

How Buddhist Monks Use Historical Narratives to Delegitimize a Dominant Institutional Logic: The Case of a Korean Buddhist Organizational Field, 1910–1962

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Abstract

Historical narrative studies suggest that history can be strategically manipulated and narrated by current actors to facilitate change. The studies emphasize that history can be used as a source of narratives to serve present purposes. Building on the studies, this research investigates how leaders use history as a set of narratives to delegitimize a dominant logic, thus facilitating institutional change. The empirical context of this study is a Korean Buddhist organizational field during and after Japanese colonization between 1910 and 1962. This context allows to examine how a group of Korean monks with a peripheral logic (meditation logic) proactively used past stories, legends, and myths to delegitimize a dominant logic (service logic). Their narrative strategies are conceptualized in this study as reviving history, stigmatizing history, and invoking leaders from the past. In integrating the findings with the relevant literature, this research aims to contribute to historical narrative and institutional research.

Keywords

Institutional theory, organization theory, qualitative research, management history

Organizational scholars have long investigated the role of history in explaining institutional change (Coraiola et al., 2018; Ocasio et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2019). They suggest that history is not merely a variable or a given context that managers cannot control, but a useful resource to shape agentic actions in the present (Adorisio, 2014; Coraiola et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2021; Suddaby et al., 2010). Studies have shown how founders (Basque & Langley, 2018; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993), legacies (Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Ravasi et al., 2019), and past achievements (Kimberly & Bouchikhi, 1995; Nissley & Casey, 2002) are used to reinterpret the present reality to either reinforce the status quo or initiate change. A common thread of the studies is that historical materials are purposefully selected, developed, and employed as sources of compelling storytelling by present-day actors (Foster et al., 2011). Scholars, in this regard, define history as “an interpretive device and strategic resource” (McGaughey, 2013, p. 73), and even develop the term, *historical narrative*, defined as narratives of the past that current actors select, develop, and narrate to serve their purposes in the present (Foster et al., 2017; Gill et al., 2018). The definition allows researchers to identify the manifestation of history in the narratives of actors.

Drawing upon the literature, I aim to reveal the rhetorical mechanisms of historical narratives. I ask: *How do leaders use historical narratives to delegitimize a dominant logic, thus facilitating institutional change?* The empirical setting of this study provides a useful context. Korean Buddhist temples underwent radical change as religious identity was built and rebuilt during and after Japanese colonial rule (1910–1962). Colonial rule led to the emergence of conflicting logics, which are codified in this study as *meditation logic* and *service logic*. Both logics are reflected in the opposing goals of Buddhist ordainment: liberation from endless cycles of rebirth (*Nibbāna* in Pali) and mercy toward people (*Bodhisatta* in Pāli).¹ In the daily monastic life of monks, the difference can be summarized in the following sentences: Go deeper into your inner mind and observe it

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so you can realize who you are (meditation logic) versus Leave the mind and look at the world so you can realize how to serve society (service logic). During the Japanese colonial rule, Korean monks split into two groups following one of the two logics. Historically, this split caused continuous strife until it was settled by a symbolic unification in 1962. My empirical focus is on how monastic leaders following the meditation logic used past stories, myths, and legends to develop narratives that delegitimized the dominant service logic and facilitated the institutional change they sought.

By vividly demonstrating how leaders (monks in this study) used historical narratives for change, this study contributes to the literature on historical narrative and institutional research. First, it identifies three different ways in which history is used to facilitate change: *reviving history*, *stigmatizing history*, and *invoking past leaders*. These narrative modes help leaders connect the past to a given context, reframe the nature of the conflict in question, and recall the legacy of past leaders, in order to reconstruct the identities of field participants in the present. Second, this study responds to the need for audience analysis. Foster et al. (2017) suggested that in order to reveal how historical narratives work, researchers should identify the target audience. One of their suggestions was to differentiate internal audiences from external audiences. This differentiation offered important insights by revealing that reviving history and invoking past leaders' narratives evoke strong emotional resonance to persuade internal audiences, whereas stigmatizing narratives highlight the authority of tradition in reaching out to external audiences. Third, by exploring historical change processes that took place in the Buddhist organizational field, this study sheds light on the nature of religious logic in a non-Christian context (e.g., Gümüşay, 2020). It draws on two distinct philosophies of Buddhism that shape the conflicting logics and discloses how they are manifested in the field history. These findings illuminate the role of historical narratives in understanding institutional change.

Theoretical Background

In this section, I review organizational narrative research to describe a theoretical foundation for this study. I then discuss how history is used to develop managers' narratives at the intersection of the literature on narrative and organizational history. I conclude by describing a theoretical white-space that motivated me to examine the role of historical narratives in institutional change.

Narrative as a Sensemaking Tool

Scholars who opt for a narrative approach suggest that change can be successfully implemented when managers overcome organizational members' cognitive resistance (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Vaara et al., 2016). To do so,

managers trigger communicative processes to invoke fundamental shifts in interpreting the current organizational vision, identity, and reality (Boje, 1991; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). As a means of constructing the organization's core activities, the process constitutes the organizational reality (Cooren et al., 2011, 2014). In a sense, scholars conceptualize managerial narratives as *sensemaking tools* to construct new meanings (Brown et al., 2008; Currie & Brown, 2003; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sonenshein (2010, p. 480), for example, defined a narrative as "a discursive construction that actors use as a tool to shape their own understanding (sensemaking), as a tool to influence others' understandings (sense-giving), and as an outcome of the collective construction of meaning."

Narrative research and organizational history literature converge on the exploration of how historical elements of managers' narratives trigger distinct sensemaking among members toward present organizational reality (e.g., Kroeze & Keulen, 2013; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Narrative research has revealed that the effectiveness of narratives is attributed to a specific element that managers develop and strategically use in their communication (Clarke & Cornelissen, 2011; Ocasio et al., 2018). To illustrate this, Vaara and his colleagues highlighted the "types of discourse" (Vaara et al., 2004) and "role of concepts" in strategic sensemaking (Jalonen et al., 2018). Focusing on managers' communicative ability, Logemann et al. (2019) showed how "forms of language" in narratives guide members' sensemaking during a strategic change. Among these narrative elements, the literature on organizational history suggests that history can be a unique source of storytelling for constructing narratives that trigger distinct sensemaking in the audience (Hills et al., 2013; Kroeze & Keulen, 2013; Suddaby & Foster, 2017).

A compelling question, however, remains as to whether history is indeed able to trigger others' sensemaking. This warrants a deeper theoretical investigation of what the meaning of *history* is in historical narratives and how *historical* narratives differ from the other collections of organizational narratives. As this investigation is a central focus of this study, I focus on reviewing the literature on organizational history and historical narratives.

History as a Source of Narrative

The idea that history can be used as a source for managerial narratives has been developed by problematizing the classic literature that characterized history as a given context, an exogenous variable, or something that managers cannot control (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004; Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). The literature describes history as a constraining structure that lends legitimacy to the status quo and thereby constrains change in the present (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1984).

