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**A Tale of Two Potalakas:  
Intercultural Relations Between China and Korea Examined  
Through Maritime Buddhism<sup>1</sup>**

**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.

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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.

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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 Avalokiteśvara's worldly abode (or *bodhimaṇḍa*)<sup>2</sup> 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. *Mahāvaiṣṭya Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經)<sup>3</sup> in 60 scrolls, Buddhahadra (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*'.<sup>4</sup> 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',<sup>5</sup> 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*,<sup>6</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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*

<sup>2</sup> '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.

<sup>3</sup> Two complete translations of the *Flower Ornament Scripture* exist: the 60-scroll version translated by Buddhahadra (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 大正新脩大藏經)

<sup>4</sup> Hikosaka 1989: 375–373.

<sup>5</sup> Bingenheimer (2016: 195–196) refers to the theory of Samuel Beal.

<sup>6</sup> The *Flower Ornament Scripture* is thought to have been compiled from independent scriptures in the 4–6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE in Central Asia. The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is usually dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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 *Avatamsaka 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 *Gaṇḍavyūha 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 Dharaṇīkoṭa<sup>8</sup> – 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

<sup>7</sup> 『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。[...]漸次遊行至於彼山,處處求覓此大菩薩。見其西面巖谷之中泉流縈映,樹林蓊鬱,香草柔軟,右旋布地。觀自在菩薩於金剛寶石上結跏趺坐。無量菩薩皆坐寶石,恭敬圍遶,而為宣說大慈悲法,令其攝受一切眾生。 T10, no. 279, p. 366c3–c17. Translated by the author. Another translation can be found at Cleary 1993: 1274–1275.

<sup>8</sup> Osto (2004: 60–61) suggests that the *Gaṇḍavyūha 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.<sup>9</sup>

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 Osto<sup>10</sup> 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-mitras*: 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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<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Osto 2004.

end show their important status among the other spiritual friends. On the other hand, Avalokiteśvara and Ananyagāmin are the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> *kalyāṇa-mītras*, 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 Läänemets<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars, on the other hand, draw attention to the *bodhisattva*'s origin as a local sea deity.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> 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-

<sup>11</sup> Läänemets 2006: 303–306.

<sup>12</sup> 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 (*ātapah*) 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/天龍及以脩羅眾/緊那羅王羅刹等/如是眷屬恒圍遶/我偽演說大悲門。 T 10, no. 293, p. 73c9.

<sup>13</sup> Li-Jing 2019: 62; Yamauchi 1998: 346.

<sup>14</sup> *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 Simhala (Sri Lanka) by going southeast over the sea for more than 3000 *li* from Potalaka,<sup>15</sup> but it also quotes a legend in which Avalokiteśvara saved a group of merchants who had lost their way on the southern sea.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

Senoo Masami<sup>18</sup> 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,<sup>19</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Da Tang xiyu ji*. 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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<sup>15</sup> *Da Tang xiyuji*, T 51, no. 2087, p. 932a21.

<sup>16</sup> *Da Tang xiyuji*, T 50, no. 2087, p. 917a2.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> Senoo 1987: 539.

<sup>19</sup> Yü 2011: 7–15, 31–91.



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.<sup>20</sup>

According to this record Potalaka is located east of Mount Malaya in the South Indian country Malakūta.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> Hikosaka Shū<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 秣刺耶山東有布呬洛迦山。山徑危險，巖谷傾。山頂有池，其水澄鏡。流出大河周流繞山二十市入南海。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，或為塗灰外道，慰喻其人果遂其願。 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 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

<sup>21</sup> Present Madurai or Tirunelveli region in the state of Tamil Nadu.

<sup>22</sup> Hikosaka (1989: 375) refers to the theories of R. F. Johnston and Alexander Cunningham.

<sup>23</sup> Hikosaka (1989: 375–373) thinks that the Tamil name of the mountain, Pothiyil, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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* 不空羈索神變真言經) 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.<sup>25</sup>

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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* 偽經) 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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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<sup>25</sup> Li–Jing 2019: 66.

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 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, Putuo Shan 普陀山, one of the islands of the Zhoushan 舟山 Archipelago in Zhejiang 浙江 Province, became the most famous Guanyin *bodhimāṇḍa*. 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’.<sup>26</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Zhoushan Archipelago in the Eastern Jin era (317–420 CE).<sup>27</sup>

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 Zhoushan 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<sup>28</sup> counted, one was always missing, since she had forgotten to count the one peak she was standing on.<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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’).

