ERIKA ERZSÉBET VÖRÖS

A Tale of Two Potalakas:
Intercultural Relations Between China and Korea Examined
Through Maritime Buddhism

Abstract
Several places around the world have been identified as Potalaka, which was originally thought to be located in South India. The most well-known among these places are Mount Putuo in China and Naksan Temple in Korea. Geographically speaking, Korea is connected to China by sea, which acted as a source of cultural and material resources for a long time. For this reason, throughout history the sea became the stage of cultural exchanges between these two regions. The sea was the channel through which faith in Avalokiteśvara entered Korea from China, and where the traditions of Buddhism merged with beliefs in indigenous sea gods. The present paper focuses on the cultural exchanges between Korea and China, with special emphasis on the role that the sea played in this process examined through the faith in Potalaka.

Keywords: Potalaka, Naksan Temple, Mount Putuo, maritime religion, Kaeyang Halmi

The worship of natural phenomena can be considered the most ancient form of religious beliefs. In ancient people’s minds the sea was an abundant store-room providing essential food products, but at the same time it was a menacing force due to maritime disasters encountered during dangerous sea voyages. This approach to the ocean is reflected in religious beliefs and rites centred around sea deities, whose worship is widespread in East Asia. These indigenous sea beliefs were further enriched by Buddhism, especially because diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations were mainly maintained via maritime routes.

1 This article represents the partial results of my research conducted as a junior fellow at Seoul National University’s Kyujanggak International Center for Korean Studies in 2021. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the generous support that the institute provided. I am also immensely grateful for The Academy of Korean Studies, since the first steps of the research were made during my MA studies at the institution between 2017 and 2019.
This paper examines the worship of Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin Pusa 觀音菩薩; Kr. Kwanŭm Posal 관음보살) – the bodhisattva of compassion – in Korea from the perspective of maritime religion. The connection between Avalokiteśvara and the sea can be traced back to the bodhisattva’s worldly abode, Potalaka. One of the main features of the Potalaka faith is that it bears the characteristics of both mountain worship and maritime religion; according to the common belief, Avalokiteśvara dwells on a mountain, but at the same time he has a connection with the sea as well.

From a philosophical perspective, mountains bearing the nature of earth represent stability and order, while water bearing the nature of water symbolise plasticity, change, and chaos. In this sense these two can be viewed as opposing entities. However, examining their relationship more deeply, we can find that mountain and sea are linked together through a certain relationship. A clue for examining this relationship is water. As gathering places of rainclouds and sources of rivers pouring into the ocean, mountains are directly connected with water. Moreover, mountains located near the sea served as points of navigation for ships. This can be the reason why mountains on the seashore are often regarded as dwelling places of sea deities and why many shrines dedicated to maritime safety were built on the tops of mountains. The most representative place where sea and mountain meet is an island. Islands can be viewed as mountains surrounded by sea, so many sacred mountains were imagined as islands. As Potalaka is depicted as ‘a mountain on the sea’, it is sometimes believed to be an island.

Several places around the world have been identified as Potalaka, which was originally thought to be located in South India. The most well-known among these places are Mount Putuo (Putuo Shan 普陀山) in China and Naksan Temple (Naksan Sa 낙산사, 洛山寺) in Korea.

Geographically speaking, Korea is connected to China by sea, which acted as a source of cultural and material resources for a long time. For this reason, throughout history the sea became the stage of cultural exchanges between these two regions. The sea was the channel through which faith in Avalokiteśvara entered Korea from China, and where the traditions of Buddhism merged with beliefs in indigenous sea gods.

The present study focuses on the cultural exchanges between Korea and China, with special emphasis on the role that the sea played in this process examined through the faith in Potalaka, the worldly abode of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.
Potalaka: a mountain on the sea

Potalaka is a sacred mountain known as Avalokitēśvara’s worldly abode (or bodhimaṇḍa)\(^2\) that was identified with various places around the world. In order to understand its nature, it might be useful to examine the depiction of this mountain in Buddhist sūtras and texts.

There are several theories concerning the meaning of the name Potalaka. In the *Flower Ornament Scripture* (Skt. *Mahāvaipulya Buddhāvatamsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經)\(^3\) in 60 scrolls, Buddhabhadra (359–429 CE) translated the name of the mountain into Chinese as ‘Brilliant Mountain’ (Guangming Shan 光明山). Hikosaka Shū linked the name to the toponym Pothigai, which means ‘the place of enlightenment’ or ‘residence of a bodhisattva’.\(^4\) There are also researchers who think the name is constituted by the components *pota* meaning ‘ship’ and *lo(ka)* meaning ‘to store’, resulting in the meaning ‘harbour’,\(^5\) which is an interpretation that foreshadows Potalaka’s relation with the ocean.

The oldest and most well-known text that mentions Potalaka is the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*,\(^6\) the last chapter of the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, which originally circulated as an independent scripture. The main character of the sūtra is the youth Sudhana, who sets out on a pilgrimage looking for enlightenment, during which he encounters 53 spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitra*), the 28th being Avalokiteśvara himself.

The *Flower Ornament Scripture* in 80 scrolls depicts the mountain as follows:

‘Good son! South of here is a mountain called Potalaka. There dwells a bodhisattva named “The One Who Observes All Existence” [Avalokiteśvara]. Go and ask him how to follow the bodhisattva practice, how to walk the bodhisattva

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\(^2\) ‘Platform of enlightenment’. The place where the Buddha reached enlightenment. In an extended sense, the spiritual presence of the Dharma at a place. The Chinese expression *daochang* 道場 is also used for all places where Buddhist practice takes place or a *buddha* or *bodhisattva* is worshipped.

\(^3\) Two complete translations of the *Flower Ornament Scripture* exist: the 60-scroll version translated by Buddhabhadra (359–429 CE) during the Eastern Jin era (T 278) and the 80-scroll version translated by Śikṣānanda (652–710 CE) during the Tang dynasty (T 279). There is also a 40-scroll version (T 293), which despite being a partial translation, contains verses that are missing from the other two Chinese translations. Among them, notable are the 22 verses of the Avalokiteśvara section and other verses from the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* that are not found in any of the existing Sanskrit versions. (T = Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō 大正新脩大蔵経)


\(^6\) The *Flower Ornament Scripture* is thought to have been compiled from independent scriptures in the 4–6\(^{th}\) centuries CE in Central Asia. The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is usually dated to the 1\(^{st}\) century CE. Osto (2004: 60) dates the formative period of the script to roughly 200–300 CE.
path.’ Then he recited a hymn of praise saying: ‘There is a mountain above the sea, where many saints and sages dwell. / Made of all kinds of jewels, it is pure beyond measure. / Trees are covered in flowers and fruits grow lush, / springs and ponds are abundant. / The resolute and undaunted Avalokiteśvara / dwells on this mountain for the benefit of the sentient beings. / You should go and ask him about his merits, / and he will reveal to you / the way of the great expedient means [upāya].’ Sudhana then prostrated at his feet, circumambulated him several times to pay homage, then looking up on him reverentially finally bid farewell and took leave. […] Wandering on he reached the mountain, where he looked for the great bodhisattva everywhere. He found him in a rocky valley on the western slope of the mountain that was adorned with many springs enhancing each other’s beauty, trees growing lush, and fragrant, tender lawn covering the ground. The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was sitting on a diamond rock with his legs crossed. Countless bodhisattvas surrounded him with respect sitting on jewelled rocks, while he was revealing them the means of great compassion and taught them how to work on the salvation of all the sentient beings.7

The 60-scroll version of the sūtra describes the mountain similarly, but the passage ‘there is a mountain on the sea’ (hai shang you shan 海上有山), which suggests a connection between Potalaka and the sea, can only be found in the 80-scroll version. The 40-scroll version of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra translated by Prajñā (734–? CE) in 796 CE contains gāthās that are missing from the other translations. These depict Potalaka as a precious mountain (or treasure mountain, baoshan 寶山) and add the information that Avalokiteśvara is living in a cave. Potalaka is depicted in the scripture as a place with a rich natural environment, the only supernatural elements being the jewelled throne and the presence of the bodhisattvas. For this reason, Potalaka should be considered a place in this world. The plot of the Gandavyūha Sūtra takes place at two main locations: South India and Northeast India. Setting off on his journey from Dhanyākara – supposedly the ancient city of Dhānyakaṭaka or Dharanićkota8 – Sudhana wanders the southern regions before visiting several places in Magadha, where major events of the historical Buddha’s life had taken place. Entering the tower of

7 『善男子!於此南方有山,名補怛洛迦。彼有菩薩,名觀自在。汝詣彼問菩薩云何學菩薩行,修菩薩道。』即說頌言: 『海上有山多聖賢/眾寶所成極清淨/華果樹林皆遍滿/泉流池沼悉具足/勇猛丈夫觀自在/為利眾生住此山/汝應往問諸功德/彼當示汝大方便。』時善財童子頂禮其足,遶無量匝已,慇懃瞻仰,辭退而去。[…]

8 Osto (2004: 60–61) suggests that the Gandavyūha Sūtra was compiled in this region.
Maitreya at the end of the sūtra, he experiences the real nature of the universe, where all phenomena interpenetrate each other, while even the tiniest entity contains infinity. A transformation in the nature of reality takes place at this point. However, according to the message of the sūtra, a differentiation between conventional and ultimate realities disappears at this moment, so only perception has changed, not the geographical location. Maitreya eventually sends Sudhana back to Mañjuśrī, his first spiritual friend and thus makes him return to the starting point. Mañjuśrī appears this time as the embodiment of the originally possessed wisdom. At last, Sudhana’s last mentor, Samanthabhadra, reveals that the only goal of attaining wisdom and enlightenment is to put them into practice for the benefit of all sentient beings. The search for enlightenment is thus represented in the scripture as a circular path returning to its starting point (i.e., the level of conventional reality). Sudhana is wandering in his own realm while visiting his spiritual masters, among whom there are not only bodhisattvas and divinities, but also ordinary lay people. The world of the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra is thus a realm, where sacred and profane aspects share the same space, and the plot depicts the process that leads to the realisation of this truth.

