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Hwansoo Kim

# The Adventures of a Japanese Monk in Colonial Korea

## Sōma Shōei's Zen Training with Korean Masters

The Japanese Buddhist view of Korean Buddhism from 1877 to 1945 abounded with colonialist and imperialistic rhetoric. Japanese Buddhist missionaries declared that Korean Buddhism should be reformed and revitalized under their guidance. With this mindset, most Japanese Buddhists in colonial Korea did not find much in Korean Buddhism that was useful or worth learning about—a paternalistic approach that Korean monks found off-putting and that therefore undermined potential cooperation. This paper introduces an unusual Japanese priest who spent six years practicing *Sŏn* (Jp. Zen) in Korean monasteries. Sōma Shōei's identity as an *unsui* (itinerant monk)—a monastic class shared across the Buddhisms of East Asia—enabled him to develop friendships with Korean Sŏn masters and fellow practitioners, relationships that were framed less by colonialist or nationalist discourse than by respect, empathy, and sincerity. This article presents Sōma's firsthand experience with Korean monasticism based on essays he wrote for a Japanese Buddhist journal. Sōma's case reveals how religious identity operates within and also beyond the colonial context. Sōma's exceptionalism also provides a contrast to the views of his colleagues, which helps reveal greater complexity in the ways that Japanese Buddhists thought about Korean Buddhism.

KEYWORDS: Sōma Shōei—colonialism—Korea—*unsui*—monasticism—*Chōsen bukkyō*—Abe Mitsuie—Takahashi Tōru—Pang Hanam

Hwansoo Kim is Assistant Professor in the Religion Department and the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University.

One afternoon in late April of 1929, a young Japanese Sōtō 曹洞 priest and recent graduate of Komazawa University named Sōma Shōei 相馬勝英[1] arrived at a major temple in the mountains of Korea. He wore a traditional Korean long, white robe, and held letters of recommendation from influential Japanese and Korean lay Buddhists. Sōma sat down anxiously before the abbot of Pŏm'ŏ 梵魚 temple and, through a translator, begged the abbot to permit him to join the monastery's three-month retreat. The young Japanese priest had long desired to learn Zen meditation from the great masters in Korea. The abbot, Kim Kyŏngsan 金擎山, replied,

> Although we have a meditation hall here in this head temple, it is against the rules to accept anybody in the middle of retreat. In addition, the monastic regulations will be too rigid for you to follow. Moreover, it will be quite disruptive to the other monks already in retreat if somebody who is unfamiliar with our language, customs, and culture suddenly joined us. What do you think about practicing meditation at a nearby branch temple, one that also has a meditation hall and which can provide you with special treatment? (DZ 1929, 290)

Sōma was so eager to join a meditation retreat that he was not disappointed by the abbot's reply. He hurried over to the branch temple a half-kilometer away and received permission to enter the retreat there. Thus began Sōma's six-year relationship, from 1929 to 1936, with Korean Buddhism. During these years, he took retreats at different Korean monasteries, studied with Korean Sŏn masters, made pilgrimages to major temples and religious sites, and traveled around Korea. Sōma wrote extensively about all these experiences, compiling the most extensive first-hand account of Korean pre-colonial and colonial Buddhism ever written by a Japanese Buddhist priest. These writings reveal much about the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhism in the contexts of colonialism, modernity, and Buddhist history.

Even though all of Sōma's writings were published in the well-known journal *Chōsen bukkyō* 朝鮮仏教 (Korean Buddhism), his story has not been included in histories of the period. The reason for this exclusion is that Sōma's experiences do not fit into conventional historiographies on colonial Korean and Japanese Buddhism. That is, the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhists

1. Sōma's dates of birth and death are not known. He was born in Niigata Prefecture and graduated from Komazawa University in 1928 (SS 767 [July 1929], 6). Little else of his life is known, except that he was affiliated with the Tentaku'in 天澤院 in Aichi Prefecture (SS 764 [April 1929], 10).

from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries has been predominantly understood through the lens of colonialism and resistance. In these accounts, Japanese Buddhist priests are characterized as nothing more than colonialists and imperialists who made no positive social or religious contributions to Korea and Korean Buddhism (Nakano 1976, 168; Han 1988, 15; Mitō 1989, 108; Hishiki 1992–1993, 157–75). Korean Buddhists, for their part, are cast as victims of imperial aggression or as treacherous collaborators (Kim 1996, 4; Ch ng 2001, 335). Japanese Buddhist missionaries are likened to Western Christian missionaries: colonialists who invaded non-Western countries with the objective of furthering their sectarian and nation's imperial ambitions. Although Sōma took Japan's colonial control over Korea as reality, his deep respect for the Korean Buddhist tradition and criticism of Japanese discrimination against Koreans does not fit into this kind of narrative. Indeed, he is a striking exception as a Japanese priest in Korea. But it is Sōma's exceptionalism—and others' reactions to him—rather than his embodiment of convention that helps us to understand the complexity of this period today.

Resuscitating Sōma's voice heeds the recent call from scholars to nuance the conventional historiography of Korea's colonial period. Scholars of modern Japanese history, such as Kiba Akeshi, Kojima Masamu, and Fujii Takeshi, have suggested, with a degree of caution, that one should take a multifaceted approach (Kiba and Kojima 1992, 1) to understanding the work of Japanese Buddhist missionaries in East Asia, and should look for a diversity of roles (Fujii 1999; Sueki 2002, 6). Henrik Sorenson, a scholar of Korean Buddhism, goes as far as to argue that many Japanese Buddhists were "sincere Buddhists" in their own right, even though their work was double-edged (Sorenson 1991, 49). However, there are few biographies like Sōma's that have been excavated to fulfill this call for a new hermeneutical approach.

One recent biography informs my approach to Sōma's life. In *The Victorian Translation of China*, Norman Girardot, a scholar of comparative and Chinese religion, introduces James Legge (1815–1897), a colonialist, Christian missionary, and Oriental scholar. Girardot expands on Edward Said's theory of orientalism to argue that while Legge was an imperialist or orientalist, he also had sincere respect for Chinese culture and religion. Girardot brings to light a more nuanced picture of Legge, whose close contact with natives gave rise to Legge's "pilgrim's identity." This identity enabled Legge to write from a transcultural and transnational framework—as Girardot calls him, "a hyphenated missionary-scholar"—and allowed him to present Chinese religions, especially Confucianism, with empathy, honesty, and appreciation. His identity as a pilgrim was reflected in his scholarship, in which Legge emphasized "comparative similarities, homologous parallels, and universal essences" rather than imperialistic and conquering "differences" (Girardot 2002, 529–30). I suggest that Legge's identity as a pilgrim

in China parallels Sōma's identity as an *unsui* 雲水 (wandering monk) in Korea. In the same way that Legge's biography adds new dimensions to understanding Christian missionaries in China, so too does Sōma's biography give new breadth to the image of the work performed by Japanese Buddhist missionaries in Korea.

Sōma's youthfulness and determination to practice in Korea might have helped him be free from ideological intentions. Sōma's narratives about his monastic experience in Korea lack an air of superiority and reveal a deep respect for Korean masters. His writing also shows that he counted his primary identity as that of an *unsui*, an itinerant monk—an identity shared by Zen monks in China, Korea, and Japan for centuries. This transnational identity allowed Sōma to share a feeling of brotherhood with the Korean Zen monastics he met. As a result of his time in Korea, his understanding of Zen practice and Buddhism was transformed, and in turn, his writing on Korean Zen had a significant impact on the views of Japanese Buddhists interested in Korean Buddhism.

Taking up currently available and newly found sources, this article explores Sōma's adventures in Korea. Sōma's experiences take place in the context of a seven-decade relationship (1877–1945) between Japanese and Korean Buddhists. Japanese Buddhists, both clerics and laity, believed throughout the pre-colonial and colonial period that Korean Buddhism needed guidance from Japanese Buddhism. In addition, they cried out for unifying Korean and Japanese Buddhism as part of a pan-Asian Buddhism, but failed to bring this about in practice. There were few Japanese Buddhists who did not view Japanese and Korean Buddhism hierarchically: Korean Buddhism was stigmatized as pre-modern, moribund, backward, and anti-social, while Japanese Buddhism was touted as modern, vibrant, reformed, and socially engaged. Due to these biases, Japanese Buddhists showed neither respect for Korean Buddhism nor found the tradition worth exploring.[2]

However, Sōma's pilgrimage in colonial Korea presents us with a good example of how his first-hand experience of Korean monasticism is both bound within and moves beyond colonial dichotomies. By writing about the situation on the ground, Sōma challenges contemporary Japanese Buddhists' views of Korean Buddhism. Sōma's identity as an *unsui* enabled him to engage with Korean monastics through the context of a centuries-old Zen paradigm, a context that offered an alternative to that of colonialism.

### *Two Separate Communities in Colonial Korea*

First and foremost, Sōma's Zen training with Korean monastics in colonial Korea is rare in light of the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhist

2. Some of the leading Japanese Buddhists who took this hierarchical view are discussed in the section on *The Call to "Reform Korean Buddhism."*

clerics from 1877 to 1945. Despite the fact that both sides shared the same religious tradition and performed their work in close proximity, in reality, the two sides occupied parallel but relatively disconnected universes. Both sides, but especially the Japanese side, frequently laid out visions for working together toward a greater Buddhist good, toward mutual understanding and support. But as it turns out, much of this was rhetoric. For this reason, a figure like Sōma is particularly striking: he was one of the very few to make a sincere effort to study Korean Buddhism and learn the language for its own sake, without much of an agenda beyond personal growth. Again, Sōma's exceptionalism shines light on what the majority of other Buddhists really did and said. To understand Sōma's uniqueness, then, let us turn to the relationship between the two Buddhisms more broadly.

The modern relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhism can be divided into two periods: 1877–1911 and 1911–1945. The first period begins with the establishment of a Japanese Buddhist branch temple in the port city of Pusan in 1877, one year after Japan forcibly opened Korea. This pre-colonial period ends, three and a half decades later, when Japan annexes Korea in 1910 and promulgates the Temple Ordinance (*jisatsu rei* 寺刹令) in 1911. During this time, the relationship between Korean and Japanese Buddhism was dynamic and stands in contrast to the more formalized and distant character of the second period, the thirty-five years of colonial occupation. However, one striking feature of the second period is that a number of Japanese lay Buddhists (as opposed to clergy) established close working relationships with Korean monastics (more on this later).

In the pre-colonial period, scores of Japanese Buddhist missionaries assisted Korean monks in establishing modern schools for monastics and a central office for the newly formed Korean Buddhist administration, and in bringing Korean Buddhism into the center of politics. Not a small number of Korean monastics turned to Japanese Buddhists for institutional and political support. In addition, after Japan made Korea a protectorate in 1905, Korean monastics turned to Japanese priests for protection: growing exploitation by local Korean officials and the Japanese police, and anti-Japanese armies who forced temples to act as their base, threatened Korean temples. Korean monastics believed that registering their temples as branches of Japanese sectarian institutions provided a degree of protection because they considered Japanese Buddhists powerful. Korean monastics sometimes even re-ordained in the sect that was supporting them. Japanese Buddhist missionaries, fired up by the state's imperial advances, missionary zeal, sectarian expansion, and antagonism against Christianity, swarmed into Korean temples. Priests and sects vied for the allegiance of Korean monks with the idea that eventually their sect would control Korean Buddhism for itself. Thus, the first thirty-five years of the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhism was dynamic—both sides wanted the help of the other to further their own interests. Japanese Buddhist missionaries wanted to expand their sectarian

influence in Korea. They accomplished this by pouring significant resources into foreign missions, recruiting missionaries to work in Korea, and reorganizing parish districts so that they were operative in an international context. Korean monastics, at the dawn of the modern period, desperately needed social, political, and institutional power to elevate their social and institutional status: five centuries of marginalization by the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy during the Chosŏn 朝鮮 dynasty (1392–1910) had devastated Korean Buddhism. Japanese Buddhist missionaries were in a position to provide such capital (Tikhonov 2004, 37).

