modern South Korea has some analogy to those of Chinese and Japanese societies.

To crystallize the complexities of such rising anxiety about religion in post-democratization South Korea, in the next chapter I will take a closer look at how the public discourse of religion is constructed and reconstructed in the legal, educational, and mass media systems of twentieth century Korea.

CHAPTER THREE

The Re-formation of the Korean Notion of Religion in the Legal System

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the fact that not only had the generic category of religion never existed in Korea before it opened its ports to the West in the nineteenth century, but also the term religion or *chonggyo* 宗教 was introduced to Korea from the West in the course of adopting Western modern knowledge and technologies. The notion of religion has changed in the process through which Korea has become part of modern global society, and the re-formation of the concept of religion has assumed a conflictive nature. The modern communicative field of law has reflected and responded to such change in the religious idea, particularly its accompanying conflictual process. The differentiated legal system has contributed to constructing and re-constructing the ‘official’ conception of religion in the public sphere of globalized Korean society.

The legal conception of religion is formed in the constitutive process of the legal system. According to Luhmann (2004), the modern system of law maintains a unique set of communicative elements that self-referentially produce and re-produce itself, e.g. its own code, function, and programs. Regarding religion and religions, the modern legal system is more concerned with such themes as freedom of religion and separation of religious organizations from state institutions. The legal system of modern Korea has constitutionalized both religious liberty and separation of religion and politics (Song 2006b). To understand the construction of religion in the legal system, it is important to recognize that while laws and various legal regulations define the category of religion at the structural level of the legal system, legal arguments of judges, legislators, or other legal authorities take part in

constructing the legal semantics of religion. That structural and semantic conceptualization of religion has in turn reflected and influenced the religious landscape of modern Korea.

This chapter examines the notion of religion and its possible change in the legal system of modern Korea. From the Luhmannian perspective, I will first consider theoretical issues in relation to the legal system as a distinctive field of communication that officiates liberty for religion as well as regulates religious individuals and groups in modern secular society. Then, I will look into the historical construction of the legal notion of religion in twentieth century Korea, in terms of its structural and semantical transformation. Finally, I will examine its re-construction since the late 1980s.

1. The Modern Legal System on Religion and Religions

Regarding the functionality of this chapter in this dissertation, I want to indicate that, in comparison to chapter two, which is intended to bring a more synchronic perspective to the Korean appropriation of religion *within* the East Asian context as a local manifestation of the global construction of religion, this chapter is focused upon the longitudinal and diachronic change in the legal conception of religion *from* early-modern *to* late-modern Korea. I would like to begin this chapter by elaborating on theoretical issues of the modern legal system, especially in relation to how religion is conceptualized in the Korean legal system.

The modern legal system operates beyond geographical and political limitations with the help of its globally applicable code and programs. Laws, regulations, and courts are the legal channels in which legal communication can happen and continue around the binary “legal/illegal” or “lawful/unlawful” code. The judicial communications are the primary loci in which a legal conception of religion is formed in the legal system. On the one hand, if it is

classified as being ‘illegal’ within the legal system, a religious tradition or organization tends to be excluded from the official category of religion constructed in other parts of the public sphere of modern Korea.⁸² On the other hand, since it is structurally coupled with its social environment, how the societal system of law defines religion may be influenced by the condition of the surrounding social environment such as the political and religious systems. That is, the operation of the legal system toward religion can assume variable forms in accordance with cultural, historical, and ideological particularities of the Korean society.

How, then, has the modern form of the legal system emerged today? Before modern times, human societies were ordered mainly according to differences between social segments or strata, or the geographical distance from of the core of political power. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the European Christendom began to undergo an unprecedented historical process called ‘secularization’ – the extensive and overwhelming diffusion of functional differentiation in the society at large; thus, Western societies largely became disenchanted with the omni-directional and hierarchical religious power of the Roman Catholic Church. Beyond the Western world, the prime principle of social configuration for modern global society is placed on different functions that each societal system such as politics, the economy, and religion fulfills for the entire society (Casanova 1994; Gauchet 1997: 162 ff.; Luhmann 2012; Martin 1979).

The rise of the modern society initiated a specialized societal system that exclusively performed a legal function. The modern legal system is a sub-societal system of global communication that consists of laws and various legal decisions that can distinguish legal

⁸² Chung Chin Hong points to the fact that when it was imported through Japan from the West in the late nineteenth century, the term ‘religion’ was alien to Koreans, and did not fully incorporate their religious expressions and experiences. It has normatively excluded the religious experiences without a doctrinal clarity as well as the consequences of inter-religious acculturation in modern Korea (Chung 2007). The religions or religious phenomena, which were not recognized as ‘religion,’ i.e. ‘legal religion,’ in the legal system, were classified as ‘illegal religion,’ i.e. ‘evil religion,’ ‘pseudo-religion,’ or ‘superstition,’ in Korea before the 1980s.

communications and those that are not. Rather than taking sides in debates on ‘justice’ and ‘equality’ within the legal system, Luhmann recognizes that the only consistent *norm* is to be found in the function of the legal system. With its own programs such as constitution, positive laws, and judges operating around its distinctive values of “lawful and unlawful,” the function of modern legal system is *maintaining the normative expectation* in the society, by preventing and handling a variety of human conflicts and crises. It does this by translating those conflicts and crises into the form of legal decisions, which are often enforced subsequently through the political system. If the legal system fails to perform this function, the other function systems would find themselves unable to perform their own historically acquired functions which allow modern society to exist.

Regarding religion, therefore, the legal system extends to all those communications related to legal suitability or unsuitability of religion. Based on the distinction legal/illegal, the legal system applies its programs, e.g. laws, ordinances, regulations, and courts, to determine the legality or illegality of religious individuals or organizations. What the laws and legal decisions intend has to be interpreted through the court system. To be constituted as a legally accepted religious exercise, the religious activity should be determined as being ‘legal’ with reference to the laws. The constitution is a governing legal program that sets out a series of legal principles on religion, e.g. religious freedom, equality of religion, and separation of religion and state.⁸³ Based on the laws, religions may secure their rights to have freedom to

⁸³ What, then, are the Korean characteristics of those legal principles? From the perspective of American experience, Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox developed a typology of the relationship between ‘church and state.’ According to them, the constitutional guarantee of religion in the U.S. Constitution can be divided into four positions: the accommodationist and separationist approaches on the establishment clause and the communalist and libertarian positions on the free exercise provision. The “accommodationist” approach reads the establishment clause in a narrow view, setting out that although government cannot help out particular religions, it may support religions at large, while the “separationist” position attempts to maximize the separation of church and state in a way that limits religion to the private sphere. On the other hand, the “communalist” type understands that government may not single out religion from valid and neutral laws so that religious organizations are not exempt from state laws and regulations, while the “libertarian” approach supports that

pursue and proselytize what they believe. The constitutional principles justify the application of the laws and legal decisions to religions in order to determine whether their religious activities are legal or illegal.

The legal notion of religion is constructed in the process through which the laws and legal decisions are produced and interpreted toward religion and religions. The contextualization of the constitutional ideas on religion is the place in which the understanding of religion is crystallized in the legal system. For example, some religious practices such as *kut*, i.e. Korean Shamanic rituals, or religious education in secondary schools either can legally be allowed and protected on grounds of religious liberty or can be prohibited on grounds of ‘demoralization’ or separation of church and state. While laws, legal regulations, and court composition together constitute the structure of the legal system, the semantical construction of the legal system consists of court decisions and other legal arguments and expressed meanings. In order to understand the structural conception of religion in the Korean legal system, I will mainly focus on how the laws and legal decisions are constructed in dealing with religions and/or religious issues in the history of modern

religious belief and practice are accorded protection against laws (Jelen and Wilcox 1997). It seems that the accommodationist and libertarian positions better fit the pattern of “passive secularism,” whereas the “assertive secularism” shows a conceptual affinity with “separationist” and “communalist” types. I argue that among Jelen and Wilcox’s four types of the church-state relationship, the legal construction of official religion(s) in contemporary South Korea is closest to Kuru’s pattern of passive secularism that has an affinity with the accommodationist and libertarian types.

Peter W. Edge’s *Religion and Law: Introduction* (2006) offers an overall view on how judicial discussions take place in relation to religious differences, in particular across Anglophone jurisdictions. Stephen M. Feldman’s *Law and Religion* (2000) brings together a series of different ideas relating to religion and law in the American context from the perspective of the ‘role of religion’ in forming modern liberal democracy. Contributors to this anthology approach the related issues in a way that protects religious minorities, but do not reach a definite consensus. For example, Steven D. Smith in “Religious Freedom in America: Three Stories” contends that religion and law in the U.S.A are best seen as a product of three different stories: the separationist “standard story,” the “Palace Coup story” that disestablishment has only replaced ‘orthodoxy’ with another sort of ‘orthodoxy,’ and finally the “Tower of Babel story” that the constitution encapsulates the ‘empire of reason’ to which the Enlightenment aspires. From the viewpoint of “Tower of Babel,” Robert Audi in “The Place of Religious Argument in a Free and Democratic Society” contends that religion takes part in the public sphere but cannot stand alone, and ethical and political positions may be justified by religious beliefs or dogmas but should also be justified by secular ideas.

Korea. As for the semantic construction of religion, I will investigate legal arguments or discussions on religion made by judges or other principal legal practitioners or decision makers. To comprehend both the structural and semantic conceptions of religion in the Korean legal system, it is important to recognize cultural and historical peculiarities of the context in which religious persons, organizations, and activities are determined to be legal or illegal.

In the perspective of multiple modernities,⁸⁴ cultural heritages, historical trajectories, and socio-political conditions all contribute to *how* modern society is formulated and re-formulated (Beaman 2003a; Eisenstadt 2000). In accordance with Eisenstadt's view on multiple forms of modernity, José Casanova notices different religio-cultural contexts as determining factors in producing differences in the conception of religion, particularly that of 'free exercise of religion':

“[O]ne may speak of a growing global consensus over the principle of free exercise of religion. Yet, it should be obvious that Christian and Jews, Hindus and Muslim may have very different cultural conceptions of what the free exercise of religion may entail. Increasingly, Christians understand this principle as an inalienable individual human right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of conversion and to freedom to proselytize. This is the taken for granted cultural understanding of the term, religious liberty, by most people, religious as well as secular, in most Western societies. Jews and Hindus, by contrast, who share a cultural conception of their religion as natal, namely one into which one is born, have a very different understanding of the principle of free exercise, as the right and duty to preserve their tradition, and have less appreciation for the right of conversion, i.e., to be “born again,” or for the right to proselytize. Muslims have a deep appreciation for the fundamental right to exercise their own religion freely, without any external coercion, but show very little cultural

⁸⁴ Eisenstadt and his collaborators argue that “the core of multiple modernities lies in assuming the existence of culturally specific forms of modernity shaped by distinct cultural heritages and sociopolitical conditions. These forms will continue to differ in their value systems, institutions, and other factors. For example, structural differentiation is a typical feature in the institutions of modern societies, ranging from family patterns to socioeconomic institutions and mass communication. Differentiated structures, modes of openness, and ways of questioning the basic premises vary greatly, however, across cultures and historical periods. Unique forms of modernity are created by different activities and social movements that hold distinct views of what makes a society modern” (Eisenstadt, Riedel, Sachsenmaier 2002: 1).

understanding, much less support, for the right to conversion away from Islam[.] ... [T]he majority of Chinese have no religious affiliation, do not belong to any religious denomination, and in this sense have “no religion.” But this does not mean that they may not be deeply “religious.” Indeed on any given day they may have offered prayers or practiced rituals of various “religious” traditions indiscriminately” (Casanova 2009: 4-5).

Recognizing Casanova’s description on the differing forms of conceptualizing religious liberty corresponding to religio-cultural differences, I suggest that Korea’s traditional culture, geopolitical location, and degree of modern development have all been considerable factors in shaping and re-shaping the contours of the Korean legal construction of religion (Choi 1983; Korea Institute for Religion and Society ed. 1991). That is, in Luhmannian social systems perspective, Korea’s religio-social context is critical in constructing religion in the nation’s legal structure and semantics, because it may influence how the legal system is differentiated from the surrounding social environment.

The closure of a differentiated societal system from the outside environment operates as a premise to open itself to other communicative systems. Through the structural coupling, the sub-societal systems of society affect each other. For example, the legal system can influence the religious system, by producing a legal definition of religion that can work for or against specific religions. Other societal systems such as the political and religious systems can influence the process of constructing the legal structure and semantics on religion. For example, such political programs as governments or political parties can influence the legal construction of religion, by legislating specific laws and regulations on religion. The religious system can influence the operation of the legal system in the way in which a religiously minded judge can interpret laws for or against specific religions by applying certain

‘theological’ view.⁸⁵ However, the religious and legal systems do not interfere with the operation of the legal system in that legal programs only operate around the legal/illegal code. The development of the legal system has reinforced the ‘self-reference’ to the inherent code and function of the legal system. The evolution of a society has increasingly allowed the legal carriers and practitioners to remain aloof from ‘non-legal’ activities in the legal system. Regardless of how much the other societal systems influence the legal system, religious groups or activities are primarily defined as ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ in the legal system. It is only ‘law’ that decides what is ‘lawful’ and ‘unlawful’, regardless of the motives or intentions of the lawmakers and legal interpreters (King and Thornhill 2003: 38; Luhmann 2004).

In the next section, based on the theoretical discussions presented above, I will describe how the category of religion has been contextualized in the legal system of modern Korea. One may expect that the Korean legal system on religion and religions has developed in structural conjunction with other differentiated societal systems such as political and religious systems. I will focus on describing the change in the legal notion of religion in terms of its structure and semantics.

2. The Legal Construction of Religion in Modern Korea

The above theoretical presentation offers a few important points that should be considered in order to examine the conception of religion in the Korean legal system. First, the modern legal system has a self-referential mechanism for producing and re-producing itself; second, the conceptual boundary of religion in the legal system can be drawn in

⁸⁵ Practicing Shamanistic ritual was illegal in South Korea in the 1970s, because it was widespread ‘theology’ to take ‘world religion’ as the standard of religion. Since Shamanism has no hierarchy and shamans communicate with gods and spirits directly, there is always the danger that it will introduce destabilizing elements into society as well that cannot be controlled.

multiple modes according to various cultural and ideological conditions; and third, the legal notion of religion is contextualized in the *secular* form in many modern societies. How, then, have these theoretical suggestions been actualized in Korean society? As Korea has advanced a differentiation of the legal system, the legality or illegality of a religion has been more and more determined in accordance with the autonomy of the legal system, being less and less influenced by other societal systems, especially the political and religious systems.

Bearing in mind these characteristics, I will examine the structural and semantic change in the legal construction of religion throughout Korea's modern history. According to changes in how Korea is incorporated into modern global society, the legal transformation of 'religion' can be divided into the four historical periods – the early modern era that opened Korea's ports to the West (from the latter nineteenth century to 1905/10), the Japanese colonial period (from 1905/10 to 1945), the Cold War era (from 1945 to 1987/1992), and the democratization era (from 1987 to now). This section of the chapter concerns the legal formation and re-formation of religion during the first three periods from the latter nineteenth century to the late 1980s.

(1) The Opening Era: The Introduction of the Category of Religion into a Confucian Kingdom

The turn of the twentieth century was a transitional period through which Korea in earnest entered modern global society. The category 'religion' was for the first time legally recognized in the form of an international treaty that ensured the twin principles of 'freedom of religion' and 'separation of church and state.' By this, the independent place of religion from a Confucian state began to be legally protected in Korean society, especially in its

burgeoning civil society. In the newly modernizing society where the modern legal system was not precisely established, the category of religion was perceived to be critical to the nation's development and integration. The native leaders in those days often observed religion as a determinative source that helped build and lead the national society in times of crisis.

a. The Negative Structure of Religion: “The Western Religion Must Not Interfere with the Korean Nation”

Like the Christianity of medieval Europe, neo-Confucianism (*sŏngnihak* 性理學) was the governing ideology of Chosŏn Korea (1392-1897), which operated as an ethical norm for both ruling and ruled classes as well as a principle of value judgment for daily life (Seo 1997). In pre-modern Korea, there was no civil society that had developed from a religious reformation like that of the sixteenth century European Christendom. No religious traditions, thereby, secured their respective legal and institutional autonomy that could allow them be ‘free’ and ‘separated’ from the Confucian state (Baker 2006: 251-257). In the latter nineteenth century, the modern notion of ‘separation of religion and state’ was for the first time introduced into Korea in the form of an international treaty.

Having longed for more ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ Confucian order, orthodox Confucian intelligentsia-officials in the late Chosŏn Dynasty rigidly oppressed other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Shamanism, and Catholicism. These religious traditions were frequently branded as ‘immoral ritual’ (*ŭmsa* 淫邪), ‘evil religion’ (*sagyo* 邪教), ‘heresy’ (*idan* 異端), and ‘misleading theory’ (*sasŏl* 邪說) (Deuchler 1992: 101, 175, 197; Kang 1997c: 2; Palais 1991: 178). In particular, among others, Buddhism was tightly regulated under the kingdom's

discriminatory policy named “Reject Buddhism, Revere Confucianism” (*ch’ōkpul sung’yu* 斥佛崇儒). Under such religious ideology, the Confucian state had a law prohibiting Buddhist monks from entering its capital, confiscated considerable lands and properties of Buddhist temples, and reduced the number of the temples. Until the nineteenth century, Korea did not as yet have a modern legal system that was differentiated from the political system. The introduction of the idea of ‘religion-politics separation,’ along with the principle of ‘freedom of religion,’ led to a collapse of the socio-political foundation that supported ‘State Confucianism,’ because it resulted in disconnecting the religion’s special relationship with state power and other institutional bases over other religious traditions.

As the Chosŏn government entered into a series of treaties and legal agreements with the French government and missionaries, the modern principles of ‘freedom of religion’ (*chonggyo ūi chayū* 宗教의自由) and ‘separation of politics and religion’ (*chōnggyo pulli* 政教分離) were accepted and legalized in Korea. A few years earlier, Chosŏn Korea concluded commercial treaties with the Western powers such as the U.S.A in 1882, Britain and Germany in 1883, and Russia and Italy in 1884; however, no treaty included anything on religion. Because many Korean Catholics and even French Catholic missionaries had been killed for their objection to Confucian ancestral rites in eighteenth and nineteenth century Korea, the French government exerted great efforts to include an article for ‘freedom of religion’ in the treaty with Korea. Finally, the Korea-France Treaty of Amity and Commerce (*Chobul suho t’ongsang choyak* 朝佛修好通商條約) was concluded on June 4th, 1886. The Korea-France Treaty did not have a clear-cut article that secured the religious freedom of French Catholic missionaries from Confucian state interference; it only had a clause that might be interpreted as ensuring liberty for the French to proselytize in Korea. The second

clause of Article 9 of the Korea-France Treaty included the sentence, “French shall be allowed to come to Korea to learn or *teach* language, scripts, science, law, or technology” (*Pömyungmin chönsaengjosönguk haksüp ku kyohoe önö munja kyökch’i yullye kiyeja* 凡有國民人前往朝鮮國學習或教誨語言文字格致律例技藝者). The term *kyohoe* (teach, 教誨) was purposely added to the Korea-France Treaty in order to make it applicable to various cases including ‘teaching religion.’ Francois George Cogordan, a French minister to Beijing who as a plenipotentiary concluded the Korea-France Treaty at that time, wrote Jean Marie Gustav Blanc, a bishop who was in charge of the Diocese of Korea, a letter informing him that “[the Treaty] did not perfectly approve religious freedom, but meant the very first step toward that road.” After the conclusion of the Korea-France Treaty, no French missionaries were executed for their religious activities, and the religious persecution against Catholicism ended in early modern Korea (Ch’oe 1987: 22-25; Ryu 2004b: 202-212).⁸⁶

The Korea-France Treaty was the first legal foundation that secured religious freedom in the way in which religious individuals and organizations were limited to a differentiated societal sphere that was specifically given to various religious traditions. However, conflict continued between the natives who were ‘clannish’ of the approaching foreign force and the Catholics who relied on ‘extraterritoriality’ to commit ‘unlawful’ religious activities. In order to solidify separation of politics and religion, the local authority and the French missionaries came to make a more concrete agreement called the “Treaty on Catholics” (*Kyomin choyak* 教民條約) on March 9th, 1899. Article 2 of the treaty provided that “Catholic missionaries

⁸⁶ In chapter two, I discussed the historical process in which Japan accepted the category religion from the West, i.e. the U.S.A. The introduction of the category religion into Japan was also made in the form of the international treaty between Japan and the U.S.A in the latter half of the nineteenth century. For further details on the Japan-U.S. treaty on religion and aftereffects concerning the modern genealogy of ‘shukyo,’ see Isomae, Jun’ichi. 2003. *Kindai nihon niokeru shukyo-gensetsu to sono keifu: shukyo, kokka, shinto* (Discourse on Religion and Its Genealogy in Modern Japan: Religion, Nation, Shinto). Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten.

should not be involved in the government administration, and the administrators should not interfere in the missionary works.” By signing “Treaty on Proselytizing” (*Sŏn’gyo choyak* 宣教條約) in 1904, the Korean and French governments re-confirmed this legal principle. These treaties eventually allowed French Catholic missionaries the freedom to travel and evangelize in the country where the population was still very ‘Confucian’ without a clearly differentiated modern legal system. Through the process of this inter-civilizational encounter, the government of Korea institutionalized the two legal principles of ‘religious liberty’ and ‘separation of church and state’ (Lee 1996: 33-39).

These Western conceptions, which the French government and missionaries wanted to secure in the form of diplomatic documents, were the critical consequences of Europeans’ early modern experiences. It is interesting that in the wake of the French revolutions, the French republican government in the nineteenth century was ardently building an assertively secularized nation-state in France that was not interfered with by the Catholic Church, but in the course of its colonial enterprise, the French tenaciously attempted to ensure its citizens’ right of religious freedom, i.e. freedom of proselytizing Roman Catholicism. These religious ideas were still highly alien to then Korean society even after the principles became part of its newly forming legal system. The introduction of such novel principles on religion significantly contributed to transiting that Korean society into a modern legal state (Choi 1981; Yi 1987; Roh 1997).

The subsequent historical events such as the Kabo Reform (*Kabo gaehyŏk* 甲午改革, 1894-1896)⁸⁷ and the establishment of the Great Korean Empire (*Taehan cheguk* 大韓帝國,

⁸⁷ The Kabo Reform describes a series of sweeping reforms introduced in Chosŏn Korea from 1894 to 1896 during the reign of King Kojong. It greatly encouraged modernization in Korea. The term *kabo* 甲午 comes from the name of the year 1894 in the traditional sexagesimal cycle.

1897-1910) allowed for freedom of religion to be granted to other religious organizations after the late 1890s (Sin 1997: 430). For example, under pressure from Japan, the Chosŏn government allowed Buddhist monks access to the capital city in 1895. The emergence of the modern legal state was in itself an invaluable opportunity for Korean Buddhism to re-develop itself in that it offered Buddhism legal protection from state discrimination, at least in a definitive Confucian form.⁸⁸

b. The Positive Semantics of Religion: “Religion Is the Root of the Nation”

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Korea was encountering the increasing imperialist threat from the World Powers, while the Chosŏn Dynasty was rapidly collapsing. To many Korean nationalists, building a rich and powerful country was the most urgent priority in order to save their nation from the threat of being colonized. A good portion of modernizing bureaucrats and intellectuals had a common understanding that to build an independent nation-state of Korea, they had to overcome pre-modern residues on the one hand and defend the nation’s sovereignty against foreign aggression on the other (Sin 1997: 429-434).⁸⁹ In that urgent situation, whether a religion was approved as legal or not was critically related to the project of building a modern nation-state.

⁸⁸ The new modern space was created along with the advance of colonial powers. In this context, Korean Buddhism entered into a strategic alliance with Japanese Buddhism, which greatly helped the revitalization of Korean Buddhism in early modern and colonial Korea (Kim 2007b).

⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion on dimensions of early Korean modernity and other new modern concepts such as individual (*kaein* 개인), nation (*kungmin* 국민), ethnic race (*minjok* 민족), and society (*sahoe* 사회), see the following trilogy, Korea Culture Research Institute of Ewha Womans University ed. 2004. *Kūndae kaehanggi chisik kaenyŏm ūi suyong kwa kū pyŏnyong* 근대 개항기 지식 개념의 수용과 그 변용 (The Shaping of Korean Modernity: The Introduction of Modern Concepts during the Korean Enlightenment Period (1895-1910)). Seoul: Somyŏng; Korea Culture Research Institute of Ewha Womans University ed. 2006. *Kūndae kaehanggi chisik ūi palgyŏn kwa sayu chip’yŏng ūi hwaktae* 근대 개항기 지식의 발견과 사유지평의 확대 (The Shaping of Korean Modernity II: The Introduction of Modern Concepts during the Korean Enlightenment Period (1895-1910)). Seoul: Somyŏng; and, Korea Culture Research Institute of Ewha Womans University ed. 2007. *Kūndae*

The introduction of the twin legal principles on religion – separation of religion and state and freedom of religion – to Korea was increasingly undermining the socio-legal status of Confucianism as an overarching state ideology. However, Confucianism, particularly the Confucian worldview, still had a significant impact on forming the modern idea that religion and state should be separated from each other, because such a Western idea was accepted and appropriated *as part of* the ‘Confucian way’ that religion was at the root of nation-building. This was exemplified by a series of nationalist bureaucrats and intellectuals in the Korean society whose legal system was not clearly differentiated from the political order. Ch’oe Pyŏng Hŏn,⁹⁰ a Protestant pioneer, stressed that “because religion was the root of the nation and the source of evolution, the reformation of the political system has to be based on religion” (Shin 1997: 432). Pak Yŏng Hyo,⁹¹ an ‘enlightenment’ politician who had once been a bureaucrat of the Chosŏn Dynasty, said as follows:

“When religion declines, the nation declines; when religion flourishes, the nation flourishes. China was strong through the flourishing of Confucianism. India and other Asian countries were in full flourish through the thriving of Buddhism. ... Now, European countries are most strong due to the flourishing of Catholicism and Protestantism. Confucianism and Buddhism flourished in early Chosŏn Dynasty, but they are now devastated. So the national power is weakened” (Sin 1997: 431-432).

The very idea that religion is the root of politics, national strength, or social development originated from ‘Confucian idealism,’ a traditional worldview that everything was recognized through the dichotomic frame of ‘principle(*i* 理)/energy(*ki* 氣),’

kaehanggi chisik ūi kulchŏl gwa hyŏnsilchŏk simhwa 근대 개항기 지식의 굴절과 현실적 심화 (The Shaping of Korean Modernity III: The Introduction of Modern Concepts during the Korean Enlightenment Period (1895-1910)). Seoul: Somyŏng.

⁹⁰ Ch’oe Pyŏng Hŏn (崔炳憲, 1858-1927) was a Methodist minister whose pen name was T’aksa 濯斯. Based on an abundant knowledge of Chinese classics, he studied Asian religions and made efforts to understand the meaning and position of Christianity in then Korea’s religio-cultural context.

⁹¹ Pak Yŏng Hyo (朴泳孝, 1861-1939) was one of the leading figures of the Kaehwa Party (The Party for Enlightenment 開化黨).

‘fundamental(*pon* 本)/periphery(*mal* 末),’ ‘the Way(*to* 道)/tools (*ki* 器),’ and/or ‘substance(*ch’e* 體)/function(*yong* 用).’ In this Confucian dualism, the former was always considered to be more important than the latter. Thus, in this logic, something that was more considerable, central, or fundamental was ethical, religious, and Eastern, while something that was less important, periphery, or trivial was material, technological, or Western.⁹² From this perspective, a majority of modernizing intellectuals and bureaucrats abstractly made a somewhat unrealistic diagnosis of the national society, and thought that religion was an important resource for overcoming the pre-modern residues and defending the nation-state’s sovereignty against foreign aggression.

In short, the Confucian bureaucrats and reformers, whose worldview was based on this positive view toward religion, understood the practice of religion as a prime way to save the Korean nation on the brink of ruin. They attempted to utilize their Confucian view as a principle to keep Korea’s own identity and civilize the national society in troubled times. In fact, this ‘religion-supremacy’ semantics was something that was shared among marginal intellectuals and religionists in the late Chosŏn society. For example, adherents of religions such as Protestantism, Tonghak (the Eastern Learning 東學), and Wŏnbulgyo (Won Buddhism 圓佛敎) followed such a Confucian worldview in early modern Korea (Baker 2007; Park 2003: 117-138).

(2) Japanese Colonial Era: The Making of the Shinto State in Korea

⁹² *Tongdosŏgi ron* (The Eastern Ways, Western Machines Theory 東道西器論) is another representative example of this Confucian idea. This thinking was also found in then China and Japan during this time.

Like other non-Western cases such as India (King 1999) or Southern Africa (Chidester 1996), an earnest incorporation of Korean religious traditions into a global religious system (cf. Beyer 2006: 225-253) was first realized through the form of colonization. However, Korea's colonial experience was different from the above cases in that Koreans were colonized by non-Western forces. That is, the neighboring Asian country of Japan, which had been greatly influenced by the Western powers, colonized Korea in the first half of the twentieth century (1905/1910-1945). The Japanese colonization of Korea was carried out with a view to building the so-called "Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" (*Taedong'a kongyōnggwōn* 大東亞共榮權), through which Japan posed itself as the liberator of Asian peoples from Western imperialism. Japan had already accepted the Western notion of religion in the face of the strong demand of the Western world; however, to materialize this imperialist enterprise, Japan refused not only the 'Western style' of separating religion and the state, but also 'universal' freedom of religion in Korea.

Before Japan invaded Korea, Japanese political elites and intellectuals had already recognized religion, i.e. *shukyo*, as being *sui generis*, foreign, and/or sectarian, which could lead to undermining the national identity and established social order of Japan. The term religion was both structurally and semantically conceptualized as a possible significant obstacle to the project of reviving the Imperial Japan Empire in East Asia. Japan eventually maintained a kind of authoritarian legal system on religion, a legal mechanism that minimized the public influence of religious organizations outside the control of the state.

Thus, the notion of religion, in particular that of 'freedom of religion,' was distinctively appropriated in the colonial legal system of Korea. As in Japan, the colonial legal system was structured to assertively separate religion from the political sphere and also to strictly limit religious activities to the differentiated field of religion which must be 'private.'

Instead, the public sphere was in turn filled by the religiously charged patriotism and civic duty that were intended to make Korea become more organically subordinate to imperial Japan (Lee 2005b: 168-169).

a. The Negative Structure of Religion: “Religion and Politics Must Be Strictly Separated”

Rather than irregularly and loosely annexing and ruling Korea, the colonizing of Korea was practiced in a carefully constructed legal form, by concluding treaties for the annexation, enacting laws and regulations for modern-style ruling, and practicing a variety of policies.⁹³ As a critical part of the colonial rule, an elaborate legal system was employed to deal with religious individuals and groups (Yun 1997b: 454). However, the legal system of colonial Korea internalized a religio-political ideology, which is now known as ‘State Shinto,’ under the pretext of promoting ‘national morality.’ The colonial political system, which was supported by the religious ideology of ‘State Shinto,’ greatly influenced other societal systems including the legal system. The colonial legal system did not fully play a role in protecting the religious liberty of Korean religionists; its actual function was to control Koreans, make them cooperate with the colonial rule, and legitimize the maintenance of Japanese colonization (Yun 1997b: 463). Although the legal system operated around the legal/illegal code, the colonial agenda was imposed on legal programs, which in turn regulated the relationship between the public sphere and the religious realm. The politically

⁹³ The Japanese colonization of Korea was processed within the cultural context of East Asia, but this was not the case between two totally different civilizations like the British colonization of India. Bruce Cumings, a distinguished historian of modern Korea, stated that “Japan held Korea tightly and pursued an organized, architectonic colonialism in which the planner and administrator was the model. A strong, highly centralized colonial state mimicked the role that the Japanese state had come to play in Japan, one that intervened in the economy, created markets, spawned new industries, and suppressed dissent” (Cumings 2005: 148).

charged legal system was firmly structured to orient both secular and religious Koreans to imagine Japan and its emperor as a ‘sacred’ inner land and a god-like leader that preceded anything including their own religions, while defining ‘State Shinto’ as a ‘national duty’ that every citizen must follow. The colonial legal system was structured to ensure religious activities were assertively limited to private matters away from the ‘secular’ public sphere.

To control Korean religionists, the colonial government in Korea established a twofold legal system, according to its definitional guideline of religion. Based on the politically imposed legal/illegal code, the colonial legal system defined whether or not a religious organization must be included in the category of ‘legal’ religion. To be recognized as legal, the religious organization had to be strictly separated from the public, especially the political sphere. Under this colonial agenda, Buddhism, Christianity, and “Shrine Shinto” (*Jinja shintō* 神社神道) were chosen to be ‘legal religions,’ and all the other religious traditions and organizations had to belong to the subaltern category of ‘quasi religion,’ which was illegal, except Confucianism. As Japanese imperialism proceeded in Korea and other parts of East and South Asia, the legal religions were forced to become a more organic part of State Shinto, especially after the mid-1930s when Japan began the Pacific War.⁹⁴ Because it was thought to have no belief in a monotheistic absolute deity or supernatural being, Confucianism was exceptionally classified as an ‘educational institution,’ but neither as legal nor illegal religion (Korea Institute for Religion and Culture 1998: 380; Yun 1997b: 458-459). Both the Regulation on Confucian School Properties Management (*Hyanggyo chaesan kwalli kyujōng* 鄉校財產管理規定) in 1910 and the Regulation on Classical Studies Institute (*Kyōnhagwōn kyujōng* 經學院規程) in 1911 were promulgated to control Confucian institutions. By

⁹⁴ Though the colonization of Korea was an important part of the ‘pious’ process of the Japanese nation building, the colonial government in Korea did not begin to enforce Korean participation in rituals at the State Shinto shrine until the 1930s.

defining Confucianism as ‘educational,’ these laws were intended to diminish the socio-political influence of Confucian organizations and utilize them for colonial edification in Korea.

First, the Japanese colonial government in Korea maintained a series of laws and regulations that controlled the legally recognized religions. The colonial legal system in relation to the official religions changed in accordance with the political transition in Japanese colonialism.⁹⁵ The “Constitution of the Empire of Japan” (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kenpō* 大日本帝國憲法), known as the Meiji Constitution (*Meiji Kenpō* 明治憲法), was in force from November 29th, 1890 until May 2nd, 1947. Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subject.” Within the constitutional framework, the Regulation on Proselytizing (*P’ogyo kyuch’ik* 布教規則), which the Japanese colonial government in Korea enacted on August 16th, 1915, limited ‘religion’ to Shrine Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity.⁹⁶ The primary concern of the Regulation on Proselytizing was to control Christianity and Korean national religions. Because, unlike Buddhism and Confucianism within Koreans’ jurisdiction, Christian religions were closely connected with the Western forces that had acquiesced in the Japanese colonization of Korea, it was difficult for Japan to control the Western religions. In that situation, the Regulation on Proselytizing allowed the Japanese colonizers in Korea to regulate Christianity in a way that did not violate the constitutional principle of ‘religious

⁹⁵ The era of Japanese colonization of Korea can be divided into four periods: The first is the Protectorate Period (1905-1910), the second the Rule of Saber Period (1910-1919), the third the Period of Cultural Rule (1920-1930), and the fourth the National Mobilization Period (1931-1945).

⁹⁶ Before the Regulation on Proselytizing, there was a similar law, which was the “Order 45 of Japanese Residence-General in Korea – Supplementary Provision on Propagating Religion” (*Ch’ongdokburyōng je45ho – Chonggyo ūi p’ogyo e kwanhan puch’ik* 統監府令 第 45 號 – 종교의 포교에 관한 부칙). This law had been enacted in 1906, four years before Japan officially annexed Korea.

freedom' (Kim 1996a: 91-93; Yun 1997b: 459-462).⁹⁷ Article 1 of the Regulation on Proselytizing recognized Shrine Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity only as 'religion' in Korea. Article 2 indicated that individuals who wanted to pursue missionary activities must report to the Governor General of Korea. Article 4 even allowed the Governor General of Korea to change the method of propagation, the authority of missionary supervisors, the method of supervising missionaries, and the supervisors for missionary work, if those were determined to be inappropriate. Article 9 stated that if someone wanted to establish a church, preaching hall, or lecture room for religious purposes, s/he had to obtain permission from the Governor General of Korea.

The Temple Ordinance (*Sach'allyŏng* 寺刹令), which was proclaimed on June 3rd, 1911, was designed to allow the Japanese colonial government in Korea to tightly control Korean Buddhism. Through this law, all Korean Buddhist temples and their properties came to be affiliated with 30 Head Temples (*Ponsan* 本山). Permission had to be obtained from the Japanese Governor General whenever a temple was amalgamated into another temple, was moved to another place, or was abolished. To change the title of a temple, to sell a temple's properties, or to make rules for a temple, the Japanese colonial government's approval had to be received.

As Japan invaded the Asian continent in the late 1930s, the Japanese colonial government enacted the Religious Organization Act (*Chonggyo tanch'epŏp* 宗教團體法) on April 8th, 1939, a comprehensive law that specialized in religious matters, which was designed to mobilize all the religions in Korea for war purposes. Based on the Religious

⁹⁷ This played a great role in making both Protestant and Catholic churches apolitical in the colonial era. However, many Korean Christians wanted to secure their freedom of religion, which in turn challenged the Japanese colonial rule. In this religio-political context, the Korean Christians chose to participate in nationalist activities or anti-Japanese movements outside the domain of the churches in order to protect them from Japanese colonial rule.

Organization Act, the Japanese colonial government integrated all the Buddhist and Christian denominations in Korea into the same Buddhist and Christian denominations in Japan, and thereby tightened the control over the legal religions in Korea (Hardacre 1989: 124-126; Yun 1997b: 469-475).⁹⁸

Second, as is pointed out above, the legal criterion that divided the religious and the non-religious was constituted by whether or not the religious organization was considered to be opposing the Japanese colonial rule over Korea. To deal with political matters, the Japanese colonial government in Korea proclaimed the Security Law (*Poanbŏp* 保安法,) in July, 1907, and the Assembly Control Act (*Chip'oe ch'wijae e kwanhan kŏn* 集會取締에 관한 건) in September, 1910, both of which were used to regulate the religious organizations that were recognized as 'quasi religion (*yusa chonggyo* 類似宗教)' or sometimes 'political groups.' The term 'quasi religion' was the pejorative label attached to the indigenous religions (*minjok chonggyo* 民族宗教), many of which were created by Koreans at the turn of the twentieth century. During the Japanese colonial era, there were about sixty indigenous religions, e.g. Chondogyo 天道教, Poch'ŏn'gyo 報天教, Sichŏn'gyo 侍天教, T'aegŭkkyo 太極教, Kongjagyo 孔子教, Kyŏngch'ŏnggyo 敬天教, and so on (Yun 1997b: 456-457). According to the Prohibition Order of Pseudo-Religion (*Yusa chonggyo kŭmjiryŏng* 類似宗教禁止令), which was issued in 1936, all the facilities of these 'quasi religions' were closed, and their leaders were also apprehended or wanted by the colonial authorities.