This might not be unrelated to the philosophical meaning of the Flower Ornament Scripture, according to which ultimate reality (the realm of the buddhas) and conventional reality (the realm of sentient beings) are not separated from each other, but saṃsāra is none other than the world of enlightenment. In this respect, bodhisattvas share the same place and live together with human beings, so communication is possible with them.9

Even if it is so, Avalokiteśvara seems to have a closer relationship with the mundane world than do the other buddhas and bodhisattvas. Douglas Edward Osto10 determines the significance of the chapters of the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra based on the position and weight (its proportion to the whole) of the sections about each kalyāṇa-mitra. The most important mentors appear at the beginning and at the end of the scripture, while an ascending hierarchy can be observed among the others.

There are five bodhisattvas among the 53 kalyāṇa-mitrās: besides the three most important mentors – Mañjuśrī, Maitreya and Samanthabhadra – only Avalokiteśvara and Ananyagāmin are listed. Following Osto’s thoughts, the positions of Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, and Samanthabhadra at the beginning and at the

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9 The Flower Ornament Scripture calls the true nature of existence dharmadhātu (fajie 法界). According to this, the foundation and source of all phenomena in the universe are the same buddha-nature (foxing 佛性), so all beings are interconnected and influence each other in infinite ways. Consequently, ultimate reality (i.e., the realm of buddhas) and conventional truth are not mutually exclusive, but saṃsāra is none other than the realm of enlightenment.

end show their important status among the other spiritual friends. On the other hand, Avalokiteśvara and Ananyagāmin are the 28th and the 29th kalyāṇa-mitra, respectively, and their chapters are relatively short and positioned in the middle of the sequence. Sudhana meets lay people before them and deities after them. In my opinion this position suggests that Avalokiteśvara’s dwelling place is located between the mundane and divine realms; thus his relationship with this world is closer than those of the other bodhisattvas’.

Based on the fact that Avalokiteśvara does not have any distinct status in the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Märt Läänemets11 thinks that the sūtra represents an early stage of the Avalokiteśvara cult and points out that in the text Avalokiteśvara appears more like a local saint or mountain god than a bodhisattva mahāsattva. He supports his observation by the fact that the worldly depiction of the natural environment of Potalaka gives one the impression that it was based on a concrete geographical location.12 Other scholars, on the other hand, draw attention to the bodhisattva’s origin as a local sea deity.13

There are seven calamities listed in the Lotus Sūtra (Skt. Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra; Ch. Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法蓮華經) from which Avalokiteśvara can protect the believers. Many of these reflect the concern of merchants and sea traders, including being blown off course to the land of rākṣasa demons while searching for treasures, or being attacked by bandits in the mountains while carrying valuable goods.14 The land of rākṣasas designates present-day Sri Lanka, which was an important destination for merchants in ancient India. As the image suggests, it was perceived as a place from where valuable goods and treasures could be obtained, but at the same time it was full of potential dangers. The Potalaka faith originally may have been in connection with mer-

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12 In the gāthās of the 40-scroll version of the Flower Ornament Scripture, there are mythical creatures like devas (gods) or nāgas (snake-like water deities) in the assembly listening to the bodhisattva’s preaching, so a more mystical, sacred scene unfolds in this scripture. Nevertheless, Läänemets (ibid.) regards these verses as later insertions in the text and a result of the bodhisattva’s transformation from local deity to a universally worshipped entity. The gāthās are as follows: ‘Welcome to you who has tamed your body and mind, praise me while prostrating at my feet and circumambulate me from left to right. I always reside in this precious mountain and dwelling in the great compassion always free from any restraints. / This diamond cave where I live is adorned with many marvelously colored maṇi jewels, and I always sit on this jewelled lotus throne with a mind resolute (ātapaḥ) and unrestrained. / I am always surrounded by devas, nāgas, crowds of asuras, kinnara kings, rākṣasas and other attendants while preaching the gate of great compassion to them.’善來調伏身心者/稽首讚我而右旋/我常居此寶山中/住大慈悲恒自在/我此所住金剛窟/莊嚴妙色眾摩尼/常以勇猛自在心/坐此寶石蓮華座/天龍及以修羅眾/緊那羅王羅剎等/如是眷屬恒圍遶/我僞演說大悲門。 T 10, no. 293, p. 73c9.13 Li–Jing 2019: 62; Yamauchi 1998: 346.
14 Miaofa lianhua jing, T no. 262, 9: 56, c5.
chants trading with Sri Lanka, which can be confirmed by the records of the *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (646 CE), which is the travel record of Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 602–664 CE). Not only does it state that one can reach the country of Siṃhala (Sri Lanka) by going southeast over the sea for more than 3000 里 from Potalaka, but it also quotes a legend in which Avalokiteśvara saved a group of merchants who had lost their way on the southern sea. It is well known historically that merchants were the earliest converts and patrons of Buddhism, so it is not unusual that Buddhism offered practical benefits to them in exchange, including spiritual protection from dangers while traveling.

Senoo Masami also points out that the description of Potalaka is much more realistic than that of the Western Pure Land of Amitābha, and the reason why Potalaka is not mentioned in the *Lotus Sūtra* is probably because the cult of Avalokiteśvara can be traced back to a local sea deity in South India. She argues that while the deity was adopted to Buddhism due to its popularity and salvational role, the cultic site of a local sea god did not pique as much interest among Buddhists as did the locations connected to the historical Buddha in the beginning.

The pioneer of Guanyin research, Chün-fang Yü, points out that based on the *sūtras* we can find at least three distinct cults centred around Avalokiteśvara: one tradition approached him as a compassionate saviour without any spatial affiliation (*Lotus Sūtra*); another tradition interpreted him as the most important acolyte of Amitābha (Pure Land *sūtras*); and one tradition worshipped him as an entity dwelling on Mount Potalaka (*Flower Ornament Scripture* and esoteric *sūtras*). In this respect, it is also possible that the concept of Avalokiteśvara living on Potalaka constituted a separate tradition that was in close connection with the South Indian origins of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*.

But where exactly is Potalaka located? One source often cited in this respect is the 10th chapter of the *Da Tang xiyu jì*. The description of Potalaka in the text is as follows:

Mount Potalaka is east of Mount Malaya. Its mountain paths are perilous, and its ridges and gorges are craggy. There is a lake on the top, the water of which is clear like a mirror. A river flows out of here, which courses 20 times around

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16 *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T 50, no. 2087, p. 917a2.
17 Including Trapusa and Bhallika, who offered food to the Buddha after his enlightenment and became his first lay followers, or Anāthapiṇḍika, who donated the Jetavāna Monastery to the saṅgha. It is also notable that Sudhana, the protagonist of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, is the son of a wealthy merchant-banker. For more on this topic see Osto 2004; Liu 1997: 114–115.
18 Senoo 1987: 539.
the mountain before it empties into the southern sea. There is a heavenly palace made of stone at the lakeside, where Avalokiteśvara resides while wandering around. Those who wish to see Avalokiteśvara climb the mountain with no thought of their life or the dangerous waters. However, few are those who can get there despite going through all hardships and dangers. At the same time, if people living at the foot of the mountain devoutly pray to meet him, then [Avalokiteśvara] appears either in the form of Maheśvara or an ascetic besmeared with ash [pāśupata] to bring comfort to them and to help fulfil their wishes.20

According to this record Potalaka is located east of Mount Malaya in the South Indian country Malakūta.21 On the top of the mountain there is a clear water lake, from which a river flows into the sea, so the connection with water is apparent in this case as well. The geographical location is concretely indicated, and Xuanzang likely thought that it was an actual location in South India, although he might not have visited the place personally.

The close connection between Potalaka and this world may have been the reason why many people tried to link it to actual, geographical sites. There is no consensus about the actual location of this mountain. There are theories that suggest that it is somewhere in the region stretching from Papanasam to Mount Agastya in South India, while others identify it with Hyderabad in the state of Telangana.22 Hikosaka Shū23 proposes that the name ‘Potalaka’ refers to Mount Potigai at the foot of the Western Ghats, while others assume the mountain is none other than Adam’s Peak (Sri Pada) in Sri Lanka.24

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20秣剌耶山東有布呾洛迦山。山徑危險，巖谷傾傾，山頂有池，其水澄鏡。流出大河周流繞山二十帀入南海。池側有石天宮，觀自在菩薩往來遊舍。其有願見菩薩者，不顧身命厲水登山，忘其艱險。能達之者蓋亦寡矣。而山下居人祈心請見，或作自在天形，或爲塗灰外道，慰喩其人果遂其願。

T 51, no. 2087, p. 932a14. In the passage ‘Maheśvara’ refers to the Hindu god Śiva, while the ‘ascetic besmeared with ash’ refers to a sect worshipping Śiva. This indicates that the syncretism of Hinduism and the cult of Avalokiteśvara had already taken place by the 7th century CE.

21 Present Madurai or Tirunelveli region in the state of Tamil Nadu.

22 Hikosaka (1989: 375–373) thinks that the Tamil name of the mountain, Pothisiyil, originally meant ‘the place of enlightenment’ or ‘residence of the bodhisattva’. He presumes that the name was translated by meaning as ‘Bodhiloka’ in South India, which later changed to ‘Potalaka’. The mountain was regarded as a sacred place in Hinduism for a long time, and mutual exchanges between Buddhism and Hinduism starting from the 3rd century CE gave birth to the cult of Avalokiteśvara. This is supported by the fact that according to a legend the holy man Agastya learnt ascetic methods from Avalokiteśvara there, and an Avalokiteśvara sculpture was found in a nearby village. The syncretism of Buddhism and Hinduism can be observed in the record of Xuanzang as well.

23 Bingenheimer (2016: 211) refers to Samuel Beal.
Potalaka appears in several esoteric sūtras as well, in which it is described in a more symbolic way. While the depiction of flora remains an important part of the description, everything in the scene is made of jewels and filled with compassion. These scriptures also mark the beginning of the symbolic interpretation of Potalaka. In the *Amoghapāśakalparāja Sūtra* (*Sūtra of the Mantra of the Unfailing Rope Snare of the Buddha Vairocana’s Great Salvation*; Ch. *Bukong juansuo shenbian zhenyan jing*  不空羂索神變真言經) translated by Bodhiruci (Ch. Putiliuzhi 菩提流支; ?–727 CE) in 707 CE, reaching or seeing Potalaka is presented as a goal to be attained not by a concrete journey but by religious practice.25

As we can see, according to the above descriptions, the world of the buddhas and the world of sentient beings are connected to some extent on Mount Potalaka, so the mountain can be understood as a borderland between these two realms. In an abstract sense, the abode of the bodhisattva is a place or a state that is hard to access for humans, but with which communication is possible if needed. In this respect, not only is it well suited to the bodhisattva, who remains in this world postponing his own enlightenment, but also is in accord with the description of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. This symbolic interpretation made it possible for Potalaka to be found at several different locations on Earth, two of which are discussed in the following chapters.

