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The Significance, Various Manifestations and Roles of Kwanŭm Tales as Found in Samguk Yusa

Kihl Tae-suk*

Introduction

In *Samguk Yusa*, Kwanŭm employs many different appearances when manifesting herself to humans¹ (*the divinity derived from the Indian Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who was a man. Somehow, as Mahayana Buddhism developed in China, a change of gender occurred, and the divinity, whose Chinese name is Kuan Yin, became popularly known and worshipped as the “goddess of mercy”. Her name is pronounced Kwanŭm in Korean and Kannon in Japanese*).

For instance, she appears as a female monk in another person’s body, as an elderly woman, and as a beautiful young woman who attempts to tempt a monk. It is written that when Kwanŭm appears before people, it is to teach them about the great virtue of Buddha or to help humans in their period of suffering. And as such, manifestations of Kwanŭm found in *Samguk Yusa* are not a strange occurrence. Nevertheless, given the differences between herself and other Buddhas, it is only natural that people begin to wonder what the relationship is between her various appearances and her actual role as a Buddha.

Previous studies on the tales of Kwanŭm found in *Samguk Yusa* can be divided into three categories: studies that have incorporated Kwanŭm

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tales within wider Buddhist tales; those focusing exclusively on Kwanŭm; and comparative studies of Kwanŭm tales in *Samguk Yusa* and those found in the *Nihon Ryoiki*.

With regards to the first category, work has been conducted on subjects such as the identification and classification of the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa*,² the literary characteristics of Buddhist tales as viewed through their formation and transmission,³ the analysis of Buddhist tales from a Structuralist viewpoint,⁴ and on Ilyon himself.⁵

Studies which have focused exclusively on Kwanŭm have dealt with subjects such as Kwanŭm's ideology as reflected in the tales found in *Samguk Yusa*,⁶ analysis of various types and literary characteristics of Kwanŭm tales,⁷ Kwanŭm from a feminist perspective,⁸ and in-depth analyses of each of Kwanŭm tales found in *Samguk Yusa*.⁹

The studies of the third category compare Kwanŭm tales in *Samguk Yusa* and those found in the *Nihon Ryoiki* from the standpoint of comparative literature and analyzes various forms of Kwanŭm belief, as well as the literary characteristics of these tales.¹⁰

These previous studies have focused on the tales themselves rather than on Kwanŭm *per se*. In other words, if we identify the Kwanŭm-related records found in *Samguk Yusa* as Kwanŭm tales, then we can argue that the main focus of these previous studies has been on the tales themselves rather than on Kwanŭm. However, this study attempts to employ a different approach, one in which the main focus will be on Kwanŭm herself. Kwanŭm, a goddess who manifests herself in many different forms, is the main character in the so-called 'Kwanŭm tales.' Therefore, there is a need to analyze the presence and role of Kwanŭm in these tales in order to understand the tales themselves. This study will delve into the roles played by Kwanŭm in order to prove the nature of Kwanŭm and develop a better understanding of Kwanŭm tales found in *Samguk Yusa*.

Kwanŭm Tales found in *Samguk Yusa*

Kwanŭm appears in 13 entries in *Samguk Yusa*. In fact, Kwanŭm appears more frequently than any other Buddhas such as Sakyamuni, Maitreya, Amitabha, Ksitigarbha, Manjusri, Samantabhadra in *Samguk Yusa*. This would seem to indicate that the writer and his potential audience considered Kwanŭm as the most important Buddha.

The 13 tales in which Kwanŭm appears are the following:

- 1) Book Two, II. Wonder 2 <36. Munho-wang, Pöpmi>
- 2) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <78. The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple>
- 3) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <79. Paengnyul Temple>
- 4) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <80. Minjang Temple>
- 5) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <83. Nohil Pudŭk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains>
- 6) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <84. The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>
- 7) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <85. The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk>
- 8) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <87. The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae>
- 9) Book Three, IV. Pagodas and Buddhist Images <89. The Five Saints of Wöljöng Temple on Mt. Odae>
- 10) Book Four, V. Anecdotes of Renowned Monks <102. Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>
- 11) Book Five, VI. Miracles <115. Ukmyön the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise>
- 12) Book Five, VI. Miracles <116. Kwangdök and Ömjang, Two Friendly Monks>
- 13) Book Five, VI. Miracles <117. Kyönghŭng Meets a Holy Man>