⁹⁸ Article 16 of the Religious Organization Act stated that "when religious proclamation, ritual practice, and religious activity of religious organizations and religious teachers disturb peace and order or run counter to the duty of the subject, the competent minister can restrict and forbid them, suspend the task of the [religious] teacher, and revoke the permission to establish the religious organization" (Yun 1997b: 472).

b. The Negative Semantics of Religion: “Religions Should Not Outstrip the National Morality”

Already before Japan invaded Korea, Japanese ruling elites had been critically aware of the significance of religion in building a nation-state in the Japanese islands as well as maintaining international relations, especially with the Western powers in an emerging global society. To them, it was unacceptable that ‘religious freedom’ was offered at the expense of Japan’s national identity; they were concerned that this could eventually lead to the Western colonization of Japan. That was the main reason why since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Japan staunchly managed its traditional religio-political structure, rejecting Christianity in the face of the Western forces’ strong demands. As it came to legalize ‘religious liberty’ in the nineteenth century, Japan went on to establish ‘State Shinto’ as having precedence over any religions. The Japanese government in both Korea and Japan affirmed that State Shinto was solely a matter of ‘state ritual,’ ‘civic duty,’ ‘national morality,’ or ‘patriotism’ so that all citizens must follow it regardless of their religious affiliation (Hardacre 1989: 114-132). Based on such religious nationalism, the Japanese colonial rule was enforced in the process of the Japanization of Korea.⁹⁹ The legal system in colonial Korea carried out a ‘State Shinto agenda’ that was highly religious, nationalist, and political. Korean religions were subject to the colonial legal system that was designed to ensure the full operation of the Japanese civil religion.

As Japan occupied the Korean peninsula, the Confucian view which had placed ‘religion’ at the core of efforts to save and develop Korea in crisis, disappeared from the

⁹⁹ The principle of “Japan and Korea are One Entity” (*Naesŏn ilch’e* or *Naisen ittai* 內鮮一體) was campaigned in colonial Korea. The policy of Japanization, which was referred to as Tennoization 皇民化, was most actively pursued after the 1930s (Jang 2003: 231-233).

colonized public sphere of Korea.¹⁰⁰ The new semantics on religion that replaced the Confucian understanding of religion in the colonial legal system was aligned with the ideology of State Shinto. No matter what its inventors and adherents argued, State Shinto had a very strong religious nature, through which to observe other religious groups, e.g. Buddhist, Christian, and other indigenous religious institutions, as its possible competitors, in that Japan had invented State Shinto in order to prevent those religions from competing against it under the guise of religious freedom. Hardacre wrote:

“Restrictions increasingly applied to the exercise of religious freedom as guaranteed in the Meiji Constitution were often rooted in the notion that shrine observances were a part of a subject’s civic duty, and that as a consequence they had an obligatory character. Thus if a person refused a talisman from the Ise Shrines or doubted the truth of Shinto myth, or took umbrage at the Shinto trappings surrounding ceremonies for reading the Imperial Rescript on Education, such actions could be taken as a dereliction of civil duty, even though no national law required anyone to do any of these things. The definition of such Shinto observances as nonreligious facilitated their classification under the category of civic duty. This vague, assimilationist thinking did not come about only by bureaucratic fiat and sleight of hand. The Shinto priesthood had been active since the Restoration in the promotion of exactly this type of thought” (Hardacre 1989: 128).

In the religio-political atmosphere managed by the imperial legal system, the more the religious organizations were independent and separated from the agenda of Japanese colonialism, the more they were viewed as parochial, antipatriotic, or problematic in the colonial legal system. They might even be considered to be detrimental and against the Japanese emperor and his sacred empire. As Japanese colonialism proceeded in Korea, such a discursive frame through which to suspiciously observe both the legal religions and the ‘quasi

¹⁰⁰ On the contrary, the idea that religions had a lot of resources to recover the sovereignty of the Korean nation was survived in the unofficial sphere of Korean society, in particular among many Korean nationalists and independent fighters. For Korean nationalism in crisis, religion continued to be significant in organizing and reviving the broken-down nation. For example, aboriginal religions such as Taejonggyo and Chondogyo and imported religions such as Christian religions emerged as critical centers of Korean nationalist movement (Association for the Historical Studies on Korean National Movement 2002, 1998).

religions' became increasingly stronger. As Japanese colonialism entered a state of war in the 1930s and 40s, the institutional autonomies of those religions became more restricted, and thereby their original religious identities were severely damaged by State Shinto. Many Korean Christians asserted that the coercion of "worshiping at the shrines" violated the legal principle of religious liberty; however, the position of the Japanese legal system was that "paying respects at the shrines" did not violate the constitutional right. In the end, most Christian and Buddhist groups came to worship at the shrines of State Shinto in order to sustain their religious organizations (Lee 1996: 6).

The negative view of religion that identified religion as a possible opponent to the project of 'japanizing' Koreans came to direct the colonial officials and intelligentsias, the carriers of Japanese imperialism, to observe both legal and illegal religious organizations from the perspective of national security. After the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, Japanese colonialism set up the direction of colonial rule over religious organizations. The 1911 edition of the Japanese Government-General Year Book (*Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu sijŏng yŏnbo* 朝鮮總督府施政年報) brought up the subject of religion in "Section on Supervising Religion" in the Security Part, having described Koreans' religious situation as follows:

"On the supervision of religion, the Residency-General Ordinance 45 in Meiji 39 [1906] set up the procedure for Japanese to assert a religious declaration. However, because there has been no law on religions of Koreans and foreigners their missionary institutions are being installed without [government] permission, and the harmful effect is enormous. Specifically, there are many Koreans' [religious] organizations, e.g. Chondogyo 天道教, Sichŏn'gyo 侍天教, Taejonggyo 大倂教, Taedonggyo 大同教, T'aegŭkgyo 太極教, Wŏnjong chongmuwŏn 圓宗宗務院, Kongjagyo 孔子教, Kyŏngch'ŏngyo 敬天教, Taesŏng chonggyo 大成宗教, and so forth. The varieties are too many and miscellaneous. Their activities mix up politics with religion so that many of them cannot be recognized as only religious. Therefore, supervision is inevitable" (Yun 2002: 49).

In October, 1940, Sumanaga 增永正一, the chief public prosecutor of the High Court of the Japanese Government General of Korea, instructed at a justice meeting that religions disturbed public order in the Korean peninsula as follows:

“I truly regret that adherents to Christianity and other religious organizations have been continually arrested and punished in the [Korean] peninsula because of crimes such as irreverence and violation of the Maintenance of Public Order Act, the Security Law, and the Military Criminal Code. All of you have already known that since the religious movements in the Peninsula are imbued with nationalist tones, many of them are a sort of political movement or social movement rather than pure religious movements, and from the standpoint of the peninsular politics, are greatly involved with many improper incidents. Crackdown on these religious organizations must not be neglected even one day in the present situation in which a demand for securing public order is most urgent. ... At the same meeting last year, I asked you to pay attention to the conventional quasi religious organizations in the Peninsula. Poch’ön’gyo 普天教 was already annihilated by crackdown, and the persons involved in the [religious] sect went underground and attempted to restore it. The top cadres of new quasi religious organizations such as Pulbŏp yŏn’guhoe 佛法研究會,¹⁰¹ which has been rapidly expanding in Honam province,¹⁰² were punished for lese-majeste. I think that the legal [religious] organizations’ doctrines, sermon, or ulterior ideological tendency should be re-examined. I call your attention again to cracking down on the quasi religious organizations” (Yun 2002: 72-73).

Because this kind of bias toward religion was widespread in the legal sector of this Asian colony, the legal principle of religious freedom was applied in a highly conditional form, especially dependent upon whether or not the colonial legal officials defined it as being ‘political.’ If a religious tradition or organization was counted as being cooperative in supporting the Japanese colonialism in Korea, it could legally be recognized as ‘religious’; on the contrary, if it was judged as being supportive of Korean nationalism and its independence movement, its status of ‘official religion’ would be threatened. Then, it would be recognized as ‘political,’ but not ‘religious’ in the colonial legal system. As a side effect, in turn, the anti-

¹⁰¹ In 1947 the “Society for Buddhist Study” (*Pulbŏp yŏn’guhoe* 佛法研究會) adopted a new title “Won Buddhism.”

¹⁰² *Honam* 호남 is the south-western region of the Korean peninsula; its other name is *Chŏlla-to* 전라도.

Japanese fighters and Korean nationalists came to discover religions as having significant sources that nurtured Korean nationalism in crisis.¹⁰³

In short, like in Japan, the colonial legal system in Korea carried out a negative semantics of religion in forming the relationship between religious groups and the public sphere. The colonial legal system allowed Korean religious groups to secure their freedom of religion in a strictly ‘non-political’ or ‘non-nationalist’ way. Since the Japanese legal system in Korea was highly suspicious of the values of Korean religious groups in carrying out the colonization project, their religious activities had to take place in a ‘patriotic’ way corresponding to the Japanese colonialism, especially the making of State Shinto in the Korean peninsula, in order to retain their institutional autonomy.

(3) The Cold War Era: The Protestantization of Law-Religion Relation

For more than the last sixty years, the post-colonial society of South Korea has radically transformed from an under-developed rural society to a highly urbanized, industrial society (Korea Institute for Religion and Culture, 1998a: 448-454). This is another case of modernization; by the term modernization, I mean that the functionally differentiated societal systems of the national society have evolved, developing the various programs in accordance with their respective self-referential codes and functions. The legal system as one of differentiated sub-societal systems has developed its communicative programs such as constitution, positive laws, and courts in the South Korean context.

¹⁰³ On the other hand, Protestantism and Catholicism, especially their conservative elites, tried to maintain their institutional autonomy in colonial Korea, by becoming non-political and non-nationalist, emphasizing personal belief, and detaching themselves from critical social issues (Park 2003: 148-156).

In many modern democracies, a constitution offers a legal foundation that defines the socio-political place of religion. When was the constitutional spirit stipulating the relationship between religion and the state materialized for the first time in modern Korea? The constitution of the Republic of Korea contains an article clearly identifying the principle of “twin tolerations” – freedom of action both for political institutions *vis-à-vis* religious authorities and for religious individuals and groups *vis-à-vis* the political institutions (Stepan 2001: 213). The Establishment Constitution – the first South Korean constitution after the 1945 liberation – was established on July 17th, 1948. Its Article 12 laid out that “all citizens shall enjoy freedom of faith and conscience; no state religion shall exist, and religion shall be separated from politics.” This constitutional article indicates that the legal system of the southern republic has since its birth secured the principle of ‘separation of religion and the state’ in the constitutional form (Kang 1993a).

After liberation from Japanese colonialism, however, the actual relationship between religion and the state in South Korea developed in a way that was quite different from the ‘secularist’ principle of the constitutional article. Contrary to the Japanese colonial era, freedom of religion was highly recognized in the development of such public fields of the post-colonial society as politics, mass media, social welfare, medicine and education, all of which were deeply intertwined with the state’s institutional support (Kang 2009a: 13-41). During the Cold War era, the South Korean legal system was focused upon securing rights and freedoms for specific religions to participate in various public activities. Then, how was such a ‘positive’ conception of religion, especially free exercise of religion, constructed in the Asian legal system?

a. The Positive Structure of Religion: “Law Protects Religion, But Not Fake Ones”

When Korea was emancipated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, there was no significant residue of *ancien régime* based on the alliance of the Korean monarchy and the hegemonic religion. The division of Korea into the North and South was a regional consequence of the re-configuration of the global political economy.¹⁰⁴ The new global ideological front formed around the Korean peninsula caused a strong rightist and anti-communist ideology to be implanted in many social fields of the southern republic that included the legal system.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the colonial legal system that had strictly restricted religious activities to the private sphere, the South Korean legal system, a ruling mechanism of the authoritarian regimes,¹⁰⁶ took for granted ‘freedom of religion,’ particularly religions’ freedom to engage in public issues. However, the ideology of religious freedom was differently experienced by individual religions in the post-colonial legal context (Korea Institute for Religion and Culture 1998a: 458-461).

¹⁰⁴ According to Ahmet T. Kuru, the political struggle between leftist and rightist groups is significant in shaping state policies toward religion, for example state neutrality toward all religions (Kuru 2009: 10). The division of the Korean peninsula into North and South Korea stemmed from the allied victory in World War II in 1945, ending Japan’s thirty-five-year colonial rule of Korea. In spite of opposition from most Koreans, the United States of America and the Soviet Union agreed to temporarily occupy the country with the zone of control demarcated along the thirty-eighth parallel. From 1945 to 1948, the United State Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) ruled the southern part of the Korean peninsula under the thirty-eighth parallel. From the perspective of the U.S. interests, South Korea is important in the new world order, since it was located at the border line of the “free world” that the United States of America and the Western advanced countries led in the Cold War world order. Thus, since South Korea was granted a unique role from that world system, its social institutions needed to be re-organized, reflecting the new reality of international relations (Cumings 2005: 115-341).

¹⁰⁵ The two-thirds of Korean Protestants and around half of Korean Catholics lived in North Korea before 1945. When they came to the South before and after the Korean War, they wanted to ensure they would enjoy the religious freedom which had been denied to them in the North.

¹⁰⁶ Under the protection and influence of the U.S.A., authoritarian regimes such as Syngman Rhee (r. 1948-1960), Park Chung-hee (r. 1961-1979), and Chun Doo-hwan (1980-1988) ruled South Korea until the democratization process began at the end of the 1980s. In the Cold War era, these dictatorial regimes tried to modernize South Korea based on the model of Western advanced societies, institutionalizing the ideology of anticommunism, driving a series of radical economic development policies, and keeping a close alliance with the U.S.A.

Contrary to the colonial legal system, the new legal system emphasized ‘freedom of religion’ much more than ‘separation of religion and politics’ (Kang 1997a: 614-617).¹⁰⁷ After the 1945 liberation, the first legal system south of the 38th parallel was established by the American authorities. The United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGK, 1945-1948) established new laws and legal decisions to ensure freedom of religion. On September 7th, 1945, Douglas MacArthur, then General of the US Army, released Proclamation No.1 stating that “[h]aving in mind the long enslavement of the people of Korea and the determination that in due course Korea shall become free and independent, the Korean people are assured the purpose of the occupation is to enforce the Instrument of Surrender and to protect them in their personal and religious rights.” Based on MacArthur’s proclamation for “religious rights,” the US Army government in Korea soon made a legal decision about the termination of the colonial laws discriminating against religion. On September 9th, 1945, the USAMGIK proclaimed Ordinance 11 whose Section 2 stated that “[a]ll other laws, decrees or orders having the force of law are hereby repealed, the Judicial or Administrative enforcement of which would cause discriminations on grounds of race, nationality, creed or political opinions.”

However, the legal principle of freedom of religion was applied unevenly among religions in the South. Laws and ordinances on religion carried out by the US military authorities and succeeding the Syngman Rhee government were centered on Christianity, and even one-sidedly treated Protestantism and Catholicism as the “officially recognized religions,” while rights of other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism were often not respected under the pretext of protecting the nation’s cultural heritage (Kang 1993a: 37-41).

¹⁰⁷ So, in terms of the form of separating religion and the state, the South Korean legal system was close to the ‘American style’ legal system rather than the ‘European style.’ Among many European cases, the French style is more assertively separating religion and the public more than, say, the German style.

On November 2nd, 1945, the USAMGK released Ordinance 21 whose Section 1 defined that “until further ordered, and except as preciously repealed or abolished, all laws which were in force, regulations, orders, notices or other documents issued by any former government of Korea having the force of law on August 9th, 1945 will continue in full force and effect until repealed by express order of the Military Korea.” This ordinance allowed many discriminatory laws, enacted by the Japanese colonialists, to be continued in the new republic; examples of those surviving laws included the Temple Ordinance on Korean Buddhism and the Confucian School Properties Act on Korean Confucianism (Kang 1997a: 616). On the other hand, no law was enacted or continued that categorized as “pseudo-religion” or “evil religion” minority or marginal religious traditions or organizations such as Shamanic traditions and new or aboriginal religious organizations; however, the legal system did not fully protect their religious freedom, which was not often recognized and even threatened by the state institutions and the conservative Christian groups.

First, the South Korean legal system did not maintain specially tailored laws that favored Christian religions; however, the legal system, which positively focused on guaranteeing freedom of religion, gave various legal preferences to them, particularly Protestantism. The emphasis upon religious liberty directed the legal system to tolerate the state’s special treatment of Christian religions, rather than to define the government’s unequal treatment for a specific religion as violating the constitutional principle of the religion-politics separation. The legal connivance of such religio-politico alliance helped Christian religions exercise a great leverage in legalizing the church-state relationship in a way that critically affected the entire religious landscape of the post-colonial society.¹⁰⁸ The birthday of Jesus

¹⁰⁸ Article 5 of the Proclamation No. 1 stated that “[f]or all purposes during the military control, English will be the official language. In event of any ambiguity or diversity of interpretation or definition between any English and Korean or Japanese text, the English text shall prevail.” Thus, during the American military government (r.

Christ, i.e. Christmas, was designated as a national holiday, although Christians were only two to three percent (about 400,000) vis-à-vis the entire South Korean population (about 2,000,000) during the rule of the U.S. military government.¹⁰⁹ On February 7th, 1951, the military chaplaincy was implemented by a presidential decree for Protestantism and Catholicism only. During the Syngman Rhee government, it was also made legal for Protestantism to participate in the prison chaplaincy, excluding all other religions that even included Catholicism. In this context of church-state relationship, Christian religions extended their influence on education, social welfare, medicine, and mass media, and other secular fields in South Korean society on the pretext of ‘freedom of religion.’

Second, the South Korean legal system maintained a series of laws that interfered with the religious freedom of Buddhism and Confucianism under the name of nurturing Korea’s original traditional culture. During the Cold War era, the legal system admitted that the state had the unilateral legal advantage over Korean Buddhism. Along with Christianity and Confucianism, Buddhism was largely regarded as a legal religion that deserved religious freedom and rights; however, the legal autonomy of Buddhism was frequently ignored by the authoritarian governments that wanted to re-construct “nation culture” (*minjok munhwa* 민족문화). Under the agenda to restore Korea’s ‘pure Buddhism,’ the president Syngman Rhee released legal statements in May and November 1954 and June 1955 that all the married monks, the majority of the Korean Sangha then, who were criticized as collaborators with the Japanese colonizers, should leave the Buddhist temples, and that the celibate monks only

1945-1948), Protestants, who once studied in the United States, were of an overwhelming majority among the most influential Korean informants with whom the U.S. military officials contacted in order to understand then Korean society and various domestic issues. American Protestant missionaries and their children, many of whom could speak both Korean and English languages, were also instrumental in formulating the U.S. army military government’s laws and policies on South Korean society (Kang 1996: 168-172).

¹⁰⁹ Buddha’s birthday was not a legal holiday until a couple of decades later, though it was the largest religion during this period of time.

should stay. The state's interference in the religious freedom of Korean Buddhists was legalized under the name of supporting the "nation's cultural heritage" (*minjok munhwa yusan* 민족문화유산), the title that allowed the state not to violate the constitutional clause on the state's neutrality toward religion (Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2006: 70-110). Since the Temple Ordinance, which had been enacted by the Japanese colonialists, was maintained until 1962, Korean Buddhism did not have full religious freedom to make decision about personal matters and financial affairs. Although the Temple Ordinance was replaced by the Buddhist Property Act (*Pulgyo chaesan kwallibŏp* 佛教財産管理法) in that year, this law still required all Buddhist temples to report to the government on accounting and disposition of their respective properties. During the military dictatorships (r. 1960-1989), the legal system offered more extensive rights and benefits to Korean Buddhism than ever before, as long as it did not criticize the undemocratic regimes. Under the authoritarian legal system, Buddhist military chaplaincy was established in 1968, and Buddha's Birthday became a legal holiday in 1975. In 1987, Buddhist Property Act was finally replaced again by the Traditional Temples Preservation Law (*Chŏnt'ong sach'al pojŏnbŏp* 傳統寺刹保存法) which only dealt with conservation of significant 'heritage temples' of Korean Buddhism (Kim 1992: 181). Until the late 1980s, those laws seriously violated the religious liberty of Korean Buddhist organizations in terms of managing their internal affairs and organizational issues; however, these laws were constitutionally justified under the pretext of protecting and nurturing Korea's traditional Buddhist 'culture.'

In comparison to Christianity and Buddhism not only was the scale of the Confucian population very small,¹¹⁰ but also its identity as a religion was by and large refused by both

¹¹⁰ The population of Confucianism as a religion vis-à-vis the entire population in South Korea was 1.2% in 1985, 0.8% in 1995, and 0.2% in 2005.

the many insiders and outsiders who wanted to regard Confucianism as the foundation of Korean distinctive values and culture. In that religio-cultural context, a specialized law was also enacted regarding Confucianism under the title of preserving ‘Korean traditional culture.’ In order to administer Confucian Schools (*hyanggyo* 鄉校), the USAMGK enacted Ordinance 194 in May 1948 “to manage Confucian school properties” (*Hyanggyo chaesan kwalli e kwanhan kŏn* 鄉校財産 管理에 관한 件), which was replaced by “Confucian School Property Act” (*Hyanggyo chaesanbŏp* 鄉校財産法) in January 1962. This law had been revised in March 1967, December 1989, December 1997, January 1999, December 2006, April 2007, and December 2008 in a direction more favorable to the Korean organizations, because many members of Korean Confucianism criticized the Confucian School Property Law as not being constitutional in terms of ‘freedom and equality of religion’ (Yang 1991: 23), and as restricting the autonomy of Confucianism. Because of this particular law, the state had to financially support Confucian organizations such as *Sŏnggyungwan*, the head institution of Korean Confucianism, and other local Confucian schools. At the same time, the law forced all the Confucian institutions to be registered as a ‘corporation’ (*pŏbin* 法人) under the supervision of specific municipal governments, which not only regulated the trade, transfer, exchange, security, and other uses of the Confucian properties, but also hindered the eventual unification of Confucianism as one national organization (Kang 2009a: 38-39; Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991: 51-76). Just like in the case of Buddhism, this law was defined as constitutional, because it was argued that it is concerned with the Confucian heritage, but did not restrict religious liberty of Korean Confucianism.

Finally, unlike the Japanese colonial period that had maintained the law, i.e. the Regulation on Proselytizing, explicitly defining what religion was, South Korea did not have

any laws that exclusively included certain religious traditions in the category of ‘lawful religion.’¹¹¹ There was not even a law or regulation that restricted or violated freedom of such minority religions as Shamanism and other ‘new’ religious groups, although mainstream religionists, especially conservative Protestants, mass media workers, and even government officials called those religious traditions or organizations ‘superstition,’ ‘pseudo-religion,’ and/or ‘evil religion,’ i.e. ‘cult’ (Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991: 119; Yun 1987). Until the late 1970s, Shamanism was widely called ‘superstition,’ which was often considered to be one of the chief obstacles to the state-led modernization drive. Performing *kut*, a shamanistic ritual, was legally prohibited in the urban and rural local communities (Kendall 2009: 1-11). To gain positive national recognition, some of them tried to draw on nationalist sentiments or champion anti-communism. For example, the members of Shamanism and Korean New Religions such as Chondogyo, Taejonggyo, and Chŭngsan’gyo, often accentuated that they were crucially oppressed by Japanese colonialism and that Korean society should more zestfully protect and nurture the nation’s heritage and Korea’s own religions. Also, the Unification Church (*T’ongilgyo* 통일교) and the Korea Association for Victory against Communism and Veneration for Gods (*Taehan sŭnggong kyŏngsin yŏnhap* ‘oe 대한승공경신연합회), the national organization of Korean Shamans, publicized that they were anti-communist.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Toward minority religious groups, China and Japan have kept a legal position that is similar to that of the Japanese colonial government in Korea. China’s “Document No. 19” and “Legislative Resolution on Banning Heretic Cults” expresses that Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism are ‘religions’ and all other ‘cultic groups’ should be banned to maintain social stability. Chapter 6 of Japan’s “Religious Corporation Law” is titled “disbandment,” and Article 43 under this chapter allows the Japanese Court to dissolve any religious organization according to the related law. In response to Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attacks in 1995, a 1996 amendment to the Religious Corporation Law gives the authorities increased oversight of religious groups and requires greater disclosure of financial assets by religious corporations and groups.

¹¹² On the other hand, some new religions opposing anti-communist ideology or Korean nationalism, for example the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, or Soka Gakkai, faced stronger oppression from both the state and society in general.

To secure their religious freedom, many marginal religious groups wanted to register themselves a “non-profit corporation” (*piyŏngni pŏbin* 非營利法人) in accordance with Article 32 of the Civil Code. Article 32 of the Civil Code on establishment and permission of non-profit corporations stipulated that an “association (*sadan* 社團) or foundation (*chaedan* 財團) whose purpose is to pursue academic, religious, charitable, artistic, social, or other non-profit enterprise can be a corporation (*pŏbin* 法人) by obtaining permission from the authority in charge.” But those religious groups experienced great structural difficulties to register themselves as a “corporation.” At a public hearing on religion-related laws held at Dongkuk University on September 9th, 1989, Cho Hŭngyun, a cultural anthropology professor, claimed as follows:

“In 1965, the [government] conducted a quasi religion survey. If not registered, [religious organizations] were classified as the quasi religion. Currently, only 14 are registered among about 260 religious groups classified as indigenous religion, 20 new religious groups from abroad are registered, and 5 new denominations from Christianity [i.e. Protestantism] are registered. By the way, the criteria of registration are vague and inconsistent, because the registration is approved according to *political backgrounds*. So there is a climate in which they are recognized as the [normal] religious groups by registration, and become superior to the others [that were not registered]. ... The competent authorities severely interfered with even the registered religious organizations. Because it is too difficult to register, religious groups are also giving up registering themselves” (Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991 ed.: 127, my emphasis).

In the Cold War context, South Korea was publicly proud of having a legal system that emphatically supported freedom of religion. But its laws and regulations were not constructed to evenly protect freedom of different religions from a neutral ‘legal’ perspective. The legal system supported the rights and benefits of Christian religions, especially the alliance of Protestant churches with the state, under the pretext of protecting religious liberty.

Since the constitution sanctified freedom of religion, the legal system could not allow the authoritarian state to directly intervene in the internal affairs of Buddhism and Confucianism. Under the name of nurturing the native or traditional culture, the specialized laws damaged the autonomy of Buddhism and Confucianism in managing their respective institutions. No positive laws were legislated to suppress the marginal religions' freedom; however, they experienced great difficulties in gaining legal recognition as a 'corporation', the legal title that would help them eliminate the dishonorable designation of 'quasi religion,' 'evil religion,' or 'cult.' Therefore, despite the constitutional articles that ensured not only the separation of politics and religion, but also prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, the religion-related laws and regulations were asymmetrically applied to the existing religious organizations. In a nutshell, the South Korean legal system supported freedom of religion; however, the notion of religion was arbitrarily and partially assigned to different religious traditions and organizations.

b. The Positive Semantics of Religion: “Religion Helps the National Modernization”

The Japanese colonial government in Korea formalized that freedom of religion was confined to the private sphere, because it considered religions to be critical in managing the colonization of Korea, and the Japanese emperor's absoluteness – the root of the legitimacy of the colonial ruling – could not be challenged by any religious and secular polities. From that perspective of the colonial legal system, all the religious organizations, except the official religions of Shrine Shinto, Christianity, and Buddhism, were observed and described as being suspicious, harmful, and/or 'illegal.' Becoming a sincere member of one of the legal religions was also anything but the appropriate way to be a royal subject of the emperor. Any

religionist could be labeled as ‘sectarian,’ ‘cultic,’ or ‘terrorist’ whenever the subject’s priority was found not to be the fidelity to the emperor, i.e. the living deity of State Shinto.

The liberation of 1945 brought about the transformation of the general semantics on religion in South Korea, granting religious individuals and groups the constitutional right of religious freedom. The post-liberation political condition was favorable to legalizing the public activities of religions, especially Buddhism, Confucianism, Protestantism, and Catholicism, all of which had been included in the category of ‘legal religion’ during the colonial era. The identity of the native elites who carried forward modernization policies in the South was characterized by a set of ideologies and imaginaries ranging from nationalism and authoritarianism to pro-U.S. attitude and anti-communism.¹¹³ Unlike those of the Japanese legal authorities who kept the anti-religious ideology, these characteristics of the new power elites well corresponded with the legal principle of protecting freedom of religion. South Korea’s constitution formalized the protection of religious liberty, and during the military dictatorial period (1960-1988) it was cited to prove the superiority of the South Korean society or ‘free world’ over the North Korean society or the ‘communist bloc.’

Within that post-liberation context of South Korea, the legal system proceeded to produce the discursive construction of religion in a very positive way. The passively separated relationship between the state and legal institutions and the four ‘world religions’ was in itself a fertile soil to spread a series of affirmative ideas on religion in the legal system, with the

¹¹³ Christianity and the existence of communist North Korea, a not-well-matched-pair, played considerable roles in making the legal system ‘pro-religious’ in South Korea. Christianity has deeply internalized anti-communist ideology in the South. Hwang Sok-yong, one of Korea’s most renowned contemporary novelists, describes in his novel *The Guest* (Sonnim 손님) the very conflicted process in which during the Korean War Christianity and Marxism encountered each other in a district known as Sinch’ŏn in Hwanghae Province, situated as the southwestern corner of North Korea now. He wrote “Christianity and Marxism may be the modernity that was carried out by others’ will, because we did not by ourselves modernize [Korea], experiencing the colonization and the division [of the Korean nation]. In North Korea, where the legacy of class structure during the traditional period was relatively diluted compared to the South, the tenets of Christianity and Marxism were zealously adopted as facets of ‘enlightenment.’ Those were the two branches that shared a root (Hwang 2001: 261-262).”

legal semantics considering that the distinctively differentiated societal system called religion or ‘chonggyo’ was important and helpful for nation’s stability and development. For example, narratives were produced that ‘religion’ contributed to the development of national culture, fought against the North Korean communists, and worked for the democratization and reunification of the Korean nation. In a nutshell, the colonial legal system approached ‘religion’ from the viewpoint of ‘national security,’ while the Cold War legal system treated religion from the perspective of the nation’s modernization.

The ‘founding fathers’ of South Korea believed that the establishment of the Korean nation-state should be based on religion, particularly Christian religions (Institute of Korean Church History Studies 2009: 40-44; Song 2003).¹¹⁴ Syngman Rhee, one of the founding fathers who later became the first president of the Republic of Korea, wanted to make Korea a Christian nation. At the beginning of the first meeting of the Constitutional Assembly held on May 31st, 1948, Rhee, then chairman of the Constitutional Assembly, proclaimed as follows:

“We have to thank God (*Hananim* 하나님) for the first meeting of the independent democratic nation, the Great Republic of Korea, is held here. No matter what religion or thought one has, we cannot boast that today is achieved only by the power of human beings. Therefore, we must thank God” (National Assembly Secretariat 1948: 1).

¹¹⁴ On April 11th, 1919 soon after the March First Independence Movement of 1919, the “Proclamation of Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea Charter,” which was signed by Syngman Rhee, Yi Dongnyung (李東寧, 1869-1940), An Chang-ho, and Kim Kyu Shik, all of whom were then well-known Korean national leaders as well as Protestant Christians, declared in its preamble that “the Provisional Government [of the Republic of Korea] is totally organized by the people’s confidence ... since God and human has coincided.” Article 7 of the Charter provided that “the Republic of Korea displays the spirit that the Country was established by the intention of God [.]” Syngman Rhee as a Christian had a dream to establish a Christian nation on the Korean Peninsula.

Then, Rhee soon asked Yi Yunyǒng,¹¹⁵ one of 198 members of the Constitutional Assembly as well as a minister of the Korean Methodist denomination, to deliver a Christian prayer at that important legal meeting to establish the first constitution of the Republic of Korea. So Yi prayed as requested by Rhee as follows:

“Dear God that created all things in the universe and led human history, I sincerely thank God for taking care of this nation and blessing this land so that today is thankfully present. [God] listened to the agony and appeal of this nation for a long time and repelled the violence of Japanese colonialism by drawing the sword of justice. . . . Dear God, please redress the difficult agony and shame of this nation that is divided into two, North and South, and I pray for the fast coming of the day to us when our nation, our countrymen, sing together with a smile and hand in hand. I hope that together with the independence of our Korea, [God] give us the reunification of North and South and also allow us a blessing of the people’s livelihood as well as world peace. I offer all this in the name of Jesus Christ our lord. Amen” (National Assembly Secretariat 1948: 1-2).

The leading lawmakers who were entitled to enact the first constitution of South Korea took ‘religion,’ particularly the Christian symbol of ‘God,’ as the foundational spirit of building the nation’s legal system at the critical juncture of the Constitutional Assembly. These utterances articulated a very positive understanding of religion, a kind of religious nationalism, that the deity backed the Korean nation at the beginning of the new history and would eventually unite the divided ‘father land.’ This ‘legal’ semantics of religion shared among the lawmakers in turn materialized through different laws and legal decisions that contributed to defining the religious nature of the new East Asian republic. Some examples include the inclusion of an article guaranteeing freedom of religion in the constitution, the appointment of Christmas and Buddha’s Birthday as national holidays, the military, prison, and police chaplaincies for Christianity and Buddhism, and laws for tax exemption of

¹¹⁵ Thereafter, Yi Yunyǒng (李允榮, 1890-1975) was nominated for Prime Minister four times, but the National Assembly rejected all the nominations.

religious groups (Hwang 2002: 355-412; Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991; Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2006). However, the most significant consequence of the positive conceptualization of religion in the legal system was that, unlike the Document No. 19 and the Religious Corporation Law of neighboring China and Japan, no positive law was ever enacted for the Korean government to thoroughly regulate or even disassemble any religious organizations, especially by reason of national security or social instability. Being far from restricting religion to the private sphere, these legal decisions and/or non-decisions were at least implicitly intended to ‘support’ religion, by assuring rights and freedom of religion.

One may notice the crucial impact of the religious system on the formative period of the South Korean legal system. On the one hand, Christian elements, particularly the Protestant ones, were deeply embedded in that discursive construction of religion in the legal system; the term *Hananim* (God 하나님) appeared in Yi Yunyŏng’s prayer above clearly signified the Protestant God.¹¹⁶ This denoted that the Korean lawmakers’ understanding of deity at that meeting of the Constitutional Assembly was of the Christian conception of religion. Among other religions except Catholicism and Protestantism, Buddhism was the only one that corresponded with that discussion of religion. Confucianism was not included in this legal category of religion, but was classified as other socially well-accepted conceptions such as ‘traditional culture’ or ‘value system.’

On the other hand, it is a striking fact that such a positive conception of religion for ‘majority religions’ was accompanied by a strong refusal to include as ‘legal religion’ many

¹¹⁶ In vernacularizing God in modern Korea, there is a difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. Korean Catholics call God *Hanūnim* (하느님) or *Ch’ōnju* (천주), while most Korean Protestants use *Hananim* (하나님). For detail on this translationalism, see Baker, Donald. 2002. “Hananim, Hanūnim, Hanullim, and Hanōllim: The Construction of Terminology for Korean Monotheism,” *Review of Korean Studies* 5(1), pp.105-131.

minority religious traditions or organizations. Representatively, shamanism and ‘new religions’ were not categorized as ‘religion,’ but as “superstition” (*misin* 미신) and “quasi religion” (*yusa chonggyo* 유사종교), which were condemned as “deluding the world and deceiving the people” (*hokse mumin* 惑世誣民). They were frequently described as “sects” harming social stability as well as the very symbols of pre-modernity against the stable development of the national society. Up to now, both the district and constitutional courts of South Korea have not produced any case law that makes clear the definition of religion or the distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘superstition.’ However, given its case laws that indirectly mentioned this matter of defining religion, the Supreme Court of Korea took the position that superstition is not religion (O 2009: 266). The Supreme Court of Korea instructed that “the requested person ... frequently falls into *superstition* and *quasi religion* because of the quirky thinking of coming evil spirits” (Supreme Court of Korea 1990, my emphasis), that “the requested person behaved somewhat vulgarly, entertained a *superstitious belief*, and paid no attention to the family” (Supreme Court of Korea 1988, my emphasis), that “the contention is something for which the dogma of *pseudo-religion* aims, and its purpose is surreal and *deceiving the people* so that it cannot be rational” (Supreme Court of Korea 1975, my emphasis), that “the requested person believed in *superstition* and *witchcraft* and frequently quarreled with the neighbors because of bad disposition” (Supreme Court of Korea 1965, my emphasis), that “if they had a little suspicion, they dismissed it as *superstition*” (Supreme Court of Korea 1955, my emphasis), and that “though anyone had to break down *superstition* in the reality aiming for democracy, the defendant took as true what a mere female shaman said” (Supreme Court of Korea 1954, my emphasis).

In conclusion, the location of the post-colonial society in the Cold War world order itself had the significant regulatory power that peculiarly contextualized the notion of religion in the legal system. The South Korean legal system did not maintain any laws directly defining what religion was or was not. If such biased laws existed to discriminate against religions, then it would be unconstitutional. Unlike in the Japanese colonial legal system in which the legality of religion was often determined in terms of ‘national security,’ laws and legal decisions of the new republic were focused on religion from the viewpoints of ‘fundamental rights’ and ‘national development’ (Fitzgerald 1997: 108). In line with this legal structure *for* religion, positive semantics was constructed concerning religion *as* an important contributor to the modernization of national society. The prime lawmakers emphasized the importance of religion in laying the foundation of the Republic of Korea. Laws were passed to protect what was ‘religion.’ Interestingly, such a positive legal construction of religion was accompanied by a kind of dualism that distinguished ‘religion’ and ‘abnormal religion.’ The legal system has been biased in favor of majority religions, the so-called ‘world religions’ of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Kang 2009a: 32-39); however, marginal religious traditions or organizations such as Shamanism and ‘new religions’ were largely categorized using terms such as ‘superstition,’ ‘cult,’ or ‘evil religion’ (Kendall 2009: 1-11). So freedom for the minority religious organizations and representations that did not meet the standards displayed by the mainstream religions became limited outside the official discourse of ‘religion.’ Within such a legal system, the marginal religions tended to be declared unlawful so that they had to be regulated and under surveillance according to criminal laws. It can be said that the legal affirmation of religion in this post-colonial society was based on the political and religious premise that religious individuals and organizations outside that category of (normal) ‘religion’ were regarded to be anti-functional, anti-social, and/or illegal.

From the viewpoint of the religious organizations or traditions located outside the category, this kind of ‘biased’ legal construction of religion was exclusive, negative, and detrimental.

3. The Transformation of the Legal Notion of Religion in Post-Cold War South Korea

In chapter two, I described how since the 1980s South Korea society has increasingly transformed into a new ‘spiritual marketplace’ where more diverse and heterogeneous religious groups, identities, and representations coexist.¹¹⁷ The transformation of the religious landscape has been driven by a series of epochal social changes. The social and ideological developments ranging from democratization and globalization to the popularization of ‘alternative modernities’ discourse have in turn challenged the official conception of religion that was once constructed in the legal system of South Korea during the Cold War era.

