Japan Review 37 (2022): 51–75

Shaku Unshō in Korea: The Buddhist Precepts and Colonialism in Modern East Asia

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In this article, I will examine the engagement of two precept-upholding monks, Shaku Unshō and his disciple, Tanaka Seijun, with the notion of "Korean Buddhism." Disaffected by the decadence surrounding Japanese Buddhism, in 1906 Unshō and Seijun traveled to Korea, seeking an ideal Buddhism in what became Japan's new protectorate after the Russo-Japanese War.

Existing scholarship on Japanese Buddhism has emphasized its disregard for the precepts. Meanwhile, post-World War II Korean Buddhists sought to reform Korean Buddhism by associating it with priests who observed monastic precepts. Japanese Buddhism and Korean Buddhism were therefore associated with breaking and adhering to the precepts, respectively, and the boundaries between them were discursively produced during Japan's colonization of Korea.

The article both details the origins and complicates the simple contrast which is often drawn between these two Buddhisms. I argue that Unshō and Seijun used the idea of Buddhism's supposed degeneracy in Korea to redirect the criticism of their contemporaries in Japan. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, the precept-oriented vision associated with Unshō, in particular, had made these priests object of deep skepticism in Japan, but Korea provided a new stage for the realization of their ideal Buddhism. Unshō and Seijun's deployment of narratives regarding reformation and regeneration around Buddhism demonstrates how modern religious dynamics in East Asia revolved around these precepts.

Keywords: modern Japanese Buddhism, Tanaka Seijun, transnational religions in Korea and Japan, precepts-revival movement, true dharma, modern esoteric Buddhism, Buddhist reformation

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* This work was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows (19J21102). This article is a revised and expanded version of Kameyama 2022. The process of translating and editing the Japanese version into English benefitted from the invaluable support provided by Dylan Toda and Nate Gallant. I also would like to express my gratitude for the valuable comments and suggestions provided by the anonymous reviewers.

The Japanese phrase *Nihon bukkyō* 日本仏教 (Japanese Buddhism) combines a term referring to the nation-state of Japan (*Nihon*) with a modern compound, consisting of the characters for "Buddha" and "teachings," that is used to refer to "Buddhism" (*bukkyō*). It is a recent invention. From the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912) onwards the singularity of "Japanese Buddhism"—a Buddhism particular to one country—would be articulated through a discourse that highlighted the dichotomy between East and West and drew upon the newly translated categories of "science," "civilization," "philosophy," and "religion."[1] This new Japanese Buddhism was knitted from multiple, intertwined threads by Japan's Buddhists and their allies, and was influenced by both broader domestic developments shaping the modern study of Buddhism in Japan, and the intimidating scrutiny the new concept was subjected to by European and American scholarship. One particularly vital thread in the resultant tapestry was Japanese encounters with Buddhism throughout Asia, which, as Richard Jaffe, Erik Schicketanz, and others have pointed out in recent years, played a significant role in the development of notions of a particularly Japanese Buddhism.[2]

This article will tease out the importance of this Asian encounter by examining how two Shingon monks, Shaku Unshō 釈雲照 (1827–1909) and his disciple, Tanaka Seijun 田中清純 (1876–1941), responded to "Korean Buddhism." Unshō and Seijun's encounter with Buddhism in Korea was mediated by this burgeoning discourse on a specifically "Japanese" variant, as well as being crucially shaped by the efforts of the Japanese state to colonize Korea after the Russo-Japanese War. Unshō was a major figure in modern Japan's monastic precept-revival movement who, unlike many of the monastics in Japan at the time, made maintenance of the traditional precepts central to his authority; Seijun was his young disciple who accompanied and vigorously supported Unshō's missionary activities, keeping detailed records of them. In foregrounding Unshō and Seijun's engagement with Korean Buddhism, I will show how their idealized vision of precept practice in fact became a tool with which to draw new boundaries between "authentic" and "corrupted" Buddhism, and contributed to the articulation of a specifically Japanese Buddhism during the colonial expansion of the Japanese Empire.

Existing scholarship on Japanese Buddhism has emphasized a disregard of the precepts as a defining feature of the Buddhism that developed in Japan. Most scholars today would posit that a perception of the existence of differences from the monastic precepts characteristic of Buddhism elsewhere in Asia has played a significant role in discourses surrounding a specifically Japanese Buddhism. However, the assertion that freedom from monastic precepts was positive for Buddhism in Japan only appears in the modern period, before accelerating after 1900.[3] This discourse on monastic precepts in modern Japan has inherently transnational referents that do not fit neatly within the framework of national history, as will be demonstrated below.

The same can be said for the formation of a discourse on Korean Buddhism (*Kankoku bukkyō* 韓国仏教/*Chōsen bukkyō* 朝鮮仏教), the contemporary self-perception of which places great store in the rejection of meat-eating and marriage. According to the historian

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[1] See Klautau 2011; Klautau 2012.

[2] See Schicketanz 2016 and Jaffe 2019.

[3] As seen in the writings of the historian of Buddhism Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929). Orion Klautau emphasizes that the effort to articulate the specificity of Japanese Buddhism in these terms was in full swing by the second half of the first decade of the twentieth century. See Klautau 2012, pp. 83–117.

Je Jum-suk 諸点淑, "Korean Buddhism" was also called "Buddhism in the mountains" before the colonial period. In other words, it emphasized priests leaving the secular world in order to strictly observe the precepts and meditate deep in the mountains. However, under colonial rule, Korean Buddhism transformed into an "urban Buddhism," in which the majority of priests married. After the liberation of South Korea in 1945, a campaign to drive out Buddhism perceived as pro-Japanese took place under the slogan of "removing the residue of the Japanese empire." Postwar Korean Buddhists sought to reform Korean Buddhism by once again associating it with those "pure priests" who had observed the monastic precepts, transforming them into symbols of anti-Japanese resistance.[4]

Kim Taehoon 金泰勳 notes that Korean Buddhism is "a category of modern Buddhism that emerged as an academic term and a religious institution" in an effort to articulate Korean national identity "in the context of the modern empire of Japan."[5] Specifically, he claims that the notion of Korean Buddhism was invented by the Japanese, was only used by Korean Buddhists themselves after 1912, and thus that the idea of Korean Buddhism reflected the gaze of Japanese Buddhists.[6] Japanese Buddhism and Korean Buddhism were therefore associated with breaking and adhering to the precepts, respectively, and it is generally understood that the boundaries between these two Buddhisms were discursively produced within academia over the course of Japan's colonization of Korea.[7]

This article challenges the simple binary represented by these two Buddhisms through its analysis of the writings of Unshō and Seijun. I argue that Unshō and Seijun, as precept-oriented Japanese Buddhists, used the idea of Buddhism's supposed "degeneracy" in Korea to redirect criticism from their Japanese contemporaries. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the clerical-oriented vision associated with Unshō, in particular, had become a marginal presence and object of deep skepticism in Japan, but Korea provided a new stage for the realization of ideal Buddhism. Unshō and Seijun's deployment of narratives regarding the need for "reformation" and "regeneration" in religion, and their use of the logic of self/other in their interaction with Buddhist traditions on the Korean Peninsula, also demonstrates how modern Japanese religious discourse was articulated as a set of transnational issues.

In an important study, Hwansoo Kim has shown that Unshō's mission in Korea aimed at realizing an ideal Buddhism through the revival of monastic precepts.[8] He argues that, in this sense, Unshō must be distinguished from those Japanese Buddhists who destroyed Korean Buddhism by introducing meat-eating, marriage, and the non-observance of the precepts. It is significant that Unshō also thought that Buddhism in the Japan of his time was decadent and should be rejected. However, as I will argue, the positions of these two precept-oriented priests were also greatly colored by their imperial gaze, which meant they saw even Korean sangha members living in precept-based communities in the mountains as in need of correction.

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[4] Je 2018, pp. 7–8.

[5] Kim 2014, p. 295.

[6] Kim 2014, pp. 302–305.

[7] To give one example, Kawase Takaya 川瀬貴也 argues how, in a 1927 book on Joseon dynasty Buddhism, Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨 (1878–1967) of Keijō Imperial University presupposed that Japanese Buddhism was advanced in doctrinal studies while Korean Buddhism focused on upholding the precepts, see Kawase 2009, p. 169.