**Mount Putuo and Avalokiteśvara, who was unwilling to leave**

When Buddhism arrived in China in the 1st century CE, the cult of Avalokiteśvara – whose name was translated as Guanyin 觀音 or Guanshiyin 觀世音 into Chinese – was also brought along with the mahāyāna sūtras. Guanyin soon became the most popular among the bodhisattvas, inducing the compilation of Chinese apocryphal sūtras (*yijing* 疑經 or *weijing* 僞經) that were modelled after original Indian scriptures. One example is the *Foshuo Guanyin sanmei jing* 佛說觀音三昧經 (*Avalokiteśvara Samādhi Sūtra Preached by the Buddha*). What is more, miracle stories about the bodhisattva began to flourish starting from the 3rd century CE. The experiences recorded by these stories were called linggan 靈感 (‘spiritual perception’) or lingying 靈應 (‘spiritual response’) and were based on the notion that buddhas and bodhisattvas perceive the piety and prayers of devotees, then accordingly manifest themselves as a response. Distinct, local traditions of the Guanyin cult formed at sites where apparitions of Guanyin were witnessed, and these places developed into famous pilgrim-

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age sites in many cases. These local traditions also played an important role in producing indigenous Chinese images and fictional biographies (zhuanji 傳記) about the bodhisattva.

Starting from the 10th century CE, Putuo Shan 普陀山, one of the islands of the Zoushan 舟山 Archipelago in Zhejiang 浙江 Province, became the most famous Guanyin bodhimanda. The reason for this is that Chinese started to identify Potalaka with Mount Putuo, one of the four great mountains of Chinese Buddhism (si da mingshan 四大名山). The highest peak of Putuo Shan is the 300-meter-high Foding Shan 佛頂山, which looks down on the ‘Southern Sea’. In this respect, not only does it correspond with Xuanzang’s description of Potalaka, but being an island, it also meets the criterion of being a ‘mountain on the sea’, as described in the Flower Ornament Scripture. There are two caves on Putuo Shan formed by coastal erosion that remind us of the abode of Avalokiteśvara: Chaoyin Dong 潮音洞 (‘The Cave of Tidal Sounds’) and Fanyin Dong 梵音洞 (‘The Cave of Sanskrit Sounds’ or ‘The Cave of Brahmā’s Voice’).

Although the first temple on the island is thought to have been founded in the 9th century CE, the presence of a Guanyin cult might be traced back earlier in the region. According to a record in the Changguo-zhou tuzhi 昌國州圖志 (Illustrated Gazetteer of Chang State; 1298), a Guanyin monastery (Guanyin An 觀音庵) had already been established at the Zoushan Archipelago in the Eastern Jin era (317–420 CE).

According to an orally transmitted legend, Guanyin leapt across the ocean from Potalaka in the southern seas of India to Putuo Shan, for it is known that the 1,000 peaks of the Zoushan Archipelago in the East China Sea are the most appropriate places for Guanyin’s manifestations. After arriving at Putuo Shan, the bodhisattva tried to count the number of the peaks by jumping three more times. However, no matter how many times she counted, one was always missing, since she had forgotten to count the one peak she was standing on. The story symbolically tries to explain the process through which the cult of Avalokiteśvara spread from South India first to Putuo Shan, then to the nearby islands. A site called Guanyin Leap near the Tidal Sound Cave is one of the tourist attractions on Mount Putuo today, where the bodhisattva allegedly left her footprint on a rock when she jumped to the mountain from India.

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26 Since the political centre was located in Northern China, the term Southern Sea (Nanhai 南海) often indicated the East China Sea in ancient China (Zou 2017: 54–55). This coincidence may have contributed to the name Nanhai Guanyin 南海觀音 (‘Guanyin of the Southern Sea’).

27 Zou 2017: 57.

28 Guanyin started to be depicted as female in China from the 10th century. Since this time coincided with the foundation of the first temple on Mount Putuo and the Nanhai Guanyin is often depicted as female, I refer to the bodhisattva with the pronoun ‘she’ in the subsequent chapters.

Song Hwa Seob argues that the worship of Avalokiteśvara was propagated by Indian merchants through maritime routes first in South-eastern Asia, then in China around the 4th or 5th century CE. Indian merchants arriving in the Jiangnan region discovered Putuo Shan as a place resembling Potalaka, so they established a similar place of worship there. Not only is this in accordance with the image of Potalaka as a ritual site for maritime religion, but also with one of the legends of Putuo Shan, which speaks of a mysterious Indian monk who burned his fingers in front of ‘The Cave of Tidal Sounds’ in 828 CE. Commercial relations between China and India had been established since the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 CE) and played a significant role in the transmission of Buddhism as well. The subsequent political division starting from the 3rd century CE, however, rapidly promoted the development of maritime trade through the southern seas, because southern states (Wu, Eastern Jin, and the Southern Dynasties) were cut off from the Central Asian caravan routes in the northern region. Merchants from India arrived at Guangdong and present-day northern Vietnam before they headed for the central plains on the Yangtze River.

Faxian, who lived in the Eastern Jin era, travelled to India via the Silk Roads in 399 CE, but used maritime routes on his way back to China in 413 CE. In his work, Foguo ji, he recorded that his ship encountered a violent tempest sailing on the maritime routes via Indochina. After he called the name of Guanyin, the tempest subsided, so the ship could safely reach its destination. The story is an early example of Avalokiteśvara appearing as a sea guardian in the Chinese context. In addition, according to a story recorded in the 6th century CE Guanshiyin yingyan ji, the Paekche monk Paljŏng visited the dwelling place of Guanyin on Mount Jie (Jie Shan) in Yuezhou (near Putuo Shan) on his way back from China around 529–534 CE.

30 Song 2013b: 59–61, 70–72.
32 Foguo ji 40. T 51, no. 2085, p. 865c26 – p. 866c5.
33 According to the story found in the text, some time before Paljŏng visited the place, two friends climbed the mountain and took a vow that they would leave together after one of them finished reciting the Flower Ornament Scripture and the other one the Lotus Sūtra. However, the man reading the Lotus Sūtra could not finish in time, so he decided to read only the Avalokiteśvara Sūtra. During this time an old man brought food to him every single day. The old man was none other than the manifestation of Guanyin (Guanshiyin yingyan ji, ‘Fahuajing zhanji’, chapter, T 51, no. 2068, p. 72a29–c3). The bodhisattva appears as an old person delivering food in another legend as well that narrates the founding legend of the ‘Pier of the Rebuked Sister-in-Law’ (Duangu Duotou, 短姑道頭) on Putuo Shan. According to this story the pier was built by an old woman who appeared from the nearby bamboo grove. She picked up stones from the ground and threw...
Based on this we can assume that the cult of Guanyin following the tradition of the *Lotus Sūtra* was already present near Putuo Shan in the first half of the 6th century CE.

For this reason, Putuo Shan might have become a place of worship for Guanyin through sea routes at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century CE. Moreover, cultural exchanges taking place through the sea continued to play a significant role in the process of Putuo Shan becoming an international pilgrimage site.

There is a well-known record about Putuo Shan in volume 34 of Xu Jing’s 徐兢 (1091–1153 CE) *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 (*Illustrated Account of the Xuanhe Embassy to Koryó;* 1124; hereafter *Gaoli tujing*), particularly in the ‘Plum Peak’ (‘Meicen’ 梅岑) subchapter of the chapter entitled ‘Sea routes 1’ (‘Haidao yi’ 海道一). This passage narrates the founding legend of Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan 不肯去觀音院 (‘Temple of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave’, present-day Puji Chansi 普濟禪寺), the oldest temple on Putuo Shan.

[...] Deep in the foot of the mountain stands Baotuo Yuan 寶陁院 [‘Potala Temple’] built during the Southern Liang dynasty. There is a statue of Guanyin famous for its spiritual responses in its hall. Long ago merchants from Shilla went to Mount Wutai [Wutai Shan 五臺山], where they carved this image, then wanted to load it [on a ship and] return to their country. When the ship sailed out to sea, it became stuck on a reef and could not move forward. So, they turned around and placed the statue on the rock. Zongyue 宗岳, a monk from the temple, took it and enshrined it in a hall. From this time on, ships commuting on the sea made sure to visit the place to pray for luck, and there was no one who did not get a response for their faith. [...]34

According to the record, the worship of ‘Guanyin Unwilling to Leave’ (Bukenqu Guanyin) was started by merchants from Shilla, but in texts written somewhat later than the *Gaoli tujing*, the founding of Bukenqu Guanyin

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34 [...] 其深麓中有蕭梁所建寶陁院。殿有靈感觀音。昔新羅賈人往五臺刻其像，欲載歸其國。曁出海遇焦，舟膠不進。乃還置像於焦上。院僧宗岳者迎奉於殿。自後海舶來往必詣祈福，無不感應。[...] *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 (online). An excellent and likely much better translation can be found in Vermeersch 2016. I hereby use my own translation following his advice to always try to make one’s own translation. My translation owes much to his translation, nevertheless. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to him for all of the precious advice that he provided during my completing this paper.
Yuan is attributed to the Japanese monk Egaku 慧萼 (ca. 9th century CE).\(^{35}\) One of these records is the historical text *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (*Comprehensive History of the Buddhist Patriarchs;* 1269) written by Zhipan 志盤 (ca. 1250 CE), in which the record about the 12th year of Dazhong 大中 states that Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan was founded by Egaku in 858 CE. The text also confirms that Putuo Shan is none other than Mount Potalaka from the *Flower Ornament Scripture* and states that merchants and envoys travelling the East China Sea are sure to receive a response if they pray to the *bodhisattva* for a safe crossing.\(^ {36}\) It is worth noting that the text mentions a so-called Shilla Reef that is located near Putuo Shan.\(^ {37}\) This shows that Putuo Shan was closely related to the Shilla people. A similar story is recorded in the *Baoqing siming zhi* 寶慶四明志 (*Gazetteer of Siming during the Baoqing Reign*) compiled in 1227 CE, particularly in the ‘Kaiyuan Temple in Yin County’ (‘Yin-xian Kaiyuan Si’ 鄞縣開元寺) subchapter in the ‘Chan temples 3’ (‘Chanyuan san’ 禪院三) chapter, which states that Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan was founded by Egaku in 859 CE.\(^ {38}\)

The *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (*Record of the Pilgrimage in Tang in Search of the Dharma*)\(^{39}\) written by the Japanese monk Ennin (793/794–864) in the 9th century CE confirms that Egaku made a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan, but the date does not match with the years 858 or 859 CE, which are provided by the aforementioned texts. According to *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* and other sources, Egaku went to China three times – in 841, 844, and 862 CE – but some scholars think that he made at least five journeys.\(^ {40}\) Thus, even if the dates do not match, we cannot preclude the possibility that Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan was founded by him. On the other hand, Marcus Bingenheimer\(^ {41}\) thinks that Bukenqu Guanyin

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\(^{35}\) The name of Egaku is written with different Chinese characters depending on the source: 慧萼 (萼/鐙), 慧鐙 (萼/鐙).

