

## Ferrying to the Other Shore: Silla Seafarers and Avalokiteśvara Faith in the East Asian Maritime World

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Historically, commerce was a significant factor in the proliferation and development of Buddhism, which is especially manifest in the cult of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Iconographic and textual evidence testifies that maritime trade on the Indian Ocean played a fundamental role in the formation of Avalokiteśvara worship. The sea was also a major conduit through which elements of the Avalokiteśvara faith were transmitted from India through China to Korea and Japan, the easternmost ends of the Silk Road. These elements include Avalokiteśvara's role as a maritime savior, oceanic symbolism, and the concept of the bodhisattva's worldly abode, Potalaka. Cultic sites dedicated to maritime safety were established at important transport hubs in East Asia. Due to China's strategic location on the Silk Road, as well as its cultural influence, the most important cultic sites were founded in China, first on the Shandong Peninsula, then in the southern Jiangnan region, in present-day Zhejiang Province. Especially notable is the role that Korean seafarers played in this process by assisting monks in search of the Dharma, establishing temples, and transmitting religious beliefs across the ocean. The present study focuses on the role that maritime figures played in the cultural exchanges between Korea, China, and Japan examined through Avalokiteśvara faith. By this, it aims to demonstrate how Korean seafarers inherited and continued the traditional relationship between commerce and Buddhism, while extending the Maritime Silk Road to the "East Asian Mediterranean."

**Keywords:** Avalokiteśvara, maritime Buddhism, Silla merchants, Chang Pogo, Mount Putuo, Fahua Monastery

## Introduction: Avalokiteśvara as the Protector of Seafarers

Commerce was a significant factor in the proliferation and development of Buddhism. The relationship between merchants and monks can be traced back to the earliest times, since merchants were the earliest converts and patrons of Buddhism. For example, Trapusa and Bhallika, who offered food for the Buddha after his enlightenment, became his first lay followers, and Anāthapiṇḍika, a wealthy merchant, donated the Jetavāna Monastery to the saṅgha.<sup>1</sup> Buddhist communities continued to rely heavily on the donations of wealthy laity, including merchants, who built stūpas, caityas, and vihāras, while also providing necessary supplies to the communities. Trade played an important role not only in the maintenance but also in the proliferation of the religion because the spread of Buddhism took place mainly via commercial routes. Important Buddhist sites are frequently found in regions that also happen to have been hubs of maritime and local trade. Duraiswamy Dayalan points out that some of the Buddhist institutions in India were either established or patronized by the foreign traders or rulers who came in contact with these Buddhist centers through trade. He provides Simhala vihāra at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa as an example, which is said to have been patronized or established by devotees from Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup> This can be paralleled with the two monasteries discussed in this paper, both established by foreign merchants or monks in China. Meanwhile, the relationship between monks and traders was far from being one-sided. As reflected in sūtras, treatises, and commentaries, Buddhism not only bestowed religious merits on its patrons, but it also offered practical benefits to them, including spiritual protection from dangers while traveling.

On the one hand, caravan leaders became the symbol of the Buddha or bodhisattvas who lead to safety those lost and in danger. By this, Buddhism recognized merchants as capable, responsible, and meritorious beings. This development can be observed in the panegyrics from Mātṛceṭa (third century CE) to Śāntideva (eighth century CE) as well as in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (Ch. *Shidi jing* 十地經, Ten stages sūtra), a chapter of the *Flower Ornament Scripture* (Ch. *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, Skt. *Mahāvaiṣṭya Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*).<sup>3</sup> In the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (Ch. “Ru fajie pin” 入法界品, Skt.\* “Dharmadhātu-praveśana-

<sup>1</sup> Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges AD 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 114–115; Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 12–39, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004181595.i-372>.

<sup>2</sup> Duraiswamy Dayalan, “Role of Trade and Tamil Traders in Promoting Buddhism,” in *Sivasri: Perspective in Indian Archaeology, Art & Culture, Birth Centenary Volume of Padma Bushan Dr. C. Sivaramamurti and Padma Bushan Sh. K.R. Srinivasan*, edited by Duraiswamy Dayalan (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 2013), 15–17.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 78. The *Flower Ornament Scripture* is thought to have been compiled from independent scriptures from the fourth to sixth century in Central Asia. Douglas Edward Osto (“The *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*: A Study of Wealth, Gender and Power in an Indian Buddhist Narrative” (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2004), 60) dates the formative period of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* script to roughly 200 to 300 CE and suggests that the sūtra was compiled in the South Indian region of the ancient city of Dhānyakataka or Dharaṇikoṭa.

parivarta,” Chapter on entry into the realm of reality), which is another chapter of the same text, material wealth is often linked to religious merits accumulated in the past. What is more, Sudhana, the protagonist, is the son of a wealthy merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhin*).<sup>4</sup> Through this, the scripture positively acknowledged the material resources accumulated by traders, upon which Buddhism heavily relied.

On the other hand, the motif of protecting travelling merchants appears in sūtras, which led to the increasing popularity of deities and bodhisattvas providing this protection. This theme is especially manifest in the cult of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Iconographic and textual evidence testifies that maritime trade on the Indian Ocean played an important role in the formation of Avalokiteśvara worship. The spread of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent via maritime routes can be traced back to the early centuries of the Common Era and evidence becomes more substantial from the fifth century CE.<sup>5</sup> The sea was also one of the conduits through which elements of Avalokiteśvara faith were transmitted from India through Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and China to Korea and Japan, the easternmost ends of the Silk Road.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest iconographic representations of Avalokiteśvara as a protector of seafarers are dated to the second century CE by Radha Kumud Mookerji and can be found in the Kanheri caves near Bombay in West India.<sup>7</sup> The sculptures in Kanheri caves 2, 41, and 90 include shipwreck scenes with two individuals praying to the bodhisattva, who sends two messengers to the rescue.<sup>8</sup> Similar depictions can be found in the Ajanta caves 4, upper 6, 11, and 26, dated to ca. 477–479. The popularity of these depictions is shown by the fact that over twelve sculpted or painted versions of the subject appear in the Ajanta caves.<sup>9</sup> Other examples include Aurangabad cave 7 (sixth–seventh century CE), and Ellora cave 9 (sixth–

<sup>4</sup> Osto, “The Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra.”

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Acri, “Navigating the ‘Southern Seas,’ Miraculously: Avoidance of Shipwreck in Buddhist Narratives of Maritime Crossings,” in *Moving Spaces: Creolisation and Mobility in Africa, the Atlantic and Indian Ocean*, African Social Studies Series, Volume 39, ed. by Marina Berthet, Fernando Rosa, and Shaun Viljoen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), 51–52, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004410992\\_004](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004410992_004).

<sup>6</sup> Commerce was not the only driving force behind the spread and development of Buddhism or Avalokiteśvara’s cult. For an overview of the “royal” versus “commercial” paradigm of the spread of Buddhism, see Acri, “Introduction: Esoteric Buddhist Networks along the Maritime Silk Routes, 7th–13th Century AD,” in *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons*, ed. by Andrea Acri (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814695091>. The regal attributes of Avalokiteśvara images change after the fifth century, which overlaps on the one hand with the bodhisattva’s emergence as an independent deity, and on the other hand with the appearance of the Litany Scene in the caves of the western coast of India famous for its trading activities (Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 11).

<sup>7</sup> Debala Mitra (*Buddhist Monuments* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971), 166) and Chün-fang Yü (*Kuan-yin*, 11) date caves 41 and 90 to the sixth century CE, which implies that a more accurate dating would help shed light on the early history of Avalokiteśvara as protector of seafarers.

<sup>8</sup> Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Indian Shipping: A History of the Sea-borne Trade and Maritime Activity of the Indians from the Earliest Times* (Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 32–52.

<sup>9</sup> W. M. Spink, *Ajanta: History and Development*, vol. 3, *The Arrival of the Uninvited* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 5–98, 111–115, 200–265, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047416272>.

eighth century).<sup>10</sup> The scenes at these sites are all examples of the so-called Litany Scene, a depiction of Avalokiteśvara surrounded by eight fears and dangers (*astabhayas*) that one might face while on the road. These might be different according to the depiction but may include wild animals (snakes, mad elephants, lions), demons, attackers, chains, swords, fire, and shipwrecks.<sup>11</sup>

The textual basis of the eight dangers is the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, Ch. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, first–second century), presumably the oldest text mentioning Avalokiteśvara,<sup>12</sup> which contributed to the development that resulted in the bodhisattva taking on the role of a maritime deity providing protection from dangers encountered at sea. In “The Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokiteśvara” (Skt. “Avalokiteśvara-vikurvaṇa-nirdeśaḥ,” Ch. “Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin” 觀世音菩薩普門品), seven calamities<sup>13</sup> are listed from which Avalokiteśvara can protect believers. Many of these reflect the concerns 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* here refers to present-day Sri Lanka, which was an important destination for merchants in ancient India. As the depiction suggests, it was perceived as a place from where valuable goods and treasures could be obtained, but at the same time was full of potential dangers.

In the earliest times, Avalokiteśvara’s cult might have been in connection with the merchants trading with Sri Lanka. This can be confirmed by Xuanzang’s 玄奘 (ca. 602–664 CE) travel records, *The Great Tang Dynasty Records of the Western Regions* (*Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, 646 CE), which is an oft-cited source with regards to Potalaka, the worldly abode of the bodhisattva. Not only does it state that one can reach the country of Siṃhala (Sri Lanka) going southeast over the sea for more than 3000 *li* from Potalaka, but it also quotes a legend in which Avalokiteśvara saved a group of merchants who had lost their way on the southern sea.<sup>15</sup> Archaeological, artistic, and epigraphic evidence also testifies that Avalokitesvara had a cult in Sri Lanka mainly sponsored by traders in the seventh century.<sup>16</sup>

The tenth chapter of Xuanzang’s record states that Potalaka is located east of Mount

<sup>10</sup> Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, 165–166, 176–177, 180–184.

<sup>11</sup> W. M. Spink, *Ajanta: History and Development*, vol. 4, *Painting, Sculpture, Architecture Year by Year* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 100, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004149830.I-354>.