[8] Kim reexamines Japanese Buddhist proselytizing discourse, and shows that Unshō and his party had a diverse set of aims and interests: the expansion of sectarian power, resistance to Christianity, the conversion of Koreans, and the realization of a Buddhist ideal in Korea. He also argues that Unshō placed more emphasis on the establishment of a Buddhist ideal than such proselytizing priests as Katō Bunkyō 加藤文教, who had internalized a "civilizing mission." See Kim 2012, pp. 96–106.

The first section of the article will outline the place of the precepts in late-Meiji Buddhism and how they figured in Shaku Unshō's understanding of Japanese Buddhism. The next section provides a general overview of the missionary activities of the Shingon sect on the Korean Peninsula, and details Unshō's specific role within the rapidly shifting political and religious situation after the Russo-Japanese War, as the Korean Empire became a protectorate of the Japanese imperial state. The third section will examine Tanaka Seijun's travelogue, which details his journey with Unshō and offers a window into the criticisms and logic of renewal around the relationship between Japanese monastics and Korean Buddhism in the colonial state. The fourth section will look in more detail at the dialogue between Unshō and his Korean interlocutors, and investigate how his encounter with new monastic traditions in Korea brought him a new understanding of the "corruption" regarding the practice of the Buddhist precepts. In the final section, I will elaborate on Unshō's views of Korean Buddhist reform to delve into how his revivalist agenda was shaped by his entangled perceptions of Korean and Japanese Buddhism. The article demonstrates how the intertwined threads of Korean Buddhism and the Buddhist precepts provided a canvas upon which Unshō and Seijun were able to project their ideal Japanese Buddhism.

The Buddhist Precepts in the Modern Period and Shaku Unshō

The Buddhist monastic precepts in Japan have a complicated history. A popular perception of early modern Buddhist decadence (*kinsei bukkyō daraku ron* 近世仏教堕落論) held that priests in the Edo 江戸 period (1603–1868), protected by the temple-parishioner system (*terauke seido* 寺請制度), deviated from the true spirit of Buddhism, and became mired in decadence and corruption. This understanding was elevated to historical fact in the work of historian Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 (1877–1955). However, recent years have seen both the deconstruction of this narrative, and greater attention paid to precept revival movements during the early modern period. For example, Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, in his survey of the place of precepts in early modern Buddhism, including the debate over the Tendai 天台 sect's Anraku precepts (*Anraku ritsu* 安楽律) and the work of monks such as Tokumon Fujaku 徳門普寂 (1707–1781), argues that one characteristic of Edo-period monastic precept-revival thought was a return to Buddhism's starting point of Śākyamuni via a "complete pan-Asian set of precepts (*gusokukai* 具足戒)."[9]

We should keep in mind that in the Edo period, the precept practices of priests were not solely motivated by sectarian-derived notions of discipline. The requirement for Buddhist monks to observe the precepts was also informed by the shogunate's secular control of the populace, which was mediated by temple regulations (*jiin hatto* 寺院法度). As a general rule, everything from names and behavior to hair length and clothes functioned as a sign of social status. In the early modern Japanese social order, Buddhist renunciates had the social status of "monk," and precept transgressions resulted in expulsion from religious organizations and sociopolitical exile from shogunal regions.

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[9] Sueki 2010, pp. 114–115. Regarding the precept revival movement in the early modern period, see Ueda 1976 and Ueda 1977. A more recent work on the subject is Nishimura 2008.

The situation altered dramatically after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, as the new government set about dismantling the early modern social status system under the slogan "equality of the four classes" (*shimin byōdō* 四民平等). Pressured by the persecution of Buddhism in the early Meiji years (referred to as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈), priests often adopted apologetic narratives to defend the dharma (*gohō* 護法), embracing the charge of clerical decadence and the need for sweeping reform. To retain state protection, many became involved in creating a trans-sectarian movement aimed at persuading the government of their determination to reform the clergy (*sōfū sasshin* 僧風刷新).[10]

This was the context within which Shaku Unshō launched his radical and wide-ranging movement calling for a revival of monastic disciplinary practices. Unshō was born in 1827 in Izumo Province (present-day Shimane Prefecture) as the fourth son of Watanabe Chūzaemon 渡辺忠左衛門.[11] At the age of ten, he was ordained as a Kogi Shingon 古義真言 (Ancient Rites Shingon) priest and spent the first half of his life devoted to traditional Buddhist training. Following the Meiji government's issuing of the "Edict Distinguishing Kami and Buddhas" (*Shinbutsu hanzenrei* 神仏判然令) in 1868, he began to protest the persecution of Buddhism. In addition to his role in founding the League of United Buddhist Sects, he petitioned the Meiji government. Unshō's "Petition to the Council of State on Sweeping Away the Evils of the Buddhist Clergy" (*Sōhei issen no kanpu kenpakusho* 僧弊一洗ノ官符建白書) called for clerical reform centered on the precepts, highlighting important connections between the observance of the monastic precepts, the imperial household, and Buddhism.

Unshō's subsequent activism won him many backers from outside Buddhist institutions. These included the sword master Yamaoka Tesshū 山岡鉄舟 (1836–1888), bureaucrat Aoki Teizō 青木貞三 (1858–1889), Sawayanagi Masatarō 澤柳政太郎 (1865–1927), an educator who subsequently became the first president of Tohoku Imperial University, and the Imperial Princes Kuni-no-miya Asahiko 久邇宮朝彦親王 (1824–1891) and Komatsu-no-miya Akihito 小松宮彰仁親王 (1846–1903). With their support, Unshō launched the Society for the Ten Virtuous Precepts (Jūzenkai 十善会) in Kyoto in December 1883. These "ten virtuous precepts" (*jūzenkai* 十善戒) were for all seven types of Buddhist disciples (*shichishū* 七衆), including laypeople and renunciates. Famously, they had been advocated for by the Edo-era Shingon priest, Jiun Onkō 慈雲飲光 (1718–1805), a frequent reference point for Unshō. The society ministered to laypeople and asserted its importance in nationalistic terms, swearing to protect Japan's national polity and worship Japan's gods.

Nevertheless, the efforts of Unshō and his supporters to promote the precepts as a means of revitalizing Shingon Buddhism in Japan and its relationship with the state ended in failure. At a meeting of all the Shingon sects (*Shingonshū taisei kaigi* 真言宗大成会議) in 1884, Unshō's precept-centered approach foundered due to the rise of the doctrinal studies faction, which sought to modernize the sect through a revival of scholastic Buddhism.

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[10] The Jōdo sect's Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誡 (1809–1888) would play a major role with Unshō in founding of the League of United Buddhist Sects (Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗同徳会盟), which sought to "wash away the old evils of one's sect" (*jishū kyūhei issen* 自宗旧弊一洗).

[11] Biographical material on Shaku Unshō includes Yoshida 1902, written while Unshō was alive, and the first volume of Kusanagi's three-volume work (1913). Kusanagi had been Unshō's disciple and later became the chief officer (*kanchō* 管長) of the Daikakuji 大覚寺 school.

This served as the impetus for Unshō to instead develop a supra-sectarian movement. At the suggestion of the aforementioned Aoki Teizō, Unshō moved his center of operations to Tokyo, where he founded an independent lineage at a new temple established by his followers—Shinhasedera 新長谷寺 in Mejirodai 目白台. In 1887, he sent his nephew, Shaku Kōnen 釈興然 (1849–1924), to what was then British Ceylon to study Theravada Buddhism. The following year, he launched the Monastic Precepts School (Kairitsu Gakkō 戒律学校), which would later be renamed the Mejiro Monastic Academy (Mejiro Sōen 目白僧園). Finally, in 1889, he relaunched the Society for the Ten Virtuous Precepts with the cooperation of Sawayanagi Masatarō, and began publishing its journal, *Jūzen hōkutsu* 十善宝窟.