The great advance of democratization in South Korea at the end of the 1980s has produced a marked effect in pushing a variety of social systems, e.g. companies, governments, institutions, and also various societal function systems, to be more autonomous, transparent, and thereby differentiated. In post-democratization South Korea, societal function systems, especially legal system, are compelled to autonomously operate by their own codes and programs all the more, while the operative autonomy of the other societal systems was greatly damaged by the authoritative political system, i.e. the military dictatorial governments before the democratization. The general wave of social reform spurred by the democratization has

¹¹⁷ The term ‘spiritual marketplace’ is coined and advocated by Wade Clark Roof. He wrote “the notion of a ‘spiritual marketplace’ is itself captivating, with the image of a quest for popular spirituality and especially its relation to such developments as feminism, the self-help movement, environmentalism, and so forth, but much less attention is given to why such spiritual concerns surface as they do today, how they find expression organizationally, and the larger issues of religion and modernity” (Roof 1999: 10). In particular, his book *Spiritual Marketplace* charts five emerging religious cultures in the U.S.A., i.e. dogmatists, born-again Christians, mainstream believers, metaphysical believers and seekers, and secularists.

more firmly restricted the interference between the differentiated societal systems, particularly the interference of the undemocratic political system with other social communication systems. This means that in democratized South Korea, the societal systems have become structurally coupled with each other in a way that more carefully considers and respects the operation of neighboring societal systems that construct their social environment (Luhmann 1990; Moon and Mo 1999).

Such socio-cultural milieu has been well matched with a newly emerging understanding of modernity. Along with the end of the Cold War, the nation's view on the 'modern style of life' has more and more been transformed toward the new frame of "multiple modernities" that focuses on the elements of Korea's native and traditional culture (Eisenstadt 2000; Eisenstadt, Riedel, Sachsenmaier 2002). This change in the modernity understanding has led to the expansion of positive awareness of the nation's indigenous culture. Particularly, this has brought about a change in the popular understanding of 'folk belief' (*min'gan sinang* 민간신앙) and/or Shamanism, both of which were once branded as 'superstition' or the 'residue of the pre-modernity,' but not 'true or normal religion.' They are still not included in the category of religion, but are now officially considered to be the 'repository of the national culture' that must be well preserved and passed down (Kendall 2009).

I think that to examine the religious transformation of contemporary South Korea, the social phenomenon called 'globalization' must be considered along with the change in the understanding of modernity. The global awareness of 'clash of civilizations' or 'inter-religious conflict' in the post 9/11 world has critically raised doubts about the constructive impact of religion on the public sphere of the national society. The increasing thirst for 'spirituality' has been presented through religious experiments, e.g. 'religious bricolage,' beyond the conventional forms of religion, especially the mainstream religions (Roh 2005:

269-271).¹¹⁸ In addition, the increase in the number of foreign workers and mixed marriages has introduced contemporary Koreans to foreign religious traditions that they rarely experienced before the 1990s, e.g. Hinduism, Islam, and Theravada Buddhism. The radical development of the communication and information technologies (CITs), e.g. the ‘Internet revolution’ and the popularization of transcontinental transportation, has resulted in facilitating such religious change (Huntington 1998; Kang 2003; Lyon 2000).¹¹⁹

These changes have together contributed to undermining the dominance of the official notion of religion, which is centered on the hegemonic religions – ‘world religions’ or ‘salvation religions.’ Corresponding to the religious change in the new social condition, the legal construction of religion has undergone the course of an adaptive re-construction. I argue that in democratizing South Korea, the transformation of the legal notion of religion is characterized by a paradoxical twofold process of both the structural liberalization toward diverse religious organizations and the diffusion of negative semantics on religious phenomena in the legal system.

(1) The Positive Structure of Religion: “Law Does Not Recognize ‘Good Religion’ or ‘Bad Religion’”

Contrary to neighboring East Asian countries like Japan and China, contemporary South Korea does not have specialized laws on religion, such as the Religious Corporation

¹¹⁸ A similar religious evolution toward ‘spirituality’ is observed in the neighboring East Asian country of Japan. See Shimazono, Susumu. 2004. *From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*. Melbourne, Australia: Trans Pacific Press.

¹¹⁹ Modern Korea has been a multi-religious society (Cho 2002: 11-22). I argue that before the 1990s Korean society was a ‘homogeneous multi-religious society’ in which various religious traditions coexisted within a racially and ethnically unilateral setting under the rule of the authoritarian regimes. I continue to argue that since the 1990s it has increasingly become a ‘heterogeneous or multicultural multi-religious society’ in which diverse ethnic and cultural minorities and their religious expressions are allowed to be visible and heard in a newly liberated cultural milieu under the rule of the democratic governments (O et al. 2007; Roh 2005: 202-231).

Law (*Chonggyo pöbinpöp* 宗教法人法) of Japan or Document No. 19 and the Regulation of Religious Affairs of the People’s Republic of China.¹²⁰ But under the Constitution which sanctifies the rights to freedom of religion,¹²¹ the Republic of Korea has maintained a variety of laws and ordinances that regard ‘religion as organization (Hwang 2002: 355-412; Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991: 137-182).’ Article 20 of the current South Korean constitution, which was last amended on October 29th, 1987, sets out that “(1) all citizens shall enjoy freedom of religion, and (2) no state religion shall be recognized, and religion and politics shall be separated.”¹²² Laws and regulations on religion as *non-profit corporations* (*piyöngni pöbin* 비영리법인) in South Korea include Civil Law Article 32 – Registration and Permission of Non-Profit Organization (*Minpöp che32jo – piyöngni pöbin üi söllip kwa höga* 민법 제 32 조 – 비영리 법인의 설립과 허가), Regulations on Foundation and Supervision for Non-profit Corporation under the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Cultural Heritage Administration (*Munhwagwan ’gwangpu mit munhwaje ch ’öngsogwan piyöngni pöbin üi söllip mit kamdok e kwanhan kyuch ’ick* 문화관광부 및 문화재청소관 비영리법인의 설립 및 감독에 관한 규칙), Foundation and Administration for Public-Service Corporation Law (*Kongik pöbin üi söllip unyöng e kwanhan pömyul* 공익법인의

¹²⁰ In Japan, almost all religious organizations are registered under the Religious Corporation Law (Ryu 2007: 46-51). If a certain religion causes a great damage to society in general, that religion can then be disassembled by this law. In the history of modern Japan, only one religion has been expelled out of the society by applying this law; it was the case of Aum Shinrikyo after it carried out the sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subways in 1995.

The Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC) has a legal system that is ‘tougher’ on religion than the Religious Corporation Law. The Document No. 19 recognizes that Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism are the only legal religions in the PRC (MacInnis 1989: 8-26). The Regulations on Religious Affairs, which was adopted at the 57th Executive Meeting of the State Council on July 7th, 2004, presents a thorough guide for the religious people to follow. For details of the Regulations on Religion Affairs, see http://www.purdue.edu/crcs/itemResources/PRCDoc/pdf/Regulations_on_Religious_Affairs_no426.pdf.

¹²¹ Not every country clarifies the principles of ‘freedom of religion’ and ‘separation of church (religion) and state (politics)’ in the form of a constitution. For example, although it has the clause to protect ‘freedom of religion and thought’, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not have a clear clause of separation of church and state as a way to protect ‘freedom of religion’ (Beaman 2002: 139).

¹²² Article 10 (1) of the Constitution specifies that “all citizens shall be equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic, social or cultural life on account of sex, religion or social status.”

설립운영에 관한 법률), Enforcement Ordinance of Foundation and Administration for Public-Service Corporations Law (*Kongik pöbin üi söllip unyöng e kwanhan pömyul sihaengryöng* 공익법인의 설립운영에 관한 법률시행령), Regulations on Delegation and Trust of Administrative Authority, Traditional Temples (*sachal*) Preservation Law (*Chönt'ong sachal pojonpöp* 전통사찰보존법), Enforcement Ordinance of Traditional Temples (*sachal*) Preservation Law (*Chönt'ong sachal pojonpöp sihaengryöng* 전통사찰법보존법 시행령), Confucian County School Property Law (*Hyanggyo chaesanpöp* 향교재산법), Enforcement Ordinance of Confucian County School Property Law (*Hyanggyo chaesanpöp sihaengryöng* 향교재산법 시행령), and other laws and regulations on taxation and architecture (Yi 2007: 23-34).

Although there is a constitutional clause that clarifies ‘separation of church and state,’ the legal structure of contemporary South Korea is constructed in a way that considers the freedom of ‘mainline religions’ to be more important than that of other ‘marginal religions.’ The four majority religious traditions – Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism – have effectively enjoyed the status of ‘officially recognized religion’ (*kong'ingyo* 公認敎) in South Korea. Based on this special status, these religious traditions legally acknowledged by the state have received most of the legally managed governmental supports, both financial and institutional (Kang 2009a: 35-39; Ko 2009: 83-84). In short, although the principle of separation of church and state is enshrined in the R.O.K Constitution, religions and the state are not clearly separated, but share a large ‘gray area,’ in which both kinds of affairs are greatly intertwined with each other.

This legal construction of religion has contributed to producing a consequence in which the public sphere of the nation-state is susceptible to the trespassing of religious ideas,

rituals, individuals and organizations. Many critical activities of those religious organizations are allowed to be visible in the legally managed sectors, e.g. military, police, prison, education, mass media, and politics (Korea Institute for Religion and Society 1991: 51-134). The clear visibility of religions in the public sphere indicates that the politics-religion separation is never assertive in post-Cold War South Korea. It is interesting to observe that recent social developments in the national society ranging from the development of democracy, to the rise of multiple modernities, and to the advance of globalization, all have significantly contributed to a structural expansion of ‘passive secularism’ beyond the majority religions in the current South Korean legal system. The conspicuous difference of the current passive secularism is that the legality of religion is extended to marginal religions. Next, I will discuss how a series of social changes since the end of the 1980s have contributed to the structural expansion of recognizing ‘religion’ in the South Korean legal system.

a. Democracy and New Religions

The striking development of democracy since the June Uprising in 1987 has given rise to an extensive wave of ‘social reform,’ which has in turn pressed for a more exhaustive differentiation of social fields in the national society. During the Cold War period, the authoritarian governments had a direct and penetrating impact on the operation of the national legal system in the South. The birth of the ‘dictatorial’ regimes was in itself realized by the ‘illegal’ military coups in 1961 and 1979. However, since the late 1980s, democratization has led to a great transformation of South Korean society, eventually resulting in the strengthening of the autonomy of the legal system. In the aftermath of the June Uprising, the current 10th constitution was amended in October 1987, and the Constitutional Court was

installed in September 1988 according to the amended constitution in order to secure a checks-and-balances mechanism against the legislative branch for the purposes of protecting the Constitution. Thus, determining whether religious individuals, groups, and/or behaviors are to be 'legal' or 'illegal' in post-democratization South Korea has come to more strictly depend on the internal logic of the legal system rather than other external factors including the political and religious.

What is the most distinguished element of the current legal system in dealing with the Korean religions? The legal system of democratized South Korea considers religion to be a 'corporation.' 'Laws on religion' mainly mean the 'laws on religious corporations.' "Religiously involved non-profit corporations" are the "corporations that mainly aim at pure belief activity, spread of religious doctrine, property management of religious organization, inter-religiously associated activities, and so forth" (Ryu 2007: 54). It is significant that the laws tend to support religious corporations financially and administratively (Ko 2009: 80-81). The current laws and regulations toward religious corporations have been designed to support them, by giving tax benefits to them and aiding their activities in favor of social development, national harmony, and preparation for the nation's reunification. In democratized South Korea, both the mainline religions and other minority religions such as Won Buddhism have enjoyed various legal privileges.

According to Kang Don-ku, a Korean religious studies scholar, Christian religions and Buddhism have enjoyed the status of 'officially recognized religion' in South Korea in that they have excessively benefited from the various legal decisions concerning religion (Kang 2009a: 34-39). During the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998), new legal decisions were enforced to allow religions as 'non-profit organizations' to have their own broadcasting

and nation-wide daily newspapers.¹²³ Secondary school teachers in charge of ‘religion education’ were for the first time granted the regular teacher’s license, and social welfare institutions owned and managed by religions also began to receive financial aid from his government. During the Kim Dae-jung government (1998-2003), the “Act on the Establishment and Management of Private Penitentiary” (*Minyŏng kyodoso tŭngŭi sŏlch ‘i-unyŏng e kwanhan pŏmnyŭl* 民營矯導所등의設置·運營에 관한法律) was passed through the National Assembly plenary session on December 28th 1999. This law allowed the religions to establish and manage a private prison on behalf of the government.¹²⁴ The Roh Moo-hyun government (2003-2008) legalized financially aiding the “Temple Stay program,” which was managed by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism.¹²⁵ In 2009, both the late Roh Moo-hyun’s ‘national funeral’ (*kungminjang* 국민장) and the late Kim Dae-jung’s ‘state funeral’ (*kukjang* 국장) were held by the priests of Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Won Buddhism.

It can be said that the democratization has changed the legal structure for the religious minorities, by allowing them to enter the official category of religion. Such derogatory terms as “superstition” (*misin* 미신) and “evil religion” (*sagyo* 사교) or “cult” (*saibi chonggyo* 사이비종교), which were once used to refer to marginal religious traditions and organizations, have become ‘unofficial’ in the current legal system. In 2006, the Daejŏn District Court

¹²³ Chapter five of the construction of religion in the mass media system discusses the religion-affiliated broadcastings and newspapers.

¹²⁴ The Hope Prison (*Somang kyodoso* 소망교도소, www.agapeprison.org), a Protestant institution, which was opened in December 2010, can accommodate up to 380 prisoners.

¹²⁵ The website of Korea Tourism Organization (http://www.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/SI/SI_EN_3_4_5.jsp) introduces foreigners to this religio-cultural program, along with other Korea-experience programs such as “Taekwondo,” “Korean Cuisine,” “Demilitarized Zone (DMZ),” and so on. The website introduces that “[a] Temple Stay is a cultural-experience program designed to help people understand Korean Buddhism better. Temple stays offer various kinds of practicing methods such as Yebul (ceremonial service involving chanting), Ch’amsŏn (Zen meditation), Tado (tea ceremony) and Paru kongyang (communal Buddhist meal service). Participants can find their ‘true self’ amongst the harmony of nature while staying at a temple. Temple Life, the experience of temples, is another program designed to help people understand Korean Buddhism and the life of monks better.”

(<http://daejeon.scourt.go.kr/>) made a judgment that, based on the principle of the state's neutrality toward religions, it is impossible to confirm whether or not a certain religion is “heresy” (*idan*) or “false” (*saibi*) (Daejŏn Distric Court 2006). The Kim Young-sam government aided “indigenous religious organizations” (*Minjok chonggyo tanch'e* 민족종교단체) that had originated in Korea, and the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments also funded “united religious organizations” (*Yŏnhap chonggyo tanch'e* 연합종교단체) that worked for ‘peace and harmony’ between religious organizations. In 1995, the Ministry of Culture and Sports published *Religious Rituals and Etiquette in Korea*, a report that its minister appraised as the very first book into which all Korea's religious rituals were compiled. In order to examine the religious lives, rituals, and ceremonies as well as inter-religious etiquette in South Korean society, the documentation recognized many marginal religions together with Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism – for example, Islam, the Eastern Orthodoxy, the Unification Church, Chonndogyo 天道教, Taejonggyo 大倮教, Chŭngsan'gyo 甌山教, Suun'gyo 水雲教, Kaengiŏng yudo 更正儒道, Kaksedo ch'ŏnji wŏlligyo 覺世道天地原理教, Ilgwando 一貫道, Ch'ŏnjonhwo 天尊會, Mirŭk taedo 彌勒大道, and so forth. It indicated that the dualistic boundary dividing religions into ‘religion’ and ‘non-religion’ had become unofficial (Ko 2009: 72). Military chaplaincy was for a long time limited to only three religions – Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. On March 24th, 2006, the Korean government allowed Won Buddhism, a Korean new religion, to participate in the military chaplaincy. Such derogatory expressions as “evil religion” (*sagyo*) and “quasi religion” (*yusa chongkyo*) rarely appear in the legal documentations of the current South Korean governments. However, given that newer religious organizations still expressed difficulties with obtaining the ‘corporation status’

recognized by the state, and government supports tend to favour Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, it can be said that the dichotomous perspective that makes normative distinction among religions still exists in an implicit form (Ko 2009:83-84).

In short, the advance of democracy has tended to strengthen the neutrality of the legal system toward religions in contemporary South Korea. The consolidation of differentiation of the legal system has resulted in the extension of a 'passive form of secularism' for the religious in general. The wave of social reform triggered by the democratization has structured the legal system not only to include the marginal religions into the category of 'normal' or 'lawful' religion, but also to recognize the activities of the mainline religions in the public sphere of South Korea. That said, the increase in the legal recognition of the autonomy of the religious system has taken on a concrete shape in a twofold direction. Not only has it continuously given the 'official recognition' to the mainline religions, i.e. Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Confucianism, in various institutional ways, but also legalized the marginal religions that, before the democratization, were once pejoratively categorized into 'pseudo-religion,' 'superstition,' and/or 'evil religion,' all of which were 'abnormal' and 'illegal' (Kang 2009a, 2002).

b. Korean Multiple Modernities and Shamanism

In modern Korea, the method of becoming a modern human (*hyōndaein* 現代人) was long equated with learning and internalizing the Western modernity. Koreans south of the thirty-eighth parallel in the Korean peninsula were liberated from Japanese colonialism as the U.S. armed forces advanced on the South in 1945, and came to closely observe the world super powers that play a crucial role in both the Korean War and the Cold War. To many

South Koreans, modernization came to simply mean the Westernization that was commonly exemplified by the Americans. Within that understanding of modernity, ‘religion’ was considered as significantly contributing to building a modern Korean nation, in particular independence and modernization of the Korean nation. Unlike in the Western world where the importance of religion had been decreased in the process of secularization, religion became a ‘symbol of modern civilization’ to many modernizing intellectuals in twentieth century Korea, except for the socialists and anti-government factions that had internalized a materialist, anti-religious worldview. For many of the modernizing intellectuals, reformers, and nationalists, religion was a critical resource to enlighten, emancipate, and strengthen the Korean nation in crisis (Jang 1992: 85-97; Kim 2006c). Within that context, Protestant believers played a great role in magnifying the idea that ‘doing religion’ meant to be exclusively loyal to a certain religion as well as to increase the scale of religious organization. However, folk beliefs or traditional religions such as Shamanism or Confucianism did not emphasize loyalty to a specific religious organization, and rarely forced their adherents to overtly reveal an exclusive religious identity. Rather, they had an obscure boundary with other secular and religious popular cultures. In that religious environment in which the Western religion took the lead, the folk religious culture became marginalized in the Cold War era. In particular, within the ‘old’ dualistic conception of modernity, Korea’s folk religious culture was often counted as the pre-modern residue that was supposed to be eliminated in the process of modernization, and was not included in that modern definition of religion (Kendall 2004).

Since the time of the opening of Korea’s ports in the nineteenth century, Shamanism had been the symbol of pre-modernity until the 1970s. Denounced as a critical obstacle to local morality and national progress, Shamanism had been dishonorably called *misin* (superstition). A good portion of Korean modernizing intellectuals observed Shamanism

from the perspective of a dualistic struggle between modern and pre-modern, civilization and barbarianism, and/or enlightenment and illusion. Employing the ‘modern’ standard of religion that included as religion only Sect Shinto, Buddhism and Christianity, the Japanese colonial legal system stipulated Korean Shamanism to be an unlawful “quasi religion” (*yusa chongkyo* 類似宗教). After the 1945 liberation, mainline conservative Protestants regarded it as “idolatry worship” (*usang sungbae* 偶像崇拜). Following this negative view on Shamanism, the authoritarian Park Chung-hee government drove the state-led modernization project called New Community Movement (*Saemaül undong* 새마을운동); it was not a rare to see in the 1970s local police men, the carriers of the state-led modernization project, wondering around in rural villages to search for the lawbreakers who performed Shamanic rituals such as *kut* (Kendall 2009: 1-11).

Since the 1980s, the criticism, suspicion, and self-reflection of such a modernization strategy have been widely proliferated in this post-colonial society. Instead, what has been increasingly popularized is the idea that Western modernity is one of many forms of modern life, and the ‘Korean modernity’ must be based on Korea’s own cultures, traditions, values and/or identities. The switch over to the alternative modernities has resulted in a change in the socio-political position of Korea’s native religious culture. Within the new frame of multiple modernities, the religious traditions that are believed to constitute Korea’s distinctive cultural foundation such as Shamanism or folk beliefs (*min’gan sinang* 民間信仰) have been re-discovered. Such a transformation of modernity understanding has contributed to the structural change on religion in the legal system, too. It has allowed the South Korean legal system to stretch its passive form of the secular-religious division, beyond the ‘world religions,’ to the native religious culture. Over time, the transformation of modernity

understanding has led to the legalization of Shamanic traditions and rituals. The rise of the multiple modernities discourse has increasingly allowed the South Korean legal system to recognize, as a significant part of ‘authentic’ Korean culture, the native popular religion and the phenomena of folk beliefs that includes geomancy (*p’ungsu* 風水), Confucian divination, and other village rituals (Cho 1994: 6). The current legal system has recognized Shamanism to be a repository of the Korean traditional culture as well as a main example of the Korean spirituality.¹²⁶ Now an indigenous religious tradition such as Shamanism has officially been counted as the ‘root’ or ‘prototype’ of ‘Korean-ness.’ Folk beliefs, once considered a hindrance to realizing modernity in the South, are no longer excluded from the category of the legal religious culture (O 2009).

Under the Cultural Properties Protection Law (*Munhwaje bojonpŏp* 文化財保護法), culturally significant shamans are selected and registered as “cultural property” (*munhwaje* 文化財) that contains the ‘prototypical’ elements of the Korean culture. Korean shamans have managed regional and national organizations in order to protect their rights and benefits and also to develop their activities and influence in the contemporary societal environment. Important cultural performers, especially the well-known shamans who are registered as cultural property, are frequently invited to various national and local festivities. Public shamanic *kut* is intended to celebrate abstract Korean culture and identity. Describing a scene

¹²⁶ With the change in the social paradigm on Shamanism, Korean shamans made an organizational effort to transform Shamanic tradition into a religion, but it has so far not succeeded. The government of South Korea does not effectively recognize the folk belief, which is often represented by Shamanism, as a religion, because Shamanism “makes a bad fit with commonplace notion of religion as church, congregation, or doctrine in the Christian sense. Shamans operate as free agents rather than an ordained clergy, and while some clients may develop enduring relationships with a particular shaman and the efficacious gods in her shrine, they feel little loyalty to an overarching religious abstraction. When efficacy fails, they might seek another shaman, might make offerings at a Buddhist temple, might attend a Christian church, or might do nothing at all” (Kendall 2009: 30).

of a kut, Laurel Kendall shows how Shamanism appears as a representative of the nation's distinctive culture in this post-colonial context:

“Echoing commentary in the printed program, the chairman [of a Shaman Advocacy Association] speaks of how the influence of foreign cultures has harmed Korea's own distinct traditions and affirms that this event keeps the memory of such practices alive. He describes how the original Asan¹²⁷ Tano¹²⁸ kut disappeared during the colonial period, borrowing for this small local revival the specter of colonial erasure that had haunted both the government's designated vanishing folk arts as “intangible cultural heritage” (muhyōng munhuaje) and the shamanic protest theater of the 1980s (Kendall 2009: 12).”

It is difficult to say that Shamanism is fully officialized as a religion in South Korea, particularly in its legal system, where the Christian sense of religion is still implicitly used as a standard of religion, since Shamanism does not have an organizational and theological systemicity that meets the standard derived from that conception of religion. As the nation has redoubled its exertions to materialize such modernity that is more firmly based on the ‘original’ Korean cultures and identities, however, Shamanism has been protected and nurtured as a valuable repository of Korean ‘unique’ culture and spirituality by the South Korean legal system.

c. Globalization and the Increased Visibility of Religion

Today's society is a world society in that functionally differentiated social systems such as politics and the economy operate globally across cultural and geographical distance (Luhmann 1995). A series of late-modern phenomena, ranging from popularization of long-

¹²⁷ Asan is a city in the South Chungch'ōng province of South Korea.

¹²⁸ *Tano* 단오 is a Korean traditional holiday that falls on the 5th day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. Since ancient times it has been a day of spiritual rites, and enjoyment with song, dance, and wine. Traditionally, women wash their hair in water boiled with sweet flag, believed to make one's hair shiny.

distance travel, to increase of transcontinental migration, and to radical development of the communication and information technologies (CITs) such as the Internet and its accompanying networking culture, all have greatly contributed to the global operation of differentiated communication systems. The social evolution called globalization¹²⁹ has brought about everyday contact between disparate religious traditions that once used to keep a great distance from each other for thousand years. This has in turn intensified diverse inter-religious encounters and conflicts in the post-Cold War world. According to Peter Beyer, the distinguished sociologist of religion and globalization, while structurally favoring the privatization of religion, the advance of the globalization provides fertile soil for the growth of the public influence of religion (Beyer 1990: 373).¹³⁰ In various political and economic crises triggered by the global transformation, religion can be a principal channel for both global and local communications of human groups such as ethnic communities and nation-states, in order to keep intrinsic identities and to achieve political or economic aims (Beyer 1994).

Such a global reconfiguration has contributed to the structural expansion of passive secularism¹³¹ toward religion in the Korean legal system. The globalization of society has multiplied ‘foreign’ religions, inter-religious encounters, and religio-political conflicts in

¹²⁹ Contemporary South Koreans may have quite mixed feelings about the term globalization. The Kim Young-sam government (1993-1998) “declared *seggyehwa* (globalization) as the leading doctrine for national governance in the second half of his reign. He also ratified the Uruguay Round agreement, and pursued an early, voluntary admission to the OECD. All these moves, predicted on complying with obligations therefrom, significantly enhanced South Korea’s international status. But the costs of the proactive globalization drive turned out to be high. The 1997 economic crisis, the bail-out by the IMF, and the placement of the national economy under IMF trusteeship may have wiped out the gains from an enhanced international status” (Moon and Mo 1999: 405).

¹³⁰ Examples of the growing public influence of religion include the political role of the Dalai Lama, the global religious leader, in the limited political situation of Tibet, the influence of Pentecostal churches on democracy, education, and economic development in various African regions, and the religions that help transcontinental migrants prepare for migration before departure, secure safety during travel, and adapt to new home after landing.

¹³¹ By ‘passive secularism,’ Ahmet Kuru means the situation that the state plays passive role by allowing the public visibility of religion. He considers that passive secularism prioritizes state neutrality on religious activities, especially in the public sphere (Kuru 2009: 10-14).

South Korea. Examples include the growing number of adherents of Hinduism, Islam, and Theravada Buddhism due to a growth of foreign workers from South Asia (Eom 2010: 17-37), the increase in mixed marriages called “multicultural family” (*Tamunhwa kajǒng* 다문화가정) (cf. O et al. 2007; Sö 2009), and the occurrence of diplomatic disputes due to the increase in overseas missionary works by the Korean Protestant fundamentalists (Kang 2010). These religio-cultural consequences have increasingly made the state realize that religion can be a critical element in maintaining continuous development in the new global situation. All these religious phenomena have come to cause the South Korean government to emphasize ‘peace and cooperation’ between religions as well as the positive role of religion in the public sphere, e.g. the reunification of two Koreas, in the 1990s and 2000s (Kang 2009a: 30, 31).

Eventually, after undergoing various consequences of globalization, the state began in earnest producing regulations and policies that support the public role of religion. Since the 1990s, the South Korean governments have tried both to establish a comprehensive policy frame for religious affairs in the country and to magnify international religious exchange, in particular between North and South Korea. In January 1990, The then Ministry of Culture (*Munhwabu* 문화부) for the first time created in its Religious Affairs Office (*Chongmusil* 종무실) a position of “Religious Affairs Support Officer” (*Chongmu tamdanggwān* 종무담당관) whose tasks included (1) survey and research on religious activities, (2) support for religious exchange with North Korea and the communist bloc, (3) support for overseas international religious organizations, and (4) support for activities of overseas missionaries and foreign missionaries. In June 1996, according to the “Regulation for the Ministry of Culture and Sports and its Affiliated Organizations – Presidential Decree No. 15065,” the

Religious Affairs Office replaced the position of Religious Affairs Support Officer with the “General Religious Affairs Section” (*Chongmu ch’onggwalgwa* 중무총괄과) that in turn took over the task of Religious Affairs Support Officer. The specific tasks of the General Religious Affairs Section included (1) establishment of and support for a comprehensive plan for religious policies, (2) survey and research on activities of religions, (3) support for religious exchanges between North and South Korea, (4) support for international religious exchanges, the (5) registration of and support for foreign religious organizations (Ko 2009: 67-68).

In 1994, the Religious Affairs Office published *Sourcebook of Religions in the North Korean Region* (*Pukan chiyŏk chonggyo charyojip* 북한지역 종교자료집). In May and September 1995, the then Ministry of Culture and Sports held a conference under the theme of “Tolerance and Peace for the National Community.” The discussed sub-themes were “Ideal Social Participation of Religions,” “Search for Inter-religious Harmony,” “Reform of National Consciousness and the Role of Religion,” and “Desirable Religious Exchange between North and South Korea.” The Korea Conference of Religion for Peace (KCRP, *Han’guk chonggyoin p’yŏnghwa hoeŭi* 한국종교인평화회의, <http://www.kcrp.or.kr>) helped the Ministry of Culture and Sports invite the North Korean representatives of religions to South Korea. The KCRP began in 1965, as the leaders of six religions – Protestantism, Buddhism, Won Buddhism, Chondogyo, Catholicism, and Confucianism – had a ‘dialogue meeting’ in Seoul. The founding purposes of the KCRP are to promote mutual understanding between religions in Korea, to make the Korean society better by researching and carrying out common tasks together with neighboring religions, and to contribute to world peace in close collaboration with all the religious people all over the world.

This meeting produced “Seven Principles for Religious Exchanges between North and South Korea” (*Nambuk chonggyo kyoryu ui 7wŏnch’ik* 남북종교교류의 7원칙). Those principles were (1) excluding politics, having worship at the center [of the business], (2) having humanitarian exchange such as reunion of separated families from North and South Korea, (3) meeting through a single window, (4) offering material supports, (5) reconstructing the church without misapprehension, (6) expanding participation of overseas Koreans, and (7) increasing the number of contacts. The Religious Affairs Office added to its task “processing and supporting foreign religious affairs that are related to Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam” in March 1998, and “surveying and researching religious activities that are related to Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam” in May 1999.

The state laws and policies have recognized and even supported the public activities of religion. In turn, both mainline and marginal religions have positively played a politically, economically, and philanthropically significant role in the official sphere of Korean society. Examples include the increased communication between the North’s Korean Christian Federation (KCF, *Chosŏn kŭrisŭdogyo yŏnmaeng* 朝鮮그리스도교聯盟) and the South’s National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK, *Han’guk kidokgyo kyohoe hyŏbŭihoe* 한국기독교교회협의회), the rice-giving movement in South Korean churches for the famine relief in North Korea, the visit of An Ho-sang, the leader of Taejonggyo, to North Korea on April 1995, and the attempted visits of Kim Soo-hwan, the cardinal of Korean Catholic church, and Song Wol-joo, the executive chief of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, to North Korea in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

To sum up, in accordance with the democratization, the acceptance of the multiple modernities frame, and the globalization of Korean society, the visibility of religion in the

public sphere of South Korea has been on the increase. The legal system has more and more respected the autonomy of the religious system and supported the public role of religions in the South Korea of today. The structural advance of passive secularism has come to legalize, beyond the mainline religious organizations, the marginal religions and their public activities. Such change toward religion in the South Korean legal system has enabled the religions to increase their public clout.

(2) The Negative Semantics of Religion: “Religion Troubles the Nation in the New Global Era”

During the Cold War era, the role and visibility of ‘religion’ was allowed to influence the ‘secular’ public sphere of South Korea that included its legal system. This ‘pro-religious’ legal structure went together with the positive semantics of religion, the legally hegemonic idea that religion was a significant source of stabilizing and civilizing the national society. Such pro-religious semantics was based the distinction between ‘legal religion’ and ‘illegal religion’ or ‘something pretending to be religion.’ Drawing a clear boundary between ‘(normal) religion’ ((*chōngsang*) *chonggyo* (정상종교)) and ‘abnormal religion’ (*pichōngsang chonggyo* 비정상종교) was the principal method that constructed the necessity and uniqueness of religion in the legal discourse. That said, the positive legal discourse of ‘religion’ was accompanied by, as its constructive requirement, a very negative semantics of ‘abnormal religion.’ The negative religious semantics was a discursive construction that directed modern Koreans to consider minority religious traditions or groups such as Shamanism or new religious organizations as ‘superstition’ or ‘evil religions.’ In that dualistic perspective of the religious, those marginal religions were imagined as anti-social, anti-human,

and harmful groups that could destroy families, blackmail persons out of their property, and/or seduce them away from their duty as members of the local and national communities. Again, such abnormal religious minorities offer themselves as a necessary condition for the normative religious majorities. This legal environment was in itself a hotbed for Protestantism, Catholicism, and Buddhism to grow rapidly. In short, the Cold War conception of religion in the legal system was constructed around the idea that the ‘world religions’ were normative and what did not conform to them was ‘not religion,’ dangerous, and therefore illegal.

In the twenty first century, the fringe religious cultures or groups have become a lawful part of the nation’s religious culture. As pointed out above, new modern projects that re-confirm diverse cultural identities are getting the spotlight in contemporary South Korea where the nation-state has been undergoing the social transformation of democratization and globalization. This has greatly helped expand the passive secularism to the marginal religious groups and traditions beyond the mainline religions. As the religious logic that excluded the ‘religious others’ by distinguishing them from the religious majorities has been extensively criticized since the 1990s, the marginal religions have become legally included in the ‘normal’ religious culture. They are no longer illegal in themselves; rather, the amended constitution and the newly founded constitutional court are entitled not only to protect the rights of the minorities including the religion ones, but also to play a constructive role in promoting the distinctive religio-cultural heritage.¹³²

¹³² In May 2006, a group of scholars and representatives of the civic society proclaimed the Cultural Charter (*Munhwa hōnjang* 문화헌장), which was immediately accepted by the South Korean government. It states that “all the citizens shall have equal rights, without any discrimination, to create culture, to participate in cultural activities, and to enjoy culture on the grounds of class, region, sex, education, physical condition, affiliation of group, *religion*, race, and so forth ... Cultural diversity is the basis of individual and collective identities and subjectivities, the principle of plurality that enriches society, and the foundation for peace and coexistence. ... The cultural and *religious minority* and minority groups including the sexual minority shall not be forced to assume any cultural identity against their own will” (Committee for Enacting the Cultural Charter 2006; my emphasis). The South Korean Cultural Charter is in line with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression in 2005, both

Then, what semantic change has accompanied the inclusive expansion of the legal structure toward the marginal religious cultures and groups? As the difference between the religious field and the secular realm has become more obvious in contemporary South Korea, the legal system has come to observe that the category of religion is crucial in determining social stability and national integration. In other words, I argue that, contrary to the positive semantics of religion in the Cold War legal system, the religious system is identified as probably going against the function of the legal system, i.e. the continuation of social stability for national development.¹³³ Particularly, the religious organizations demanding their members to be exclusively loyal to them are increasingly described as being anti-social, anti- or less-national, or sectarian in critical legal decisions in today's South Korea.

The function of the legal system for a society as a whole is to maintain normative expectations by performing dispute resolution (Luhmann 2004: 142-172). The evolution of functional differentiation in democratized South Korea has contributed to the increase in the autonomy of the legal system from the influence of the religious system, particularly mainline religions, in dealing with religious affairs. It is observed that whether certain religious activities are legal or illegal is increasingly determined in accordance with the very functional perspective of the legal system, i.e. the stabilization of the normative expectations, rather than in reference to religious logic or a 'theological perspective.' Such evolution of the 'legal observation' on religion has more and more allowed the legal system to watch religions as

of which were adopted by the UNESCO (Kang 2009a: 32-33, my emphasis).

¹³³ In China and Japan, 'religion' is still regarded as leading to being foreign or sectarian, but not nationalist or patriotic. Ryu Sung-min's comparative research (2007) on the religious laws in China, Japan, and Korea reveals that in China and Japan, the religion laws and regulations are aimed at thoroughly controlling and staking out religions. This reflects the suspicion on religion that still greatly continues in the official sphere of both East Asian countries. Peter Beyer presented in his seminal work that the two East Asian societies inevitably accepted the notion of religion from the West, but watched it coming into conflict with building their respective nation-states, because religion, a concept that was introduced to the two Asian countries under diplomatic pressure of the Western Powers, was considered to be harming the identity and development of the national societies. Therefore, religion, i.e. the religious system, was distinctively appropriated in China and Japan for constructing part of each national society rather than aiming for universalism beyond nationalism (Beyer 2006: 225-253).

‘sects,’ human groups that, often being indifferent to how the surrounding world sees them, are preoccupied with their own beliefs and interests. After all, in current South Korea, the impact of the legal system concerning the religious has come to focus upon resolving or preventing disputes within the religious system as well as between the religious system and other secular societal systems that construct its environment.¹³⁴

At the critical juncture longing for alternative modernities, the South Korean legal system has come to observe religions as ‘suspicious organizations’ that tend to feud or collide with the secular public sphere rather than contribute to the stable development of the national society. The religious groups have increasingly appeared to stick to divergent worldviews and identities that are not parallel to the new modern project of the national society. The religious organizations are widely discussed as being liable to run counter to the functional purpose of the legal system – the stable maintenance of the social normative expectations. Over time, quite similar to the national suspicion of ‘religion’ in China and Japan of the twentieth century (Beyer 2006: 225-253), what has increasingly become diffused in the democratized national society is a normative discursive construction that religion is indifferent to the reconstruction of a Korean nation-state for the new global era. It seems paradoxical that such reconstruction of the legal semantics of religion springs from the liberalization of the legal structure toward religion.

In order to articulate this semantic change about religion in the legal system, I will look into two judicial precedents in which both mainline religion – conservative Protestantism – and marginal religion – new religions – are involved respectively.

¹³⁴ Basically, religions, i.e. religious organizations, are regulated by Article 32 of the Civil Law. Hwang Kyoan (2002)’s *Chonggyo hwaltong kwa punjaeng ūi pōmnyuljisik* 종교활동과 분쟁의 법률지식 (Legal knowledge on Religious Activities and Disputes) is an comprehensive examination of the laws and legal disputes in which Protestantism and Buddhism are involved in today’s South Korea.

In the era of the Cold War, Protestantism actively proselytized Koreans and led the Korean religious market, thereby showing other religions how to ‘behave’ as a religious organization in a modern context (Baker 2006, 2002). However, in the South Korea of the twenty-first century, Protestantism stands in the center of intense social debates and conflicts. In the nation’s legal system, far from being considered to be the model of ‘modern religion,’ Protestantism is increasingly signified as ‘too self-interested’ sectarian group that lacks a sense of social responsibility as well as shows disrespect to fellow Koreans who have different religious worldviews or memberships (Lee 2006b). The negative semantics has been constructed around public institutions managed by the Protestant church, e.g. Protestant affiliated schools infringing upon religious freedom of the students who do not believe in that specific religion.