While one of the common themes found in all of these tales is Kwanŭm's constant exposition of her divinity, she nevertheless takes on different appearances and exhibits different virtues. For example, Kwanŭm does not actually manifest herself in the tale <Munho-wang, Pöpmin>. Nevertheless, her presence is felt in this tale in the form of revelations. In this particular tale, it is written that when Kim In-mun was imprisoned by the Tang dynasty, the people of Silla gathered and prayed for his safe return while building a temple known as Inyong Temple. That this temple was built as a result of people's wish reveals that such wishes can come true when people cooperate, while Kwanŭm does not make a physical appearance in this tale, we are left to believe that she is present and answering the people's prayers. In the <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, once again her mercy is evident only through the portrait of the Thousand Handed Goddess at Punhwang Temple. Meanwhile, while Kwanŭm does not appear in <Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>, her presence is felt through an individual's appeals to her, and her subsequent provision of a son to this sonless man.

In <Paengnyul Temple> Kwanŭm manifests herself as a monk who brings Puryerang, who had been captured by the Malgal, back to his parents. In <Minjang Temple> Kwanŭm once again appears in the form of a monk who brings a son back to a mother who had been praying for his safe return. Kwanŭm again manifests as a monk in <Ukmyŏn the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise>. In this particular tale, Kwanŭm takes on the appearance of a monk named Paljin and organizes a Hwarang order of 1,000 men, one of whom eventually reborns as a slave woman named Ukmyŏn. Ukmyŏn's eventual attainment of Buddhahood proves that even those from the lowest class can aspire to become a Buddha.

In <The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple> Kwanŭm takes on three different appearances: a monk in Chungsaeng Temple, the Abbott of Chungsaeng Temple, and a woman who takes care of a newborn.

In <The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae> Kwanŭm

exposes herself in the form of fifty thousand images of Buddha to Princes Puchŏn and Hyomyŏng. Meanwhile, in <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> Kwanŭm appears in the form of a living Buddha to Ŭsiang.

However, in the same tale, Kwanŭm also appears as a beautiful woman to Wŏnhyo, who like Ŭsiang, desired to see the living Buddha. In this particular tale, Kwanŭm manifests herself as two different women before Wŏnhyo: a woman harvesting rice in the field and another washing her menstrual band in running water. In this same tale, Kwanŭm appears in Chosin's dream as his beloved, the daughter of King Kim Hŏn-kong. In <Nohil Pudŭk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains>, Kwanŭm appears as a fair maiden who visits Nohil Pudŭk and Taltal Pakpak. In <Kwangdŏk and Ŏmjang, Two Friendly Monks>, Kwanŭm manifests herself as Kwangdŏk's wife, who marries Ŏmjang after her husband's demise.

In the instances when Kwanŭm manifests as a woman, she does not always assume a beautiful appearance. For example, in <The Five Saints of Wŏljŏng Temple on Mt. Odae>, Kwanŭm appears as an old woman who shows Sinhyo-Kŏsa a good place to meditate. In <Kyŏnghŭng Meets a Holy Man> Kwanŭm is a female monk who cures Kyŏnghŭng.

Kwanŭm does not directly reveal herself in tales such as <Munho-wang, Pŏpmin>, <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, and <Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>, but rather makes her presence known through actions such as the establishment of a temple or through the portraits of the Goddess of Mercy in temples. Meanwhile, in the following tales she appears as a monk: <Paengnyul Temple>, <Minjang Temple>, <Ukmyŏn the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise> and <The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple>. In the <The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae> Kwanŭm appears in the form of fifty thousand images of Buddha to two princes, while in <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> she appears as a living Buddha. She appears before Wŏnhyo and Chosin as a beautiful woman in <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and

Chosin, the Lovesick Monk>, <Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains>, and <Kwangdök and Ömjang, Two Friendly Monks>, whereas in <The Five Saints of Wöljōng Temple on Mt. Odae>, she is an old woman. In <Kyōnghūng Meets a Holy Man>, she is once again a female monk.

The first question we should consider regarding various manifestations of Kwanūm is why she takes on such diverse forms and what the relationship these various appearances and roles have? Furthermore, what are these tales trying to convey through her manifestations? In the following section, I will analyze the virtues she exhibits in each of her appearances and the roles she played in each tale. I will also try to look into the significance of these tales.