Unshō thus initiated a variety of projects that sought the revival of the monastic precepts. In this, the "true dharma" (*shōbō* 正法), a concept which he inherited from Jiun, served as his ideological touchstone. "True dharma" in this context refers both to the orthodox teachings transmitted by Śākyamuni, and to the "age of the true dharma" found in Buddhism's theory of time, namely, the period lasting five hundred (or one thousand) years after Śākyamuni's death in which Buddhist doctrines, practices, and enlightenment were all accessible in their original form. This initial period is followed by the semblance dharma (*zōhō* 像法) and then the latter dharma (*mappō* 末法). The former lasts for one thousand years, in which teachings and practice remain, while the latter retains teachings and continues for ten thousand years. Fundamental to Unshō's ideal of the "true dharma" was recreating the sangha of Śākyamuni's time through a revival of monastic precepts. He also thought that priests' observance of monastic discipline, and the spread of Buddhist teachings, such as the results of good and evil karma of the past, present, and future (*sansei zen'aku inga* 三世善悪因果), would lead to the realization of an ideal social order.

While Unshō's precept revival movement acquired support from his lay followers, it faced significant resistance in the rapidly shifting religious environment of Meiji Japan. This was particularly true in the latter half of the 1890s, with the spread of views that came to accept priests eating meat and marrying. According to Richard Jaffe, the background to this was both the question of modernizing intra-sectarian institutions, and a practical problem: sons born into "legal marriages" after the Council of State order permitting clerical marriage were beginning to assume head priest positions at branch temples. While the focus of discussions concerning meat-eating and clerical marriage had been on doctrine in the early and mid-Meiji periods, they now shifted to the practical issues of institutional politics.[12]

By the first decade of the twentieth century, younger Japanese Buddhists had come to see Unshō's precept-revival movement as conservative and behind the times. Representative of this view was the New Buddhism Movement (Shin Bukkyō Undō 新仏教運動), which emerged around the turn of the century following the formation of the Fraternity of New Buddhists (Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai 新仏教徒同志会) by Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (1871–1933), Takashima Beihō 高嶋米峰 (1875–1949), and others. This movement has been hailed as the apex of modern Japanese Buddhism due to its progressive nature. Its members, primarily laypeople, criticized temple organizations and the conservative worlds of priests, even predicting their extinction. New Buddhists were particularly harsh in their criticism of Unshō's precept-revival movement as representative of "old Buddhism" (*kyūbukkyō* 旧仏教), an unnatural and abnormal asceticism that ran counter to human nature. In response,

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[12] Jaffe 2001, p. 189.

Unshō and his supporters referred to New Buddhists as "heavenly demons" and "demon armies" aiming to destroy the unchanging essence of Buddhism's teachings. The divide between them quickly became unbridgeable. Unshō, disaffected with the Japanese Buddhist world, would set sail for the Korean Peninsula in search of an opportunity to realize his idealized Buddhist reformation, and to seek institutional allies for his aspirational view of Buddhism.

Shingon Proselytization in Korea, and Unshō's Visit

Under Korea's Joseon dynasty, which adopted a pro-Confucian, anti-Buddhist stance, Buddhist priests were relegated to the lowly position of "commoners" (Kr. *jeongmin* 賤民). This has often been taken as evidence of Buddhism's decline in the early modern period. However, as Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 points out, regardless of the position of priests in society, it was during this period that the religious beliefs and practices associated with Korean Buddhism spread throughout the populace.[13] Kim Yong-tae 金龍泰 argues that the rejection of a role for Korean Buddhism by the Japanese during the colonial period was crucial for the emergence of the view that Korean Buddhism had "declined."[14]

The intrusion of "Japanese" Buddhism into the peninsula is generally associated with the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War. Especially significant in this regard was the decision of the Korean cabinet to lift the ban on Korean priests from entering Hanseong 漢城 (Seoul; Jp. Kanjō), made after the Nichiren 日蓮 sect priest Sano Zenrei 佐野前励 (1859–1912) petitioned Prime Minister Kim Hongjip 金弘集 (1842–1896) in March 1895, following the conclusion of the First Sino-Japanese War.[15] Sano's petition was received favorably and even with hope by some Korean Buddhists.[16] Around the same time, the Jōdo 浄土 sect was extending its influence in Korea, primarily through social projects based in educational reform, and other Japanese sects rapidly followed them onto the peninsula, especially following the 1896 anti-Japanese "Righteous Armies of Elumi" conflict. [17] However, at this initial stage, the activities of Unshō's Shingon sect were primarily focused on the Japanese population in Korea—when the sect founded the Daishidō 大師堂 hall in Pusan in 1898, it was reported that there were no Korean followers in attendance.[18]

In 1897, Korea changed its name to the "Great Korean Empire" (Kr. Daehanjeguk 大韓帝国) to show to the outside world that it was an autonomous, independent state, and Kojong 高宗 (1852–1919) became emperor. Subsequently, the Korean government implemented a series of new religious policies, establishing a religious affairs office (Kr. Jongmuwon 宗務院), and Korean Buddhism underwent institutional reforms modeled on Japan's chief abbot (*kanchō* 管長) system. Korean priests and temples, formerly situated outside the realm of politics, were now being put under state administration. However, after imperial Korea became a protectorate of Japan following the Russo-Japanese War, the situation grew turbulent, as Japanese Buddhist sects competed to annex Korean temples as branch temples.[19] This competition would intensify after the resident-general issued regulations regarding religious propagation in November 1906 (*Shūkyō no senpu ni kansuru kisoku* 宗教の宣布に関する規則; ordinance no. 45).

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[13] Kamata 1987, p. 28.

[14] Kim 2017, p. 106.

[15] The Kim cabinet was heavily influenced by the Japanese government.

[16] Je 2019, pp. 524–525.

[17] See Nakanishi 2013, pp. 107–164.

[18] Kankoku fukyō ippan 1899.

Unshō's arrival in Korea at the end of June 1906 was considered a landmark event by those in Korea affiliated with the Shingon sect, a fact overlooked in earlier research. Shakuo Kyokubō 釈尾旭邦, chief of the Shingon Sect's First Dharma Office in Daegu (Tegu Shingonshū Kaikyōjo 大邱真言宗開教所), lamented that year that "our Shingon sect" had not sent even one missionary, unlike the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺, Higashi Honganji 東本願寺, and Jōdo sects, all of which were working to "expand their propagation here in Korea." Shakuo was particularly alarmed by the visit of the Ōtani school missionary Okumura Enshin 奥村円心 (1843–1913) to Tongdosa 通度寺, noting "If [Okumura] is able to save Korean priests, the opening act in Korean Buddhism's development will be in [this] teacher's hands." However, he celebrated the "recent delightful event" of the "eminent Shingon priest" Unshō coming to the Daishidō as he headed home from his tour of Manchuria and Korea.[20] Aoyagi Nanmei notes that when Unshō visited Korea, he visited the "Temporary Mt. Kōya Missionary Facility" (*Kōyasan kari fukyō jo* 高野山仮布教所) established in Hanseong, and was invited to perform the completion ceremony and name the temple.[21] Clearly, Unshō's mission to Korea was meant to coordinate with the Shingon sect's advancement into the Korean Peninsula after the Russo-Japanese War.

Nonetheless, there was a large gap between the precept-promoting Unshō and those in Korea affiliated with the Shingon sect. While one purpose of Unshō's mission to Korea was to establish a local monastic academy and "revive" Korean Buddhism through a renewed emphasis on the precepts, Shakuo instead suggested using Unshō's reputation to establish a Shingon sect propagation facility in Hanseong, cautioning that "in Hanseong, a precept-oriented Mejiro branch will be of no use at all, whereas an ordinary Shingon-sect missionary center would be."[22] The direction of Shingon proselytization and Unshō's emphasis on the precepts were deemed by Shakuo to be incompatible.

Unshō arrived in Japan's new protectorate of Korea at a time when the Shingon sect's missionary machine was lagging behind that of other Japanese Buddhist organizations. While Unshō visited entirely in a private capacity, his stay was seen on the ground as an excellent opportunity to expand Shingon influence, and he would play an active role in this effort. However, as illustrated by Shakuo's remarks, there was a gulf between Unshō and the Shingon organization regarding the proper approach to propagation. Unshō aimed to lay the groundwork for a revitalization of Korean Buddhism largely anchored in a revival of the Buddhist precepts, a proposal which had earlier resulted in total failure in Japan, despite concerted efforts within the Japanese Buddhist world. On the other hand, the Shingon Buddhists in Korea exercised constant vigilance over Unshō's precepts-oriented activities and his initiatives. The promulgation of particular Shingon teachings constituted the subject of their considerable interest rather than adherence to the precepts among Korean monks.

