

Buddhist Transformation of the Body through Korean Image Consecration and Death Ritual

By Joey Beckerman

Advised by Mark Graham and Madonna Hettinger

Intercarnation

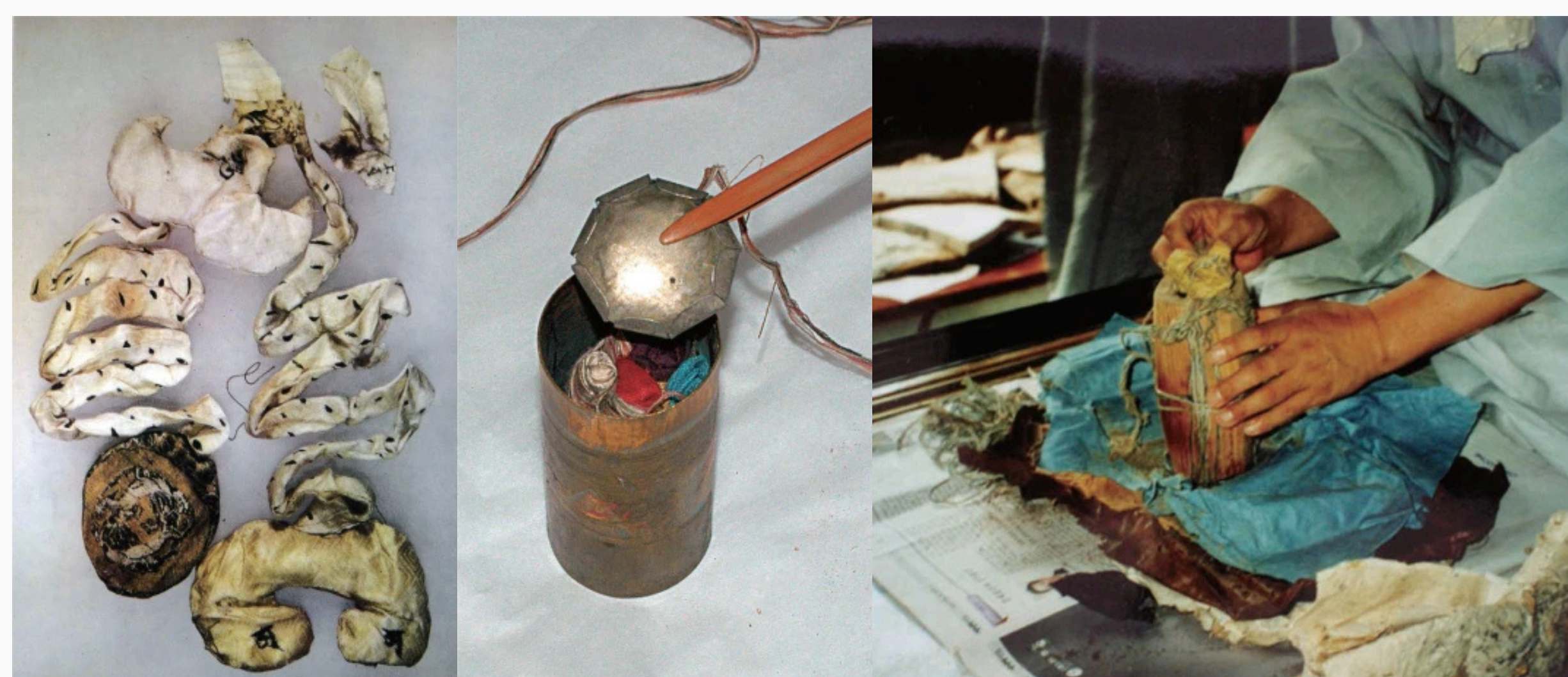
- Intercarnation is a term developed by theologian Catherine Keller
- It refers to the relational connections between two bodies, that form and become part of the body's meaning
- Her work is concerned with religious bodily experience, and ... helped me think about ritual in this project.



“The reciprocity of the viewer and the viewed becomes the incarnational field, the intercarnation, in which the relationship of the body of the image and the body contemplating it activates what we may call a non-separable difference.”