Kwanūm assisting humans in removing their earthly suffering

In <Munho-wang, Pöpmin> Kwanūm takes on the role of a Goddess who helps out people in their time of need:

When Kim In-mun (King Munmu's brother) was imprisoned by the Tang dynasty, Silla people prayed for his safe return and erected Inyong Temple. As a result, he could come back to Silla. Unfortunately, however, he died during the return voyage. The people mourned his death and worshiped his patriotic soul in the Kwanūm Hall at Inyong Temple, which had been erected in Kyōngju during his captivity.

In <Munho-wang, Pöpmin> Kim In-mun is identified as a person who contributed to Silla's unification of the Three Kingdoms. However, Kim was imprisoned by Tang dynasty, where he had been dispatched to as an envoy due to diplomatic tensions between the two nations. The people of Silla congregated to Kwanūm Hall of Inyong Temple to pray for his safe return. As a result of these implorations to Buddha, Kim was released from prison. In this tale we can see that people believed that by praying to

Kwanŭm's virtue their earthly suffering would be lifted. Moreover, that Kim was actually released from prison proves that people's faith can be rewarded. However, when Kim died on his return voyage to Silla, people replaced Kwanŭm Hall with Amitabha Hall, which show that while the people perceived Amitabha as helping people reach heaven after death they saw Kwanŭm as helping people overcome their suffering during their lifetime.

Kwanŭm's ability to help people overcome their earthly woes without even appearing before them is shown in tales such as <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, <Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>, and <The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple>. In <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, Kwanŭm uses the portrait of the Thousand Handed Goddess of Mercy to exhibit her power to save people from their suffering:

During the reign of King Kyōngdōk (742-765) there lived at Hanki-ri a woman whose name was Hŭi-myōng. She had a son, but he became blind at the age of five. One day this unhappy mother carried her child in her arms to the Left Hall of Punhwang Temple. There she had him sing a song before the portrait of the Thousand-Handed Goddess of Mercy on the northern wall while she offered a prayer. Immediately, the child recovered his sight.

According to the *Chonkwang Ankwan Jajae Bosal Bimal Bopkyong*, the Thousand Handed Goddess of Mercy has 20 arms on each side of her body and 25 hands on each arm, with an eye on each hand. The song of praise to the Thousand-handed Goddess of Mercy found in this tale can be regarded as a form of prayer to Kwanŭm to mitigate their earthly burden. In the tale above, Kwanŭm shows her benevolence by curing a blind child, thus removing the child's pain.

Meanwhile, in <Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>there is no mention of Kwanŭm Hall or of the Thousand-handed Goddess of Mercy. What we find instead is Murim's prayers to Kwanŭm to bestow a son upon him, a wish Kwanŭm grants:

The family name of the great monk Chajang was Kim and he was the son of Murim, a nobleman of Chingol (royal clan) who was honored with the third-rank title of Sopan(蘇判) in Chinhan. His father was an important court official who, since he had no son, prayed to Kwanŭm Bodhisattva, pledging, “If I have a son I will make him a bridge to the world of Buddha.”

On the night of his prayer, his wife dreamed that a star fell from heaven and entered her bosom. She conceived that very night and in due time bore a son. This was Chajang. Because he was born on Buddha’s birthday he was named Sŏnjongnang.

What is interesting here is the wide range of people who believed in Kwanŭm’s ability to answer their needs. While Murim is from a noble family in <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, the main figure, Hui-myŏng, is a commoner. These two examples show that faith in Kwanŭm’s ability to heal earthly woes was not limited to a particular social class.

While Kwanŭm does not manifest herself directly in the <The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple>, she appears as a woman to the newborn baby Ch’oe Un-song leaves in front of her portrait in Chungsaeng Temple:

During the last years of Silla, the T’ien-cheng period (926-929), the childless wife of the nobleman Ch’oe Ŭn-sŏng prayed to Buddha at Chungsaeng Temple to give her a son. Her prayer was heard, and she soon conceived and bore a baby boy. But before the child was three months old the tiger general of Later Paekje (Chin Hwon) attacked Kyŏngju, and many people lost their wives and children. Carrying the baby in his arm, Ŭn-sŏng fled to the temple and implored the aid of the merciful Bodhisattva, saying “the enemy soldiers run amuck in the King’s capital, attacking women and killing babies. If my son was born through your holy blessing, care for him now and nourish him in your bosom till I come again.” He wrapped the child warmly and laid him beside the lotus

pedestal of the seated goddess, said a tearful farewell and departed.