<sup>27</sup> Zou 2017: 57.

<sup>28</sup> Guanyin started to be depicted as female in China from the 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> Bingenheimer 2016: 170; Song 2013b: 53–54.

Song Hwa Seob<sup>30</sup> argues that the worship of Avalokiteśvara was propagated by Indian merchants through maritime routes first in South-eastern Asia, then in China around the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 法顯 (337–422 CE), 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* 佛國記 (*Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*), 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.<sup>32</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> century CE *Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 觀世音應驗記 (*Records of the Miraculous Responses of Guanyin*), the Paekche monk Paljōng 발정 (發正; ca. 6<sup>th</sup> century) visited the dwelling place of Guanyin (Guanyin *dushi* 觀音堵室) on Mount Jie (Jie Shan 界山) in Yuezhou 越州 (near Putuo Shan) on his way back from China around 529–534 CE.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Song 2013b: 59–61, 70–72.

<sup>31</sup> Yü 2001: 383–384.

<sup>32</sup> *Foguo ji* 40. T 51, no. 2085, p. 865c26 – p. 866c5.

<sup>33</sup> According to the story found in the text, some time before Paljōng 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* 觀世音應驗記, ‘Fahuajing zhuanji’ 法華經傳記 6, ‘Yuezhou Guanyin daochang daoren’ 越州觀音道場道人 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 Daotou 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 6<sup>th</sup> century CE.

For this reason, Putuo Shan might have become a place of worship for Guanyin through sea routes at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 Koryō; 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 寶陀院 ['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. [...]<sup>34</sup>

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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them into the sea, where they turned into huge rocks to form a pier. In this way she was able to deliver food to a female worshipper who had to stay on the ship alone due to her menstruation. The motif of Guanyin building a pier shows that the *bodhisattva* played a role in maritime navigation. Bingenheimer (2016: 68) thinks this legend must have formed between the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) and 1590 when the pier first appeared on the maps of gazetteers.

<sup>34</sup> [...] 其深麓中有蕭梁所建寶陀院。殿有靈感觀音。昔新羅賈人往五臺刻其像，欲載歸其國。暨出海遇焦，舟膠不進。乃還置像於焦上。院僧宗岳者迎奉於殿。自後海舶往來必詣祈福，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. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE).<sup>35</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that the text mentions a so-called Shilla Reef that is located near Putuo Shan.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

The *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (*Record of the Pilgrimage in Tang in Search of the Dharma*)<sup>39</sup> written by the Japanese monk Ennin (793/794–864) in the 9<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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<sup>41</sup> thinks that Bukenqu Guanyin

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<sup>35</sup> The name of Egaku is written with different Chinese characters depending on the source: 惠諤 (萼/鏢), 慧鏢 (萼/鏢).

<sup>36</sup> T 49, no. 2035, p. 388b16–c3.

<sup>37</sup> ‘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 Jucan’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 *Putuoluojishan zhuan* 補陀洛迦山傳 (*The History of Mount Potalaka*; 1361), as well as several Japanese sources, such as *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks in Japan*; 1702) or *Genkō shokusho* 元亨釋書 (1344)

<sup>38</sup> *Baoqing siming zhi*, ‘Jun zhi’ 郡志 11, ‘Chanyuan san’ 禪院三, ‘Yin-xian Kaiyuan Si’ 鄞縣開元寺 (online).

<sup>39</sup> The records of the 7<sup>th</sup> day in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the year 841 CE, the 25<sup>th</sup> day in the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the year 842 CE, and the 5<sup>th</sup> day in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year 845 CE in volumes 3 and 4.

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka Fumio (2012) adds three other dates to Egaku’s journeys: 848, ca. 852, and 858 CE. See also: Zou 2017: 60–62.

<sup>41</sup> Bingenheimer 2016: 83.

became associated with Egaku later, supposedly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE, since the earlier records do not mention his name at all.

At the same time, Park Hyun-kyu<sup>42</sup> and Cho Young-Rok<sup>43</sup> 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 Indök *sarang* 李仁德四郎 or Yi Indök 李隣德 (ca. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE), the owner of the ship used by Egaku on his return to Japan, is thought to have been from Shilla.<sup>44</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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*<sup>45</sup> instruments, and copper objects, all offered by merchants from the Kyerim state,<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

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,

<sup>42</sup> Park 2000: 99–120.