On the other hand, although they were once called “pseudo religion” or “cult” (*saibi chonggyo*) or “heresy” (*idan*) which was not included in the category of ‘normal religion,’ minority religions have now been constructed as a formative part of the official realm of religion as laws and legal regulations do not differentiate ‘legal religion’ and ‘illegal religion’ in the post-Cold War legal system. The legal system has come to have no interest in differentiating ‘good’ and ‘bad’ religions (O 2009). Therefore, their religious activities are legal so that laws must protect their freedom of religion – the constitutional right. Nevertheless, it is still questionable whether their religious liberty is fully protected in national society. Although political democratization has greatly contributed to institutionalizing basic human rights for the minorities in South Korea, this still young democracy tends to ignore the constitutional assertion of the religious fringe for their ‘novel’ rights, especially in cases in which the rights claim appears as conflicting with the crucial interest of the nation’s majority. For example, when such a public issue as a national security

matter is challenged by the religious pacifists, e.g. the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-Day Adventists, their civil rights come to be in danger easily, and their loyalty to their religions is legally interpreted as "being selfish" or an "act of betrayal of the Father Land" in the official legal discourses.

Judicial precedents are the critical loci where the official discursive reality of religion is constructed in the legal system. Among various case laws dealing with the relationship between religion and secular society, I will in detail examine two cases of the Supreme Court of Korea and the Constitutional Court of Korea that attracted a great deal of public attention in South Korea in the 2000s. These legal cases are concerned with the fields of 'education' and 'military' respectively, both of which play a critical role in forming and re-forming the identity of the Korean nation-state. I will first examine the precedent on the problem of 'religious education' in a secondary school that is affiliated with a Protestant foundation, and then will look into the case of religiously motivated 'conscientious objection to military service.' While the former is a resistance of a high school student with no religious belief to an established religion of Protestantism, the latter is a resistance of minority religions, e.g. the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, to the national obligation to participate in military activities. The two cases share commonalities in that they are related to human rights and became well-known in the 2000s.

a. The Antisociality of Protestantism: "The Religious People Do Not Respect Others Not Belonging to Their Own Religion"

As in most advanced industrial societies, secondary education is compulsory in South Korea. With the exception of the schools that specialize in subjects such as foreign languages,

arts, and physical education, most private secondary schools effectively constitute part of the public education system, which is funded and supervised by the state education authorities. The educational system of South Korea has laws and regulations that prohibit religious education propagating a specific religion in religion-affiliated schools.¹³⁵ Thus, according to both the Constitution and the Education Act, religious education should not infringe on students' freedom of religion, and their freedom whether or not to believe in a religion must be protected in the schools. However, the religion-affiliated secondary schools tend to proselytize their students who do not share the faith of the schools' religion, by forcing them to participate in religious rituals as well as to receive theological education.

Daekwang High School¹³⁶ is a Christian school in Seoul, which is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (*Taehan yesugyo changnohoe* 大韓예수교長老會).¹³⁷ It was identified that the school forced its students to participate in Protestant rituals, events, and performances. The entrance ceremony, opening and ending ceremonies of the academic term, and the graduation ceremony were all performed in the style of Protestant ritual that included prayers, hymns, minister's sermon, and the like. Every weekday morning, the school had the "Time of Piety" (*Kyönggönhoe sigan* 경건회시간) for five minutes or so, in which students had to sing hymns, pray in silence or verbally, read passages from the Bible, and so forth.

¹³⁵ The Education Act (*Kyoyukpöpp* 教育法) of R.O.K was enacted in 1949, which has been replaced by the Framework Act on Education (*Kyoyuk kibonpöpp* 教育基本法) enacted in 1997. On equal opportunity of education, Clause 1 of Article 4 of the Framework Act on Education lays down that "no citizen shall be treated with discrimination in education for reasons of sex, religion, faith, race, social standing, economic status or physical conditions, etc." On educational neutrality, Clause 1 of Article 6 of the Framework Act on Education provides that "education shall be operated to perform its functions according to the purpose of the education *per se* and it shall not be used as a tool for propagating any political, factional or individual biased views," and Clause 2 of Article 6 also provides that "(2) No school founded by the State or local governments shall conduct religious education in favor of any particular religion."

¹³⁶ Daekwang High School under the umbrella of Daekwang Academy (*Taegwang hagwönn* 대광학원) was founded on November 12th, 1947 by Han Kyung-chik, a Templeton prize winner of 1992 as well as a well-known Protestant minister in South Korea. The late Rev. Han also founded Youngnak Presbyterian Church, which now has a congregation of about 60,000. It is one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the world.

¹³⁷ Its website is <http://www.pck.or.kr/Eng/Main/engMain.asp>. Among many Presbyterian denominations, it is commonly known as the t'onghap 통합 denomination in Korea.

“Wednesday service” (*Suyo yebae* 수요일예배) was performed weekly, and Easter service and Thanksgiving Day service were conducted during regular school hours. Even though the Ministry of Education has stipulated that “when setting up religion classes, the schools should make up plural subjects including other subjects so that students should have choices,” Daekwang High School made up no alternative subjects, but offered the religion class only. Therefore, all these activities happening in Daekwang High School came to clash with a variety of laws such as Article 20 of the Constitution (on freedom of religion) and Clause 2 of Article 6 of the Framework Act on Education (on neutrality of education).

Mr. Kang Ŭisök, a then senior student as well as the president of the student council, had frequently expressed to both his teachers and colleagues his dissatisfaction with this sort of forced religious education. In the end, just before a religious service on Wednesday morning, June 16th, 2004, Mr. Kang publicly announced through the school’s broadcasting system that he would not attend activities as ceremonies for a specific religion. This led to the result that Mr. Kang was expelled from Daekwang High School on July 8th, 2004.¹³⁸ Then, he sued Daekwang Academy and the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the competent government authority of Daekwang High School, for violating his freedom of religion, and won the case only against Daekwang Academy on October 5th, 2007.¹³⁹ Dissatisfied, on May

¹³⁸ Rev. Ryu Sangt’ae, the chief chaplain as well as a religion teacher of Daekwang High School at the time, felt guilty about this situation and his student Mr. Kang. On July 9th, 2004, he blew the whistle on ‘intramural freedom of religion,’ by writing on the Internet site of Daekwang High School (<http://www.dgh.hs.kr/>). Daekwang High School soon removed Rev. Ryu from the position of the school chaplain. In order to resist forced religious education, Mr. Kang also fasted for forty-six days from August 11th to September 25th, 2004. Eventually all of these affairs ended up provoking a great controversy in South Korea in 2004 (Ryu 2005: 5-6, 225-267). *Hangyŏrhe 21* (*Han’gyŏre 21* 한겨레21) and *Sisain* (*Sisain* 시사인), two liberal Korean weekly magazines for current affairs, named Mr. Kang Ŭisök the “person of the year” in 2004.

¹³⁹ Before this lawsuit, Mr. Kang petitioned the National Human Rights Commission of Korea to request intramural freedom of religion on July 13th, 2004. He also filed in the Seoul Northern District Court for “provisional disposition to suspend the dismissal from school and to preserve the status” on July 29th, 2004. As on August 31st, 2004, the Seoul Northern District Court gave its decision that until the final decision was given on the case, the “validity of the dismissal from school” was suspended. So Mr. Kang returned to his school as a ‘temporary student’ on September 2nd, 2004. He later won on this case on January 21st, 2005.

8th, 2008, he appealed to the Seoul High Court against its decision, hoping to win against both defendants. Contrary to his hope, he lost the case against the two defendants this time. He made a final appeal to the Supreme Court of Korea on May 27th, 2008, and won only against Daekwang Academy on April 22nd, 2010.

Then, how did the Supreme Court of Korea understand the religious education conducted in Daekwang High School, especially regarding Mr. Kang's claim for damages to his freedom of religion? The Protestant institution was discursively constructed as offending the basic rights of the juvenile in the legal argument. The Supreme Court ruled as follows:

“Because it seems that even though the religious activities carried out by Daekwang High School were not religious education as the universal liberal arts, but sectarian activities for propagation of the religious doctrines of Protestantism through such methods as prayers, sermons, hymns, and so on, the plaintiff with no religious belief could not freely make a decision whether to participate in the activities, because the above mentioned school created an atmosphere in which students were unable to refuse to attend [the sectarian activities] by giving disadvantage to students who did not participate in those activities, it is difficult to judge the measure as considering the basic rights of the plaintiff who has no religious belief” (Supreme Court of Korea 2010).

Regarding the content and method of the ‘religion course,’ the Supreme Court of Korea clarified as follows:

“Due to that, although the religion class implemented in Daekwang High School was sectarian education based on the Christian doctrine, the school did not give the students an opportunity of choices by not opening an alternative class [to the religion class], contrary to the notification of the Ministry of Education, did not secure the substantial autonomy in taking part [in the religion class], and even did not gain the prior consent, ... it is difficult to admit that the proceeding of such religion class was the action that considered the limit [of the sectarian education] caused by the basic rights of the plaintiff's freedom of religion” (Supreme Court of Korea, 2010).

Thus, the Supreme Court of Korea concluded this case as follows:

“After all, the religious education implemented in the defendant school corporation is the one that exceeded the limit that can be tolerated in view of the sound common sense and legal sentiment of our society, and must be an illegal act that arrogated the personal legal benefit in relation to the plaintiff’s religion. And since, given that it is empirically apparent that all the students enrolled by the compulsory assignment do not have the same religion as that of the school, it is predictable that the students’ personal legal benefits would be violated in the case that the above mentioned type of religion education was conducted, and this violation could be avoided, then, the negligence is also recognized. Furthermore, it can be easily inferred that, because of this, the plaintiff who did not have the same religion as the founding philosophy of the defendant school corporation suffered from mental anguish” (Supreme Court of Korea 2010).

Therefore, the Supreme Court judged that Daekwang High School illegally conducted ‘theological education’ rather than the ‘science of religion,’ contrary to the laws and regulations for ‘neutral’ religious education. There were a series of laws to force the educational authorities, i.e. Seoul Metropolitan Government, to protect Mr. Kang’s religious freedom, by regulating Daekwang High School so as not to violate the student’s freedom of religion. On guidance and supervision, Article 6 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (*Ch’ojungdŭng kyoyukpŏp* 초·중·등·교·육·법)¹⁴⁰ defines that “public and private schools shall be guided and supervised by the Superintendent of the Office of Education,” and Article 7 defines that “the Superintendent of the Office of Education may execute academic guidance on the operation of the educational curriculum and the methods of teaching and learning at school.” In order to ensure correction or change, the first clause of Article 63 stipulates that “where a school violates education related laws and regulations, orders or school rules regarding the facility, equipment, class, academic affair and other matters, its competent offices may order the founder and operator of the school to correct or change it within a certain period of time.” Despite these laws, the Superintendent of the Office of Education, i.e.

¹⁴⁰ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was legislated in December 1997.

the Seoul Government, does not assertively regulate the religion-affiliated schools and their method of religion education in order to secure the secularity of public education.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court of Korea judged that it was not unlawful that the Seoul Metropolitan Government did not supervise well Daekwang High School, allowing it to violate Kang Ŭisŏk's religious freedom.

By damaging the principle of the secularity of public education, these religion-affiliated schools have abused the legal principle that religious neutrality should be guaranteed in the religion-based school. The Supreme Court of Korea critically recognized that, although the human rights of the adolescents had a special protection, Daekwang High School systemically created the mood in which the teenage students had been unable to refuse to attend the sectarian events, so that their rights of religious liberty had been violated. As long as the Seoul Metropolitan Government does not thoroughly supervise religious education in the religion-affiliated schools, it is highly possible that similar forms of illegal activities would continue to happen. Of course, such legal conflicts and controversies will contribute to the expansion of negative discourse on religion in the legal system.

Having a 'double identity' as a constitutive part of the public education system as well as private religious institutions seeking to convert their students, the religion-affiliated schools have been a battle zone of the religious-secular discord in South Korea today. As national awareness and needs of human rights and church-state separation have radically increased since democratization, the public role of mainstream religion has been articulated as 'not universal' or 'not public' in the legal system. The relations of religion and the secular sphere have been discoursed as being 'complicated,' 'chaotic,' and/or 'problematic.' So far, there seems to be no clear evidence that the Protestant secondary schools have halted proselytizing to the youth. Mainline Protestantism, which once greatly contributed to the development of

modern Korea, has been criticized as a ‘perilous interest group’ that may illegally threaten the citizens’ freedom of religion in contemporary South Korea.¹⁴¹

b. “The Cultic Anarchist”: Religious Objection to the National Obligation

The development of democratization, globalization, and multiple modernities has brought about the re-construction of legal structure that does not differentiate ‘just religion’ and ‘unjust religion.’ However, in spite of such structural change in the legal system, practices of the minority religions opposing the mainstream ideologies of the national society are frequently signified as being “treasonous” or “non-ethical” in the nation’s legal system. A typical example of this is the legal criticism against the religious minorities’ conscientious objection to military service. How is the negative legal semantics against this kind of religious action constructed notwithstanding the enhanced inclusiveness of the legal structure?

One of the most significant consequences of the Korean War and the Cold War was the establishment of anti-communism as an official national ideology in the military dictatorial era. Anti-communism has still played a great role in ‘sacralizing’ the compulsory military service in this divided nation. In this ideological context, conscientious objection to military service has been stigmatized as an ‘unpatriotic behavior,’ one that is considered to insist an individuals’ own interests and rights without taking into consideration the country’s special concern for the national security. The conservative majority, in particular the mainline religious groups, tend to go on othering or even further demonizing the conscientious

¹⁴¹ Such negative discourse on religion has augmented a demand to replace ‘passive secularism’ with ‘assertive secularism’ in the public sphere of South Korea. Since the democratization, there has been a growing voice to enact “religion corporation law” in Korean civil society, in order to practice ‘equality of religions’ and more clearly separate between the state and religions, and regulate the illegal activities of the majority religions (Lee 2007a).

objectors whose decisions are based on their respective non-mainstream religious belief, by condemning them as ‘cult,’ ‘fanatic,’ or ‘heresy.’ In the situation in which conscientious objection to military service of such religious minorities as Seventh-Day Adventists and the Jehovah’s Witnesses has not been recognized by the national society, legal sanctions have been continuously imposed on them even after the democratization. Since 1950, more than sixteen thousand conscientious objectors to military service have been imprisoned in South Korea. As of March 2011, eight hundred nineteen South Koreans are imprisoned for conscientious objection to military service. Recently, conscientious objection to military service has been argued by both non-religious individuals who have peace or antiwar convictions and the believers of majority religions such as Buddhism and Catholicism (Hong 2005: 15; Jang 2005: 89; Sin-Yŏn 2011).

Mr. Chung Chun-kuk, a conscientious objector to military service, was imprisoned for seven years and ten months from the age of twenty one to thirty three between 1969 and 1981, because of his religious belief as a Jehovah’s Witness. But until the middle of 2001, more than eighty percent of conscientious objectors to compulsory service were sentenced to three years’ imprisonment or more through military trial by Article 14 of the Military Criminal Law. Since the middle of 2001, the civil courts have sentenced them to eighteen to twenty-six months’ imprisonment by applying the Military Service Law instead of the Military Criminal Law. Because, according to the Military Service Law, the duty of military service is exempted only in the case that more than one and a half years is sentenced, the civil courts have sentenced imprisonment close to one and a half years (The Presbyterian Church of Korea Human Rights Committee 2004: 7).

On April 22nd, 1998, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1998/77, the Magna Carta for the right of conscientious objections to military service,

affirmed that anyone has the right to engage in conscientious objection to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, which is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Both the 58th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights on April 23rd, 2002 and the 60th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights on April 19th, 2004 *adopted* a resolution to call upon states to review their current laws and practices in relation to conscientious objection to military service in light of Resolution 1998/77. The Republic of Korea is one of the fifty-three members of the UN Commission on Human Rights (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2004, 2002).

Soon after *Hankyoreh 21*, a weekly magazine for current affairs, produced a series of articles in relation to religiously based objection to compulsory military service in February 2001, conscientious objection to military service emerged as a critical social issue in South Korea. Before it became publicized in 2001, conscientious objection to military service had been overruled by the Korean courts as a “limited right on the basis of the positive law.” But since the issue became known to the general public, new light has been shed on the approach that treats it as one of the “basic rights” or “human rights.”¹⁴²

In the changed context in favor of the minorities’ rights, on January 29th, 2002, Judge Pak Sihwan of the Seoul Southern District Court recommended to the Constitutional Court of Korea to decide on the constitutionality of Article 88 of the Military Service Law, which had been applied to overrule conscientious objection to military service. For the first time in Korean legal history, on May 21st, 2004, Judge Lee Jōngryōl of the Seoul Southern District Court acquitted three Jehovah’s Witnesses of their conscientious objection to compulsory

¹⁴² The representative examples of this case are the two different books of the same title *Yangsimjōk byōng ’yōk ’kōbu* 양심적 병역거부 (Conscientious Objection to Military Service). One volume was edited by An Kyōnghwan and Chang Pokhūi in 2002, and the other the same name was edited by Lee Sōg’u in 2005.

military service. Whereas the previous decisions gave precedence to ‘national security’ or ‘social order,’ Judge Lee’s decision suggested that ‘freedom of conscience’ must be the ‘natural right of human’ that comes before any.¹⁴³ Keeping pace with Judge Yi, on May 28, 2004, Judge Min Byōnghōn at the Sungnam Branch of the Suwon District Court refused to produce a warrant for a Jehovah’s Witness who had objected to the military duty because of his religious belief.

However, this liberal legal approach has been in limbo, since the Supreme Court of Korea convicted a Jehovah’s Witness of their religiously motivated evasion of the military service on July 15th, 2004. And also on August 26th, 2004, the Constitutional Court of Korea decided that it was constitutional that the first clause of Article 88 of the Military Service Law had not recognized conscientious objection to military service. The Constitutional Court’s conviction for conscientious objection to military service presupposed ‘legal order’ and ‘national community’ as preceding ‘conscience’ on the grounds that the practice of fundamental rights should not jeopardize the legal order.

“Freedom of conscience is ... part of the order of the positive law. ... Practice of the fundamental rights should be done within the range that makes it possible to live together with others in a national community and does not jeopardize the nation’s legal order. Therefore, guaranteeing freedom of conscience does not mean that individuals are bestowed rights to refuse obedience to the legal order on the grounds of conscience. ... Individual conscience is an extremely subjective phenomenon, which includes irrational, unethical, and unsocial conscience. Taking into account that all kinds of consciences are protected on the grounds of freedom of religion, the idea that the legal order of the nation is valid so far as it does not oppose individual conscience means dissolution of the legal order and further dissolution of the national community” (The Constitutional Court of Korea, 2004).

¹⁴³ Judge Lee Jōngryōl’s decision was a case of ‘liberal construction of law’ that puts stress on individuals’ human rights. Contrary to the liberal construction of law, ‘authoritarian construction of law’ prescribes individuals’ rights to be part of ‘constitutional order’ or ‘positive law’ (Yi 2005: 64-67).

Not only did the Constitutional Court ruling define freedom of conscience to be a conditional right rather than a universal right, but also recognized it to be possibly causing a state of anarchy. It seems closer to an authoritarian judgment rather than a defense of the minorities' rights. Hence, under the guise of 'national security' or the 'interests of the national community,' both of which are largely supported by the religious majorities, conscience and freedom of the religious minorities can be ignored any time in South Korea. In a similar fashion, the Supreme Court of Korea judged that if it had conflicted with 'other legal interests,' freedom of conscience had to be limited as follows:

“Freedom of constituting conscience and freedom of decision by conscience are absolute freedoms in that they [i.e. conscience] cannot be restricted or there is no need to restrict them since they exist in the mind. Otherwise, freedom of practicing conscience by passive nonfeasance as claimed by the defendant may clash with other interests and purposes of the law in the course of following the conscience. At this point, it may be necessary for this practice to be attended with restriction. In this case, it need not be directly said that the essential content of religious freedom is infringed upon the grounds that freedom of practicing conscience by passive nonfeasance is restricted. ... In particular, taking account of our special and actual situation of national security in which, due to the division of Korea into north and south, insecurity and the impossibility of predicting future stability still exist as the military confrontation between the North and the South continues, the duty of national defense cannot be exceeded even if it [i.e. freedom of conscience] is more emphasized” (The Supreme Court of Korea 2004).

This legal discourse considers that the “our special and actual national security situation” is more important than individuals' rights of “freedom of following conscience” and “freedom of religion.” It even seems that the sentence is based on the premise that demanding freedom of religion may clash with the political condition of Korean society. The “division of Korea into north and south” and the “duty of national defense”¹⁴⁴ are presented as

¹⁴⁴ Since 2000, conscientious objectors to military service have done 'alternative services' instead of the military service in Taiwan, the East Asian country that has been faced with a critical national security situation similar to that of South Korea (An and Chang 2002: 285-320).

the reasonable reason for the restriction on freedom of conscience and religion. In this legal discussion, the request of religious freedom would be mostly viewed as a critical action of deconstructing the national society in crisis so that the religious minorities demanding their own religious freedom would be described as an ‘anarchistic sect’ that has no sense of social and national responsibility. In the end, the religious liberty of these religious pacifists comes to fall outside the realm of ‘lawful’ freedom of religion. The beliefs of the Jehovah’s Witness, that have been condemned as ‘heresy’ by the majority ‘orthodox’ South Korean Protestants in the field of religion, are also made illegal in the secular legal discourse.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, they have become once again stigmatized as ‘social heresy’ or ‘cult’ by such a legal standard even in democratized South Korea.

In order to examine how the South Korean judiciary constitutes legal semantics of religion, I looked into the two legal precedents in connection with secondary education and the obligatory military service, both of which greatly stimulated social concern for freedom of religion as well as the separation between religion and the secular. At the turn of the twentieth century, the nation’s understanding of modernity and its own place in the new global order has radically changed in South Korea. In this socio-cultural milieu, the place of ‘religion’ in national society has changed from a “symbol of modern civilization” to a “critical social problem” that can interrupt sustainable development of national society. The discursive construction of religion in the South Korean legal system has articulated a conflictive process of religious change, particularly the process in which the notion of ‘religion’ has been reconstructed as reflecting the diversified religio-political context of contemporary East Asian society.

¹⁴⁵ With some exceptions, most of the conscientious objectors are the Jehovah’s Witness believers in today’s South Korea. Encountering the state’s strong restriction, the Seventh Day Adventist denomination in South Korea has given up the dogma of objecting to military service since the mid-1960s (Chin 2005: 98-100).

4. Concluding Remarks

Throughout the modern history of Korea, the religious and legal systems have influenced one another, being structurally coupled with each other. With its laws and regulations based on the legal/illegal code, the legal system has greatly contributed to the formation and re-formation of the notion of religion in the Korean public sphere. The change in the legal conception of religion has substantially reflected the transformation of Korea and its religious traditions and organizations in modern global society. The semantic and structural conceptualizations of religion in the Korean legal system have not always been consistent with each other through the four different periods of modern Korea ranging from the opening era (the latter nineteenth century – 1905/1910) and the Japanese colonial time (1905/1910 – 1945) to the Cold War era (1945 – 1987/1992) and the democratization era (1987-1992 – present).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the two legal principles of ‘freedom of proselytizing’ and ‘separation of religion and politics’ were for the first time introduced to Korea in the process through which Korea entered into an international treaty with France. So it was slowly legalized that religion should be separated from the Confucian state institutions. However, at the turn of the twentieth century when the modern legal system was still being constructed, a good portion of modernizing bureaucrats and intellectuals found that a lack of religion was the fundamental cause of Korea’s crisis. In a Confucian dualistic perspective, the Korean nationalists regarded religion as preceding material conditions including technologies and international political dynamics, and sought for a revival of the Korean nation through developing religion and ethics.

Contrary to such a ‘religious’ approach to the religion-secular relation before the colonization, the Japanese legal system approached any religious organizations in colonial Korea from the perspective of national duty or ‘State Shinto.’ With that agenda, a variety of laws were enacted to clearly differentiate ‘legal religions’ and ‘illegal religions.’ Not only were the illegal religions, many of which were Korean aboriginal religions, prohibited, but also the legal religions had to be tightly regulated by the laws, being assertively separated from political and public affairs. In the process of structuring and re-structuring the colonial legal system in the changing political situation of East Asia, many religious organizations were described as possibly being a crucial hindrance to the Japanization (*Nihonka* 日本化) of Korea, by connecting them with Korean nationalism and the foreign forces.

Unlike the negative construction of religion in the Japanese colonial legal system, the South Korean legal system, which greatly internalized the ideologies of the Cold War order, structurally and semantically conceptualized the utility of religion for modernizing the underdeveloped East Asian society. The legal system whose constitutional foundation was imbued with the Christian spirit of the nation’s founding fathers was structured to encourage religion to take part in the nation building of South Korea. Corresponding to the positive legal structure of religion, religion was also counted as greatly helping modernization of the underdeveloped society and thereby the stabilization of the Korean nation in the face of the threat of North Korea and its strong communist neighbors, i.e. China and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the establishment of such a positive construction of religion in the Cold War legal system made it a proviso that the religious minorities were illegal so that they were not religion, but something pretending to be religion. That is, the legality of religion was based upon the premise of the illegality of ‘superstition’ or ‘evil religion.’ Again, the legal conceptualization of ‘good’ religion came to exclude something that might have counted as

religion, and in that context constructed the Christian centered concept of religion. In this biased conception of religion, many marginal religions could not enter into the legal field of religion.

Since the 1980s, a series of social developments caused a great paradoxical change in the legal notion of religion. Democratization, globalization, and the emergence of multiple modernities have increasingly advanced the functional differentiation of the Korean legal system. The evolution of the legal system has resulted in making identifying ‘normal religion’ and ‘abnormal religion’ of no legal interest so that any religions are legal and their freedom of religion must be protected. Such legal transformation has contributed to the structuralization of the legal protection of religious minorities’ liberty, the re-discovery of Korea’s aboriginal culture, and the re-location of religion, i.e. the religion system, in Korean society. Thus, the folk beliefs and the marginal religions, which were once unlawful, are no longer ‘superstition,’ ‘pseudo religion’ and/or ‘evil religion.’

While the structural discrimination dividing hegemonic religions from minority religions has greatly decreased in the current legal system, a negative legal semantics of religion has increased at the same time. As it has functionally evolved, the legal system has become more independent from the influence of the majority religions and their religious ideas and views. So rather than participating in ‘theological’ debate, the legal system has suspiciously observed religion more and more in terms of whether or not a religious organization de-stabilizes the society and its normative expectation. In that legal perspective, religious organizations, whether large or small, are somewhat reasonably described as ‘self-seekers’ or ‘sectarians’ who are not interested in guaranteeing the security of the public sphere and defending the national community against external threat. It is observed that the

entire religious system is negatively constructed in the legal perspectives of de-stabilizing the operation of the national society in contemporary global society.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Re-formation of the Korean Notion of Religion in the Educational System

Contemporary education is basically constructed as one of the functionally differentiated societal systems of modern society. In the Luhmannian perspective, it is self-sufficiently and self-referentially closed, yet at the same time is structurally coupled with other communication systems such as political, legal, and religious systems. By functioning not only for upbringing or cultivation, but also for career selection, the modern system of education, along with other communication systems, participates in making the globally extended society of today. Such programs as schools, curricula, and evaluation systems are the constituents that manage the functional autonomy of the educational system. The society as a whole expects the educational system to produce and re-produce ‘civilized’ and ‘capable’ individuals who can appropriately and efficiently communicate in the functionally differentiated and globally extended modern society (Luhmann 1995).

How then has the educational system been contextualized in modern Korea? In contemporary South Korea, education – particularly official education – has been expected and assigned to play a critical role in making a Korean nation-state as a distinctively imagined community (cf. Anderson 1983), by bringing up younger Koreans as virtuous, competent, and ‘modern’ citizens. In the Korean society of the twentieth century, state-led education often meant producing *kungmin* (nationals 國民), the imagined individuals who “would lay down their lives for the sake of the fatherland.” For a long time, it was periodically articulated in Korea’s primary and secondary schools that a ‘historical mission’ given to students was a

‘restoration of the Korean nation.’¹⁴⁶ Since democratization in late 1980s, the official school system has been expected by the civil society to produce ‘citizens’ (*simin* 市民) who not only enjoy their citizenry rights, but also actively contribute to building a ‘new democratic republic’ in the newly globalized world (cf. Moon and Mo 1999; cf. Song 2004a).

Religion has greatly contributed to the development of modern education in Korea (Catholic Federation of Education 2008: 68; Kim 2008: 21). As a matter of fact, Christians began ‘new education’ (*Sin’gyoyuk* 新教育) in early modern Korea. It is well-known that their ‘mission schools’ built in the late nineteenth century initiated a history of Korea’s modern education (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 8; Korea Federation of Christian School 2006: 20-36). Ever since liberation in 1945, religious schools, i.e. schools with a religious affiliation, have continued to occupy an essential part of official education in the southern part of the Korean peninsula. In contemporary South Korea, religious schools are considered private schools within the publicly funded education system. Private schools, which were founded by individuals or private organizations, and public schools, which were established by the state or municipal governments, can be divided from each other; however, most primary and secondary private schools are incorporated in the official education system. The curricula are the same between private and public primary and secondary schools, and they share the same textbooks, either government-published or government-authorized.¹⁴⁷ Like public schools, they are supervised and maintained by the district educational authorities, just

¹⁴⁶ The National Charter of Education (*Kungmin kyoyuk hōnjang* 國民教育憲章), which was announced by Park Chung-hee, the military dictator, in 1968, began with the first sentence that “we were born in this country with the historical duty that is the restoration of the nation” (*Urinūn minjok chunghūng ui yōksajōk samyōngūl ttigo i ttange t’aeōnatta* 우리는 민족중흥의 역사적 사명을 띠고 이 땅에 태어났다). After democratization in 1987, the Charter was severely criticized for excluding individual students’ freedom and rights on the pretext of the nation as well as falling short of fostering democratic citizens. In 1994, in the end, it was discarded under a new democratic government.

¹⁴⁷ Religion courses do not have a common textbook that can be shared among different private and public schools.

as private colleges and universities by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (Ryu 2008: 176-180).

Quite like the political and legal system, the educational system is a constituent that constructs the official conception of religion in modern Korea. To understand the Korean notion of religion, it is helpful to examine how religion is taught, discussed, and understood in the official educational system – the structural and semantic formation of religion in the public educational circle. The contextual particularities of the Korean educational regime have an impact upon the condition in which the place of religion is constructed and re-constructed in the educational system. While public schools have rarely had any programs to teach religion as a subject, most religion-affiliated schools have managed specialized courses and activities for religious education. Religion courses and religiously-oriented extracurricular activities in faith-based schools are the main venue in which religion and religions are taught and imagined in the Korean schools (Ko 2007: 1-4). Therefore, it is necessary to closely look at how religion-affiliated schools offer students religion courses and other religious activities, and also how the curriculum maintains those educational programs on religion and religions.

In South Korea's official schools, "religious education" (*chonggyo kyoyuk* 宗教教育) refers to the general context through which the subject of religion is intensively discussed, imagined, and even practiced. Again, it mainly consists of religion courses and other related activities. How systemically does Korea's school system teach students about religion and religions? Is religious education a constituent part of Korea's official education? Are religion courses effectively a place to propagate specific religions or to educate about religion? How have religious institutions contributed to the formation of Korea's modern education? These questions are important to figure out the construction of religion in the public educational system of modern Korea.

This chapter concerns the place of religion in the educational system as a part of the Korean public sphere. It is focused upon how religion has been constructed in Korea's official education. Particular emphasis is placed on the process in which the conception of religion has been both structurally and semantically re-formulated in the publicized school system of South Korea. This investigation begins with some theoretical questions concerning the modern system for education.

1. The Modern Educational System on Religion and Religions

In chapter one, I suggested that to comprehend the official conception of religion in modern Korea, it is necessary to examine the process of how the conception of religion is formed in the educational system that constitutes part of the public sphere. This is mainly because education critically contributes to the re-production of modern society. This requires analyzing how religion *as* part of curricula is structurally and discursively embedded in the context in which the differentiated educational system operates in this East Asian society. This chapter, therefore, examines how religion courses and other related activities and institutions are constructed and signified in the Korean educational system, particularly its official schools.

According to Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (2012; 1995), education is one of the functionally differentiated societal systems that construct contemporary society. As an autonomous societal system, modern education maintains its systemic distinctiveness vis-à-vis its social environment. The code, function, media, and programs of the educational system are the constitutive elements that distinguish itself from its surrounding world. Like other kinds of communication, educational communication may be difficult to materialize. The

code of education is set to help the educational communication be more possible, by reducing the improbability of the communication. In accordance with the binary code of “good grade/bad grade,”¹⁴⁸ the educational system self-referentially operates itself, and this in itself constructs a distinction between the educational system and other societal communication systems. Because the binary code of education ensures the autopoietic closure of the educational system, not only can this functionally differentiated system of education possibly influence the surrounding environment such as political, economic, or religious systems whose codes are all different from one another, but also at the same time its universal relevance can safely be limited by it (Luhmann and Schorr 2000; Vanderstraeten 2004).

The fundamental end of the educational system is to minimize the improbability of educational communication. This goal is achieved by the performance of the educational function. The educational system as a sub-societal system of society functions to make human beings be ‘persons’ and also to execute evaluations in order to realize ‘career selection.’

Turning human beings into persons is the primary functional purpose of the educational system. Luhmann wrote that “human beings are born. Persons develop through socialization and upbringing/education. Keeping this difference in mind, it is natural to set the education function into relation with the fact that human beings become persons. Especially in complex societies, this cannot be left only to socialization. This does not function specifically enough and is too connected to the environment where this occurs. In both instances, we are dealing with the process of becoming a personality. It is here that leeway exists that education can use in order, on the one hand, to correct the results of socialization, and on the other hand, to amend them. But whether that interaction develops at all between socialization and

¹⁴⁸ Depending on differences of situation of evaluation and assessments, the educational code can be rephrased as distinctions such as positive/negative, good/wrong, succeed/fail, praise/punishment, acceptable /unacceptable patterns of behaviors (Vanderstraeten 2004: 264-266).

education depends on whether both processes are related to becoming a person” (Qvortrup 2005: 13 (originally from Luhmann 2002: 38)).

The transformation of a human being into a person increases the possibilities for the human being to couple with other function systems of the society. In the modern social context, this often means teaching a child to function as citizen as well as worker – a good citizen for the society and a competent worker for specialized private and public institutions. Because everyone does not necessarily have to do the same thing in the differentiated contemporary society, the educational system carries out evaluation in order for human beings to realize ‘career selection.’ This process of career selection is in itself the continuation of the project to allow the human beings to better communicate with each other. If they become ‘everything,’ their chances for communication would rather be much smaller in that differentiated world. The function for career selection of the educational system helps human beings become socially integrated based on the future – forward potentialities for a better career. The modern educational system is equipped with the machinery for highly formalized examination in order to fulfill the function of career selection (Qvortrup 2005: 13-14).

In accordance with constitutive criteria of education such as code, function, and programs, students – one of the main media of the educational system – are taught about religion and religions in the educational system. I argue that the function of education is determinative in conceptualizing religion in the educational system. Particularly, whether or not religious education fulfills the functional end of the modern education – upbringing/cultivation and career selection – is critical in constructing the institutional and discursive place of religion in the Korean educational system. Receiving a good or bad mark in a religion course does not necessarily correspond to the functional values of the educational system. Programs of teaching religion to students may accord with or oppose the educational

function of the society as a whole. If religious education and schools are not *educational*, but rather religious or proselytizing, what is called religion can be problematic, conflicted, or malfunctioning from the viewpoint of modern secular education. For example, if receiving a ‘good grade’ in a religion course was not helpful for children to be cultivated persons as well as to be prepared for making their future career better in contemporary South Korea, religion, in particular religious education, would be negatively signified as running counter to the very educational function for the general public in the educational system.

Though the degree of the impact varies, the surrounding communication systems can influence the operation of the educational system in pursuit of their respective interests and functions. The educational system may tolerate external influence in formulating the educational construction of religion. For example, the religious, political, or legal systems can influence how secondary schools operate religious education. Religious organizations can affect religion-affiliated schools and their religion curricula to make their students be ‘faithful’ and ‘loyal’ to particular religious tradition rather than ‘understand’ various religious phenomena from the academic perspective. The legal system may observe such ‘parochial’ education in the secular school system as ‘breaking the rules’ or ‘illegal’ in order to solve conflicts and insecurities raised by sectarian education in favor of a particular religion. Based on laws and policies, the municipal government may monitor and regulate how religious education is practiced in schools under its jurisdiction. As a modern educational system becomes more and more professionalized and differentiated, the educational function of religious education can be increasingly enhanced and independent from the influence of the surrounding social environment, religions in particular.

Within this theoretical frame, this chapter concerns the structural and discursive reality of religion in the educational system – especially how religion as part of official curricula like

‘mathematics,’ ‘English,’ or ‘science’ is taught and observed in the educational system of modern Korea. This chapter is focused upon analyzing how religion as an educational subject and agent is structurally and semantically formulated and re-formulated within the educational circle of South Korea. In doing so, it will be clarified how the educational system has contributed to the re-formation of the official notion of religion in contemporary Korea. I will begin this analysis, by examining the structural construction of religion in the Korean educational system, and will then proceed to the investigation into the semantic level.

2. The Structure of Religion in the Modern Korean Education: “Religion as an Official Subject”

Religion has had a structural impact upon the development of education in modern Korea, particularly South Korea, where ‘passive secularism’ is widespread (Casanova 2011: 66-73; Kang 2009b; Kuru 2009: 10-14).¹⁴⁹ Christian religions even initiated ‘modern education’ in nineteenth century Korea. It can be said that religious education¹⁵⁰ is the main venue where logic, knowledge, and the image of religion and religions is produced and re-produced in the public educational system (Sealey 1992: 61-106). As religions exercised a far-reaching influence on the development of Korea’s modern education, religious education was an important place to propagate particular religions in the nation’s educational system rather than perform the function of modern secular education (Yun 2009: 43-45).

¹⁴⁹ In the previous chapters on the notion of religion in the political and legal systems, I described how the process of secularization in modern Korea has ended up assertively restricting religious individuals and groups to the field of religion. Religions have been largely able to use their influence on a variety of public affairs in this East Asian society.

¹⁵⁰ John Sealey suggests that to state religion in the form of ‘knowledge’ rather than ‘belief’ is important in realizing the purpose of education (Sealey 1992: 25-43).

In the South Korea of today, like ‘economics’ or ‘philosophy,’ ‘religion’ is included as one of the regular elective courses in the curriculum of the official secondary school system. Religious education largely consists of religion courses and other related religious and ritualistic activities that are often led by religion teachers and stakeholders. The subject of religion is offered by most private schools that are affiliated with specific religious organizations, but rarely by public and ‘secular’ private schools. A religion course is not the sole place where religion and religions are taught and discussed in schools. Other courses such as ‘civil ethics,’ ‘philosophy,’ ‘morals,’ and ‘history’ also deal with religious issues, groups, and phenomena at least partially. For example, *High School Civil Ethics* (2003) published by the National Textbook Publishing Committee of Seoul National University Teacher’s College contains a section entitled “religious activities and pious life” that describes the magnitude of religious matters in keeping world peace. Chapters such as “where I come from and go” and “how to live” from *High School Philosophy* (2003) published by the Catholic Federation of Education introduce the answers and views of various religions on these philosophical or ontological questions.