In contrast, during the colonial period, the connection between the two communities—at a clerical level—was rather thin (Sorenson 1999, 131). This is not to say that the number of Japanese Buddhist priests in Korea decreased, or that the opportunity for individual encounters became less frequent. Indeed up until 1911, only a couple of hundred Japanese Buddhist missionaries had visited and lived in Korea, mostly for short periods, while just a score of Korean monks had crossed the sea to study in Japan.[3] In contrast, during the colonial period, several thousand Japanese Buddhist priests took residence in colonial Korea to run Japanese temples or preaching halls.[4] In this period, over a hundred Korean monastics left to pursue studies in Japan. Without doubt, the physical presence of Japanese Buddhism in colonial Korea and the education of Korean monks in Japan continued to influence institutions, doctrines, and practices, primarily in Korean Buddhism. Many Korean Buddhists turned to Japanese Buddhism as a model for the modernization of the Korean Buddhist tradition.

Yet, the impact of Japanese Buddhism on Korean monastics during the colonial period was not a result of cooperation of the kind seen in the pre-colonial period, between two Buddhist communities. On closer examination, the relationships between Korean and Japanese Buddhist clerics in colonial Korea were surprisingly minimal and passive. Scholars unanimously agree that the primary reason for this disconnect was that Japanese Buddhist priests acted more as colonialists than as fellow Buddhists and that they had little interest in the welfare of Korean Buddhism (Mitō 1989; Hishiki 1993). They prioritized the state's imperial goals and faithfully fulfilled their role as the advance guard for Japan's military expansionism. Most Korean monastics were bitter about colonial rule, and thus did not want to associate with Japanese priests, even though they shared this deep connection to the Buddhist tradition.

However, another, more fundamental reason explains the lack of engagement between the two Buddhist communities: the Temple Ordinance of 1911,

3. In 1910, there were 140 Japanese Buddhist missionaries with 150 temples, preaching halls, and offices (stn, 1912).

4. As of 1937, there were 1,045 Buddhist missionaries with 846 temples and preaching halls (stn, 1938).

which was promulgated soon after annexation. This ordinance brought Korean Buddhism directly under the control of the Japanese colonial government. All executive decisions, including the appointment of key offices in Korean Buddhism, were made by Japan's governor-general in Korea, making him the de facto "pope" of Korean Buddhism. Furthermore, by proscribing Japanese Buddhism from forming any institutional alliances with Korean Buddhism (*Chōsen Sōtokufu kanpō* 270 [18 September 1911], 139), the ordinance pretty much put an end to institutional alliances between the two Buddhisms. The colonial government also brought Japanese Buddhist missionary work under its control by issuing regulations on propagation (*fukyō kisoku* 布教規則). Once Japan began the official process of colonization in 1910, the colonial government no longer tolerated the growing sectarian strife among Japanese Buddhists, which had spilled over into Korean Buddhism as well. Such sectarianism and its divisive effect on Korean Buddhism were detrimental to effective colonial rule.

The colonial government touted the ordinance as a sign that it was ending centuries of persecution and abandonment of Buddhism by the Chosŏn dynasty. It proclaimed that the colonial government was providing official, state recognition of Korean Buddhism as a religious institution. Moreover, the colonial government provided an institutional structure for Korean Buddhism through the ordinance by creating a hierarchy of abbotships, turning this period of Korean Buddhism into, as Henrik Sorenson terms it, "the reign of abbots" (Sorenson 1991, 56). In the new system, abbots of the head temple and other major temples came to hold unprecedented control over the monks in residence. Additional administrative positions were created with the establishment of a central meeting office for head priests in Seoul. As a result, these posts—which carried significant clout, money, and recognition—led to internal struggles among Korean monks. These power struggles intensified during the colonial and post-colonial periods. By incorporating Korean Buddhism into the state system, this ordinance effectively excluded Japanese Buddhism from the sphere of Korean Buddhism altogether.

From the perspective of Korean monastics, the ordinance fulfilled their aspiration for state recognition, protection, and institutional formation. Thus, they no longer needed the help of Japanese Buddhists, and they did not further pursue alliances with sects. Although many Korean monks had studied in Japanese sectarian schools during the colonial period, they had gone to receive a modern education and to build their credentials, rather than as a way of seeking support from a Japanese sect. After completing their studies in Japan, Korean monks were employed by their affiliated temples and worked as temple administrators and proselytizers at preaching halls in cities. In fact, as Sōtō missionary Kawamura Dōki 川村道器 complained, those educated in Japan often betrayed the expectations of Japanese Buddhists because as soon as they came back, they not only did not want to work with Japanese Buddhists, but also would distance themselves

(CB 81 1931, 6). As Japan's colonial rule progressed, the 1911 Temple Ordinance inadvertently enabled the independent development of Korean Buddhism, thus helping Korean monastics to consolidate their identity as practitioners of a tradition distinct from Japanese Buddhism. Consequently, the same level of deep engagement seen between the two Buddhist communities in the years before 1910 was not seen during the colonial period, other than at ceremonial occasions initiated and enforced by the colonial government. In sum, each community dealt directly with the colonial government and did not engage with each other.

Linguistic and cultural differences could also account for the lack of meaningful relationships. Japanese Buddhists' discriminatory views of Korean monks could be another factor: Japanese priests did not want to spend time with inferior Buddhists, nor did Korean monks want to be in the company of those who looked down on them. Korean monks had their own discriminatory views of Japanese Buddhists, finding a number of faults—such as laxity in holding precepts—in the Japanese Buddhist style. Scholars have also proposed that Korean Buddhism, which takes an inclusive approach to beliefs and practices, did not accept the sectarianism of Japanese Buddhism (SORENSON 1991, 47). Moreover, even though Japanese Buddhists had explicit goals of reaching out to Koreans and Korean Buddhists, they had neither the ability for nor a real interest in missionary work. After a number of efforts, even Japanese Buddhists themselves conceded that they had failed to create a vigorous missionary culture equivalent to that of the Christians (CN 2, 19, 29, 31 March 1910).

This lack of interest between Japanese and Korean Buddhists is also reflected in the sectarian and non-sectarian journals published in colonial Korea. Higashi Honganji published *Shinyū* 信友 in 1910, *Kakusei* 覚醒 in 1927, *Tōkō* 東光 in 1929, and *Tanshin* 端心 in 1930; the Shingon 真言 sect published *Mandara* 曼荼羅 in 1923 and *Gasshō* 合掌 in 1925; the Sōtō sect published *Kongō* 金剛 in 1924 and *Shunpo* 春畝 in 1935; and Mizuno Rentarō 水野錬太郎 (1868–1949), a lay Buddhist, published the ecumenical Buddhist journal *Kannon* 観音 in 1932. These journals rarely carry articles or reports related to Korean Buddhism. The few articles that do appear tend to repeat the rhetoric that Korean Buddhism is in dire condition and that Japanese Buddhism urgently needs to support Korean Buddhism. References to Korean Buddhism briefly reappear whenever a major political and social upheaval occurred such that it necessitated cooperation between the two Buddhisms. The journals published by Korean Buddhists, in which reports on Japanese Buddhism are more numerous in comparison to the number of reports on Korean Buddhism in Japanese Buddhist journals, still show a marked lack of interest in Japanese Buddhist communities in Korea.[5]

5. To name a few: *Wŏnjong* 圓宗 (1910); *Chosŏn Pulygo Wŏlbo* 朝鮮佛教月報 (1912–1913); *Haedong Pulgyo* 海東佛教 (1913–1914); *Pulgyo Chinghŭnghoe Wŏlbo* 佛教振興會月報 (1915); *Chosŏn*

The Japanese colonial government also noticed that the two Buddhisms in Korea were disconnected. In an effort to provide some kind of symbolic unity between the two Buddhisms—and thus both countries—the colonial government worked with Japanese Buddhists to build a temple, Hakubunji 博文寺 (or Hirobumidera), named after Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), in 1932. They originally planned to post a Korean monk as the abbot, but in the end reneged. Due to Itō's affiliation with the Sōtō sect, the Sōtō priest Suzuki Tenzan 鈴木天山 (1863–1943) became the first abbot (CB 84 1932, 9).

However, while Japanese Buddhist priests remained at a remove from the affairs of Korean monks throughout the colonial period, several Japanese lay Buddhists seemed to have formed friendships with Korean monks and Korean lay Buddhists. These Japanese lay Buddhists held powerful positions in government, business, and media in colonial Korea. They initiated a movement aimed at overcoming the obstacles of language, culture, prejudice, and disinterest that held the two Buddhisms apart. Nakamura Kentarō 中村健太郎 (1883–?), Abe Mitsuie 阿部充家 (1862–1936), Kobayashi Genroku 小林源六 (1867–?), Kwŏn Chunghyŏn 權重顯 (1854–1934), and Yi Wŏnsŏk 李元錫 established the organization Chōsen Bukkyō Taikai 朝鮮仏教大会 (The Great Meeting of Korean Buddhism) in 1920. (In 1925, it was retitled Chōsen Bukkyōsha 朝鮮仏教社 [Association of Korean Buddhism], henceforth Association.) Initially, the Association received the support of all the major Japanese and Korean Buddhist leaders. The Association was possible due to the general support of Kobayashi, a wealthy businessman who donated one hundred thousand yen in startup money. They set up branches of the Association in major provinces and made an effort to build bridges between Japanese and Korean Buddhist communities through journals, lectures, the distribution of Buddha statues, and the introduction of new scholarship. An event organized to bring the two Buddhist communities together was held in 1929. More than a hundred Japanese Buddhist leaders from all sects and the abbots of Korea's head temples convened in the garden of the colonial government headquarters. This seemingly historic event disappointed many observers. The Sōtō missionary Kawamura Gobō 川村五峰 charged that the organizers of this event "betrayed" people's expectations by being too bureaucratic, Korean Buddhist leaders were passive, and Japanese Buddhist groups were indifferent (*Kongō* 1930, 10–11).

Among other activities, the Association also published the journal Korean Buddhism. At its peak, approximately three thousand copies of each issue were distributed, primarily to Japanese emigrants in colonial Korea, Imperial Japan, and other colonies. Reflecting the determination to bring together the two communities, the first few issues were printed in both Japanese and Korean. (In addi-

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*Pulgyo Ch'ongbo* 朝鮮佛教叢報 (1917–1921); *Pulgyo* 佛教 (1924–1933); *Pulgyosibo* 佛教時報 (1935–1944); *Kyŏngbuk Pulgyo* 慶北佛教 (1936–1941); and *Sin Pulgyo* 新佛教 (1937–1944).

tion, the Association issued a news journal for children in the Korean language [*Chosŏn Pulgyo So'nyŏn nyusŭ* 3 1924]). Korean Buddhism carefully included positive articles, some written by Nakamura, on Korean Buddhism in order to rectify the misconceptions that Japanese had about the tradition. Beginning in 1929, the Association was also at the forefront of promoting parades commemorating the Buddha's Birthday that were organized jointly by the two Buddhist communities.

Nevertheless, these efforts brought limited results. Japanese scholars of the time persisted in taking a colonialist view of Korean Buddhism in their journal articles. In fact, Nakamura opens his essay on the first page of Korean Buddhism's very first issue by accusing Korean monks of failing to reform and revitalize Korean Buddhism, and thus of failing to meaningfully influence Korean society (CB 1 1924, 2). Moreover, the Korean translations gradually dwindled and disappeared from the journal altogether. The joint Buddha's birthday parade also degenerated into a formal event for which neither side had much enthusiasm. Both communities celebrated the Buddha's birthday according to their own custom, with the Japanese following the solar calendar date and the Koreans following the lunar calendar date. In sum, even efforts by Japanese lay Buddhists, which had shown promise at the outset, did not succeed in bridging the gap during the colonial period.