<sup>12</sup> Scholars has also suggested that the chapter on Avalokiteśvara in the *Lotus Sūtra* is a later addition. Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 513.

<sup>13</sup> Two calamities—flood and storm at sea—are sometimes combined, resulting in seven calamities.

<sup>14</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 [Skt. *Saddharma puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, Lotus sūtra], 7 *juans*, trans. Kumārajīva, 406. *T* no. 262, vol. 9: 7.56c5. *T* = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, The SAT Daizōkyō Text Database [SAT Taishō shinshū daizōkyō Tekisuto Dētabēsu 大正新修大藏經テキストデータベース], The SAT Daizōkyō Text Database Committee, University of Tokyo, updated June 11, 2012, <https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT>.

<sup>15</sup> *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 [The great Tang dynasty records of the western regions], 12 *juans*, by Xuanzang 玄奘, 646. *T* no. 2087, vol. 51: 8.917a2–20.

<sup>16</sup> Osmund Bopearachchi, “Sri Lanka and the Maritime Trade: Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the Protector of Mariners,” *Asian Encounters: Exploring Connected Histories*, ed. by Parul Pandya Dhar and Upinder Singh (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161–87.

Malaya in the South Indian country of Malakūta. According to the description in the text, at the top of the mountain there is a clearwater lake, from which a river flows into the “southern sea” (*nanhai* 南海, presumably the Indian Ocean) after coursing around the mountain twenty times.<sup>17</sup> Based on Xuanzang’s record, many scholars have tried to identify the geographical location of Potalaka. 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>18</sup> or Adam’s Peak (Sri Pada) in Sri Lanka.<sup>19</sup> Hikosaka Shū<sup>20</sup> proposes that the name “Potalaka” refers to Mount Potigai at the foot of the Western Ghats. This is supported by the fact that according to a legend the holy man Agastya learned ascetic methods from Avalokiteśvara there and an Avalokiteśvara sculpture was found in the nearby village of Theroor. The scholar proposes that the old name of the village, Teranūr, refers to Sri Lankan *theras* and suggests that the area was frequently visited by Sri Lankan monks, which reaffirms the connection between Potalaka and Sri Lanka.<sup>21</sup>

The oldest and most well-known text that mentions Potalaka as Avalokiteśvara’s worldly abode is the *Gandavyūha-sūtra*, which, as has been pointed out, emphasizes the connection between material wealth and spiritual merits, while using a merchant’s son as its protagonist. The version of the sūtra in the *Flower Ornament Scripture* in eighty fascicles depicts Potalaka as “a mountain on the sea” (*hai shang you shan* 海上有山),<sup>22</sup> which confirms the connection between Potalaka and the sea that was mentioned in Xuanzang’s record as well.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, several scholars propose that the bodhisattva’s origin can be traced back to a local sea deity.<sup>23</sup> Among them, Senoo Masami<sup>24</sup> assumes that the reason for why Potalaka is not mentioned in the *Lotus Sūtra* is probably because, while the deity was adopted to Buddhism due to its popularity and salvational role, the cultic site of a

<sup>17</sup> *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T no. 2087, 51: 10.932a14–23.

<sup>18</sup> Hikosaka Shū 彦坂周 (“Nanin Podiyasan, Kannon shinkō hasshō no seichi” 南印ポディヤ山, 観音信仰發祥の聖地 [Potiyil Mountain in Southern India, the site of the birth of the Avalokiteśvara cult], *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 38.1 (1989): 375, <https://doi.org/10.4259/ibk.38.375>) refers to the theories of R. F. Johnston and Alexander Cunningham.

<sup>19</sup> Marcus Bingenheimer (*Island of Guanyin: Mount Putuo and its Gazetteers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 211, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190456191.001.0001>) refers to Samuel Beal.

<sup>20</sup> Hikosaka, “Nanin Podiyasan,” 375–373.

<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, due to the mythical and symbolical nature of Potalaka, several geographical locations became identified with the mountain not only in India but also in other countries, including China, Korea, and Japan. Mount Putuo, discussed later in this paper, is one of these locations.

<sup>22</sup> *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 [Skt. *Mahāvairocana Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, Flower ornament scripture], 80 juans, trans. Śikṣānanda, ca. 699. T no. 279, vol. 10: 68.366c6.

<sup>23</sup> Li Lian 李利安 and Jing Tianxing 景天星, “Lun gudai Yindu de Budaluojiashan xinyang” 論古代印度的補怛洛迦山信仰 [Discussing Potalaka cult in ancient India], *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌 9 (2019): 62; Yamauchi Shinji, 山内普次, “Kōkai shugojin to shite no Kannon shinkō” 航海守護神としての観音信仰 [The cult of Kannon as a maritime guardian deity], in *Kodai chūsei shakai to kokka* 古代中世の社会と国家 [Ancient-medieval society and the state] (Ōsaka: Seibundō shuppan 清文堂出版, 1998), 346.

<sup>24</sup> Senoo Masami 妹尾匡海. “Fudaraku shisō to ‘Fumon hin’ no mondaiten” 補陀落思想と「普門品」の問題点 [Questions relating to Mount Potalaka and the ‘Samantamukha-parivarta’ in the *Lotus Sūtra*], *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 35 (1987): 539, <https://doi.org/10.4259/ibk.35.538>.

local sea god did not pique as much interest among Buddhists as did the locations connected to the historical Buddha in the beginning.

We must keep in mind, however, that there is no consensus about the temporal and spatial origins of Avalokiteśvara's worship. Chün-fang Yü<sup>25</sup> points out that based on the sūtras we can find at least three distinct cults centered around Avalokiteśvara: one tradition approached the bodhisattva 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 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*. Since the sea was an important symbol in Buddhism from the beginning,<sup>26</sup> it was proposed early on that the fears depicted as *astabhayas* in the Litany Scene might symbolize negative mental states or actions.<sup>27</sup> However, the number of representations at remote sites created in times of turbulence when traveling might have been dangerous, as well as the presence of scenes of shipwrecks at places located near the coast or along trading routes in South Asia, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, indicates that the initial intention might have been practical instead of being purely spiritual.<sup>28</sup>

The veneration of Avalokiteśvara and the *Lotus Sūtra* for gaining protection from maritime dangers, the cooperation between merchants and monastics, and the interpenetration of spiritual and material benefits continued in the East Asian maritime world as well, where the vibrant maritime trade between China, Korea, and Japan from around the fifth century turned the region into a bustling “East Asian Mediterranean.”<sup>29</sup> As Kim Sujung writes: “The East Asian Mediterranean functioned as a medium and as a hybrid space populated by humans, buddhas and gods, all of whom coexisted in this shared territory.”<sup>30</sup> In this hybrid space, cultic sites dedicated to maritime safety were established at important transport hubs in China as well as in Korea and Japan. Due to China's strategic location on the Silk Road, as well as its cultural influence, the most important cultic sites were founded in China, first on the Shandong Peninsula, then in the southern Jiangnan region, in present-day Zhejiang

<sup>25</sup> Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 7–15, 31–91.

<sup>26</sup> In the Pāli Canon the sea symbolizes saṃsāra, the ocean of suffering, whereas the Buddhist teaching is compared to a boat that must be left behind once one has crossed over to the other shore. The symbolism became more complex in Mahāyāna literature, where—taken to the utmost level—it can symbolize the all-encompassing nature of the *dharmadhatu*, the realm of truth, or the essence-quality of the mind.

<sup>27</sup> Spink (*Ajanta*, vol. 3, 7) refers to John Huntington in the 1980s.

<sup>28</sup> Acri, “Navigating the ‘Southern Seas,’” 53.

<sup>29</sup> The expression “East Asian Mediterranean” was coined by Angela Schottenhammer and refers to the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the East Sea. Besides the geographical classification, it also indicates the connecting role this area played in intercultural relations. Schottenhammer, “The ‘China Seas’ in World History: A General Outline of the Role of Chinese and East Asian Maritime Space from Its Origins to C. 1800,” *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 1 (2012): 64, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.imic.2012.11.002>.

<sup>30</sup> Sujung Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of East Asian Mediterranean* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824881733>.

Province.

Especially notable is the role that Korean seafarers played in this process by assisting monks in search of the Dharma, establishing temples, and transmitting religious beliefs across the ocean. In some cases, they even became the target of religious worship, like the Silla admiral Chang Pogo 장보고 (張保皋, also written as 張寶高, 787–841/846 CE). Thus, the present study focuses on the role that maritime figures played in the cultural exchanges between Korea, China, and Japan examined through Avalokiteśvara faith. By this, it aims to demonstrate how Korean seafarers inherited and continued the traditional relationship between commerce and Buddhism while extending the Maritime Silk Road to the “East Asian Mediterranean.”

## The Golden Age of Silla Merchants in the “East Asian Mediterranean”

### Conduits of Goods and Beliefs: Maritime Routes in East Asia

The worship of Avalokiteśvara might have been propagated by Indian merchants through maritime routes first in Southeast Asia, then in China around the fourth or fifth century 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 third century CE, however, rapidly promoted the development of maritime trade through the southern seas, because the 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 started off from the Bay of Bengal (Bengal or the Coromandel Coast, sometimes via Sri Lanka), passed through the Strait of Malacca after leaving the Nicobar Islands, then sailed by the Mekong Delta near the Funan 扶南 region (present-day Cambodia and Vietnam) before arriving at Hepu 合浦 (present-day Guangxi), Panyu 番禺 (present-day Guangdong), or Jiaozhi 交趾 (present-day northern Vietnam) from where they headed for the central plains on the Yangtze River. From China, alternatively, Faxian 法顯 (337–422 CE) traveled 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 (*A Record of 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.

<sup>31</sup> Song Hwa-sŏp 송화섭, “Chungguk Chŏusan-gundo P’ut’wŏsan ūi haesin kwa Kwanŭm sinang” 중국 저우산군도 [舟山群島] 푸퉁산[普陀山]의 海神과 觀音信仰 [Sea god and Guanyin worship on Mount Putuo of the Zhoushan Archipelago in China], *Tosŏ munhwa* 島嶼文化 42 (2013): 59–61, 70–72.