\(^{36}\) T 49, no. 2035, p. 388b16–c3.

\(^{37}\) ‘At present Shilla Reef is located near the mountain.’ 今山側有新羅將. *Fozu tongji*, T 49, no. 2035, p. 388c01–c05. (online). The name of Egaku also appears in Juean’s 覺岸 *Shishi jigu lüe* 釋氏稽古略 (*Excerpts of the Historical Research Concerning Buddhist Believers;* 1354) and Sheng Ximing’s 盛熙明 *Putooluojiashan zhuàn* 補陀洛迦山傳 (*The History of Mount Potalaka;* 1361), as well as several Japanese sources, such as *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧伝 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks in Japan;* 1702) or *Genkō shokusho* 元亨釋書 (1344).

\(^{38}\) *Baoqing siming zhi*, ‘Jun zhi’ 郡志 11, ‘Chanyuan san’ 禪院三, ‘Yin-xian Kaiyuan Si’ 鄞縣開元寺 (online).

\(^{39}\) The records of the 7th day in the 9th month of the year 841 CE, the 25th day in the 5th month of the year 842 CE, and the 5th day in the 7th month of the year 845 CE in volumes 3 and 4.

\(^{40}\) Tanaka Fumio (2012) adds three other dates to Egaku’s journeys: 848, ca. 852, and 858 CE. See also: Zou 2017: 60–62.

\(^{41}\) Bingenheimer 2016: 83.
became associated with Egaku later, supposedly in the 13th century CE, since the earlier records do not mention his name at all.

At the same time, Park Hyun-kyu and Cho Young-Rok point out that the seemingly different legends do not necessarily contradict one another, since the founding of Putuo Shan can most likely be ascribed to the joint effort of the Japanese monk Egaku and Shilla merchants. We can confirm through Nittō guhō junrei kōki that Chang Pogo (787–846 CE), supervising sea trade in the territorial waters of the Korean Peninsula and China, along with the people of Shilla residing in the Tang empire, played a significant role in East Asian maritime cultural exchanges. As a part of this process, active exchanges took place in the field of Buddhism as well, and we can assume that during his visits to Tang, Egaku also needed the help of Shilla merchants. Yi Indŏk sarang or Yi Indŏk 李隣德 (ca. 9th century CE), the owner of the ship used by Egaku on his return to Japan, is thought to have been from Shilla. For this reason, there is a possibility that Egaku and Shilla merchants travelled together on a ship when the incident with the statue happened on the waters near Putuo Shan.

Mozhuang manlu 墨莊漫錄 (Random Notes from the Ink Manor) written by Zhang Bangji 張邦基 (ca. 1131) in the 12th century CE contains a record about Putuo Shan, which is as follows:

The foreign mountains of the three Han [Korean] states are far and away, so whenever ships arrive here, [travellers] make sure to pray. There are bells, qing instruments, and copper objects, all offered by merchants from the Kyerim state, so reign names of that place are carved on many of them. There are also poems [inspired by this place] written by the foreigners, which have considerable literary value.

Even if we cannot tell for sure who founded Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan, based on the above record and the name ‘Shilla Reef’ mentioned in the Fozu tongji 佛祖統紀, we can confirm that the cult of Putuo Shan was in strong connection with the people of Shilla. Putuo Shan played an important role in the cultural exchanges between China and the Korean Peninsula in later times as well,
which is also shown by the fact that the ‘Pier of the Rebuked Sister-in-Law’ is also called Koryŏ Pier (Gaoli Daotou 高麗道頭).\footnote{Song 2008b: 300.}

As we saw, the cult of Guanyin might have been present at Putuo Shan since the 4th century CE, but international cooperation was needed for it to become an important East Asian pilgrimage site. This was not unrelated to the fact that Putuo Shan lies on the sea route between China, Korea, and Japan, which is a strategically relevant location. Through these maritime routes not only goods but also cultural elements like Buddhism were actively transmitted and circulated.

Moreover, during this process not only did Avalokiteśvara start to appear in a new iconographical form, but also the bodhisattva’s role as a sea deity became emphasised. Saving those encountering maritime danger was already one of Avalokiteśvara’s roles in the Lotus Sūtra, but maritime safety might have been of special importance for those navigating on the sea near Putuo Shan. Nanhai Guanyin 南海觀音 (‘Guanyin of the Southern Sea’) worshipped on Putuo Shan is one of the several iconographic forms indigenous to China and was regarded as a bodhisattva in charge of maritime safety.

Images of Nanhai Guanyin, appearing from the 16th century CE, usually depict the bodhisattva as a white-robed woman who sits on a rock before a bamboo grove with the full moon in the background. There is a willow branch\footnote{Helps to avoid and heal illnesses (Pak 2008: 199).} in her hand or next to her in a vase (huping 胡甁). A boy and a girl, who are identified as Sudhana (Shancai tongzi 善才童子) and the Dragon Girl (Longnü 龍女), accompany her while a parrot holding a rosary soars above them. The bodhisattva is sometimes depicted standing on the top of waves, a giant fish,\footnote{Aoyu is a mythical creature in Chinese folklore depicted with the head of a dragon and the body of a fish (mainly that of a carp). Its image is linked to the belief that carps, being able to swim upstream, turn into dragons if they can jump up the waterfall of the Dragon Gate (Longmen). The motif of the fish can be interpreted in connection with the makara as well. The makara is a sea creature in Hindu mythology, which is often depicted as a combination of terrestrial and aquatic animals. Just like the nāga or the dragon, it symbolizes the beneficial and harmful nature of water: it frequently appears in stories as a monster overturning ships, but at the same time it could have a protecting role as well. The makara appears in scriptures (see for example the Lotus Sūtra, T 9, no. 263, p. 129a2–10) and legends (see for example the Da Tang xiyuji, T 51, no. 2087, p. 917a2–20) about Avalokiteśvara, as well as on sculptures and frescoes depicting the bodhisattva. (For more on this topic see Kósa 2013: 47–56.) The motif of riding a fish or a dragon thus can be understood as the symbol of taming wild, unruly forces, which in the Buddhist context includes not only natural forces but also obstructing mental states.} or a dragon. In these cases, she usually holds a rosary or a water bottle (jingping 淨甁)\footnote{Also referred to as shuiping 水甁, one of the 18 objects possessed by monks. It can symbolize spiritual purification and the discarding of all impurities obstructing enlightenment.} and a willow branch in her hands.
The bodhisattva has been depicted as female in China since the 10th century CE. There are several theories to explain this phenomenon, one of which attributes the change to the influence of indigenous Chinese goddesses, such as Xiwangmu 西王母, Mazu 媽祖, or Magu 麻姑. On the other hand, Chunfang Yü argues that the process moved in the other direction: the cult of these goddesses started to spread widely due to the popularity of the female form of Guanyin. According to her, the early depictions of Guanyin as female was based on the spiritual experiences of certain individuals called linggan 靈感 (‘spiritual perception’), lingying 靈應, (‘spiritual response’), or lingyan 應驗 (‘spiritual experience’) in Chinese, when the bodhisattva reveals her power in response to the devotion of a believer.

Sudhana and the Dragon Girl have been depicted together with Guanyin since the 12th century CE and appear in different texts together with the bodhisattva. Avalokiteśvara is one of Sudhana’s spiritual friends in the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, and the bodhisattva receives a jewel from the daughter of the dragon king in the esoteric sūtras after teaching a dhāraṇī in the Dragon Palace. The Dragon Girl can also be linked to the daughter of the dragon king Sāgara in the Lotus Sūtra, in which case the two acolytes symbolise two cardinal scriptures about the bodhisattva. The composition of Sudhana and the Dragon Girl accompanying Guanyin is also thought to imitate the Jade Emperor (Yu Huang 玉皇) appearing together with the Golden Boy (Jintong 金童) and the Jade Maiden (Yunü 玉女), which shows the influence of Chinese mythology. The motif of the parrot is usually traced back to a jātaka and is the symbol of filial piety. On the other hand, Yü suggests a connection with the goddess of Mount Kunlun, Xiwangmu 西王母 (‘Queen Mother of the West’), who shares some of her characteristics with the bodhisattva: not only does she dwell on a mountain, but she is also thought to be accompanied by birds.

