



# BETWEEN COMMON HUMANITY AND PARTIALITY: THE CHOGYE BUDDHIST CHAPLAINCY MANUAL OF THE SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

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# BETWEEN COMMON HUMANITY AND PARTIALITY: THE CHOGYE BUDDHIST CHAPLAINCY MANUAL OF THE SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

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## ABSTRACT

The Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism (K. Chogye chong or Jogyejong 曹溪宗) compiled a booklet called *Kukkun pöbyo chip* (*Essential Buddhist Teachings for the Armed Forces*, 國軍法要集, *EBTAF* hereafter), which is distributed in the military Buddhist temples (K. *kun sachal*; Ch. *jun sisha* 軍寺刹) of South Korea. This manual for Buddhist military personnel draws on Buddhist classical texts and teachings to provide them both with doctrinal and practical information, and guidance as well as litanies for chaplains to perform crucial rites such as funerals. At the same time the *EBTAF* contains some distinctively Korean Buddhist references and ideas, and combines them with elements of Korean nationalism. In this context, this article analyses (1) the ideal traits of Buddhist combatants suggested in the *EBTAF* and their compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL); (2) the conflicting values illustrated in the booklet between Buddhist soldiers' religious aspirations to uphold common humanity and the partiality inherent in their governmental affiliation; and (3) a passage to resolve the disparity. While the *EBTAF* aligns with IHL principles, some parts of it reflect a tension between Buddhist aspirations for peace and the military necessities of the state. Though IHL is not explicitly mentioned in the *EBTAF*, there is potential for embedding education on mutually complementary Buddhist and IHL values into Korean military chaplaincy.

**KEYWORDS** Buddhist Military Chaplaincy; Impartiality; Chogye Order; International Humanitarian Law; Korean Buddhism

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism<sup>2</sup> is a Korean Zen school with a focus on meditation practices like *Kanwha Sön* (Ch. *kanhua chan* 看話禪) and *Hwadu* (Ch. *huatou* 話頭). Even though its provenance can be traced much further back in history, the current form of the Chogye Order was established in 1962. As of the 2018 census, it is the largest and most influential Buddhist

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order in South Korea, with 3185 temples, 13,327 monastics, and 12,000,000 lay followers (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism 문화체육관광부 2018, 101). With its increasing interest in social engagement, it is currently one of the four religious denominations<sup>3</sup> that partake in the military chaplaincy service in cooperation with the Ministry of National Defence of South Korea.

The military chaplaincy institution was founded in South Korea in 1951 during the Korean War (1950–1953), inspired by the American Protestant chaplaincy service (Kang 2017, 35–54). However, during the pro-Christian Syngman Rhee's regime (1948–1960), no Buddhist monastic was officially assigned to chaplaincy service, even though Buddhism was the most prominent religion among South Koreans in the 1950s (Kang 2017). After a period of ostracisation that lasted almost two decades, the Chogye Order was finally recognised by the South Korean government in 1968 as the third religious denomination to become an official member of the military chaplaincy service (Editorial Board of Buddhist Chaplaincy 불교군종사 편찬위원회 2008, 16). In the same year, five chaplains who had completed a chaplaincy training course, as well as ten weeks of military training at the army's Infantry School, were deployed. Three of them were sent to Vietnam during the Vietnamese War (1954–1975) (Kim and Park 2020, 4).

Ever since, the Chogye Order has noticeably increased the number of military temples, with 10 monasteries in 1970, which rose to 170 by 1990, then reaching 416 in 2018. Military temples are run jointly with military camps in South Korea. They are located either within the camps or in proximity to them, for the convenience of military personnel. Subject to availability, one Buddhist military chaplain may reside in the camp or travel between temples at weekends. The activities conducted in the military temples include Dharma talks and Buddhist rituals; the latter include funerals for deceased soldiers. In 2008, the Pisung sa temple held celebrations for a South Korea–US collaborative military exercise, namely Ulchi Freedom Guardian (Editorial Board of Buddhist Chaplaincy 불교군종사 편찬위원회 2008, 395).

The need for an administrative entity for the military temples and chaplains was ardently discussed at the Chogye Order in the 1990s (Editorial Board of Buddhist Chaplaincy 불교군종사 편찬위원회 2018, 42), and in 2005, the Buddhist Military Ordinate of the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism (K. *Taehan pulgyo chogyejong kunjong t'ŭkpyŏl kyogu*; Ch. *dahan fojiao caoxizong junzong tebie jiaoqu* 大韓佛教曹溪宗 軍宗特別教區) was established. The Ordinate is in charge of selecting aspiring military personnel and running monasteries in conjunction with military camps. With the aid of two universities, Joong-ang Sangha University<sup>4</sup>

and Dongguk University,<sup>5</sup> the Ordinariate is also responsible for educating aspiring military chaplains. In addition, it publishes the reading materials and booklets related to the Buddhist military chaplaincy service.