To broadly characterize the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhism, we could say that the first thirty-five years, during the pre-colonial period, was dynamic, while the second thirty-five years, during the colonial period, was inert.

### *The Call to "Reform Korean Buddhism"*

While extant sources lack evidence of meaningful relationships between Japanese and Korean Buddhist clerics on a large scale during the colonial period, Japanese Buddhists never reduced the volume of their rhetoric that the two Buddhisms should work together. The ideology behind this rhetoric revolved around the view that Korea had civilized Japan by introducing Buddhism many centuries ago, and that Japanese Buddhists should return their gratitude (*hōhon hanshi* 報本反始) by pouring resources into resuscitating the ailing Buddhism of Korea, helping it recover its former glory. Thus, they believed that it was the obligation of Japanese Buddhists to reform and modernize Korean Buddhism. Motivated by this ideology, Japanese Buddhist missionaries approached Korean monastics in two different ways. Up until 1911, Japanese Buddhists from each sect presented the teachings and institutional structure of their sect as a panacea for all the problems of Korean Buddhism. Thus, the reform of Korean Buddhism, they proposed, would be possible *only if* Korean monastics converted to that sect. However, after annexation and the promulgation of the 1911 Temple

Ordinance, which ended the institutional relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhism, Japanese Buddhist missionaries had to give up on this earlier strategy. Instead, they stressed the necessity of reforming Korean Buddhism by taking Japanese Buddhism as a whole as a model, and sects no longer attempted to create alliances.[6]

Accordingly, it is hard to find an instance in which Japanese Buddhist priests or lay Buddhists interacted with Korean monastics without this undertone. It is even harder to find a case similar to Sōma's.[7] Japanese Buddhist priests tended to think that there was little they could learn from Korean Buddhism and Korean monastics. In order to survive severe persecution in the early Meiji period, Japanese Buddhism had reformed and modernized itself to become, as James Ketelaar puts it, "a harbinger of civilization and enlightenment" (Ketelaar 1990, 138). Japanese Buddhists viewed Korean Buddhism as superstitious, backwards, and nearly extinct—a result of the Chosŏn dynasty's anti-Buddhist policies. They thus believed that their version of Buddhism was the only one with the strength to save the ailing Buddhisms of China and Korea. For centuries, Japan had received culture and religion from China and Korea. Now the tables had been turned, and Japanese Buddhism should be exported back to the motherland (Welch 1968, 160). It was natural that, given this perspective, those who had the opportunity to meet with Korean monastics often had an eye toward conversion.

With this *mission civilisatrice* mindset, Japanese missionaries set about getting Korean temples to convert to Japanese Buddhism. For example, Katō Bunkyō 加藤文教, the Nichiren 日蓮 sect missionary, who had visited Korean temples in Kyŏnggi 京畿 Province in 1894, asserted that Japanese Buddhism was "the center of Buddhism of the East" and that "a Buddhist country" should consider as its "most urgent task" saving the Buddhisms of neighboring countries, especially that of Korea (Katō 1900, 21). This pan-Asian rhetoric notwithstanding, he soon pressed Korean monks to join his sect, saying that it was the best candidate to revitalize Korean Buddhism. In 1895, another Nichiren priest, Sano Zenrei 佐野前励 (1859–1912), proudly posted a sign on the gates of a major Korean temple declaring it a Nichiren temple, thus announcing that the two hundred resident monks had converted to his sect. Furukawa Taikō 古川太航 of the Rinzai sect

6. There is one case in which the Korean monk Yi Hoegwang 李晦光 (1862–1933) colluded with the Rinzai 臨済 monk Gotō Tangan 後藤端岩 in early 1920 to create an alliance between Korean Buddhism and the Japanese Rinzai tradition. Their plan did not succeed, since it violated the 1911 Temple Ordinance.

7. According to *Kŭndae sŏnwŏn pangmyŏngrok* (The Lists of Practitioners in Modern Sŏn Monasteries), there were two Japanese priests who attended. Kawazoe Erin 川添慧林 from Hōzōji 法藏寺 did three three-month retreats in 1917–1918. Suzuki Mushō 鈴木無證 from Kyoto Ittōen 一燈園, a new religious organization founded by Nishida Tenkō 西田天香 [1872–1968] in 1904) did a retreat in 1931 (Chogyejong Pulhak Yŏn'guso 2006, 110 and 141).

stayed at the Pohyŏn 普賢 temple in P'yŏngan 平安 Province and later persuaded the temple to make itself into a branch of the Rinzai sect in 1909.

Some of the Japanese monks active in Korea seem to have given Korean Buddhism a degree of respect. Shaku Unshō 釈雲照 (1827–1909), who visited a number of Korean temples in 1906, immediately after Japan had made Korea a protectorate, told a Korean master that he came to Korea to learn from Korean Buddhism. He even had a kōan exchange with another Korean master, after which they spoke highly of each other (Kusanagi 1913–1914, 203–204). Yet one could not say that Unshō respected Korean Buddhism in its own right. Rather, Unshō envisioned the establishment of an ideal Buddhism in Korea, something he had been unable to do so in Japan. He attempted to persuade Resident-General Itō Hirobumi to grant him authority to control all of Korean Buddhism. Itō allegedly chastised him, and Unshō's dream soon evaporated (CN 22 December 1920). Iwa Jōen 巖常圓, a Honganji missionary of the Jōdoshin 浄土真 sect, spent three years at the T'ongdo 通度 temple at the turn of the century to learn the language, customs, and Buddhism of Korea. He became a disciple of Pak Manha 朴萬下, a renowned precepts master, and studied under him. Iwa most closely parallels Sōma in that he submitted himself to training under a Korean master. However, it did not take long for Iwa to begin persuading Pak to convert to the Honganji teachings. In 1910, Iwa took Pak to the Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 and got the latter to reordain as a Honganji priest (CN 3 March 1911 and Aoyagi 1911, 130). Inoue Genshin 井上玄真 (1861–1934) of the Jōdo 浄土 sect also worked closely with Korean monks and was instrumental in establishing a central school and a modern institution for Korean Buddhism. However, he also attempted to take over these facilities, and as a result he alienated himself from Korean monastics. Takeda Hanshi 武田範之 (1863–1911), the most influential Buddhist missionary and a leading political operative in the years preceding 1910, formed strong working relationships with leading Korean Buddhist monastics. As a Sōtō priest, he also envisioned merging the administrative institution of Korean Buddhism with the Sōtō sect, but in vain (Ishikawa 1998, 94–98; Hur 1999, 177–9). Another Sōtō priest, Hioki Mokuzen 日置黙仙 (1847–1920), who visited China to collect the ashes of dead Japanese soldiers during the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905), dropped by Korea in 1908 and visited the T'ongdo temple. He gave a talk to three hundred Korean monastics, again emphasizing the necessity of reforming Korean Buddhism, and the willingness of Japan to give assistance for that purpose (Takashina 1962, 83–87).

During the colonial period, the two most influential Japanese lay Buddhists, Abe and Nakamura, made great efforts to connect Japanese Buddhist priests with Korean monks. Abe was a particularly influential figure for young lay and monastic Korean Buddhists. Yet, despite his close relationships, he too felt it was imperative to reform Korean Buddhism by sending Korean monks to Japan for a modern education. In 1936, with sponsorships from the colonial government and

the Association, Abe and Nakamura brought *Hossō* 法相 Master Ōnishi Ryōkei 大西良慶 (1875–1983), the abbot of Kiyomizudera 清水寺 in Kyoto, to Korea to make a three-year tour of Korea to give dharma talks. He stressed, in a public speech that was likely repeated elsewhere, that Korean Buddhism could play a great role in leading Korean society if monks became "purified" and temples were "revitalized" (Kawase, 2002). However, Ōnishi's visits to Korean temples and talks to Korean monastics did not produce any meaningful exchanges.

In sum, because Japanese Buddhists brought an ideology of reform to their relationships with Korean monks and temples, they did not tend to value learning from the Korean Buddhist tradition. This makes a figure like Sōma all the more exceptional.

### *Sōma and the Association of Korean Buddhism (Chōsen Bukkyōdan)*

Even though Sōma stands out in his eagerness to learn about Korean Buddhist practices, his writing nonetheless reflects the colonial discourse of the time. Although not stated outright, it is clear that Sōma assumes that Korea will be assimilated into Japan (*dōka* 同化), and that Korean subjects will be imperialized (*kōminka* 皇民化). First and foremost, it is important to bear in mind that Sōma's long journey across Korea would have not been possible without financial and administrative support from Nakamura, Abe, the Sōtō sect, and others who worked for the colonial government. Almost all Sōma's writings, with the exception of one piece, were published in *Korean Buddhism*, the journal of his sponsors. In addition, at the request of *Korean Buddhism,* Sōma undertook several anthropological research projects on local Buddhist faith traditions. He also conducted a tour for a group of twenty young Korean monks of a prison complex, the colonial government's offices, a military post, and other media facilities in Seoul (CB 117 1935, 28). In collaboration with the colonial government, he was instrumental in introducing the sound of the famous metal bell of a Korean temple, which was broadcast by radio in colonial Korea in the New Year (CB 108 1936, 42). By creating knowledge about Korean Buddhism and culture for the Japanese, Sōma thus participated in the colonial discourse. Furthermore, nowhere in his writing does Sōma directly challenge the legitimacy of Japan's colonial rule over Korea, although in places he is quietly critical of the way it was being implemented. In the wake of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, he even writes a letter to one of his mentors about Japan's total mobilization policy and expresses a desire to be of any help to the nation (CB 136, 10). His writing was inevitably part of the goal to promote assimilation, and thus it contributed to a colonial agenda.

Though Sōma may have had the limited intention of simply practicing Zen in Korea, Abe and Nakamura had a broader vision. As mentioned earlier, Abe and Nakamura were the two most influential mediators between the Japanese and

Korean Buddhist communities. Interestingly, they (especially Abe) promoted Zen Buddhism as the best candidate to popularize Buddhism in Japan and Korea in general, and to revitalize Korean Buddhism in particular. A number of factors led to this decision. First, colonial policies advocated spiritual cultivation and revitalization. Second, the strong Sŏn thread of Korean Buddhism prompted Japanese lay intellectuals to assert that Zen would be appropriate for Buddhists in colonial Korea. Third, the growing popularity of Zen Buddhism in Japan and in the West made many think that Zen would appeal to Koreans. In this sense, Sōma's identity as an *unsui*—an identity drawn from the Zen tradition—fit well into Abe and Nakamura's larger vision of promoting Zen in Korea.

The years that Sōma spent in Korea (1929–1936) spanned the rule of Governor-General's Saitō Makoto 斉藤 実 (1929–1931) and Ugaki Kazunari 宇垣一成 (1931–1936). The colonial policy of the first decade of Japan's rule in Korea, from 1910 to 1919, was a military one (*budan seiji* 武断政治). However, the colonial government was stunned when a massive independence movement rose up, one in which a sizable number of Korean Buddhist monastics participated. After a brutal suppression, the colonial regime was pressed to change its hawkish policy to a conciliatory one. Saitō initiated a cultural policy (*bunka seiji* 文化政治) that continued the colonial government's underlying objective of assimilating Korea into Japan, but that took a softer approach (Robinson 2007, 43). The new slogan advocated the harmony of Japan and Korea (*naisen yūwa* 内鮮融和). The government allowed greater latitude to Korean subjects in expressing their cultural identity. The intention of this policy was to integrate Korea into imperial Japan so as to avoid another mass anti-Japanese movement. The Manchurian Incident of 1931 and the socialist movement forced the colonial government to further reinforce their cultural policy. Along these lines, Ugaki initiated two mobilization movements—Nōson shinsaku undō 農村振作運動 (village innovation movement) and Shinden kaihatsu undō 心田開発運動 (the movement of spiritual cultivation)—in order to get a much firmer grip on all corners of the country. This cultural policy and these two movements were displaced by the total mobilization movement initiated by Governor-General Minami Jirō 南 次郎 (r. 1936–1942) in 1941 as Japan entered World War II.