<sup>32</sup> *Foguo ji* 佛國記 [A record of Buddhist kingdoms], by Faxian 法顯, Eastern Jin era, Chinese Text Project [Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃], accessed September 23, 2023, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=962864>.

Considering the geographical location of China, Korea, and Japan, we can assume that the ideas of Buddhism, including Avalokiteśvara's cult, were transmitted via sea. Japan is an archipelago while Korea is located on a peninsula surrounded by ocean on three sides and connected by sea to China, a region that acted as the 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 three countries. Although, a continental route had already existed since the Warring States period (ca. 475–221 BCE) that led from China to Japan via the Korean Peninsula along the coastline, maritime routes became more dominant in the era of division following the fall of the Han dynasty, especially after the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 CE) relocated its capital to Nanjing. During the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589 CE), new maritime routes opened in the southern regions, which—unlike regions in the north—remained under the rule of Chinese dynasties. Two important routes among the new maritime routes led to Koguryō and Paekche.

A Paekche-era (18 BCE–660 CE) ritual site dated to the fifth–sixth century was discovered in 1992 in the Chungmak-tong 죽막동 (竹幕洞) region of Puan County (Puan-gun 부안군, 扶安郡).<sup>33</sup> Celadon ceramic fragments from the Chinese Southern dynasties have been excavated at the site, with which we can confirm that a southern maritime route between the Jiangnan 江南 region and the Pyōnsan Peninsula (Pyōnsan pando 변산반도, 邊山半島) had been open since at least this time. Paekche maintained a close relationship with the Southern Liang dynasty (502–557 CE), so alongside the exchange of cultural artifacts, the transmission of Buddhism to Korea might also have taken place through this route. Paekche had a central role in transmitting Buddhism to Japan as well, which indicates the importance of this maritime route. The southern sea route, later known as the “transversal maritime route” (Kr. *sadan hangno* 사단항로, 斜斷航路), 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).

However, during the Unified Silla era (668–935 CE), corresponding to the Sui (581–618 CE) and Tang dynasties (618–906 CE) in China, mainly a northern maritime route called “traversing sea route” (Kr. *hoengdan hangno* 횡단항로, 橫斷航路) was used due to its safety. This route started from Dengzhou 登州 on the Shandong 山東 Peninsula, then headed toward Hwanghae Province (Hwanghae-do 황해도, 黃海道) in present-day North Korea along Bohai 渤海 and the Dalian 大連 Bay via the Yellow Sea.<sup>34</sup> The southern sea route regained its importance in the late ninth century and became the dominant sea route between Song

<sup>33</sup> Yi Chae-yōl 이재열, ed., *Puan Chungmak-tong chesayujōk yōngu: Kaegwan ojunyōnginyōm haksul simp'ojium nonmunjip* 扶安 竹幕洞 祭祀遺蹟 研究: 開館五周年紀念 學術심포지움 論文集 [The remains of the cultic site in Puan Chungmak-tong: A selection of academic papers presented at the academic conference commemorating the 5th anniversary of the foundation of Chōnju National Museum]. (Chōnju: Kungnip Chōnju Pangmulgwan 국립전주박물관, 1998).

<sup>34</sup> Angela Schottenhammer (“The ‘China Seas,’” 64–65) categorizes both the “transversal” and the “traversing” routes as northern routes (Ch. *beihanglu* 北航路) while classifying the direct route from Zhejiang or Fujian Province to Japan, as well as the same route via Ryūkyū, as eastern routes (Ch. *donghanglu* 東航路).



China and the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392). Ultimately, the rise and fall of trading hubs, as well as religious centers of maritime Buddhism, followed the change of dominance between the northern and the southern sea routes. As such, the first part of the ninth century was defined by the maritime empire of Chang Pogo, who was mainly active on the Shandong Peninsula, the terminal of the northern route.

### Emperor of the Sea: Chang Pogo's Maritime Commercial Empire

It is impossible to discuss the maritime history of ninth-century East Asia without mentioning Chang Pogo and the Silla residents of the Tang Empire, who played a crucial role not only in commercial but also in cultural exchanges between China, Korea, and Japan. Since 755, the Shandong Peninsula had been under the supervision of Yi Chŏnggi 이정기 (Ch. Li Zhengji 李正己), a general of Koguryŏ descent, and his family, who exercised almost full authority in the region until 819. Officially, they performed a mediating role between the Tang Empire, Silla, and Palhae but they also conducted private trade with the involved regions. To facilitate these exchanges, the Silla people established their own settlements, the so-called Silla Wards (Kr. Silla pang 신라방, 新羅坊), mainly on the Shandong Peninsula, but also near the coastal areas in Jiangsu and reaching as far as the Zhejiang region. These communities enjoyed administrative authority even after the decline of the Yi family, when they were placed under the administration of Silla officials. The most influential Silla resident in Tang China was Chang Pogo, who supervised the trading centers on the Shandong Peninsula, while safeguarding the maritime routes between China, Korea, and Japan from pirates and human traffickers.

Born as the son of a boatman in Silla, Chang went to the Tang Empire around 810 CE to look for opportunities outside of the rigid bone-rank system of Silla, which limited his career opportunities as a commoner. He rose to the rank of junior general of Wuning 武寧 in China before returning to his homeland. With the permission of the court, he established the military garrison and trading hub Ch'ŏnghaejin 청해진 (淸海鎭) on Wando 완도 (莞島), an island at the southernmost region of the Korean Peninsula. Supervised by Chang Pogo as commissioner of the garrison (*taesa* 대사, 大使), Ch'ŏnghaejin stationed around 10,000 soldiers under its roof. In addition to protecting the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea from pirates, Chang also actively participated in maritime commerce by controlling trade between China, Japan, Central Asia, and Arabian areas.<sup>35</sup> Not only did Chang Pogo play a crucial role in the history of commerce, he also greatly contributed to the history of religion in East Asia. The next chapter explores his contributions.

<sup>35</sup> For more on Chang Pogo see Stella Xu, "The Guardian of the Maritime Network in Premodern East Asia: Contested History and Memory of Chang Pogo," *Korean Studies* 40 (2016): 119–139, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.2016.0004>.

## The Fahua Monastery on Mount Chi

In order to fulfil the religious needs of the Silla communities in Tang China, Chang Pogo commissioned a temple named Fahua Monastery (Fahuayuan 法花院, Monastery of the Lotus of the Dharma) on Mount Chi (Chishan 赤山) in Dengzhou (present-day Penglai 蓬萊).<sup>36</sup> Considering the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Fahua Monastery, there is no doubt that one of its functions was to provide spiritual protection during maritime travel. The name of the temple refers to the *Lotus Sūtra*, the scripture that established Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩) as a maritime savior, so we can assume that the bodhisattva was venerated in the monastery. However, the temple served not only as a religious establishment but also as a lodging and information center for itinerant monks as well as a communal space for Silla residents in Tang China.

One of the most important sources about the Fahua Monastery, the Silla community in China, and Chang Pogo is *The Record of the Pilgrimage in Tang in Search of the Dharma* (*Nittō gubō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記, hereafter *The Record*), the diary of the third abbot (Jp. *zasu* 座主) of the Japanese Tendai 天台 (Ch. Tiantai) School, Ennin 円仁 (794–864 CE), who stayed at the monastery for eight months after being denied permission to visit Mount Tiantai. During his nine-and-a-half-year-long stay in Tang China, he received a lot of help from the Silla community there. Not only did the community provide lodging and transportation for the monk but it also supplied him with crucial information and, in addition, helped him during the Huichang 會昌 persecution of Buddhism (842–845 CE). Being unable to visit his original destination (i.e. Mount Tiantai), Ennin decided to stay in China and make a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai (Wutaishan 五臺山) instead after hearing from a Silla monk, Sōngnim 성림 (聖琳), that Tiantai practices were carried out on the mountain. Moreover, Ennin's Korean interpreter, Yu Sinŏn 유신언 (劉慎言), along with 설전 薛詮, the general manager (*zongguan* 惣官) and assimilated colonel (*tongshijiang* 同十將) from Chuzhou 楚州 (present-day Huaian 淮安), hid his Buddhist artifacts during the persecution of Buddhism. The monk even returned to Japan on the ship of Silla merchants Kim Chabaek 김자백 (金子白), Hūm Ryanghwi 흠량휘 (欽良暉), and Kim Chin 김진 (金珍). It is not an exaggeration that without the help of Silla people, Ennin could not have succeeded on his mission. It is due to their contribution that many of the Silla interpreters', monks', and officials' names are immortalized by Ennin in his diary.

Ennin documented many details about the Fahua Monastery including its location, appearance, management system, and rites. It is noteworthy that apart from Ennin and his entourage, all the monks and believers were of Silla origin. Men and women, monastics and lay people, and wealthy and poor all participated together in the sermons, about 40–250 people at a time. According to the records, the *Lotus Sūtra* was lectured on in the winter while the *Golden Light Sūtra* (Skt. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, Ch. *Hebu Jin guangming jing* 合部金光明經) was lectured on in the summer. Lectures were held during the day and repentance rituals along

<sup>36</sup> Xu, "The Guardian of the Maritime," 127.

with sūtra-recitations were held during the night. Most of the ceremonies were conducted in the Silla language and in Silla style, except for two repentances, one in the morning and one in the evening, which were conducted in Tang style.<sup>37</sup>

Analyzing the rites conducted at the Fahua Monastery, Pak So-yŏng 박소영<sup>38</sup> argues that the practices might have been based on the worship method of the Tiantai school. This can be assumed based on the centrality of the *Lotus Sūtra* in ceremonies and beliefs at the temple. It is noteworthy that Avalokiteśvara had a central role in this Buddhist school. The fourth patriarch and *de facto* founder of the Tiantai school, Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597 CE), actively promoted the cult of the bodhisattva and compiled two commentaries on the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which were written down by his disciple, Guanding 灌頂 (561–632 CE). One of these commentaries, the *Guanyin yishu* 觀音義疏 (Commentary on the meaning of Avalokiteśvara) gives a symbolic interpretation not only of the dangers from which the bodhisattva can protect travelers but also of merchants.