Contrary to a few countries where the military chaplaincy service is either completely or partially civilianised, South Korea has maintained the service under the direction of the state. The Buddhist monks and nuns<sup>6</sup> who are appointed are therefore military personnel, while maintaining their status as monastics at the Chogye Order. In the same fashion, the military temples are essentially military facilities, even though they are run by the Ordinariate and some of them were completed with donations from lay Buddhists with permission from the Ministry of National Defence.

The primary source for this paper is *Kukkun pöbyo chip (Essential Buddhist Teachings for the Armed Forces, EBTAf)*, Office of Military Ordinariate, 1997), a booklet distributed in military Buddhist temples in South Korea. The *EBTAf* is a guidebook for Buddhist military personnel who wish to abide by Buddhist teachings during their service to their country. It is compiled by the Office of Buddhist Military Ordinariate and published by the Ministry of National Defence of South Korea. The first 1000 copies were printed in 1972.<sup>7</sup> The *EBTAf* has already undergone several revisions in the past five decades since then. Except for the latest version from 2018, all the older booklets are over 400 pages long with extensive coverage of diverse themes. These include Buddhist rituals and core teachings, the fit mindset and disciplines for military personnel, and the correct attitudes towards one's nation. In this article, the *EBTAf* versions from 1997, 2000, 2010 and 2018 are analysed.

The tension between humanitarianism and military necessity is embedded in the booklet. As a guide for Buddhist combatants, composed by the ordained and sanctioned by the state, both common humanity and patriotism co-exist ironically yet ineluctably. This tension is similar to the ontological grounding for international humanitarian law (henceforth IHL), which is based on a balance between considerations of military necessity and of humanity, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare (Melzer 2019, 17, 18). A comparative analysis of the two can therefore shed light on their potential complementarity.<sup>8</sup>

This study answers the following questions in this regard: (1) What kind of Buddhist teachings are emphasised in the *EBTAf*?; (2) Do the Buddhist values espoused in the *EBTAf* align with IHL?; (3) How are the seemingly irreconcilable humanitarian values of Buddhism and patriotism addressed together in the *EBTAf*?; (4) How does the *EBTAf* reflect and reconcile the disparity between scriptural Buddhism and the lived reality of Buddhism?; and (5) What implications does the *EBTAf* have in terms of Buddhist military personnel's understanding of Buddhism and humanity in situations of armed

conflict? By answering these questions, this study attempts to contribute to the understanding of the lived reality of Buddhists by analysing how impartiality and partiality are placed and endorsed together in the lives of Buddhist armed forces in South Korea. By so doing, it is hoped that this research will open up further engagement between the Buddhist military chaplaincy service and IHL practitioners.

## Overview of the *EBTAF*

The *EBTAF* is a manual for Buddhist combatants which addresses multiple aspects of a Buddhist's life in military situations, from combat preparation to Buddhist daily practice. The content includes canonical compositions from both Mahāyāna and earlier Buddhist teachings, written in both Korean and classical Chinese. Non-canonical pieces are provided only in modern Korean; they consist of expositions and interpretations of canonical pieces or guidelines for daily life tailored to Korean Buddhist soldiers.

The *EBTAF* published in 1997 consists of 10 chapters and over 700 pages, whereas the versions from 2000 and 2010 have six chapters, with a total of 480 and 438 pages, respectively. The latest revision from 2018 has three chapters and a total of 95 pages. According to the educational director at the Ordinariate, there are three additional publications being planned in order to supplement the latest *EBTAF: Collected Buddhist Rituals in Battlefields, Buddhist Sutras for Young Soldiers* and *Manual for Rituals and Prayers*.<sup>9</sup> Prior to 2018, despite a number of revisions, the contents of the *EBTAF* in the past several decades remained similar except for marginal changes of structure. The list of the chapters of the four versions of the *EBTAF* is given in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Contents of the four versions of the *Essential Buddhist Teachings for the Armed Forces (EBTAF)*.