<sup>43</sup> Cho 2011: 187.

<sup>44</sup> Reischauer 1955: 18.

<sup>45</sup> An L-shaped percussion instrument made of stone or jade, or the bronze percussion instrument of Buddhists resembling an alms bowl.

<sup>46</sup> Kyerim (‘Rooster Forest’) is another name for Shilla.

<sup>47</sup> 三韓外國諸山在杳冥間，海舶至此，必有祈禱。寺有鐘磬銅物，皆雞林商賈所施者，多刻彼國之年號。亦有外國人留題頗有文采者。 *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄 (online).



which is also shown by the fact that the ‘Pier of the Rebuked Sister-in-Law’ is also called Koryō Pier (Gaoli Daotou 高麗道頭).<sup>48</sup>

As we saw, the cult of Guanyin might have been present at Putuo Shan since the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>49</sup> in her hand or next to her in a vase (*huping* 胡瓶). 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,<sup>50</sup> or a dragon. In these cases, she usually holds a rosary or a water bottle (*jingping* 淨瓶)<sup>51</sup> and a willow branch in her hands.

<sup>48</sup> Song 2008b: 300.

<sup>49</sup> Helps to avoid and heal illnesses (Pak 2008: 199).

<sup>50</sup> *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 Kōsa 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.

<sup>51</sup> Also referred to as *shuiping* 水瓶, one of the 18 objects possessed by monks. It can symbolize spiritual purification and the discarding of all impurities obstructing enlightenment.



The *bodhisattva* has been depicted as female in China since the 10<sup>th</sup> 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, Chün-fang Yü<sup>52</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Yü 2011: 182, 413.

<sup>53</sup> 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* 鸚哥寶卷 (*The Precious Scroll of the Parrot*) and the *Yingge xing xiaoyi zhuan* 鸚哥行孝義傳 (*The Story of the Parrot’s Filial Deed*; 15<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

<sup>54</sup> 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*; 5–6<sup>th</sup> 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 會稽 County (present-day Shaoxing 紹興 in Zhejiang Province),<sup>55</sup> 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 昌國 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.<sup>56</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> century CE,<sup>57</sup> 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 *bodhimāṇḍa*. 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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<sup>55</sup> Rong-Bi 2016: 31–52.

<sup>56</sup> Kim S. 2010: 199–228; *Baoqing siming zhi* 19, 'Dinghai-xian zhi' 定海縣志 2, 'Shenmiao' 神廟 (online).

<sup>57</sup> As examples we can mention Wang Shunfeng's 王舜封 mission in 1080 CE and Liu Da's 劉達 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 gazettiers 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>58</sup> (*kūmdong shinmyomyōng samjonbul* 금동신묘명삼존불, 金銅辛卯銘三尊佛) dated 571 CE.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Japanese sources recorded the story of the Japanese monk Gyōzen 行善 (ca. 7<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup>

As a remnant of the Kwanŭm cult of Paekche 백제 (百濟), we can mention the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE rock-carved buddha-triad in T'aean (T'aean *maeabul* 태안마애불, 泰安磨崖佛).<sup>61</sup> It is notable that the central figure of the triad is not Amitābha but Avalokiteśvara. Moreover, Tangjin 당진 (唐津), 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 Paljōng 발정 (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).<sup>62</sup> It is not unlikely that the cult of Guanyin was transmitted by Paljōng to the Korean Peninsula.

As for Shilla, the *Samguk yusa* 삼국유사 (三國遺事, *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 *bodhi-sattva* 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.

<sup>58</sup> Ch. *xinmao*, the 28<sup>th</sup> in the Chinese sexagenary cycle.

<sup>59</sup> 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.

<sup>60</sup> *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語集 16, no. 1, 'Sō Gyōzen, Kannon no tasuke ni yorite Shindan yori kaerikoreru monogatari' 僧行善依觀音助從震旦歸來語 (*Konjaku monogatari shū* 1993: 468–469); *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 1, no. 6, 'Kannon bosatsu wo tanominenjimatsumite genpō wo uru en' 恃憑念觀音菩薩得現報緣 (*Nihon ryōiki* 1996: 208–209).