However, the recent literature suggests that history can be rather a rich source of storytelling that current actors can use to design their actions and facilitate change (Sasaki et al., 2020; Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Suddaby et al., 2020). These studies take a distinct epistemological approach that allows scholars to differentiate the notion of history (as interpretation) from that of the past (as fact) (see Maclean et al., 2016; Rowlinson et al., 2014; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). Ravasi et al. (2019, p. 1523) viewed “the past as a set of events and experiences, and history as a partial and subjective reconstruction, ordering, and framing of these events and experiences.” Similarly, Wadhvani et al. (2018, p. 1665) argued that “history was understood not primarily as a representation of the past, but rather as a rhetorical and didactical tool that provided relevant, useful, and applicable plots and morals that could serve strategic purposes in the present.” In differentiating the concept of history from that of the past, these scholars argued that the past (as factual data) is converted to history (as interpreted facts) when managers mediate the influence of the past through their subjective interpretation and storytelling. These arguments offer a foundational epistemological basis for the claim that historical narratives can be used as a distinct sensemaking tool.

The important question, here, centers on understanding what it means to be *historical* and on identifying the unique sensemaking that historical narratives trigger. The answer can be found in sociological research that links history to memory. In pursuit of unpacking the sensemaking process triggered by historical narratives, sociologists have approached history as a set of collective memories that are symbolically shared and recalled among community members (Olick, 1999; Zerubavel, 2003). In his seminal work on collective memory, Zerubavel (2003) argued that community members bind themselves together by collectively recalling shared memories, engaging in commemoration practices, and transmitting memories to future generations. The collective remembering serves to define “who we were,” “who we are,” and “who we should be,” which delineate a community boundary (Olick, 1999; Zerubavel, 2003). This nostalgic sensemaking shapes the present organizational identity (Ravasi et al., 2019). Zerubavel (2003, p. 13) elaborated on this as follows:

One of the most remarkable features of human memory is our ability to mentally transform essentially unstructured series of events into seemingly coherent *historical narratives*. We normally view past events as episodes in a story, and it is basically such “stories” that make these events historically meaningful. (Italics in original.)

Drawing on the sociological literature, organizational scholars have demonstrated that organizations also proactively engage in collective remembering (Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Decker et al., 2021; Foroughi et al., 2020).

As a socially constructed process, remembrance evokes nostalgic sensemaking that keeps the past relevant and serves present organizational purposes (Gioia et al., 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2017). The central thesis of the studies is that history is not merely an earlier time that is distinct from the present, but also a shared memory (Rowlinson et al., 2010; Wadhvani et al., 2018). A role of historical narrative is to connect the present to the past by activating the process of recalling collective memory. In this view, remembering is understood as a distinct means of sensemaking, reconstructed by present actors’ storytelling on historical tales, myths, and legends (Boje, 1995; Kroeze & Keulen, 2013).

Role of Historical Narrative in Institutional Change: A Missing Part

Prior studies have certainly shown that history is collectively recalled as a shared memory that can be manipulated to reconstruct the present audiences’ sensemaking (Basque & Langley, 2018; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Ravasi et al., 2019; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). History can be used to disseminate new meanings to external stakeholders (Foster et al., 2011; Nissley & Casey, 2002; Suddaby et al., 2010). However, despite the conceptual advancement and empirical cases, existing studies are relatively less informative on the mechanisms of using historical narratives to facilitate institutional change.

This omission is perhaps because most empirical studies tend to highlight the sensemaking side of historical narratives, although some have emphasized the sensegiving mechanism in a change process (Brunninge, 2009; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). For example, three recent inductive case studies examined how historical founders, artifacts, and materials were rhetorically invoked (Basque & Langley, 2018), historicized (Hatch & Schultz, 2017), and uncovered (Ravasi et al., 2019). Yet, as the studies focused on the ways in which present actors discover historical materials to use in the present, they offered relatively little insight on the role of historical narratives in facilitating change. Furthermore, the studies unpacked the members’ direct engagement with historical materials rather than through ones’ narratives. As audiences react to leaders’ narratives, they engage in interpreted history that is only made available through the leaders’ subjective understanding. The audiences may then react differently to historical narratives that are strategically designed by speakers, possibilities of which have not been adequately explored.

Several anecdotal studies have offered useful insights. Foster et al. (2011) showed how Tim Hortons, a Canadian coffee chain, used ice hockey to strengthen its connection to a nostalgic representation of Canadian sports history. Tim Hortons developed patriotism as a corporate identity through strategically developed narratives. Holt (2006) examined how Jack Daniel’s, a world-renowned liquor

brand, used the historical image of American frontiers and developed it as a strategic narrative to construct its corporate image. In such cases, history is used to reconstruct corporate branding by reaching out to customers, investors, and other external stakeholders. Patriotism is identified an important narrative mechanism that arouses the audience's nostalgic sensemaking. However, these studies remain anecdotal. In fact, the historical images and stories that appeared were used for the sake of corporate image-building and branding, and not to facilitate change involving a significant reinterpretation of present reality.

Revealing leaders' narratives to facilitate change is crucial as it can potentially offer explanation of how and why audiences redirect their firmly grounded interpretations of reality to support change initiatives. Visionary speakers often unconsciously transform the ways in which audiences construe reality, building on even short addresses or preaching (Boje, 1991; Duranti, 1997). Vaara (2002, p. 217) suggested that "central in the narrative approach is that it highlights the narrator's ability to describe organizational change in different ways." Successful narratives draw audiences to shift their interpretations of the present, thereby reducing cognitive resistance to change (Boje, 1991, 1995). By drawing upon the historical narrative literature and analyzing rich historical documents and interviews conducted at multiple Buddhist temples, this study examines how Buddhist monks endorsing peripheral logic use historical narratives to delegitimize the dominant logic thereby facilitating institutional change.

Methods

Empirical Context

Just as Friedland and Alford (1991) included Christianity among the five institutional orders of Western society at the societal level, Buddhism is a comparable order that shaped the East Asian culture and worldview. Yet, Buddhist temples have suffered significantly throughout modern history of Asia, as a result of colonization, persecution, dictatorship, and war. In this study, I focus on two historical periods of Korean Buddhism—the periods of Japanese colonization (1910–1945) and national reconstruction (1945–1962)—after which, in 1962, a new Korean Buddhist religious order was established. This historical context allows us to examine how monk leaders in given context reinterpreted, reshaped, and used historical materials to challenge the dominant logic and thereby change the organizational field.

Data Sources

To collect historical data, I conducted multi-sited fieldworks in 32 Korean Buddhist temples from May 2015 to October 2019. During this period, I spent more than two months at three sites (K, H, and B Temples), which became my major

research sites. I lived, worked, and meditated with monks as a group (Van Maanen, 2011). As the fieldwork continued, I traveled to 29 other temples to verify my findings from the three research sites.