Since the late 1980s, democratization has made South Korea’s educational system more transparent, public, and autonomous. Both the global clash of different religious civilizations and the nation’s growing passion toward alternative modernities have together increased the need for the nondenominational study of religion in schools. Such social changes have contributed to bringing about a structural turn of religious education, by transferring the place of religion from an informal and marginalized course to a formal subject of the secondary education. Not only have the state’s increased support and evolved regulations strengthened a variety of programs for religious education in the state-led school

system, but also raised many critical questions about the educational value of religion in schools.

(1) The Significance of Religion in the Modern Education

Three religious traditions – Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity – have had an enormous impact on education in pre-modern and modern Korea. Buddhist and Confucian traditions exerted influence upon elite education in pre-modern Korea. Buddhist institutions were closely related to monastic schools that fostered elite monks in ancient Korean states such as the Three Kingdoms (37BCE-935CE)¹⁵¹ and the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392). During the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) with Confucianism as its governing ideology, *Hyanggyo* 鄕校, the government-run provincial school, and *Sŏnggyun'gwan* 成均館, the highest national academy, were managed and designed to produce Confucian scholar-bureaucrats. Rather than functioning as differentiated educational institutions, those Buddhist and Confucian academies served in establishing the political, moral, and religious foundations of then Korean societies. In early modern Korea, Christianity played a great role in developing Western-style educational institutions. It can be said that Korea's modern education was initiated by Catholic and Protestant schools (Lee 2002: 51-54).

In the last chapter, I pointed to the fact that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Confucian ruling elites of Chosŏn Korea persecuted Catholicism for prohibiting its adherents from worshipping their ancestors, often referring to it as 'heresy' or 'evil religion' (Ryu 1965: 112-117). With the clash of the Western and Eastern traditions in mind, Protestant

¹⁵¹ The Three Kingdoms were *Koguryŏ* (高句麗, 37BCE-668CE) in the north of the Korean peninsula, *Paekche* (百濟, 18BEC-660CE) in the southwest, and *Silla* (新羅, 57BCE-935CE) in the southeast.

missionaries cautiously began to proselytize Koreans in the form of medical and educational missions. The government of Chosŏn Korea allowed this kind of indirect missionary activity, believing that Protestantism, the amicable religion of America, was different from Catholicism, the religion of imperialistic Europe. As the Western conception of religion became the norm in Korea at the late nineteenth century, Korea's traditional religions gradually lost the initiative in the newly differentiated public sphere including the field of education.

Meanwhile, Christian religions disseminated 'modern education' in early modern Korea. In 1856, Paeron Seminary, the first Western style modern school, was built by Catholic missionaries to train clerics. In 1885, H. G. Appenzeller (1828-1902), an American Methodist missionary, initiated Paejae School, the then symbol of 'new education' (*Sin'gyoyuk* 新教育), which, based on the Christian spirit and the Enlightenment thought, taught not only English and the Bible, but other 'modern' subjects, e.g. astronomy, geography, history, physiology, mathematics, handicraft, chemistry, and Western style workouts such as baseball, soccer, tennis, and basketball. The Korean government decided to support this educational institution that was affiliated with Protestant Christianity. As of May 1910, among 2,250 private schools in Korea, 801 were religious schools which consisted of 46 Catholic schools, 5 Buddhist schools, and 750 Protestant schools (Yun 2009: 48). Without the interference of the Korean government, these schools conducted religious education according to their respective founding philosophies.

Once Japan annexed Korea in 1910, however, religion came to be largely restricted as a teaching subject in the colonial educational system, because the Japanese colonial government kept a principle of 'separation of education and religion.' In April 1915, Komatsu 小松録, the director of Foreign Affairs Bureau, said "Propagation of religion falls under the

control of church, but educational work is completely under the jurisprudence of the government. ... As the government cannot interfere in religion, church cannot interfere in the [government's] administration and also education that is a part of the administration" (Kim 1996b: 103). This position was manifested in various educational laws and regulations. The Private School Act (*Sarip 'akkyoryōng* 私立學校令) enacted in 1908 allowed for freedom of religion and education, only if there were no political agitators in schools who opposed the Japanese colonial government of Korea. In 1915, the Japanese colonial government enacted the Revised Private School Act (*Kaejōng sarip 'akkyo kyuch 'ik* 改定私立學校規則). By this law, teaching 'religion' as well as 'geography' and 'history' was totally prohibited in all the Korean schools. In the aftermath of the March First Movement of 1919, the Japanese colonial government started to impose an appeasement policy called "Cultural Rule" (*Munhwa t'ongch 'i* 文化統治). As part of the change in the colonial ruling strategy, the Japanese Government General allowed religious education, e.g. teaching the Bible or practicing religious rituals in schools, either in the form of 'after-school activity' in such official schools as "Normal High School" (*Kodŭng pot'ong hakkyo* 高等普通學校) or in the form of 'regular course' in such private schools as "Miscellaneous Schools" (*Kakjong hakkyo* 各種學校) (Lee 2005b: 168-177; 1996: 67-74). The consequence was that schools that had religion course could not be part of the official school system in colonial Korea.

Therefore, under the colonial rule, the Japanese concept of religion was accepted into the colonial school system. Religious education, i.e. parochial teaching and activities for a particular religion, had a very limited space in schools, because, as in Japan, the Japanese colonial government of Korea regarded religion, except Shinto or Japanese-style Buddhism, as something beyond the project of Japanese nation building in Korea or even possibly

treasonous against the colonizing project. In the end, in the colonial education mechanism that must produce sincere subjects of Japanese emperor, religion could not be an official constituent element of the school education.

Once Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945, the new South Korean government stopped interfering in religious education in schools at the primary level. To examine the structural construction of religion in the secondary education of South Korea, it is important to look into commonalities and differences between the generations of religious education, its curriculum in particular, which is distinctively positioned in the development of South Korea's educational system. Some commonalities found are that religion as a subject has been only taught in religion-affiliated schools, but rarely in 'secular' schools, and also that those religious schools have only hired religion teachers among graduates from 'theological' schools affiliated with their respective religions, but not among those from 'religious studies' departments.

Except for the Curricula (1945-1955) established under the United States Military Government, the South Korean educational authorities revised their curricula six times. Prior to and during the 1st Curricula (1955-1963) and the 2nd Curricula (1963-1974), the Ministry of Education did not have a systematic plan of how to educate students on religion and religions. Religion was not included in the official education system that was supported and regulated by the educational authorities, and the Ministry of Education did not prepare any curriculum for religious education. The government did not subsidize private schools including those affiliated with specific religious organizations. In return for receiving no financial supports from the state, religion-affiliated schools could perform their own 'theological' education rather than teach religious studies. For example, middle and high schools established by particular religions offered religion courses such as "Bible" for Christian-established schools

and “Buddhism” for the Buddhist-established schools (Kim 2008c: 22-23). This kind of religious education did not appear as problematic in the nation’s official education because students and their parents had the right to choose schools. As students chose their school according to their own desires, it would not be a critical educational issue that a school performed religious education. Religion teachers were hired as ‘non-official teaching personnel’ among clergies, and they led religious education as parochial education. By the mid 1970s, this sort of propagating activity was practiced under the pretext of religious education.

As the Equalization Education (*P’yŏngjunhwa kyoyuk* 平準化教育) was introduced to the secondary school system in the 1970s, the government’s non-interference policy on private schools including the religious schools came to be changed. During the period of the 3rd Curricula (1973-1981), the standardization of the secondary education system in earnest paved the way for formulating religion as part of the regular curricula in the South Korean middle and high schools (Ko 2005: 113-116). As the School District System (*Hakkunje* 學群制) was initiated by the high school equalization policy in 1974, most private high schools were incorporated into the official educational system and were subsidized and supervised by the municipal governments. The introduction of the School District System meant that no matter what their religions or religious/secular intentions were, students came to be assigned to middle or high schools including religion-affiliated schools in the designated school district where they lived (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 9). The state institutions began to financially support private middle schools in 1971 and private high schools in 1981 (Kang 2009b: 17). In 1980, the Confidential Report System (*Naesinje* 內申制) also began to be applied for the college entrance examination, which was the ‘final’ purpose of South

Korean secondary education.

Since then, it has been continuously reported that students' religious rights and freedoms are frequently infringed upon by the sectarian position of religion-affiliated schools, when both parties do not share the same religious identity (Song 2006b: 142-143; 2004b). Consequently, based on the Constitution and related laws, the South Korean educational authorities began to implement a series of policies, regulations, and programs on how to conduct religion courses and other related activities in secondary schools. It eventually became a principle that religion should be excluded from the obligatory curriculum system of both religion-affiliated schools and non-religion-affiliated schools. With this rule, the educational authorities started to prohibit middle and high schools from forcing their students to participate in any religious activities in favor of a particular religion.

In this context, religion courses came to be opted out of the grade system of the secondary schools. As the Confidential Report System was introduced to the university entrance screening process in 1980, counting the evaluation of religion courses in the evaluation system was banned. Over time, this has made students and their parents avoid religious education because 'religion' is not related to the university entrance examination. In addition, unlike teachers who teach other courses, e.g. mathematics, history, and science, the religion teacher could not be hired as a normal paid teacher (Kang 2009b: 17-18).¹⁵² Thus the entire situation concerning religion courses has contributed to weakening the position of religious education in secondary schools. In this way, religion for the first time took its formal place within the official secondary school system.

¹⁵² Like before the 3rd Curricula, clergy without official teacher's certificates continuously took charge of religion courses and other religious activities in school.

(2) The Re-formation of Religion in the Post 80s' Educational System: From Proselytism to an Official Subject of Public Education

How, then, has religion been re-constructed in public secondary education since the 1980s? Is religion still one of the unofficial and peripheral teaching subjects or a constitutive part of public education and its curriculum?

As mentioned above, the Equalization Education was first enforced for middle schools in 1969 and five years later, in 1974, for high schools.¹⁵³ It was a groundbreaking event in South Korea's public education in that by this structural renovation of the compulsory educational system, both private and public schools entered a unified official school system that the state institutions supported and managed by using national revenue. The implementation of such educational policy has had a significant impact on the development of religious education in secondary schools, particularly because it became a structural trigger that brought about re-formulating religious education as part of the official curricula prepared by the public educational authorities. Until the 1970s, however, religious education was still left to the discretion of each religion-affiliated school that wanted to teach their own beliefs and values, but was not organically incorporated into the whole curriculum system (Ko 2007: 12-13, 2005:113-116).

In the 1980s, changes were made to re-configure religious education in secondary schools, responding to the new situation that because of enforcement of the Equalization Education policy, any students could be allocated to a religion-affiliated school in the school district where they resided. According to the 4th Curricula (1982-1988) that was newly

¹⁵³ The South Korean government began to subsidize private middle schools in 1971 and private high schools in 1981. Of course, those private secondary schools included the religion-affiliated middle and high schools (Kang 2009b: 17).

introduced under the Equalization Education policy, ‘religion’ was provided as one of the “free elective courses” (*Chayu sŏnt’aek kwamok* 자유선택과목), together with ‘logic,’ ‘philosophy,’ ‘psychology,’ and ‘education’ in high schools. So religion, once an unofficial subject, became for the first time one of the official subjects of secondary education. In consideration of students who did not believe in the particular religion of the religion-affiliated school they attended, the 4th Curricula specified that, whenever ‘religion’ was offered, alternative course among the four elective courses be set up for those students who did not want to take religion courses. The Ministry of Education also began to standardize religion textbooks that had been arbitrarily published by religious organizations. So religion textbooks were for the first time approved as ‘recognized reading’ (*Injŏng tosŏ* 인정도서) by the state educational authorities (Yu, Chang, and Kim 1997: 125-126).

Those changes in religious education were made possible not only by the liberal educational spirit of the 4th Curricula that was intended to revitalize “whole-person education” (*Chŏnin kyoyuk* 전인교육), but also by the request of religion-affiliated schools that had for long wanted to formalize religious education (*Ibid.* 125). The regularization of religion was also accelerated by the growth in government subsidies for private secondary schools, of which religion-affiliated schools form a part. That said, the increase in government aid effectively made private schools to become public, and thereby to some degree lead to the ‘disenchantment’ of faith-based schools, by giving the educational authorities power and means to tighten regulations on religious education in favor of certain religions. In short, those changes have contributed to secularizing religious education and religion-affiliated schools, both of which had effectively been propagating sites for specific religions rather than places of secular education about religion and religions (Kang 2009b: 18).

However, alternative courses for students who did not want to take religion courses were rarely prepared by those religion-affiliated schools, although the South Korean Ministry of Education ordered them to offer those elective courses. Another critical problem was that the educational authorities still did not arrange any comprehensive curriculum for religious education, a systematic curriculum that identified the status of teachers for religion courses, presented the framework of religion textbook, and directed teachers on how to conduct religious education in the setting of official secondary education. In addition, most religion teachers were still members of the clergy, most of whom were ‘unlicensed’ teachers (Yu, Chang, and Kim 1997: 125-126).

The normalization of religious education became in itself a structural impetus to remedy the ongoing difficulties of religious education in the official school system. To fix these problems, the 5th Curricula (1987-1992) made important changes regarding religion textbooks and the status of the religion teacher.¹⁵⁴ Religions for the first time published ‘religion textbooks’ in their respective ways, and the Ministry of Education approved them. Even until the middle of the 5th Curricula, clergy – the unlicensed teachers – mostly took charge of religious education in schools (Kim 2008c: 23). As ‘religion’ became one of the formal elective courses during the 4th Curricula, religion teachers became more and more required to have a teacher’s certificate from the state educational authorities. In particular, since they were non-official teaching personnel, most religion teachers were not provided full welfare benefits including their retirement pension. In 1990, the Ministry of Education prepared the first temporary training program for those unlicensed religion teachers to obtain

¹⁵⁴ Other additional changes include the title change from ‘free elective course’ (*Chayu sŏnt’aek kwamok* 자유선택과목) to ‘liberal elective course’ (*Kyoyang sŏnt’aek kwamok* 교양선택과목), establishment of the elective course from ‘zero to two’ units to ‘two’ units, and addition of ‘economics’ to the list of elective courses (*Ibid.* 126). A ‘unit’ is a 50-minute teaching per week in one semester (17 weeks). So for example, a two-unit course would be a 50-minute course per week in two semesters of a school year.

a regular teaching license. Through this qualifying training, about 90 religion teachers acquired a ‘second-degree teacher certificate.’¹⁵⁵ Both the publication of religion textbooks and the regularization of religion teachers contributed to dragging religious education in schools into the public educational sector (Ko 2005: 116-118, 120).

However, the general trend in religious education in the official school system was still ‘faith education’ in favor of specific religions with which religious schools were affiliated. Because the educational authorities did not prepare a comprehensive curriculum on how to teach religion in the public educational system, parochial and propagating elements were still widely embedded in the actual practice of religious education. As the Ministry of Education did not make clearly defined criteria for content and composition of religion textbooks, religion textbooks that were composed for the sake of specific religious traditions were all approved by the educational authorities.¹⁵⁶ So some religion textbooks explained other

¹⁵⁵ The qualifying training for teachers having already taken charge of religion courses in their schools was opened by the collaboration of the Departments of Education and Religious Studies of Seoul National University (SNU). The two departments together opened the second training in 1995, through which about 50 teachers obtained the religion teacher certificate. In 2000, about 120 religion teachers obtained the official teacher certificate through the third training, which was held again by the collaboration of the two SNU departments. It is noteworthy that the third training increased the number of the courses within the field of Religious Studies, providing that the trainees take 40 credits from those religion courses (Yu, Chung, and Kim 1997: 128).

¹⁵⁶ Protestant high schools had two kinds of religion textbooks, both of which were called “Bible textbooks” (Sŏnggyŏng kyogwasŏ 성경교과서), *Chilli waŭi mannam* (진리와의 만남 Encounter with Truth), published in 1983 for first year high school students, and *Yŏksa waŭi mannam* (Encounter with History 역사와의 만남) in 1984 for second year students. The chapters of *Chilli waŭi mannam* are “for becoming a student of Christian school,” “encounter with Bible,” “the person we have met,” and “Jesus who is with us.” Those of *Yŏksa waŭi mannam* are “life and God,” “the world church in history,” and “the Korean church in history.”

Catholic high schools also had two kinds of religion textbooks, *Sinang ũi yŏmyŏng* (Dawn of Faith 신앙의 여명) *I* and *II*, both of which were published in 1986. *Sinang ũi yŏmyŏng I* has 14 chapters – “merciful encounter,” “the finding of new life,” “what is religion,” “Bible,” “Christianity,” “God call us,” “God emancipate us,” “God protect us,” “God complete us,” “gospel reading,” “listening to holy music,” “Christ though the Gospels,” “how the Gospels were written,” and “baptism.” *Sinang ũi yŏmyŏng II* also had 14 chapters – “false beacons,” “Christian is the person who practiced Christ’s sermon on the mountain,” “the role of the disciple of Jesus Christ is to become light and salt,” “the power of love,” “stare at God to raise brotherly love,” “where treasure is, there will your heart be also,” “the final great proof,” “it’s not enough simply to talk,” “the dawn of faith,” “more love is needed,” “how they called me,” “take the example of me,” “to enter into the kingdom of God,” and “the universal panacea.”

Buddhist high schools had two religion text books, *Pulgyo* (Buddhism 불교) *I* and *II*, which were published in 1988. *Pulgyo I* had five chapters such as “religion and living,” “the great life,” “the world of truth,” “the spread and development of Buddhism,” and “Buddhism and art.” *Pulgyo II* also had five chapters such as “the nature of

religions from a religiously biased perspective in a bid to prove the superiority of specific religions (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 69-71). Many religion-affiliated schools also continued to force their students to attend a religion class, not offering them other alternative elective courses, and also compelled them to participate in rituals and ceremonies for the religion of school, commonly holding various school ceremonies in the style of the particular religion.

The post-Cold War world increased the necessity of an undenominational understanding of religious phenomena in the nation society. In the global religio-political milieu that was wary of resurgent religions and the clash of civilizations (Berger 1999; Huntington 1998), foreigners with different religious beliefs began to visit or immigrate to South Korea in large numbers, especially after the 1988 Seoul Olympics. In the aftermath of 1987 democratization the South Korean government liberalized its laws on overseas travel in 1989 so that South Koreans, especially younger ones, could freely go overseas and experience foreign cultures and traditions. This changed situation made it important for South Korean students to learn and understand such unfamiliar religions as Islam, Hinduism, and non-East Asian forms of Buddhism and their peculiar worldviews and cultural expressions (Eom 2010: 15-38).¹⁵⁷

Reflecting the newly globalized religious conditions, ‘religion’ was a bit more formalized as one of the principal educational themes in South Korean public education. The 6th Curricula (1992-1997) was a turning point in the history of religious education in South Korean schools in that under the new curricula system, religion began to be taught according to concrete guidelines prepared by the public educational authorities. The Ministry of

Buddhism,” “the world of Mahayana,” “Buddhism of our country,” “a good society,” and “modern times and Buddhism” (Chung 1990: 298-300).

¹⁵⁷ As of December 2009, there are 1,168,477 non-ethnic Koreans living and working in South Korea, including many Muslims, Hindus, and other South or Southeast Asians.

Education for the first time prepared a systematic curriculum of how to teach religion in secondary schools.¹⁵⁸

Based on this religion curriculum, a teaching manual was compiled for guiding religion teachers through both the content and method of religious education. Such being the case, the 6th Curricula provided that not only other elective courses be offered for students who did not want to take religion course, but also that the grade book for the students should record only whether or not religion was taken, but not the mark of the course. The particular aims of religious education clarified in religion curriculum were to (1) define sound religious views by acquiring balanced and wide-ranging knowledge, (2) nurture piety that helps overcome difficult problems of life, and (3) promote such desirable attitudes that embrace other religions and contribute to developing the national society (Ministry of Education 1992). The religion curriculum also presented six key sections on which the content of all religion textbooks published by each religion had to be based; the six principal topics were (1) humans and religion, (2) world culture and religion, (3) Korean culture and religion, (4) understanding of religious experiences, (5) modern society and religion, and (6) teaching and history of particular religion (Chung 2001: 15-16). In addition, the time unit of religion courses was extended from two to four units per school year, and about 50 religion teachers obtained a teacher's certificate for religion courses through the second qualifying training in 1995 (Yu, Chung, and Kim 1997: 127-128).

Nevertheless, there were still critical limitations of the religion course that kept it from being a full-fledged official course in compulsory education. First, to make religion a full elective course for the secondary school system, it had to be offered in both public and private

¹⁵⁸ The 6th Curricula added "environment" (*hwan'gyōng* 환경) to the list of liberal elective courses. The Educational Ministry prepared curricula for all the other elective courses as well.

schools that are not affiliated with any religious organization; however, the subject of religion was only offered among private faith-based schools. Secondly, religion curriculum was at best designed as a compromise between the secular academic education about religion and the sectarian education of religion. The religion curriculum let religion courses teach not only various religious traditions and issues in a non-sectarian perspective, but also particular traditions of religion-affiliated schools for proselytizing those religions. Thirdly, religion textbooks, which could be commonly used across public and private schools, were still not prepared. All religion textbooks published by religious groups commonly displayed exclusionary perspectives on other religious traditions and groups. Therefore, while the main purpose of religion courses was set as ‘cultivating the citizens to have sound common sense toward religion,’ faith education that supported particular religions came to be continuously approved by the educational authorities, because religion-affiliated schools and their religious organizations supporting them desperately wanted to keep teaching it.

The 7th Curricula (1997~present) now guides the secondary schools, both private and public, which receive government financial aid. The 7th Curricula includes religion as one of the general elective courses for high schools together with “philosophy,” “logic,” “psychology,” “education,” “economics,” “ecology and environment,” and “career and work.” For middle schools, religion is not specified among the elective courses that include “Chinese characters,” “computer,” “environment,” and “other courses,” but can be freely taught as one of “other courses” and/or in the form of “creative extracurricular activity” (*Ch‘angŭijŏk chaeryang hwaltong* 창의적 재량활동) (Korea Federation of Christian School 2006: 119-120). The current religion curriculum defines the nature of religion courses as follows:

“Many places of the world are experiencing conflicts and disputes due to religion;

however, our multicultural society is making efforts to increase understanding and amity through inter-religious meetings and dialogues. Being divided into two for half a century, North and South Korea have displayed extreme consequences by selecting different systems and ideologies. It is our task to recover the nation's purity and identity that has continued for a thousand years. Through religious education, it is needed to nurture the mind to practice religious teachings in life. That said, the religion [course] regards as important religious interest in the ultimate question of life and understanding of sacred value, and, through systematic discerning, gives priority to raising holistic humans who live together with many people (Yu, Chung, and Kim 1997: 128).”

Based on the framework of the previous religion curriculum compromising with theological education, the revised religion curriculum of the 7th Curricula¹⁵⁹ is intended to put more emphasis on availability of religion courses in other ‘secular’ secondary schools beyond the circle of religion-affiliated schools as well as on neutral education *about* religion (Chung 2001: 29). Within this emphasis, the religion curriculum has applied a historical approach, in particular the ‘history of thought’ approach, to better introduce students to diverse religious doctrines and thoughts as well as religion in general. To realize the aims of religious education mentioned above, the religion curriculum has also chosen a ‘thematic-realistic’ approach, a teaching methodology through which students may more efficiently deal with a variety of practical problems and also seek their meanings, by linking real-world issues and religious themes such as death and pain, justice and human rights, and/or nature and life. Under the new emphasis and teaching method, the educational authorities’ guideline for religion textbooks is slightly changed with the new set of eight key sections; those principal

¹⁵⁹ The basic functions of the curricula revision by the Ministry of Education are (a) to commit to the basic education that fosters sound character and creativity, (b) to increase self-initiated abilities in order to adapt to globalization and informatization, (c) to realize learner-centered education that fits the capability, aptitude, and career of students, and (d) to expand autonomy of organizing and operating local and school curriculum. The South Korean Ministry states that such curricular revision is caused by the radical change in the domestic and home system, environment, and demand around the education, articulating the background of revision as (1) the transformation of the educational system and the rapid social change toward globalization, informatization, and diversification, (2) the radical development of science-technology and academy, (3) the transformation of economic, industrial, and employment structure, (4) the change in the request and needs of the educational demanders, and (5) the change in the educational condition and environment (Chung 2001: 25).

topics are (1) humans and religion, (2) understanding of religious experiences, (3) different religious traditions, (4) world religion and culture, (5) religious understanding of humans and nature, (6) Korean religion and culture, (7) religious communities, and (8) teachings and history of particular religions. While the first and second sections are intended to help students understand religion in general, the third and fourth are focused upon comprehending diverse religious traditions and multi-religious phenomena. The fifth and seventh sections are prepared toward grasping environmental and ecological issues that the natural environment and human society now face. Interestingly, the eighth section is offered specifically for religion-affiliated schools to teach specific religions they would like to teach (Chung 2001: 32-33). Therefore, this new frame for religious education shows that, in comparison with the 6th curricula's curriculum, religion as a subject is now more concerned with the realistic problems that would be significant for students to lead their future social and professional lives.

It seems that such development of a religion curriculum has paralleled the growing recognition and establishment of religion as a principal subject for liberal arts education in the official secondary school system.¹⁶⁰ Concerning the general situation of religious education in the South Korean secondary schools, Ko Byoung-chul recognizes its five characteristics: First, students and schools do not have the right to choose their own schools and students respectively; second, religion teachers are people who have received religious education in favor of particular religions; third, religion textbooks are made to be oriented toward

¹⁶⁰ The structural development of religion courses in secondary education is accompanied by a critical problem of employment. Teachers' certificate for religious education taken from nondenominational universities are almost useless in finding teaching position, because the secondary schools that are not affiliated with any religions rarely select religion among elective courses, and also middle or high schools having religion courses prefer to hire religion teachers who are adherents of the religions of the private schools. To resolve these problems, not only should the nondenominational programs produce religion teachers, but those middle and high schools should also recruit religion teachers trained in a university that is not affiliated with their own religions (Ko 2007:33).

particular religions; fourth, students consist of both believers and non-believers; and fifth, religious education emphasizes particular religions (Ko 2005: 109). The chart below shows the distribution of those religion-affiliated schools among private schools as of December 2004 (Kang 2009b: 13). The numbers of the ‘total schools’ at the bottom of the table are drawn from the 2005 national statistics (Kim 2005).

<Table 2> Religion-affiliated Schools in Contemporary South Korea

| | Elementary School | Middle School | High School | College (2 yrs) | University | Total (% among TPS) |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Buddhism | 1 | 11 | 10 | . | 2 | 24 (1.2) |
| Protestantism | 10 | 123 | 165 | 17 | 34 | 349 (17.6) |
| Catholic | 6 | 27 | 38 | 2 | 9 | 82 (4.1) |
| Won Buddhism | . | 6 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 18 (0.9) |
| Chon Do Gyo | . | . | 1 | . | . | 1 (0.1) |
| Indigenous Religions | . | . | 6 | 1 | 1 | 8 (0.4) |
| Total Religious Schools (% among TPS) | 17 (22.7) | 167 (25.2) | 227 (24.2) | 22 (15.4) | 49 (31.6) | 482 (24.3) |
| Total Private Schools (TPS) | 75 | 666 | 941 | 143 | 155 | 1,980 |
| Total Schools | 5,646 | 2,935 | 2,095 | 158 | 191 | 11,025 |

(Kang 2008; Kim 2005)

As of 2005, as the above chart displays, religion-affiliated middle schools constitute 5.7-percent (167 schools) of middle schools (2,935 schools), and religion-affiliated high schools occupy a 10.6-percent (227 schools) share of high schools (2,095). The relatively wide share of religion-affiliated schools in the secondary school system has been in itself one of the forces that has established religion as one of the elective courses and/or “creative extracurricular activity.” In the development of South Korea’s official school system, the scientific study of religion is now formalized as an official subject of teaching more than ever.

Nevertheless, it is still hard to say that religion is being taught *on the ground* as a well-accepted course in the official school system. First, religion as a ‘regular elective course’ has so far been mostly limited to religion-affiliated schools, all of which are private schools, and secular secondary schools have rarely offered any religion course. So even compared to other elective courses such as ‘philosophy’ and ‘economics,’ ‘religion’ is relatively located on the margin of the current secondary school system. In both public and private secondary schools having no affiliation with a religious organization, education on religion is achieved through such other subjects as ‘history,’ ‘society,’ or ‘civil ethics.’ But those courses deal with religious issues, groups, and phenomena only partially. In addition, there are some problems found, particularly in the ‘history of Korea’ course, about how to describe religion. According to Yoo Yohan, history textbooks for the secondary school ignore the universal religiosity of human beings and instead apply religion as a means to prove the particularity of the Korean nation. Also, history textbooks tend to depict religion as something pre-modern or unscientific, focusing on religious phenomena in pre-historic and ancient times. And, finally, religion’s independent power and importance is frequently ignored, as history textbooks describe religion as a factor which is dependent upon political and economic aims. So it can be said that religion is misleadingly treated in the case of secondary school history class (Yu 2009).

Secondly, a teacher certificate for religious education taken from universities not affiliated with a specific religion is almost useless in finding a teaching position in schools, because those middle and high schools offering religion courses almost always prefer to hire religion teachers who have graduated from a seminary or university affiliated with the particular religions or denominations to which those schools belong. Thus, most university programs producing religion teachers are effectively close to the denominational programs

that train ‘belief teachers’ or ‘theological teachers’ rather than ‘religious studies teachers’ or ‘teachers for the science of religion.’ Therefore, such a situation has in turn structured the marginalization of religious education in the compulsory education system so that credits taken from religion courses are never seriously considered in the general evaluation system of the current secondary education that is focused upon the college entrance examination.

In conclusion, the long-term transition of religious education from a sort of private faith training to a theme of public education has contributed to better establishing religion as an official subject of the secondary school education. Such a secularizing flow of religious education is parallel to the general development of South Korea’s educational system. The evolvement of the official education in religion has been increasingly accorded with the functional purposes of the modern educational system, i.e. ‘cultivation’ and ‘carrier selection,’ rather than religious zealotry.¹⁶¹ In other words, the development of religious education has influenced how programs for teaching religion and religions, e.g. religion class and other related activities, are re-aligned with the educational code of ‘good mark/bad mark.’ That said, to prove having better knowledge or understanding about the subject rather than to show and encourage religious devoutness or perochial loyalty has more and more become critical in getting a good evaluation for a religion course. The strengthening of the educational function of religion courses is also underpinned by a series of laws and regulations that

¹⁶¹ There may be different educational theories that assert the importance of religious education as ‘personality education’ and/or even the ‘foundation of all education,’ especially in those societies where a religious tradition dominates. But in contemporary South Korea where no single religion dominates, but plural religious traditions coexist, moral or cultivation education exclusively connected to one specific religion can come into conflict with many students who are not adherents to that religion. Forced moral education based on certain religious worldviews may rather cause an opposite effect (Kang 2004b).

officially prohibit ‘faith education’ as proselytizing activity for the sake of particular religions in the official secondary educational system.¹⁶²

3. The Semantics of Religion in the Educational System: “Religion as an Anti-educational Entity”

Religion is now quite established as both a subject and an agent in South Korea’s public education. Not only is ‘religion’ one of the official elective courses in schools, but also faith-based schools and the religious groups supporting them are a constitutive part of the nation’s educational circle. As the structural differentiation of public education increases the expectation of the educational value of religion, the educational authorities have exerted greater authority to supervise religious education and religion-affiliated schools. Interestingly, the development of public religious education has in turn ended up leading to questioning more and more the educational function of religion courses, in-school religious activities, and their allied religious groups within the official education sector.

In chapter three, I depicted the historical context in which, despite the R.O.K. Constitution and other laws stipulating a separation of religion and state institutions, religious individuals and groups, for example the Christian churches and their backed Protestant and Catholic elites, have critically influenced the state-led public institutions. As shown in the previous section of this chapter, therefore, the term ‘passive secularism’ may also characterize the formation of the relationship between religion and public education in modern Korea. The

¹⁶² Some examples are the first clause of Article 20 of the R.O.K. Constitution (*hōnbōp*, 憲法), “All citizens shall enjoy freedom of religion,” and the second clause of Article 6 of the Framework Act on Education (*Kyoyuk kibonbōp* 教育基本法), “No school founded by the State or local governments shall conduct religious education in favor of any particular religion.” Religion curriculum gives full details of how to conduct religious education in middle and high schools in South Korea of today.

historical conditions under which religions have had a great institutional impact on Korea's modern education has been a great force allowing the public educators of religion to not fully follow the religion curriculum jointly prepared by the educational authorities and religious studies scholars. That said, religious groups have successfully maintained a foundation in which the religious agenda may surpass the functional purpose of secular education in teaching religion in the official educational arena. Indeed, in educating students about religion in the South Korean secondary school system, 'theology' has often been more influential than the 'science of religion' (Korea Federation of Christian School 2007; National Organization of Religion Teachers of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism 2005; Söngsim High School. unknown year).

I suggested above that a series of momentous social developments such as globalization, democratization, and the rise of Korean multiple modernities since the 1980s have helped religious education evolve, and thereby, at least in principle and according to official educational policy, secure its own position in the South Korean educational structure. More specifically, rapid advances in the process of globalization led the public educators to realize the significance of an impartial understanding of diverse religions in today's globalized world. Growing national efforts to include Korea's native cultural elements have increased the necessity of educating, beyond world religions, indigenous, popular, and minority religious movements and phenomena. In addition, the substantial reform of the school education system initiated by the democratization has largely strengthened the autonomy of the educational system about religious education.

It seems that quite paradoxically, those socio-educational developments have contributed to questioning the educational values of the official religious education. As the functional standard of the educational system has been strengthened, there has been rather a

growing public concern that the ‘sectarian perspective’ may have infiltrated the national schooling system. The fact that religion-affiliated schools have still taught ‘theology’ rather than the ‘science of religion’ would mean that not just do those religiously biased educational institutions not fully endeavor to produce ‘sound and efficient’ citizens who are fit for the new global society, but also threatens students’ freedom of religion as well as the religious neutrality of compulsory education. Such reality of the religious education in schools may multiply concerns about religion-based institutions in the South Korean educational system – a discursive construction of religion that the parochial institutions and their partial religious education may hinder the functional purpose of public education and thereby the development of the national society. Let’s elaborate on how the educational progress in contemporary South Korea has contributed to constructing the negative meanings of religion in the educational system.

(1) The Real Function of Religious Education: Does Religion¹⁶³ Foster Good and Competent Citizens in a Globalized Korea?

What is the criterion in forming semantics of religion in the educational system of modern Korea? I admit that in the educational system, discursive construction of religion is vitally concerned with how religion as educational subject and practitioner realizes the functional values of education for society at large. More particularly, whether or not ‘religion’ properly functions not only to make humans be persons who care about others and society, but also to help the students prepare for their future career is critical in forming semantics on

¹⁶³ By the term religion, I hereby mean specifically not only religion courses and extracurricular activities in favor of specific religions, but also religion-affiliated schools and their allied religious institutions and their general activities in the nation’s educational system at large.

religion in the educational system (Qvortrup 2005; cf. Luhmann 1995). In order to ensure education to properly function, the first clause of Article 6 of the Framework Act on Education (Educational Neutrality) provides that “education shall be operated to perform its functions according to the purpose of the education *per se* and it shall not be used as a tool for propagating any political, factional or individual biased views.” That being so, religion-affiliated schools and their religion courses and other religious activities are expected to promote educational purposes and values rather than propagate certain sectarian ideas.¹⁶⁴

As mentioned above, since the 6th Curricula (1992-1997), the Ministry of Education has prepared religion curriculum guiding how religious education should be carried out in the secondary school system. By officially rejecting religious education as a means of propagating specific religion, the educational authorities have attempted to block religion-affiliated schools from becoming a stage for religious proselytism. To restrict religious education for specific religious traditions and groups, the second clause of Article 6 (Educational Neutrality) of the Framework Act on Education (*kyoyuk kibonpŏp* 教育基本法) states that “no school founded by the State or local governments shall conduct religious education in favor of any particular religion.” Notification No. 1997-15 of the Ministry of Education (Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools) also specifies that “when religion course is set up in school, multiple courses including courses other than religion should be

¹⁶⁴ Regarding the larger social context in which religious education is located, it is noticeable that contemporary South Korea is a multi-religious society where diverse religious traditions and groups exist, but no one religion dominates the religious market. Keeping a peaceful and harmonious relationship between people having different religious identities is decisive in operating modern differentiated institutions and organizations such as economic firms, political parties, schools, hospitals, and legal and educational systems, and thereby in developing Korea in contemporary global society. Religious education can contribute to it, by offering students unbiased knowledge on religion and religions so that it helps them understand, in a non-parochial perspective, different religious expressions and phenomena in today’s global society. Unlike the people who have negative or hostile views against other religions except their own religions, students who have deviated from prejudice or animosity towards the other religions through religious education may communicate better for the national and global civil societies, possibly not coming into conflict with their colleagues and neighbors having different religious views and identities.

organized to offer students choices.” Of course, these institutional contrivances have made religious education better fulfill the educational function, and has consequently contributed to the establishment of religious education in the public educational setting.

However, the reality of religious education is highly problematic and controversial in the public educational system of contemporary South Korea (Kang 2009a: 36-38; Yun 2009: 53-61). In the field of official education, religious education remains a critical point of debate between ‘students and citizens’ that want to maintain the official school system as a secular space and ‘religious schools and institutions’ that like to continue theological education based on their religious conviction. This is mainly because, even though such a turn to the science of religion has increased the functional value of religion as a subject of public education, the nature of religious education has still remained very ‘ambiguous’ between varied stakeholders in the educational system (Kim 2005: 9-19). Particularly equivocal are the legalities, curriculum, and the site of religious education.

First, the installation of religion courses in the secondary schools is legally ambiguous in itself. On the one hand, based on the R.O.K Constitution and the Framework Act on Education, educational institutions can be established with a religious or missionary purpose, and can also conduct education for a specific religion. Specifically, Article 4 (Equal Opportunity of Education) of the Framework Act on Education provides that “no citizen shall be treated with discrimination in education on the ground of sex, religion, faith, social standing, economic status, physical condition, etc.” Article 11 (Establishment of Schools) also provides that “any juristic person or individual may establish and manage schools and institutions for social education as provided by other Acts.” On the other, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (*Ch’ojungdŭng kyoyukpŏp* 初中等教育法) allows the educational authorities to limit the autonomy of religion-affiliated schools. Article 7 (Academic Guidance)

of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states that “the Minister of Education, Science and Technology and the Superintendent of the Office of Education may execute academic guidance on the operation of the educational curriculum and the methods of teaching and learning at schools.” The second clause of Article 23 (Curriculum, Etc.) provides that “the Minister of Education, Science and Technology shall determine the basic matters on the standards and contents of a curriculum ... and the Superintendent of the Office of Education may determine the standards and contents that are appropriate for local situations within the education category determined by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, religion curriculum has been revised to better deal with the different laws divided into the two opposite directions that secure freedom of religion on the one hand and limit it for the purpose of unbiased education on the other. However, the development of religion curriculum has not completely solved such a legal ambiguity of religious education in schools.

Second, the content of religious education is equivocal. Until the 6th Curricula, religious education had meant to exclusively teach those particular religions of religion-affiliated schools. The religion curriculum of the 6th Curricula was in fact designed to teach the specific religions of religious schools as well as general religious phenomena and the other religious traditions. Since then, religious education in secondary schools has had two contrasting purposes; one is to make students adhere to a particular religion and the other is to educate them to be sound and sensible persons who have learned about religion and religions around the world from a neutral perspective.