1997	2000	2010	2018
I. Buddhist Ceremonies	I. Buddhist Ceremonies	I. Buddhist Ceremonies	I. Buddhist Ceremonies
II. Guidelines for Everyday Life	II. Prayers	II. Prayers	II. Sutras for Recitations
III. Prayers (for the Ordained)	III. Buddhist Teachings	III. Buddhist Teachings	III. Basic Knowledge on Buddhism
IV. Prayers (for All)	IV. Sutras for Recitations	IV. Introduction to Buddhism	
V. Buddhist Etiquettes	V. Guidelines for Buddhist Practice		
VI. Rituals	VI. Buddhist Hymns		
VII. Buddhist Teachings			
VIII. Sutras for Recitations			
IX. Operational Discipline of Buddhist Military Temples			
X. Buddhist Hymns			

Chapter III and Chapter IX in the version in 1997 were eliminated in the versions from 2000 and 2010. The construction and content of these two versions do not differ greatly despite changes to the title of the fourth chapter. In the 2010 version, sutras for recitations and essential Buddhist teachings are placed together under the title 'Introduction to Buddhism', with a detailed explanation.

Among the contents in Chapter I: Buddhist Ceremonies, Buddhist rituals for the deceased are noticeable. In its subchapters, topics such as ceremonies for receiving Buddhist precepts and for Buddhist observance days (Skt. *upavasatha*; Ch. *busa* 布薩) are included. In the chapter of prayers, readers can find diverse prayers which the armed forces may need during service, including prayers for patience and perseverance, prayers for courage, prayers for the soldiers who are training, prayers before carrying out operations, and prayers before dispatching warplanes.

In Chapters III and IV, Buddhist teachings as well as major sutras are introduced in both classical Chinese and Korean with explanations of the content. For instance, in the subchapters, core Mahayanist Buddhist sutras such as the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*; Ch. *miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經), the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (Skt. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *dafangguang fohuayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經), and the *Diamond Sūtra* (Skt. *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*; Ch. *jingang banruo boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經) are introduced. An apocryphal text, the *Sūtra of Filial Piety* (Ch. *fumu enzhong jing* 父母恩重經), is also included in Chapter IV. In Chapter V: Guidelines for Buddhist Practice, readers can find practical guidance related to the practice of Buddhism in daily life. Readers are informed about fundamental Buddhist courtesy and the rules of conduct including the correct way to enter a Buddhist temple, and to make offerings to the Buddha.

Chapter VI: Buddhist Hymns contains 29 Buddhist hymns and the South Korean national anthem with full scores and lyrics in sheet music. The themes of the hymns include playing Dharma drums and welcoming new Buddhist soldiers. It is notable that four of the hymns are related to death and funerals.

### **The ideal traits of Buddhist combatants and their compliance with IHL**

In all versions of the *EBTAF*, Buddhist combatants are encouraged to remain calm and compassionate during their service. Prayers and Buddhist teachings in the *EBTAF* aim to help them develop a sound mindset and cultivate

desirable personality traits through the practice of Buddhism in military camps, particularly impartiality, compassion and selflessness. Consideration for the happiness of others, sacrifice, devotion and world peace are also often discussed. For example, the meaning and implications of the Four Immeasurable Minds (Skt. *apramāṇa*; Ch. *si wuliang xin* 四無量心) are introduced and explained in full as follows:

Buddhist teachings place a great emphasis on the relationship one has with others, to the point that Buddhist practice is ultimately perfected by doing good for others as much as for oneself. One must interact with others with the Four Immeasurable Minds, which are:

- (1) *Cha muryang shim* (loving-kindness; Skt. *maitrī*; Ch. *ci wuliang xin* 慈無量心): a loving and kind mind. Loving-kindness is about treating everyone with benevolence and warmth.
- (2) *Pi muryang shim* (compassion; Skt. *karuṇā*; Ch. *bei wuliang xin* 悲無量心): a compassionate mind. Compassion is about taking someone else's adversities as your own. This mind allows us to feel compassion towards suffering sentient beings.
- (3) *Hüi muryang shim* (joy; Skt. *muditā*; Ch. *xi wuliang xin* 喜無量心): this mind assists us to be happy for others without jealousy.
- (4) *Sa muryang shim* (equanimity; Skt. *upekṣā*; Ch. *she wuliang xin* 捨無量心): with equanimity, we do not discriminate against anyone, whether he is a friend or a foe. We are not attached to or obsessed with anything, and we are fair.

It is to say that Buddhism is ultimately about *chabi* (Ch: *cibei* 慈悲). *Chabi* is indeed the combination of the first and the second mind in the Four Immeasurable Minds, loving-kindness and compassion, as explained above. In other words, *chabi* denotes the mindset of treating others with gentleness and warmth as if it were one's own body (EBTAF 2010, 302–303).