This level of immersion allowed me to collect unique historical items, such as the handwritten notes of earlier master monks, books, artifacts, and short stories. I also had the rare opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews with senior monks on monastic life during colonial rule. Some of them provided photographs and historical materials that vividly portrayed the nature of the conflict and how monks justified their initiatives for change at the time. In the later stages of fieldwork, I collected relevant articles published in Buddhist and major Korean newspapers. These secondary data included commentaries of Buddhist scholars on events from Korean Buddhist history between 1910 and 1962 and their interpretations of the monks' actions. Table 1 provides an overview of the research sites and data sources.

Data Analysis

Organizational scholars have taken distinct approaches to historical analysis (Coraiola et al., 2015; Decker et al., 2021; Gill et al., 2018; Maclean et al., 2016). For example, Rowlinson et al. (2014) conceptualized four epistemological perspectives on organizational history: corporate, structured, serial, and ethnographic history. Maclean et al. (2016) suggested distinct historical analyses as evaluating, explicating, conceptualizing, and narrating. These categories have been explained in detail in the recent review literature (see Foroughi et al., 2020; Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016).

Among others, a body of research focused on how various elements of history are manifested in the narratives of organizational actors (e.g., Basque & Langley, 2018; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). In these studies, *history* and *narrative* meet through the present actors' storytelling, where history provides the speakers with compelling sources of storytelling that arouse nostalgic sensemaking and the speakers' rhetorical skills make the past come alive as shared memories (Decker et al., 2021; Gill et al., 2018). Aligning with these studies, I approached history, manifested in the historical narrative, which "recounts the past instrumentally in ways that suit current needs and strategies" (Decker et al., 2021, p. 1140). A compelling advantage of this approach is that it draws the researchers' attention to how the past is manifested in the narratives. To systematically identify the manifestation of the past, I took three steps of analysis: (1) understanding the historical context of the study, (2) analyzing the monks' historical narratives, and (3) identifying the rhetorical mechanisms underlying the use of historical narratives.

Step one. My goal in the first step was to capture important events of the past and examine how they relate to the

Table 1. Research Site and Data Sources.

Research site	K-temple	H-temple	B-temple	29 Korean temples
<i>Site descriptions</i>				
Founding year	Appr. 600 BCE	Appr. 600 BCE	Appr. 800 BCE	Various
Mountain height	600 m	400 m	500 m	
No. of Buddhist halls	12	23	9	
No. of monks ordained	Appr. 40	Appr. 120	Appr. 20	
<i>Research period</i>				
Fieldwork period	May 1 to July 31, 2015	November 1 to December 28, 2016	January 1 to April 29, 2017	May 2015 – October 2019
Researcher's status	Participant	Participant	Participant	Non-participant
Fieldwork notes	228 pages	33 pages	22 pages	13 pages
<i>Interviews</i>				
A master monk	2 (1 h)	0	3 (3 h)	8 (8 h)
Senior monks	6 (3 h)	11 (8 h)	7 (7 h)	22 (32 h)
Junior monks	3 (3 h)	3 (1 h)	2 (1 h)	28 (28 h)
<i>Archival documents</i>				
Temple history books	1 (321 pages)	2 (645 pages)	2 (312 pages)	8 (1,681 pages)
Temple magazines	12	4	3	11
Buddhist newspaper articles	17	3	9	92
Korean newspaper articles	8	9	6	21
Monks' interview records	Video: 2 (3 h)	Video: 4 (2 h)	Video: 10 (6 h)	Video: 32 (12 h)
<i>Secondary history data</i>				
Historians' commentaries	Journal articles: 3	Journal articles: 11	Journal articles: 5	Journal articles: 17
Historians' interview records	Videos: 4 (4 h)	Videos: 6 (11 h)	Videos: 9 (4 h)	Videos: 13 (11 h)

emergence of conflicting logics across the two periods (colonization: 1910–1945 and national reconstruction: 1945–1962). The literature shows that when conflicting logics coexist in an organizational field, field participants split to legitimize one logic to secure their interests, which leads to a political contestation among the participants (Hoffman, 1999; Jay, 2013; York et al., 2016). Informed by the literature, I set to discover how a series of historical events and issues divided the Korean Buddhist monks over the two periods.

I examined a set of historical documents and important components of monastic life observed in fieldwork, such as religious ideology, organizational governance, ethical systems, or other criteria that caused the split. I tagged the data with elements of institutional logic conceptualized in the literature, including legitimacy and identity (Ocasio et al., 2016; Smets et al., 2015; Thornton et al., 2012). For example, during the two historical periods, monks debated on the legitimacy of being a monk (e.g., entering marriage and eating a carnal diet). Data show that these issues divided the monks. I codified the issues as sources of moral conflict. The four most salient elements of conflict—morality, legitimacy, identity, and relationship with society—emerged as a result of this tagging. Over time, I categorized 34 past monk leaders into two groups: 22 *service logic monks* (SV monks hereafter) and 13 *meditation logic*

monks (MD monks hereafter). These were monk leaders with opposing moral philosophies, sources of belief systems, legitimacy, and philosophical attitudes toward public relations.

Step two. I began to examine the 22 MD monk leaders. As noted in step one, 22 MD monks sought to delegitimize the dominant, service logic through collective movements and legal action. I investigated how the past manifested in the historical narratives of the 22 MD monks. I first tried to manually separate their historical narratives from the rest of the narratives told and written during the period of analysis (between 1910 and 1962). For example, MD monk I-J lamented that monks left the temple to engage in social activities during colonial rule. When he had a chance to give a public speech on this trend, he used monk D-M's self-discipline stories (e.g., his legendary life in a cave hermitage) to challenge SV monks who considered the practice of meditation in isolation from society to be the old convention. In contrast, he relied on his own meditative experience to challenge SV monks' idea. Although the purpose of monk I-J's narratives is the same (challenging SV monks), the source of storytelling is different: the main source of the former is monk D-M's story that aims to arouse nostalgic sensemaking among audiences, whereas the latter was sourced from one's own experience. Thus, only the former was codified and

Table 2. Important Events in the Buddhist Organizational Field from 1910 to 1962.

Colonial era, 1910–1945	
1910	Japan officially colonized Korea
1911	On June 3, the Japanese Governor-General of Korea enacted a legal ordinance that mandated the reorganization of temples to comprise a system involving 30 regional heads/branches to bureaucratically control all Korean temples.
1913	On May 25, Monk Y-U published <i>Theory of Reformation of Buddhism</i> .
1919	On March 1, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea recited the declaration of independence across the nation. Monk Y-U joined this independence movement with 33 national leaders.
1921	In December, MD monks established the Seon Meditation Institute that operated independently from Japanese control.
1926	In May and September, MD monk Y-S officially submitted a letter to the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, calling for the ban on marriage and consumption of meat.
1935	In March, MD monks held a nationwide conference to promote Seon meditation.
1945	On August 15, independence was attained.
1945	On September 22, a nationwide conference only for celibate monks was held in Tae-Go temple
National reconstruction period, 1945–1962	
1945–1948	Temporary US military governance.
1945	On September 22, the Japanese centralized bureaucracy to control temples was officially abolished.
1948	On September 9, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was established in North Korea
1948–1960	President Seung-Man Lee's administration.
1950	Two SV monks were elected members of the National Assembly.
1954	On May 20, President Lee declared that only celibate monks would be recognized as Buddhist monks.
1954	On August 24–25, MD monk C-D, with 60 followers, held a nationwide conference to officially declare that anyone who was married was not a monk in Korea.
1955	On February 5, celibate MD monks announced the eight criteria for one to qualify as a Buddhist monk.
1955	In April, MD monk T-H established a monastery exclusively for monks' meditation at a distance from society.
1959	On January 5, MD and SV monks issued a proclamation that sought to resolve the conflict.
1960–1963	Interim government
1960	On November 19, MD monks publicly marched with placards stating, "There are no wives in Buddhism" in Seoul.
1962	On February 12, MD and SV monks came to an agreement on unification and named the united order the Jo-Gye Order of Korean Buddhism

counted as historical narrative. This was obvious, given my interest in unraveling history as a source of narrative. The process selected 152 historical narratives used by MD monks to delegitimize the stance of SV monks. Each of the 152 historical narratives contained a complete story on the past of Korean Buddhism.