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[19] In February 1907, the Ōtani 大谷 sect received permission from the resident-general to place Korean temples under its protection, while the Sōtō 曹洞 sect drew up plans to annex Korea's powerful Won 圓 sect. See Kim 2012, pp. 184–185.

[20] Shakuo 1906a. On Shakuo Kyokubō (Shunjō 春芿), see Abe 1934, pp. 602–604.

[21] Aoyagi 1911, p. 148.

[22] Shakuo 1906c.

In the next section, I will consider the perceptions of Unshō and his party towards local Korean Buddhism by focusing on the activities of his disciple, Tanaka Seijun, who authored a detailed travelogue about his journey with Unshō.

Redirecting Criticism: Tanaka Seijun's Critique of Korean Buddhist Monks

On 8 May 1906, Unshō, Tanaka Seijun, and Unshō's other disciples, Shinkai 真戒, Sen'yū 宣猷, and Junkai 順海, were seen off by supporters as they departed from Tokyo's Shinbashi on a trip to memorialize the deceased on both sides of the Russo-Japanese War. The party arrived back in Japan in November of the same year. In 1907, Seijun published *Senjō no hana: Unshō risshi Man Kan junshakushi* 戦場の花: 雲照律師満韓巡錫誌 (Flower of the battlefield: A record of precept master Unshō's tour of Manchuria and Korea). Seijun's travelogue is rich in detail about the group's itinerary and activities as they traveled from Japan to Manchuria and then on to the Korean Peninsula. Its eighth and ninth chapters, which respectively cover the first and second half of their stay in Korea, are filled with Seijun's somewhat sentimental observations regarding Korean Buddhism.[23] These provide useful material for considering the orientation of Unshō and his disciples toward religious practices and institutions there.

One of the primary goals of the mission was to hold memorial services for the war dead in the Russo-Japanese War. During the war, Unshō had encouraged the citizenry to support the military effort through esoteric rituals and prayers for the submission of the enemy country.[24] Seijun would recall that in late March 1906, Unshō had already written his *Tokan yōshi* 渡韓要旨 (Outline of my trip to Korea) in preparation for the tour.[25] However, Miura Gorō 三浦梧楼 (1847–1926) and other supporters opposed Unshō's tour, on account of his old age, so it was decided that the young Seijun would go with him.[26]

Unshō and his party first traveled through Okayama and Fukuoka, giving sermons and performing ceremonies conferring lay precepts (*jukaie* 授戒会) in various localities. From Sasebo 佐世保 in Nagasaki, they headed to the port of Dalian. After disembarking, they conducted memorials at battle sites in Lüshun 旅順, Shahe 沙河, Mukden (Ch. Fengtian 奉天; now Shenyang 瀋陽), and elsewhere. They then proceeded to Korea, now occupied by Japan. After arriving in Hanseong on 28 June 1906, Unshō and his party spent 124 days in Yongsan at Shin'entei 心遠亭, secondary residence of the imperial Korean government's "hired foreigner" engineer, Inoue Yoshifumi 井上宜文.[27] During this time, Unshō's party, including Seijun, visited famous Korean temples such as Tongdosa and Haeinsa 海印寺 and interacted with local priests.

Tongdosa, one of Korea's three major Buddhist temples, is a large complex located on the outskirts of Pusan, and today belongs to the Jogye order (Kr. Jogyejong

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[23] Seijun would subsequently make a name for himself in the Shingon sect's relationship with China; see Kōmoto 2012.

[24] As part of this initiative, Unshō also launched a nationwide campaign which spiritually mobilized lay followers to organize "Associations for One Million Recitations of the Mantra of Light" (*Kōmyō shingon hyakumanben kō* 光明真言百万遍講) for a Japanese victory.

[25] Unshō 1914c.

[26] *Shinkō* 1934, p. 178. Seijun would later accompany Unshō on his teaching tour around Japan, from Karafuto 樺太 (Sakhalin) in the north to Kyushu in the south. In this sense, Seijun was the disciple most responsible for supporting Unshō's activities in his later years.

[27] For detailed information on Inoue, see Kim 2019.

曹渓宗). *Senjō no hana* describes their visit to this temple in a section entitled "Ryōjusan Tsūdoji sankeiki" 霊鷲山通度寺参詣記. Seijun had previously written that Korea is Japanese Buddhism's "motherland," and praised Buddhism's past efflorescence there with reference to Beopheung 法興 of Silla and Munjong 文宗 of Goryeo, but also criticized the current Korean policy of favoring Confucianism at the expense of Buddhism:

> Now, temples of the eightfold path merely sit empty and decay in the deep shadows of twilight breezes and falling leaves. The eight-thousand priests, not even having the right to proselytize and carry out funerals, and unable to endure the abuse of being seen as sub-human, create separate communities in completely different worlds deep in the quiet of the mountains. They are indifferent to the rise and fall of the nation's cultural vitality, and to deviations in the nation's moral life.[28]

However, Seijun's encounter with the Tongdosa priests moderates this judgment, and on viewing Tongdosa's priest halls and quarters, he depicts them as creating a landscape resembling "[the Shingon headquarters of] Kōya 高野 and [the Tendai headquarters of] Eizan 叡山 of old."[29] For Seijun, the priests at Tongdosa, a temple "cloistered away in an entirely separate world and detached from the defilement of society," generally practice the precepts.

Nevertheless, their practice was not something meriting unreserved praise for: "The precepts, meditation, and the recitation of the Buddha's name are just limited to formal adherence to old customs," and lack "deep investigation of Buddhist principles and inquiry into the distinctions between sects." Seijun also notes that "aside from Buddhas, sect founders, and people with great religious belief aside, there is nothing as pathetic for normal people as being bound by primitive, Buddhism-like precepts." While for Unshō, Korean priests lived in "fear of government officials," and lack "social knowledge," and "vitality, hope, and vigor," in Seijun's eyes, Korean priests were evidently backward, fettered by "primitive Buddhism-like precepts," and practicing the precepts in form only.[30]

Next, let us turn to Seijun's record of their visit to Haeinsa. Haeinsa is one of Korea's most important temples, famous for its "Tripiṭaka Koreana" on which the Taishō Tripiṭaka is based. At the time, it was for all intents and purposes under the aegis of the Shin sect's Ōtani school. Seijun did not mention that point, but likens the temple's founders, Sun-eung 順応 and Yi-jeong 利貞, to his own sect's founder, Kūkai 空海 (774–835), before describing the "relationship between religion and the tall, deep mountains" as follows:

> If priests hold that an ascetic lifestyle is to be revered in every respect, then they should live in such a place. This is because the surrounding environment will naturally make them live an ascetic, a so-called "pure," life. However, an ascetic lifestyle of strictly endeavoring to entirely overcome the self's desire is [only] one early step in ego expression (*jiga hatsugen* 自我発現). It is not the goal of life. Humans naturally lean toward pleasant feelings. This impedes social progress and ego expression … This is

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[28] Tanaka 1907, pp. 109–110.

[29] Tanaka 1907, p. 115.

[30] Tanaka 1907, p. 116.

> because the content of the ego is both the fundamental substance of self-restraint and pleasure.[31]

Seijun, for whom the ego comprised self-restraint and pleasure, asserts that Korean priests' precept practice was an "ascetic lifestyle which strictly endeavors to overcome and suppress the self's desires," and criticized it as nothing more than "one step in the early stage of ego expression." In other words, Seijun is advocating for a more moderate, middle path based on stringent self-restraint, and sees pleasure as harmful for ego expression and social progress. He clearly distinguishes the ideal religious life that is centered and proper from what he sees as the qualitatively inferior lives of the Korean priests around him.