The way in which the meaning of equanimity is construed in the EBTAF is note-worthy, as it argues against the distinction between a friend and a foe. The Buddhist virtues praised in the Four Immeasurable Minds are accentuated again in the way the Ten Conducts in the *Flower Garland Sūtra*<sub>10</sub> are fully quoted and translated in the EBTAF. Like the interpretation of equanimity above, the following passage on non-attachment resonates with the core attributes of IHL in its emphasis on equanimity and impartiality:

What do we call bodhisattvas' non-attachment?<sup>11</sup>

...

The impurity of the world does not incite hatred in bodhisattvas. This is because bodhisattvas see everything as the Buddha Dharma. That is, everything is neither pure nor impure, light nor dark, truthful nor untruthful, comfortable nor arduous, neither right nor wrong.

...  
 Bodhisattvas do not think of 'self' or 'mine' even in a brief instant, do not attach to their bodies, the Dharma, thoughts, aspirations, *samādhi*, or *dhyaṇa*.

...  
 Bodhisattvas conceive everything through no-self, develop *mahā-karuṇā* (great compassion) to relieve sentient beings, yet they are not defiled by their conducts. They transcend the secular realm, yet they fully live in it. This is what we call bodhisattvas' conduct of non-attachment. (*EBTAF* 2000, 314–315)

Such well-established Buddhist qualities of compassion, impartiality and equanimity are reflected in the Four Immeasurable Minds as well as the Bodhisattvas' Conduct of Non-Attachment in the *EBTAF*. These Buddhist aspirations are channelled into one of the most frequently recited prayers from the *EBTAF*. In this prayer, soldiers are encouraged to remain compassionate, loving, and impartial during service.

#### Prayer Two<sup>12</sup>

I pay homage to the divine true teacher, the Buddha, with great devotion.

...

I aspire to be grateful to my mission and everyone around me.

I will pray for the happiness of others rather than that of my own.

I aspire to be a person who cherishes living beings and peace for the happiness of my family, my fellow comrades, and all sentient beings.

I wish my prayers to lead to security of all troops and harmony among families.

I aspire to be a stepping-stone to peace so that the whole world will become a Pure Land. (*EBTAF* 2018, 20–21)

The values found in the verses above correspond with IHL's core humanitarian concerns. For example, according to IHL, 'all persons who have fallen into the power of the enemy are entitled to humane treatment regardless of their status and previous function or activities without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion or faith' (Melzer 2019, 20).<sup>13</sup> IHL, therefore, requires treatment to be impartial, prioritised only according to need, in the provision of medical care and humanitarian relief.<sup>14</sup>

IHL also upholds human dignity during armed conflict, including that of the deceased. It imposes obligations with regard to the dead, and stipulates that parties to a conflict must take all possible measures to ensure that the remains of the deceased are respected and that they are neither mutilated nor pillaged or despoiled (Melzer 2019, 159–160).<sup>15</sup> The *EBTAF* pays close



attention to this topic, and emphasises the importance of rituals for the dead during military service. In its preface, the significance of the rituals for the armed forces is explicitly stipulated. Consequently, there are multiple entries related to funerals in Chapter I, which provide the full procedures, with additional prayers and hymns in Chapter II and VI. The values of the Buddhist teachings in the *EBTAF* therefore guide soldiers to treat the bodies of the deceased with respect and kindness, and in compliance with IHL.

To summarise, the implications of compassion, impartiality and equanimity in the *EBTAF* for relieving suffering during military situations are twofold. Firstly, such values may relieve the participating military personnel from excessive negative emotions, and aid their mental and emotional health. Secondly, such values help them to abide by IHL.

### Conflicting values in the *EBTAF*

As a booklet reflecting both military necessity and humanitarian values, the *EBTAF* has an additional dimension: nationalism. Numerous subchapters place patriotic and humanitarian terms in the same passage without conceptual distinction, articulation of their implications, or recognition of the cognitive dissonance such blending of the two may cause. As a case in point, the prayers in the booklet often show great care and compassion for others, with a nationalistic undertone.

The prayer below expresses concerns for distressed, sick and fatigued soldiers. At the same time, patriotic sentiments are observable throughout the passage, invoking a sense of belonging to the 'homeland'. An archaic character in the history of Korean Buddhism is also drawn on to add historical legitimacy to the military activities of Buddhists; Won'gwang 圓光 (555–638), an eminent monk from the mid-Silla period (514–654) is believed to have altered the five Buddhist precepts to support his king by integrating Confucian virtues with Buddhist concepts of morality (Yi 2014, 3).