Two weeks later, when the enemy had evacuated the city, Ch'oe Ŭn-sōng returned to the temple and found the child in robust health. His body was as white as if he had been newly washed, his breath smelled of fresh milk, and his face beamed with a bright smile.

Ch'oe's prayers to Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple were rewarded with a son. The role of Kwanŭm in this particular tale is similar to the one she plays in <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>. Kwanum's power is revealed to Ch'oe through her portrait at Chungsaeng Temple. However, Ch'oe's problems did not end here, as Silla was invaded by later Paekje before his son was even three months old. This conflict forced Ch'oe to flee, but not before hiding his baby beside a lotus pedestal of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple. While we cannot be sure of exactly what happened to the baby during his stay at the temple, we can deduct from the last sentence that Kwanŭm had taken good care of him. Here, we can see that one of the purposes of Kwanŭm tales is to make people be aware of her ability to remove people's individual earthly burdens.

In <Paengnyul Temple>, <Minjang Temple>, and <The Three Portraits of Kwanŭm at Chungsaeng Temple>, Kwanŭm appears as a monk who helps people in despair. In <Paengnyul Temple> Puryeryang is able to return to his parents after having been kidnapped by the Malgal thanks to the help of a monk who owned a flute and a harp:

In March of the second year of Chang-shou, in the year of the snake (693), Puryrang led his youthful followers on a trip to Kŭmnan (T'ongch'ŏn in Kangwŏn province). But when the party arrived at a point north of Puk-myŏng (near Wonsan Bay) it was attacked by a band of armed thieves (these appear to have been a group of Malgal-Mo-ho, a fierce nomadic tribe of the north) and Puryerang was taken captive. An Sang stayed and followed his master into the enemy camp. The two treasures –the harp and the

flute- in the High Heaven Vault had also disappeared.

Puryeryang's father and mother prayed in the Golden Hall of Paengnyul Temple every night until the fifteen of May, for the safe return of their son. On the last night they found the harp and flute on the table of the incense-burner and Puryeryang, attended by An Sang, standing behind the Buddha image. The old parents fell upon their beloved son weeping for joy, and asked him how he had returned.

"My honored parents," he said, "when the enemy carried me away, they made me a cowherd of Taedo-kura, their chief, and I was set to caring for his cattle in the field of Jaejo-rani. There a kind-looking monk holding a harp in one hand and a flute in the other appeared and said, 'My good lad, don't you feel homesick?'"

"Partly overawed by his noble face and partly overcome with grateful emotion at his gently words, I fell to my knees and answered, 'Honorable monk, carry me back to Kyōngju. I long to see my King and my parents in my native land, a thousand *ri* far away to the south.'

"Come with me, my lad," he interposed, and took me by the hand and led me to the seacoast, where I met An Sang once again. Here the monk broke the flute in two and handed each of us a piece, 'Ride on them!' he said, while he rode the harp. We flew high above the clouds and in a twinkling we had landed here."

In <Minjang Temple> Chang-ch'un, who had been lost at sea, is able to come back home with the help of Kwanūm, who manifests herself in the form of a monk:

There was once a poor woman in Ugūm-ni named Po-kae who had a son named Chang-ch'un. In order to improve their lot, the boy joined the crew of a merchant ship, and for a long time nothing was heard from him. His lonely old mother waited long in vain. Finally she visited Minjang Temple (which had been built with funds donated by Minjang Kakkan, a Kyōngju nobleman),

and prayed for seven days to the Kwanūm Bodhisattva to bring her son home safe. As she rose from her prayers on the seventh day and raised her eyes to heaven, thinking of her son, there he was standing before her. She greeted him joyfully and asked him how he had come. Chang-ch'un related his adventures as follows.