Second, I looked for consistent patterns across 152 narratives. The central focus of this study was the role of historical narratives to delegitimize a dominant logic. To uncover this role, I examined the specific stories that were used and interpreted in the 152 historical narratives. Over time, I was able to identify three different *storytelling sources* for the narratives, namely the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910, 42 narratives), the colonization period (1910–1945, 43 narratives), and a pair of former monks who lived in a hermitage to continue meditating (67 narratives). Based on these findings, I classified the 152 narratives into three narrative modes: *Reviving history* (42 narratives that build on stories on the Joseon Dynasty) and *Stigmatizing history* (43 narratives that build on stories on the colonial era), and *Invoking past leaders* (67 narratives that build on stories of past monks).

Step three. Finally, I conducted an additional analysis to capture some of the rhetorical mechanisms underlying the narratives. There are several ways to capture the mechanisms of historical narratives (e.g., Adorisio, 2014; Gill et al., 2018). Following Foster et al.'s (2017) framework, I analyzed the audiences of the narratives to re-decompose the 152 narratives. I chose this route because "the significance and the meaningfulness of a historical narrative can only be understood by gauging the impact it has on an audience" (Foster et al., 2017: p. 1182). Foster et al. (2017) defined internal audiences as organizational members and other organizations facing the same fate in the same organizational field, and external audiences as external stakeholders such as government agencies, the media, and the public.

Following detailed prescriptions proposed in existing studies (e.g., Adorisio, 2014; Gill et al., 2018), I examined the sources of narratives to identify internal and external audiences. For example, one of the leading MD monks C-D told the same story seven times during the period of study. The narratives were formally documented in temple magazines (twice), in interviews with Buddhist newspaper A (twice), and at a Buddhist conference (twice). He also

Table 3. Conflicting Logic in the Korean Buddhist Organizational Field.

	Meditation logic	Service logic
Identity	Buddhist monks are spiritual meditators who must prioritize meditation practice to dig deeper into their inner minds.	Buddhist monks are religious service providers who must prioritize their social responsibility and look after unfortunate people.
Understanding of meditation	Sacred; enlightenment; spirituality	Secular; learning; research
Legitimacy	Historical tradition passed down with Korean Seon meditation practice	Current social demand on religion to be less sacred and society-friendly
Economic system	Donation-based economy	Donation plus temples' own profit-seeking business (e.g., cultural programs, religious events, and selling tea)
Organizing system	Decentralized self-governing system	Centralized bureaucratic system
Ethical system	Strict monastic rules maintaining the Buddhist way of communal life	General human rights widely accepted in secular society

wrote an article for a public newspaper (once). The narratives from the internal data sources aimed at influencing Buddhist monks' perceptions, while their writing for the public newspaper sought to provide new information to the public. The pivotal unit of narrative analysis in this step was the *data source* (i.e., interview, document, and observation), not a *story source* of narrative (i.e., the two historical periods and the former monks) that were the unit of analysis in step 2.

Findings

I report the findings in three subsections: (1) Rise of conflict in a Korean Buddhist organizational field, (2) MD monks' historical narratives to delegitimize SV monks, and (3) Narrative mechanisms: Authority and emotional resonance. In the first subsection, I illustrate why and how conflicting logics emerged during both colonial rule (1910–1945) and the national reconstruction period (1945–1962). Then, I report the three narrative modes—reviving history, stigmatizing history, and invoking past leaders—that were used to delegitimize SV monks in the two periods. Finally, findings of the audience follow in the third subsection.

Rise of Conflict in a Korean Buddhist Organizational Field

Overview. Table 2 presents the timeline and important events that took place in the Korean Buddhist organizational field. After independence from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the post-colonization government rapidly removed the remnants of colonization to rebuild the nation (Mun, 2009; Yun & Park, 2019). Religion was no exception. By amending law and policy, the government sought to weaken the authority of SV monks who cooperated with Japanese religious policy (Sørensen & Harris, 1999). This attempt did not mean that all SV monks suddenly lost their legitimacy and

turned to meditation logic. The reason that MD monks continued to delegitimize service logic, despite formal institutional interventions from the government, was to ultimately establish a new religious order of Korean Buddhism (Yong, 2012). The new religious order was established in 1962, which they believed marked the point when the change was complete (Yong, 2012). The historical chaos in the two periods provided the historical context in which 22 MD monks sought to delegitimize the dominant SV logic.

Colonial era (1910–1945). On August 8, 1910, Korea was colonized by Japan, which brought various areas of the country under its control. The control of religion was one of the most important colonial policies, as religion shaped people's mentality and worldview. The Japanese Governor-General of Korea controlled Korean Buddhism in two ways: first, by suppressing the meditative tradition of Korean Buddhism, and second, by converting Korean Buddhist monks to Japanese Buddhism and by offering them political benefits (Park, 1998; Sørensen & Harris, 1999). As a result, two conflicting logics were created, which divided the monks. The split led to conflict over time. Table 3 summarizes the conflicting logics that emerged during colonial rule.

The conflict manifested in three specific areas of monastic life. The first was the system of governance. Before colonization, Korean Buddhist temples had their own way of organizing monastic life according to their socio-historical context (Nathan, 2010). However, in 1910, the Japanese Governor-General of Korea replaced the traditional way of organizing with a centralized, bureaucratic control system (Nathan, 2010). The transition was formally enacted by legal ordinance on June 3, 1911, and publicly promulgated on July 8 (Song, 2019). This change triggered an identity conflict between monks as service providers and spiritual meditators. The former believed that centralized administration would help individual temples manage their day-to-day

operations and allow monks to effectively engage in social issues. The latter strongly opposed the idea, arguing that the service provider identity was detrimental to the spiritual identity of the monks (i.e., the meditators). In December 1921, a group of meditating monks even emerged to form an independent organization only for those who called themselves meditators.