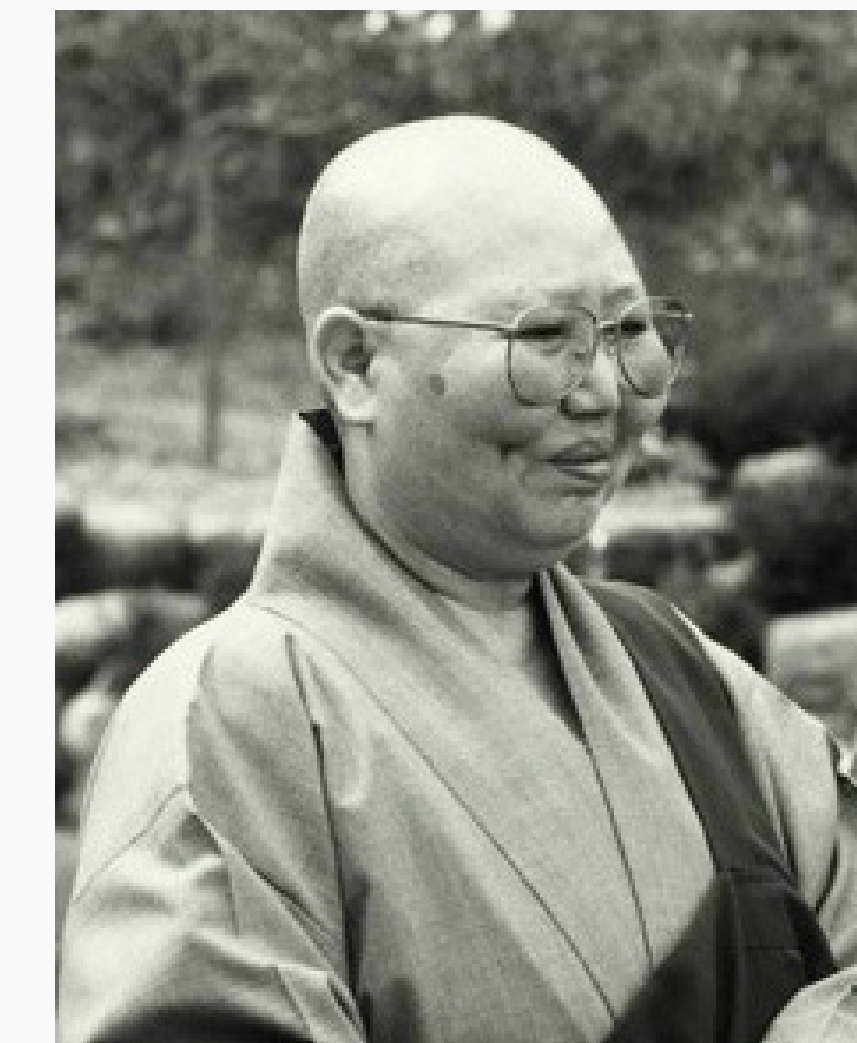
“Enlivening the Buddha”

- Bokjang (or pokchang) refers to a Korean Buddhist image consecration ritual, specifically the ritual installation of objects inside a statue or painting.
- The purpose is to transform that image into a living instance of the bodhisattva that it depicts.
- The development of this practice is related to practices involving śarīra, or bodily relics. The term is also used to refer to textual relics.



Daehaeng Kun Sunim

- Daehaeng Kun Sunim was a Seon Buddhist nun who lived from 1927 to 2012.
- She established the Hanmaum Seon Center in 1972. Hanmaum refers to her ideal of the “one mind”, and she encourages her community to rely on their own inherent Buddha-nature through daily practice.
- By 2015, fifteen branch temples had been established within Korea and an additional ten centers had opened overseas.



- Daeheng's community maintains her presence through ritual practice, the temple's spaces, textual record of her teachings, and collective memory.