52 Yü 2011: 182, 413.
53 The parrot falls into the trap of humans while looking for food for its mother. By the time it manages to escape, its sick mother has already died. For this reason, after burying her with filial piety, it becomes the disciple of Guanyin. The story was elaborated on in China in the Yingge baojuan 鶴哥寶卷 (The Precious Scroll of the Parrot) and the Yingge xing xiaoyi zhuan 鶴哥行孝義傳 (The Story of the Parrot’s Filial Deed; 15th century CE). There are also alternative narratives concerning the origin of Sudhana and the Dragon Girl as Guanyin’s acolytes in the Nanhai Guanyin quanzhuan 南海觀音全傳 (The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the Southern Sea) and the Shancai Longnü baojuan 善才龍女寶卷 (The Precious Scroll of Sudhana and the Dragon Girl) written in the 16th century CE.
54 According to the Shanhai jing 山海經 (The Classic of Mountains and Seas), three blue birds deliver food to Xiwangmu, and in the Hanwu gushi 漢武故事 (Stories of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty; 5–6th century CE), a flock of blue birds arriving from the west foreshadow the arrival of the goddess (Yü 2011: 410–411).
The influence of another indigenous deity needs to be considered as well: the Dragon King of the East Sea, which was a popular deity in the Zhoushan Archipelago. The veneration of the dragon in the Zhejiang region might be traced back to the snake-dragon worship of ancient Wu-Yue culture that later developed into the belief in the Dragon King of the East Sea and merged with Buddhist ideas from around the time of the Southern and Northern dynasties to the Sui and Tang dynasties. The Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) had already worshiped the East Sea God in Kuaiji 会稽 County (present-day Shaoxing 繇興 in Zhejiang Province),55 and during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE) the shrine of the God of the East Sea was relocated from Laizhou 萊州 on the Shandong Peninsula to the border of Dinghai 定海 and Changguo 昌国 County in Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo). This was related to the fact that the main sea route for diplomatic missions to Koryŏ changed from the northern route via Shandong to the southern route via Mingzhou. An Tao’s 安燾 (1034–1108 CE) petition also contributed to the relocation; he suggested building a shrine in Dinghai to the king after he had escaped several dangerous situations with the help of the deity on his diplomatic mission to and from Koryŏ in 1078 CE.56 It is notable that miracle stories about Nanhai Guanyin saving travellers on the sea first appeared in connection with diplomatic missions to Koryŏ starting from the 11th century CE,57 which shows that diplomatic and cultural relations with the Korean Peninsula continued to be a major factor in Putuo Shan’s development even after the foundation of the Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan. The dragon motif in the iconography of the Nanhai Guanyin might be connected to the presence of dragon faith in the region and can be understood as an amalgamation of Buddhist and local ideas about entities providing protection on the sea, a much-needed service at a time when diplomatic missions were frequent between Song and Koryŏ.

As we have seen, cultural exchanges between China and the Korean Peninsula played a significant role in the formation of Mount Putuo as an Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva bodhimanda. The next chapter elaborates further on this connection by examining another sacred site regarded as the dwelling place of the bodhisattva, the Naksan Temple in Korea.

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57 As examples we can mention Wang Shunfeng’s 王舜封 mission in 1080 CE and Liu Da’s 劉逵 and Wu Shi’s 吳栻 mission to Koryŏ in the Chongning 崇寧 era (1102–1106 CE). The miracle stories about the missions are recorded in gazetters about Mount Putuo (Yü 1992: 2016–2017).
The founding legend of Naksan Sa on the eastern coast of Korea

It is uncertain when the worship of Avalokiteśvara (Kr. Kwanŭm 관음, 觀音, Kwanseŭm 관세음, 觀世音) began in Korea, but presumably it had already taken root in the Three Kingdoms period by the end of the 6th century CE.

The only archaeological find from Koguryŏ 고구려 (高句麗) is a gilt-bronze Buddha-triad engraved with the word shinmyo 辛卯 (kŭmdong shinmyomyŏng 삼존불, 金銅辛卯銘三尊佛) dated 571 CE. Moreover, Japanese sources recorded the story of the Japanese monk Gyōzen 行善 (ca. 7th century CE) who had studied in Koguryŏ. When Koguryŏ fell in 668 CE, he wanted to escape to the Tang Empire but was unable to cross a river due to a collapsed bridge. As he started to recite while meditating on Avalokiteśvara, an old man appeared and helped him safely cross the river.

As a remnant of the Kwanŭm cult of Paekche 백제 (百濟), we can mention the 6th century CE rock-carved buddha-triad in T’aean (T’aean maaebul 泰安磨崖佛). It is notable that the central figure of the triad is not Amitābha but Avalokiteśvara. Moreover, Tangjin 당진, a nearby harbour, connected the Korean Peninsula with Tang via Shandong Province, so it is not unlikely that the Paekche people prayed here for commercial success and safe journey. As we have mentioned, according to a story recorded in the Guanshiyin yingyan ji 觀世音應驗記 (Records of the Miraculous Responses of Guanyin), the Paekche monk Paljŏng 發正 visited the dwelling place of Guanyin on Mount Jie in Yuezhou 越洲 (near Putuo Shan) on his way back from China (ca. 529–534 CE). It is not unlikely that the cult of Guanyin was transmitted by Paljŏng to the Korean Peninsula.

As for Shilla, the Samguk yusa 삼국유사 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms; ca. 1282–1289 CE) compiled by Iryŏn 일연 (一然; 1206–1289 CE) records numerous stories about Kwanŭm. In these stories the bodhisattva appears in different roles: saving those in danger and granting children or helping practitioners attain enlightenment by making them realise the delusional nature of desires.

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58 Ch. xinmao, the 28th in the Chinese sexagenary cycle.
59 National treasure no. 85, found at Hwanghae-do Kuksan-gun Hwachon-myŏn Pongsal-li, and stored at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art. 15. 5 cm high, Amitābha and two bodhisattvas are visible in front of a boat-shaped halo.
61 Ch’unghŏng-namdo T’aean-gun Paekhwa San. 140x207 cm, standing triad.
62 Guanshiyin yingyanji, T 51, no. 2068, p. 72a29–c3.
The most famous sacred site of Avalokiteśvara in Korea is Naksan Temple (Naksan Sa 낙산사, 洛山寺) built on Obong San 오봉산 (五峰山, ‘Five-Peaked Mountain’) on the seaside of Yangyang-gun 양양군 (襄陽郡), Kangwŏn Province. The founding of the temple is attributed to the Shilla monk Ŭisang 의상 (義湘; 625–702 CE), who travelled to the Tang Empire in 661 CE to study with the second patriarch of Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism, Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668), and returned to Shilla in 671 CE. The founding legend of Naksan Sa can be found in Book 3 of the Samguk yusa,63 in Part 4 called ‘Pagodas and images’ (‘T’apsang’ 탑상, 塔像), in the chapter titled ‘Kwanŭm and Chŏngch’wi, the two great saints of Naksan and Choshin’ (Naksan idaesŏng Kwanŭm Chŏngch’wi Chosin 낙산이대성 관음 정취 조신, 洛山二大聖觀音正趣調信). The legend is as follows:

A long time ago when the monk Ŭisang returned from the Tang Empire for the first time, he heard that the true body of the bodhisattva of great compassion dwells in a cave on this seashore, so he called [this place] Naksan 洛山. Mount Potalaka (Pot’anakka San 寶陀洛伽山) in the Western region – also called ‘Small White Flower’64 – is the abode of the true body of the white-robed bodhisattva. That is why [Ŭisang] borrowed this name. After purifying himself for seven days, he floated his sitting cushion on the surface of the morning sea, then dragons, deva gods, and other representatives of the eight kinds of Dharma-protecting beings lead him into the cave. As he paid homage, a crystal rosary was bestowed on him from the sky, which he received, and he was about to leave. The dragon of the East Sea65 also offered him a wish-fulfilling jewel, which he received and then left [the cave]. After fasting for another seven days, he got to see the true form [of the bodhisattva], who told him: ‘A pair of bamboos shoot from the ground on the top of this mountain you sit right now. It is advised for you to build a Buddhist shrine there’. Hearing this the master came out of the cave, and really found the bamboos shooting [from the ground]. He built a golden chamber, then made a statue and enshrined it there. The rounded face and beautiful appearance

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63 A similar story is found in the 44th fascicle of Shinjŭng Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam’s 신증동국 여지승람 (新增東國輿地勝覽, Revised and Augmented Gazetteer of Korea; 1530 CE) chapter titled ‘Puru’ 불우 (佛宇, ‘Buddhist cultic sites’), particularly in the subchapter titled ‘Naksa Sa’ 낙산사 (洛山寺), which preserved the records of the Sŏn 선 (禪) monk, Ikchang 익장 (益莊; 13th century CE).

64 In the topographical accounts of Putuo Shan in China (shanzhi 山誌), Potalaka is translated as ‘Small White Flower Mountain’ (Xiaobahua Shan 小白華山), but this is regarded as a mistranslation from Li Tongxuan’s 李通玄 (635–730 CE) Xin Huayan jing lun 新華嚴經論 written in the 8th century CE (Xin Huayan jing lun 新華嚴經論 36, T 36, no. 1739, p. 981b23–18.). This translation probably appeared, because Chinese translators confused the phonetic transcription of puṇḍarīka (‘white lotus’) with the Chinese transcription of Potalaka.

65 The Sea of Japan.
Naksan Temple is located on a seaside cliff, which is on the boundary of mountain and sea. Through the legend we can also confirm the relationship between Kwanŭm and caves. The building built above the cave where the spiritual encounter is believed to have taken place is the present Hongnyŏn-am (Red Lotus Hermitage) at Naksan Temple.

According to the story, master Ŭisang had practiced for seven days before Dharma-protecting beings such as nāgas and devas led him into the cave where he received a crystal rosary from the sky, as well as a wish-fulfilling jewel from the dragon of the East Sea. Then he needed another seven days of practice before he was able to see the true form of Kwanŭm. In the case of Mount Putuo, Avalokiteśvara made her wish known spontaneously by getting the ship stuck on a reef. On the other hand, in the case of Naksan Temple, Ŭisang consciously endeavoured to meet the bodhisattva, and religious practice – which is a central part in Ŭisang’s Hwaŏm school – is emphasised in the founding narrative. The origin of the eight kinds of Dharma-protecting beings can be traced back to the gāthā in the chapter called ‘Entering into the state of inconceivable liberation and the practices and vows of Samantabhadra’ (Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie Puxian xingyuan pin 入不思議解脫境界普賢行願品) in the 40-scroll version of the Flower Ornament Scripture.

On the other hand, we should pay attention to the motif of the dragon of the East Sea in the story. Not only is the dragon one of the Dharma-protecting beings in Buddhism, but the Chinese iconographic representation of Nanhai Guanyin


67 See footnote no. 12.

68 Despite the similar name with the deity worshipped in the Zhoushan Archipelago, the dragon of the East Sea here refers to the sea east of the Korean Peninsula (i.e., the Sea of Japan), while in the case of China it refers to the deity of the East China Sea. Even if it is so, there is no doubt that the deity was influenced by its Chinese counterpart.