Buddhism was seen as a religion that could further the new cultural policy. Saitō said that Buddhism was the only religion that "could help complete the assimilation policies" (CB 66 1929, 8). The Association was founded with this cultural policy in mind (Nakamura 1937, 346–48).[8]

In order to understand Sōma's relationships with the Association and the journal, it is crucial to pay attention to his relationship with Abe. Abe was born

8. In commemorating the death of Saitō, Nakamura writes that Saitō recommended Nakamura publish a journal, rather than a pamphlet, for the Association.

in Kumamoto 熊本 in 1862 and started his career as the editor of the newspaper *Kokumin no tomo* 国民之友 (The People's Friend) in 1886. He became a reporter at The People's Friend in 1889 and became its vice president in 1911. Abe arrived in Korea in 1914 as president of the *Keijō nippō* 京城日報 (The Seoul Daily). Journalist Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (1863–1957), who published The People's Friend and founded Seoul Daily, had been Abe's longtime friend, and Abe was considered Tokutomi's right-hand man. Through his work as a journalist, Abe befriended prominent Korean intellectuals such as Yun Ch'iho 尹 致昊 (1865–1945) and Yi Kwangsu 李 光洙 (1892–1950), as well as leading businessman Kim Sungsu 金性洙 (1891–1955). If the Sōtō missionary Takeda Hanshi was the most influential Buddhist in the pre-colonial period, Abe was the most prominent Buddhist during the 1920s and 30s in colonial Korea. He was better known by his dharma name, Mubutsu Koji 無仏居士, and was also known to be the lay disciple of Rinzai Master Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1859–1919) (Nakamura 1969, 54).

Abe devoted much of his time and energy to promoting Buddhism in colonial Korea, and in particular, to reforming Korean Buddhism. An early piece from the 1930s titled "An Opinion about Korean Buddhism" (*Chōsen bukkyō ni taisuru hiken* 朝鮮仏教に対する卑見) reflects his view that Korean Buddhism needs reform and goes on to state some objectives for the Association. Broadly, Abe's ideas for Korean Buddhism were that Japanese Buddhists can "instruct and guide" (*shidō yūdō* 指導誘導) and "improve and innovate" (*kōjō saishin* 向上砕身) (AMKBM 251).[9] Like many Japanese Buddhist priests, Abe considered Korean Buddhism to be stagnant and in need of serious help. But Abe's proposal is unique because he prioritizes Zen, suggesting that it would be the most effective framework for popularizing Buddhism in Korea. Abe's stance can be gleaned as early as 1918 from a talk he gave at a Zen retreat in Japan. Lauding his master's (Sōen) trips to China and Korea, Abe expresses his happiness that, thanks to Sōen, the Rinzai tradition, which was popular in Japan, had returned to China and Korea and had "revitalized Rinzai Zen in those lands" (*Zendō* 1918, 21). Abe's view carries forward to the early 1930s. This time, he is more specific. He proposes that Korean Sŏn monks be sent to Japanese Zen monasteries so that they can learn about the style and vitality of Japanese Zen. In the same way, young Japanese priests who have recently graduated from universities should be dispatched to stay at Korean temples where they could learn the Korean language, study Korean Buddhism, and ultimately contribute to the popularization of Buddhism in imperial Japan and colonial Korea. It is interesting that Abe does not consider Korean Sŏn to be something for young Japanese priests to practice and learn. Abe also suggests that Japanese Buddhist intellectuals should come

9. I would like to express appreciation to Ellie Ch'oe, a postdoctoral fellow at Yale, for kindly sharing this source with me.

and enlighten Korean monks. He recommends as an excellent starting point lectures by a friend of his, well-known Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (aka D. T. Suzuki) (1870–1966) of Ōtani University, who was planning to visit China and Korea (AMKBM, 125). Although it is not clear whether Suzuki visited Korea and met Korean monks, Abe sent two Korean monks, Pang Hanam 方 漢岩 (1876–1951) and Paek Yongsŏng 白 龍城 (1864–1940),[10] a copy of a report on Suzuki's visit to China (CB 104 1934, 8). It is clear that Abe intended to popularize Zen in Korea with the help of the two transmitters of Zen Buddhism to the West, Sōen and Suzuki.

Sōma's first meeting with Abe took place in Tokyo in early 1929. Also attending this meeting was a group of ten Korean students that Abe had brought to Japan to learn about Japanese Buddhism. When Sōma expressed his interest in practicing at Korean monasteries, Abe was delighted. He complained about the lack of missionary spirit among Japanese Buddhist priests in Korea, comparing them to Christian missionaries who willingly lived among native Koreans, had become fluent in Korean language within a year, and converted Koreans en masse. None of the Japanese Buddhist priests, Abe laments, was capable of doing as the Christian missionaries had done (CB 119 1936, 45–46). To Abe, Sōma was the perfect candidate: he took Sōma's enthusiasm as a sign of missionary fervor, and encouraged Sōma to leave for Korea as soon as possible. Abe writes an addendum to "Opinion" stating that Sōma is a fitting example for young Japanese priests who desire to study at Korean monasteries (AMKBM 251).

Sōma later recalls a brief exchange he had with the ten Korean students present at the meeting. They agreed with Abe, pointing out that Japanese Buddhist priests in Korea were totally useless and had no relationship with Korean Buddhists like themselves (CB 119 1936, 45–46). This attests to the earlier point that Japanese Buddhist priests were primarily concerned about their own Japanese communities in Korea, and that they were uninterested in reaching out to Korean people.

Abe introduced Sōma to Nakamura. Also born in Kumamoto, Nakamura lived in Korea for forty-seven years until the end of the colonial period. He learned Korean at a Korean language school in Kumamoto, came to Korea to work for a railroad company in Pusan in 1899, and later worked for a newspaper in Seoul (NAKAMURA 1969, 9–10). He also worked as a reporter at the Seoul Daily when Abe was the president. He became a Buddhist through his friendship with Abe. Nakamura provided financial support throughout Sōma's trips across Korea. In return, Sōma contributed diaries and travelogues to Korean Buddhism. Sōma also received assistance from the Sōtō sect through a

10. The journal conjectures that one of them could be Paek Sŏnguk 白 性郁 (1897–1981). However, in extant sources, there is no record that Abe was acquainted with him.

grant.[11] Whenever necessary, Abe and Nakamura wrote Sōma recommendation letters, which Sōma submitted to Korean monks in order to receive permission to stay at monasteries. Most of Sōma's submissions came in the form of travelogues and letters to Nakamura. Except during three-month retreats or due to illness (one of which forced him to return to Japan for recovery),[12] Sōma sent his pieces regularly to the journal.

Therefore, although Sōma went to Korea to practice for personal reasons, his writing helped fulfill the objectives of the Association and the visions of Nakamura and Abe. As such, Sōma participated—albeit passively—in the colonial project.

### *Sōma's Adventures in Colonial Korea*

Nevertheless, Sōma himself did not identify with the double agendas typical of some Japanese Buddhist colonialists. Rather, he grounded his status in a traditional Zen identity that had been shared by East Asian countries for centuries—that of an *unsui*. Sōma's interpretation of an *unsui* was not derived from the Zen ideology that some Japanese Buddhist intellectuals presented as the pure essence of Japanese civilization (Sharf 1993; Heisig and Maraldo 1995). Rather, Sōma's self-identity as an *unsui* was personal, transnational, and less politically shaded.

The literal meaning of *unsui* is "cloud" or "water," and refers to the ideal characteristics of a Zen monastic's life. That is, Zen monastics should "live their lives so smoothly that they can be compared to a moving cloud or to running water" and "gather around a great master as water or clouds gather in certain places" (Satō 1973, 1). In living like a cloud, which moves freely and leaves no trace, an *unsui* is not confined to space and time in his search for enlightenment: he should travel about as a pilgrim, learning from masters.

At the time, it was common for the graduates of Komazawa University to spend a few years as an *unsui* as part of their training. Sōma, a graduate of that university, which was operated by the Sōtō sect, chose Korea. During his six years as an *unsui*, Sōma experienced the Korean Zen monastic life to the fullest, developed a strong sense of community with those he practiced with, and trained under masters to mature his spiritual practice. His fellow Japanese Buddhists appreciated his sympathetic descriptions of Korean Buddhism, not because he introduced them to the attractive qualities of Korean Buddhism but because he

11. *Kongō*, a journal published by the branch temple of the Sōtō sect in Seoul, reports in its news section, "Since this summer, Sōma Shōei, who has been practicing at the Pŏm'ŏ temple, will receive some grant money [from the Sōtō headquarters]. We would like to wish him good health and great progress in his Zen practice" (*Kongō* [February 1930]: 18).

12. For example, *Kongō* reports in 1930 that due to sickness Sōma had to return to Japan (*Kongō* [October 1930]: 17).

did so in a way that was honest, sincere, and reverent toward Korean monastics and their tradition.

With the help of Abe, Sōma was nominally assigned by the Sōtō sect to be a missionary at the two Sōtō branch temples in Seoul (SS 765 1929, 1).[13] He arrived in Seoul on April 15 1929. After several weeks of preparation, he headed off to Pŏm'ŏ temple with a recommendation letter from Abe and Yi Ch'anggŭn 李昌根 (1901–?), Head of the Department of Religion in the colonial government, to start his first retreat in Korea. What bears exploring is why Yi and Abe sent Sōma to Pŏm'ŏ temple in particular. According to statistics printed in the Korean Buddhist journal Sŏnwŏn 禪苑 in 1932, Pŏm'ŏ temple and its branch Naewŏnam 內院庵 were two of nineteen Sŏn monasteries in Korea. At the time, it is estimated that roughly 230 Korean Sŏn monks were living there as *unsui*s, practicing mainly *kongan* (Jp. Kōan 公案) meditation. This number is just a fraction of the total monastic population, which numbered around 7,000 (5,709 monks and 1,185 nuns) in 1932 (STN, 1934). Unfortunately for those Japanese seeking to promote Zen, the number of Sŏn monasteries in Korea was declining: in the pre-colonial period there had been about a hundred monasteries.

There were several reasons for the loss of nearly four out of every five Sŏn temples in the early twentieth century. Korean Buddhist reformers, seeking to modernize, succeeded in relocating the Buddhist clergy from the mountain monasteries to the cities, where they could minister to larger groups. In this new paradigm, the role of itinerant monks was seen as useless and even more irrelevant to propagation than the already demoted role of the scholar-monk. Moreover, the emphasis on propagation over that of personal, secluded practice meant that limited temple resources were funneled into the establishment of propagation halls in cities. By 1929, when Sōma began his training, eighty-two such city centers, managed by sixty-three proselytizing-type Buddhist monks, had been established (*Chōsen yōran* 1929).

Equally threatening to the population of *unsui* monks was the increasing trend toward marriage among Korean monastics. A growing number of Korean monks had decided to marry in part because they believed that, like Christian ministers and Japanese priests, a married cleric would be more socially viable in modern society. The majority of the head monks and administrators of temples in Korea married openly. Eventually, the heads of the major temples petitioned the colonial government in 1926 asking that the provision in the 1911 Temple Ordinance requiring celibacy for head monks be lifted (KIM 2002, 174). Eliminating this requirement would follow the policy that the Meiji government promulgated in 1872 in which eating meat and marriage for the Japanese clergy had

13. According to a different source, he was assigned to a rural preaching hall in Korea (SŌTŌSHŪ KAIGAI KAIKYŌ DENDŌSHI HENSAN I'INKAI 1980, 270).

been decriminalized. By 1929, according to the colonialist scholar Takahashi Tōru (1878–1967), more than eighty percent of Korean temples were following this new style (1929, 953). A Korean monk in 1941 even suggested that Korean Buddhism no longer be called monastic Buddhism, but rather be considered a form of lay Buddhism, similar to Japanese Buddhism. He stated that these two Buddhisms were the only lay Buddhist traditions in the Buddhist world, indicating that clergy from Korean and Japanese Buddhism were aberrations from the broadly held tradition of celibacy (*Kyŏngbuk Pulgyo*, December 2 1939, 4).