He is known for a set of moral codes entitled *sesok o kye* 世俗五戒 (five worldly precepts): *sagun ich'ung* 事君以忠 (Serve the king with loyalty), *sach'in ihyo* 事親以孝 (Serve parents with filial piety), *kyou isin* 交友以信 (Befriend people with trust), *imjŏn mut'oe* 臨戰無退 (Do not retreat from battle), and *salsaeng yut'aek* 殺生有擇 (Kill with discernment).<sup>16</sup> His five worldly precepts are often quoted in the discourses with regard to the convergence of the state and institutional Buddhism in Korea, suggesting that the Korean Buddhist *samgha* has a long history of supporting the state in even a military capacity.<sup>17</sup>

Such a confluence of politics and Buddhism in East Asia was framed as state-protecting Buddhism (J. *gokoku bukkō*; K. *hoguk pulgyo* 護國佛教; SPB hereafter)<sup>18</sup> by Japanese Buddhologists during the Meiji period (1868–1912) (Jorgensen 1997, 209–210). Buddhist intellectuals such as Eda Toshio (1898–

1957) applied *gokoku bukkō* discourses to describe Korean Buddhism during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–1945) (Eda 1977, 155–169; Kamada 1987). As the concept aligned with the ideologies of the authoritarian regimes of Syngman Rhee and Park Chunghee (1948–1979), it carried increasing significance (Mohan 2006; Sorensen 2008), and by the 1970s it was adopted by Korean scholars of various disciplines (Kim 2007, 10). This concept is therefore frequently attributed to Won'gwang's alleged stance on the military involvement of the *samgha*. In the prayer below, the concept of SPB appears together with Won'gwang's precept.

#### Prayer Before Executing Operations

Dear Buddha, who guides sentient beings with compassion, please help us realize that our lives only exist because our homeland does, and peace in our homeland only exists thanks to our challenging training.

...

Let us overcome our own selves through hard work, let the teaching of Venerable Won'gwang, 'no retreat at a battlefield', live in the heart of every fellow comrade through the strength of state-protecting spirit, so that everything is accomplished by the Buddha's brilliance without obstacle.

...

Dear Buddha, who leads us to the path of limitless compassion and wisdom, please be benevolent to our troops, parents, and siblings whom we left behind and make our sacrificial lives worthy. Please heal our fellow soldiers who became sick during training, and give courage to those who are distressed and fatigued so that we can hear shouts of victory. (EBTAF 2000, 152)

In addition to distinctively Korean Buddhist references and ideas, various other rhetorical devices are found in the EBTAF that reflect conflicting values. In the prayer below, the repetition of the word 'our' rhetorically separates 'us' from 'them'. This rhetorical style is particularly perplexing, considering the exposition on the Four Immeasurable Minds in which soldiers are encouraged not to separate friends and foes, and to be loving towards both instead. At the same time, the military activity in this prayer is described as defensive, focusing on the protection of people from undesignated enemies who are not demonised.

#### Prayer Before Dispatching Warplanes

Dear Buddha, we, Air Force 000, the protector of the South Korean airspace, are about to execute our mission. For we have our homeland, we can fly in our airspace like birds, looking down the beautiful mountains and streams, which is the basis of our people. We bid you to lead us to victory and to grant

us the Four Heavenly Kings' courage and strength so that we will not let the enemies rob our beautiful land which we must protect even at the cost of our lives.

...

Dear Buddha of limitless light, please answer to our earnest prayer and let us not become conceited or negligent. Let us return to our beloved homeland with our fellow comrades. (*EBTAF* 2000, 154)

However, in another entry with a reference to enemies, the contrast between the impartiality emphasised in the Four Immeasurable Minds and the sentiments in the excerpt becomes starker. The 2010 version of the *EBTAF* ends with a battlefield hymn with a reference to Māra, the demonic figure in Buddhism who represents temptation and *samsāra*. The hymn, which is placed almost at the end of the booklet in Chapter VI with the South Korean anthem, reads as follows:

#### A Song for State-Protecting Buddhist Militaries

Following the example of unification Buddhism of Silla, which brought the distressed nation together, hold the flag of reunification high in the sky! Let us march, let us defeat the red evil soldiers, we are invincible soldiers against Māra!