69 The origin of dragon kings in East Asian Buddhism can be traced back to the water deities of Hindu mythology called nāgas. These deities were depicted in the form of cobras or as
南海观音 is also often depicted riding on the back of a dragon or accompanied by the daughter of the dragon king Sāgara. Moreover, the Buddhist sūtras refer to dragon kings as protectors of those who recite the dhāraṇī of the Thousand-armed and Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. Since Naksan Sa is located on the shore, it might not seem unusual for the dragon to appear in the story.

Just like in China, the dragon of the East Sea in the founding legend might be interpreted as an attempt to incorporate an indigenous sea deity that was locally worshipped before the domestication of Kwanŭm into the Buddhist religious system. This would be the continuation of the long-standing practice of Buddhism, which always tried to adopt local gods into its pantheon.

Tonghae Shinmyo 동해신묘 (東海神廟), ‘Shrine of the God of the East Sea’, also Tonghae Shinsa 동해신사 (東海神社), is located near Naksan Sa, where the god of the East Sea is worshipped. Although the actual founding date of the shrine is unknown, based on a record in the ‘Ingnyŏng-hyŏn’ 익령현 (翼嶺縣) chapter of the 58th fascicle of the Koryŏsa 고려사 (高麗史; 1392–1451 CE), the existence of Tonghae Shinmyo at Yangyang can be confirmed from the Koryŏ dynasty. Following the Chinese model, rites for the four seas had been conducted since the Shilla era (668–935 CE), in which system the rites for the East Sea were held in present-day Pohang 포항 (浦項) near the Shilla capital, Kyŏngju 경주 (慶州), while during the Koryŏ era (918–1392 CE) a five-sea system was established. Since Yangyang is located east of the Koryŏ capital Kaesŏng 개성 (開城), it makes sense that a shrine for the deity of the East Sea was later established in this area. Starting from the Chosŏn dynasty the half-serpent, half-human beings and were believed to possess a magical jewel. Nāgas were adopted by Buddhism as Dharma-protecting deities, and there are many legends about Buddha-relics or sūtras kept by or acquired from them. In other words, the wish-fulfilling jewel that the nāgas possessed became the symbol of the treasures of Buddhism (i.e., relics, sūtras, the Dharma, or even bodhicitta).

70 *Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa guangda yuanman wuai dabeixin tuoluoni jing 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經* T 20 no. 1060, p. 108b01–b04; Pak 2008: 205.
72 Koryŏsa 58, ‘Ingnyŏng-hyŏn’ 익령현 (online).
73 Contemporary Adŭng-byŏn 아등변 (阿等邊) Kŭnohyŏng-byŏn 근오형변 (斤烏兄邊). The four seas to which rites of the medium rank (chungsa 中祀) were conducted are listed in the *Sanguk sagi* 삼국사기 (三國史記, The History of the Three Kingdoms) chapter titled ‘Miscellaneous Records 1’ (‘Chapchi il’ 잡지 일, 雜誌一), particularly in the subchapter ‘Rites’ (‘Chesa’ 제사, 祭祀). Information about the Koryŏ rites to seas can be found in the *Koryŏsa* 고려사 (Koryŏ History), and information about the Chosŏn rites can be found in the *Sejong shillŏk* 세종실록 (世宗實錄).
74 After 1456, the shrine for the East Sea at Yangyang was moved to Kangnŭng for a while, and rituals were conducted there. At the same time, the shrine for the West Sea was moved to Inchŏn, and the shrine for the South Sea was moved to Sunchŏn. The reason that the shrines were moved was to align directions with the newly moved capital, Seoul. The shrine of the East Sea was moved back to Yangyang in 1536.
(1392–1897 CE), state-sponsored rituals were also held in the second and eighth lunar month every year in the shrine, as well as in corresponding shrines on the western and southern coasts.

Unfortunately, we cannot confirm that the worship of an indigenous sea deity was present in the region in Ŭisang’s time, and if it was, what kind of deity was worshipped. Although the Dragon King of the East Sea appears frequently in the *Samguk yusa*, this deity shows strong Chinese influence. It is interesting to note that the shrine of the God of the East Sea was also near an Avalokiteśvara bodhimaṇḍa in China: it was relocated near Putuo Shan around the time the maritime route of diplomatic missions with Koryó changed for the one via Mingzhou.

Even if it is so, Naksan Sa seems to be less connected to sea worship than is Putuo Shan. Although the *bodhisattva* worshipped at Naksan Sa is known as Haesu Kwanŭm 해수관음 (海水觀音, ‘Sea Water Avalokiteśvara’), this nomenclature cannot be confirmed before 1683 CE.75 Naksan Sa on the eastern coast of Korea was not located on an important maritime route at the time of its foundation, and the role of Kwanŭm as a protector of sea travellers gained importance only after maritime trade became flourishing later during the Shilla dynasty.76 Even in this respect, the western coast of the Peninsula was more important, since most of the trade relations and diplomatic missions took place through the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea. Moreover, Naksan Sa was established by a monk and had no connection with maritime traders or fishermen, for whom protection from danger on the sea would have been of crucial concern.

Religious practice, which is a central element in Ŭisang’s *Hwaŏm* 화엄 (華嚴, Ch. Huayan) interpretation, is emphasised instead in the legend as a premise for seeing the *bodhisattva*. Thus, Avalokiteśvara worship at Naksan Sa is based on the central text of *Hwaŏm*, the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, and has a different character than worship at Putuo Shan, which shows stronger influences from the *Lotus Sūtra*.

At the same time, in the case of the founding legend of Naksan Sa, a particularly Korean meaning is embedded in the motif of the dragon. The dragon of the East Sea that bestows a wish-fulfilling jewel on Ŭisang can be a symbol of King Mumnu 문무 (文武; 626–681 CE), who was a supporter of the monk in real life.77 Many stories in the *Samguk yusa* testify that the dragon has a state-protecting (*hoguk* 호국, 護國) function. The most well-known story of this kind was recorded in the chapter ‘King Mumnu and Pŏmmin’ (Munmu wang Pŏm-

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75 Its first appearance is on a stele called ‘Naksan Sa Haesu Kwanŭm kungjung sari pi’ 낙산사해수관음공중사리비 (洛山寺海水觀音空中舍利碑).
76 Byeon 2010.
77 So 2008: 45–86.
min 문무왕 법민, 文武王法敏) in Book 2, Part 2, titled ‘Marvels 2’ (‘Kii 이, 奇異 이),奇異二). According to the legend, King Munmu asked to be buried on a rock in the East Sea and took an oath to protect the nation by transforming into a dragon before his death. We can confirm that King Munmu turned into a ‘state-protecting great dragon’ (hoguk taeryong 호국대룡, 護國大龍) through the chapter titled ‘The flute that calms all waves’ (‘Manp’a shikchŏk’ 만파식적, 万波息笛). Master Ŭisang returned from China in 670 CE to warn King Munmu of the attack the Tang Empire had planned against Shilla. In the light of this, it is possible that the presence of the dragon of the East Sea has a state-protecting function in the legend of Ŭisang as well.79

The state-protecting role of the dragon may be related to the historical background of the compilation of the Samguk yusa (i.e., the historical circumstances of the Koryŏ era). The Koryŏ dynasty, just like Shilla in the Three Kingdoms era, had to face external menaces. From the 10th century until the 12th century CE, it was engaged in wars with the nomadic Liao (947–1125) and Jin dynasties (1125–1234). Then, in the aftermath of the Mongolian invasions in the 13th

78 In this story King Shinmun (Shinmun wang 신문왕, 神文王; r. 681–692 CE) receives a jade belt from a dragon on a strange mountain that floats on the surface of the water in the direction of Kamun Temple. The dragon is an envoy of Kim Yushin 김유신 (金庾信; 595–673 CE), who has turned into a heavenly deity, and of King Munmu (the father of King Shinmun), who has turned into a dragon. On the mountain resembling the head of a turtle, a pair of bamboos grow that are two during the day and one during the night. The dragon tells the king that a flute made from this bamboo can drive away enemies and bring prosperity to the country. The motifs of the mountain on the sea (i.e., the island), the dragon, and the bamboo are noteworthy. Like the legends about Kwanǔm, the concepts of the mountain on the sea, the dragon, the state-protecting role, and the magical bamboos are linked together in the story.

79 There is much criticism directed toward the overemphasising of nation-protecting Buddhism when talking about Korean Buddhism (See for example Kim 1995, 2010; Mohan 2006). Scholars argue that the ‘nation-protecting’ paradigm evolved in Meiji Japan. Later, Korean scholars of Buddhism in the late colonial and postcolonial eras uncritically inherited this theoretical model, which further embedded in the national self-identity of Korean Buddhism, especially during the Pak Chŏnhŭi 박정희 (朴正熙; 1917–1979) era. These discourses are valuable for counterbalancing the uncritical emphasis on the ‘nation-protecting’ role of Buddhism and for deepening our understanding of Korean Buddhism. The so-called ‘state-protection’ was also not exclusive to Korea and thus cannot be used as a distinct characteristic when comparing it with the Buddhism of other regions. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the nation-protecting agenda is explicitly expressed through the mouths of deities or buddhas in many stories of the Samguk yusa (see for example the ‘Manp’a shikchŏk’ chapter), so stating that the text is devoid of this kind of meaning would also be a mistake. For a critique on the nationalistic nature of the Samguk yusa itself see McBride 2007. McBride questions that the Samguk yusa as a Buddhist response was written to rectify a perceived nationalistic shortcoming in the allegedly more Sino-centric Samguk sagi. Sem Vermeersch’s book (2008) is also a good reference in the topic and provides a meticulous critical perspective of Buddhism as an ideological underpinning of the centralised monarchy during the Goryo period. Birtalan (2013) also addresses the question of state-protecting Buddhism.
century, it became the protectorate of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368 CE) from around 1270 until 1356. By depicting Korea as the dwelling place of buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as a land under the protection of dragons, *Samguk yusa* could arouse national feelings and provide an ideological basis for national defence. At the time of the building of the temple (671/676 CE), Shilla had already defeated Koguryŏ and Paekche, but still had to face the threat of the Tang Empire. Naksan Sa is located near the northern border of contemporary Shilla, a region that was exposed to attacks from the Malgal tribes. As we can confirm through the record about the year 693 CE in the ‘Paengnyul-sa’ 백률사 (栢栗寺) chapter of the *Samguk yusa*, offering prayers to Kwanŭm was a way to gain protection from the northern barbarians.80

It is worth mentioning that the legends of Ŭisang seem to be in close connection with the dragon. According to the legend about the maiden Shanmiao turning into a dragon (Sŏnmyo hwaryong 선묘 화룡, 善妙化龍),81 the monk was protected by a dragon on his long maritime journey back to Shilla from the Tang Empire. Although the story can be originally found in a Chinese source – *Song gaoseng zhuán* 宋高僧傳 written by Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001 CE) – it is well-known not only in Korea, but also in Japan. Some researchers try to link the legend with the iconographic representation of the Nanhai Guanyin often depicted together with a dragon,82 but a scene can call to mind the image of the dragon boat of *prajñā* (*panya yongsŏn 반야용선, 般若龍船*) as well, by which sentient beings travel to the Pure Land of Amitābha under the guidance of Avalokiteśvara. The dragon boat of *prajñā* is sometimes called ‘the boat of compassion’ (*taebisŏn 대비선, 大悲船*) and serves as a symbol of compassion. Even if it is impossible to find a direct link between these narratives, a complex system of symbols surround Avalokiteśvara, including the sea-dragon imagery, which was a significant element is East Asian maritime Buddhist culture.