“My good mother, we set sail before a favorable wind, but when we were out in the open sea, suddenly dark clouds hid the sky and a great storm came up, with foaming waves that tossed our ship about like a toy. Then a whirlpool appeared and seized the ship, and the valuable cargo and all the crew except myself sank to the bottom. I managed to cling to a plank and floated on the waves until I was cast ashore on the coast of Wu in south China”

“One day a strange monk came to comfort me, and bade me to walk with him as far as the bank of a stream. There he seized me in his arms, and leaped into the sky, flying higher and higher and then swooping low again until my feet lightly touched the ground. I was dazed, my head spun like a top, and my ears hummed like a hive in Korean, and, opening my eyes, found I was back in Silla.”

The structure of this tale is similar to that of < Paengnyul Temple> in that in both cases Kwanūm appears as a monk who conducts miracles to help the main characters return to their homes. In <The Three Portraits of Kwanūm at Chungsaeng Temple> Kwanūm appears as two different monks:

In March of the tenth year of T'ung-huo (992), Sōng-t'ae, the abbot of Chungsaeng Temple, knelt before the image of the goddess and said, “I have lived at this temple for many years and I have kept the incense burning in the censer day and night. But now the income from the temple lands has ceased, so it is impossible for me to continue this service. I must bid you farewell and move to another place.”

As he finished speaking, the monk was suddenly attacked by drowsiness and fell into a trance. In this state, he heard the low,

sweet voice of the goddess whisper in his ear: “My good monk, do not leave, but abide with me yet. I will go round and get donations for the temple supplies.”

Two weeks later two stout countrymen led into the temple grounds a caravan of horses and oxen fully loaded with supplies. The sexton ran out to meet them. “Where have thou come from?” he enquired.

“We have come from Kimhae,” they replied. “A few days ago a strange monk came to our village and told us that he had lived at Chungsaeng Temple for many years. He said that he had come to ask for donations for the temple, which was in great want, and so we collected six large bags of rice and four large bags of salt as gifts. We placed them on the backs of our strong horses and oxen, and here they are. Please come and help us unload them.”

“No monk from this temple has gone out to ask for alms,” the abbot said, “Perhaps you have come to the wrong place.”

“The monk guided us,” the countrymen replied, “as far as a well he called Sinkyön-jōng (God-seeing Well) below the hill, and pointed to this temple, saying, ‘Go carefully up the mountain, and you will find a temple above the clouds. I will join you on the temple grounds.’ So here we are.”

In the thirteenth year of Ta-ting, the year of the snake (1173) a monk named Chōmsūng lived at Chungsaeng Temple. He was illiterate, but his inward eye saw Buddha’s mind, and he kept the incense-burner alight with holy flame from morning till night as he knelt before the image of the merciful Bodhisattva.

Another monk who wanted the temple for himself appealed to the Angel of Shirts, saying, “Chungsaeng Temple was created to invoke Buddha’s grace and blessing on all the myriad creatures in this nation, and therefore a learned person should be its proprietor. This poor monk knows only enough to say, ‘Namuami-T’abul’ and ‘Kwanūm Bodhisattva’ waking and sleeping. He should be turned out of the temple.”

“Very well,” the angel replied, “I will test him.” The written appeal was presented upside down to Chōmsūng, and he took it and read all the sentences aloud in a musical voice, without making a mistake.

The angel was astonished at this unusual intelligence and clapped his hands, saying “Again!” But this time Chōmsūng remained stubbornly silent. “Thy soul is aflame with holy inspiration. Such a monk as thou art Silla’s boast,” the angel exclaimed. “Stay where thou art and be happy, and may Buddha bless thee!”

In above tales, we can see the writer’s intention to convey Kwanūm’s ability to help people overcome their difficulties. However, there is a need to point out here that Kwanūm’s granting of assistance only occurred in cases where people had directly appealed to her in their prayers, which show that prayers constitute an essential element in reaching Kwanūm’s assistance to heal their suffering.

Kwanūm does not appear by herself, but rather only materializes when implored to do so through prayer. In short, the citizens of Silla’s prayers for the safety of Kim In-mun a father’s prayers for a son, mothers’ pleas for the safety of their sons, and monks’ imploration to be allowed to continue to worship, impressed Kwanūm to the point where she decided to extend her mercy.