Following the example of state-protecting Buddhism from Koryŏ dynasty (高麗, 918–1391) which protected the state in need, hold up the state-protecting flag! (*EBTAF* 2000, 436)

In this excerpt, the juxtaposition equates Māra with the enemy. With the ideal of reunification and the reference to the colour red, a visual symbol of communism, the lyrics seem to associate the military of North Korea with Māra. Given that a war against Māra, the mythological representation of evil, is one of the common mechanisms used in Buddhist countries when justifying state-sanctioned violence against non-Buddhist groups or socially constructed others,<sup>19</sup> this hymn suggests animosity towards designated 'others' which contradicts the otherwise humanitarian undertone of the *EBTAF*. Since the metaphor of Māra is often employed in a dehumanising sense, this song contradicts the principle of common humanity. Additionally, the concept of SPB reappears and frames the identity of Buddhist militaries. The way in which this hymn associates current military practices of Buddhists with historical events, and thus with the larger SPB discourses, is also notable.

In combining Buddhist, nationalistic and militaristic values, the *EBTAF* includes conflicting messages and does not provide conceptual clarification in relation to these hymns. In sum, the above pieces translated from the

*EBTAF*, where humanitarian concepts are placed alongside nationalistic terms, beg the question of how Buddhist combatants should understand such texts and manage the cognitive dissonance they induce.

### A passage to close the gap

Elsewhere, however, the *EBTAF* acknowledges the disparity between Buddhist combatants' religious aspirations and their institutionalised loyalty to the state. In the 1997 version, the topic of the Buddhist view on warfare and taking lives during armed conflicts is discussed in detail over 10 pages. This discussion on Buddhism and warfare begins by tracing the canonical provenance of the Buddha's perspective on engagement in battles.

The *EBTAF* refers to the *Book of Gradual Sayings* (Skt. *Ekottaragama*; Ch. *zengyi ehan jing* 增一阿含經) to elaborate on the Buddha's position on war, with concrete examples in which the Buddha mediates between two antagonists and advises against violence (*EBTAF* 1997, 555–557). Quotes from the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* (Ch. *sifen lü* 四分律) are presented as well, to demonstrate that *bhiksus* are prohibited from visiting military camps or staying there for more than two nights or witnessing scenes of war. With various canonical references, the *EBTAF* comments that 'Sakyamunī disapproved of war and held the value of life to the utmost priority. His perspective on war is shown in the first precept against killing. In this sense, in accordance with the thought that war equates with taking life, it seems that war itself was considered transgressive in the times of early Buddhism' (*EBTAF* 1997, 557). To summarise, the first few paragraphs of this subchapter emphasise that Buddhism is a peace-oriented religion.

The passage proceeds by contending that the Buddhist view on warfare has changed over time. It quotes the *Medicine Buddha Sutra* (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*; Ch. *yaoshi rulai benyuan jing* 藥師如來本願經),<sup>20</sup> in which armed conflicts are justified in the case of defensive war and civil turmoil (*EBTAF* 1997, 559). The *Nirvana Sutra* (Skt. *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*; Ch. *daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經)<sup>21</sup> and the *Treatise on the Stages for Yoga Practice* (Skt. *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra*; Ch. *yujia shi di lun* 瑜伽師地論)<sup>22</sup> are also quoted in order to argue that war is condoned in the cases of protecting the Dharma or sentient beings (*EBTAF* 1997, 559–560). This subchapter concludes that 'participation in a war can be a proactive practice of compassion' (*EBTAF* 1997, 558–559). The *EBTAF* tries to resolve the tension between the humanitarian qualities embedded in Buddhism and military necessity by advocating that in certain cases, partaking in war does not contradict foundational principles in Buddhism.

Lastly, this subchapter on Buddhism and war addresses the issue of killing and warfare in the context of Korean Buddhism. The chapter stresses the aforementioned monk Won'gwang's position on precepts. Moreover, it

emphasises that his contemporary Üijök 義寂 (681–?) also elaborated the issue of killing in war for soldiers in his well-received commentary on the *Brahma's Net Sutra* (Skt. *Brahmajāla Sūtra*; Ch. *fan wang jing* 梵網經) (EBTAF 1997, 560).<sup>23</sup> With the introduction of the two eminent monks from the Korean Buddhist historiography, the EBTAF affirms and ends with Won'gwang's five worldly precepts (EBTAF 1997, 562).

In the EBTAF, Won'gwang is described as the forefather of SPB, who set moral codes for Buddhist militaries as well as civilians (EBTAF 1997, 561–562). His 'kill with discernment' is cited as altering the precepts, in this case the first precept not to kill, in order to serve military purposes. Such a conventional way to read his worldly precepts is precisely how the EBTAF depicts them in order to close the gap between normative Buddhist ethics and the lived reality of Buddhism in practice. What is noteworthy in the EBTAF, however, is that it quotes the whole passage in which the precise context of the worldly precept 'kill with discernment' can be analysed.

Won'gwang replied, 'There are ten Bodhisattva precepts in Buddhism, but since you are subjects of a king, I am afraid that you can hardly keep them.