As a greater number of monks came to have wives and children, the monks' families drained the temples' accounts, thus exacerbating the problems of the already financially-strained temple economies (Buswell 1992, 29–30). Sŏn monasteries tended to remain celibate because one needed to be single, without the obligations of family life, in order to pursue such intensive and extended time in retreat. Thus, those Sŏn monasteries that had depended mainly on the financial support of the head temples bore the brunt of the financial disaster. Gradually, other monks came to view celibate monks as unproductive members of the Buddhist clergy, and celibate monks became marginalized. As a result, the number of Sŏn monasteries inevitably decreased. In an effort to preserve the Sŏn tradition and protect the interests of these Sŏn monks, thirty-five monks established the Society for Supporting Sŏn Fellows (*Sŏnu kongjaehoe* 禪友共濟會) in 1922. Pŏm'ŏ Temple was a major force in establishing this society. It established a branch temple in Seoul and managed to collect enough resources to run the facility along with other programs, such as the hosting of Sŏn masters for dharma talks (Ch ng 2001, 275). Given Pŏm'ŏ Temple's leading role in preserving Sŏn, it was an obvious place for Abe to send Sōma to begin practicing.

Sōma's first impression of the Naewŏnam was that "as compared to busy temples in Japan, this temple is truly a blessed place for Zen practice" (cb 64 1929, 64). Regarding the resident monks, he continues, "I admire those monks who are practicing according to their own ability, as if they had just one day in a hundred years [to practice]." Sōma describes meeting with an old master who decades earlier had been the head monk of Pŏm'ŏ Temple and who now practiced without leaving the temple and its mountains. Intrigued that Sōma had arrived wearing the white robes of traditional Koreans, the master asked him a series of questions. He wanted to know why Sōma came to Korea and why he chose this monastery specifically. The master noted that "It is a strange connection that I will teach Sŏn to somebody who came from Japan" (dz 1929, 292), thus acknowledging this reversal in Korean-Japanese relations. Apparently, Sōma's answers were satisfying, and he was given permission to join the retreat, which had begun two months earlier, even though it is usually against the rules to enter retreat after it has begun. Along with over thirty other monks, Sōma began to meditate for eight hours a day.

In an early submission to the journal, Sōma details the twenty different tasks assigned to each monk at the retreat center, starting from the *chusil* 籌室 who oversees and manages all the details of the retreat. He then lists the *sŏnbaek* 禪伯, a senior practitioner who administers retreat regulations, the *chijŏn* 知殿, who is in charge of rituals and cleaning,… the *sŏgi* 書記 who works as the secretary, the *ch'aegŏng* 菜供 who is in charge of preparing side dishes such as mountain vegetables, and so on (DZ 1929, 294–95). This structure was universal among the nineteen Korean Sŏn monasteries operating at the time, with slight differences from one monastery to the next.

On the first day, the secretary (*sŏgi*) assisted Sōma with settling in. In the meditation hall in front of the entire group of monks on retreat, he introduced Sōma to those in charge of each task one by one, and translated some of the most important regulations that Sōma would need to abide by. Sōma and the Korean monks communicated by brushing out Chinese characters, a written, classical language that both sides could read, since Sōma did not know Korean and his translator had already left. This situation reminded Sōma of the ancient times when monks of different cultures met. He writes, "For some reason, it came to my mind that when Japanese monks studied in China many years ago, they must have also communicated by way of handwriting. Suddenly, I felt as if I had become one of those monks of old, as if I were not in contemporary Korea" (DZ 1929, 293). Sōma was reenacting a centuries-old tradition that allowed Zen teachers and students in East Asia to communicate. Nonetheless, Sōma was determined to learn Korean as soon as possible. At the end of being introduced, Sōma made a full prostration to the monks sitting in front of him as a sign of his commitment to adhering strictly to the regulations. He recalls this moment: "This one bow had quite a significant meaning" (DZ 1929, 297). The bow was an official request that he be received into the retreat, upon which the monks bowed back as a sign that they accepted him as a full member of the community.

Sōma managed to adjust to the rigors of the retreat: waking up at three in the morning, eating spicy food, coping with the hot, muggy weather, enduring bug bites, refraining from killing those bugs, and more. He was assigned to pick mountain vegetables, a role titled *ch'aegŏng*. Spicy food, he writes, was the most difficult part. One time, during a communal meal, he dared to eat one of the most piquant dishes. With his eyes closed, his mouth "flamed out like a volcano" and his eyes "brimmed with tears." A senior monk saw this and recommended that the temple provide specially prepared, non-spicy food for him. Sōma respectfully declined.

> On the second day of retreat, the master called upon Sōma and said, "I would like to teach you everything about Korean monastic life, so it is unfortunate that we both cannot communicate." Sōma replies, "It is unfortunate, indeed, since I also have many questions to ask you. By the way, please treat me as you do other monks" (DZ 1929, 311). The master continued by informing him of a number of points:

> I assume that due to the differences in culture and customs, especially regarding food, you must undergo some inconveniences…. I hope you will be able to get used to these inconveniences, since I hear that it is your purpose of coming here [to practice as the Korean monks do]…. If you have any difficulties, though, feel free to ask me. I would like to provide you with as much accommodation as I can. (DZ 1929, 311)

Sōma writes that the master's words made him feel "like my tears would fall in response to his kindness." The master reminds him of two important points regarding practice:

> It is common in Korea for Sŏn monks to do *kongan* practice. If you have adjusted to the daily life here, I would like you to work on a *kongan*…. Furthermore, needless to say, I would like you to observe precepts well. I assume that you must have heard about the precepts in detail upon ordination. I would like young monks to pay special attention to not smoking, drinking alcohol, and eating meat. (DZ 1929, 311–12)

On the point of precepts, Sōma learns about one of the characteristics of Korean Buddhism during this period. Despite the growing phenomenon of clerical marriage in Korea, the celibacy that Korean monks rigorously adhered to was one of their exceptional qualities. Japanese Buddhists who had decried the backwardness of Korean Buddhism at least admired how Korean Buddhists practiced this precept, and were greatly impressed by how they upheld the other traditional precepts. Sōma writes of the master's comments,

> At some point while listening to him, I felt my face reddening. I recalled what I had heard from somebody before coming to this temple: that he was one of the foremost masters of samadhi meditation, one who has stayed in the deep mountains, preserved precepts, and has not ever slept lying down. Hence, I could feel something powerful from him such that those who talk about precepts are merely spouting words. (DZ 1929, 312)

After a week, even though he and the Korean monks communicated through few words, Sōma felt included in the community.

> While in conversation, we became close and could talk about dharma as if we were Zen friends (*zenyū* 禅友) from the start.… Because they simply spend time meditating and studying sutras, they might not know the world outside well. [Nevertheless], they have something that enables them to live entirely secluded in the deep mountains. Those monks who are into preserving precepts sometimes tested me with honest questions and reflections…. Gradually, I felt like I was being led into a world separated from the secular world. (DZ 1929, 318–19)

Sōma shares another interesting interaction he had with his fellow monks.

> To my surprise, although they practice just sitting meditation at the Zen monastery, I came to find that they are trying to learn Japanese. In the breaks between meditations, they diligently ask me a lot of questions. I was jealous of them, since they can memorize Japanese words quite fast. Their pronunciation is also good. Thus, we spend breaks by teaching and learning words from each other. (DZ 1929, 318)

Sōma also records an aspect of this specific monastery that reflects how a Sŏn monastery was supported in Korea during this time. On the third day, there was a big memorial for the donors who had given some land to the temple. In return for this donation, the temple commemorated the donors each year. Sōma was surprised by the fact that this ritual performance interrupted the retreat because Zen is conventionally understood as anti-ritualistic, anti-scriptural, and anti-iconoclastic. This points to a difference between Korean Sŏn and Japanese Zen, with Korean Sŏn taking a more inclusive approach to a range of Buddhist practices. Here, one can glimpse Sōma's critical view of Japanese Buddhism. He expresses his doubts about whether Japanese temples, which had received similar donations from parishioners (*danka* 檀家), truly fulfilled their promise to pray for the donors every year. What impressed him even more was the way all the food after the ceremony was distributed among monks: "With the principle of equality governing distribution, I was a little bit amazed that every monk [no matter what rank] received the same portion" (DZ 1929, 314).

Sōma documents another large ceremony that was held on the last day of the three-month retreat, which was 15 July on the lunar calendar. On the day before this special day, there was no meditation, and the monastery was flooded with devout lay Buddhists who came to pray to the Buddha for their ancestors. This is one of the major Buddhist holidays in East Asia, called *paekjung* 百中 in Korean (Jp. *Obon* お盆), and the Sŏn monastery was not an exception in performing this festive ritual on behalf of the ancestors of its members. All the Sŏn monks engaged in chanting scriptures, invoking Amida, and praying. This scene intrigued Sōma: "Although it is not the first time that I heard *nenbutsu* 念仏 (chanting the Buddha's name) at a Zen monastery, I have never seen Zen monks chanting alongside [lay] believers." Yet Sōma does not judge what he was seeing as anti-Zen or inauthentic, but instead puts a meditative spin on such a this-worldly ritualism:

> When syllables of *Namu ami t'abul* (Jp. *Namu amida butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏) tenderly reverberated throughout the deep mountains, I was enchanted by the solemnity manifesting from the beautiful chorus of chanting and my body swayed from side to side. At this moment, everybody forgot about the sultry weather and suffering and just rejoiced with rapture. (DZ 1929, 321)

This ceremony continued until the next day, the morning of July fifteenth. All the rituals came to an end, and the bustling temple returned to its original repose. However, an unexpected incident caused another disruption. The Chijŏn monk in charge of rituals and four other monks had been seized by acute food poisoning. Everybody was at a loss as to what to do, and could only watch the sick monks anxiously. Sōma did not hesitate to offer pills and tinctures that he had brought for himself. He had received them from the Zen scholar Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 (1867–1934)[14] in case he might fall ill with this kind of acute sickness during his stay in Korea. Sōma had the monks take the pills, which eventually cured them. Rejoicing, Sōma and the monks cried together in gratitude: Sōma had been extremely worried about the effectiveness of the medicines (DZ 1929, 328–30).

In the same way that Sōma cared for his fellow monks, he is clearly aware of their care for him:

> It is strange that one who does not know the language and customs well can get by each day without many problems. However, behind the scenes of this happiness, I must be aware of how much care the monks of the monastery have provided for me. As if they took care of a baby, they predict and observe my needs from my behavior. By being attentive to my needs, even young monks help me without being asked. However, in fact, this support can be interpreted in another way. Regardless of language barriers, behavior says something beyond what words can. Therefore, friendship can arise not from the unity of words and behavior, but from behavior alone. (DZ 1929, 319)

On the next day, after the three-month retreat ended on 16 July, all the *unsui* monks left for unspecified locations, while Sōma stayed on at the temple for three more years. The Sŏgi monk tells Sōma, "We will meet again if we are meant to." The Chijŏn monk, whom Sōma had befriended and helped to heal from the food poisoning that had nearly killed him, held Sōma's hands tightly in gratitude without saying a word. Sōma said, "Please take good care of yourself." Seeing all the monks off, Sōma expresses how lonely he felt at being left behind.

> At last, with big backpacks on their backs and holding bamboo hats in their hands, they close the door of the monastery behind them without any attachment. They are finally leaving. I feel alone. They are walking in a line. Walking away. Into the thick forests. They are gone. They have gone to seek the Dharma. They must go somewhere to resolve the great matters of life and death. Will they reach enlightenment there? (DZ 1929, 333)

14. Nukariya wrote the first comprehensive book on the Korean Sŏn tradition, *Chōsen zenkyō shi* 朝鮮禅教史, in 1930. Later, he served as president of Komazawa University.