Seijun based his claim of Korean Buddhism's devolution not only on precept practice. While "Goryeo-era Buddha-dharma," prospered to a degree comparable to the time of Japan's Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (r. 724–749), with its capital of Gaeseong 開城 like Nara, Korean Buddhism's flourishing led to priests indulging in luxurious lifestyles under royal protection, producing a great deal of corruption. The oppressive policies of the Joseon dynasty were thus an inevitable development. According to Seijun, the same problem arose "in our country" during the reign of Emperor Kanmu 桓武天皇, but thanks to two figures—Kūkai and Saichō 最澄 (767–822)—the situation did not deteriorate to the same extent.[32] In this way, while emphasizing the role of Shingon in the history of Japanese Buddhism, Seijun tries to identify a logic to the perceived decadence and decline of its Korean counterpart.

At the same time, Seijun reserves his highest praise for the "commoner" (*heiminteki* 平民的) Shin and Jōdo sects, which suffered less damage than Shingon and Tendai during the persecution of Buddhism around the time of the Meiji Restoration. He criticizes Korean Buddhism for lacking such a "pure and simple, commoner-like" nature.[33] We should note that his use of "commoners" as a metric by which to criticize Buddhism for its "royal and aristocratic" religious beliefs was common in histories of Buddhism written in Japan at this time. Mori Shinnosuke 森新之介 emphasizes how the "commoner/aristocrat" schema spread through Japanese society from the mid to late Meiji period. Katō Totsudō 加藤咄堂 (1870–1949) and other Buddhists contrasted, as historical fact, the Buddhism of "aristocrats," unsuitable for general practice by the populace, with the Buddhism of "commoners." Heian Buddhism (Shingon, Tendai) came to be seen as the former, while the narrative of "commoner-like Buddhism" widely took root as a Buddhism that transcended specific group interests and met the demands of the time.[34] In the case of Seijun, he attempts to find this negative aristocratic nature in Korean Buddhism and Shingon, which had both suffered significant blows due to anti-Buddhist persecution, all while emphasizing the status of the Shin sect as "commoner" Buddhism.

In summary, Seijun developed a vigorous critique of Korean Buddhism, in which his criticisms were quite similar to those which New Buddhists directed at Unshō's emphasis on the precepts.[35] The relationship between self-denial and the ego, the problem of formalism in precept practice, and the issue of aristocratic Buddhism had all been used to target

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[31] Tanaka 1907, pp. 129–130.
[32] Tanaka 1907, p. 130.
[33] Tanaka 1907, p. 131.
[34] Mori 2012, pp. 125–126.
[35] See Kameyama 2019.

Unshō in Japan. In this sense, the Korean Buddhism that Seijun saw was similar to "old Buddhism," the primary point of reference for which was Japanese Buddhism of the past.

The political scientist Ogawara Masamichi 小川原正道 points out that Japanese Buddhists' often used the terms *suitai* 衰頽 (decline) and *teitai* 停滞 (stagnation) to describe the Buddhism they encountered in other Asian countries.[36] Japanese Buddhist criticism of other Asian Buddhisms as formalism dates back to the internal reformist struggles among late Meiji Buddhists to sweep away "Old Buddhism," which was subsequently applied to denounce Buddhism's "decline" and "decadence" outside Japan.[37] Seijun's account displays a similar tendency to disregard formalism in the religious practice of other Asian Buddhisms. Despite a lack of historical materials showing Seijun's exact relationship to the New Buddhist Movement, it is clear that he applied a similar framework, which regarded the precepts as an inessential, formal part of Buddhism, as a means to "other" Korean Buddhism and Korean monks' practice of the precepts.[38] In this way, Korean Buddhism served as a mirror through which to offload criticism directed at his master, Unshō. His "recognition" of decadence and degeneracy in Korean precept practice allowed him to position himself as someone who had overcome these very ills and was now an authentic practitioner of the Buddhist discipline, which reflected Japanese Buddhism's intertwined understanding of self and other. Seijun sought to transfer oppressive narratives, which for the most part "progressive" Japanese Buddhists used against precept-upholding monks like Unshō, onto the Korean Buddhists. In Seijun's narrative, adherence to the Buddhist precepts and isolation from the social sphere served as a crucial reference point to identify whether a form of Buddhism is progressive or not. Precept-observation was a recurrent issue also in the Meiji Buddhist world, and Seijun's critical view of monasticism in Korean Buddhism reflected the newly established self-image of Japanese Buddhism as progressive, open to commoners, closely tied to social engagement, and emancipated from primitive formalism in the Buddhist precepts.

Unshō at Haeinsa: Korean Buddhism and the Monastic Precepts

In this section, I will now consider exchanges that took place between Unshō and Korean priests. As mentioned above, in Japan, Unshō became a symbol of "Old Buddhism," and bore the brunt of criticism by the New Buddhists that his formalism and asceticism was behind the times. The previous section has shown how his disciple Seijun redirected this critique towards Korean Buddhism in his account of Unshō's travels on the peninsula. Here I will elaborate on how Unshō's own understanding of Korean Buddhism took shape through his dialogue with Buddhists on the ground there.

Before reaching Korea and interacting with priests there, Unshō had criticized deficiencies he saw in Korean Buddhism.[39] For example, he wrote that "the purpose of this trip to Korea is to choose a key place in Korea to establish a monastic academy, and then, first and foremost, working to wash away the corrupt ways of Buddhist priests with a focus on the precepts."[40] However, Unshō's perception gradually shifted as he talked with Korean priests on the ground. For example, according to *Rokudai shinpō*'s 六大新報 report on Unshō's July 1906 trip to Tongdosa, he is full of praise for the way in which Korean priests live in separate communities in the mountains apart from society. To his surprise, Unshō found them immersed in serious practice, such as meditation, "absorption in which one chants the name of the Buddha" (*nenbutsu zanmai* 念仏三昧), precept observance, and discussion of traditional Buddhist logic (*rikutsu* 理屈). This led him to reconsider Japanese society's tendency to ridicule and scorn Korean Buddhists as though they were, in his terms, outcasts (*eta* 穢多). [41]

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[36] Ogawara 2010, p. x.

[37] Le Xing has pointed to a similar development in her analysis of the Buddhist Asianism of Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞 (1876–1948), who traveled to India and China during the Taishō 大正 period (1912–1926); Le 2019, p. 114.

[38] It should be noted that Seijun had attended the Philosophy Academy, a citadel of the New Buddhists.

[39] Unshō had been in contact with Korean priests previously. After the First Sino-Japanese War, the Nichiren priest Sano Zenrei brought back nineteen students (including three priests) to study in Japan, and Pak Nangok 朴蘭谷 and Hyeon Sangsun 玄尚順 visited Unshō. See Nakanishi 2013, pp. 98–99.

While Unshō softened his attitude towards Korean priests through his visits to the mountain communities, he maintained his sense of ethnic hierarchy in speaking about Korean people more generally, and never took issue with Japan's imperial project there. The sermons Unshō delivered to Japanese settlers throughout the Korean Peninsula confirm this. For example, at a ceremony in July 1906 to confer the three sets of purifying precepts (*sanju jōkai* 三聚浄戒), held for approximately one hundred and thirty lay Japanese in Incheon 仁川, Unshō's talk, according to Seijun, emphasized receipt of the precepts as a way to make people "joyfully submit" to "our empire's sphere of influence." Unshō states that despite "receiving the blessings of civilization every day" from Japan, "[Korean people] appear to not joyfully submit and enjoy [Japanese governance], comparatively speaking." Unshō insists that their reluctance is caused by Korean "ignorance and failure to discuss what is reasonable and unreasonable," and that their attitude to Japanese authority depends greatly on the "history of the [Korean] state," and "the public and private virtue of [you] immigrants."[42] Unshō then states that "I implore you to apply [the precepts] in everyday life. Without doubt, it will help with the imperialization [of Korea]. This is the practice of living bodhisattvas."[43]

Unshō thus positions the Japanese people newly in receipt of the precepts as bodhisattvas who will save and guide Koreans. Here we find the classic settler-colonialist gaze. Unshō conferred the precepts on Japanese settlers, and exhorted that through their example Koreans should be brought to appreciate the Japanese empire.

As already noted, Unshō and his party stayed at Shin'entei in Yongsan from late June to late October. During this time, he attempted to engage in dialogue with local priests to better understand Buddhism on the ground. Notably, in early August he had conversations at Haeinsa with four Korean priests: Gyeong-myeong 景明, Eungheo 應虛, Yongban 龍般, and Manheo 万虛. They used written literary Chinese to communicate, and the record of their conversations has survived.