To “trade” is to “assess.” These people [the merchant leaders] can distinguish valuable things from worthless objects, and they are good at understanding fortune and profit. After reckoning, they acquire the suitable [goods]; that is how they become the leader of the merchants. If there is a merchant leader, there must be merchants who are led. The things carried by merchants through dangerous, remote places might be precious goods that are hard to obtain. That is why [the scripture] says “with significant treasures.” The so-called “dangerous road” can be a deserted, dark, and narrow pass, or a place where they can be attacked by malicious bandits.<sup>39</sup>

In the text, a merchant is depicted as someone who is able to distinguish valuable things from worthless objects and who is determined to set out on a dangerous journey in order to obtain them. Thus, the merchant becomes the symbol of Buddhist practitioners striving toward enlightenment, or the mind set on attaining wisdom. As can be seen, the doctrines of Tiantai Buddhism were in sync with and provided a solid background for the functions of the Fahua Monastery.

On the other hand, not only the teachings of Tiantai but also the traces of Chan 禪 can be detected at Fahua Monastery. Ennin mentions in his diary that at least four Chan monks

<sup>37</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), 131, 150–156; the record of the 7th day of the 6th month, and the 16th day of the 11th month of 839.

<sup>38</sup> Pak So-yŏng 朴昭映, “Ennin no *Nittō gubō junrei kōki* ni kansuru ichikōsatsu: Sekizan Hokke-in no bukkyō girei wo chūshin ni 円仁の『入唐求法巡礼行記』に関する一考察—赤山法華院の仏教儀礼を中心に [A study about Ennin's *Nittō gubō junrei kōki*: Focusing on the rituals of the Fahua Monastery at Mount Chi],” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 65, no. 2 (2017): 600–604, [https://doi.org/10.4259/ibk.65.2\\_600](https://doi.org/10.4259/ibk.65.2_600).

<sup>39</sup> 商者訓量.此人擇識貴賤,善解財利.商量得宜,堪為商人之主.既有商主即有將領.諸商人既涉險遠所齋者,必是難得之貨.故言重寶也.險路者或可曠絕幽隘,名為險路,或值怨賊衝出之處,名為險路者也. *Guanyin yishu* 觀音義疏 [Commentary on the meaning of Avalokiteśvara], by Zhiyi 智顛, recorded by Guanding 灌頂, sixth-seventh century (Seoul: Taehan pulgyo ch'ŏnt'aejong Guinsa 대한불교천태종 구인사, 1996), 130–131.

permanently resided at the temple.<sup>40</sup> The communal work in which everyone participated, regardless of birth or rank, is also a characteristic of Chan.<sup>41</sup> The influence of the Silla Sōn monk Musang sōnsa 무상선사 (無相禪師, 684–762 CE) can also be observed in the fact that believers practiced the drawn-out recitation of buddhas' and bodhisattvas' names (Ch. *yinsheng nianfo* 引声念佛).<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the *Cidi chanmen* 次第禪門 (also *Shi chan boluomi cidi famen* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門, Understanding *dhyāna pāramitā*, a method in stages) written by Zhiyi was explained during the night alongside repentance rituals and sūtra explanations. The reason for this might have been that many of the believers at Fahua Monastery were commoners and this method of “gradual stilling and insight” (Ch. *jianci zhibiguan* 漸次止觀) was more suited to their lifestyle and needs than the *Mobe zhibiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The great calming and contemplation) that was linked to the method of “perfect and sudden cessation and contemplation” (Ch. *yuandun zhibiguan* 圓頓止觀) and was preached at the Guoqing Monastery (Guoqingsi 國清寺) on Mount Tiantai and at the Great Flower Ornament Monastery (Da Huayansi 大華嚴寺) on Mount Wutai.

Furthermore, the reason for lecturing on the *Golden Light Sūtra* might also be linked to the connection with the Tiantai school, since Zhiyi introduced a ritual called *gongfo zhibaitian* 供佛齋天 (making an offering to the buddhas and providing a feast to the *devas*) based on the ceremonies in the *Golden Light Sūtra*. The scripture also had a function of protecting the country and warding off threats. It is noteworthy that the version of the *Golden Light Sūtra* used at the Fahua Monastery was not Yijing's 義淨 (635–713 CE) translation (*T* no. 665) but the earlier, 597 CE, eight-fascicle translation of Baogui 寶貴 (*T* no. 664). The reason for this might be because the Silla commentator Wōnhyo 원효 (元曉, 617–686 CE), one of the most famous and legendary figures in Korean Buddhism, based his *Kūmgang sammae kyōngnon* 金剛三昧經論 (Exposition of the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*) on Baogui's translation and he links the scripture to the *Lotus Sūtra* in his *Pōphwa kyōng chongyo* 法華經宗要 (Doctrinal essentials of the *Lotus Sūtra*).<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the worship of Avalokiteśvara was linked to the *Golden Light Sūtra* at Mount Odae (Odaesan 오대산, 五臺山) in Silla, the Korean equivalent of Mount Wutai in China. The “5000 True Manifestations on Mount Odae” (“Taesan oman chinsin” 대산 오만 진신, 臺山五萬眞身) chapter in the *Overlooked Historical Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms* (*Samguk yusa* 삼국유사, 三國遺事, ca. 1282–1289 CE) compiled by Iryōn 일연 (一然, 1206–1289 CE) recorded the Buddhist ceremonies that were to be held for the prosperity of the country on the mountain. According to the text, a Buddhist chamber needed to be built on all five terraces of Mount Odae for the buddha or bodhisattva that lived there. The following passage describes the chamber on the eastern terrace:

The color blue belongs to the eastern terrace. A hall should be built for

<sup>40</sup> Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, 165; the 15th day of the 1st month in 840.

<sup>41</sup> See the record of the 28th day of the 9th month in 839.

<sup>42</sup> Pak, “Ennin no *Nittō gubō junrei kōki*,” 602; Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, 154.

<sup>43</sup> Pak, “Ennin no *Nittō gubō junrei kōki*,” 602–603.

Avalokiteśvara below the northern cape, at the end of the southern foot of the northern terrace. A perfect image of Avalokiteśvara should be enshrined in the hall, along with 10,000 portraits of Avalokiteśvara painted on blue backgrounds. Five monastics should read aloud the eight-fascicle *Golden Light Sūtra*, the *Sūtra of the Humane Kings*, the *Prajñā-pāramitā* sūtras and the *dhāraṇī* of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara by day and chant the Avalokiteśvara repentance by night. You shall call this hall Wōnt’ongsa (Shrine of the Perfect Penetration).<sup>44</sup>

In this system, Avalokiteśvara must be worshipped on the eastern peak by reciting the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the *Sūtra of the Humane Kings* (Ch. *Renwang jing* 仁王經), and the *dhāraṇī* of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (Ch. *Qianshou zhou* 千手呪). Based on the above, we can conclude that Korean Buddhist ideas and rites significantly influenced the practices of the Fahua Monastery, which incorporated Tiantai and Chan teachings as well as prayers for worldly benefits.

It is worth mentioning that researchers have also tried to point out the connection between Chang Pogo and the Sōn 선 (禪, Ch. Chan) schools in Silla. After the return of Doui 도의 (道義, ?–825 CE) from Tang China in 821, many Sōn monks went to China to study Chan. They established their own schools after returning to Silla—the so-called “nine mountain schools” (*kusan* 구산, 九山). The majority of these schools traced their lineage back to Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788 CE), that is, the Southern school of Chan. This lineage emphasized moderation, frugality, and physical work, especially communal work regardless of one’s status. As we have seen, these values were present at the Fahua Monastery on Mount Chi as well. Chang Pogo returned to Silla around this time, in 824, and established Ch’onghaejin in 828 after meeting King Hūngdök 흥덕 (興德, r. 826–836 CE). Because the king started to show interest toward Sōn after 830, Kondō Kōichi<sup>45</sup> assumes that Chang Pogo might have mediated between the court and the new Sōn schools by introducing the monks to the king. This is based on the fact that many of the founders of the nine mountain schools sailed to and from China on the ships of merchants: For example, Hyech’öl 혜철 (慧徹, 785–861 CE, Tongnisan school) and Ch’ejing 체징 (體澄, 804–890 CE, Kajisan school) traveled to Tang China while Hongch’ök 홍척 (洪陟, fl. 830 CE, Silsangan school), Doyun 도윤 (道允, 797–868 CE, Sajasan school), Muyōm 무염 (無染, 800–888 CE, Sōngjusan school), and Pōmil 범일 (梵日, 810–889 CE, Sagulsan school) returned to Silla on merchant ships. Maintaining relationships with the monks might have been beneficial for Chang in many ways: he could use them as messengers, the temples could serve as bases for commercial purposes, and he

<sup>44</sup> 靑在東臺.北角下北臺南麓之末宜置觀音房.安圓像觀音及靑地畫一萬觀音像.福田五員畫讀八卷金經,仁王,般若,千手呪,夜念觀音禮懺.稱名圓通社. *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 [Overlooked historical records of the three Korean kingdoms], 5 *juans*, by Iryōn 일연 (一然), ca. 1282–1289, T no. 2039, vol 49: 3.998b15–18.

<sup>45</sup> Kondō Kōichi 近藤浩一, “Shiragi ni okeru nanshūzen no juyō to tenkai: Chō Hokō to no kankei wo chūshin ni 新羅における南宗禪の受容と展開:張保皋との關係を中心に [The acceptance and development of Southern Chan in Silla: Focusing on the relationship with Chang Pogo],” *Kyōto sangyō daigaku ronshū* 京都産業大學論集 (Jinbunkagaku keiretsu 人文科学系列 40) (2009): 15–32.

could get closer to the court through them. The work ethic of Chan could also serve as an ideological base for him and his fleet. The similarities between the beliefs and practices of the Sŏn temples in the southwestern regions of the Korean Peninsula and the Fahua Monastery at Mount Chi make this topic worthy of further scholarly attention.