Sōma's first monastic experience in colonial Korea provides a fresh perspective on the relationship between Japanese and Korean Buddhists. An itinerant monk traveling to neighboring countries, such as China, Korea, or the far reaches of central Asia, and developing a strong sense of transnational community is not unusual: throughout the history of Buddhism, innumerable seekers of the Dharma have crossed seas and continents and worked across national and cultural boundaries. Sōma's case, though, is exceptional because his pilgrimage took place in the context of colonialism and imperialism. Most Korean-Japanese Buddhist interactions were largely colored by political necessities, mainly to the advantage of the colonizer. Sōma's shared identity as an *unsui* enabled him to find a degree of freedom from colonial discourse, to feel at home in a Korean monastery, and to sustain a strong sense of brotherhood with Korean Sŏn monks.

Some years later, when Sōma was on his way to Kwiju 歸州 Temple in Hamgyŏng 咸鏡 province just after completing several months of intensive retreat, he caught the flu and could not resume his trip. Fortunately, he ran into two *unsui* monks with whom he had practiced before. When they found out Sōma was ill, they looked after him for two weeks until he recovered and was ready to resume his journey. However, it had snowed continuously for three days the morning before Sōma was ready to leave, making the trip dangerous. Nevertheless, the life of the *unsui* requires that he move constantly and not stay in one location except for retreat periods. Sōma says, "I am leaving today." "Isn't it still snowing?" asks one of the monks. However, the monk knows why Sōma plans to head out: the *unsui* is without ties, like clouds and water. Sōma writes, "Being aware of this feeling, the monk does not argue with me further" (CB 89 1933, 18–19).

Yet Sōma knew that he would meet them again somewhere, and that they would receive him with warmth and kindness, as fellow *unsui* monks do. Exhausted from the long journey, he arrives at a temple in the Chi'ak 雉岳 Mountains of Kangwŏn 江原 province. Sōma was surprised when a monk peeked his head out of a room and said, "You must be the one from Kumgang 金剛 mountain!" The monk carried Sōma's backpack and ushered him into the room. Sōma records this warm welcome,

> It is such a pleasure to meet an acquaintance in the middle of nowhere. The delight of being an *unsui* erupts from here. The abbot of the temple also appeared and others studying at the temple gathered together. I entrusted myself to them as if leaving my exhausted body to them. (CB 90 1933, 41)

Here, his identity as an *unsui* monk predominates, and his other identities as a Japanese citizen and Sōtō priest are secondary. The camaraderie among Zen monastics and *unsui*s is deeper and broader than these national and sectarian identities. In January 1934, at the T'ap 塔 monastery where he sat yet another retreat, Sōma reveals another, rather comical, feature of the *unsui* community.

> *Unsui* monks usually arrive at Zen monasteries at least a week before a three-month retreat commences. I like this period the most because I can hear all the different impressions, experiences, and stories that the *unsui* bring from their travels to villages and temples. It is as if I were reading the *Unsui* shinbun 雲水新聞 (newspaper) but with a livelier take. (CB 97 1934, 27)

He then preempts any possible misinterpretation of this passage by those who might believe that Korean monks are less serious about their practice and act more like commoners.

> If I write this way, Korean *unsui* monks might be thought of as chatter boxes. There is no one who keeps silence as strictly as the *unsui* in Korea. They merely express the entirety of a thought with a frank word or phrase. Such is the flavor of Zen monks. (CB 97 1934, 27–8)

These passages convey appreciation, respect, and gratitude for Korean Buddhism, rather than the often-spouted rhetoric of decadence, ignorance, or the necessity of reform, and thus are valuable as a point of contrast in colonial studies.

### *Search for Masters*

One of an *unsui*'s primary tasks is to find a master who can guide him on practice and path (KUZUNISHI 1977, 167; SATŌ 1973, 1). Sōma met a number of prominent masters, including Pak Hanyŏng 朴 漢永 (1870–1948), Kim Kyŏngun 金 敬雲 (1852–?), and Pang Hanam 方 漢岩 (1876–1951), who were well respected by Korean Buddhists.

His most memorable and personally transformative encounter occurred with Hanam, the most prominent Sŏn master in colonial Korea. Revered as an exemplary reclusive Sŏn master who never left his monastery and was solely devoted to teaching meditation to students, he attracted many *unsui* monks serious about Sŏn practice. Despite his reluctance, he later became the first patriarch of the institutional governing body of Korean Buddhism, the Chogyejong 曹溪宗, in 1941, under the condition that he would not be required to leave his mountain (CHONGGO 2007, 72–73). Hanam was also known to Japanese Buddhists and venerated by Japanese Buddhist intellectuals. Indeed, it was Sōma who made Hanam well known. Hanam deeply influenced Sōma's understanding of what true Buddhism and monastic life should be in modern society.

In 1933, Hanam resided at Sangwŏn 上院 Temple, a branch of the head temple Woljŏng 月精, in Kangwŏn 江原 Province. He was leading a three-month retreat for thirty-five monks when Sōma arrived. Sōma presented a recommendation letter from the abbot of Woljŏng temple and begged Hanam to receive him for the winter retreat. The first meeting between Sōma and Hanam is a typical

encounter between a spiritual seeker and a master in East Asian Zen discourse. The following are the initial exchanges between Sōma and Master Hanam:

> Hanam: By the way, I hear that Japanese Buddhism is quite popular. Why did you venture into these deep [Korean] mountains?
> Sōma: I came to practice Zen under your close guidance.
> H: It is quite cold here, it snows a lot, and it's very windy. In addition, if it snows, it is impossible to get access to the village. What if you get sick?
> S: Having given my life for the Dharma, I would rather consider these hardships as a pleasure.
> H: Although I cannot help you if the community denies you admission because your late arrival violates retreat rules [he arrived fifteen days late], I will give you a special permit so that you can practice here. (CB 87 1933, 15)

As was the case at Pŏm'ŏ Temple, Sōma had to wait for the monastics to discuss Sōma's entry in a public sangha meeting (*taejung kongsa* 大衆公事) to receive a final answer. To Sōma's relief, they accepted him. He joined the other monks in the retreat for the remaining winter session. Sōma was assigned the duty of cleaning the meditation complex. The schedules and rules of the retreat were quite tight and strict. Sōma writes,

> One is neither allowed to talk until nine o'clock in the evening nor to have personal time. Everybody practices assiduously and seriously. One thing that is different from other meditation centers is that there are just two meals a day—and one of them, breakfast, is [merely] rice soup. (CB 97 1934, 16)

Although the reduced meals were attributed to the dire financial situation of the head temple[15] that supported the branch, Hanam did not mind. Rather, he said to Sōma, "Śākyamuni had just one meal a day; therefore we all should be appreciative of having even breakfast. With that note, I want you to practice diligently" (CB 97 1934, 16). Sōma's personal admiration of Hanam's disposition is stated clearly in a letter to Nakamura. Sōma writes of Hanam's emphasis on precepts, the core of Hanam's teachings. Hanam had told him, "If one fails to preserve precepts, he cannot be called one who left home to seek the way to enlightenment. A precept breaker is inferior to a lay person." Sōma points out that students viewed Hanam's teachings as authoritative: "Those who are practicing under his guidance, of course, do their best not to break a single word of the master. For his word, no interpretation needs to be attempted" (CB 97 1934, 17). Sōma was deeply moved by Hanam's steadfast practice despite his weakening health.

15. The Woljŏng temple allegedly had a debt of 800,000 won and eventually had to sell vast tracts of land that it owned to pay the debt back (Kim 2002, 162).

> Master was suffering from chronic stomach aches, and his energy gradually deteriorated. As a result, it became impossible for him even to sit with us. I was just grateful to him for teaching us despite his illness. In addition, despite his sickness, he never lagged behind us in practice. Except for three or four hours of sleep, he meditates all day. (CB 97 1934, 17)

Deeply enchanted, Sōma reveals some of Hanam's more personal qualities. "Although stern and strict, in person he becomes a child with a pure mind. One will feel happiness in his honesty" (CB 97 1934, 18). His observation of Hanam and the way other monastics followed all the instructions given by Hanam led Sōma to see what a true monastic life should be. Sōma continues,

> When believers send gifts such as cakes, no matter how little the amount, they will be distributed equally to everybody. There is no distinction between Master and disciples. The true spirit of "leaving home" (*shukke* 出家) is actualized. (CB 97 1934, 19)

After the winter retreat was over, Sōma asked Hanam for some calligraphy, and Hanam wrote four characters: "Do not seek fame." Sōma and his fellow monks joined the master for a final meal of noodles, committing to each other to "practice diligently in the future" (CB 97 1934, 19). A year later, Sōma would return to Hanam to do an intensive retreat during which students did not sleep.

As noted earlier, Sōma also visited Hanyŏng and Kyŏngun, two other renowned masters. Under Hanyŏng, Sōma studied sutras at a Buddhist seminary for a year (CB 110 1935, 5). Kyŏngun, who was eighty-three years old at the time, also left a deep impression on Sōma, who writes of his overwhelming feeling in the presence of this master when ushered into the old master's room: "I could not utter any word. I instinctively prostrated on the floor once.... I came to meet this great Zen master Kim Kyŏngun in person!!" Sōma also delivered a letter to Kyŏngun from Hanyŏng, which he brought with him. After reading it, Kyŏngun told Sōma in a clear voice:

> Buddhism in Japan and Korea is the same. Nevertheless, how good it is for you to come to Korea to study and practice meditation! Who would say the Dharma will perish?! Practice itself is the life of Buddhism. (CB 98 1934, 11)

In the course of conversation, Kyŏngun repeatedly reminded Sōma that he "should not forget to practice diligently." This left a deep imprint in Sōma's mind. Sōma reflects, "I believe that if there is no practitioner, Buddhism will be nothing more than a historical relic. The prosperity of Buddhism, as Master says, will depend solely on one thing, practice." Sōma felt embarrassed about his own level of diligence in practice. He felt self-conscious sitting in front of the master who practiced assiduously day and night. Sōma writes, "I felt as if a tremendous power were pressing in on me—from the old master who has practiced continuously

and sincerely" (CB 98 1934, 11). When Kyŏngun fell ill, Sōma revisited him and delivered messages from Abe and Nakamura wishing him a quick recovery.

*Sōma's Views on Japanese and Korean Buddhism*

His exchanges with Korean masters and monastics later prompted Sōma to question why Japanese Buddhists broadly characterized Korean Buddhism as "mountain Buddhism" (*sankan bukkyō* 山間仏教) and Japanese Buddhism as "urban Buddhism" (*tokai bukkyō* 都会仏教). Behind this dualistic representation was the implication that progressive-minded urban Buddhism was superior to isolated, anachronistic mountain Buddhism.

> Korean Buddhism is often called mountain Buddhism. Mountain Buddhism itself is fine! The true disciple of the Buddha adheres to his identity as a bhikkhu by renouncing the world. Now, mountain Buddhism is being turned into urban Buddhism. However, how much can we value urban Buddhism? Japanese Buddhism might be called urban Buddhism; nevertheless, how many urban Buddhists can we say are the true disciples of the Buddha and how much do they actually save and guide society? (CB 87 1933, 19)

This was a bold statement that ran contrary to one of the aims of the journal in which it was published, namely to not undermine the view that Japanese Buddhism is superior. By making it, Sōma debunked the assertions of many Japanese Buddhists that their own Buddhism was more modernized, urbanized, and socialized.

Sōma's critique deepened as he came into greater contact with local Koreans and Japanese people because he found the views on both sides to be even more skewed than what was put forward in the public discourse. During his extended travels in Korea, Sōma had many occasions to hear what other people thought of Korean and Japanese Buddhism. In his responses, he is generally critical and self-reflective when talking about Japanese people and Buddhism, while he is defensive and sympathetic toward Korean people and Buddhism.