¹⁶⁵ Clause 1 of Articles 29 (Use of Books for Classes) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act sets up “[s]chools shall use books for classes of which the State has copyrights or books for classes that are officially approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Technology. The second clause provides “[n]ecessary matters on the range, writing, approval, recognition, publication, supply, selection and price settlement of the books for classes shall be determined by the Presidential Decree.”

Finally, the position of religion in South Korean public education is in itself problematic in that religious education is only conducted by religion-affiliated schools, but any other schools regardless of public or private status rarely maintain religion courses or conduct any special religious education. Although the Ministry of Education aims at teaching the science of religion in schools, nevertheless, the parochial education in favor of specific religion is widely carried out in the current educational circumstance, religio-affiliated secondary schools in particular (Chung 2001: 5-10).¹⁶⁶ This complicated and discrepant nature of religious education has been an ongoing source that creates a negative discourse on religion in the official educational system of this East Asian society.

(2) The Change in the Semantic Construction of Religion: From the Advocate of Modern Education to the Obstructor of Educational Development

Korean society has traditionally recognized that religion plays a great role in developing education, modern education in particular (Korea Federation of Christian School 2006: 26-36). It is a historical fact that in the twentieth century not only did Korean Protestant churches produce many leading educators and modern educational institutions especially in early modern and colonial Korea, but Buddhism, Catholicism, and indigenous religions such as Chondogyo and Won Buddhism have contributed to the development of Korea's modern education (Lee 2005b: 159-160; Yun 2009: 46-49; 2002: 189-199, 276-291).

¹⁶⁶ Chung suggests four methods to overcome such ambiguousness of the religious education. First, religion courses must clearly be suggested as a course to understand religious culture. Secondly, education for specific religions and other religious events should be practiced as extracurricular activities. Thirdly, religion courses with a purpose to understand religious culture should be opened as a liberal elective course in public schools as well. And finally, professional religion teachers should be trained for education on religion (Chung 2001: 10-11).

Since the 1980s, however, there has been a growing concern that religion may not keep pace with the new educational environment that has been significantly developed in democratized South Korea so that it now gets in the way of further developing Korean education. Faith-based educational institutions, which were once considered “advocates of Korea’s modern education,” are occasionally signified as an undeniable hindrance to the continuous development of education. For example, high schools and universities have produced cases that seem to demonstrate an un-instructive dimension of religious education. In today’s South Korea, it is not too difficult to find examples of the students’ and citizens’ struggle with the influence of religious authorities disturbing the independent operation of the official education (Kang 2004b; Kim 2005).

As mentioned above, the post 1980’s transformation of South Korean society, characterized by such conceptions as democratization, globalization, and the rise of Korean multiple modernity (Chung 2004a; Song 2004a), has contributed to the structural establishment of religious education in the country’s compulsory educational system; but those developments at the same time seem to have fostered a new condition that gives rise to much controversy around religion in the nation’s educational system. Although the educational authorities have reflected the phases of the times in the generations of the Curricula including religion curriculum, the public educational system has increasingly recognized the context of religious education as being ‘non-democratic,’ ‘exclusive,’ ‘non-nationalist,’ and ‘anti-human rights.’ In late-modern South Korea, religion has been widely observed as interfering with the autonomy and neutrality of official education. Those examples representing the change in the discursive construction of religion in the South Korean educational circles show some characteristics.

a. “Religious Education that Ostracizes Korea’s Religious Uniqueness”

For most of the 20th century, to many South Koreans, the modernization of the national society meant becoming a country like the Western advanced industrial societies, and the United States was the most representative case (Chung 2004b: 178-180). The socio-cultural milieu yearning after the Western modernity led them to branding their traditional religions, e.g. Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and other folk traditions, with the symbol of pre-modernity. As Korean society has re-discovered the value of its indigenous culture especially since the 1980s, those religious traditions have been increasingly regarded as forming the bedrock of Koreans’ uniqueness in the contemporary era of globalization. The South Korean government has since then designated well-known Shamans as the nation’s intangible cultural assets, supported a variety of Confucian rituals and ceremonies, and managed programs to protect and promote Buddhist cultural assets (Kang 2009a: 25-29). In the newly globalized world, such a transition in the interpretation of modernity toward ‘alternative modernities’ has increased the necessity of educating about native culture, values, and traditions in compulsory education (Chung 2004a: 49-88).

Until the beginning of the 6th Curricula (1992-1997), religious education was carried out outside the official curriculum so that the government authorities took a position that they neither regulated nor supported it. As religion was included in the formal curricula, the state came to intervene and control the method and content of religious education in school. As of 1992, the ratio of government aid amounted to 67% of the entire annual budget for private middle schools and 38% of that for private high schools in South Korea (Kang 2009b: 17-18). Reflecting the nation’s awareness of the emerging importance of religious culture, the 6th Curricula for the first time put forth an independent curriculum on religion, one which

concretely shows how to educate students on Korea's indigenous and traditional culture and religions. Among the six sections of the religion curriculum of the 6th Curricula, the third section titled "Korean culture and religion" specified to teach "Korean folk beliefs," "new religions," and "the acculturation of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam" (Kim 2008c: 24-26). In addition, among the six main points prepared to achieve the purpose of religious education in the 6th Curricula, the third point was "to develop [students'] abilities to compare cultural traditions as well as understand religions of different regions, e.g. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism of the East and Christianity and Islam of the West," and the fourth point was "to guide [students] through sound religious life to achieve self-realization and contribute to the development of national society as well as understand the process through which foreign religions were introduced to Korea" (Chung 2001: 14-15).

However, in the situation in which forced denominational education in favor of specific religion has still continued, many religion-affiliated schools have not sincerely carried out the curriculum of teaching Korea's native culture, religious traditions, or national religions. During my field research in South Korea in July 2008, Prof. Kim Yunseong at Department of Religious Studies of Hanshin University, who had participated in making the current religion curriculum, told me that although religion textbooks are published according to religion curriculum prepared by religious studies scholars, only specific portions of the textbook focusing on the religion of the religion-affiliated school is used in religion courses, purposely omitting other parts concerning other religious traditions. He also pointed to some worst cases in which auxiliary materials such as the Bible or other religious scriptures are even substituted for the religion textbook.

Particularly, in Protestant-affiliated schools, many of which are based on the 'evangelical theology,' Korea's native and traditional religions tend to be categorized as less

moral and less valuable religion. A religious textbook used in Christian high schools describes Shamanism as follows:

“‘Shamanism’ does not have such systematic forms of advanced religion as founding father, doctrine, ritual, denomination, and consciousness, but accepts individual fortune and human’s basic and instinctive desires, so that it often emphasizes a belief form facing away from social ethics and rational thinking. Therefore, Shamanism is widespread, but not recognized as advanced religion, because it involves an extremely subjective and individualistic image and at the same time a mystical element like *kut* [i.e. exorcism]” (Korea Federation of Christian Schools 2008e: 13).

Interestingly, the account of the religious textbook for Buddhist high schools of Shamanism shows a much more sympathetic perspective than that of the religion textbook for Protestant schools. It describes:

“In the ancient theocratic society, the shaman had been an entity that maintained quite a high social position; however, in the Chosŏn dynasty, the shaman became one of the eight lowest classes, because Shamanism was suppressed by being called superstition. This eventually incurred the political and social vulnerability of Shamanism. Especially since [1945] liberation, our society has been re-formed by the standard of Western values so that it has not appreciated the traditional culture. Therefore, Shamanism and folk religions retaining multiple traditional cultures have received a negative evaluation” (Korea Federation of Buddhist Education 2003b: 95).

Another characteristic of Korea’s religious uniqueness is its multi-religious context that no one religion dominates the religious landscape of South Korea. The same religious textbook for Protestant schools expressed a somewhat ‘twisted’ perspective on religious pluralism as follows:

“Christianity¹⁶⁷ [i.e. Protestantism] recognizes that religious pluralism not only means the peaceful coexistence of plural religions, but also implies an ism that admits all

¹⁶⁷ Rather than using *kaesingyo* (Protestantism 개신교), Korean Protestantism prefers to call itself *kidokgyo*

religions securing their respective salvation and gods. From the Christian [i.e. Protestant] viewpoint, we have to separate out the positive dimension of religious pluralism from the negative one. We have to sympathize with merits of other religions, their accomplishments shown through history, and ethical lessons taught by them, and also respect – but not accept – their rituals, doctrines, and so forth. However, though acknowledging other religions as such, we must have a firm trust in and conviction of the core of our faith, and must not change it. The traditional faith of Christianity [i.e. Protestantism] is to stick to the teaching that God is one, and that salvation can be gained through Jesus Christ” (Korea Federation of Christian School 2008f: 27-29).

In short, rather than fully following the religion curriculum prepared by the educational authorities along with religious studies scholars for non-partisan education of Korea’s indigenous religions and multi-religious context, religious education – one offered by the secondary schools affiliated with Protestantism in particular – has been a place to emphasize a particular religion. That said, many religion-affiliated schools teach ‘other’ religions and belief systems in a way to display the superiority of the schools’ own religions without giving up the agenda of propagation. This kind of religious activities in the official school system hinders the religious neutrality of public education.

b. “Religious Textbooks that are Insensitive to the Global Religious Conflict”

Since the end of the Cold War, the new religiously charged world has increased tension and conflicts between peoples whose identities and worldviews are built on different traditions and civilizations, and thus has raised a timely question of how to establish harmony among divergent religious groups. Contemporary South Korea has transformed into a new religious terrain that is different from before both quantitatively and qualitatively. ‘Novel’ religions and religious phenomena such as Islam, Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism, and

(Christianity 기독교) although this term include other traditions of Christian religion such as Catholicism and the Orthodox Church.

religious activities without organizational belonging have increased through international marriage, influx of foreign workers, and the development of communication and information technologies (CITs) (O et al. 2007; Park 2004; Yoo 2007). The new form of religious diversity has increasingly required unbiased education about religion and religions in the official educational curriculum more than ever before, in order to let the young students head off any possible collision caused by religious differences.

The 7th Curricula (1997-present) has come to reflect the nation's new religious situation and the needs of the times. Under the current direction of the 7th Curricula, religion as an official elective course has been re-designed to better realize the functional purpose of the educational system, say, to pursue making students become well-rounded persons who can effectively communicate with other people having different religious identities in the new context of religious diversity. More specifically, the current religion curriculum has clarified the purpose of religious education as seeking to comparatively understand many different religions in the late-modern world from an objective and comprehensive perspective, not only to keep peace between religions, but also to help students achieve self-realization by practicing a sound religious life as well as becoming sound members of society who can contribute to the development of the national society (Yu, Chung, and Kim 1997: 128-130).

However, it is questionable if religious individuals and institutions in the compulsory school system have fully practiced the current religion curriculum that is prepared to better respond to the urgency of global religious conflict. In fact, it is still known in the educational circles that sectarian intention in favor of a specific religion often overtakes the purpose and role of the new religious education and religion curriculum. In this context, it is very problematic that there has been no religion textbook, published by any secular entities, which can be used for both public and private schools that are not associated with any religion.

Rather than closely following the framework prepared by the Ministry of Education and religious studies scholars, religion textbooks published by Protestant institutions are disproportionately composed for the sake of Protestant churches. Korean Protestantism has published two kinds of religion textbooks – one by the Korea Federation of Christian School (KFCS, *Han 'guk kidokkyo hakkyo yŏnmaeng* 한국기독교학교연맹)¹⁶⁸ and the other by the Association of Christian Schools in Korea (ACSK, *Han 'guk kidokkyo hakkyo yŏnhap 'oe* 한국기독교학교연합회).¹⁶⁹

The high school religion textbook published by the KFCS is composed of three volumes that together have 13 sections: Volume I is comprised of 1) humans and religion, 2) the traditions of world religions, 3) the scripture of Christianity, and 4) God's history shown in the New Testament; volume II is comprised of 5) Korean religions, 6) religions transmitted to Korea, 7) God's history shown in the Old Testament, 8) the teaching of Christ, 9) Christians' changed life; and, volume III is comprised of 10) modern society and religion, 11) church history, 12) Christian life, and 13) Christians' future. Not only does the total of eight sections (3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13) focus upon Protestantism, but also these are all written from the Protestant theological perspective, while the other five sections (1, 2, 5, 6, and 10) are written from the viewpoint of the science of religion.

The ACSK high school religion textbook is also made up of three volumes consisting of 15 sections, but shows a less disproportionate composition than the previous one. Volume I is comprised of 1) humans and religion, 2) different religious traditions, 3) understanding of religious experience, 4) Jesus Christ, the son of God, and 5) Christianity and the Bible;

¹⁶⁸ The Korea Federation of Christian School (<http://www.kfcs.or.kr>), established by lead Methodist educators in 1964, has as many as 375 member schools (12 kindergartens, 14 elementary schools, 126 middle schools, 178 high schools, 45 colleges or universities).

¹⁶⁹ The Association of Christian Schools in Korea (<http://www.acsk.org>), established by Presbyterian leaders such as Kim Hwal-ran (1899-1970) and Kim Ok-kil (1921-1990) in 1952, has as many as 134 member schools (8 elementary schools, 53 middle schools, and 73 high schools).

volume II is comprised of 6) religions of the world I, 7) religions of the world II, 8) Korea's religion and culture, 9) promise with God, and 10) Jesus Christ and the Church; and, volume III is comprised of 11) nature and I, 12) life and religion, 13) life and practice of a religious person, 14) God and humans, and 15) living with the Holy Spirit. Among all these fifteen sections, sections 4, 5, 9, 10, 14, and 15 are more based on the parochial intension of Protestantism, while the other sections 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 relatively closely follow the religion curriculum from the Ministry of Education.

Even though the ACSK religion textbook has a smaller portion for Protestant theology than that of the KFCS textbook, it is questionable that a more neutral religious education about religion is actually conducted in schools that are affiliated with the ACSK. Rather, it is known that many religion teachers only use a specific part of religion textbook in a way that propagates a specific religion. So it is hard to prove that these religion textbooks that have an extended part for Protestant theology are suitable to conduct the non-sectarian religious education for young students who will live in the age of global religious violence. It is striking that as of 2005, 67.74% of secondary school students taking religion class are "not satisfied" with these additional teaching materials (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 39).

Because the religious agenda of religion-affiliated schools overwhelms the secular intention of official religious education, religion textbooks, especially Protestant ones, do not fully contribute to making young students learn how to peacefully and constructively communicate with 'religious others' in the current global society where the relationship between religion and violence has been very visible. Therefore, a negative semantics has grown about the public value of religious education, based on social doubt as to whether or not the religious education is helpful for students to understand the rapidly changing global society, in particular such the globalization of religious violence and conflicts.

c. “Religion Conflicting with Educational Reform”

The post-1980 democracy has necessitated reforming many parts of South Korean society that include the field of mandatory education. The process of reforming official education has generated lots of intense disputes, discussions, and conflicts inside and outside educational circles. The public debates about educational renovation also concern religion, particularly religion-affiliated schools, method of religious education, the violation of students’ human rights by forced theological education, and religious organizations resisting educational reform (2005: 39-49, 136-138; Song 2004b). Those controversies related to religion have shed a negative light on the place of religion in educational circles.

First, the extension of democracy in contemporary South Korea has given rise to a change in public education toward managing religious education as educational, transparent, and non-sectarian a way as possible. The liberal governments, e.g. the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, tried to reform private schools, including religious schools, which are a significant part of South Korean public education. Interestingly, religious schools and their affiliated organizations have organizationally objected to a variety of civil and governmental efforts to renew the private school system. Thus, those reforming efforts have ended up conflicting with religion-affiliated schools and their allied religious organizations.

The democratization has led to critical concerns about the interference of religion in public education, since religious education and religion-affiliated schools are used as vehicles of ‘sectarianism’ in favor of a particular religion. Until the 6th Curricula, secondary schools had not been given concrete curriculum for neutral religious education. As written above, the 6th Curricula for the first time prepared a religion curriculum, the very foundation for non-

sectarian religious education. According to a survey in 2005,¹⁷⁰ however, even until recently, 75% of the secondary school religion teachers believed that religion courses should teach a particular religion exclusively or mainly, along with other religions (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 43). Only 38.46% of the secondary school students are interested in religion courses (2005: 41). 77.21% of surveyed students think that substitute courses for religion courses must be arranged in order to respect students' freedom of conscience (2005: 49). Reflecting this situation, teachers and educational experts have come to a critical conclusion that current forced religious education does not help build students' character; rather, the coercive religion education may only destroy it by suppressing the students' freedom of religion and conscience (Ha 2005; Kang 2004b; Song 2004b).

Besides the condition of religious education in schools, criticism has led to the reformation of religion-affiliated schools. It is known that many private schools including faith-based schools are arbitrarily managed outside of the public surveillance,¹⁷¹ even though they constitute a significant part of the publicized secondary school system financed by national revenue (Ryu 2008: 176-180). To improve transparency in management of the private schools and thereby stamp out corruption, the new democratic governments tried to revise the Private School Act (*Sarip 'akkyopŏp* 私立學校法) as the primary work for

¹⁷⁰ The survey was conducted in October and November, 2005. The research subjects were 500 students and 100 religion teachers in private middle and high schools that were affiliated with Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and new religions (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 34-54).

¹⁷¹ One of the reasons for corruption in the South Korean schools is that school management, which is maintained by national taxation and student's tuition, is not transparent in making financial and personnel decisions from the outside. Most private schools have a board of directors that mainly consists of family members or close relatives of a chairman of the board. In these cases, the chairman practically holds sway over the school management. Thus, civic groups specializing in the private school issue have suggested that a public board system be introduced to the private schools. For example, half or more of the board directors should be recommended by a steering committee of the school or parents' or teachers' organizations of the school. Also, it is extensively reported that even though private schools' personnel should be employed through an open recruitment process in conformity to the Private School Act enacted in 2005, many private schools do not follow the Act. It is also known that although it is illegal, most Protestant schools require submitting a certificate of baptism or a recommendation letter by the pastor of the affiliated church as a condition of employment (Hong 2006; Kim 2011a, 2006e).

educational reform, and the amendment of the Private School Act¹⁷² was passed at the National Assembly in December 2005. However, the revised Private School Act ran against resolute opposition of most private schools, especially religion-affiliated schools and their allied religious organizations.¹⁷³ Under the pretext of keeping autonomy and distinctiveness of each private school, faith-based schools and religions backing them strongly opposed the liberal governments and many progressive civil groups that attempted to improve public surveillance of the management of private schools, and eventually succeeded in re-revising the Revised Private School Act in July 2007.¹⁷⁴ For the sake of reforming the secondary educational system, therefore, a good portion of educational reformist circles has expressed serious concerns over, and also has criticized, those schools and religious groups that opposed reforming the private school system (Ko 2007: 26-27).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² The principal content of the passed bill included 1) the number of members of the board of directors should be seven or more, 2) a quarter of the board of directors should be appointed by plural recommendations of a steering committee of the school, 3) one of auditors should be recommended by a steering committee of the school, 4) recruitment of teachers should be open to the public, 5) chairman of the board should be restricted to holding the position of school principal, and 6) descendents and their spouses as well as the spouse of chairman of the board should not be the school principal (Korea Federation of Christian School 2006: 83).

¹⁷³ Many religious organizations had opposed the amendment of the Private School Act before it was passed. On August 17, 2005, the Korea Council of Religious Leaders (*Han'guk chonggyo chidoja hyöbühoe* 한국종교지도자협의회), comprised of representatives of seven religious bodies (Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Won Buddhism, Confucianism, Chondogyo, and the Association of Korean Native Religions (*Minjok chonggyo hyöbühoe* 민족종교협의회)), announced the “Position of the Religious Circles on the Revision of the Private School Act (*Sarip'akkyoböp kaejöng e taehan chonggyogyo ipchang* 사립학교법 개정에 대한 종교계 입장)” that strongly objected to the revision of the Private School Act. Once the bill was passed, 82 conservative civic groups held a press conference on December 23, 2005, expressing their objection to the revised Private School Act. On January 19, 2006, the Christian Council of Korea (*Han'guk kidokkyo ch'ongyönhap* 'oe 한국기독교총연합회), the Korea Federation of Christian School (*Han'guk kidokkyo hakkyo yönmaeng* 한국기독교학교연맹), the Association of Christian Schools in Korea (*Han'guk kidokkyo hakkyo yönhap* 'oe 한국기독교학교연합회), etc. held at Youngnak Presbyterian Church a mass prayer at which about 7,000 ministers and Protestant believers gathered, and announced a ten-million signature collection campaign in order to re-revise the revised Private School Act. After the prayer, the attendants marched down the street to the Seoul City Hall (Korea Federation of Christian School 2006: 82-108).

¹⁷⁴ Article 31 (4) of the R.O.K. Constitution provides that “independence, professionalism, and political impartiality of education and the autonomy of institutions of higher learning shall be guaranteed under the conditions as prescribed by the Act.” Based on this constitutional clause, the private schools including religion-affiliated schools and allied religious organizations stressed that the revision of the Private School Law would destroy the autonomy and founding spirit of the private schools.

¹⁷⁵ The educational reformist groups contend that Article 31 of the South Korean Constitution is provided with “the purpose that promotes stable growth and development of the nation.” Considering the autonomy of the

Second, the advance of democracy has been accompanied by a growing expectation of human rights in many parts of national society that include the educational field. As awareness and needs of minors' human rights and intramural democracy has increased in the field of mandatory education, such un-instructive activities as corporal punishment and coercive education have been widely prohibited in South Korean middle and high schools. This changed situation has increasingly allowed students, educational experts, school parents, and other concerned observers, e.g. human rights watchers, to raise concerns that compulsory religious education and other forced religious activities may not only un-educationally abuse students' human rights, but also destroy the character of the vulnerable juvenile. However, many religion-affiliated schools still infringe on students' freedom of religion, as they hold religion courses as an obligatory requirement for graduation as well as hold many school events or ceremonies such as morning assembly, meditation, or "*Kyönggönhoe sigan*" (the moment of piety 경건회 시간) in a heavily religious mood. In the liberated social milieu of today's South Korea, therefore, the faith-based schools have more and more been confronted with widespread public criticism that they practice forced religious education, while not respecting the students' freedom of conscience and faith, rather violating their constitutional rights (Ha 2005).

According to a survey conducted by Kang Don-ku and his collaborators, 56.17% (264 students) of 470 students attending religion-affiliated secondary schools indicated that religious activities were conducted for 'morning assembly' at their respective schools. Among 321 respondents who did say there were religious activities conducted during the morning assembly, 68.85% (221 students) responded that they were not satisfied with those religious

private schools as the "autonomy within the public sphere" for the sake of the nation's steady growth and development, they suggest that the 'founding spirit' of the faith-based schools be realized within the boundaries of the public sphere (Ko 2005).

activities. In the case of Buddhist secondary schools, ‘Vippasana meditation’ or ‘chanting the Heart Sutra’ were conducted in the course of morning assembly. In Catholic middle and high schools, ‘meditation’ or ‘day-opening prayer’ and in Protestant secondary schools, ‘hymn,’ ‘worship,’ ‘prayer,’ or ‘*Kyönggönhoe sigan*’ were performed. Among 56 religion teachers, 57.14% (32 teachers) said that their students had no rights to choose whether or not to attend regular religious rituals. Among 453 students, 33.78% (153 students) expressed that students should have the right to choose whether or not to attend or not the regular religious activities (Kang, Yun, Cho, and Ko 2005: 49-54). Those religious activities, together with religion courses, were the focus of such concerns about religion in secondary schools.

As many religion-affiliated colleges or universities have required students to take ‘chapel’ as a compulsory subject, those students who do not want to participate in any ritualistic activities in favor of a particular religion have expressed disapproval of this graduate requirement, claiming that their freedom of religion is violated by such un-educational coercion. In 1995, for instance, Sungsil University was sued by a student who could not receive a bachelor’s degree because he did not complete the chapel course.¹⁷⁶ In 2003, a group of students of Ehwa Womans University organizationally objected to the obligatory chapel as a graduate requirement, saying that “I have freedom not to pray to God who does not exist to me.” In the same year, the student association of the Faculty of Arts of Myongji University organizationally refused to attend chapel, arguing that “equal are the right to pray and the right not to pray.” In 2004, a group of students named “People Who Wish to Liberate Yonsei University Chapel” (*Yönsedae ch’aep’ül üi chayuhwa rül paranün saramdül*

¹⁷⁶ In 1995, a law school student filed a lawsuit against Sungsil University, arguing that the school regulation, which had forced students to complete chapel for six semesters as a requirement of graduation, violated his freedom of religion, the constitutional right. The first trial decided that “setting the duty of chapel attendance as a school regulation cannot be viewed as intrinsically violating the students’ freedom of having no belief.” In 1998, the Supreme Court ruled that “within the limit of not violating the freedom of having no belief, the school regulation setting the completion of religious education as a graduate requirement can be enacted.”

연세대 채플의 자유화를 바라는 사람들) took part in movements refusing the forced chapel.¹⁷⁷ Of the most well-known cases is Kang Ui Seok's objection to forced religious education in his high school, i.e. the refusal against both forced Protestant rituals and forced religion courses in Daekwang High School in 2004.¹⁷⁸ On July 12th, Kang presented to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea a petition that asked to guarantee his freedom of religion in his high school.

On top of these, many civil groups specializing in public education, e.g. the Citizens Coalition for Freedom of Religion in Schools (*Hakkyo chonggyo chayu rŭl wihan simin yŏnhap* 학교종교자유를 위한 시민연합), Parents Solidarity for Human Education (*In'gan kyoyuk sirhyŏn hakpumo yŏndae* 인간교육실현학부모연대), Freedom of Religion in Mission Schools (*Misyŏn sŭk'ul chonggyo chayu* 미션스쿨종교자유), and the Korea Institute for Religious Freedom (*Chonggyo chayu chŏngch'aek yŏn'guwŏn* 종교자유정책연구원), have joined the widespread objection to forced religious education in school, sharing an idea that religion-affiliated schools have given priority to religion over students' human rights (Ha 2005; Kang 2009a: 34-40; Kang 2004b; Song 2004b).

The rapid democratization of South Korea has contributed to spreading a sense of crisis in terms of students' fundamental rights in the educational system where religious projects have persisted within its public educational institutions.¹⁷⁹ Forced religious education not fully recognizing students' human rights would not effectively make students be 'global

¹⁷⁷ It is known that in order to lower resistance to the chapel as a required subject, many religion-affiliated colleges and universities have now changed its form into a 'liberal arts style chapel' in which a variety of cultural activities, e.g. play, hip-hop, musical, and gospel, are performed rather than forcing students to participate in more traditional religious rituals.

¹⁷⁸ In chapter three, I gave a detailed account of Kang's case in terms of its legal significance.

¹⁷⁹ As mentioned above, the Charter of National Education (*Kungmin kyoyuk hŏnjang* 國民教育憲章), announced on December 5th, 1968, was discarded in 1994, since it was criticized for disregarding the human rights and characteristics of individual students on the pretext of the state and nation as well as falling short of fostering democratic citizens.

citizens' who can 'peacefully' work with others having different religious identities in today's globalized society (Kim 2007a: 119-123). This is because, through forced religious education, the students cannot properly learn how to respect the rights and freedom of 'religious others' whom they must frequently encounter in this age of globalization. Even though some argue that religious education can function as moral education in modern times (Ryu 1994; Kang 2009a: 39-40), it would be difficult to practice as wished, as long as such religious education suppressing students' freedom of faith would not instill a proper sense of ethics into the students. The idea that religious education has violated human rights and religious liberty of the juvenile students in schools is largely shared in the educational system of democratized South Korea.

4. Concluding Remarks

This chapter examines from structural and semantic perspectives the change in the construction of religion in the educational system of contemporary South Korea. As South Korea has become more multi-religious in the processes of democratization and globalization, the importance of religious education as 'global civil education' has been recognized in the nation's educational system. The increased necessity of religious studies and the request of religion-affiliated schools to secure theological education have together contributed to making religion become an official course in the secondary school system. Through the establishment of religion curriculum, religion has been formalized as a subject of public education, i.e. 'regular elective course.' To be sure, religious education is well institutionalized as a constituent part of the publicized secondary education in contemporary South Korea.

On the other hand, the post-Cold War religious situation has been accompanied by growing concern over conflict and tension between religions. Witnessing the globalized religious violence, the South Korean educational authorities have imposed restriction on “education for specific religion” in schools, endeavoring to realize “education about religion” to bring up sound citizens who can peacefully and efficiently live and communicate with different religious people in contemporary global society.

As the educational system of South Korea has rapidly developed, religion has been signified as a problematic subject that does not fully help the official school system realize its educational purpose, but is only interested in keeping its sectarian interests. Because faith education for particular religions is still practiced in schools thanks to the continuous influence of religion upon the public educational system, religion has been largely considered constructed as an obstacle to the realization of modern secular education. In democratized South Korea, unlike early modern Korea, students and concerned people have critically questioned whether or not religion, i.e. religious education, religion-affiliated schools, and their allied religious organizations, can contribute to producing democratic citizens who fit the globalized society of the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Re-formation of the Korean Notion of Religion in the Mass Media System

Mass media are an important field of investigation to understand the official conception of religion in contemporary South Korea. The modern system of mass media observes religion and religions and produces texts and images from its own viewpoint, and through such media as newspapers, broadcasting, and magazines, people come to know about religious and non-religious events and activities, even remote ones. Observing the significance of mass media in today's globally networked society, religious individuals and groups attempt to utilize media for propagating purposes. For example, some religious people who are not satisfied with the official notion of religion would like to change the established idea of religion for their own sectarian interests. Cultural elites who are engaged in the media industry, e.g. newspaper journalists or television program producers, make a series of media products that reflect not only the publicized or mainstream ideas of religion, but also their own ideological and secular/religious identity. The discursive construction of religion may be reiteratively re-produced by a recursive operation of the system of mass media. Of course, it can reflect the different ideas of religion constructed in other societal systems such as the religious, political, legal, and educational systems.

How, then, does the system of mass media specifically operate in constructing and re-constructing the official notion of religion in the national society of South Korea? It is important to recognize that the observed system of mass media is one of the functional systems of modern global society. In other words, by means of mass media, we come to know society, nature, and/or the world. Based on its own code, programs, medium, and function, the system of mass media operates its distinctive communication process that is self-referentially

closed from other functional systems. The system of mass media operates its own programs that make use of copying technologies to disseminate communication; the programs include books, magazines, and newspapers manufactured by printing presses, as well as photographic or electronic copying procedures and broadcasting. Since being coupled with other differentiated communication systems, the mass media can, at the same time, be influenced by the environment and its changes, such as the transformation of political, economic, and technical systems.¹⁸⁰ For example, it is noteworthy that the public media industry in South Korea has been largely liberalized from the power of the authoritative state since the late 1980s, and this is a principal factor that defines the current condition of the Korean mass media, in particular its manufacturing of the consent of religion and religions (Kang 2004a: 322-323).

This chapter delves into how the Korean notion of religion is constructed in the process through which the mass media differentiate themselves from other functional societal systems. As in chapters three and four, my examination of the mass media's conceptualization of religion in contemporary South Korea will be conducted from the dual viewpoints of 'structure' and 'semantics.' At the same time, I recognize that, in forming and re-forming the official conception of religion, the mass media, as one of the societal communication systems, play their own part differently from the political, legal and educational systems, as they serve as a 'medium' to deliver and reflect the ideas of religion already produced in the other societal communication systems. Therefore, once more, it is necessary to investigate how notions of religion are structurally and semantically constructed in the Korean context of the system of mass media.

¹⁸⁰ "The mode of operation of the mass media is ... subject to external structural conditions which place limits on what they are able to realize" (Luhmann 2000: 3).

1. The Function, Code, and Programs of the Mass Media System

From the perspective of Luhmannian systems theory, the mass media are primarily observed as one of the sub-societal systems of modern society. As a functionally differentiated communication system, the mass media fulfill the function of “information” and “dialogue” for the globally extended society. Various forms of information, such as news, ideas, stories, texts, pictures, images, and so on, from the other sub-societal systems, are produced and re-produced in the process of the functional operation of the mass media, as the system of mass media observes the communicative activities of the other sub-societal systems, memorizes and forgets the communications that are observed, and repeats this communicative process continuously. Depending on the topic, the other communication systems, e.g. the educational, legal, political, and religious systems, all of which are structurally coupled to the system of mass media, may agitate and even influence the operational process of the mass media.

In modern times, the achievement of the system of mass media has been made possible by the invention of technologies of information dissemination that not only circumvent interaction among co-present individuals and groups, but even render such interaction impossible for the mass media’s own communication. With the development of the printing press and broadcasting, for example, the size of written and visual material is multiplied to the extent that oral interaction among all the communicators is rendered impossible. Of course, oral communication is still possible, “[b]ut the success of scheduled communication no longer depends upon it. This is how, in the sphere of the mass media, an

autopoietic, self-reproducing system is able to emerge which no longer requires the mediation of interaction among those co-present” (Luhmann 2000: 16).

The functional operation of the autonomous communication system is guaranteed by distinguishing between the system of mass media and its environment. In other words, the system of mass media as one of the sub-societal systems is oriented to the distinction between self-reference and other-reference. How, then, is the primary difference of the system of mass media and the social environment continuously produced and re-produced? This fundamentally occurs by means of a binary code of “information” and “non-information.” Luhmann wrote that “[i]nformation ... is the positive value, the designatory value, with which the system describes the possibilities of its own operating. But in order to have the freedom of seeing something as information or not, there must also be a possibility of thinking that something is non-informative. ... Of course, even the information that something is not information is also informative” (2000: 17).

The information/non-information code is not sufficient for operating the system of mass media, because the coding only secures the difference of the mass media from the operations of the other communication systems. So “programs are additionally required which will divide whatever can be expected as information, or remains without an informational value, into fields of selection such as sports or astrophysics, politics or modern art, accidents or catastrophes. The unity and invariance of the code is then matched by a plurality of such programs” (2000: 18). Luhmann inductively typifies various programs of the mass media into three strands – “news and documentary reports,” “advertising,” and “entertainment.” The three strands are the same in that they all use the information/non-information code, but are also different from each other in that they use divergent criteria that underpin the selection of information. It is also possible that they overlap each other.

In order to examine the construction of religion in the Korean mass media, this chapter is focused on programs and cases in the strand of “news and in-depth reporting (2000: 25-41),” setting aside the two other programmatic strands of “advertising” and “entertainment.”¹⁸¹ In particular, this chapter delineates not only the structural landscape in which religious organizations as agencies of “news and reports” have become a constituent part of the Korean media industry, but also the process through which texts, discourses, or images on religion and religions are constructed and re-constructed in the Korean context of mass media.

Consequently, on the level of structure, I will first investigate how religions are institutionalized as ‘information producers’ in the field of mass media in South Korea. In other words, I will examine how religious organizations use mass media for their own interests. What are the structural characteristics of the media industry in South Korea? In the Korean media structure, what is the state of “religious media” (Hoover 1997)? Where have religious media been located in the history of Korean media? Is religion allowed to be a justifiable contributor to the field of mass media in the Korean public sphere? How many religious newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting companies are there in this modern Asian society? Whether a space for religions to participate in constructing South Korea’s media industry is limited or widely opened is determinative in conceptualizing the structural nature of religion in the Korean media context.

¹⁸¹ Luhmann argues that “advertising seeks to manipulate, it works insincerely and assumes that that is taken for granted. ... This function of making the motives of the one being targeted unrecognizable is served above all by the trend towards formal beauty which currently dominates advertising, both visually and textually. ... Another widespread technique of ‘opaque-ization’ lies in the paradoxical use of language. For example, we are told that by spending money we can ‘save’; items are designated ‘exclusive’ in an advertisement which obviously directed at everybody” (Luhmann 2000: 44-45). Regarding entertainment, its examples include the games such as the sports programs, the novel, films, many other stories and literature (2000: 51-62).

I will, secondly, examine the semantic construction of religion in the system of mass media by investigating how religion and religions are discussed and imagined in the Korean secular media such as newspapers or broadcasting documentaries. In modern times, mass media are significant in delivering and processing information and knowledge on religion and religions, because they are a communication system functionally specialized to observe, and produce information related to, all the other communication systems including the religious system. So the kind of semantics produced on religion and religions in the mass media is important in forming and re-forming the official notion of religion in contemporary South Korea. Texts and images of the religious – the medium of the system of mass media – create certain meanings of religion in the system of mass media. Meaning is not static or unchangeable, but can be manufactured through the processes of intention, resistance, and/or compromise (Hoover 2002: 1-6; Park 2009: 318). Programs of mass media, ranging from newspapers to broadcasting, deal with a variety of religious topics formed in the other sub-societal systems, topics through which the other communication systems may influence the functional operation of the system of mass media. Both the identity of media workers and public discourses on the religious are important in that they may influence how the media professionals select specific topics of religion as well as deliver information, or produce meanings, on religion in a certain form (Hoover 2006: 39-44).

2. The Location of Religion in the Korean Mass Media

What is the most appropriate method to delineate the structural conception of religion in the South Korean context of mass media? In order to examine the semantics of religion in mass media, one would need to analyze ideas and thoughts on religion and religions that a

variety of meaning carriers, e.g. texts, stories, and images, contain in the system of mass media. But difficulties are apparent when attempting to extract such passages or texts that clearly disclose the structural dimension of the conceptualization of religion in the mass media of South Korea. Unlike the legal and educational systems that have stipulated laws and regulations on religious persons and organizations or educational authorities' policies on religious education, there are rarely parallel institutional guidelines found in Korean mass media that centrally regulate the constellation of their structure through which religious topics and information are brought to the populace.¹⁸²

Thus, without sufficient primary materials that would underline the assumption that the structural notion of religion is embedded in mass media, I will alternatively examine the institutional location of religion itself in the Korean media context. Particularly, I will describe how 'religious media,' e.g. newspapers and broadcasters that are affiliated with and/or operate for a particular religion, have played a role as a manufacturer of information in the local mediascapes¹⁸³ of South Korea since the late 1980s.¹⁸⁴ Religious media have their

¹⁸² The political system, particularly government, may influence the system of mass media, by arranging 'media policies' or 'guidelines toward the press.' It can, thus, be said that, from the Luhmannian perspective, those policies and guidelines primarily belong to the political system rather than the system of mass media. Whether or not they are influenced by other communication systems, the documented structural principals that generally regulate the self-referential system of mass media are in principle not found within it. Of course, in South Korea, laws and regulations exist on press, broadcasting, publishing, the Internet, and so forth. For their own interests, the state institutions can even use other apparatus, e.g. the Tax Law or the National Security Law, to control mass media. However, from the Luhmannian perspective, these are not the products produced out of the functional operation of mass media. Thus, in any event, my focus is on the observed structural situation of mass media itself to examine the structural notion of religion in the Korean media regime.

¹⁸³ Arjun Appadurai differentiates five dimensions of global flows across local cultural boundaries, i.e. ethnoscape, technoscape, financescapes, ideoscapes, and mediascapes. Mediascapes refers both to the distribution of the capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the large complex repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities (Appadurai 1996: 35-36).