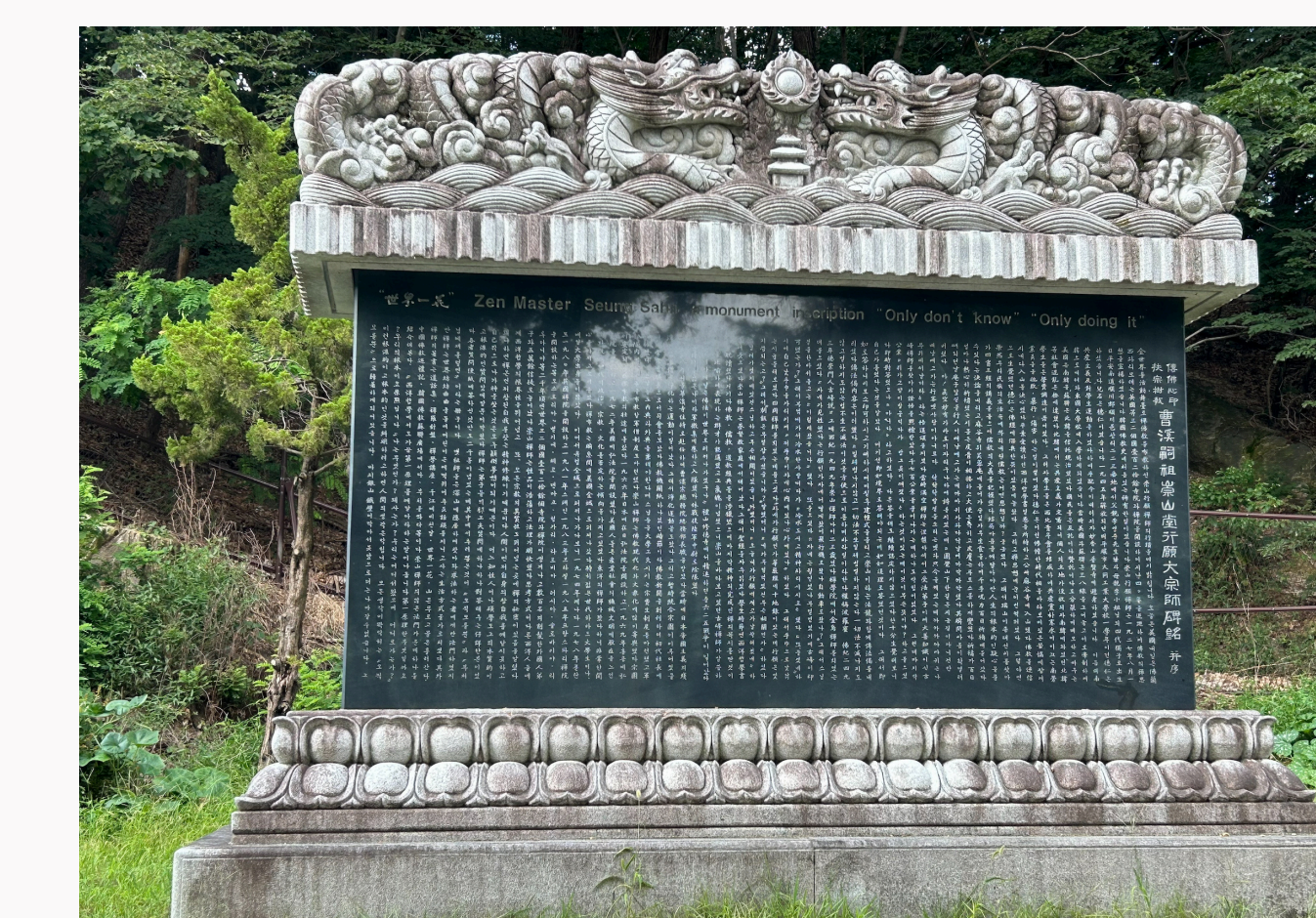
- A statue of her was installed at the center in 2020, which is an unusual form of memorial.
- The statue is very reminiscent of other Buddhist imagery, and is an important space representing Daehaeng's presence and her teachings at the center.

Substitute Bodies

- This term was first used by Bernard Faure in his book about Zen Buddhism, and refers to texts, corpses, portraits, and icons that serve as instances of the Buddha's presence.
- Substitute bodies do not just ‘represent’ an absent body, but refers to presence being generated through ritual.



- This term has been used to think about contact relics, and the use of clothing inside consecrated images.
- It is also useful to use when thinking about non-traditional forms of sacrifice, especially in Seon tradition.



Funerary Ritual

- The Buddha's funeral serves as a point of reference that many rituals have developed from.
- After the Buddha's cremation, bodily relics emerged from his ashes. The transformation of his body marks the passage from mortality to nirvana.
- In Seon Buddhism, monastic funerals resemble the depiction in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*.
- Changes in funerary practice over Korean history altered how the corpse was understood. The body of the deceased became an object of reverence, and in some cases functioned as a kind of image.

image citations:

<https://www.ijkaa.org/v.7/0/60/120?view=pubreader#!po=41.6667>

<https://wakeupandlaugh.com/>