The second element pertained to marriage in the monastic society (Yun & Park, 2019). Under the influence of Japanese Buddhism and its policy that encouraged monks to marry, many monks broke celibacy and decided to marry (Song, 2019). According to a study by a Korean scholar, about 3,000 monks (mostly SV monks), were married at the time, and only 300 chose to remain celibate. MD monk Y-S and 127 of his fellow MD monks submitted an official letter to the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, stating that “marriage and meat consumption do not exist in Buddhism.” In 1927, some MD monks also held a nationwide conference to publicly denounce married SV monks. These events show that MD monks strongly disapproved the idea of marriage, whereas SV monks were more accepting.

Finally, the third conflict concerned educating monks (Kim, 2019). During colonial rule, many intellectuals studied in Japan, often with the support of the Japanese government. Some elite monks joined the stream. A credible record shows that 175 monks from the 10 big Korean temples studied in Japan. Considering the number of monks at the time (about 3,000 officially registered monks), 175 is a surprisingly high number. Most elite monks who chose to study in Japan were SV monks. They wanted to stay abreast of the latest science and literature and expand their view of Buddhism within an academic setting. They believed that research was an important contribution to society. However, the idea was directly opposed to the traditional monastic training of monks that the mental progress and supervision of a master monk are central. Whereas SV monks preferred to conduct research on social contributions, MD monks insisted on following tradition.

National reconstruction period (1945–1962). The conflict persisted until May 20, 1954, when Korean President Seung-Man Lee officially declared that only celibate meditators could be Buddhist monks. This incident implied that not only did the nation proactively intervene in the legitimacy of the religion, but also that it acted as a catalyst for SV monks to be delegitimized. The results also show that MD monks had begun to develop their narratives since this event. Of the 152 verbal and literal narratives from 1910 to 1962, 93 were found between 1954 and 1962 alone. This shows that MD monks’ project of delegitimizing SV monks gained momentum after it received political support from the government.

For example, MD monk C-D convened a nationwide conference of 60 celibate monks on August 24 and 25, 1954.

Since then, a group of leading MD monks held numerous conferences to jointly establish a traditional method of meditation and communal monastic life. On February 5, 1955, they declared eight criteria that one had to fulfill to qualify as a Korean monk: (1) Remaining celibate, (2) Tonsuring one’s head, (3) Practicing meditation, (4) Being over 20 years of age (5) Abstaining from alcohol, (6) Adhering to traditional monastic rules, (7) Maintaining good physical health, and (8) Residing in a temple for over three years. The first and third principles explicitly delegitimized married SV monks.

The movement even reached Seoul. On November 19, 1960, leading MD monks and their followers marched with placards saying, “Buddhism disallows one from having a wife” (Figure 1). These collective movements are strong evidence that MD monks rejected SV monks even after independence. At this time, MD monks established various communities and meditation spaces to meditate with believers. Having previously led a secluded life deep in the mountains, they began to appear in society.

In April 1962, the movement of the MD monks came to a dramatic end when a unified order, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, was established (Mun, 2009; Yun & Park, 2019). The unification marked a significant change in Korean Buddhist organizational field, as the Buddhist community and the central government officially recognized the legitimacy of MD monks. However, Korean scholars later interpreted the unification as merely rhetoric. Some even called the process purification. (e.g., Kim & Park, 2020; Mun, 2009, Yong, 2012). Scholars argued that it was more of a subjugation, as SV monks were placed under the leadership of MD monks. In any case, MD monks gained full legitimacy from the public, which justified the ouster of SV monks from key positions in all Buddhist organizations (e.g., Kim & Park, 2020; Mun, 2009).

These findings show how the conflict manifested in the lives of the monks and how it was symbolically resolved by 1962. My question concerns the role of the leading MD monks in this process. How did they use historical narratives to challenge and delegitimize SV monks?

MD Monks’ Historical Narratives to Delegitimize SV Monks

Table 4 presents selected quotes for each of the three narrative modes used by MD monks: reviving history, stigmatizing history, and invoking past leaders. I report on these modes by drawing upon the relevant literature.

Reviving history. The first mode of the historical narratives of MD monks sought to revive a period of Korean Buddhist history (the Joseon Dynasty: 1392–1897) that had been largely forgotten. By recounting this era, MD monks



Figure 1. MD monks on street march in Seoul, denouncing SV monks.

argued that meditation should be a sole historical tradition for all Korean Buddhist monks to follow. It challenged the service logic that emphasized the social contributions of monks (e.g., cultural and educational service). Monks had undertaken various tasks in social fields, including social enlightenment, public education, medical care, and humanitarian aid. MD monks' narratives were meant to define monks who actively engaged in such social activities as neglecting the main duty of a Buddhist monk.

Citing the forgotten history of the Joseon Dynasty, MD monks stated that the monks' present-day identity must correspond to that of those who lived in the Joseon Dynasty. For example, in 1949, MD monk J-K said the following:

The meditation tradition of Korea was entirely neglected because of the entry of Japanese Buddhism during colonial rule. We must redefine our identity ... We must look back on who we were and what we did before colonial rule ... In the Joseon Dynasty, we were meditation practitioners.

That year, MD monk K-C also stated:

We must remember the era [the Joseon Dynasty]. At the time, we were meditators who isolated ourselves to practice meditation in the deep mountains. Our duty was not to become politicians,

social workers, or educators ... Now, we must return to our original identity. We must go back to the mountains.

The Joseon Dynasty, which the monks J-K and K-C used to build their identity, followed the Confucian order. Ironically, it persecuted monks strictly. The dynasty legitimized only Confucian values like filial piety toward parents and patriotism for the country. Buddhist monks, however, were required to leave their families and the state to join monastic organizations. During the Joseon Dynasty, monks retreated even further into the mountains, fearing harsh persecution and social discomfort.

Paradoxically, this environment produced venerable meditators. They were able to refine their meditation techniques and passed on their legacy to their students. With these stories, MD monks emphasized the Joseon monks' devotion to the meditation tradition. They hoped to use the stories to justify the continuation of meditation. In an interview with MD monk J-I, he reported that:

At that time, Buddhism was in a terrible state. Many monks had to grow their hair. [Because cutting hair is highly contrary to the Confucian value of filial piety for parents.] People treated the monks as beggars ... Yet, they did not neglect their role as meditation practitioners. They maintained their identity as meditators

Table 4. Selected Quotes from the Historical Narratives of MD Monks.