¹⁸⁴ The principal purpose of this thesis is to investigate the 'official' notion of religion in modern Korea, but not the 'academic' and 'theological' ones, so that I delve into decisions, ideas, and principles and agendas expressed and practiced by leading elites and intellectuals in the differentiated public spheres of Korean society. However, my efforts in this section of chapter five to some extent take on the character of academic re-construction, because, due to a relative lack of recorded 'structural' articulations on religion and religions by those public figures, I inversely examine the resulted constellation of 'religion media' rather than directly deal with those institutional representations in the mass media system like positive laws and regulations on religious organizations in the legal system and methods and curriculum about religious education in the educational

own place in the Korean media system that has gone through a structural change parallel to the general transformation of South Korean society since the democratization of 1987. I will first elaborate on the changing relations of state, civil society, and media in democratized South Korea. I will, then, proceed to examine the structural formation of religious media in the Korean media context. Through this process of analysis, I will try to conceptualize the structural position of religion in the system of mass media, by articulating the formative characteristics of the Korean religious media.

(1) The Transformation of the Media Structure in South Korea

‘Symbolic power’ is a term that is often used to characterize the media in modern times,¹⁸⁵ especially the place and role of the media in late-modern society. The media as symbolic power in themselves assume a leading place among many parts of modern society (Giddens 1990; Thompson 1995). Before the democratization of 1987, the Korean media were seized by the dictatorial state that wanted to use them as a tool to persuade the populace that the authoritarian ruling was somehow necessary and legitimate for ‘modernization of the fatherland’ (조국근대화), ‘economic development’ (*kyöngje paljön* 경제발전) in particular. The press industry was a controlled market where, under the guardianships of the state, not only was a cartel allowed, but also newspapers and broadcasting companies cooperating with the illegitimate state were protected from the penetration of new competitors. It can be said, therefore, that the authoritarian regimes protected and nurtured the media as well as

system.

¹⁸⁵ Throughout this chapter, I make use of both terms ‘mass media’ and ‘media.’ While using the term ‘mass media’ as a more inclusive conception that embraces not just a differentiated societal system of communication in society, but also any tools and resources conveying information, I restrict the word ‘media’ to meaning the programs or programmatic institutions for ‘news and in-depth reporting’ in the mass media system or simply the ‘press,’ such as newspaper, magazine, or broadcasting.

suppressed freedom of speech. For the Korean dictators, the media were a partner for national modernization and also an important means to justify the political power so that for a long time the media were taken into the strong state of this developing East Asian country (Cho 2003; Won 1998).

The 1987 democratization changed state policies toward the press from ‘direct control’ to methods of ‘unofficial cooperation’ and ‘industrial regulation.’ As the marketplace of the press has changed from a controlled market to a regulated market, competition within the media industry has in earnest begun for the first time. Until the middle of the 1990s, while existing newspapers competed to increase the number of pages, new nationwide newspapers were launched as were a countless number of local newspapers. In 1993, the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS, *Sŏul pangsong* 서울방송), a nationwide private broadcaster, newly entered the broadcasting market. Through this process, Chosun Daily (*Chosŏn ilbo* 조선일보), Joongang Daily (*Chungang ilbo* 중앙일보), and Donga Daily (*Tonga ilbo* 동아일보) have emerged as the three dominant players in the newspaper market,¹⁸⁶ while the broadcasting industry was established with the Seoul Broadcasting System as well as two other public broadcasters, i.e. the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS, *Han'guk pangsong kongsa* 한국방송공사) and the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC, *Munhwa pangsong* 문화방송) (Kang 2004a: 322-326).

The current media industry of South Korea is marked by a contrasting change through which, while the newspaper industry is stagnant, the broadcasting industry is expanding along with the development of ‘new media.’ In 1996, the total sales of the major daily newspaper

¹⁸⁶ These three ‘conservative’ newspapers are often pejoratively referred to as “Cho-Choong-Tong” (조중동) especially among liberal South Koreans, many of whom supported the reforming governments such as the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations. It is known that as of 2001, these three newspapers occupy about 75% of the circulation share (An 2006).

industry were 1.9 trillion won, and the broadcasting industry 1.8 trillion won.¹⁸⁷ In 2002, however, those of the major newspaper industry decreased to 1.88 trillion won, while the broadcasting industry increased to 2.65 trillion won, and has continued to increase (Chung and Park 1996). As early as 2000, the broadcasting industry outstripped the newspaper industry in ad sales, which occupied the largest portion of total sales in both industries. Not only is the broadcasting industry more stable than the major daily newspaper in terms of financial management, but it has also actively invested in a newly developing digital imaginary market while most newspapers have, in contrast, reduced their scale of management.

With the structural transformation of Korean media, the system of mass media has become more differentiated and autonomous in South Korea, and this has in turn brought about changes in the position and role of the media in relation to the state and civil society. The advance of Korean media is characterized by the concurrent progress of the democratization of media firms as well as the rise of corporatism. In the wake of the 1987 democratization, in-house democratization advanced with the unionization of workers in each media corporation and also the establishment of the Korean Federation of Press Unions.¹⁸⁸ The Korean media, which had operated as an ‘instrumental power’ of the authoritarian governments until the early 1990s, greatly advanced the democratization of editing and scheduling organizations by establishing a system of direct election of the managing editor or the director of the programming department, the Committee for Impartial Reporting

¹⁸⁷ If the Korean won-U.S. dollar exchange rate is 1,000 won per 1 U.S. dollar, 1.9 trillion won is 1.9 billion U.S. dollars.

¹⁸⁸ The Korean Federation of Press Unions (*Chŏn'guk ŏllon nodong chohap yŏnmaeng* 전국언론노동조합연맹) was established on November 26, 1988 as an upper organization of 41 unions of newspapers, broadcasting companies, and news agencies. On November 24th, 2000, this organization was replaced by the National Union of Mediaworkers (*Chŏn'guk ŏllon nodong chohap* 전국언론노동조합, <http://media.nodong.org>) that was expanded by newly including the unions of the publishing industry. The National Union of Mediaworkers consists of 128 corporate unions.

(*Kongjŏng podo wiwŏnhoe* 공정보도위원회), and the Code of Ethics for Reporting (*Podo yulli kangryŏng* 보도윤리강령). However, as competition within both newspaper and broadcasting industries grew fierce, the movements for in-house democratization declined sharply on one hand, and the atmosphere of market supremacy became a major trend in those media organizations on the other. In short, although the internal structure of the Korean media has largely become democratized and rationalized since the late 1980s, the lead newspapers still struggle to fully secure the autonomy of their editorial staff from the interference of the newspaper owners and the managing officers, and also the major television broadcasters such as KBS and MBC have been faced with the task of reforming their governing structure, especially as it pertains to the board of directors and the appointment of the president (Kang 2004a; Ryu 2004c).

Such reconfiguration of the Korean media structure has been accompanied by the change in the general character of media workers and their groups. Until the late 1980s, media workers or ‘journalists’ had the image of ‘patriotic intellectuals’ in the public sphere.¹⁸⁹ However, since the 1990s, the identity of the media workers has been in crisis between two contrasting directions; one is ‘employees of media firms,’ and the other ‘professionals or intellectuals taking charge of producing information and knowledge.’ In other words, the

¹⁸⁹ The chart below shows the changing relation between the state power and the media in modern Korea.

<Table 3> The Form, Identity, and Role of the Media in Modern Korea

| | The Relation to Power | The Identity of Journalism | The Role of Journalist |
|------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1886-1910 | Part of the bureaucracy | Enlightening press | Patriotic and enlightening |
| 1910-1945 | Pro-Japanese organization | Modern enlightening press | Nationalistic activist |
| 1945-1948 | Partisan organization | Partisan media | Partisan ideologue |
| 1948-1972 | Strongly controlled by the dictatorial regimes | Developmental journalism | Education for modernization |
| 1972-1986 | Propaganda machine of dictatorial regimes | Propaganda journalism | Propagandist for dictatorship |
| 1987-2000 | Cartel journalism | Populist journalism | Populist opinion leader |

(Kang 2006b: 75)

identity crisis takes the form of selecting between an identity as a member of the National Union of Mediaworkers or the Journalists Association of Korea¹⁹⁰ and an identity as employee of the newspaper or broadcasting company to which the media worker belongs. According to Kang Myung-Koo, a communication scholar specializing in Korean media, what has emerged as ‘reasonable’ in the culture of the Korean media market is that a journalist’s affiliation with a media firm overrides the identity of his or her loyalty to the professional spirit of journalism, because competition and conflicts have intensified between the media and the state, as well as between media groups, especially between the conservative media and the liberal media. Such a state of affairs has been solidified since all the major newspapers and broadcasters underwent an intensive tax investigation under the reform-oriented governments during the first few years of the twenty-first century, with one prominent example being Hong Sök-hyun, the president of Jungang Daily, who was arrested for tax evasion in 2000 (Kang 2004a: 337-338).

(2) The Rise of Religious Media in Democratized South Korea

In the new media environment of democratized South Korea, what is the location and role of religion? Are religious media, e.g. religious newspapers or broadcasters, included as positive providers of universal knowledge and information in the Korean media industry? Or, are they considered as ‘special media’ exclusively working for their religious interests? How has the process of modernization in Korea affected the role of religious institutions in forming public opinion in Korea’s mass media? In previous chapters, especially in chapters three and

¹⁹⁰ The Journalists Association of Korea (<http://www.journalist.or.kr>) is arguably the largest organization of Korean journalists, and has about 7,000 members working for newspapers, broadcasters, or news agencies. Founded on August 17th, 1964, it has had four creeds, 1) to defend freedom of speech, 2) to enhance the quality of journalists, 3) to protect the rights and interests of journalists, and 4) to reinforce international exchange.

four, I attempted to delineate how the modern principle of ‘separation of church and the state’ has been differently contextualized in the legal and educational systems of modern Korea, and it is commonly found that in both sub-societal systems, religion has been allowed to participate in forming those communication systems. What place and role, then, has religion had in constructing the mass media in contemporary South Korea?

As in the two differentiated societal systems of law and education, the ‘passive,’ but not ‘assertive’ form of secularism is also widely observed in the system of mass media. That said, religion is largely allowed to partake in the making of the Korean structure of media. There are a lot of ‘religious media,’ e.g. newspapers and broadcasters, in the media industry of today’s South Korea, and their roles have been significant in building popular journalism through the modern history of Korea. Religious media may be in themselves an alternative place for many modern Koreans to keep their religious identity and to even religiously communicate without having religious membership in any particular religious organization. According to Robert Wuthnow (1992), the location in which one can find religion or the sacred in modern times has changed from an institutional religion to unexpected places such as popular culture or the media. The contemporary media has the power to reconstruct such modern religious culture, by having an impact on the qualitative dimension of individuals’ lives (Horsfield 1997: 168-169).

Within the structural change of the media environment in South Korea described above, religious media have disclosed some characteristics that heuristically indicate how religions institutionalize themselves in the Korean media system. First, the democratization and fierce competition in the media industry triggered by the worldwide spread of neo-liberalism have provided a hotbed for a rapid growth of religious media. Korean religions have positively employed the newly liberated media circumstances for the sake of

‘propagation’ and ‘practice of social doctrine.’ Secondly, the range of religious media has been extended from majority religions such as the ‘world religions’ to minority religions such as Won Buddhism, Soka Gakkai, Chŭngsan’gyo, and the Unification Church. The democratized nation-state does not have any discernible regulations that explicitly prohibit the once so-called ‘pseudo’ or ‘evil’ religions from possessing broadcasters or press corporations. Thirdly, commodities of religious media, e.g. books, magazines, music records, and tools and accessories, have created new cultural loci such as ‘CCM’ (Contemporary Christian Music) or ‘meditation industry.’¹⁹¹ These are increasingly important parts of the religio-cultural landscape of contemporary South Korea (Park 2009: 321). All of these characteristics of religious media detail their dynamics that cut across the division between the sacred and secular sectors in the country. Among these features mentioned, I will here focus upon the first one, especially the formation of religions’ use of media in late-modern South Korea, from the perspective of the historical development of religious newspapers and broadcasters.

Let’s have a look at the statistical constellation of religious media in contemporary South Korea. The chart below offers an overall picture of Korean religious media, which is arranged according to religions and types of media.

¹⁹¹ Contemporary South Korea has on-line and off-line stores specializing in meditation and the New Age movement, selling books, records, and others about them. They often deal in items related to Zen or Sŏn Buddhism, Yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, alternative spirituality, and the like. *Chŏngsin segye sa* 정신세계사, which literally means ‘the mind world corporation,’ is one of the most well-known publishers in South Korea’s meditation industry. *Chŏngsin segye* 정신세계 is widely used as a synonym for “New Age” in South Korea today.

<Table 4> Religious Media in South Korea¹⁹²

| | Buddhism | Protestantism | Catholicism | Others | Total |
|-----------------------|----------|---------------|-------------|--------|-------|
| Radio | 7 | 22 | 5 | 4 | 38 |
| CATV | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Internet TV | 4 | 1 | . | 1 | 6 |
| Newspaper | 24 | 82 | 3 | 7 | 116 |
| Monthly Periodicals | 59 | 130 | 21 | 14 | 224 |
| Bimonthly Periodicals | 14 | 37 | 1 | 2 | 54 |
| Quarterly Periodicals | 9 | 37 | 9 | 4 | 59 |
| Biannual Periodicals | 4 | 9 | 3 | . | 16 |
| Yearly Periodicals | 1 | 1 | . | . | 2 |
| Total | 123 | 322 | 43 | 33 | 521 |

(Ko, Yi, and Chŏn 2008: 107)

As the above table shows, religions actively participate in the Korean media industry whose segments range from broadcasting to newspapers to periodicals. Among these mass media, religious broadcasting, which was once limited to radio and the Internet, have expanded to cable television since the late 1990s.¹⁹³ In 1995, as religious CATV broadcasting began to be transmitted, cable television broadcasting was launched. On the grounds of diversifying the mediascape, broadcasting-related laws have been enforced to support religions partaking in constituting the nation’s broadcasting industry. For example, the Revision of the Broadcasting Act has made compulsory the transmitting of religious broadcasting (Lee and Min 2011: 178).¹⁹⁴ The third clause of Article 70 (Composition and Operation of Channel) of the Broadcasting Act prescribes that “the cable television provider and satellite broadcasting provider ... shall maintain ... channels for the missionary purpose

¹⁹² “Others” and “CATV” stand for ‘other religions’ and ‘cable television broadcasting’ respectively. The labels “Monthly,” “bimonthly,” “quarterly,” “biannual,” and “yearly” also mean monthly magazines, bimonthly magazines, quarterly magazines, biannual magazines, biannual magazines, and yearly magazines respectively (Ko 2008: 107-113).

¹⁹³ Such expansion of religions’ use of broadcasting corresponds to the general growth of media usage in contemporary South Korea. As of 1991, television and VCR ownership rates are 99.2% and 54.2% respectively per household on the average (Gallup Korea 1992: 44-49). As of 2011, family television viewing time is 7 hours 48 minutes per day on the average (Yoon 2011). As of June 2006, about 2,560,000 Koreans subscribe to cable television (Sim 2006).

¹⁹⁴ The Revision of the Broadcasting Act was enacted in March, 2000.

of religion.”¹⁹⁵ Drawing upon this legal support, Korean Buddhism has maintained the Buddhist Broadcasting System (BBS)¹⁹⁶ and the Buddhist Television Network (BTN), while three cable television broadcasters, i.e. Christian Broadcasting System (CBS),¹⁹⁷ Christian Evangelical Broadcasting (C3TV), and Christian Television System (CTV), have represented the Protestant broadcasting. Catholicism and Chŭngsan’gyo¹⁹⁸ have Pyeonghwa Broadcasting Corporation (PBC)¹⁹⁹ and Sangsaeng Television Broadcasting (STB)²⁰⁰ respectively. The development of media technology and culture, the state’s supports, and the religions’ needs to use the media for their proselytizing purposes have all cooperatively contributed to expanding religious broadcasting to cable television. In addition, Buddhism (e.g. BBS), Protestantism (e.g. CBS and FEBC²⁰¹), Catholicism (e.g. PBC), and Won Buddhism (e.g. WBS²⁰²) have their respective national and local radio stations.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ The second clause of Article 6 (Impartiality and Public Interest Nature of Broadcasting) of the Broadcasting Act also regulates that “a broadcast shall not be discriminative in broadcast programming on account of sex, age, occupation, religion, belief, class, region, race, etc.: Provided, That this shall not apply in cases where a broadcasting business operator is engaged in a specialized programming with respect to a missionary work of religion within the limit of a relevant broadcast field.”

¹⁹⁶ BBS (*Pulgyo pangsong* 불교방송, www.bbsi.co.kr) started service in May 1999. The Buddhist sects that participated in establishing BBS are the Jogyo Order of Korean Buddhism, Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism, Cheotae Order of Korean Buddhism, Korean Buddhism Promotion Foundation, etc.

¹⁹⁷ CBS (*Kidokgyo pangsong* 기독교방송, www.cbs.co.kr), an interdenominational ecumenical organization, started service in December 1954 when it went on the air as the first independent radio station in South Korea. In 2002, it opened its own television station.

¹⁹⁸ For general information about this indigenous Korean religion, refer to Donald Baker’s introductory article and its reading list for further information, “Renewing Heaven and Earth: Spiritual Discipline in Chŭngsan’gyo,” in Robert E. Buswell Jr. ed. 2007. *Religions of Korea in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 487-496.

¹⁹⁹ PBC (*Pyŏnghwa pangsong* 평화방송, www.pbc.co.kr), which was established in 1990, began cable television service in 1995. Some argue that the 1990 foundation of the PBC initiated the era of religious broadcasting in South Korea (Jung and Hahn 2009).

²⁰⁰ STB (*Sangsaeng pangsong* 상생방송, www.stb.co.kr), which was created by Jungsando, one of the Chŭngsan’gyo denominations, began service in March 2007.

²⁰¹ The Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC, *Kŭktong pangsong* 극동방송, http://www.febc.net) was founded in 1956, with the purpose of “full evangelism” especially toward the communist bloc. It consists of one national and seven local radio stations.

²⁰² WBS (*Wŏnŭm pangsong* 원음방송, www.wbsi.kr) began service in 1999. It consists of one national and three local radio stations.

²⁰³ BBS consists of one national and six local radio stations, while CBS consists of one national and thirteen local stations, and PBC consists of one national and four local stations.

The significance of religious broadcasting has gone beyond the scope of mere missionary purposes in the history of Korean journalism and broadcasting. Lee and Min (2001) argue that watching Catholic television programs improved the audiences' interpersonal trust and social networking activities as well as their intention for civil and political participation, thus underlining the role that religious broadcasting has played in shaping public roles in Korean society. The Christian Broadcasting System (CBS),²⁰⁴ which was founded by the Protestant churches with a purpose of “the dissemination of the Christian gospel and the nurturing of Christian education,” has greatly contributed to the development of South Korea's broadcast journalism, by being primarily independent from the power of the authoritarian state. Before the democratization, CBS – South Korea's first private broadcaster – not only emphasized active social participation and anticommunism (Lee and Kang 2007), but strongly criticized dictatorial regimes and their undemocratic activities such as military coups (Cho and Lee 2004: 12-18). Such political participation of religious journalism caused serious conflict between CBS and the authoritarian governments. Under the dictatorial regimes, the reporting function of the CBS was frequently restricted by the state's systematic sanction.²⁰⁵

In this media context, an official title given to religious broadcasting was “special broadcasting” (*T'ũksu pangsong* 특수방송), a term implicitly suggesting that religious broadcasting focuses upon religious issues only, not political ones. At this juncture the issue of identity takes on a particular dynamic in religious media as it oscillates between secular public journalism and private religious proselytism. It must first be noted that although this

²⁰⁴ The CBS, which had been tinged with strong religious coloring in its early years, gradually reduced the scale of mission broadcasting, and expanded popular broadcasting, entering into competition with the state-run broadcasters of serial dramas (Lee and Kang 2007: 431-437).

²⁰⁵ For example, in November 1980, the South Korean government announced the “Media Consolidation” (*Ŏllon t'ongp'yehap* 언론통폐합) that prohibited the CBS from reporting news, commenting on current events, and advertising commercial products.

label was *formally* eliminated when the Integrated Broadcasting Act (*T'onghap pangsongpŏp* 통합방송법) was enacted in December 1999, the concept of “special broadcasting” has arguably continued to influence the categorization of religious broadcasters in the broadcasting industry (Cho and Lee 2004: 19-20). Within this ongoing conceptual frame, religious broadcasters, together with their sister religious media such as religious newspapers, have by themselves tended to restrict their role and place to the religious, leaving aside their possible role for social services and public/political participation. It can be said that the identity issue of religious broadcasting fundamentally reflects the conflicting demands of the audience that seeks to satisfy their religious needs without withdrawing their religious lives from the general trend of the national society (Jung and Hahn 2009: 426-435).

For religious newspapers, balancing between ‘proselytizing purpose’ and the ‘function of journalism’ has been a critical issue as well. Among the many religious newspapers shown in <Table 4>, Kukmin Daily²⁰⁶ and Segye Times²⁰⁷ are the only two nationwide general newspapers. Whereas all the other religious newspapers operate with a definite missionary purpose for a somewhat limited range of readership, Kukmin Daily and Segye Times have produced news and information aimed at both religious and secular people. For the general readership, many reporters and personnel of the two religious newspapers have endeavored to keep their journalistic freedom and avoid the owner’s interference with their newspapers. However, civil groups point out that these nationwide religious newspapers do not fully respect the principle of freedom of speech, criticizing that many important issues such as

²⁰⁶ Although Kukmin Daily (*Kungmin ilbo* 국민일보, www.kukinews.com) was established by Yoido Full Gospel Church, one of the world largest Protestant congregations, in December 1988, it is *officially* no longer affiliated to any religious denomination, but is an independent civil newspaper for the general public. However, there are facts that may prove the clandestinely religious dimensions of this religious media, particularly given the fact that as of 2012, the chairman and president of Kukmin Daily are Cho Hui-jun (46) and Cho Min-che (41) respectively, the first and second sons of Cho Yong-gi, the founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church.

²⁰⁷ Segye Times (*Segye ilbo* 세계일보, www.segye.com) was founded by Sun Myung Moon in 1989, the founder of the Unification Church. It is in alliance with the Washington Times in the U.S.A.

matters of personnel, the writing of articles, and newspaper editing have often been controlled by religious power, i.e. the foundations and stockholders of each religious newspaper (Kim 1999; Joo 2010). Sung Sök-hwan, the director of the Institution of Urban Community (*Tosi kongdongch'e yŏn'guso* 도시공동체연구소), said “a countless number of Christians sacrificed to make the Kukmin Daily of today, but in fact, it is doubtful that it is recognized as a public media of our society (Won 2012).” Cho Sang'un, a union head of Kukmin Daily, also made a critical remark that “Kukmin Daily is not Reverend Cho [Yong-gi]'s private possession. ... [Kukmin Daily] has become a mouthpiece of the most conservative Protestant circle, since in its religion section the size of content that Reverend Cho favors tends to be bigger, and a good deal of space is devoted to those pastors who are rich and power-oriented (*Ibid.* 2012).” In addition, it should also be pointed out that because laymen, but not management professionals, have led those media corporations, the two newspapers have been poorly managed. For example, Segye Times was saddled with debts of about U.S. \$140 million in 1999. It is estimated that as of 1999, the Unification Church has spent more than U.S. \$1 billion on Segye Times since it was founded in 1989, but the market value of Segye Times is only about U.S \$100 million (Kim 1999: 20-21). In short, most problems have been caused due to the fact that ownership and management of the two largest religious newspapers in South Korea are not separated from each other.

All the other religious newspapers have worked at influencing public opinion for their own religions, by mainly conveying news and reports related to beliefs, practices, and other activities of their respective religions. It can be said that since they follow the position of the religious organizations to which they belong, these religious newspapers do not have to face an identity crisis between public journalism and their religious loyalty to the extent the two nationwide newspapers do. Meanwhile, <Table 5> is designed to show the degree to which

the editorials of religious newspapers are interested in other topics besides their respective religions. The various topics of the editorials of religious newspapers indicate that the nine religious newspapers, all of which are the members of the Korea Association of Religious Journalists (*Han'guk chonggyo ŏllonin hyöbüihoe* 한국종교언론인협의회), are greatly interested in many social issues that range from the environment, education, and gender, to the reunification of two Koreas, human rights, and interreligious dialogue. According to Park's analysis on the contents of these editorials, they tend to indicate a relatively open or liberal stance on many social issues, while taking no stance or a conservative stance on politically sensitive issues such as the National Security Law and the Private School Act (Park 2005a: 202-210).

<Table 5> Editorial Tendency of Nine Religious Newspapers in 2004²⁰⁸

| Topics of Editorials | Protestantism | | Catholicism | | Buddhism | | | Won Buddhism | Chondogyo |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|
| | Kidokkyo sinmun | Kyohoe yŏnhap sinmun | P'yŏnghwa sinmun | Kat'ollik sinmun | Pulgyo sinmun | Pŏpbo sinmun | Chugan pulgyo | Wonbulgyo sinmun | Sinin'gan |
| Religion (Denomination) | 33.8 | 31.0 | 40.2 | 51.9 | 33.9 | 27.4 | 37.5 | 50.0 | 34.5 |
| Environment, Life | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8.4 | 9.9 | 5.8 | 7.1 | 12.5 | 1.4 | 3.5 |
| Women, Education, Family | 7.8 | 1.4 | 8.4 | 9.9 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 7.5 | 5.4 | 17.2 |
| Peace, Reunification | 7.8 | 5.6 | 4.7 | 3.8 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 10.0 | 1.4 | 6.9 |
| Politics, Religious Policy | 11.7 | 18.1 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 5.3 | 9.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.9 |
| Human Rights, Labor | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 7.5 | 1.4 | 3.5 |
| Welfare, Neighbor | 3.9 | 0.0 | 8.4 | 1.2 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 7.5 | 5.4 | 3.5 |
| International Cooperation | 1.3 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 6.0 | 0.0 | 2.7 | 6.9 |
| Society, Culture | 6.5 | 9.7 | 1.9 | 4.9 | 12.3 | 9.5 | 10.0 | 9.5 | 6.9 |
| Laws on Security & School† | 0.0 | 4.2 | 1.0 | 2.5 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Others | 27.3 | 29.2 | 21.4 | 11.1 | 22.8 | 32.1 | 7.5 | 20.3 | 13.8 |
| Total (Number of Cases) | 100% (77) | 100% (72) | 100% (107) | 100% (81) | 100% (171) | 100% (84) | 100% (40) | 100% (74) | 100% (29) |

†“Laws on Security and Schools” mainly refers to the National Security Law and the Private School Act (Park 2005a: 204, 206)

This section of the chapter is focused upon delineating how religions have partaken in constructing the system of mass media in the South Korean context. Since the late 1980s, a series of social changes from democratization to the global expansion of neo-liberalism have provided abundant resources for the rapid development of mass media in South Korea.

²⁰⁸ By merging the two separate tables on pages 204 and 206 of Park's article (2005), I made this table. *Kidokkyo sinmun* (기독교신문, www.gidoknews.kr) and *Kyohoe yŏnhap sinmun* (교회연합신문, www.ecumenicalpress.co.kr) are Protestant newspapers, and *P'yŏnghwa sinmun* (평화신문, http://web.pbc.co.kr/newspaper) and *Kat'ollik sinmun* (가톨릭신문, www.catholictimes.org) are Catholic newspapers. Korean Buddhism here has *Pulgyo sinmun* (불교신문, www.ibulgyo.com), *Pŏppo sinmun* (법보신문, www.beopbo.com), and *Chugan pulgyo* (주간불교, www.bulkyonews.co.kr). *Wonbulgyo sinmun* (원불교신문, www.wonnews.co.kr) and *Sinin'gan* (신인간) belong to Won Buddhism and Chondogyo respectively.

Responding to the liberalization of the media industry, religious media have actively participated in producing news and reports from their religious perspectives. Religious media such as religious broadcasters and newspapers have now become a constituent part of South Korea's media industry. It can be said, in other words, that in the system of mass media, the distinctive role of religion is largely recognized as an important part of the Korean mediascape, regardless of the outcome of their information-making activities. On the other hand, given the fact that religious broadcasting, particularly the case of the Christian Broadcasting System, once led the way for civic media becoming independent from the state power before the democratization, the socio-political influence of religious media has been somewhat diminished in the newly enlarged civil society, especially because the identity of the influential religious media has been equivocal between the two divergent functions of 'religious mission' and 'secular journalism.' Another characteristic of the constellation of religious media is that, as <Table 4> and <Table 5> display, religious media are concentrated in the three world religions of Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism,

3. The Semantics of Religion and Religions in the Korean Mainline Media

In order to show the structural construction of 'religion' in the Korean media regime, the previous section was devoted to delineating how 'religious media' are positioned in the general structure of Korean mass media. At this juncture of the chapter we will examine how 'religion' is semantically formed in South Korea's media context. In doing so, my analysis will focus upon the process through which mainline secular media, e.g. major newspapers and broadcasting companies, produce images and discourses on religion and religions in today's South Korea. According to Arjun Appadurai, what he calls "mediascapes," a critical

dimension of global cultural flows, “provide[s] ... large and complex repertoires of images [and] narratives ... to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed” (Appadurai 1996: 35). In line with his remark on globalized media, I admit that those repertoires of mediated images and narratives are critical to people in constructing their understanding of religion and its relationship with other social sectors in the public sphere. In other words, various programs of mass media, e.g. television documentary shows and journalists’ timely reportage on religio-political, have a powerful influence over forming social cognizance about the position, function, and role of religion in late-modern South Korea. In order to grasp such media semantics of religion, I will first look into the socio-cultural conditions in which religious images and discourses are embedded in mainline secular media. I will secondly detail the dimension of the existing discursive construction of religion in the secular media in contemporary South Korea.²⁰⁹

(1) Conditions of the Media’s Construction of Religious Content

The power of mass media to lead or even frame a conception of religion in the public sphere may in itself explain the reason why religions in South Korea have made a great effort to maintain their own professional media organizations, e.g. religious newspapers or television or radio broadcaster, although the management of those religious media exposes them to great expense and burdens (Kim 1999). It may also somewhat indirectly inform us of the reason why religions tend to be sensitive about the mass media’s representation of them from a critical or negative perspective. The media’s negative depiction of certain religions

²⁰⁹ Douglas Kellner (1997) argues that “multiperspectival approach,” which comprehensively considers ‘manufacturing,’ ‘texts,’ and ‘reception,’ should be applied to understanding media products and related phenomena. My examination here is focused upon the process by which the texts on religion and religions are manufactured in secular mass media.

may instantly incur the wrath of religious organizations and their adherents. In fact, in South Korea, religious people, who are outraged by the media's critical treatment of their respective religions, occasionally sued those particular journalists or media institutions, and even took extreme measures such as inflicting violence on media workers or even storming television broadcasters (Kwōn 1999; Yi 1999). As a consequence, many Korean journalists and media professionals, especially those who did not want to rouse such excessive debates and social conflicts, have confessed that religion is a taboo subject for their media activities (Kang 2007d; Kim 2008a).

Nevertheless, another definite fact is that, despite such journalistic worries, religious issues have been widely dealt with in Korean mass media throughout modern times (Yun 1987). Despite those journalists' concerns, the sheer number of newspaper articles or television documentaries on religion is enormous in South Korea. Why is there such a great discrepancy between stated beliefs in media circles and the actual reality? One could conceivably claim that not only the amount, but also the spectrum of media discourses on religion and religions are almost as unlimited.²¹⁰ How media workers understand the nature of their own occupation may offer an explanation as to why the topic of religion is popular among the Korean media, which has simultaneously considered it as taboo. In other words, the self-identity of media workers is decisive in selecting, producing, and/or even framing news and information on religion and religions.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Chang collected 3,953 religion-related newspaper articles from the three mainline nationwide newspapers of *Chosun Daily*, *Donga Daily*, and *Hangyoreh sinmun* for a nine-year period between January 1991 and December 1999 (Chang 2000: 113-119). If one includes political, economic, and other social news or review documentaries intertwined with the religious, the media's discourses on religion may be much greater in terms of both its amount and variety.

²¹¹ Hoover (1998) divides non-religious media's contents dealing with religion and religions into the two separate fields of "entertainment" and "journalism." The religious, which is dealt with in the entertainment media such as fictions, amusements, and popular music, include not only institutional religions, but also spirituality, myth, mystery, supernatural, mysticism, and various irrational and unscientific stories and phenomena. This section focuses upon the religious contents that are manufactured *in* the journalism media.

Media workers often enter major newspapers and broadcasting companies through stiff competition, and they also tend to assume particular identities and ideologies. In South Korea a large portion of newspaper journalists and broadcasting producers think of themselves as “cultural elites” who are in charge of producing media discourses and thereby shaping public opinions (Kang 1993b).

Even before democratization, many newspaper journalists were both by themselves and others regarded as “patriotic intellectuals” who resisted social injustice and dictatorial powers. During the process of compressed modernization after the Korean War, they believed that their mission was to play a role as an “educator of modernization.” Since 1980, especially from the 1987 democratization onward, newspaper journalists have assumed a new identity as “professionals” or “intellectual workers,” who not only monitor power, but may also function as a power apparatus for the public good in the newly democratized social space (Kang 2006b).

Like newspaper journalists, broadcasting producers also use the ideology of “professionals” in order to justify their superior position as public knowledge manufacturers. Also, the Korean broadcasting producers who participate in making news and reporting programs, e.g. documentary or public educational programs, are known as having a strong vocational self-consciousness. Park wrote,

“Since the 1990s, producing a television documentary in South Korea has meant to become a creator of resistance discourse. ... The broadcasting producers asserted “publicity of broadcasting” in order to secure freedom of press from the authoritarian regimes, linking resistance with their social role. In this process, the broadcasting institutions maintained the documentary genre to play a function that produces knowledge of resistance. Since then, it has been regarded as having the genre characteristic of television documentary. The involved producers and scriptwriters generally share a critical tendency. ... The producers share a belief that “the power of documentary is to change the world” so that they build consensus on the purpose of

producing enlightening knowledge. ... They think that their journalistic activities should place an essential value on [social] reformation. So criticism against the established force and norms to speak for the interests of the minority appears to be the organizational culture [of the television documentary producers]" (Park 2008: 120).

Along with the ideological identity which the media workers possess, general social context and public discourse must also be considered, because these are also influential in the process in which a variety of religious semantics are constructed in the system of the mass media. It can be said that the texts and images produced by mass media are fundamentally based on the ideas and narratives the populace has already absorbed, e.g. the 'spirit of the times,' rather than being solely created by the media workers who are located outside the socio-ideological context. Therefore, where mass media are concerned with religion, the widespread public discourse on religion and religions in a given society is critical in conceptualizing what religion is and what (legitimate) religions should do *in* the news or in-depth reporting media. In Luhmannian terms, the discursive construction of the religious in the system of mass media is somehow coupled with a series of communications on religion and religions in the social environment, i.e. such other societal systems as legal, religious or educational systems, all of which have their respective definition of what the 'right' role and place of religion are within modern society (Hoover 1998; Luhmann 2000).

In the general public sphere of South Korea, different attitudes and understandings are found around the category of religion as well as religious traditions and organizations. Those popular understandings of the religious have been, to be sure, susceptible to the greater socio-political developments mentioned above.²¹² Here I want to simply mention some of the more visible public discourses on different religions, beginning with Protestantism. The anti-

²¹² Chapter two is devoted to describing the popular conception of religion in South Korea and how it is different from those in Japan and China, the two neighboring East Asian countries, as well as in the Western world.

sociality of Protestantism, which is in opposition to the general wave of social reformation, has been intensively criticized in secular civil society since the 1990s, because its ‘fundamentalist’ nature runs against the new socio-cultural landscape of South Korea in general, which has become ideologically liberalized, religiously pluralized, and culturally diversified. While anti-Protestant sentiment has been widespread in liberalized public discourse, particularly in the cyber space of the Internet (Kim 2007c), the nation’s general attitude towards Buddhism and Catholicism, the two other major religions, is relatively moderate and even sometimes favorable. However, Korean Buddhism, being proud of itself as Korea’s ‘representative traditional religion,’ has revealed serious inner organizational conflicts between the sects and factions in their unique post-colonial situation (Korea Institute for Religion and Culture 1998: 416-421). Excessively authoritarian clergy-centrism is also known as one of the principal problems that the Korean Catholic churches should overcome (Kang 2008: 117-133, 169-187). As one of the post-secular societies in the wake of the Islamic extremist attacks in September 2011, South Korea suspiciously observes interreligious conflict, especially between Buddhism and Protestantism. Violence and conflicts caused by religious differences in a globalized world have disturbed many South Koreans whose lives are more and more dependent on the labor of migrant workers coming from totally different religious backgrounds. People both with and without religion have felt a certain anxiety of how to deal with the newly politicized and globalized South Korea where religions must be a critical element to consider if its multi-religious landscape is to remain peaceful. In the end, such public consciousness of the complex religious situation of a globalized national society, together with the collective identity of media workers, would have a great impact on how Korean mass media covers various religious topics (Hoover 1997; Park 2008: 121-122).

(2) The Constellation of Religious Content in Mass Media

How, then, have the Korean media, in particular the secular mainstream media, constructed images and texts on religion and religions from its human and social conditions? Are there more positive views on religion than negative ones in newspaper articles and in-depth reporting television programs, or vice versa? What general tendencies have appeared within texts and images that concern various religious organizations in Korean mass media? I will try to answer these questions, focusing upon the two separate domains of South Korea's media industry, i.e. newspaper and broadcasting.

a. Newspaper Articles

Within the media context of the 1990s, Chang Honggün (2000) offered his answer to these questions, a comparative analysis of the texts and images about religion and religions that appeared in 3,953 religion-related articles produced by three major Korean newspapers – *Choson Daily* and *Donga Daily*, the two conservative newspapers, and *Hangyoreh sinmun*, a liberal newspaper – from January 1990 and to December 1999.²¹³ As shown in <Table 6> and <Table 7> below,²¹⁴ he classified all the religion-related articles of the three influential

²¹³ 3,953 newspaper articles were collected by searching such various words as “religion,” “Christianity,” “Protestantism,” “Catholicism,” “monk,” “minister,” “Catholic father,” “Buddhism,” “Unification Church,” “Confucianism,” “Confucian learning,” “religious leader,” “Shamanism,” “Shaman,” “exorcism,” “eschatology,” “Chūngsan,” “Taesunjilli,” “church,” “temple,” and “Catholic parish” (Chang 2000: 113).

²¹⁴ I made <Table 6> and <Table 7>, drawing upon primary information collected by Chang (2000: 113-124).