The first conversation with Haeinsa's Gyeong-myeong on 2 August focused entirely on sectarian consciousness and precept practice in Korean Buddhism.[44] Unshō inquired whether Korean Buddhism held to "the system established by the Buddha's precepts" in the *Four-Part Vinaya*, an influential *Vinaya* text in the East Asian monastic tradition. In response, Gyeong-myeong replied that Korean Buddhism, comprising of only sutra study, chanting, and meditation "sects" (*shū* 宗), does not have a "precepts sect" (*risshū* 律宗) nor any notions of periods of decline such as *mappō,* and that practitioners of the precepts do not faithfully maintain "the system established by the Buddha's precepts."[45]

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[40] Unshō 1914c, p. 87.

[41] Shakuo 1906b, p. 5.

[42] Tanaka 1907, p. 104.

[43] Tanaka 1907, pp. 104–105.

[44] Japanese Buddhists proselytizing in China also relied on "sect", central to Japanese Buddhism, to understand Buddhism elsewhere, see Schicketanz 2016, p. 25; Schicketanz 2017, pp. 281–300.

Gyeong-myeong's answer seems to have greatly interested Unshō, who then explained that Japanese Buddhism is divided into the sects of Kegon 華厳, Tendai 天台, Shingon, Hossō 法相, Sanron 三論, and Nenbutsu 念仏, and inquired whether such sects' tenants were separate or mixed in Korean Buddhism. Gyeong-myeong replied that while some priests adopt Jeondae 天台 (Jp. Tendai) as their teaching, there are others "who adopt mixed teachings."[46] This reply shows that the concept of "sect" emphasized by Japanese Buddhists served as a common ground for discussion, which is hardly surprising given that Haeinsa was in the process of becoming a branch of the Ōtani school. Gyeong-myeong's response indicates an internalization of, or at least an ability to deploy, this sectarian vocabulary. Pointing to the lack of an independent precepts sect, Gyeong-myeong goes on to explain that Korean Buddhism lacks the distinctions of "the system established by the Buddha's precepts."[47]

Unshō then asked about the distinction between the ten novice precepts and the two hundred and fifty full monastic precepts. Gyeong-myeong replied: "The precepts proclaim the three activities [of word, thought, and deed] and govern the six senses. The myriads of bodhisattvas are enlightened by them. However, the *Platform Sutra* preaches, 'With the mind universally [the same], [why] labor to maintain the precepts? With direct practice, what use is it to practice meditation?'"[48] Thus, while Gyeong-Myeong had earlier stated that monks in Korea do not follow the precepts and that he sees this as a sign of degeneration, here he seems to say that outward adherence to the precepts does not matter so much, as the mind is more important. While here there appears to be a gap in their conversation, likely due to linguistic limitations, it is clear that this reply was contrary to Unshō's expectations. Unshō responded that even if there is no distinction between sentient beings and buddhas in principle (i.e., buddha-nature) in light of "reason" (*ri* 理) as encompassed by "all phenomena of the ten realms" (*jikkai manbō* 十界万法), there is a definite distinction between enlightenment and delusion, and Buddhas and sentient beings, in the dimension of practice and reality (*ji* 事). He added that Gyeong-myeong's understanding of Buddhist training was not that held by ordinary people and novice practitioners.[49] Gyeong-myeong's response was thus to greatly influence Unshō's perceptions of Korean priests regarding their supposedly degenerate fixation on an original buddha-nature.

This first day of conversation between Unshō and Gyeong-myeong saw Korean priests' precept adherence became entangled with the concept of "sect," and the relationship between "mind" and practice. However, the focal point of the following day's conversation was on how Unshō and the Korean priests could work together and reform contemporary Buddhism in Japan and Korea. Yongban, one of the participants, asked Unshō about the purpose of his visit to Korea. Lamenting "the gradual decay of the true teachings," Unshō said that if there was a Korean priest who could serve as his teacher—someone who "cultivated, understood, and practiced the three disciplines of precepts, meditation, and wisdom"—he would follow him.[50] In response, another of the Korean participants, Eungheo, replied that while many Japanese Buddhists "have the ability to attain Buddhahood," Korean Buddhism "now is declining greatly because it is destitute, and there are none with superior capacities." Moreover, Eungheo added, even if a "great founder of a school" appeared, the people would not respect him, and he would go into hiding.[51]

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[45] Unshō 1914h, pp. 194–195.
[46] Unshō 1914h, p. 195.
[47] Unshō 1914h, p. 196.
[48] McRae 2000, pp. 40–41.
[49] Unshō 1914h, p. 196.

Overall, the Korean Buddhist priests participating in the dialogue adopted a laudatory attitude toward an increasingly powerful Japanese Buddhism, and disparaged the state of Korean Buddhism. However, Unshō took issue with this characterization. Indeed, he replied that even in "my country," there is "nothing resembling the venerable custom of respecting the buddhas and the patriarchs." There was also a lack of suitable human resources, and "only the presumptuous and superficial New Buddhists remain." Unshō then proposed that Eungheo and the others revive "the Great Dharma" with him to resist the New Buddhists.[52] However, the Korean priests showed little enthusiasm for his proposal. They apologized for a lack of sufficient capacity to support such an effort, and noted that Unshō should lead such an undertaking. While Unshō's attempts to create an alliance ostensibly failed, the dialogue between Unshō and the Korean clerics shows how a Japanese domestic conflict also unfolded as a transnational issue.

The dialogue reproduced above demonstrates that Unshō observed Korean Buddhism, engaged in dialogue with its priests, and formed an outline for Buddhism's reform. After his Haeinsa meetings, he developed a concrete plan to reform Korean Buddhism, which he submitted, along with a petition, to Emperor Kojong. These proposals will be detailed in the next section, but here I want to discuss how Unshō's conversations at Haeinsa reflect his conceptualization of Korean Buddhism. Unshō traveled in search of an idealized form of Buddhism, but he also envisioned Korean Buddhism as something that needed to be reformed and guided by its Japanese counterparts. Unshō, as a missionary monk of the Japanese Empire, objectified Korean Buddhism and priests by viewing them through this somewhat dissonant set of assumptions. In his petition, Unshō was critical of Korean Buddhists' failure to observe the precepts, and Gyeong-myeong's observations appear to have solidified Unshō's impression of Korean Buddhism. Unshō wrote:

> I have often heard Greater Korea's priests say that with the mind being the precepts and universally [the same], why must one cultivate the practice of meditation? [However] these are the precepts maintained by bodhisattvas on the higher level of the Mahayana precepts and not the precepts maintained by ordinary priests. Therefore, the World-Honored One [Śākyamuni Buddha] instructs and warns that, "These are conceited persons, followers of the Deva-māra." It must be said that they only know Buddha-nature in part and in principle, and do not yet know Buddha-nature as [acquired through] practice. Furthermore, when it comes to discussing the rules of

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[50] Unshō 1914h, p. 197.
[51] Unshō 1914h, p. 198.
[52] Unshō 1914h, p. 198.

> receiving the precepts, they thus just barely know the terms of "three categories [of the pure precepts]" and the "full precepts," and are yet ignorant of there being distinctions of the precepts for [each of] the seven types of Buddhist practitioners.[53]

In this way, Unshō criticizes Gyeong-myeong's reduction of precept practice to an issue of the mind, and generalizes this as a common misapprehension among Korean priests.

We should also note that Unshō considered this a problem relevant to all Mahayana Buddhisms, and thus one shared by both Korean and Japanese Buddhism. In his "Bukkyō kairyō chakushu junjo shikō" 仏教改良着手順序私考 ("My ideas on procedures for starting to reform Buddhism"), he laments that the true dharma has been weakened due to the "latter [dharma] age's degenerate custom" of emphasizing the "discipline of practicing wisdom in speech and listening" and the three disciplines (*sangaku* 三学) as being in conflict.[54] In the same text, he writes as an example of the way people overemphasize original Buddha-nature that, "Buddhism's essence is cultivating the mind. Therefore, with the mind universally [the same], what use is it to practice meditation? With practice being direct, why labor to maintain the precepts?" Given the context, these statements are clearly based on the words of Gyeong-myeong.[55] We can see that Unshō understood that Korean and Japanese Buddhism shared similar issues.