It is also noteworthy that a temple named Pŏphwa Monastery (Pŏphwasa 법화사, 法華寺) existed at Wando (only 2 km from Ch'ŏnghaejin) and at Sŏgwipo City on Cheju Island as well. Since Pŏphwa is the Korean pronunciation of Fahua, the meanings and transcriptions of the temples' names are almost identical with those of the name of Fahua Monastery on Mount Chi. The locations of the temples on sea routes between China and Korea, especially the location near Ch'ŏnghaejin, indicate that there might be a connection between these sites and Chang Pogo. Only ruins exist of the two temples and no records of their origin survive. There are only local oral traditions, which attribute the foundation of both temples to Chang Pogo. However, based on archaeological findings, the temple at Cheju Island is dated to the tenth–twelfth century.<sup>46</sup> The archaeological excavation conducted at the ruins of the Pŏphwa Monastery at Wando between 1989 and 1990 also could not prove the link between Chang Pogo and the temple. Fragments of ceramics, tiles, and coins from the tenth century, as well as from the Koryŏ era, were dug up. The large number of Chinese coins found in the area revealed that even if a direct connection with Chang Pogo cannot be proved, the Wando area continued to play an important role in international maritime trade even after the death of Chang Pogo.<sup>47</sup> The temple might have served as lodging for members of diplomatic missions on their way from China to Japan as well as a resting place for itinerant monks on their way to China.

Moreover, the remains of the Avalokiteśvara Temple (Kwanŭmsa 관음사, 觀音寺) at Wando indicate that the Avalokiteśvara cult flourished in the region as well. The ruins are located below a great rock on Mount Sanghwang (Sanghwangsan 상황산, 象皇山) facing the sea toward Ch'ŏnghaejin. The date of establishment is unknown but it is assumed to be around the time of Chang Pogo. Considering the strategic location, we can assume that it was used as protection from maritime danger.<sup>48</sup> Based on these examples, although Tiantai (Kr. Chŏnt'ae) became popular in Korea from the time of Ŭich'ŏn 의천 (義天, 1055–1101 CE), we can observe that the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* influenced this region as well.

Finally, the Fahua Monastery at Mount Chi was destroyed during the Huichang persecution of Buddhism in 845 and Chang Pogo was assassinated in 841. The Ch'ŏnghaejin Garrison continued to operate for about a decade after Chang's death but was eventually closed in 851. This marked the end of an era and resulted in the relocation of both the

<sup>46</sup> “Pŏphwasaji 법화사지 (法華寺址),” *Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajŏn* 한국민족문화대백과사전 [Encyclopedia of Korean culture], accessed September 23, 2023, <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0022773>.

<sup>47</sup> “Wando Pŏphwasaji 완도 법화사지 (莞島 法華寺址),” *Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajŏn* 한국민족문화대백과사전 [Encyclopedia of Korean culture], accessed September 23, 2023, <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0022773>.

<sup>48</sup> “Kwanŭmsaji 관음사지, Kŏngang ũi sŏm, Wando 건강의 섬, 완도 [Island of health: Wando, Korea],” accessed September 23, 2023. [https://www.wando.go.kr/tour/sub.cs?m=162&tCimTitle=%EA%B4%80%EC%9D%8C%EC%82%AC%EC%A7%80&tCimUniqId=TCIM\\_00000000004573&tCfdMenuChoice=tCfdArea](https://www.wando.go.kr/tour/sub.cs?m=162&tCimTitle=%EA%B4%80%EC%9D%8C%EC%82%AC%EC%A7%80&tCimUniqId=TCIM_00000000004573&tCfdMenuChoice=tCfdArea).

commercial and the ritual centers of maritime exchanges. The next chapter examines this new development in East Asian maritime history.

## Potalaka on the Southern Seas: Mount Putuo and Silla Merchants

### The Emergence of Mount Putuo

After the death of Chang Pogo and the destruction of the Fahua Monastery at Mount Chi, another location emerged as a major maritime transportation hub in China: Mount Putuo (Ch. Putuoshan 普陀山), one of the islands of the Zhoushan 舟山 Archipelago in Zhejiang Province, which by the twelfth century had become identified with Potalaka, the worldly abode of Avalokiteśvara. The presence of Avalokiteśvara's cult might be traced back early in the region. According to a record in the *Changguo-zhou tuzhi* 昌國州圖志 (Illustrated gazetteer of the Chang State, 1298), a Guanyin Monastery (Guanyin'an 觀音庵) had already been established at the Zhoushan Archipelago during the Eastern Jin era (317–420 CE).<sup>49</sup> In addition, according to a story recorded in the *Fabua zhuanyu* 法華傳記 (A record of the transmission of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Tang dynasty), the Paekche monk Paljōng 발정 (發正, ca. sixth century CE) visited the dwelling place of Guanyin (Ch. *Guanyin dushi* 觀音堵室) on Mount Jie (Jieshan 界山) in Yuezhou 越州 (near Mount Putuo) on his way back from China around 529–534 CE.<sup>50</sup> Since the *Lotus Sūtra* is featured as a superior scripture in the story, we can assume that the cult of Guanyin following the tradition of the *Lotus Sūtra* was already present near Mount Putuo in the first half of the sixth century CE. However, international cooperation was needed for the island to become one of the most popular East Asian pilgrimage sites. This was not unrelated to the fact that Mount Putuo lies on the southern sea route between China, Korea, and Japan, which is a strategically relevant location.

The importance of Mount Putuo is closely related to the fact that Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo 寧波), a city located near the island, emerged as an international trading center. The construction of the Great Canal (Ch. Dayunhe 大運河) during the Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) contributed to the rapid economic upturn of the Yangtze delta while the development of navigation technologies enlivened a shipping industry that linked the region to wider East Asia. Since Ningbo was connected by waterways to Hangzhou, the terminal of the Great Canal, most of the goods of international trade passed through the city. Moreover, both Hangzhou and Ninbo were close to the manufacturing sites of desirable continental

<sup>49</sup> Zou Yi 鄒怡, “Cong daoia dongtian dao Guanyin shengjie—Zhonggu Dongya wenhua jiaoliu beijing zhong de Putuoshan kaiji gushi 從道家洞天到觀音聖界—中古東亞文化交流背景中的普陀山開基故事 [From the Daoist grotto-heaven to the sacred realm of Guanyin: The founding legend of Mount Putuo with medieval East Asian cultural exchanges in the background],” *Shilin* 史林 1 (2017): 57.

<sup>50</sup> See *Fabujing zhuanyu* 法華經傳記 6, “Yuezhou Guanyin daoichang daoren 越州觀音道場道人 [Daoist practitioner of the Guanyin Daoist Temple in Yuezhou],” *Fabua zhuanyu* 法華傳記 [A record of the transmission of the *Lotus Sūtra*]. 10 juans, by Sengxiang 僧詳, Tang dynasty, T no. 2068, vol. 51: 72a29–c3. The cult of Avalokiteśvara might have been transmitted to Paekche by him.

goods, such as ceramics and silk.<sup>51</sup> Thus, as a gateway to Ningbo, Mount Putuo became an important transport hub between China and the world. Not only commodities, but also cultural elements, religious ideas, and narratives traveled via this maritime route.

As we have seen, the southern, “transversal” maritime route had existed since at least the fifth century CE but became pushed into the background by the northern route from the Sui dynasty onward. However, Japanese tribute missions (Jp. *kentōshi* 遣唐使, seventh–ninth century) to Tang China started to again use the southern route relatively early after the unification of the Korean Peninsula by Silla (668 CE) from 701 CE, heading toward Mingzhou via Okinawa instead of passing through the Korean Peninsula. The reason for this, on the one hand, was that Japan had previously maintained a close relationship with Paekche instead of Silla. On the other hand, from the eighth century Silla–Tang relations also deteriorated, due to Tang efforts that aimed at turning Silla into a protectorate after the unification.<sup>52</sup>

From the middle of the ninth century, cities near the Yangtze delta, such as Mingzhou, Yuezhou, Taizhou, Wenzhou, and Suzhou, became trade centers taking part in the lucrative business of international commerce. It has been pointed out that at about the same time, Chinese merchants from the region started to increasingly participate in maritime trade, slowly extended their range of activity to territories formerly dominated by Silla merchants, and eventually became the dominant traders in East Asian waters.<sup>53</sup> However, the role that Korean merchants played in East Asian maritime history did not end with the fall of Chang Pogo and Ch’onghaejin.

## Mount Putuo and Silla Merchants

There is a well-known record about Mount Putuo in volume thirty-four of Xu Jing’s 徐兢 (1091–1153 CE) *Xuanbe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 (*Illustrated Account of the Xuanbe Embassy to Koryō*, 1124, hereafter *Gaoli tujing*), particularly in the “Plum Peak” (“Meicen” 梅岑) subchapter of the chapter titled “Sea Routes 1” (“Haidao yi” 海道一). This passage narrates the founding legend of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave (Bukēn qū Guanyin yuán 不肯去觀音院), thought to be the oldest temple on Mount Putuo.

[...] Long ago merchants from Silla went to Mount Wutai, where they carved this image, then wanted to load it [on a ship and] return to their country. When the ship

<sup>51</sup> Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 369–370.

<sup>52</sup> Zou, “Cong daojiā dongtian.”

<sup>53</sup> Yiwen Li, *Networks of Faith and Profit: Monks, Merchants, and Exchanges between China and Japan, 839–1403 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 47–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009303132>; Yamasaki Satoshi 山崎覚士, “Kyū seiki ni okeru Higashi Ajia kaiiki to kaishō: Jo Kōchoku to Jo Kōyū 九世紀における東アジア海域と海商: 徐公直と徐公祐 [Report on the maritime merchants of the East Asian Sea in the ninth century: Xu Gongzhi and Xu Gongyou],” *Jinbun kenkyū* 人文研究 58 (2007): 242–243.



