



## *Chogye Zen*



This is the Chogye Administrative Headquarters in Seoul, where I was made the First American International Buddhist teacher. I must have been interviewed by five of the highest ranking administrative monks of the order, and another ten monks lower down in the food chain.

There was a lot of political infighting for control of the order, with the old guard, appointed by the Japanese during WWII, being pushed out by the nationalist and reformist new guys, such as Seung Sahn. At times, there were

armed guards patrolling Chogye Sa's grounds after some threat or another had been made.

This is a bit unfair, but funny. Below are some news photos of monks fighting for control of Chogye Sa in downtown Seoul where I came most every day. This is the head temple of the entire 2,000 temple Chogye order.

I did meet one extraordinary monk, Seung Sahn-Nim (No relation to my Seung Sahn Soen Sa), who was the abbot of a small temple in Seoul. I felt he was the

real deal, but that was just a hunch, since I did not speak Korean and he did not speak English and my interpreter knew less English than I knew Korean.

I hardly ever saw any animals when I was in Seoul, except small dogs running free around the temples; it was wall to wall people, cars and concrete. I got lost once when staying at Seung Sahn's temple above, and wandered for hours amongst at least 9,000,000 Koreans, unable to find someone who spoke English. When I did get back, the abbott had an American style lunch ready for me, with fried potatoes. That's class. Normally, if you miss a meal in a temple, you miss a meal.

Below is the official propaganda out of their aptly named, Propaganda Office:

Korean Buddhism includes 28 sects officially and all sects are joined in the Assembly of the Council of Buddhist Orders. Among the 28 orders, the Jogye (American's refer to this as Chogye) Order is the largest.

The Jogye Order includes 2,000 temples, 15,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, and as of 1997, there were about 8.1 million active, registered lay members and countless followers more loosely affiliated. Also, it consists of 25 Buddhist head temples (Buddhist dioceses), and each Buddhist diocese has a head temple (monastery) and branch hermitages.

About 800 monasteries of the Jogye Order are traditional monasteries, and have a history of several hundred to 1,000 years. More than 90% of traditional old monasteries belong to the Jogye Order.

The Jogye Order has followed the tradition of practice and active propagation, the education of lay Buddhists, and various forms of social welfare. The Jogye Order is also concerned with environmental problems related to the environment of its monasteries. Therefore, the Jogye Order, based on the Buddhist ethic of respect for all life forms, concerns itself with environmental problems related to development and destruction of nature. Besides these activities, the Jogye Order has a great number of organizations of lay Buddhists which are learning and practicing the Buddha's teachings. They are a positive and pure force in society.

The Jogye Order has grown and become reinvigorated in the last twenty years and its weekly newspaper Pulgyo Shinmun is read nationwide. Monks are assigned to the military to serve as Buddhist chaplains, and teachers have been dispatched to centers overseas in United States (that would be me), Japan, China including Hong Kong, Australia and Europe. Korea also has a Buddhist radio station BBS-FM and cable TV station BTN-TV that function in collaboration with the Jogye Order and other Buddhist organization.

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For those of you who speak Korean, you can find info about my ordination [here](#), in Pulgyo Shinmun; this is the main propaganda publication of the Chogye Order.

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## Fighting Monks in 1998



Just outside of the courtyard, Chogye-Sa, Seoul.

I believe this was the 1998 battle which made news around the world. Below is Seung Sahn's discussion about it to his students.

### Seung Sahn's explanation of the fighting monks:



*An excerpt from a talk given by Zen Master Seung Sahn on December 3, 1998 to the students beginning the ninety-day winter retreat at our school's temples in Korea.*

**Q:** I want to ask you about the fighting at Chogye Sah Temple. You always talk about putting everything down, but on the television news we see pictures of Korean monks fighting with each other at Chogye Sah Temple in Seoul, the head temple of

Korean Buddhism. Why are they fighting?

**Zen Master Seung Sahn:** A long time ago in Korea a famous book appeared which predicted the fate of our country. The book said, "When true monks do not live in the temples anymore, only outside, [laughter] then it's the end of the world!" So, that means it is almost the end of our world.

Many religions are nowadays saying it's the "end of the world." That means there are too many human beings down here! Everybody understands: in 1945 there were two billion people in the whole world. Now, only fifty years later, there are over five billion people! All these consciousnesses come from where? All this is from animal consciousness. So today there is a lot of fighting everywhere--just like animals. In the old days--east or west, it didn't matter--

people understood correct human being, correct parent, son and daughter, correct situation, condition and relationship. But now many people don't understand correct situation, correct function, correct relationship.

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