Unshō rejected forms of Buddhism that overemphasized the discipline of wisdom, but not necessarily the role of the mind more generally in Buddhism. This is clear elsewhere in this text, where he asks: "Why would one try to do things with people who are ignorant of the [actual nature of] precepts and meditation [and just practice them in form]? Those who study the precepts overemphasize upholding the precepts in deed (*jikai* 事戒), and do not know anything of upholding the precepts in principle (*rikai* 理戒)." According to Unshō, scholars of the *Vinaya*, following the precepts in form only, neglect to uphold them in principle through contemplation, something that is based on an understanding of original Buddha-nature.[56] Unshō observed that the three disciplines of morality, meditation, and wisdom complement each other, and that while they are centered on the precepts, it is crucial to maintain a balance between them in practice.[57]

As we have seen, Unshō went to Korea shortly after the beginning of Japan's occupation, and engaged with Buddhist communities on the ground, although his relationship to the colonial missionary activities being undertaken by other Japanese Buddhist institutions is unclear. Tongdosa and Haeinsa, which he visited, were both in the process of being incorporated as branch temples by the Jōdo sect and the Shin sect's Ōtani school, respectively, but Unshō's reaction to this process of forced subsumption is not extant in his or his disciples' writings.

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[53] Unshō 1914a, pp. 77–78.

[54] Unshō 1914e.

[55] Unshō 1914e, p. 94.

[56] *Jikai* is also referred to as *zuisōgai* 随相戒. This refers to precepts with concrete instructions, such as the five precepts to be observed by laypeople (*gokai* 五戒), the eight precepts to be observed by strict lay Buddhists on certain days (*hassaikai* 八斎戒), the ten novice precepts, and the complete precepts. *Jikai* forms a contrasting set with *rikai*. See Asada 2014, p. 194.

[57] Unshō 1914e, p. 94.

Unshō's activities in colonial Korea shared ambitions with those of Seijun. On the one hand, he sought out collaborators to counter New Buddhism's ascendancy in Japan. On the other, as shown in his *Tokan yōshi*, he wanted to simultaneously occupy a leading role in reforming a "declining" Korean Buddhism, which was itself based on his image of the history of Japanese Buddhism. Despite their divergence in assessing the contemporary settings surrounding Japanese Buddhism, both agreed on the fundamental need for a substantial renovation of how Korean Buddhist monks adhered to the precepts.

In the next section, I will delve further into the concept of the "true dharma," which bridged his understanding of what was at stake in Buddhism's history in Japan, the notion of Japanese Buddhism, and the movement to reform Buddhism in colonial Korea.

A Land of the "True Dharma": Shaku Unshō's Views of Korean Buddhist Reform

In this section, I will elaborate on Unshō's views of Korean Buddhist reform. For Unshō, who had dreamed of reforming Japanese Buddhism, devoted his life to the revival of the precepts, and through his efforts become increasingly isolated in the Japanese Buddhist world, the encounter with Korean Buddhism may be regarded as providing renewed impetus to his multi-faceted, reactionary, and ultimately failed attempts to reform Japanese Buddhism. As shown earlier in the article, for Unshō, Japanese Buddhism had been degraded by the New Buddhists. He did not see Buddhism in Japan as providing a model for reform in Korea. Instead, Unshō's idealized view of Buddhism's past in Japan served as the model for religious reform in Japan's increasingly colonized continental "other" of Korea. Unshō connected the two through the discourse of the "true dharma," which offered a framework through which to advocate for the reform of both Japanese and Korean Buddhism.[58]

Previous scholarship has situated Unshō's thought almost exclusively within a nationalist framework. However, closer examination of Unshō's use of the "true dharma," offers a more subtle interpretation of the relationship between his idealized vision of Buddhism and its role in reform. Consider, for example, how this concept is articulated in his *Bukkyō genron* 仏教原論 (Elements of Buddhism),[59] which Unshō published in the year before his trip to Korea. He remarks that "if the priests of that time [in the age of the latter dharma] committed a transgression, they should be swiftly punished based on the Buddha's rules and royal [secular] law (*butsuritsu ōhō* 仏律王法). Is reviving the Buddha's true dharma—an element of the state's morality—not a duty in which those managing the state and protecting the people should reasonably engage?" In Unshō's view of the "true dharma," the "Buddha's rules" and the "royal law" are one, and priests' transgressions of the precept are addressed in order to maintain the "state's morality." Unshō draws from the *Nirvana Sutra* to argue that "the country's king, ministers, elders, and householders" should "thus correct such transgressions and make the true dharma flourish."[60]

The relationship between the state and Buddhism is thus rendered inseparable through the concept of the "true dharma." Unshō's program for reforming Buddhism in Japan and

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[58] This section largely draws on Unshō's August 1906 petitions to Korea's Emperor and Prime Minister (Unshō 1914a; 1914b), and several other proposals for Korean Buddhist reform (Unshō 1914d; 1914e; 1914f; 1914g).

[59] See Unshō 1905.

[60] Unshō 1905, pp. 32–33.

Korea relied on a view of historical decline, where the current era is the latter age *(mappō)* of the dharma. Unshō identified Japanese Buddhism's relationship with the state from the middle ages onwards as having corrupted, and held that the *ritsuryō* 律令 state, in which the Buddhist monastic community's transgressions were policed directly by the government, was the model. To this end, he cited *Shakushi kenpō* 釈氏憲法 (known today as apocrypha from the Edo period) and the *Sōniryō* 僧尼令, a set of regulations for monks and nuns laid down in the *ritsuryō* of Nara Japan (710–794). He writes, "When the medieval court ignored the records that established the emperor's supreme power and regulations, the Buddhist precept laws and ordinances also declined. This brought about a situation in which priests, while wearing Buddhist robes, did not hesitate to possess swords and join and lead armies."[61] According to Unshō, later priests neglected the teachings of the *Butsu yuikyōgyō* 仏遺教経 (Sutra of the Buddha's Deathbed Injunctions), in which Śākyamuni taught the need to "take the liberatory precepts (*gedatsu kai* 解脱戒) as your great teacher." As such, they did not place enough emphasis on the practice of the precepts. These two errors gave rise to ills.

This also explained the decline of Korean Buddhism:

> I have heard the following. In ancient times, the true dharma flourished in Great Korea. The country's prestige was strong, and it subjugated the realm far and wide, across the eight directions. However, in the middle ages, wanting to correct the mistakes and disarray of priests' practices, it actually committed the error of doing away with both the good and the bad. Today, throughout the eight regions of the country, there are grand temples. However, they have become entirely the useless possessions of the state. Do they really have any benefit for the people? For as we know, due to the evil world of the latter dharma age, people's minds grow darker and darker, and have much falsity and little that is true. If religion is not adopted to cultivate the mind, then the people will end up beyond saving. This is why the World-Honored One presented the true dharma of the latter age, and had countries' kings and ministers of the future entrust themselves to safeguard it.[62]

We can see how in Unshō's view of the latter-age dharma, priestly decadence was prophesized by Śākyamuni. In this sense, Unshō's vision for reforming Korean Buddhism was grounded in a particular kind of revivalism oriented towards Buddhist orthodoxy, Śākyamuni, and the ancient Japanese state, which sought to yoke together the survival of the state and the future of Buddhism's resurgence.

Also behind Unshō's ideas on reforming Korean Buddhism was his confidence in 1906 that a new constitution would be promulgated in imperial Korea:

> Right now, Great Korea's constitution and legal codes are being compiled and are about to be implemented. It is my wish that the major high officials and persons of great intelligence and ability dictate to people of virtue around the world that the laws and rules of priests and nuns be fashioned in line with the precepts established by the

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[61] Unshō 1914c, pp. 87–88.
[62] Unshō 1914b, pp. 82–83.