<sup>61</sup> Ch'ungch'ōng-namdo T'aean-gun Paekхва San. 140x207 cm, standing triad.

<sup>62</sup> *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*,<sup>63</sup> 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 寶陁洛伽山) in the Western region – also called ‘Small White Flower’<sup>64</sup> – 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 Sea<sup>65</sup> 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

<sup>63</sup> A similar story is found in the 44<sup>th</sup> fascicle of *Shinjŭng Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam*’s 신증동국여지승람 (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; 13<sup>th</sup> century CE).

<sup>64</sup> In the topographical accounts of Putuo Shan in China (*shanzhi* 山誌), Potalaka is translated as ‘Small White Flower Mountain’ (Xiaobaihua Shan 小白華山), but this is regarded as a mis-translation from Li Tongxuan’s 李通玄 (635–730 CE) *Xin Huayan jing lun* 新華嚴經論 written in the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 *punḍarīka* (‘white lotus’) with the Chinese transcription of Potalaka.

<sup>65</sup> The Sea of Japan.

[of the statue] was as if it was made by heaven. After that, the bamboos sank into the ground again, so it was known that it was truly the abode of the true body [of the *bodhisattva*]. For this reason, [Ūisang] named the temple ‘Naksan’, and enshrined the two treasures in the chamber before he left.<sup>66</sup>

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 Kwanūm and caves. The building built above the cave where the spiritual encounter is believed to have taken place is the present Hongnyōn-am 紅蓮庵 (Red Lotus Hermitage) at Naksan Temple.

According to the story, master Ūisang 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 Kwanūm. 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, Ūisang consciously endeavoured to meet the *bodhisattva*, and religious practice – which is a central part in Ūisang’s Hwaōm 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*.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, we should pay attention to the motif of the dragon of the East Sea in the story.<sup>68</sup> Not only is the dragon one of the Dharma-protecting beings in Buddhism,<sup>69</sup> but the Chinese iconographic representation of Nanhai Guanyin

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<sup>66</sup> 昔義湘法師始自唐來還，聞大悲真身住此海邊嶠內，故因名洛山。蓋西域寶陀洛伽山，此云小白華，乃白衣大士真身住處，故借此名之。齋戒七日，浮座具晨水上，龍天八部侍從，引入嶠內。參禮空中出水精念珠一貫給[獻]之，湘領受而退。東海龍亦獻如意寶珠一顆，師捧出。更齋七日，乃見真容，謂曰：『於座上山頂雙竹湧生，當其地作殿宜矣。』師聞之出嶠，果有竹從地湧出。乃作金堂，塑像而安之。圓容麗質儼若天生。其竹還沒，方知正是真身住也。因名其寺曰洛山。師以所受二珠，鎮安于聖殿而去。 Iryōn 1982: 416–417; T 49, no. 2039, p. 996c3–14. Translation is by the author. Another translation can be found in McBride 2012: 394–396.

<sup>67</sup> See footnote no. 12.

<sup>68</sup> 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.

<sup>69</sup> 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

南海觀音 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.<sup>70</sup> 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 Kwanūm 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, 東海神祠), is located near Naksan Sa,<sup>71</sup> 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 ‘Ingnyōng-hyōn’ 익령현 (翼嶺縣) chapter of the 58<sup>th</sup> fascicle of the *Koryōsa* 고려사 (高麗史; 1392–1451 CE),<sup>72</sup> the existence of Tonghae Shinmyo at Yangyang can be confirmed from the Koryō 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, Kyōngju 경주 (慶州), while during the Koryō era (918–1392 CE) a five-sea system was established.<sup>73</sup> Since Yangyang is located east of the Koryō capital Kaesōng 개성 (開城), it makes sense that a shrine for the deity of the East Sea was later established in this area.<sup>74</sup> Starting from the Chosōn dynasty

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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*).

<sup>70</sup> *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.

<sup>71</sup> Kangwōn-do, Yangyang-gun, Yangyang-ūp, Chosal-li 339-oe 1-p’il.

<sup>72</sup> *Koryōsa* 58, ‘Ingnyōng-hyōn’ (online).

<sup>73</sup> Contemporary Adūng-byōn 아등변 (阿等邊) Kūnohyōng-byōn 근오형변 (斤烏兄邊). The four seas to which rites of the medium rank (*chungsa* 中祀) were conducted are listed in the *Samguk sagi*’s 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 Koryō rites to seas can be found in the *Koryōsa*, and information about the Chosōn rites can be found in the *Sejong shillōk* 세종실록 (世宗實錄).