Korean newspapers, according to each religion, i.e. Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, folk belief,²¹⁵ Confucianism, Won Buddhism, others,²¹⁶ and religion in general.²¹⁷

<Table 6> Frequency of Religious Articles

| | Chosun | Donga | Hangyoreh | Total |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Buddhism | 377 (27.9) | 329 (30.6) | 534 (35.0) | 1,240 (31.4) |
| Protestantism | 372 (27.5) | 215 (20.0) | 390 (25.5) | 977 (24.7) |
| Catholicism | 190 (14.1) | 124 (11.5) | 189 (12.4) | 503 (12.7) |
| Folk Belief | 59 (4.4) | 52 (4.9) | 37(2.4) | 148 (3.7) |
| Confucianism | 50 (3.7) | 65 (6.1) | 26 (1.7) | 141 (3.6) |
| Won Buddhism | 25 (1.8) | 21 (1.9) | 17 (1.1) | 63 (1.6) |
| Others | 110 (8.1) | 115 (10.7) | 118 (7.7) | 343 (8.7) |
| Religion in General | 168 (12.4) | 154 (14.3) | 216 (14.1) | 538 (13.6) |
| Total | 1,351 (34.2) | 1,075 (27.2) | 1,527 (38.6) | 3,953 (100%) |

(Chang 2000: 117-118)

As <Table 6> shows above, the “total” quantitative ratio of the articles on Buddhism (31.4%), Protestantism (24.7%), and Catholicism (12.7%) reflects relatively well the actual ratio of the adherents of the three majority religions in South Korea in the 1990s.²¹⁸ Although the three major newspapers showed some interest in “others” (8.7%) as well as other minority traditions of folk belief (3.7%), Confucianism (3.6%), and Won Buddhism (1.6%), about 69% of the entire religion-related newspaper articles deal with these three majority religions of Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Given “religion in general” (13.6%) concerns the joint or inter religious activities mostly held or led by these three religions, the total of the

²¹⁵ “Folk belief” (*Min’gan sinang* 민간신앙) means Shamanism and Korea’s other indigenous belief forms without any ‘formal’ organization (2000: 114).

²¹⁶ “Others” means other religions that include the Unification Church 통일교, Chondogyo 천도교, Chŭngsangyo 증산교, Taejonggyo 대종교, the Jehovah’s Witnesses 여호와의 증인, Chŏndogwan 전도관, Tongbanggyo 동방교, T’aegŭkto 태극도, Ch’ŏlligyo 천리교, Yonghwagyo 용화교, and other newer religions that stemmed from Christianity (2000: 114).

²¹⁷ “Religion in general” refers to united, joint, or group activities between different religions, i.e. religious activities that do not belong to a particular religion. By the way, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Buddhism usually initiate and lead most of these religious activities (2000: 114-115).

²¹⁸ According to the 1995 statistics of the South Korean government, Buddhists, Protestants and Catholics had membership totals of 10,321,012 (45.67%), 8,760,336 (38.8%) and 2,950,730 (13.7%) respectively among the entire religious population of 22,597,825 (100%).

newspaper articles dealing with Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism can reach 82.4% of the entire religion-related articles.

<Table 7> Distribution of Positive, Neutral, and Negative Articles

| Total | Chosun (1,351) | | | Donga (1,075) | | | Hangyoreh (1,527) | | |
|-------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Posi. | Neut. | Nega. | Posi. | Neut. | Nega. | Posi. | Neut. | Nega. |
| 3,953 | 460 (34.1) | 669 (49.5) | 222 (16.4) | 347 (32.3) | 549 (51.1) | 179 (16.6) | 541 (35.4) | 708 (46.4) | 278 (18.2) |

(Chang 2000: 117-118)

As <Table 7> shows above, on the other hand, what the three major newspapers had in common in terms of producing articles related to religion was a higher percentage in their neutral strand of reporting (51.1% for *Donga*, 49.5% for *Chosun*, and 46.4% for *Hangyoreh*), followed by generally positive coverage (35.4 for *Hangyoreh*, 34.1% for *Chosun*, and 32.3% for *Donga*), and last came the negative strand of articles (18.2% for *Hangyoreh*, 16.6% for *Donga*, and 16.4% for *Chosun*). Interestingly, *Hangyoreh sinmun*, the reform-minded newspaper which was a direct product of the 1987 democratization, not only produced the most religion-related articles (1,527), in comparison with those of *Chosun Daily* (1,351) and *Donga Daily* (1,075), but also had about 2% more negative articles on religion (18.2%) than those of *Donga Daily* (16.6%) and *Chosun Daily* (16.4%) as well as about 2% more positive articles (35.4%) than those of *Chosun Daily* (34.1%) and *Donga Daily* (32.3%). Thus, I interpret this statistical constellation as meaning, in comparison with the two conservative newspapers, the liberal media polity of *Hangyoreh sinmun* took more notice of the significance of the social roles of religion, rather than merely informing the public of events and changes in relation to the religions.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ In the 1990s, *Hangyoreh sinmun*, a newspaper founded in May 1988 by many journalists who had been dismissed from *Chosun Daily* and *Donga Daily*, had much less pages than did *Chosun Daily* and *Donga Daily*,

<Table 8> Viewpoints of the Religious Articles

| | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Total |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Buddhism | 346 (27.9) | 619 (49.9) | 275 (22.2) | 1,240 (31.4) |
| Protestantism | 413 (42.3) | 346 (35.4) | 218 (22.3) | 977 (24.7) |
| Catholicism | 261 (51.9) | 218 (43.3) | 24 (4.8) | 503 (12.7) |
| Folk Belief | 0 (0.0) | 115 (77.7) | 33 (22.3) | 148 (3.7) |
| Confucianism | 12 (8.5) | 120 (85.1) | 9 (6.4) | 141 (3.6) |
| Won Buddhism | 17 (27.0) | 44 (69.8) | 2 (3.2) | 63 (1.6) |
| Others | 12 (3.5) | 240 (70.0) | 91 (26.5) | 343 (8.7) |
| Religion in General | 287 (53.4) | 224 (41.6) | 27 (5.0) | 538 (13.6) |
| Total | 1,348 (34.1) | 1,926 (48.7) | 679 (17.2) | 3,953 (100%) |

(Chang 2000: 117-118)

As shown in <Table 8>, according to each religion, Chang, again, categorized all the newspaper articles into the three strands of ‘positive,’²²⁰ ‘neutral,’²²¹ and ‘negative,’²²² types. Except for “religion in general,” among all the religions in South Korea, the ratio of positive articles on Catholicism was the highest (51.9%), while the ratio of the negative articles on Catholicism was the lowest (4.8%). So it is not too misleading to posit that Catholicism had the most positive image in the print media in the 1990s. Both Buddhism and Protestantism displayed a similar proportion (about 22%) of negative newspaper articles, while Protestantism had more positive articles (413) than did Buddhism (346). Among the minority religions, “others,” i.e. new or indigenous religions, had the highest ratio (26.5%) of negative articles, excluding “folk belief,” which had the lowest (3.5%) percentage of positive articles. Interestingly, there was not one positive article on folk belief, while it had the higher ratio (22.3%) of negative newspaper articles. So it would not be too misleading to claim that folk belief and new or indigenous religions had the least positive or most negative images in the

the two richer newspapers. It is significant that this liberal newspaper with a fewer number of pages produced more religion-related articles than did the two conservative newspapers with a larger number of pages.

²²⁰ The positive type of articles concern social participation, social service, religious harmony and reconciliation, inter-religious dialogue, and religious exchange between North and South Korea (2000: 115).

²²¹ The neutral type of articles merely report facts related to religious activities, results of opinion surveys on religions, and the changing reality of religious conditions (2000: 115).

²²² The negative type of articles concerns internal schism of religious organizations, individual corruption, religious activities to enhance social injustice, and fomentation of conflict (2000: 115).

newspaper media of the 1990s. Although it was one of the newer and native religions, Won Buddhism had the lowest ratio (3.2%) of negative articles. Confucianism, largely known as ‘culture,’ ‘philosophy,’ or ‘education’ in today’s South Korea, did not make any impression, whether positively or negatively, on the Korean newspaper media. Finally, the category of “religion in general,” which concerned inter-religious dialogues or joint religious activities, was largely regarded as productive for the national society at large, showing the highest ratio (53.4%) of positive articles.

For the media context of the 2000s, Kim Kitae (2010) offered an analytical description on religion-related newspaper articles, and by this, similarities and differences can now be found between the 1990s and the 2000s. Kim collected 455 religion-related articles produced by the four major Korean newspapers – *Choson Daily* and *Joongang Daily*, the two conservative newspapers, and *Hangyoreh sinmun* and *Kyunghyang sinmun*, the two liberal newspapers, between September 2009 and February 2010. He classified all the newspaper articles according to the four respective religions of Protestantism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Won Buddhism, as shown in <Table 9>, and then also divided them into the ‘positive,’ ‘neutral,’ and ‘negative’ types, as shown in <Table 10>.²²³ Unlike those of Chang (2000), Kim’s tables do not have any statistics on “folk belief,” “Confucianism,” “others,” and “religion in general.”

²²³ Unlike Chang, Kim did not clarify the meanings of evaluative adjectives, ‘positive,’ ‘neutral,’ and ‘negative.’

<Table 9> Frequency of Religious Articles

| | Chosun | Joongang | Hangyoreh | Kyunghyang | Total |
|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Buddhism | 69 (44.5) | 28 (35.0) | 24 (43.6) | 70 (42.4) | 191 (42.0) |
| Protestantism | 34 (21.9) | 33 (41.3) | 12 (21.8) | 31 (18.8) | 110 (24.2) |
| Catholicism | 48 (31.0) | 15 (18.8) | 17 (30.9) | 61 (37.0) | 141 (31.0) |
| Won Buddhism | 4 (2.6) | 4 (4.9) | 2 (3.7) | 3 (1.8) | 13 (2.8) |
| Total | 155 (34.1) | 80 (17.6) | 55 (12.0) | 165 (36.3) | 455 (100%) |

(Kim 2010: 149)

<Table 9> shows that during the six-month period, Buddhism (42%) was the religion most covered by the four newspapers, which was followed by Catholicism (31%), Protestantism (24.2%), and Won Buddhism (2.8%). The newspaper articles on Buddhism were particularly concerned with “Buddhism as Korea’s national heritage,” with coverage on such topics as Buddhist literature, Buddhist temples, and other Buddhist architectures (*Ibid.* 149). Although, continuously focusing upon the three ‘world religions,’ the four newspapers did not give much attention to Won Buddhism (2.8%), their interest in this indigenous religion of Korea had increased by 1.2% in comparison with 1.6% for Won Buddhism in the 1990s. What is striking is that although according to <Table 1> the Protestant population (42.96% versus the entire religious population) is significantly higher than that of Catholics (21.61%) in the 2000s,²²⁴ Catholic-related articles (31%) among the religious articles amount to about 7% more than Protestant-related articles (34.51%). Except for the *Joongang Daily*, all the other three newspapers produced more articles on Catholicism than Protestantism. Thus, one may conclude that the ratio of religious articles, especially regarding Protestantism and Catholicism, does not closely reflect the ratio of the actual religious population in South Korea today. What is the reason behind this phenomenon of Korean journalists producing

²²⁴ According to the 2005 government statistics, among the entire Korean religious population (24,970,766), Buddhists, Protestants, and Catholics had memberships of 10,726,463 (42.96%), 8,616,438 (34.51%), and 5,146,148 (20.61%).

more articles on Catholicism despite the fact it had fewer adherents than Protestantism?

<Table 10> below seems to offer some possible answers to this question.

<Table 10> Viewpoints of the Religious Articles

| | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Total |
|---------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Buddhism | 78 (40.8) | 112 (58.6) | 1 (0.6) | 191 (42.0) |
| Protestantism | 50 (45.5) | 41 (37.3) | 19 (17.2) | 110 (24.2) |
| Catholicism | 84 (59.6) | 57 (40.4) | 0 | 141 (31.0) |
| Won Buddhism | 4 (30.8) | 9 (69.2) | 0 | 13 (2.8) |
| Total | 216 (47.5) | 219 (48.1) | 20 (4.4) | 455 (100%) |

(Kim 2010: 149)

As in Chang’s <Table 8>, Kim split all the religion-related newspaper articles into the ‘neutral,’ ‘positive,’ and ‘negative’ types, thereby showing that the religious articles presented in <Table 10> mostly deal with the neutral (48.1%) and positive (47.5%) dimensions of the four religions. While there are more neutral-type articles on Buddhism (58.6%) and Won Buddhism (69.2%) than positive ones, there are more positive-type articles on Catholicism (59.6%) and Protestantism (45.5%) than neutral ones. The fact that many Buddhism-related articles approach Buddhism from the perspective of the “nation’s inherent traditional culture” (*Minjok koyu ūi chōnt’ong munhwa* 민족고유의 전통문화) to simply describe, say, Buddhist temples and architectures, Buddhist literature, and other dimensions of Buddhist culture, may be one of the reasons why the neutral articles on Buddhism outnumber the positive ones.

Between Protestantism and Catholicism, on the other hand, the ratio of the positive articles on Catholicism (59.6%) is about 14% more than that of the positive articles on Protestantism (45.5%), while the ratio of the neutral articles on Catholicism (40.4%) is only about 3% more than that of Protestantism (37.3%). One of the most striking in <Table 10> is that the four newspapers produced as many as 19 negative articles exclusively on Protestantism, while there are rarely negative articles on the other three religions. Therefore,

in analyzing the social values and contribution of Korea's four religions, the four mainstream Korean newspapers have, *comparatively speaking*, paid divergent attention to the neutral dimension of Buddhism, the positive dimension of Catholicism, and the negative dimension of Protestantism in the 2000s.

b. Television Review Programs

Along with newspapers, television programs also play a key role in disseminating the news and in-depth reporting function of the mass media. To understand how religion is conceptualized by South Korea's mainline media, it is indispensable to examine how the television news and review programs describe religion and religions. Drawing upon the recent research on television current-affair programs, I will examine how the television broadcasting media view the category of religion in the transformation of contemporary South Korea and describe different religious organizations and their activities.

According to Jang Suk-man, since the 1990s South Koreans have observed the increase of television documentary programs dealing with "religious problems" (*chonggyo munje* 종교문제) (2002: 163). Regarding this rising phenomenon, Kang Sung-hun, a television documentary producer who had participated in producing the controversial documentary, "Is the Korean Church with the 120 Year Mission History in Crisis?" (*Söngyo 120nyön han'guk kyohoenün wigiinga?* 선교 120년 한국 교회는 위기인가?),²²⁵ of the

²²⁵ One of about 50 documentaries of *Let's Talk about Korean Society*, "Is the Korean Church with the 120 Year Mission History in Crisis?" was broadcast on October 2, 2004. As part of broadcasting preparation, the reports conducted a public opinion poll of 1,200 male and female Koreans who were 20 years old or older, and announced the survey results in the middle of the broadcasting. To the question of the general appraisal of the Korean Protestant churches, 59.3% of the respondents picked "going toward an inappropriate direction," 31.1% "going toward an appropriate direction," and 9.7% did not respond. To the question of the largest problem of the Korean Protestant churches, 40.3% answered that it is "individual-denomination or individual-church centrism,"

Korea Broadcasting System (KBS)'s review program entitled *Let's Talk about Korean Society* (*Han'guk sahoerül malhandā* 한국사회를 말한다), expressed his view during an in-depth interview not only on the location of religion, but also on the relationship between religion and media in post-democratization South Korea as follows:

“Although the established power of the state apparatus has been largely weakened due to the advance of democratization and the growth of civil society, the influence and power of religion has continued to increase. ... With the help of election politics accompanied by the advance of democratization, the political value and utility of major religions having millions of adherents has been increasing day by day. ... Now, in our country too, religion is no longer the trivial polity that the press can pretend not to recognize” (Kang 2007d: 30).

Additionally, he puts forth a critical remark on the present state of the press reporting on religion. Kang said:

“Actually, the reports of the press on religion tended to repeatedly focus upon senseless religious activity of a particular religious group or the corruption of a particular religious person. And the manner of coverage became somewhat suggestively sensational. ... However, too much inclination to this form [focusing upon religious absurdity] would not produce reflexive and sober reports. ... To overcome this, there is only one way that the press should, after all, recognize the importance of the religious issues and make efforts to retain professionalism. And journalists also have to assume a forward-looking attitude toward religious issues, coming out of a victim mentality in which they passively think that it only causes problems. I'd like to accentuate again that religion is a 'power' on which the press must keep an eye” (Kang 2007d: 31).

That said, as an active participant of the Korean broadcasting industry, this insider emphasized the necessity of reporting on religion, not because of its quirky aberrational behaviors, but because of its rising socio-political influence. A nameless television program

23.9% “economy of church scale or growth-first policy,” 12.6% “unqualified clergy,” 9.5% “undemocratic decision-making or unclear financial management,” and 5.8% “hereditary succession of the church” (Hwang, Lee, and Kang 2004).

producer, who had participated in making a television documentary, “God’s Way, Human’s Way” (*Sin ūi kil in ’gan ūi kil* 신의 길, 인간의 길),²²⁶ confirmed that the political power of religion has been enlarged even more than the actual power of the religion, specifically referring to Protestantism as follows:

“Among religions, [Protestantism] is the most clannish and coercive religion that is not harmonious and full of contradictions. Albeit occupying about 27-28% [of the Korean religious market], it effectively makes a noise as loud as almost 80%. If journalism overlooks it just as a personal belief, in fact it is not the right thing to do” (Park 2008: 131).

If anyone just looks at the titles of television current-affair programs in today’s South Korea, she/he will realize that many programs have a focus upon religion-related accidents and events that have ‘victims.’ From the start, accordingly, it would be difficult for television review programs to approach those religious activities from a positive perspective. For example, the KBS’s television program entitled *Report File 4321* (*Ch ’wijae p ’ail 4321* 취재파일 4321), defines its program fundamentally as “contributing to making society transparent and bright through criticism and reporting without any taboo.”²²⁷ The Munhwa Broadcasting Company (MBC)’s television program entitled *Current Affair Magazine 2580* (*Sisa maegōjin 2580* 시사매거진 2580), also perceives its identity as “a current-affair program that reports social absurdity and corruption ... aimed toward a healthy democratic society.”²²⁸ Thus, as long as the purpose of any program in question is to report and criticize

²²⁶ The Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) produced this documentary in four parts and televised it from late June to mid-July, 2008. “God’s Way, Human’s Way” pointed to the exclusiveness, aggressive and unilateral missionary method, and lack of appreciation of other religions in Korean Protestantism, and connected these characteristics to the fundamentalist faith and biblical literalism on which Korean Protestantism is based. This television documentary invited a great organizational resistance from Korean Protestantism (Park 2008: 114-115).

²²⁷ See http://news.kbs.co.kr/tvnews/4321/intro_4321.html

²²⁸ See <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/culture/sisa2580/program/index.html>

various social problems, the tone of their documentaries on religion and religions would not be very sympathetic, but rather sharply critical.

Beneath such attitudes of the television media is a peculiar perception on not only the current situation of South Korea, but also the place of religion in it. Defining the socio-cultural landscape of late-modern South Korea as ‘pluralist,’ ‘democratic,’ and ‘rationalistic,’ many television media workers evaluate that religion, in particular Protestantism, does not keep up with the societal progress that Korean society has achieved (Park 2008: 129-131). From the viewpoint of ‘enlightenment rationalists,’ they come to see various religious organizations as running against the newer values of Korean society. Among many criticized cases, mainline conservative Protestantism and “heterodox” organizations that originated from the Protestant tradition are overwhelmingly in the majority (Jang 2002; Lee 2001).²²⁹

One of the most well-known examples criticizing conservative Korean Protestantism is “Mega Church of Korea in 2000” (*2000nŏn han’guk ŭi taehyŏng kyohoe* 2000 년 한국의 대형 교회), a documentary that was televised on December 19th, 2000 by the MBC’s current-affair program *Producer’s Diary*.²³⁰ “Mega Church of Korea in 2000,” one of the nine religion-related documentaries²³¹ that the *Producer’s Diary* has broadcast since 1990, dealt

²²⁹ The unclear and corrupted internal affairs of Korean Buddhism have long been criticized; however, in comparison to Christian religions, the mainline broadcasting media in the post-democratization era have not given much attention to Korea’s traditional religions from the same perspective. One of the rare cases is *Producer’s Diary* (*P’idi such’ŏp* 피디수첩)’s 744th documentary review “The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in Crisis, Where is the Way of Purity?” (*Wigi ŭi Chogyejong, Kŭ ch’ŏngjŏng ŭi killŭn* 위기의 조계종, 그 청정의 길은?), which was broadcast on October 14th, 2007.

²³⁰ A Korean newspaper announced that this documentary review was “the first in-depth report on the corruption of the established religion in the history of Korean broadcasting” (Choi 2000).

²³¹ The other eight documentaries of *Producer’s Diary* are “Urgent Diagnosis, Apocalypse D-100 days” (*Kingŭb chindan, hyugŏ ti-paek il* 긴급진단, 휴거 D-100 일) televised on July 21st, 1992, “Suspicion! What Happened in the Prayer House” (*Ŭihok! Kidowŏn esŏ sanggin il* 의혹! 기도원에서 생긴 일) on March 26th, 1993, “Suspicion, Let’s Reveal the Religion of Eternity” (*Ŭihok! Yŏngsaenggyo rŭl palkinda* 의혹, 영생교를 밝힌다) on February 15th, 1994, “The Truth of the Scops Owl Village” (*Sothchŏksae maŭl ŭi chinsil* 소쩍새 마을의 진실) on July 4th, 1995, “Where are You, the General Leader of the World Religion of Truth?” (*Segye chŏnggyo, ch’ongryŏng ponjon ŏdi gyesimnikka* 세계정교, 총령본존 어디계십니까?) on November 24th, 1998, “Heresy Stir! Rev.

with the three largest Korean Protestant churches, in particular the unclear financial management of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, one of the world's largest Protestant churches, and the heredity succession of Kwanglim Methodist Church and Choonghyun Presbyterian Church, one of the world's largest Methodist churches and one of the world's largest Presbyterian churches respectively. This documentary introduced the audience to an insider's accusation that the Yoido Full Gospel Church's minister Cho Yong-gi and his son Cho Hui-jun used the church's offerings for private investment, particularly to expand Cho Hui-jun's personal business.²³² Also, it publicized how the Kwanglim Methodist church and Choonghyun Presbyterian Church had been undemocratically bequeathed from father ministers to son ministers, and how this created a series of enormous conflicts and schisms among the adherents of the two congregations. All of these events were depicted in a framework in which all the affairs uncovered displayed not only the degree of morality or corruption of Korean Protestantism, but also the undemocratic decision-making structure that is rampant among many established Korean religions.

Even though the nation's consciousness on cultural minorities' rights has been greatly improved since the late 1980s, television review programs have tended to approach minority religions from the 'theological' perspectives of majority religious groups. Although they do not explicitly name the newer religions as "evil religions," "pseudo religions," and the like in the new global era, it seems that television documentary programs have still embodied a view that they are located outside the world of 'normal religion.' The affair of Manmin Central

Lee Jae Rok – Shepherd, Our Shepherd” (*Idan p’amun! Ijaerok moksa – Mokjanim, uri mokjanim* 이단 파문! 이재록 목사 - 목자님, 우리 목자님!), “The Suspicious Secret of the New World” (*Sinch’ŏnji ūi susanghan pimil* 신천지의 수상한 비밀) on May 8th, 2007, and “The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in Crisis, Where is the Way of Purity?” (*Wigi ūi Chogyejong, Kŭ ch’ŏngjŏng ūi kirŭn* 위기의 조계종, 그 청정의 길은?) on October 14th, 2007.

²³² This report on the Yoido Full Gospel Church was verified as factual, as the Justice Department of the Republic of Korea sentenced him to three years in prison and the fine of 300 million Korean Won (U.S. \$300,000 at the exchange rate of 1,000 won to the U.S. dollar) in January 2002.

Church is an illustrative case that shows how the broadcasting media approach a “heterodox” religious organization from the eyes of the religious mainstream. Manmin Central Church, which has been labeled as a “heresy” by mainline Korean Protestantism, became known due to the “extreme mysticism” of Rev. Lee Jae Rok who performed healing and other “miracles.” On May 11th, 1999, the *Producers’ Diary* broadcasted a documentary titled “Heresy Stir! Rev. Lee Jae Rok – Shepherd, Our Shepherd” (*Idan p’amun! Ijaerok moksa – Mokjanim, uri mokjanim* 이단 파문! 이재록 목사 - 목자님, 우리 목자님!) that critically described the deification of Rev. Lee and his other immoral activities around his church. In order to show his illegal and unethical ministry, the documentary presented the ministers of mainstream conservative Protestantism who strongly denounced Manmin Central Church and Rev. Lee as “heretical” on the grounds of their Protestant viewpoint; however, it did not interview any scientific scholars of religion or ‘secular’ public opinion leaders from civic society. In addition, it focused upon the sensationalist dimension of Rev. Lee’s immoral activities, e.g. the miracle of curing ailments by using spring water or Rev. Lee’s gambling habit in Las Vegas, U.S.A. As a consequence of this public broadcast the producers soon found themselves embroiled in an unnecessary “heresy” dispute within evangelical Protestant circles, which in turn made the documentary less persuasive as well as less religiously neutral in a secular civil society that was not interested in any theological dispute (Jang 2002:165-168).

In short, in the current era of globalization, the Korean television media have observed religious organizations, both major and minor, from a rather rigid and critical standard of morality, social development, and national integration. There is a propensity in the Korean broadcasting media’s attitude toward the religious that diverges into two contrasting methods. To deal with mainstream religious organizations, the media elites focus on their political

influence and the socio-ethical responsibilities from the viewpoint of secular civil society that is reform-oriented. However, when covering minority religions, they become more interested in investigating the idiosyncratic nature of minority religions, often by using the ‘theological’ views or ideologies of mainstream religious groups in contemporary South Korea.

4. Concluding remarks

In contemporary global society, the system of mass media as a functionally specialized societal system operates its self-referential process of communication, based on its own code, function, and programs, all of which serve to differentiate it from the other communication systems. This chapter examined how the category of religion was structurally and semantically constructed and re-constructed in Koreans’ participation in the global system of mass media. The post-80s development of the Korean media industry triggered by the transformation of the global political economy has not only changed the place of religious media institutions in the Korean media landscape, but also created a new semantics of religion.

To conceptualize the structural notion of religion formed in the system of mass media, I described how religious media have contributed to the constitution of the Korean media system. In the current Korean media regime, which has been greatly liberalized since the end of military dictatorship in the late 1980s, religious organizations are largely allowed to participate in producing information and knowledge, becoming a significant part of the Korean media industry. The number of religious newspapers and broadcasters is large, and their focus groups are either their own believers or South Koreans in general. However, in maintaining a wider space of religious liberty after democratization, maturing Korean civil society has demanded that religious broadcasters and newspapers internalize a clearer identity

as journalistic institutions as well as to take more social responsibilities beyond their respective sectarian agendas.

Contrary to religious media that often have a somewhat obscure institutional identity, Korean mainstream newspapers or broadcasters, especially their media workers, have kept a specific 'journalistic' view of what role the public media should play to make Korean society more democratic, transparent, and impartial. In that ideological framework, mainstream media have in democratized South Korea not only recognized that religion is a critical issue, but also produced significant content about religions, in particular on the three major religions of Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. As many media workers have internalized the standards of liberal or progressive journalism, they have increasingly produced religion-related information in the form of religious articles or documentaries, which is focused upon the anti-social, 'fundamentalist,' and/or negative dimension of religions, especially of Protestantism and the newer religions.

CONCLUSION

The principal goal of this dissertation is to secure a better conceptual purchase on the category of religion by examining the formation of religion in contemporary global society. To this end, the Korean case has offered an interesting locus that speaks to ways in which both religious and non-religious factors have somehow cooperated to produce and re-produce various discourses, imaginaries, and practices on religion and religions in modern times. In particular, modern Korea has been shown as a case of how, along with the modern worldwide expansion of functionally differentiated social domains such as politics, law, education, and mass media, the ‘religious system’ has been characteristically localized in the global emergence of modern secular society. The transformation of the official conception of religion in late-modern South Korea illustrates the proposition that the construction of religion is a consequence that is not only related to the distinctive nature and location of national religious traditions, but also the peculiar way in which the national society has become incorporated into contemporary global society.

In chapter one, I stated that this doctoral thesis research on the re-formation of the Korean notion of religion has utilized Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory as its theoretical framework. According to Luhmann, modern society is a globally extended social system that is divided into diverse sub-social domains in accordance with their respective functions for society as a whole, and in that global society religion is constructed, first and foremost, as a social communicative system. Drawing upon the social systems theory, I have attempted to understand and delineate the ‘official’ conception of religion that is constructed and re-constructed in the secular public sphere of Korean society. To do that, my analysis has split the construction of religion into the structural and semantic dimensions in the social

domains of the political, legal, educational and mass media systems. For this analysis, it is significant to recognize that religion and religions in modern global society have become an important social factor rather than a trivial disappearing residue, especially when they are connected with the issues of difference and identity. Throughout this doctoral research, it has been confirmed and re-confirmed that the formation and appropriation of religion in Korean society concerns such issues as national identity, the nation's regional and global position, and changing interpretations of modernity.

In chapter two, I analyzed the conceptual construction of religion in the political system. From the perspective of the systems theory, states such as nation-states are 'self-description' of the political system that operates globally. The modern notion of 'religion' was originally invented in the secularization of the European Christendom, and was gradually disseminated to other parts of the global political system through the dialogical process through which the Western colonizing states encountered non-Western nations. Through this conflicted process, the East Asian nations all accepted, but differently appropriated, the Western category of religion. In China and Japan, the term religion was by and large deemed a foreign or 'immerging' category that would eventually disturb nation-state building and modernization. Unlike in its two East Asian neighbours, religion in modern Korea was largely considered as an indispensable element in re-constructing the Korean nation in crisis. Particularly, a good portion of modernizing elites and political leaders regarded religion as a positive force for Korea that was threatened by the world powers in the early twentieth century. Within this national understanding of religion, Christian and Buddhist populations grew remarkably in contemporary Korea, especially South Korea. The rise of religion has played a pivotal role in forming civil society, while a variety of political camps have allied with religious organizations for their own political agenda. Since democratization in 1987,

religions are no longer perceived as leading institutions of national modernization, but rather increasingly signified as a critical hindrance in the new modernization. In a new interpretation of modernity, many younger South Koreans think that the nation-state must be democratic, reformed, and eventually united with North Korea. Political semantics on religion and religions has been increasingly re-constructed in a way for the Koreans to see religion as a critical social ‘problem’ that the national society must overcome in the age of the “clash of civilizations.”

While the analysis of the political conception of religion was located in the context of the East Asian appropriation of religion within a global political system, chapter three on the legal notion of religion tries to delineate the transformation of the conception of religion in the Korean legal system throughout the twentieth century. With the introduction of the term religion to Korea from the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the modern principles of ‘separation of church and state’ and ‘freedom of religion’ were legalized in the form of an international treaty with France. From the perspective of ‘Confucian dualism’ that regarded religion as the foundation of material conditions, a good portion of bureaucrats, politicians, and intellectuals thought that a lack of religion was a fundamental cause of the nation’s crisis, and sought a revival of the Korean nation by developing religion and ethics. In contrast, the Japanese colonial government in Korea assertively separated religion and politics. The Japanese legalists were worried that religion would be a crucial hindrance to colonizing Korea because it could threaten the Japanese nation building in the Korean Peninsula by connecting with Korean nationalism and the Western forces. After liberation, South Korea was rejoined to passive secularism. The legal system extensively recognized the public role and visibility of religion. But the establishment of such a positive conception of religion makes it a proviso that religious minorities were legally negated, often branded as

‘superstition’ or ‘evil religion.’ Since the latter half of the 1980s, the evolution of the legal system has contributed to institutionalizing legal protection for religious minorities. Folk belief and marginal religious organizations have largely entered the legal sphere for religion. On the other hand, negative legal semantics of religion increased as well. The refined legal system in South Korea has suspiciously observed religion and religions more and more. As the hegemony of established ideas, institutions, and values has been largely challenged in the new Korean society, the multi-religious context of late-modern South Korea has been critically viewed in the public sphere as being in conflict with the values and standards of the secular legal system. The category of religion is signified as being antisocial in the legal system.

Chapter four focused on the conceptual re-formation of religion in the educational system of late-modern South Korea. Building and managing many educational programs and institutions, religions have actively participated in the modern education of Korea. As Korean society has increasingly become multi-religious in the process of democratization and globalization, the importance of religious education has been recognized in the nation’s educational system. In the end, the increased necessity of the science of religion has made religion a regular teaching subject in secondary schools. In particular, through the establishment of a religion curriculum, religion has been formalized as a subject of public education, i.e. ‘elective course.’ Religion is well institutionalized as an educational topic and provider in publicly-run secondary education. However, the post-Cold War religious situation has been accompanied by growing concern over conflict and tension between religious individuals and organizations. Witnessing globalized religious violence, the Korean educational authorities have officially imposed restrictions on ‘education for a specific religion’ in the secondary schools, endeavoring to realize ‘education about religion’ to bring

up ‘sound citizens’ who can peacefully and efficiently communicate with different religious people in a global civil society. As the educational system of South Korea has evolved, religion has been observed as a problematic subject that does not really help the Korean public school system realize its educational goals, but is effectively interested in keeping its parochial interests. Because faith education in favor of a particular religion is still practiced in schools thanks to the influence of religion upon the public educational system, religion has been signified as an obstacle to the realization of modern secular education.

Chapter five examined how the notion of religion was constructed and re-constructed in the system of mass media. The significance of the system of mass media is that it is functionally specialized to produce information and transfer it to the public at large, observing all the other societal communicative systems such as politics, the economy, education, law, and medicine. The post-80s development of the Korean media industry has liberalized religious press in the general media landscape on the one hand, but greatly constructed a negative semantics of religion and religions on the other. In the current Korean media regime, religious organizations have become a significant part of the Korean media industry. The number of religious newspapers and broadcasters is large, and their focus groups are either their own believers or South Koreans in general. In maintaining a wider space of religious liberty, Korean civil society has demanded the religious media internalize an identity as a journalistic institution. On the other hand, mainstream newspapers or broadcasters have kept a specific ‘journalistic’ view of what role the public media should play to make the Korean society more democratic, transparent, and reformed. Within that frame, mainstream media have in post-democratization South Korea recognized that religion is a critical issue, producing a significant amount of content about religion, in particular the three major religions of Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. The more media workers have

internalized the standard of liberal or progressive journalism, the more they tend to produce religion-related articles or documentaries describing anti-social, exclusive, and ‘fundamentalist’ dimensions of religion, especially Protestantism and newer religious organizations.

Based on the contents described above, I hereby make some concluding remarks. First, in modern global society religion is a category that is universal, but at the same time it can take different forms according to region. Religion becomes an easy object of contestation, because religion is used as an important location for individuals and organizations to represent themselves. That said, in modern society religion plays a role as a center of identity, power, citizenship, and/or difference. For this reason, social domains want to conceptualize, control, or appropriate it in a certain particular form. Government, laws, educational institutions, the press, and other secular spheres, alongside religions, greatly contribute to setting the boundary between things that are considered to be religion and things that are not. In modern Korea, too, these social domains have played a principal role in forming and reforming the ‘official’ notion of religion.

Second, in the nineteenth century the notion of religion was introduced to East Asia from the West. However, the social location of the category of religion in this region was different from those in the Western and other non-Western regions. In Japan and China, religion was not recognized as an appropriate conception through which to maintain, represent, and develop the nation, in particular the nation’s indigenous tradition. As in the nineteenth and twentieth century it was understood to be something related to paying exclusive loyalty to particular groups or ‘sects,’ the category of religion in China and Japan became extensively considered as an obstacle to ensuring the nation’s own identity as well as

to achieve modern civilization. Therefore, Confucianism and Shinto in the two countries were imagined not as religion but as philosophy or civilization and national ethics respectively.

Third, the formation of the notion of religion in Korea is deeply associated with the particular way through which the East Asian society has been incorporated into the modern global society of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In the first half of the twentieth century Korea was colonized by Japan which had established State Shinto, and then in the latter half South Korea came to be located at the frontline of the 'free world' that confronted the communist bloc in the Cold War system. Religion was extensively imagined as a critical resource in order to not only protect the Korean nation from the threat of its Asian neighbors, but also to keep the 'true' national identity from the enemy within the nation. Religions made an impressive contribution to achieving democratization and industrialization in the South as well as resisting colonialism and communism, both of which threatened the ultimate completion of the Korean nation-state. A great many Koreans planned to enlighten the nation through a religion so much so that it ended up proclaiming that Korea was the chosen nation in the new global world. In the colonial and post-colonial context of Korea, religion was largely imagined as one of the most indispensable requirements to accomplish universal modern civilization.

Fourth, the strong affirmation of religion was accompanied by a strong negation of 'something that seems religious, but is not religion.' As the theological, ritualistic, and organizational frame of the 'mainstream religions' was accepted as the 'paradigm of religion' by many Koreans, it strongly influenced such social non-recognition of the non-mainstream religions. Particularly, folk beliefs, indigenous religions, and the new religions were labeled as 'evil religion,' 'pseudo religion,' 'superstition,' and/or 'cult,' because their religious

quality was seriously questioned. As they were stigmatized as obstacles to achieving modern civilization, their civil rights were not respected in many cases.

Fifth, since the latter half of the 1980s, democratization, the cessation of the Cold War, the acceleration of globalization, economic development, and so forth have prominently advanced the differentiation of social domains such as politics, law, education, and the media in South Korea. Religions have structurally and unevenly intervened in the functional operation of the secular domains. This has caused an extensive semantic change of religion in the public sphere of Korean society. There have been rising semantics that religion is not interested in the evolution of national society, but is rather concerned with ‘sect’ only and wrapped up in an expansion of its own organization. More specifically, in the public sphere it has been widely observed that the mainline religions, especially Protestant Christianity, adversely affect social reform, democratization, ideological conflict, improvement in human rights for minorities, and national and global security, as well as cause a clash of civilizations. Accordingly, religion is extensively re-imagined as a category that is regressive, antisocial, and less-nationalistic in late-modern South Korea.

Sixth, with the negative notion of religion being spread and also multiculturalism being more and more accepted, ‘religious others’ or ‘religious minorities’ that were once placed under the subaltern categories of ‘evil religion,’ ‘heresy,’ ‘pseudo religion,’ and the like, have been re-discovered. Especially, folk beliefs or Shamanism, which was until the late 1970s stigmatized as ‘superstition’ or the ‘symbol of pre-modernity’ retarding the detribalization of the Korean nation, have been reminisced, recollected, and recognized as the root of Korean traditional culture and the nation’s distinctive identity. The ‘indigenous’ identity of the Korean people was described by using shamanic myths or shamanically-themed terms such as *Tan’gun* (the legendary founder of the Korean nation 檀君) and *Sin*

param (god wind 신바람). However, it has refused to re-imagine the nation's own identity and Korean traditional religion as 'religion' or *chonggyo*. The insiders of Korean Shamanism, especially professional shamans, have tried to re-construct their tradition as one of the religions, but so far failed. Rather than defining Shamanism along the lines of one or more religions, Korean society has re-imagined it as the national 'culture.' It has been re-discovered that Shamanism has successfully 'preserved' Korean 'inherent' cultural elements, enduring the Japanese colonial oppression, Western-style modernization, the 'harming influence' of foreign culture, and the coercion of the 'new village movement' driven by Park Jung-hee, the military dictator (Kendall 2009: 11-24). Since the 1980s, some Korean Confucian scholars have attempted to re-construct Confucianism as religion, but this has been met by enormous opposition from inside Korean Confucian circles contending that it is philosophy or thought, which is "superior to religion." Modern Koreans have extensively refused to re-imagine or re-construct Korean religious traditions, the nature of the Korean nation, and/or Korea's contribution to the new global civilization as religion.

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