...

It [kill with discernment] means no killing on the six purification days or in the spring and summer months. This is to choose the right time. Killing with discernment means no killing of domestic animals such as horses, cattle, fowl or dogs. No killing of organisms that are not big enough to make a morsel. This is to choose the right beings. Moreover, there should be no killing beyond what is absolutely necessary. These are the commandments for the secular world'. (Ilyon, *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* (三國遺事), v.4\_342b 1–11)<sup>24</sup>

The context for 'kill with discernment' from the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) makes it clear that there is a logical leap in connecting this precept with any justification for the military involvement of the *samgha*. The original context shows that the worldly precepts were an attempt to accommodate the difficulties of maintaining the bodhisattva precepts in lay life rather than an endorsement of military action per se. While the phrase 'kill with discernment' has been widely misconstrued to justify killing due to lack of consideration for its original context, its primary connotation is that 'there should be no killing beyond what is absolutely necessary', and therefore it aligns with IHL.

### Conclusion: between common humanity and partiality

Common humanity – or, in the Buddhist case, common sentience – and impartiality are emphasised in both IHL and Buddhist teachings. These are the pillars of belief wherein the two institutions overlap and can guide the armed forces in situations of armed conflict. Both can help prevent unnecessary harm and ameliorate the distress that military personnel undergo by guiding

them to see that their 'enemies' are in fact no different from themselves, regardless of their different nationality and other affiliations. Such values are indeed the undertone of the *EBTAF*. However, its indiscriminate use of conceptually discrepant notions blended together requires further analysis.

The Buddhist position on warfare itself is not conclusive. This lack of clarity, complicated by the diverse cultures, political systems and historical memories of different countries, yields context-specific interpretations of the reasoning behind Buddhist involvement in military activity and its morality. Precisely because of the dearth of discussion on this issue, Buddhist military chaplains presumably receive questions from military personnel with regard to the lack of conceptual clarity between humanitarian principles and nationalism, or the Buddhist stance on state-sanctioned violence. This dearth of incisive, explicit discussion also explains the confusion and mixed accounts of common humanity and nationalism that are features of the *EBTAF*. The philosophical question here is whether one can ever be totally impartial while devoted to one's duty as a servant of a specific country, its associated values and political orientation.<sup>25</sup>

While this is possible for IHL because it does not seek to prohibit killing per se, for a Buddhist member of the military this is more problematic, because impartiality is taken to a higher degree in Buddhism, and requires literally treating one's enemy with the same consideration as oneself, even during armed conflict. Moreover, patriotism or national identity and the will to fight are both often invoked using othering techniques to dehumanise the opponent, in the case of the *EBTAF* by equating the enemy with Māra, the mythological representation of evil, which in Buddhism originally represents our inner weaknesses to be overcome on the spiritual journey.

Even though many of the Buddhist virtues presented in the *EBTAF* overlap with and support IHL, there is nevertheless no direct reference to IHL in the *EBTAF*. Some collaborative work between the Chogye Order, or Korean chaplaincy in general, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to revise the content of the *EBTAF* or the curriculum for aspiring Buddhist military chaplains could be of great benefit to the Buddhist members of the armed forces in the future.

Lastly, while there is no doubt that it is important to examine the compatibility of IHL and scriptural Buddhism, the lived reality of Buddhist combatants for whom the *EBTAF* is designed, and the specific cultural history of Buddhism that pertains to them, suggests that the context-specificity of a given region should also be taken into account when looking for areas where the two might converge. In this respect,

there should be further research with empirical data to fully comprehend the realities of different Buddhisms in the plural, to whatever degree they share some core basic principles.