Sōma was well aware of the way the Japanese treated Koreans in colonial Korea. His first experience of Japanese arrogance (as he would view it) was when he was staying at Pŏm'ŏ Temple. Japanese tourists who were on a sightseeing trip to view fall leaves at the temple complex approached Sōma and inquired about something. They had not realized that he was Japanese because he was wearing the white robes of a native Korean. When Sōma answered in fluent Japanese, they were surprised. During their visit, Sōma could sense the arrogant gaze of the Japanese tourists over the Korean people and monks. In a letter to Nakamura, he writes,

> In order to understand Korea, as you said, one must become Korean by dressing in the Korean traditional white clothes. It is shameful to see Japanese

> people living in Korea. Their understanding of Korea is entirely wrong. And those lacking a correct understanding of it display the attitude of conquerors. Korean people have to put up with it. Not everybody, I believe, will tolerate it.
> (CB 64 1929, 40)

Sōma understood that the disastrous March First Movement in 1919 stemmed from the tension and animosity between Koreans and Japanese. He firmly believed that it would be impossible for the Japanese to live among Koreans if they did not learn the language and follow their customs.

His self-critical view of Japanese people living in Korea also applies to Japanese Buddhism in colonial Korea. During one journey on a cold winter day, he sought shelter at a local police substation and started a conversation with a Japanese police officer. When the officer learned that Sōma was a Japanese Buddhist priest, the policeman complained that there were not enough Japanese priests in the village available to administer funeral ceremonies for Japanese residents. The policeman's remark hit Sōma hard. Sōma laments: "Japanese Buddhism is needed only for funerals!" (CB 90 1933, 36). Sōma knew that Japanese Buddhist priests were perceived as, as a Higashi Honganji priest put it, "specialist[s] of the funeral execution business for Japanese" (*naichi nin no sōgi jikkō sengyōmon* 内地人の葬儀執行業専門)(*Kakusei* 1937, 12 February).

Worse, the police officer said that when a local troublemaker sought his advice, he had sent him to a Christian church since there was no Buddhist priest and temple nearby. Sōma felt even more dejected when the officer said that the troublemaker had been converted into a devout Christian. The officer admitted that he himself was ignorant about Buddhism, but that he remembered his mother would make him put his palms together and pray to the Buddha when he was little. Sōma bemoans, "Isn't it the reality that current [Japanese] Buddhism is merely sustained by mothers?" (CB 90 1933, 37). This observation led Sōma to try to correct the belief among many Koreans that Japanese Buddhism was popular and vibrant.

Sōma often defended Korean Buddhism. One time, a Korean female innkeeper asked him, "Japanese priests, I hear, are esteemed, aren't they? There was a time when Korean monks' social status was low beyond comparison." To this, Sōma questions what it means to be a Buddhist priest: "Is it true, as she said, that Japanese priests are socially higher than Korean monks? Is social status necessary for those who have renounced the world?" Perhaps in remembrance of Hanam's instruction "Do not seek fame," Sōma claims, "Is it desirable for one who has renounced the world to have a social status? I myself am nothing more than an alms beggar" (CB 90 1933, 38). In another, similar incident, Sōma defends Korean Buddhism. An old Korean man he had met at a motel told Sōma his view of the stark contrast between Korean and Japanese Buddhism:

> It is said that Buddhism is flourishing in Japan and that Korean Buddhism is not even comparable to Japanese Buddhism. First and foremost, Japanese people have faith. We once went to a Japanese preaching hall in Kangrŭng 江陵 and everybody in the hall was praying with his or her hands together.
>
> (CB 89 1933, 23)

Upon hearing this, Sōma momentarily lost his temper and retorted: "There is no question about the popularity of Korean Buddhism during the Shilla 新羅 (668–935) and Koryŏ 高麗 (935–1392) periods.… It makes me sad to see people's lives distanced from this great Buddhism." He acknowledges that Korean Buddhism "was miserable in the past" and had lost much of its cultural and religious influence (CB 89 1933, 23). He is especially concerned that the number of Zen monasteries had significantly decreased as a result of social change.

Regarding proselytization, Sōma was critical of both communities for lacking missionary spirit and fervor. When he visited a temple in northern Korea, he was stunned that the area had become heavily Christian. He called it "a place of Christian monopoly." Soma was right in that Presbyterians, who by the 1920s had firmly established Christianity in the largest city of the area, Pyŏngyang 平壤, proudly presented the city as the new "Jerusalem" (CLARK 2003, 121). Compared to the deserted Korean temple, there were churches everywhere, each full of people singing hymns. Sōma felt terrible about Buddhism's lack of strength because he saw that Christian missions had made much progress in such a short period. He writes, "If Buddhists today had made one millionth the effort in proselytization as Christian missionaries did, the result would have been different" (CB 92 1933, 33).

Sōma was able to be critical of Japanese Buddhism and appreciative of Korean Buddhism because of his first-hand monastic relationships. In many ways, Sōma's observations and assessments of both Buddhisms were more accurate than the (mis)conceptions of colonial scholarship and the public.

### *"Go Back to the Mountains": The Impact of Sōma's Writings*

Sōma's revelations about the vitality of the Korean monastic tradition and its great masters were not enough to offset the broad misconceptions Japanese Buddhists had about Korean Buddhism and monastics. However, Sōma's descriptions of his rich experience influenced a number of Japanese Buddhist priests and intellectuals who consequently modified their perceptions of Korean Buddhism. One Sōtō missionary, impressed by Sōma's efforts to learn from Korean Buddhism, criticized the lethargic missionary work of Japanese Buddhists in the newspaper *Kongō* (1930, October, 14). He admired Sōma's eagerness to learn Korean Buddhism and expressed concern about Sōma's health: "It is too bad that Sōma, who came to Korea right after he graduated from Komazawa University and practiced Korean Buddhism at the Pŏm'ŏ Temple in Kyŏngnam

慶南 Province, had to return Japan [briefly] due to his sickness" (*Kongō* 1930, October, 14). Nevertheless, it is clear that the priest appreciated Sōma's practice with Korean monastics. Another admirer, a military colonel named Kaneko Tei'ichi 金子定一, visited Pŏmŏ Temple after reading Sōma's account of his time there in the journal (CB 94 1933, 16).

Japanese Buddhists seem to have been most influenced by Sōma's writing on Hanam. Sōma's deep respect for Hanam caused other Japanese Buddhists to change their belief that Korean Buddhism lacked any respectable, serious masters and monks. The newspaper *Korean Buddhism* repeatedly mentioned Sōma's presentation of Hanam, as if suddenly the true dharma had been discovered in Korea after centuries of absence. Nakamura, along with a reporter, took the head of the Police Department Ikeda Kiyoshi 池田清 (1885–1966)[16] to pay a visit to Hanam as though seeking out a new holy man discovered in a desert.[17] Ikeda, a Buddhist himself, was also motivated by Sōma's writing to meet Hanam (NAKAMURA 1969, 184). After a challenging trip to reach Hanam's remote monastery, Nakamura and Ikeda finally arrived and sat down with the master. Through Nakamura as translator, Ikeda told Hanam that he had learned about the master from Sōma and thanked Hanam for having taken good care of Sōma, whom Ikeda identified as his friend, during retreat. Ikeda asked Hanam to continue to instruct Sōma if Sōma came back, to which Haman replies, "I am not at all a useful person. But if he comes back, I would love to practice together." (As mentioned earlier, Sōma did come back to do an intensive retreat under Hanam).

This meeting between Hanam and Ikeda, however, was presented in a journal article with a slight twist, quite differently from the way Sōma described his own meeting with the master. The article concludes, at the end of conveying the content of the conversation, with a typical assessment:

> [F]or Master Hanam, who must have experienced contempt from society, his meeting with the head of the Police Department, must have been, I believe, one of the most unforgettable impressions in his life. (CB 102 1934, 4)

The meeting of Hanam with such a high state official, the reporter interpreted and Nakamura also wrote later in his memoir (NAKAMURA 1969, 184–85), was an honor for Hanam because Hanam, as a monk, held a very low position in society. In the same issue of the journal, Sōma, who had heard about their visit, writes a letter to Nakamura with an entirely different assessment:

> I conjecture that the meeting with Master Hanam was a beautiful gift from Korea. However, if we bother him too much with frequent visits, it wouldn't be

16. Ikeda served from 1931 to 1936.

17. Sōma's mentor, Abe, was also eager to meet Hanam although Abe's poor health did not allow that to materialize (CB 119 1936, 50).

> an exaggeration to say that he might hide himself deeper into the mountains. For certain, his great work is to be in contact with his students, and I believe that his teachings will be like a great river that saves sentient beings boundlessly. (CB 102 1934, 7)

Nakamura's meeting with Hanam eventually changed Nakamura's views on Korean Buddhism. Two years later, in an editorial addressed to Korean monks, while he admonishes Korean Buddhism for lacking able figures, he acknowledges,

> I don't mean that there are no respectable monks among the seven thousand [monastics in Korea]. I am aware that there are eminent masters. In addition, I know that there are monks who are serious about practice. (CB 106 1935, 1)

Sōma's writing also inspired the Rinzai master Kasan Daigi 華山大義 to visit Hanam to "seek teachings that can help him [Kasan] understand the Rinzai tradition" (CB 124 1937, 35). Nevertheless, Kasan intended to advise Hanam on how to correct the drawbacks of the Korean monastic system by emulating the Japanese monastic system. Kasan recommended that Hanam integrate physical labor into the Korean monastic practice. The journal reports Kasan as saying that upon his instruction, Hanam "was in tears with full agreement," and "said that he had heard it for the first time," and conversed with Kasan "for four straight hours" (CB 124 1937, 35). The difference between Sōma's approach toward Hanam and that of other Buddhists is clear. While Sōma perceived of Hanam as a great master, others considered him as either a socially inferior individual or somebody who could benefit from guidance by Japanese Buddhists.

Sōma's introduction of Hanam and other Korean masters to the public also prompted the journal to balance the reporting by introducing Japanese masters as great as Hanam. The journal soon featured Toyama Kassan 豊山豁山 from Hokkaidō as evidence that "there is a similar master in Japan [as Hanam in Korea]." But this master is different. He is "like Master Hanam brought on Broadway," writes the reporter of the journal. The next few issues in the journal feature details about the *unsui* life in Japan (CB 90 1933, 22–26).

The most interesting person who was changed by Sōma's writing is Takahashi Tōru. As a prominent colonialist scholar who taught at Keijō 京城 [Seoul] Imperial University, Takahashi wrote one of the most influential works on Korean Buddhism in 1924, a work titled *Richō bukkyō* 李朝佛教. He also wrote on other religions and folk traditions in Korea. Along with a similar work, Chosŏn Pulgyo T'ongsa 朝鮮佛敎通史, written by Korean scholar Yi Nŭnghwa 李 能和 (1869–1943) a decade earlier, *Richō bukkyō* is the most comprehensive work on the history of Korean Buddhism. But, as modern scholar Kawase Takaya says, Takahashi was a "typical" colonialist scholar whose stance on Korean Buddhism reflected colonial ideology, with its narrative leading up to an argument for the reformation

of a spineless Korean Buddhism (Kawase 2004, 151–71). Sōma's articles, however, shifted Takahashi's earlier views about solving the problems of Korean Buddhism.

For example, in *Richō bukkyō* Takahashi examines issues in Korean Buddhism before the issuance of the 1911 Temple Ordinance, and then points out the improvements that came about as a result of the colonial government's subsequent promotion of Korean Buddhism through to the late 1920s. Detailing the dire condition of Korean Buddhism, he makes five comparisons between Korean and Japanese temple Buddhism during the pre-colonial period. Japanese Buddhists singled out two of Takahashi's five comparisons in defining themselves against Korean Buddhists—the parish system and the social status of Buddhist priests—so we will look at what Takahashi says about these.