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, 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>54</sup>

According to the record, the worship of the Guanyin Unwilling to Leave (Bukun Qu Guanyin) was started by merchants from Silla. However, in texts written somewhat later than the *Gaoli tujing*, similar stories attribute the founding of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave to the Japanese monk Egaku 慧萼 (ca. ninth century CE). <sup>55</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), which mentions a so-called Silla Reef that is located near Mount Putuo. <sup>56</sup> This shows that even if the monastery had been established by Egaku, Mount Putuo was closely related to the Silla people. The name of Egaku also appears in the *Baoqing siming zhi* 寶慶四明志 (*Gazetteer of Siming during the Baoqing reign*, 1227), Juean's 覺岸 *Shishi jigū lüè* 釋氏稽古略 (*Excerpts of the historical research concerning Buddhist believers*, 1354), and Sheng Ximing's 盛熙明 *Putuoluojiashan zhuàn* 補陀洛迦山傳 (*The history of Mount Potalaka*, 1361) as well as several Japanese sources, such as the *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧伝 (*Biographies of eminent monks in Japan*, 1702) and the *Genkō shokusho* 元亨釋書 (*Genkō era Buddhist history*, 1344). *The Record* <sup>57</sup> written by Ennin also confirms that Egaku made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai but the date does not match with the years 858 or 859 CE, which are provided by the aforementioned texts. Even if the dates do not match, we cannot preclude the possibility that the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave was founded by him. On the other hand, Marcus Bingenheimer <sup>58</sup> thinks that the monastery became associated with Egaku later, supposedly in the thirteenth century CE, since the earlier records do not mention his name at all.

<sup>54</sup> [...]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。[...] *Xuanbe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 [Illustrated account of the Xuanhe embassy to Koryō], by Xu Jing 徐兢, 1124, database of Korean Classics [Han'guk kojōn teit'ōbeisū 한국고전종합DB], accessed September 23, 2023, [https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=BT#/dir/node?dataId=ITKC\\_BT\\_1369A](https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=BT#/dir/node?dataId=ITKC_BT_1369A).

<sup>55</sup> The name of Egaku is written with different Chinese characters depending on the source: 惠萼 (萼/鏢), 慧鏢 (萼/鏢).

<sup>56</sup> “At present Silla Reef is located near the mountain.” 今山側有新羅將。 *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [Comprehensive history of the Buddhist patriarchs], by Zhipan 志盤, 1269, Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association [Zhonghua dianzi fodian xiehui 中華電子佛典協會], accessed September 23, 2023, [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T49n2035\\_001](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T49n2035_001).

<sup>57</sup> The records of the 7th day in the 9th month of the year 841 CE, the 25th day in the 5th month of the year 842 CE, and the 5th day in the 7th month of the year 845 CE in volumes 3 and 4.

<sup>58</sup> Bingenheimer, *Island of Guanyin*, 83.

At the same time, Pak Hyön-gyu 박현규<sup>59</sup> and Cho Yǒng-nok 조영록<sup>60</sup> point out that the seemingly different legends do not necessarily contradict one another, since the founding of the temple can most likely be ascribed to the joint effort of the Japanese monk Egaku and Silla merchants. We have seen that the people of Silla residing in the Tang empire played a significant role in East Asian maritime cultural exchanges. We can assume that during his visits to Tang China, Egaku also needed the help of Silla merchants. According to *The Record* and other sources,<sup>61</sup> Egaku went to China three times—in 841, 844, and 862 CE—but some scholars think that he made at least five journeys.<sup>62</sup> Egaku first went to China in 841, the year that Chang Pogo died, dispatched by Empress Dowager Tachibana Kachiko 橘嘉智子 (786–850 CE) to invite a Chan monk back to Japan to propagate Chan Buddhism in Japan. He made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai before going to Mount Tiantai via Mingzhou. During his journey, he visited master Qi'an 齊安 (?–842) at Haichangyuan 海昌院 in Hangzhou who introduced his disciple Yikong 義空 (ca. ninth century CE) to him. He returned home on the ship of the Silla merchant Yi Indök 이인덕 (李隣德, ca. ninth century CE)<sup>63</sup> one year later in 842. He went to China for the second time in 844 and returned to Japan with Yikong on the ship of the Tang merchant Xu Gongyou 徐公裕 (ca. ninth century CE) and another merchant called Zhang Zhixin 張支信 (fl. 847–865 CE) in 847. He went to Tang China for the third time in 848 and returned to Japan in 849. He supposedly visited China in 852, 858, and 862 as well. The foundation of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave might have occurred during his trip in 858. As we have seen, Egaku travelled with the Silla merchant Yi Indök on at least one occasion. For this reason, there is a possibility that Egaku and Silla merchants traveled together on a ship when the incident with the statue happened on the waters near Mount Putuo.

There is another historical figure worth paying attention to. As we have seen, there

<sup>59</sup> Pak Hyön-gyu 박현규, “Chungguk pulgyo söngji Pot’asan kwa Sillach’o 중국 불교 성지普陀山과 新羅礁 [The Chinese Buddhist sacred site Mount Putuo and the Silla Reef],” *Chunggukhak nonch’ong* 중국학논총 10 (2000): 99–120.

<sup>60</sup> Cho Yǒng-nok 조영록, “Hyangsan Myosön kongju wa Tǔngju Sönmyo nangja — Kwanüm yongsin sörhwa wa Han-Chung haeyangbulgyo kyoryu 香山 妙善公主와 登州 善妙娘子 — 觀音·龍神설화와 한·중 해양불교 교류 [Princess Miaoshan of Xiangshan and the maiden Shanmiao from Dengzhou: Guanyin, dragon god narratives and maritime Buddhist exchanges between Korea and China],” *Tongyang sabak yǒngu* 東洋史學研究 115 (2011): 187.

<sup>61</sup> These include the correspondence of Yikong (Jp. Gikū), the Chinese monk who went to Japan with Egaku to be the first one to exclusively teach Chan in the country. The 18 letters are found in the *Kōya zappitsu shū* 高野雜筆集 (A collection of letters from Mount Kōya) and are comprised of the correspondence between Yikong and the Tang merchant brothers Xu Gongzhi and Xu Gongyou, the Silla merchant Yi Indök, as well as several other Chinese and Japanese monks. For more on this, see Yamasaki, “Kyū seiki ni okeru.”

<sup>62</sup> Tanaka Fumio 田中史生, “Egaku no nittōguhō to Higashi Ajia no bukkyō kōryū 慧尊の入唐求法と東アジアの仏教交流 [Egaku’s search for the Dharma in the Tang Empire and East Asian Buddhist exchanges],” *Dongguk sabak* 동국사학 52 (2012): 199–232.

<sup>63</sup> Also written with the characters 李仁德 or 李隣德. Reischauer (*Ennin’s Diary*, 18) assumes he is Korean because he is always mentioned in context with Yu Sinan. Bingenheimer (*Island of Guanyin*, 216) also mentions that recent scholarship has confirmed Reischauer’s assumption. He refers to the research of Tanaka Fumio.

are several textual sources that narrate the founding legend of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave. Although the main storylines align in these narratives, they vary in smaller details. I would like to draw attention to an episode recorded in the local gazetteers of Mingzhou, the *Dade Changguo-zhou tuzhi* 大德昌國州圖志 (Illustrated gazetteer of Changguo County from the Dade era) compiled by Feng Fujing 馮福京 in 1298.<sup>64</sup>

[...] Later the Japanese monk Egaku acquired an auspicious image from Mount Wutai, and he wanted to return to his homeland. When the ship arrived at the Silla Reef, it did not move. E[gaku] prayed saying: “If the sentient beings in my country do not have the karma to see this Buddha [image], I will follow its will and build a temple where it leads me.” After a short time, the ship moved forward and eventually came to anchor beneath the Tidal Sound Cave. There was a local resident from the Zhang family who witnessed this marvel and immediately donated his dwelling erecting a hermitage on Mount Double Peak and enshrined the image there. It is called the “Monastery of the Guanyin Unwilling to Leave.” [...]<sup>65</sup>

Cho Yǒng-nok assumes that the “local resident from the Zhang family” in the passage, who helped to build what later became the Monastery of the Guanyin Unwilling to Leave, as well as the “Silla merchant(s)”<sup>66</sup> (*Xinluo guren* 新羅賈人) mentioned in the *Gaoli tujing*, might refer to Zhang Zhixin 張支信 (also referred to as Zhang Youxin 張友信 in textual sources) who, according to the *Shoku Nihon kōki* 續日本後期 (Continued later chronicles of Japan, 869), traveled to Japan on the same ship with Egaku when he returned home from his second trip.

A Tang dynasty merchant, shipbuilder, navigator, and interpreter, Zhang played an important role in promoting international economic and cultural exchanges in the ninth century. He was active on the sea route connecting Mingzhou and the Gotō 五島 Islands in

<sup>64</sup> Cho Yǒng-nok (“Chungguk Pot’asan Kwanūm toryang kwa Han’guk–Pot’asan Pulgūnggōgwanūmjōn ūn che2 ūi Naksan Hongnyōnam 중국普陀山 관음도량과 한국 - 보타산 不肯去觀音殿은 제2의 낙산 흥련암 [The Chinese Avalokiteśvara *bodhimāṇḍa*, Mount Putuo and Korea: The Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave is the second Naksan Hongnyōn-am],” *Han-Chung munhwagoryu wa nambanghaero* 한중문화교류와 남방해로, ed. Cho Yǒng-nok 조영록 (Seoul: Kukhakcharyowon 국학자료원, 1997), 17) states that the episode is recorded in the *Baoqing Siming zhi*, which I could not confirm. It is, however, recorded in the updated version of the gazetteer, the *Yanyou Siming zhi* 延祐四明志 (The gazetteer of Siming from the Yanyou era, by Ma Yi 馬澤 and Yuan Jue 袁桷, 1320), as well as the nineteenth-century *Changguo dianyong* 昌國典詠 (Classical odes from the Chang State). The narrative is also quoted in the twentieth century gazetteer of Mount Putuo, the *Putuoluojia xin zhi* 普陀洛迦新志 (New gazetteer of Mount Potalaka, 1924).