81 In this story when Ŭisang arrived in China, he stayed in the house of a lay believer, whose daughter, Shanmiao, fell in love with him. Ŭisang kept his precepts and rejected the girl, who took a vow to help the monk until her dying day. Since Shanmiao did not have a chance to give her present to Ŭisang upon his departure, she threw the box containing the gift after the ship, then jumped into the water, where she turned into a dragon to lead and protect the ship until it reached the land of Shilla. After arriving in Korea, Shanmiao turned into a huge rock floating in the air to scare away other sects who occupied the territory where Ŭisang wanted to build a temple. The temple built with the help of Shanmiao is called Pusŏk Sa 부석사 (浮石寺, ‘Temple of the Floating Rock’).

82 Cho 2011.
The relationship between Putuo Shan and Naksan

Based on the role that Shilla people played in the founding of Putuo Shan, there is an ongoing debate about the chronological order of the foundings of Putuo Shan and Naksan, as well as the relationship between these two sacred places.

There are two theories concerning the founding year of Naksan Sa: 671 and 676 CE. However, several studies suggest that the temple may not have been founded by Ŭisang himself. Hwang Keum-Soon argues that even the geographical name ‘Naksan’ itself cannot be attributed to Ŭisang in the first place. The reason for this is that the Chinese transcription of ‘Potalaka’ (Budanluoji-asan, 布呾洛迦山), which was regarded as a prototype for the name ‘Naksan’, appears first in the 80-scroll version of the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, which was translated into Chinese in 699 CE. In other words, in Ŭisang’s time (625–702 CE) the widely used text was the 60-scroll version of the *sūtra*, which translated the name of the mountain as ‘Brilliant Mountain’ (Guangming Shan 光明山). For this reason, it is not likely that it was Ŭisang who named the mountain as Naksan.

The chapter titled ‘Naksan idaesŏng Kwanŭm Chŏngch’wi Choshin’ in the *Samguk yusa* also contains the story of Pŏmil (범일; 810–894 CE), the founder of the Sagul San 사굴산 (闍崛山 or Kulsan) school, which was the most influential Sŏn 선 (禪) school during the Shilla era. The legend narrates how the monk introduced the worship of the bodhisattva Ananyagāmin (Kr. Chŏngch’wi Posal 정취보살, 正趣菩薩), who appears together with Avalokiteśvara in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, to Naksan Sa. After the unification of the three Korean kingdoms, the mainstream tradition of Shilla Buddhism was the Hwaŏm school of Ŭisang’s lineage. At the same time, the territory where Naksan Sa was built was under the influence of the Sagul San Sŏn school.

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83 Cho 2012: 204.
85 The transcription ‘Budaluojia Shan’ 布呾洛迦山 appears in the *Da Tang xiyuji* written by Xuanzang in 646 CE, so we cannot preclude the possibility that this text was the source of the name. However, the way Ŭisang visits the cave to meet the true form of Kwanŭm is similar to the scene where Sudhana meets the bodhisattva in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, which shows the strong connection between Naksan Sa and this sūtra.
86 According to the legend, Pŏmil went to Tang in 832 CE, where he met a half-eared monk at Kaiguo Temple 開國寺 in Mingzhou, who claimed to be from Tŏkgi Village in Ingnyŏng County (present-day Yangyang) in Shilla. He asked Pŏmil to build a house for him in Yangyang on his return to Shilla. After Pŏmil returned to his home country in 847 CE, the mysterious monk appeared in his dream to remind him of his promise. Pŏmil then visited the village at the foot of Naksan, where he found a half-eared stone bodhisattva statue under a bridge. The statue was an image of the bodhisattva Ananyagāmin and was the spitting image of the monk he met in China, so Pŏmil built a shrine for him on Naksan (T 49, no. 2039, p. 996c23 – p. 997a10).
which was dominated by a local clan. Since the 8th century CE, Yangyang had been governed as a virtually independent kingdom, over which the state could assert only token authority. The founder of the Sagul San school, Pŏmil, was the grandson of the governor of Myŏngju 명주 (溟州, present-day Kangnŭng 강릉, 江陵), and the patrons of the school were mostly members of the local clan. Pŏmil and his disciples maintained a close relationship with the Hwaŏm school. Hwang Keum-Soon supposes that it was the Sagul San school that determined the location of Naksan Sa on the eastern coast, a region under its influence with similar natural characteristics as Potalaka. They back-dated the founding of the temple to attribute it to Ŭisang, by which they could elevate the prestige of the temple. At the same time, this could give a reason for national pride by implying that an Avalokiteśvara bodhimaṇḍa was established earlier in Shilla than in China.

On the other hand, Cho Young-Rok has no doubt that Naksan Sa was founded by Ŭisang and upholds his opinion that – influenced by the Da Tang xiyuji – the very first Avalokiteśvara bodhimaṇḍa was established at Naksan. He suggests that because the founding of Putuo Shan and the enshrining of Ananyagāmin by Pŏmil on Naksan overlap chronologically, the key figures involved in these two enterprises might have known each other. According to the Samguk yusa, Pŏmil resided at Kaiguo Temple (Kaiguo Si) after arriving in Mingzhou, then studied with master Qi’an 齊安 (?–842 CE), who lived in Haichang Yuan 海昌院 in Hangzhou. Around the same time, the Japanese monk Egaku was wandering the region of Mount Tiantai and Mingzhou. He arrived in the Tang Empire in 841 CE, then made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai before he went to Mount Tiantai via Mingzhou. During his journey, he visited master Qi’an, who was living nearby and introduced his disciple Yikong 義空 (ca. 9th century CE) to him. After going to Tang the second time in 844, Egaku returned to Japan along with Yikong, receiving the help of the Shilla brothers Sŏ Kongjik 서공직 (徐公直) and Sŏ Kongyu 서공유 (徐公裕; ca. 9th century CE) in 847 CE. This means that he returned home in the same year as Pŏmil, who stayed in China from 831 to 847 CE. Egaku visited China two times during this period, and we can assume that he visited Qi’an during the last period of the six years while Pŏmil was studying there. It is not impossible then that the people participating in the founding of Putuo Shan and the reconstruction of Naksan Sa might have known each other.

87 Vermeersch 2008: 69–70.
90 This is supposedly a clerical error of the name of Kaiyuan Temple (Kaiyuan Si 開元寺) frequently visited by Egaku after the founding of Putuo Shan (Cho 2012: 212).
Based on this, it is very likely that there is a connection between Putuo Shan and Naksan, even if we cannot determine which one of them was founded earlier. Proponents of both versions equate the founding of Putuo Shan with the founding of the first temple on the island, Bukenqu Guanyin Yuan, though as we have seen, Guanyin worship might have been present in the area since earlier times. Since the founding date and circumstances of Naksan Sa have been questioned, it is possible that the Guanyin cult of the Zhejiang region inspired the founder or founders of Naksan Sa in some way. On the other hand, ‘Plum Peak’ gained importance only from the 9th century CE and was identified with Potalaka only after the 11th century CE. This was not unrelated to the role the Wu-Yue Kingdom played in international Buddhist relations, the Guanyin cult in the Zhejiang region, the dominance of Shilla merchants on the seas of China, and Korean and Japanese monks’ searching for the Dharma. Therefore, I think that instead of trying to establish a chronological order or some kind of hierarchy between these places, it is more worthwhile to put the emphasis on international cooperation and examine the nature of the beliefs about each bodhimaṇḍa. Since the motivation of establishment, as well as the function, of these two places are very different from each other, it does not seem as if either of these sites was founded to create a local counterpart of the other through a simple transmission-localisation process. In other words, the aim was not to establish a rival Potalaka in either instance. In the case of Naksan Sa, spiritual practice was emphasised, and protection from danger on the sea does not play a central part in the cult. Moreover, Putuo Shan was accepted as the dwelling place of Avalokiteśvara among Korean merchants and envoys as well, and any other place would have questioned this authority. As a matter of fact, it would have made more sense to establish a bodhimaṇḍa on the western coast of the Korean Peninsula on the major sea route between the two regions.91

Even if we cannot find a major religious site for Kwanŭm on the western coast of Korea, the Guanyin cult of Mount Putuo has influenced the beliefs in this region. There are many Kwanŭm temples on Wido 위도 (蝟島) and the Pyŏnsan Peninsula (Pyŏnsan Pando 변산반도, 邊山半島), and the indigenous deity Kaeyang Halmi shares many characteristics with the Nanhai Guanyin. In the next chapter, I would like to briefly address this topic.