## Notes

1. Romanisation of Korean follows the McCune–Reischauer system and the *pinyin* system is used to romanise Chinese characters. K. for Korean; Ch. for Chinese; Skt. for Sanskrit; J. for Japanese. Because all Korean words that appear in this article can be written in Chinese logographs, only rominisations are provided, followed by English translations and Chinese characters.
2. The Education Centre for the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism published a book titled *History of the Chogye Order* (Education Centre for the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism 대한불교조계종교육원 2001). For a concise introduction to the Order in English, see Buswell and Lopez (2014, 185). For the historical development of Buddhism in modern Korea, see Park (2014). For the contemporary monastic practices of the Chogye Order, see Buswell (1992).
3. The other three denominations are the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church and Won Buddhism. Won Buddhism was founded in 1916. There are debates on whether it should be regarded as a new religion or a form of Buddhism. It joined the chaplaincy service in 2007.
4. A higher educational institute for Buddhist monks and nuns, founded and run by the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism.
5. A private university founded and run by the Chogye Order. Contrary to Joong-ang Sangha University, it is open to the unordained public as well. The Chogye Order recruits military chaplains by offering tuition fee waivers to aspiring Buddhist chaplains.
6. In 2014, the first Buddhist nun was assigned to military chaplaincy service. A recent publication by the Ordinariate, namely the *50-Year History of the Buddhist Chaplain Service*, includes interviews with four female military chaplains.
7. See the Ordinariate's official homepage: [www.gunindra.com](http://www.gunindra.com).
8. I am indebted to Noel Trew for his kind suggestions regarding IHL reading materials related to my research.
9. <http://www.hyunbulnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=294124>.
10. *Flower Garland Sutra* (Skt. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *hua yan jing* 華嚴經). *Tripitaka Koreana* K0079; K0080; K1262. <https://kabc.dongguk.edu/>.
11. The Korean translation of this passage in the *EBTAF* diverges marginally from the standard one of the *Tripitaka Koreana* by the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Literature at Dongguk University. No classical Chinese is provided for this passage. The *EBTAF* sometimes omits the exact bibliographical information for its canonical source. Based on the comparison of the three versions of the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the translation given above proved to be the closest to the version with 60 volumes, which was initially translated into classical Chinese by Buddhahbhadra (359–429 CE).
12. Parts of the English translations of the *EBTAF* were carried out by the author without consultation regarding possible variations, due to the lack of extant research on the *EBTAF*.
13. GC I–IV, Common Art. 3(1); CIHL, Rules 87 and 88.

14. GC II, Art. 12; AP I Art. 10; ICRC study on customary IHL, Rule 55.
15. GC I, Art. 15; GC II, Art. 18; GC IV, Art. 16; AP I, Art. 34(1); CIHL, Rule 113. Recited from Melzer (2019).
16. For different interpretations of the five worldly precepts, see Yim (2014). For their ethical underpinnings, see Im (2012), Lee (1990) and Yi (2014).
17. Tikhonov notes, 'it is no accident that the chief Buddhist military temple attached to the Ministry of Defence was named in honor of the priest [Won'gwang]' (Tikhonov 2015, 15–16).
18. During the last few decades, this term and the associated ideology have met harsh criticism with a trend of Buddhist scholarship reassessing characteristics of Korean Buddhism (Kim 2013, 2014; Mohan 2006; Pak 2010; Shim 1989; Sorensen 2008). Despite diminishing acceptance among academics, however, the SPB rhetoric still prevails among and continues to shape the religious experience of South Koreans. For the doctrine and practices of SPB in East Asia, in the premodern and modern era, see Daoru (2012).
19. The rhetoric against Māra is often found in Theravada Buddhist countries. For the case of Sri Lanka, see Seneviratne (1999), Bartholomeusz (2002) and Frydenlund (2013). For Thailand, see Nilsen (2013), Tambiah (1992) and Jerryson (2010, 2011, 2013). As for Mahāyāna countries, concepts such as no-self or ethical transcendentalism – bodhisattvas transcending normative ethics – are employed as just-war ideologies. For the case of Japan, see Auerback (2013), Kleine (2006) and Victoria (2003, 2006). For China, see Yu (2005, 2010, 2013). In the case of South Korea, the discourses on state-protecting Buddhism are the most dominant in the disputes on Buddhism and war.
20. *Medicine Buddha Sutra* (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*; Ch. *yaoshi lulai benyuan jing* 藥師如來本願經). *Tripitaka Koreana* K0176. <https://kabc.dongguk.edu/>.
21. In Fascicle III, Chapter Two: The Adamantine Body, *Nirvana Sutra* (Skt. *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*; Ch. *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經). *Taishō Tripitaka* 0374\_12.0383b; 0384b. <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php>.
22. In Fascicle 41, *Treatise on the Stages for Yoga Practice* (Skt. *Yogācārabhūmi-Śāstra*; Ch. *yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論), *Taishō Tripitaka* 1579\_30.0517b. <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-sat2.php>.
23. *Posalgyebon so* 菩薩戒本疏 (Commentary to the Code of the Bodhisattva Precepts). *Han'guk pulgyo chōnsō* (The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism) H0036. <https://kabc.dongguk.edu/>.
24. Though my translation is indebted to Ha and Mintz (2006), any mistakes are my own.
25. Agent neutrality is a frequently debated topic in Buddhist ethics. In Theravada Buddhism, having no element of negative emotions in the moment of the act of killing is deemed impossible (Gethin 2004).

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