Theoretical categories	Selected narrative quotes from MD monks	Source of the story	Purpose
Reviving history	<p>"We should inherit the meditation tradition from our history. It was disconnected during Japanese colonial rule. We must pass on the tradition to the next generations of monks."</p> <p>"Many monks were forced to live in a mountain hermitage at the time (Joseon Dynasty). No one supported their practice. However, because they did that, we still enjoy our legacy."</p> <p>"It seems clear to me that our time is disconnected from our history. We must put our disconnected identity together to retain our identity."</p>	Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910)	To justify that meditation practice is only a tradition of Korean Buddhism, which Korean Buddhist monks must follow.
Stigmatizing history	<p>"We lost our identity in the colonial era. What does it mean to be a monk? How can a monk have a wife? Monks who get married just follow Japanese Buddhism."</p> <p>"It is shameful that most monks were simply Japanized at the time. They got married just to cooperate with Japan. They (SV monks) say it is a matter of logics, yet it is not."</p> <p>"The colonial era certainly contaminated us. The conflict between two philosophies (two logics) is ultimately the conflict between the Korean meditative tradition and Japanese secular Buddhism. It is about who you want to stand between our tradition and the Japanese way of practicing Buddhism."</p>	Colonial era (1910–1945)	To transform elements of conflicting logics from technical issues to a new framing of nationalism versus colonial remains.
Invoking past leaders	<p>"The master monk N-J always encourages us to remain a meditator. His life proves the path. He spent his entire life deep in a mountain to truly concentrate. Now, no one wants to seek the path. Then, who are we following? What do we pass down to our fellow monks?"</p> <p>"The path we are taking is the path that our past monks took. They already proved that meditation is only the way that defines us."</p> <p>"The master monk Y-H realized that everything stems from one's mind. He took a noble path to be a meditator and gave up all opportunities to return to society. Why do you think he took this path? Curiosity motivated him to seek further knowledge. That is our heart. We lost that unfortunately."</p>	Past monks	To ensure new organizational vision by unifying people.

even in the worst situation. Sadly, this identity disappeared during colonial rule.

The difficulties encountered by monks during the Joseon Dynasty ironically helped MD monks develop effective narratives to solidify their identity as meditators. This narrative had been neglected during colonial rule. MD monks used the stories of Buddhism in the Joseon Dynasty to connect to their respective historical contexts. Zerubavel (2003) claimed that present-day actors use mnemonic bridging techniques, such as mnemonic pasting, to connect the past to the present.

The technique allows community members to view the past and present "as parts of an integrated whole" (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 37). When MD monks revived forgotten history, they sought to connect monks' identity in a mnemonic manner across past and present contexts.

Stigmatizing history. The second mode of historical narrative that MD monks used was the stigmatization of SV monks with the intention of reframing all the issues around the conflicts into nationalistic concerns. Stigmatization implies disgracing a certain group of people to prevent them from

gaining full moral and social acceptance (Crocker et al., 1998). By stigmatizing SV monks, MD monks tried to reshape Japanese colonial period into a stigma of Korean Buddhist history.

Walsh (1995, p. 281) defined a cognitive frame as “a mental template that individuals impose on an information environment to give it form and meaning.” Through stigmatization, MD monks sought to alter the cognitive frame of the audience to nationalism. Thus, whereas reviving history sought to mnemonically connect the identity of the monks in the pre-colonial era to their present historical context, stigmatization aimed to separate the colonial era from the present.

In one of the H-temple interviews, monk S-U recalled that “at the time, the monks who only practiced meditation (MD monks) associated a service provider identity with Japan.” MD monk M-W stated that “the strategy of meditation monks (MD monks) was to frame service provider monks (SV monks) as those who mindlessly cooperated with Japan.” The essence of this stigmatization was to transform the clash between two competing logics into a new frame of nationalism versus colonial remnants. In 1957, MD monk C-J argued:

Japanese colonial rule marked a humiliating period wherein Korean Buddhism disappeared completely. Buddhism was just a tool for Japanese rule ... The monks who were active at the time could not be considered monks.

MD monk Y-N stated:

Religion was treated as a very important colonial policy that exterminated the minds of Koreans in the 1920s. How can we view the influential monks of that time positively? Without a deal with Japan, the monks could not come out of mainstream society.

Another major aspect of stigmatization pertained to the question of whether monks were allowed to get married. This critically related to the monks’ morality and social acceptance of married monks. In 1946, MD monk R-B stated:

In the colonial era, many monks got married and had families. This was possible because they followed Japanese Buddhism and policy. However, this decision was not based on philosophical ideas. It was simply because monks wanted to have political power by following Japan. Thus, we must keep away from the products of that time. We must eliminate and step on them, and stand up to become true Buddhist monks.

Before Japanese colonization, the issue of monks being able to marry was not necessarily a matter of “nationalism versus colonial imperialism”. For example, in the *Theory of Reformation of Buddhism* published in 1913, monk Y-U wrote that:

Buddha reached liberalization by extinguishing all desire. He hoped that others could realize the vacuity of desire, but also knew that people are different and may need different ways of learning the truth ... If celibacy is just a rule or method, then we can remove the rule and take a different path to liberalization.

As monk Y-U noted, the central dispute concerned the ability to adopt more flexible ways of Buddhist practice in dealing with human nature. SV monks argued that monastic celibacy caused more sexual problems and that monks should live as members of a secular society rather than as hermits in the mountains. By stigmatizing SV monks as those who cooperated with Japan and reinterpreting marriage in the same vein, MD monks attempted to turn a legitimate philosophical debate on the possibility of marriage among monks into a dichotomous representation of nationalism and colonial imperialism.

Organizational historians conceptualize this framing process in different ways, such as *recasting* (Basque & Langley, 2018), *recontextualizing* (Hatch & Schultz, 2017), and *rememorizing* (Foster et al., 2011). A unique aspect of framing in my context arises from the historical setting, namely the colonial era. The narrative of this particular period almost always involved nationalism and stigmatization. For MD monks, the inclusion of elements of nationalism was an effective means of stigmatizing SV monks.

Invoking past leaders. MD monks’ third narrative mode was the evocation of past leaders. Whereas the revival and stigmatization of history imparted meaning to entire historical periods (i.e., the Joseon Dynasty and the colonial era), the evocation of past leaders focused on master monks’ life stories and legendary achievements in the past. MD monks carefully selected those whose stories could be used for their purposes of promulgating meditation. By invoking these master monks, MD monks claimed that all monks must inherit the meditative legacy of the past leaders.

MD monk S-K, for instance, recounted the legendary life stories of monk D-M as the core of his narratives. Monk D-M lived in the nineteenth century and led a meditative life pursuing a single question on a remote mountain. In the narratives of MD monk S-K, monk D-M’s legendary meditation practice is reflected in quotes such as “complete silence for a year,” “meditation for six consecutive days without sleeping or eating,” or “living alone on an isolated mountain for three years.” MD monk S-K used these anecdotes to emphasize the meditative spirit that he hoped his fellow monks would follow.

In the colonial period, MD monk S-C also used such legendary stories to connect monk D-M’s mysterious life to monastic authority. He argued:

The core of Buddhism that monk D-M always emphasized was to dig deeper into one’s own mind. As he showed, this is

achieved only by years of solitary meditation practice ... That path itself creates authority. We do not need to do anything more to build our authority. When we do our work well, the authority will emerge.

MD monk J-G referred to several stories of monk J-M:

Monk J-M was always treated as a beggar at the time. But no one believed that he was a beggar. This reaction originated from the fact that people saw him as the one who was purely committed to the truth ... I think we have lost that kind of devotion. Today, I am asking you if we have pure curiosity toward our minds.