<sup>74</sup> After 1456, the shrine for the East Sea at Yangyang was moved to Kangnūng for a while, and rituals were conducted there. At the same time, the shrine for the West Sea was moved to Inchōn, and the shrine for the South Sea was moved to Sunchōn. 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 Koryŏ 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 Naksa Sa is known as Haesu Kwanŭm 해수관음 (海水觀音, 'Sea Water Avalokiteśvara'), this nomenclature cannot be confirmed before 1683 CE.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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 Munmu 문무 (文武; 626–681 CE), who was a supporter of the monk in real life.<sup>77</sup> 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 Munmu and Pŏmmin' (Munmu wang Pŏm-

<sup>75</sup> Its first appearance is on a stele called 'Naksan Sa Haesu Kwanŭm kungjung sari pi' 낙산사해수관음궁중사리비 (洛山寺海水觀音空中舍利碑).

<sup>76</sup> Byeon 2010.

<sup>77</sup> So 2008: 45–86.



민 문무왕 법민, 文武王法敏) in Book 2, Part 2, titled ‘Marvels 2’ (‘Kii i’ 기이이, 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 shikhchök’ 만파식적, 万波息笛).<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

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 10<sup>th</sup> century until the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup>

<sup>78</sup> 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 Kamŭn 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 Kwanŭm, the concepts of the mountain on the sea, the dragon, the state-protecting role, and the magical bamboos are linked together in the story.

<sup>79</sup> 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 Chŏnghŭi 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 shikhchök’ 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 Goryŏ 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 Koguryō 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 Kwanūm was a way to gain protection from the northern barbarians.<sup>80</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the legends of Ūisang seem to be in close connection with the dragon. According to the legend about the maiden Shanmiao turning into a dragon (Sōnmyo hwaryong 선묘 화룡, 善妙化龍),<sup>81</sup> 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 zhuan* 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,<sup>82</sup> but a scene can call to mind the image of the dragon boat of *prajñā* (*panya yongsōn* 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’ (*taebisōn* 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 in East Asian maritime Buddhist culture.

<sup>80</sup> *Samguk yusa* 3, ‘T’apsang’ 탑상 (塔像) 4, ‘Paengnyul-sa’ 백률사 (栢栗寺); Byeon 2010.

<sup>81</sup> In this story when Ūisang arrived in China, he stayed in the house of a lay believer, whose daughter, Shanmiao, fell in love with him. Ūisang 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 Ūisang 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 Ūisang wanted to build a temple. The temple built with the help of Shanmiao is called Pusōk Sa 부석사 (浮石寺, ‘Temple of the Floating Rock’).

<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> However, several studies suggest that the temple may not have been founded by Ŭisang himself. Hwang Keum-Soon<sup>84</sup> 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’ (Budaluojiasan, 補怛洛迦山), 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.<sup>85</sup>

The chapter titled ‘Naksan idaesōng Kwanūm Chōngch’wi Choshin’ in the *Samguk yusa* also contains the story of Pōmil 범일 (梵日; 810–894 CE), the founder of the Sagul San 사굴산 (闍崛山 or Kulsan) school, which was the most influential Sōn 선 (禪) school during the Shilla era. The legend narrates how the monk introduced the worship of the *bodhisattva* Ananyagāmin (Kr. Chōngch’wi Posal 정취보살, 正趣菩薩), who appears together with Avalokiteśvara in the *Flower Ornament Scripture*, to Naksan Sa.<sup>86</sup> After the unification of the three Korean kingdoms, the mainstream tradition of Shilla Buddhism was the Hwaōm school of Ŭisang’s lineage. At the same time, the territory where Naksan Sa was built was under the influence of the Sagul San Sōn school,

<sup>83</sup> Cho 2012: 204.

<sup>84</sup> Hwang 2007: 95–96.

<sup>85</sup> The transcription ‘Budaluojia Shan’ 布呬洛迦山 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 Kwanūm 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*.