First, according to Takahashi, Japanese Buddhist priests busy themselves daily by caring to the needs of their parishioners through performing funerals and other rituals and giving dharma talks. In contrast, Korean monks were "lazy" because there was "no parish system" that caused them to provide services to members. Takahashi reasoned that due to the long period of persecution during the Chosŏn dynasty, Korean Buddhism could not develop parishioners who could donate economic resources and, as a result, Korean monks were forced to support themselves by begging, performing labor, and selling artifacts, and that they rarely interacted with lay people. Second, Korean monks were ignorant. Here, Takahashi admits many Japanese priests in Japan were likewise uneducated, especially, in the Jōdoshin sect. Yet, compared with the level of the ignorance of Korean monks, they are "great scholars" (Takahashi 1929, 1019–37).

Among the other remaining points of comparison, Takahashi presents at least two positive aspects of Korean monastics. While Japanese Buddhists were divided into various sects, Korean Buddhists maintained some kind of unity, a trait that enabled Korean monks to survive their long persecution. In addition, Korean monks abided by precepts and monastic rules far better than Japanese priests. However, the weight of his argument fundamentally rests on how to improve Korean Buddhism so that it could be elevated to at least the same level that Japanese Buddhism had achieved (Takahashi 1929, 1037–39).

Based on the first point, that Korean temples had no parish system, Takahashi characterizes Korean Buddhism as a monastic-centered Buddhism because the only Buddhists in Korea were monastics confined to the temple complex. Lacking any influence among common people, Korean monks, he concludes, completely lost the capacity to relate their religion to society (*shūkyō no shakōsei* 宗教の社交性). He asserts that the most urgent priority for Korean Buddhism, would be to integrate Korean Buddhism into society, a priority he terms as "the socialization of religion" (*shūkyō no shakaika* 宗教の社会化) (Takahashi 1929, 1039–40).

Reflecting his position as a colonialist scholar, Takahashi believed that the socialization of Korean Buddhism was to a great extent accomplished after the

1911 Temple Ordinance. More specifically, the colonial government's pro-Buddhist policies brought about fundamental changes in Korean Buddhism. He enumerates five changes: 1) the lazy and useless chanting of monks was reduced and the number of (also lazy and useless) Sŏn monks decreased; 2) young monks were motivated to study; 3) the features of a modern Korean society, such as improved roads, modern education for young monks, tourist housing, and modern office culture, had been introduced to the temples; 4) budgets for proselytization and education were increased; 5) thanks to the temple ordinance, the social status of Korean monastics had been elevated to be on par with that of Japanese priests (Takahashi 1929, 1040).

Nevertheless, he points out that the socialization of Korean Buddhism during the colonial period caused some side effects as well. Korean monks were rapidly secularized, no longer wearing monk robes but instead putting on lay clothes. In emulation of Japanese Buddhist priests, they also ate meat and took wives in public. He also asserts that under the pretext of proselytization, they squandered the temple economy, and that a growing number of preaching halls established in cities had increased their contacts with women, resulting in complaints from onlookers. In the end, Takahashi warns that the resolution of these issues would depend on preparing appropriate measures that dealt with the problems brought about by the socialization of Korean Buddhism (Takahashi 1929, 1042). As seen in his accounts, Takahashi still considers the socialization of Korean Buddhism as a desirable path despite some negative impacts.

In his response to Sōma's article on Hanam, Takahashi, however, makes a major shift from his earlier position. Takahashi opens by acknowledging that, thanks to Sōma's writing, he came to know of Master Hanam's day-to-day life. "Although I heard his name twenty years ago, I have not had an opportunity to receive his teaching," he remarks. He then lauds Hanam as "a characteristic Zen monk that one once found in Chosŏn [for example, pre-modern] Buddhism." Yet, he does not fully accept the way Sōma described Hanam as a great spiritual master. Just as other Japanese Buddhists would not acknowledge Hanam's accomplishments, Takahashi likewise writes that, "The vitality of Zen in the Chosŏn dynasty was lacking, but Korean monastics were able to reach some spiritual advancement through preserving precepts" (CB 90 1933, 24). While attributing Hanam's spiritual foundation to the practice of precepts rather than to Zen practice itself, Takahashi nevertheless praises Hanam:

> The mind of enlightenment that Chosŏn Sŏn monks attained is like a lake in a deep mountain. It is as if no fish are swimming, not a single wave is moving, and the depth and purity is limitless. Whenever things appear, the lake reflects them and when they disappear, it does not leave any trace. Master Hanam is like this lake, and he is an old master whom Sŏn practitioners should revere.
>
> (CB 90 1933, 24)

Takahashi then turns his attention back to the corrupt situation of Korean Buddhism. He makes a series of acerbic remarks stating that in this day and age, Korean monks "live completely like lay people." He says that the abandonment of precepts and the practice of clerical marriage is ubiquitous, and that many Korean monks justify taking a wife, having children, possessing a house and property, eating meat, drinking alcohol, and smoking as rather trivial so as long as they follow a monk's life symbolically or spiritually. He proclaims that "Korean Buddhism has reversed its religious basis from monastics to laity." Thus, "In cities and villages, one can see neither dharma nor monks nor temples" (CB 90 1933, 25). It is not that there were no temples and monks in cities and villages; indeed, the number of preaching halls and preacher monks was increasing. What he meant was that there were few celibate monks who abided by the precepts.

Takahashi had a strong dislike for married monks. The least qualified clergy, he says, were monks who entered the priesthood but were preoccupied with supporting their wives and children without an interest in helping people with suffering. "The Dharma today is in much greater jeopardy than it was when it endured persecution during the Chosŏn dynasty," he writes. "What should we do?" he asks rhetorically. He answers, "The only way is to reverse the trend of Korean Buddhism that began after annexation; that is, to send Korean Buddhists back to the mountains" (CB 90 1933, 25). Reversing his earlier vision of reform for Korean Buddhism, he continues,

> The sound of the whistle that has beckoned Korean monks up to now is the song that draws monks from the mountains into cities and from home-renouncing monk to laity. The sound of the whistle from now on should be the song that drives monks from the laity to home-renouncing monk and from cities into the mountains. (CB 90 1933, 25)

Influenced by Sōma, Takahashi modifies his earlier emphasis on the socialization of Korean Buddhism and, in a sense, acknowledges the failure of colonial policies for Buddhism. In addition, as seen in his biting criticism of the popularity of clerical marriage, Takahashi did not consider Japanese Buddhism itself to be a model for reforming Korean Buddhism. In a speech given in 1936, he argues that there would be "no merit at all" in sending Korean monks to the schools of Japanese Buddhist sects because these schools are merely academic and lack real religious practice and spirit (TAKAHASHI 1936, 18). Abe likewise was averse to Japanese Buddhism. Sōma quotes him as saying that "even seeing a [priest's] wife's slip hanging [on the clothesline] in the temple complex makes me feel disgusted, and I don't feel like going there ever again" (CB 119 1936, 48).

Both Abe and Takahashi, after learning more about Korean Buddhism through Sōma's writings, began to doubt the deeply held views that Korean Buddhism should modernize by coming into the cities, that mountain Buddhism was

without value and obstructed modernization, and that Japanese Buddhism was superior. Takahashi suggested that mountain Buddhism and Sŏn be considered the key to revitalizing Korean Buddhism, as Sōma had indicated in his writings. Sōma's presentation of Korean Sŏn thus played a significant role in reshaping the Japanese slogan for reforming Korean Buddhism. At the end of his article, Takahashi says, "I would like to dedicate a stick of incense in the form of words for Master Hanam's health" (CB 90 1933, 25).

*Conclusion*

One sign of the popularity of Sōma's articles is that every issue of Korean Buddhism includes a postscript announcing his whereabouts and the upcoming topic of his next entry. The postscript also sometimes apologizes for failing to feature his pieces. Sōma's narratives captured the imagination of many readers. Although Sōma was a young priest who had no significant administrative position in his sect, he became so important, memorable, and meaningful that Nakamura, in a 1969 memoir, highlights just two things when referring to the journal, one of which is "Sōma Shōei's writing." He remembers it as "precious material" that would help one to understand Korean Buddhism (Nakamura 1969, 97–98).

In 1936, after six years of adventures in Korea, Sōma returned to Japan to live as an *unsui* there. After practicing for a year at Eiheiji 永平寺 in 1938, Sōma continued his meditation retreat at a small Sōtō monastery called Taijōji 大乘寺, located in Kanazawa. With so many years of practice in Korean monasteries, Korean Buddhism had become a major point of reference for him, even when practicing in the Japanese style. In a letter to Nakamura in March 1938, Sōma writes that the meditation practice and retreat management at Taijōji were "quite similar to those of the Korean [monasteries]" (CB 129 1938, 8).

Sōma writes again to Nakamura in December 1938 about the volatile position of imperial Japan in the global community and the seriousness of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Hearing that some of his friends had been drafted and killed for the war, Sōma becomes defensive about his *unsui* life.

> Just because it is the time of total mobilization for all people in Japan does not mean that one cannot do any service for the nation unless one puts on a military uniform. It is also important to protect the home front without guns, and it will be honorable for an *unsui* like me to exert oneself through practice in a monastery. (CB 1938 136, 10)

He continues,

> With that in mind, I have practiced so far in good health. However, at the time of state emergency, it is wasteful to only practice meditation. Furthermore, I have been able to practice for a long time; this is not the first time that I started

> practice. I would like to return to Korea as soon as possible and do my best at a given place. I think that returning would be the best thing to do, and it would not run counter to *unsui* practice. Thus, I feel like finishing practice in Japan and traveling to the temples that I had wanted to visit. Now, I have finally arrived in Tokyo. …My return to Korea this time will be a real one. For so many years in the past, I have been given so much support in my studies. This time, I will devote my entire energy for the benefit of Korea. (CB 1938 136, 10)

It is not known what Sōma wished to devote himself to or how it would have benefitted Korea. But it is clear that Sōma took Japan's colonial rule over Korea as a given, and understood the implication of Japan's wars against China and the West. Yet, his descriptions of his monastic experience are not occupied with the colonizer/colonized paradigm, seen in the writings of Takahashi, Nakamura, Abe, and many other Buddhist priests on the topic of Korean Buddhism. The journal was probably excited about Sōma's writing and readers were moved by his representation of Korean Buddhism because they could receive the stories without such ideological rhetoric.

We do not know from extant sources whether Sōma made it to Korea or even whether he survived World War II. Perhaps new sources will be found later. Yet it is not my concern to ensure that Sōma's life have a coherent viewpoint through to the end of colonial rule. It suffices to say that Sōma's monastic experience in Korea provided the unique perspective of a Japanese priest who had meaningful relationships with Korean monastics, relationships that made a significant impact on his religious practice and identity. These relationships were based not so much on his political connections to colonial officials as on his own identity as an *unsui*, an identity that enabled him to see the value of Korean monastic training and to join the practice community easily. Sōma's case is precious and memorable because, as discussed, it provides scholars of modern Japanese and Korean Buddhism some relief from the dominant, bipolar discourse of Japanese Buddhists. Sōma's exceptionalism creates a contrast to the beliefs of most other Japanese colonial figures, thereby providing contemporary scholars with insight into the complexities of how both Sōma and his counterparts viewed Korean Buddhism in the colonial context.

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AMKBM *Abe Mitsuie kankei bunsho mokuroku* 阿部充家関係文書目録. Chōsen bukkyō ni taisuru hiken 朝鮮仏教に対する卑見. (Available at the National Diet Library, Tokyo)

CB *Chōsen bukkyō* 朝鮮佛教 (1924–1945). Keijō: Chōsen Bukkyōsha.
CN *Chūgai nippō* 中外日報 (1897–1995). Kyoto: Kōrakudō.
DZ *Daruma Zen* 達磨禅 (1917–1934). Tokyo: Tokyo Busshinkai.
SS *Sōtōshū shūhō* 曹洞宗宗報 (1896–1940). Tokyo: Sōtō Shūmukyoku Bunshoka.
STN *Sōtoku tōkei nenpyō* 総督府統計年表 (1906–1940). Keijō: Chōsen Sōtokufu.

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