<sup>65</sup> 後日本國僧慧諤自五台山得瑞相。欲返故國，舟抵新螺礁，不為動。諤禱之曰：「使我國眾生無緣見佛，當從所向建立精藍。」有頃，舟行，竟泊于潮音洞下。有居民張氏，目睹斯異，亟舍所居，雙峰山卓庵奉之。俗呼為「不肯去觀音院。」 *Dade Changguo-zhou tuzhi* 大德昌國州圖志 [Illustrated gazetteer of Changguo County from the Dade era], compiled by Feng Fujing 馮福京, 1298, Chinese Text Project [Zhongguo zhhexueshu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃], fascicle 7, “Baotusi” 寶陀寺, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=619510#p8>.

<sup>66</sup> The absence of plural forms in the classical Chinese language leaves room to interpret the expression as a reference to either one or more Silla merchants.

Kyūshū 九州, the shortest route between China and Japan at the time, and made the journey six times between 844 and 864 alone. He is known to have sailed from Mingzhou to the Gotō Islands in just three days in 847, a significantly short time considering contemporary navigation techniques. Aboard the ship were Yikong and Egaku, the latter of whom traveled on his ship at least one more time, in 862.<sup>67</sup>

Cho assumes that Egaku was linked to the foundation of the Monastery of the Guanyin Unwilling to Leave because he was associated with Zhang Zhixin. In addition to operating a maritime transportation enterprise, Zhang also served as an interpreter (*tsūji* 通事) at the Dazaifu 太宰府 Kōrokan 鴻臚館, a reception center for foreign officials, monks, and merchants in present-day Fukuoka 福岡. Many in this role were of Silla origin at the time. There was also a significant foreign community in Mingzhou at the time, including Silla merchants who settled in the region of Zhenmingling 鎮明嶺. Based on this, Cho supposes that the local resident Zhang, as well as the Silla merchants carrying the Guanyin statue from Mount Wutai, might have been the residents of Zhenmingling.<sup>68</sup> However, there is no evidence that Zhang was of Silla origin since in textual sources he is only referred to as a “Tang merchant” (*Tang shang* 唐商). On the other hand, we cannot rule out the possibility either.

Following the death of Chang Pogo, the Tang and the Heian governments implemented new regulations on foreign trade. These included inspections, taxation, preemptive rights for the court to purchase goods, and limits to the accommodation of merchants to appointed guesthouses. It has been pointed out that Buddhist temples, merchants, and authorities in both countries cooperated closely to find their way around some restrictions. Merchants could provide financial support, supply monasteries with commodities monks needed, and transport them on their pilgrimages. Monks could not only provide spiritual merits and protections but, by serving as envoys, they could also exchange messages and gifts between merchants and authorities with whom they had extensive relationships. Meanwhile, government officials could also have a share in the benefits of international trade.<sup>69</sup>

A well-known example of this collaboration is between Yikong and the Xu brothers, Xu Gongzhi 徐公直 and Xu Gongyou 徐公祐.<sup>70</sup> Xu Gongzhi held an office, first in Wuzhou 婺州, then in Suzhou 苏州, as a *yaqian sanjiang* 衙前散將 (honorary commander of a prefectural

<sup>67</sup> He is mentioned in various Japanese texts including Ennin’s *The Records*, the *Shoku Nihon kōki*, the *Nittō gokaden* 入唐五家傳 [Biographies of five pilgrims to Tang], and the *Heian ibun* 平安遺文 [Literary remains of the Heian period]. Tanaka, “Egaku no nittōguhō,” 199–232; Yi Yu-jin 이유헌, “Tang hugi ūi Myōngju wa Tongasia haesang 唐 後期の 明州와 동아시아海商 [Mingzhou in the late Tang era and East Asian merchants],” *Dongguk sabak* 동국사학 50 (January 2011): 243–273; Yang Jiande 楊建德, “Tangdai hanghaijia Zhang Youxin 唐代航海家張友信 [Zhang Youxin, a seafarer from the Tang era],” *Zhongguo gangkou* 中國港口 1 (October 2015): 81–83.

<sup>68</sup> Li, *Networks of Faith*, 21–48.

<sup>69</sup> Cho, “Chungguk Pot’asan Kwanūm toryang,” 30–31.

<sup>70</sup> Ennin’s diary and the correspondence between the merchant brothers and Yikong contained in the *Kōya zappitsu shū* are important sources for researching the relationship between merchants, monks, and authorities. For more on this topic see Yi Yu-jin 李侑珍, “Koyajapp’iljip surok ‘Tanginsōgan’ ūi yōngu 『高野雜筆集』 수록 『唐人書簡』의 연구 [A study of “Letters from the Chinese” included in the *Kōya zappitsu shū*],” *Chungguksa yōngu* 中國史研究 91 (2014): 55–75.

office). As an official in Tang China, he could dispatch his brother, Gongyou, on journeys and provide him with the necessary permissions and documentation. He even sent his own son, Hu Po 胡婆, to serve Yikong as a *dōji* (child attendant). We can assume that through this measure he could not only maintain a good relationship with Yikong but he could also receive his help while trading with Chinese goods in Japan. The Xu brothers might have had wide acquaintanceship with Buddhist monks: not only did they maintain a relationship with Yikong but also Egaku sailed with Gongyou on at least one of his journeys. Moreover, Xu Gongzhi provided accommodation for Enchin 円珍 (814–891 CE) for two months while the Tendai monk tried to recover from an illness on his way from Taizhou to Chang’an in 855. It is likely that the title Xu Gongzhi held was a nominal rank often bestowed on personalities involved in commercial activity who were responsible for the communication between merchants and authorities as well as the supervision of international trade.<sup>71</sup> This system might have been beneficial for all parties involved: government officials, merchants, and monks alike.

After the downfall of Chang Pogo, many of the Silla merchants previously supervised by him became pirates causing trouble on Japanese waters. For this reason, trade relations came to a halt between Silla and Japan and the Japanese court limited the use of Dazaifu Kōrokan (the designated guesthouse for foreign merchants) by Silla traders. Only those classified as “Tang merchants” had access to accommodation, board, and the right to trade. We can assume that to qualify for this, one needed to prove their identity and affiliation. Yamasaki Satoshi supposes that this might have given rise to a mutually beneficial cooperation system, by which Tang authorities endowed certain merchants with nominal titles, thus certifying their Tang affiliation in exchange for a share in commercial profit. It is likely that facing strict restrictions, Silla merchants in Tang China made good use of this system as well by obtaining classifications as “Tang merchants” through their connections.<sup>72</sup> It is possible then that some of the merchants who appear in the records as “Tang merchants” were originally members of the Silla community in Tang China, including Zhang Zhixin. Even if they had not been members of the, by then, disbanded fleet of Chang Pogo, they might have had connections to it.

After the fall of Ch’onghaejin, commercial exchanges between Silla and Japan came to a halt but this was only true of merchants from the Korean Peninsula. We can assume that Silla merchants who resided in Tang China continued to participate in commercial activities. For example, Enchin sailed to China on the ship of the Silla merchants Hūm Ryanghwi 暉良暉 (欽良暉) and Wang Ch’o 왕초 (王超) in 853 CE. During the time of Ch’onghaejin, Silla merchants were mainly active on the Shandong Peninsula (Dengzhou, Rushan 乳山, Shidao 石島) and their communities were mostly located around Yangzhou 揚州 and Chuzhou (also Suzhou 蘇州 and Lianyun 連雲) but partly also in Eastern Zhejiang (Mingzhou). Moreover, the main commodity that Chang Pogo’s fleet traded was Yue ware (*Yue-zhou yao* 越州窯), a type of

<sup>71</sup> Yang, “Tangdai hanghaijia,” 67–68.

<sup>72</sup> Yamasaki, “Kyū seiki ni okeru,” 230.

ceramic ware manufactured in Zhejiang (first Shaoxing, then Mingzhou), so Chang himself might have visited the area during his lifetime.<sup>73</sup> From the end of the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties (907–960 CE), more toponyms relating to Silla appeared in the seaside of Zhejiang.<sup>74</sup> It is possible that following the southward shift of the economic and commercial center in China, Silla merchants also moved south or that newcomers arriving from the Korean Peninsula settled in this area from the beginning.

Overall, the relationship between monastics and merchants was by no means purely economic. It is likely that most of the traders were pious believers of Buddhism as they are referred to as “disciples” (Ch. *dizi* 弟子) or “lay disciples” (Ch. *su dizi* 俗弟子) in their correspondence with monks both by the monastics and by themselves. The questions then arise of what rituals they followed and what teachings they believed in.

### Buddhist Teachings at Mount Putuo

We know from the records that initially the main function of Mount Putuo was as a place to pray for maritime safety. This can be confirmed through the record of the *Gaoli tujing*, quoted above, as well as the *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄 (Random notes from the Ink Manor) written by Zhang Bangji 張邦基 (twelfth century CE). The latter text identifies Mount Putuo as a place to pray for a safe journey before sailing out to Korea and mentions the bells, *qing*<sup>75</sup> instruments, copper objects, and poems left behind by Koreans as offerings.<sup>76</sup> It is also notable that miracle stories about Nanhai Guanyin 南海觀音 (Guanyin of the Southern Sea)<sup>77</sup> saving travelers on the sea first appeared in connection with diplomatic missions to Koryŏ, starting from the eleventh century CE,<sup>78</sup> which shows that diplomatic and cultural relations with the Korean Peninsula continued to be a major factor in the development Mount Putuo

<sup>73</sup> Cho Pŏm-hwan 조범환, “Han’guk ūi Pŏphwa-Kwanŭm sinang kwa Chang Pogo: Chang Pogo wa Pŏphwa-Kwanŭm sinang ūl chungsim ūro 한국의 法華·觀音 信仰과 張保臯 -장보고와 法華·觀音 信仰을 중심으로 [Lotus and Avalokiteśvara faith related with Chang Pogo in Korea],” *Tongasia Pŏphwasa(nŏn) net’ŭwŏk’ŭ wa Chang Pogo* 동아시아 법화사(원) 네트워크와 장보고 (2015): 48–57.