In both the colonial and national reconstruction periods, MD monks retold the stories of monks J-M and D-M, reiterating that “meditation is the only single source of authority” (MD Monk D-S), “we lost the authority as we got closer to society” (MD Monk Y-R), and “we should return to the legacy that monks J-M and D-M left behind” (MD monk B-J). Invoking the stories of past monks helped fellow MD monks visualize their situation and realize why easy access to society may inadvertently desecrate the spirituality of meditation practice.

Past monks were revived in the MD monks’ narratives, which served to legitimize authority and evoke emotional resonance. Some scholars argued that the imprint of the founders and leaders leaves a sacred legacy that provides contemporary actors with a sense of legitimacy for the status quo, thereby preventing change (e.g., Kimberly & Bouchikhi, 1995). However, the invocation of leaders in this study showed that past leaders can be used to reconstruct the

present reality (see also Basque & Langley, 2018). It may thus fall on the present actor to use their legacy in reinforcing or subverting the status quo.

Narrative Mechanisms: Authority and Emotional Resonance

Thus far, I have reported how MD monks delegitimized SV logic, thereby facilitating institutional change and establishing the new religious order of Korean Buddhism. In the final phase of the analysis, I attempted to identify the mechanisms underlying these narratives, regarding whether each narrative targeted a specific audience (Foster et al., 2017). Table 5 presents the results.

Although it is difficult to capture audience demographics in detail, it is possible to determine whether the audience comprised internal members (i.e., monks) or external stakeholders (e.g., government, people from the local community, and the public) by analyzing data sources. For example, the main audience for Buddhist newspapers, temple magazines, and books were monks, whereas the audience for general newspapers, media, and public statements were broadly external stakeholders.

The analysis shows that audience for the second narrative strategy (stigmatizing history narratives) was mostly external, whereas that for the first and third strategies (reviving history and invoking past leaders narratives) were internal members. Of the 42 narratives that sought to revive history, 28 were directed at internal audiences (67%); of the 43 narratives that sought to stigmatize history, 37 were directed at

Table 5. Mechanisms of Narrating History by Audiences.

Three theoretical categories	Reviving history	Stigmatizing history	Invoking past leaders
Mechanisms	Emotional resonance	Authenticity	Emotional resonance
Main target audience	Internal audiences	External audiences	Internal audiences
Narration context			
<i>To internal audiences</i>			
Temple history books (6)	5	0	1
Temple magazines (28)	5	3	20
Buddhist newspaper A (9)	2	0	7
Buddhist newspaper B (22)	5	2	15
Conference reports (20)	8	0	12
Internal interview records (4)	3	1	0
Total internal audiences (89)	28	6	55
<i>To external audiences</i>			
Korean general newspaper A (39)	10	21	8
Korean general newspaper B (4)	0	4	0
Interview records for the public (7)	2	4	1
Local community records (7)	0	5	2
Declaratory statement to the public (4)	1	2	1
General books (2)	1	1	0
Total external audiences (63)	14	37	12
All sources Total (152)	42	43	67

external audiences (86%), and of the 67 narratives that aimed to invoke past leaders, 55 were directed at internal audiences (82%). The mechanisms of the narratives differed, based on the target audience. Whereas reviving history and invoking past leaders narratives evoked emotional resonance as an underlying mechanism to persuade audiences, the stigmatizing narratives emphasized the authority of tradition for the frame change. I elaborate on this in detail.

First, a distinct mechanism underlying the stigmatizing history narrative was to ensure historical authenticity, defined as “accurate and authentic representations of historical events and processes” (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016, p. 638). All 37 narratives in this regard were developed to offer specific descriptions of historical incidents that highlighted how SV monks contaminated traditional monastic identity. By focusing on the fact-based transmission of information, MD monks sought to inform external stakeholders on all that was happening in Buddhist society. For example, before MD monks promulgated the eight qualifying principles in 1955, a group of them proactively wrote articles for newspaper columns and books on the principles. Their writing specifically described how married monks cooperated with Japan (e.g., the centralized control system of temples) and how they used the power of the colonial ruler to eliminate traditions of Korean Buddhism (e.g., celibacy, Korean Seon Buddhism, and independent lineage of temples). An interesting observation here is that such details are absent from the other six narratives of the stigmatizing story targeted for internal audiences.

Second, a common motive for the narratives of reviving history and invoking past monks was to arouse an intense emotional response from the audience. For example, when MD monks presented the status of Joseon Dynasty Buddhism at the 1935 nationwide conference, fellow monks immediately expressed their views orally and wrote in temple journals. MD monk C-H, for example, said that “we need to learn more from the Joseon period to improve our present situation.” Monk G-J commented on the conference, saying: “monks were situated in a desperate condition at the time [Joseon period]. They were treated like beggars and bandits. They breathed just to survive.” The descriptions were powerful as if the audience had lived during the period. They used words such as “remind” and “sympathetic” to describe their emotions and sentiments. The expressions presented the audiences’ deep immersion into the stories.

The emotional immersion was more prominent in the narratives that invoked past leaders. In 1924, a senior MD monk B-J fervently stated:

What makes us so disappointed? What is truly frustrating to us? We must find the cause within ourselves, and not outside. We must purify our minds first. We must also abandon our negligence and greed. Look at monk D-M’s life. Imagine why he did not eat the food that believers donated and instead tried to

farm on his own. Imagine why he lived with one piece of cloth even in the winter. We have lost something in our minds. We should not forget monk D-M.

When fellow monks immersed themselves in such narratives of the leader MD monks, they experienced strong emotional resonance. Whereas the stigmatizing narratives focused on providing information to external stakeholders, the reviving and invoking ones were about dramatic storytelling and emotion.

Discussion

In this study, I sought to discover how leaders (in this case, Buddhist monks) used historical narratives to delegitimize a dominant logic, thus facilitating change. By analyzing rich historical records and interviews with monks, I found three modes of historical narratives that Buddhist monks construct from the past. The findings have several implications for a historical account of institutional logics (Ocasio et al., 2016; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Wang et al., 2019) and for the literature on historical narratives that conceptualize history as a narrative source to reshape the present reality (Gill et al., 2018; Suddaby et al., 2010, 2014, 2020; Wadhvani et al., 2018). I discuss these implications at the intersection of history, institution, and religion.

Mechanisms of Historical Narratives in Facilitating Institutional Change

First, this study contributes to the historical narrative literature by showing how the mechanisms of narratives work for different audiences. The audience analysis showed that MD monks made a greater effort to provide authentic information to external stakeholders. Hatch and Schultz (2017) highlighted the importance of authenticity in explaining how the Carlsberg Group historicized organizational legacy, with the Latin phrase *Semper Ardens* (“always burning” in English) carved above the corporate doorway. In the historicizing process, the corporate narrative “necessitated storytelling structures that capture convincing and believable accounts of the past” (Suddaby & Foster, 2017, p. 33). When stories are perceived as less authentic, narratives encourage the audiences to engage in fact-checking, which elicits skepticism from the audience about the veracity of the overall narrative content (Decker et al., 2021; Hatch & Schultz, 2017). Not only does this study provide vivid empirical evidence for such findings, it also shows that historical authenticity is likely more important for external audiences.