> Buddha, which were strict laws ordered by the Buddha that should not be violated in any form.[63]

The ultimate thrust of Unshō's ideas regarding Korea was to make Buddhism the official state religion, thus realizing "true dharma"-based governance. This was a second attempt on his part, following a similar effort for Japan which had failed over two decades prior. When the Constitution of the Empire of Japan was being drafted, Unshō wrote the *Dai Nihon kokkyōron* 大日本国教論 (On the state religion of Greater Japan, 1882) hoping in vain to turn Buddhism into Japan's state religion.[64] Unshō asserted in his later work that the political situation in imperial Korea resembled that in Japan approximately twenty years earlier. Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), first resident general of Korea, was rapidly promoting legal reforms in order to prepare for negotiations with the United States and European countries to revise the unequal treaties, including the right of foreign powers to consular courts.[65] However, the only international legislation to emerge as a result of his efforts was the 1907 Court Organization Law, which allowed the appointment of Japanese legal advisors to Korean courts.[66] Unshō nevertheless understood that imperial Korea was in the process of establishing a new legal regime under the guidance of the Meiji government, and enthusiastically advocated for Buddhism to be deployed in the effort to restructure colonial Korea's legal systems.

In two of his proposals, Unshō called for the creation of a "Department of Religion" within the government. As a preliminary step to establishing a full governmental body, he proposed a "Department of Religious Research" to formulate the overall direction and policy of Buddhist doctrines, morality, the obligations/social status of priests, and the relationship between true, "proper" Buddhism and state interests.[67] Under the heading of "The Nation's Religion: Course of Action," he argues that the foundation of "the nation's unity" depends on all its members taking refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. Furthermore, he suggests that primary school children should take the ten virtuous precepts, in order that they might acquire "roots of virtue and faculty of belief" (*tokuhon shinkon* 徳本信根). Then, in accordance with the "degree of [their] power of faith (*shinriki* 信力)," they should receive the "five precepts, eight precepts, bodhisattva precepts, [or] preliminary esoteric initiation (*jumyō kanjō* 受明灌頂)."[68] Unshō thus applies his precept ideology to general Korean edification in the imperial state alongside his discussion of how Buddhism should be made into the state religion.[69] As a broader structure of governance, Unshō also proposed that designated "religious representatives" could be charged with the religious edification of specific "counties, towns, major towns, and cities," and could spearhead a crackdown on the "bad, areligious people."[70]

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[63] Unshō 1914c, p. 88.

[64] See Kameyama 2018.

[65] Asano 2016.

[66] Kim 2012, pp. 98–99.

[67] Unshō 1914e, pp. 92–93.

[68] Unshō 1914e, p. 97.

[69] Unshō 1914g covers topics such as the handling of priests that break the precepts as well as applying the five precepts to laypeople.

[70] Unshō 1914e, pp. 92–93.

The above raises issues surrounding freedom of religion, which Unshō addresses in a section on "Confucianism, Religions, Sorcery, and so on: A Course of Action." He quotes Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron* 十住心論 ("Treatise on the ten abodes of the mind") to argue that religions of all types are "sets of teachings within the secret mandala," and all share "a degree of truth," despite doctrinal differences regarding, for example, "nihilism, eternalism, and emptiness" (*danjōkū* 断常空). All members of any nation should be "supported" (*kaji* 加持) by the "great compassionate, incomparable power of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 (Skt. Mahāvairocana)."[71] We can detect a similar argument here to that found in Unshō's *Bukkyō genron* (1905). In his later years, Unshō advocated the view that "all morality and teachings in the reality-realm together return [to the same source]." He duly devoted himself to integrating all religions, morality, and fields of academic study, believing that everything is subsumed by the "secret mandala."[72] Other than reducing many of these distinctions to an overarching schema of esoteric/exoteric matters based in Shingon discourse, though, there is little other detail on his plans for a reformation of the imperial Korean state organized around Buddhist doctrine or the "true dharma."

Of course, we know that Unshō's attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, and he played no role in the subsequent expansion of Japanese settler colonialism in Korea or on the Asian continent. However, the case of Unshō exemplifies the way in which new discourses on the precepts in modern Japan encouraged those engaged in them to look towards the continent and broader global religious discourses for frameworks within which to reinvent their predispositions. Unshō imagined Korea as a stage for the realization of Japanese Buddhism's ideal, a scheme based on a particular understanding of ancient and contemporary Japan. While relying on the discourse of Korean Buddhism, he conceived of a project of reform that took precept revival as its central tenet and, thanks to his use of the concept of the "true dharma," was potentially universal in nature. At the same time, though, universalism was insufficient to overcome his prejudices, and like many of his Japanese Buddhist contemporaries, Korean Buddhism was reduced to one of the many modes of Korean life that required intervention on the part of Japanese colonists.

Conclusion

In this article, I have used Unshō and his party's experiences in Korea to examine encounters between discourses on the precepts in Korean Buddhism, which occurred amid intense competition among Japanese Buddhist organizations to annex the institutions of Korean Buddhism under the branch temple system. Their encounter with Korean Buddhism and its mutually interrelated narratives also highlighted the contested ground of the authenticity of "Buddhism," revolving around the fundamental precondition for its "resurgence" and "degeneracy" under the influence of Japanese Buddhists. In Unshō and Seijun's formulation of Korean precept practices as formalist and ascetic, one indicative of an "underdeveloped psychology," we can see the contours of a certain Buddhist universalism being shaped by the imperialist logic of the Japanese empire. This evidences the displacement of domestic criticism outwards if we remember that nearly identical criticisms were also being simultaneously directed at priests like Unshō and his followers by the New Buddhist movement.

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[71] Unshō 1914e, pp. 98–99.

[72] In a sermon given during his tour of Manchuria and Korea, Unshō proposed that of the many religions, Buddhism, Christianity, and "Mahometanism" (*Mahomettokyō* マホメット教; i.e., Islam), Buddhism is the most outstanding, and the Shingon sect is the most venerable within Buddhism. Furthermore, the Shingon sect preaches "without flaw all of the reality realm," and God, Christ, the Twelve Apostles, and the Holy Mother are all manifestations of Dainichi Nyorai and the workings of the mandala reality realm. See Unshō 1906, pp. 11–12.

With the ascendancy of the New Buddhists in Japanese Buddhism, Unshō had become increasingly isolated, but his encounter with Korean priests, who had also been persecuted, gave him a ray of hope. At first he sought to reform Buddhism alongside Korean priests, but he came to see them as lacking knowledge regarding the two hundred fifty precepts, the rules for receiving the precepts, and the seven types of Buddhist practitioners. He also "discovered" a problem, that his interlocutors were fixated too rigidly on the "mind," while disregarding other traditional Buddhist disciplines such as the precepts and meditation. This he perceived as a longstanding myopia associated with much of Mahayana Buddhism.

Unshō's "discovery" in turn came to justify his program of "reform," rooted in a revivalist program of yoking the state to the "true dharma." In this context, Unshō proposed governmental oversight of monastic practices, making Buddhism into the national religion, and unifying the Korean nation by using the precepts as a means of public moral reform. This attempt sheds important light on Unshō's ideals. For him, the model was the "true dharma" of the past, lost in the latter dharma age. His position thus differed from that of his disciple Seijun. However, Seijun and Unshō's views were similar in that they both identified problems in Korean Buddhist precept practice that needed reform.

Unshō and Seijun describe their endeavors as repayment for "the motherland" Korea's transmission of Buddhism to Japan in ancient times, and called for a guiding role in reforming Korean Buddhism for both Japanese Buddhists and the Japanese government, in order to rescue it from its state of "decline." Korean Buddhism emerged over the course of Korea's colonization, and is notable here as a site of increasing Japanese influence, and for providing an imperial project offering a set of terms with which to frame Buddhism's own revival across Asia. Disaffected by his contemporaries, Unshō proposed an alternative vision for Japanese Buddhism centered on precept adherence, which was largely tangential to modern Buddhism as it developed in Japan. This Buddhism should, in his view, be realized through the mobilization of imperial power (in this case, the Meiji emperor). This vision also represented a return to the vanished past of Japanese Buddhism, which shared common grounds in his eyes with the classic ideal of its Korean counterpart, and still served as a model for the reformation of Korean Buddhism.

The realities of Buddhism in Korea were of little interest to Unshō or Seijun. Rather, Korea served as a blank canvas upon which they were able to project their Japanese Buddhist ideal. Immediately prior to Japan's formal annexation of Korea, precept-upholding priests from imperial Japan painted a negative picture of Korean priests' precept practice, a picture which would define Korean Buddhism both during the colonial period, and after the collapse of the Japanese empire.

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