<sup>74</sup> Cho Yŏng-nok, “Chang Pogo sŏndan kwa kusegi Tongasia ūi pulgyo kyoryu: Chŏksan, Pot’asan kwa Naksan ūi naejŏk yŏngwansŏng ūi mosaek 장보고 선단과 9세기 동아시아의 불교교류 – 적산(赤山)·보타산(普陀山)과 낙산(洛山)의 내적 연관성의 모색 [Chang Pogo’s fleet and Buddhist exchanges in the 9th century].” *Han-Chung munhwagyoryu wa nambanghaero* 한중문화교류와 남방해로, ed. Cho Yŏng-nok 조영록 (Seoul: Kukhakcharyowŏn 국학자료원, 1997), 232.

<sup>75</sup> An L-shaped percussion instrument made of stone or jade, or the bronze percussion instrument of Buddhists resembling an alms bowl.

<sup>76</sup> *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄 [Random notes from the Ink Manor], by Zhang Bangji 張邦基, twelfth century, Chinese Text Project [Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃]. Accessed September 23, 2023, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=857915>.

<sup>77</sup> The iconographic form of Avalokiteśvara worshipped at Mount Putuo.

<sup>78</sup> Chün-Fang Yü, “P’u-t’o Shan: Pilgrimage and the Creation of the Chinese Potalaka,” *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-Fang Yü (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 216–217, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520911659-008>.

even after the foundation of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave.

During this process, Avalokiteśvara's role as a sea deity became emphasized. As we have seen, 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 Mount Putuo. This worldly function suggests that the worship of Guanyin at Mount Putuo was based on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Considering the proximity of Mount Tiantai, as well as the presence of Tiantai teaching on Mount Wutai (i.e. the original location of the Guanyin statue "unwilling to leave"), it is plausible that the cult was inspired by Tiantai teachings that are centered around the *Lotus Sūtra*. However, the Huichang persecution of Buddhism that had occurred only about a decade before the foundation of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave led to the decline of doctrinal schools, such as Tiantai and Huayan, and to the rise of devotional or practical teaching, such as Chan and Pure Land Buddhism. It also ushered in a new era in which syncretic tendencies became mainstream, trying to harmonize the teachings of various Buddhist sects as well as those of Confucianism and Daoism.

One of the reasons for the flourishing of the Jiangnan region may be attributed to the rise of Chan at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. Not only Japanese monks like Egaku but also, as we mentioned earlier, Silla monastics started to look for Chan teachings. The Southern school of Chan was especially popular among them, the center of which was in Hunan and Jiangxi Prefectures, i.e. in the Jiangnan region. Thus, instead of going north for doctrinal studies via the northern sea route to arrive at Dengzhou, they headed south via Mount Putuo. One of these Silla monks was Pōmil 범일 (梵日, 810–894 CE), the founder of the Sagulsan 사굴산 (闍崛山 or Kulsan) school, which was the most influential Sōn school during the Silla era. He introduced the worship of the bodhisattva Ananyagāmin (Kr. Chōngch'wi posal 정취보살, 正趣菩薩) to Naksansa 낙산사 (洛山寺), the most important Avalokiteśvara monastery in Korea; some scholars even propose that he was the original founder of the monastery.<sup>79</sup> Although Naksan Monastery is affiliated with the Hwaōm 화엄 (華嚴, Ch. Huayan) school of Ŭisang 의상 (義湘, 625–702 CE), the territory where it was built was under the influence of the Sagulsan Sōn school, which was dominated by a local clan in the ninth century. Despite being a Tendai monk, Egaku also arrived in Tang specifically to look for Chan teachings. The fact that both Pōmil and Egaku visited the Chan master Qi'an 齊安 (?–842 CE) in Hangzhou around the same time, along with the fact that the founding of the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave overlaps with Pōmil's reconstruction of the Naksan Monastery, gave rise to much speculation about the connection between Mount Putuo and the Naksan Monastery.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Hwang Kūm-sun 황금순, "Naksan sōrhwa wa Koryō Suwōl Kwanūm-do, Pot'asan Kwanūm toryang 洛山說話와 高麗水月觀音圖, 普陀山 觀音道場 [The legend of Avalokiteśvara at Naksan, Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara painting and Mt. Putuo sanctuary]," *Pulgyohak yōngu* 불교학연구 18 (2007): 94–101.

<sup>80</sup> Due to limitations of this paper, I cannot elaborate on this question. Since I have discussed this matter elsewhere, for further details please see Erika Erzsébet Vörös, "A Tale of Two Potalakas: Intercultural Relations Between China and Korea Examined Through Maritime Buddhism," *Journal of East Asian Cultures* 2022/1

However, the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave initially did not have any official affiliation with any of the Buddhist schools. It was classified as a Vinaya monastery, but this only indicated that it did not belong to any particular school. Like many similar temples, it became a Chan monastery during the Song dynasty (960–1279). Chan was present on the island from the time of the first abbot of the temple who we know by name, Zhenxie Qingliao 真歇清了 (1088–1151 CE). He was a monk from the Caotong 曹洞 lineage but there was no uninterrupted Chan tradition on Mount Putuo after him. Even Zhenxie Qingliao himself was well versed in Huayan and Pure Land teachings as well, probably because there was a vivid exchange between Mount Putuo and Mount Wutai even after the Guanyin statue “unwilling to leave” arrived at the island.<sup>81</sup> As we have seen, many different teachings were present at Mount Putuo, including those of Chan, Pure Land, and Huayan. However, it has always been primarily known as a pilgrimage center attracting visitors from all over the world to pray for worldly benefits based on the *Lotus Sūtra*.

### Final Remarks

The present paper has discussed the role that Korean maritime figures played in the cultural exchanges between Korea, China, and Japan examined through Avalokiteśvara faith. The establishment of both the Fahua Monastery at Mount Chi and the Monastery of Guanyin Unwilling to Leave was in close relation with Silla maritime merchants and, directly or indirectly, with Chang Pogo. Considering this, it is understandable that the *Lotus Sūtra* and faith in Avalokiteśvara’s saving power were dominant in both cultic sites discussed in this research. However, these religious spaces were diverse in terms of beliefs and practices as much as in terms of social and cultural background. It is relatively rarer for commoners to leave their names and traces in historical documents than for the ruling stratum of society. The number of Korean merchants we know by name through monastics’ records shows the significant role that they played in monks’ lives. What is more, they could even be deified and worshipped as gods.

According to the *Sekizan daimyōjin engi* 赤山大明神縁起 (The karmic origin of the Great Bright God of Mount Chi, 948) the deity Sekizan Myōjin 赤山明神 (Bright Deity of Mount Chi) appeared on the ship in front of Ennin when he encountered a violent storm on his way back to Japan. On the other hand, the *Jigaku daishi den* 慈覺大師傳 (The biography of the great master Jigaku, 939) records that the deity manifested himself to Ennin in the form of a merchant while the monk was staying at the Fahua Monastery between 839 and 840. Based on this experience, Ennin made a vow that he would establish a monastery where he would worship the deity after returning to Japan. The temple was built by Ennin’s disciples after his death on Mount Hiei (Hieizan 比叡山) in 888 and was called Zen Monastery of

(2022): 129–131, <https://doi.org/10.38144/TKT.2022.1.7>.

<sup>81</sup> Cui Zhengsen 崔正森, “Wutaishan yu Putuoshan fojiao wenhua jiaoliu 五臺山與普陀山佛教文化交流 [Cultural exchanges between Mount Wutai and Mount Putuo],” *Wutaishan yanjiu* 五臺山研究 3 (1998): 41–42.



Mount Chi (Sekizandenin 赤山禪院). The legends reflect the correlation between Buddhism, maritime protection, and commerce whereas the image of the deity might pay homage to the merchants whose support was indispensable for itinerant monks.<sup>82</sup>

As Kim Sujung points out, many Korean scholars argue that Sekizan Myōjin might be indeed a deification of Chang Pogo. This assumption is based on the relationship that Ennin had with the merchant prince: although the monk did not have the chance to meet Chang personally, he wrote a letter to him to express his gratitude for the support that he had received through his fleet and connections.<sup>83</sup> It is not unusual that a deity of Silla origin became worshipped at Mount Hiei since a significant number of Korean immigrants had settled in the region of Lake Biwa since the fourth century. Moreover, the original owner of the land upon which Sekizandenin was built—the western slope of the mountain called Nishi Sakamoto 西坂本—was Minabuchi no Toshina 南淵年名 (808–877) who, along with his son, participated in international commerce with Chang Pogo and Silla traders.<sup>84</sup> Chang Pogo is also worshipped as a native god on an island called Changdo 장도 (將島) in Wando-gun 완도군, the place where Ch'onghaejin was previously located. This is an indicator of how much he influenced locals' lives and that his tragic end qualified him to be a folk hero.<sup>85</sup>

Chinese, Korean, and Japanese merchants and monks, who were involved in the foundation of several monasteries and cultic sites associated with Avalokiteśvara in the three regions, were part of a vast contact network interrelated by multiple skeins. It would be desirable to further investigate these relations in the future and, by utilizing modern methods of digital humanities, to visualize this complex system that links various countries, cultic sites, Buddhist schools, and people.

<sup>82</sup> Kim, *Shinra Myōjin*, 37–40.

<sup>83</sup> Kim refers to Yi Pyōng-no, Kim Mun-gyōng, Kim Tae-do, and Kwōn To-gyōng. For the full text of the letter see Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, 168–169, the record of the 17th day of the 2nd month of 840.

<sup>84</sup> Kim, *Shinra Myōjin*, 39.

<sup>85</sup> Kwōn To-gyōng 권도경, “Changjwa-ri Changdo tangje yurae chōnsōl kwa Chang Pogo chōnsōl ūi sanggwansōng mit hyōngsōnggwajōng e kwanhan yōngu 장좌리 장도 당제 유래전설과 장보고 전설의 상관성 및 형성과정에 관한 연구 [A study on the relationship and the formational course of the legend that explains the origin of the sacrifice in Changdo in Changjwa-ri and Chang Pogo legend],” *Han'guk ūi ch'ōngsomyōn munbwa* 韓國의 靑少年 文化 8 (2006): 41–67.

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### Abbreviations

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