<sup>86</sup> According to the legend, Pōmil 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 Tōkgi Village in Ingyōng County (present-day Yangyang) in Shilla. He asked Pōmil to build a house for him in Yangyang on his return to Shilla. After Pōmil returned to his home country in 847 CE, the mysterious monk appeared in his dream to remind him of his promise. Pōmil 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 Pōmil built a shrine for him on Naksan (T 49, no. 2039, p. 996c23 – p. 997a10).

which was dominated by a local clan. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> 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, Pōmil, was the grandson of the governor of Myōngju 명주 (溟州, present-day Kangnūng 강릉, 江陵), and the patrons of the school were mostly members of the local clan.<sup>87</sup> Pōmil and his disciples maintained a close relationship with the Hwaōm school. Hwang Keum-Soon<sup>88</sup> 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<sup>89</sup> 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 Anan-yagāmin by Pōmil on Naksan overlap chronologically, the key figures involved in these two enterprises might have known each other. According to the *Samguk yusa*, Pōmil resided at Kaiguo Temple (Kaiguo Si 開國寺)<sup>90</sup> 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. 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Sō Kongjik 서공직 (徐公直) and Sō Kongyu 서공유 (徐公裕; ca. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE) in 847 CE. This means that he returned home in the same year as Pōmil, 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 Pōmil 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.

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<sup>87</sup> Vermeersch 2008: 69–70.

<sup>88</sup> Hwang 2007: 94–101.

<sup>89</sup> Cho 2011: 177–205; Cho 2012: 197–235.

<sup>90</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> century CE and was identified with Potalaka only after the 11<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup>

Even if we cannot find a major religious site for Kwanūm on the western coast of Korea, the Guanyin cult of Mount Putuo has influenced the beliefs in this region. There are many Kwanūm temples on Wido 위도 (蝸島) and the Pyōnsan Peninsula (Pyōnsan 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.

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<sup>91</sup> There is actually a Kwanūm *bodhimaṇḍa* on the western coast of the Peninsula, the Nakka San 낙가산 (洛迦山) Pomun Sa 보문사 (普門寺) on Sōngmo Island (Sōngmo Do 석모도, 席毛島) in Kanghwa-gun, Inchōn, which lies near the Koryō era sea route. However, although the foundation of the temple is dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, the worship of Kwanūm is likely to have started only during the Japanese occupation, since there is no written or archaeological evidence for Kwanūm 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 Susōng Shrine (Susōng Tang 수성당 水聖堂, ‘Shrine of the saint of the water’) in Puan-gun 부안군 (扶安郡) Chungmak-tong 죽막동 (竹幕洞) on the Pyōnsan Peninsula can be viewed as a case of ‘reverse syncretism’, an expression borrowed from James Huntley Grayson.<sup>92</sup> Susōng Tang bears the characteristics of the shamanic folk religion of Korea. Thus the expressions ‘Kwanūm’ 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 Pangwōl-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’ilsan 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’ilsan 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 Susōng Shrine to ask for help from Kaeyang Halmi. The goddess appeared in front of the woman, waded into the sea, and rescued her husband.<sup>93</sup>

Based on the description above, Kaeyang Halmi worshipped in Susōng 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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<sup>92</sup> 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.

<sup>93</sup> Field work was conducted on the 10 July 2005 by Shin Chongwōn, Sō Yōngdae, Yi Ch’angshik, Kim Ch’anggyōm, Sō Bongsu, and Choe Myōnghwan (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 Susōng 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 Susōng Tang.

Furthermore, according to Song Hwa Seob,<sup>94</sup> the motif of Kaeyang Halmi giving birth to eight daughters calls to mind the image of Bixia Yuanjun 碧霞元君,<sup>95</sup> 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 Pyōnsan 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<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Song 2013a: 169.

<sup>95</sup> 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.

<sup>96</sup> 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 Koryō 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 Hūksan Island (Hūksan Do 흑산도, 黑山島), from where ships turned northward to reach the Koryō 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 Pyönsan 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, Paljöng, 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 Chosön 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 Pyönsan Peninsula held rituals to the sea before their journey.<sup>97</sup>

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 Susöng 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 Pyönsan 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.

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<sup>97</sup> Song 2008b: 300, 317; Lee 1998.

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 *bodhimāṇḍas* in Korea.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Besides Hongnyŏn Am at Naksan Sa, the other locations are the Kūmo San Hyangil Am (Yŏsu City, Cholla-namdo, Tolsan-ŭp, Yullim-ni) together with the Kūmsan 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. Meūm-ni) on the Western coast.

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