91 There is actually a Kwanŭm bodhimaṇḍa on the western coast of the Peninsula, the Nakka San 낙가산 (洛迦山) Pomun Sa 보문사 (普門寺) on Sŏngmo Island (Sŏngmo Do 석모도, 席毛島) in Kanghwa-gun, Inchŏn, which lies near the Koryŏ era sea route. However, although the foundation of the temple is dated to the 7th century CE, the worship of Kwanŭm is likely to have started only during the Japanese occupation, since there is no written or archaeological evidence for Kwanŭm cult from earlier times.
Sea worship on the Korean western coast: Kaeyang Halmi and Nanhai Guanyin

If we attribute the indigenous elements in the founding legend of Naksan Sa to syncretism, then the cult of Kaeyang Halmi at Susŏng Shrine (Susŏng Tang 수성당, ‘Shrine of the saint of the water’) in Puan-gun 부안군 (扶安郡) Chungmak-tong 축막동 (竹幕洞) on the Pyŏnsan Peninsula can be viewed as a case of ‘reverse syncretism’, an expression borrowed from James Huntley Grayson.92 Susŏng Tang bears the characteristics of the shamanic folk religion of Korea. Thus the expressions ‘Kwanǔm’ or ‘Potalaka’ are not explicitly linked to this place, but the goddess Kaeyang Halmi 개양할미 (開洋할미, ‘Sea-opening Grandmother’) worshipped here has many similarities with the Nanhai Guanyin. Not only is the geographical location of the shrine similar to that of Putuo Shan, but also maritime exchange had taken place between the two regions since around the Paekche era (18 BCE–660 CE).

The orally transmitted legends regarding the goddess can be summarised as follows: in times past Kaeyang Halmi appeared from a cave. She is wandering between her home and Pangwŏl-li by wading through the sea, but she is so tall that the water can hardly reach the top of her feet. As she wanders through the Ch’ilisan 칠산 (七山) Sea (the territorial waters of Wido, Yanggwang, and Koch’ang), she fills up the deep parts of the water and calms the waves to guard the safety of maritime routes. She has eight daughters and is usually depicted in a sitting position, wearing white and hugging her youngest daughter. She marries off seven of her daughters to the deities of nearby shrines on the islands of the Ch’ilisan Sea, while she herself oversees the whole territory of the sea. According to the oral tradition, once a fisherman did not return from the sea, so his wife climbed up to Susŏng Shrine to ask for help from Kaeyang Halmi. The goddess appeared in front of the woman, waded into the sea, and rescued her husband.93

Based on the description above, Kaeyang Halmi worshipped in Susŏng Shrine and the Nanhai Guanyin of Putuo Shan have many common features. First, the bodhisattva appears as an old woman in the legend about the ‘Pier of the Rebuked Sister-in-Law’ at Putuo Shan. As her name shows, Kaeyang Halmi

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92 Grayson (1992) calls ‘high syncretism’ the phenomenon by which the basic values of an indigenous religion constitute the core of the belief, while external elements of an adopted religion appear on the surface. ‘Low syncretism’, on the other hand is the opposite of this. It is when the basic values of the missionary religion are at the centre of a belief, with external elements of the indigenous religion. The former is also called ‘reverse syncretism’, because the process is contrary to what is usually understood as syncretism.

93 Field work was conducted on the 10 July 2005 by Shin Chongwŏn, Sŏ Yŏngdae, Yi Ch’ang-shik, Kim Ch’anggyŏm, Sŏ Bongsu, and Choe Myŏnghwan (Shin 2006: 276–308), as well as by Song Hwa Seob in 2002 and 2003 (Song 2008a: 91–93).
is also a *halmi* (‘grandmother’) deity, so she was regarded as an old woman. Second, the image of the giant Kaeyang Halmi wandering the waters might call into mind the image of the Nanhai Guanyin as she leaps through the islands near Putuo Shan. Third, Nanhai Guanyin and Kaeyang Halmi are both sea deities responsible for the safety of ships. There are stories in both cases when the goddesses helped people encountering danger on the sea. Fourth, it is believed that Kaeyang Halmi appeared from a cave, based on which we can suppose that the goddess lives in a cave, as does Avalokiteśvara. There is an actual cave near Susŏng Tang, which is regarded as the dwelling place of Kaeyang Halmi. Fifth, the images of Nanhai Guanyin depict the *bodhisattva* as a white-robed woman. Similarly, Kaeyang Halmi is also depicted as a woman clad in white together with her daughters in the shamanic painting of Susŏng Tang.

Furthermore, according to Song Hwa Seob, the motif of Kaeyang Halmi giving birth to eight daughters calls to mind the image of Bixia Yuanjun 碧霞元君, the goddess of Taishan 泰山 in China, while the motif of her embracing the youngest resembles the image of Songzi Guanyin 送子觀音 (‘Guanyin, the Bestower of Sons’). He assumes that the cult of Guanyin merged with the cult of Bixia Yuanjun in the Zhoushan Archipelago before it was transmitted to Korea. Based on this, the cult of Kaeyang Halmi was formed by indigenous Korean sea worship assimilating the image of Bixia Yuanjun, the Nanhai Guanyin, and the Songzi Guanyin. Among these goddesses, the Nanhai Guanyin bears the characteristics of a sea god, while Bixia Yuanjun can be regarded as a mountain goddess. In this respect, Kaeyang Halmi is endowed with the dual nature of sea and mountain, just like the Nanhai Guanyin who bears the nature of a sea god while living on a mountain.

The cave at Chungmak-tong, regarded as the dwelling place of Kaeyang Halmi, lies near a Paekche-era ritual site that was discovered in 1992. This shows that the sea worship on the Pyŏnsan Peninsula can be traced back to early times. Celadon fragments from the Chinese Southern dynasties have been excavated on the site, by which we can confirm that a southern maritime route

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94 Song 2013a: 169.
95 The cult of Bixia Yuanjun bestowing longevity and offspring began during the Song dynasty (960–1279), and the goddess was often worshipped together with Guanyin in the same shrine in later ages.
96 The sea route, later known as the ‘transversal maritime route’ (sadan hangno 사단항로, 斜斷航路), was the dominant sea route between Song China and the Koryŏ dynasty. The route connected the Hangzhou Bay (Nanjing 南京, Mingzhou 明州, or Hangzhou 杭州) with the Korean Peninsula via the Zhoushan Archipelago and Hŭksan Island (Hŭksan Do 黑山島), from where ships turned northward to reach the Koryŏ capital. However, during the Unified Shilla era, mainly a northern maritime route called ‘traversing sea route’ (hoengdan hangno 횡단항로, 橫斷航路) was used.
between the Jiangnan 江南 region and the Pyŏnsan Peninsula had been open since the Paekche era. Paekche maintained a close relationship with the Southern Liang dynasty (502–557 CE), so beside the exchange of cultural artifacts, the transmission of Buddhism to Korea might also have taken place through this route. As we have seen, the cult of Guanyin supposedly had already existed on Putuo Shan in the Paekche era, since the Guanyin lingyan ji 觀世音應驗記 recorded that the 6th century CE Paekche monk, Paljŏng, visited a Guanyin ritual site near present Putuo Shan while studying in the Liang state. The cult of Avalokiteśvara might have been transmitted to Paekche by him and might have influenced the beliefs about Kaeyang Halmi on the western coast. International relations maintained through the southern maritime route continued well into later times: artifacts dated to the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1897), as well as ceramics originating in Kaya, Japan, and China, have been excavated from the ritual site in Chungmak-tong. This testifies that for a long period of time passengers of the ships sailing out from the Pyŏnsan Peninsula held rituals to the sea before their journey.97

Unfortunately, we do not have any textual evidence for the rites conducted at the site and have no way to confirm what kind of deity was worshipped there. All the narratives and beliefs about Kaeyang Halmi are folklore material collected in the modern era, and thus it is hard to draw conclusions about the past based upon them. The Susŏng Shrine itself is thought to have been built first in 1801, but the present building was erected in 1996. Even if it is so, the archaeological site near the shrine suggests that the region had been a place for maritime rituals since ancient times, which is not surprising if we consider the fact that one of the main sea routes connecting China and Korea passed through the area near Pyŏnsan Peninsula.

Conclusion

Helping those who encounter danger on the sea was already one of Avalokiteśvara’s functions in the Lotus Sūtra. Moreover, the bodhisattva’s abode, Potalaka, was depicted in Buddhist texts as a ‘mountain on the sea’. It is no wonder that geographical locations identified as Potalaka are all mountains lying near the sea, where the traces of mountain worship and maritime religion are simultaneously present. The sea was one of the main conduits through which Avalokiteśvara faith spread first from India to China and then from China to Korea, where the traditions of Buddhism merged with beliefs about indigenous sea gods.

In China, Putuo Shan was located at an international maritime route. Its founding was connected to the sea trade between India, China, Japan, and Silla. This made the ‘Guanyin of the Southern Sea’ function as a sea deity, a savior of those who are in danger at sea, a role rooted in the teachings of the Lotus Sūtra. At the same time, her image was also changed by incorporating indigenous Chinese religious elements.

In Korea, the image of Avalokiteśvara was further enriched by indigenous beliefs. We could find examples for both traditional and reverse syncretism: elements from indigenous beliefs were implanted in the legends about Kwanŭm, and local deities became similar to the bodhisattva. There are also overlapping layers of meaning in the motif of the dragon often depicted together with the bodhisattva: the image of Dharma-protecting nāgas, local sea deities, and King Munmu protecting the state symbolically merged together. Naksan Temple was established by the monk Ŭisang; therefore the founding legend of Naksan shows the strong influence of the Hwaŏm school. Instead of maritime safety, religious practice is emphasised, which aims at entering Potalaka envisioned as a Pure Land on Earth through enlightenment. On the other hand, the indigenous sea goddess of the Pyŏnsan Peninsula, Keyang Halmi, shows the strong influence of the ‘Guanyin of the Southern Sea’, which can be explained by the maritime exchanges between the western coast of Korea and the area of Putuo Shan in China.

In this paper I mainly examined the legends concerning Naksan Temple on the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. It would be meaningful in the future to extend the research to the other three temples on the southern and western coasts that are listed among the four great Kwanŭm bodhimandhas in Korea.98

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98 Besides Hongnyŏn Am at Naksan Sa, the other locations are the Kŭmo San Hyangil Am (Yŏsu City, Cholla-namdo, Tolsan-ŭp, Yullim-ni) together with the Kŭmsan Pori Am (Kyŏngsan-namdo, Namhae-gun, Sangju-myŏn, Sangju-ri) on the Southern coast, and the Nakka San Pomun Sa (Inchŏn City, Kanghwa-gun, Samsan-myŏn. Meŭm-ni) on the Western coast.


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