The second area of the contributions concerns the process of delegitimizing a dominant logic. Compared to the “legitimacy-as-property” perspective that defines legitimacy as property, resource, and asset, Suddaby et al. (2017)

suggested the legitimacy-as-process view that defines legitimacy as “the product of an ongoing *process* of social negotiation involving multiple participants” (p. 459). From this perspective, the purposeful efforts of leaders are key to understanding the process of legitimization and delegitimization of a logic (Suddaby et al., 2017). This study shows that historical narratives can be used proactively to delegitimize a dominant logic.

Specifically, this study reveals how leaders use historical narratives to stigmatize and delegitimize the bearers of the dominant logic. The ultimate purpose of stigmatizing narratives was to identify SV monks (i.e., the bearers of service logic) with colonial remnants. They argued that most organizational practices, belief systems, and interpretations of Buddhist philosophy that SV monks chose to legitimize were simply a colonial legacy. Consequently, the narrative audience’s understanding of change shifted from a technical interpretation (tradition versus change) to a normative issue (nationalism versus colonization). It implies an essential frame shift that MD monks strategically employed to contextualize a given situation in their favor. In a sense, MD monks saw SV monks as inheritors of colonized Buddhism. From their perspective, change was essential for Korean Buddhism to eliminate the remnants of colonization.

Third, this study contributes to the institutional literature by illuminating how historical narratives can be a facilitating source of field-level change (Hoffman, 1999; Suddaby et al., 2014; Washington, 2004; Zietsma et al., 2017). An organizational field is defined as “a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). In the definition, the field is considered a socioeconomic structure in which organizations participate to produce and exchange products and services (Lounsbury, 2007; Scott, 2014). Changes in the field take place when formal institutional regulations and interventions, such as industry regulation and deregulation, are legislated (Delmas & Tokat, 2005; Delmas et al., 2007).

However, this study shows how a field, the Buddhist organizational field, can be transformed by the dynamics of conflicting logics. These dynamics emerge when field participants share collective and multiple memories inherent in field history (Coraiola et al., 2018). As this study shows, leaders in such fields can initiate collective movement at the field level by systematically using historical narratives. This study suggests that even historical narratives can act as important facilitators of change.

Religious Logic in the Buddhist Context

Finally, this study broadly joins one of the most prominent discussions in organizational studies at the intersection of religion and institution (Gümüşay, 2020; Gümüşay et al.,

2020; Tracey, 2012). The two constructs, religion and institution, have long been theorized and integrated into institutional analyses (Bartunek, 1984; Mutch, 2018; Thornton et al., 2012). When Friedland and Alford (1991) developed the idea of institutional logic, they argued that Western society is an inter-institutional system of market, democracy, family, state, and religion (Christianity). Following Friedland and Alford (1991), Thornton and Ocasio (1999, p. 804, italics added) defined institutional logics as “socially constructed, *historical patterns* of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules.” Religion has been considered particularly important because it shapes moral norms at the societal level to determine how actors think and behave (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

A compelling theoretical implication, here, is that religious logic is almost homogeneously conceptualized in institutional research (Gümüşay, 2020). Yet, religion encompasses multiple central features, belief systems, and historical origins that are hard to reduce to a single ideal logic (Bartunek, 1984). For example, Gümüşay (2020, p. 864) noted that most institutional analyses of religion are still biased with “a strong Western focus” (i.e., Christianity). He argued that existing research tends to reduce all elements of religion to an ideal type of societal logic, such as the faith or spiritual logic in Christian contexts, to enquire how the logic is integrated, hybridized, or reconciled with other societal-level logics. Consistent with Gümüşay’s (2020) concern, this study suggests that such a research question may obscure the dynamic nature of religious logic.

In Buddhist monastic communities across East and Southeast Asia, 2,500 years of Buddhist history have been inscribed in a Buddhist organizational field as symbolic heritage, monastic rule, and ritual in Buddhist temples. These traditions were passed down to generations of monks as sacred. However, interpretations of traditions have evolved with different paths and in different regions over time. This study sheds light on the diversity by documenting that a religious logic, at least in the Buddhist context, is more complex than its Christian counterpart. It establishes the existence of two different religious logics in a Buddhist organizational field—meditation and service logic—as historically manifested in two distinct roots of Buddhist philosophies.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings and theoretical implications of this study have several limitations that indicate directions for future research. The first is related to the methodological aspect of the study. The purpose of this study was neither to represent how the narratives accurately capture historical reality nor to objectively extract factual descriptions of past events often with computerized text analysis techniques. It aimed to capture coherent storytelling sources that constitute a narrative by categorizing seemingly random narratives into several thematic patterns.

This approach is aligned with the interpretive approach to narratives (sensemaking tool) that I took in this study (see Brown et al., 2008; Currie & Brown, 2003). Thus, the findings of this study are limited to revealing how history can be malleable and manipulable in a context of institutional change, which does not mean that all narratives captured in this study are based on factual representations of the past.

Second, there are other ways to interpret the narratives and historical contexts of this study. For example, the timing of the narratives seems important, given that most MD monks' narratives were found in a certain period between the post-colonial government's official declaration (1954) and symbolic unification (1962). Future research may chronologically analyze the timings of the narratives to link them to important historical events. For example, within a designated period of observation, one may be able to examine how important field-level changes lead to the leaders' historical narratives and how these narratives trigger subsequent field-level changes over time.

Third, future research may focus on the nature of religious logic, especially at the intersection of religion, institution, and market. One may investigate whether various elements of a religion are compatible with market logic. Some features of religion may be incompatible with market logic, whereas others are more easily hybridized (Gümüşay et al., 2020; see also Thornton et al., 2012, p. 103–111). In Buddhism, economic transactions were considered taboo, as stated in the ancient Buddhist moral precept, “do not buy and sell” (Keown, 1991, p. 26). In contrast, transactions were encouraged at one point in history, as society viewed Buddhist temples as safe community banks where people could deposit their money with trust. Thus, the relationship between the market and Buddhism evolved dynamically (Swearer, 2010). However, this evolution is not merely about the compatibility between the market and Buddhism, but rather about how monks, people, and society interpret the core ideas of Buddhist philosophy and the role of Buddhist monks. This aspect is open for further investigation and can possibly provide context-specific insights.

Conclusion

This study investigated dramatic institutional change that took place during the modern history of Korean Buddhism. The findings show how various elements of Korean Buddhist history were reinterpreted, manipulated, and reproduced through the narratives of present-day actors. On the one hand, leaders strategically select multiple elements of history, used them as narratives, and systematically narrate them to facilitate change. On the other hand, their historical narratives reshaped the audiences' pre-existing value system, which, in turn, drove them to rethink the dominant religious ideology they believed. Overall, this study revealed

both the sensegiving and sensemaking process of historical narratives in a unique historical context.

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Note

1. Liberation is understood as a noble spiritual state that renounces all senses of worldly desire, action, gratification, and bias, whereas mercy emphasizes unconditional devotion to others (Keown, 1991).

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