Kwanūm as a guide to the spiritual path that leads to nirvana

As is the case in <Paengnyul Temple>, <Minjang Temple>, and <The Three Portraits of Kwanūm at Chungsaeng Temple> Kwanūm also appears as a monk in <Ukmyōn the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise>. However, the monk in <Ukmyōn the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise> plays a different role than in the other three tales:

Another version of this story is found in the Book of Monks

(Sŭngjŏn). P'aljin, an incarnation of Kwanŭm, organized a Hwarang order of one thousand men and divided them into two groups, one for physical labor and one for mental culture. One of the members of the labor group violated the Buddhist commandments and in consequence was reborn as a cow at Pusŏk Temple. While carrying Buddhist books on his back the cow died and was reborn as a human being by the power of the books. This was Ukmyŏn, a slave in the household of Kwijin, a nobleman.

One day Ukmyŏn went on an errand to a mountain called Hagasan, and there she experienced a trance in which she saw Buddha and was possessed with the holy spirit.

Mita-sa, founded by Hyesuk Pŏpsa, was not far from the house of Kwijin. For nine years, whenever her master went to worship Buddha in that temple, Ukmyŏn followed him to offer her prayers. On the twenty-first day of the first month of the tenth year, while she was worshipping Buddha, she soared up into the sky, breaking through the ceiling and roof of the palace of Buddha.

In this tale, the monk does not appear as a result of people's exhortations. Rather, the monk Paljin is a reincarnation of Kwanŭm. Despite her misgivings in her previous life, Ukmyŏn worshipped Buddha with a pure heart, was able to forge a relationship with Kwanŭm and become a Buddha herself. As such, Kwanŭm not only help fulfill people's wishes during their lifetime, but also guides individuals who have established a relationship with her to paradise. In the <The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae> and <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> Kwanŭm appears in many different forms:

One day the two princes, Poch'ŏn and Hyomyŏng, made a pilgrimage to Obong (Five Peaks) high in the mountains. Present here were thousand Kwanŭm on Manwŏl-san (Full Moon Mountain) above the Eastern Terrace; ten thousand Chijang (earth gods) headed by the eight great Bodhisattva on Kirin-san (mountain of the Giraffe, a fabulous monster) above the Southern

Terrace; ten thousand Seji gods led by Buddhas of everlasting life on Changnyŏng-san (Mountain of the Long Pass) above the Western Terrace; five hundred Nahan (disciples of Sakyamuni) led by their master on Sangwang-san (Mountain of the King Elephant) above the Northern Terrace; and ten thousand Munsu Buddhas led by Piro Ch'ana on P'ungno-san (Mountain of the Wind Furnace) above the Central Terrace.

With wondering eyes the two princes worshipped the fifty thousand Buddhas who thus appeared in their real persons.

In the <The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae> Kwanŭm appears as fifty thousand different images of Buddha before the two princes Poch'ŏn and Hyomyŏng, who have devoted themselves to meditate on the spiritual world. Once Kwanŭm appeared before him, Poch'ŏn began to meditate constantly, through which he eventually reaches nirvana. Meanwhile in <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> Kwanŭm manifests herself to Ŭisang:

When Ŭisang Pŏpsa had returned from his first visit to China, he heard that the Goddess of Mercy (Kwanŭm) had taken up her abode in a cave on the seacoast. He therefore called the place Naksan, after the Indian mountain Pota-Nakka-san, which is better known as Sopaekhwa (small white flower) because the graceful white-clad image of Kwanŭm Bodhisattva there resembled a white flower on a slender stem.

On the seventh day of his purification, Ŭisang stood up and pushed his cushion into the sea so that it would float away on the morning tide. Eight gods from the Four Deva Kings then conducted him into the cave. There he looked up to heaven and worshipped Buddha, and a crystal rosary was given to him. He took it, and as he stepped backward the Dragon of the Eastern Sea offered him a bead-like gem (*Cintamani*), which he also accepted. Ŭisang purified himself for a further seven days, after which he beheld the splendid face and graceful figure of the living Buddha.

Ŭisang erected a temple in the spot where he had seen the living Buddha with his own eyes. He called this temple Naksan Temple in honor of the Indian mountain Pota-Nakka-san. According to a Buddhist text, Kwanŭm had once resided in a coastal area known as Potalaka.

In <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> Wŏnhyo also makes a pilgrimage to Naksan to see the living Buddha. However, instead of seeing the living Buddha, he encountered two women whose form Kwanŭm had taken:

Soon afterward Wŏnhyo, another famous Silla monk, made a pilgrimage to worship this Buddha. When he arrived at the southern foot of the mountain, he saw a woman harvesting rice in a field. Wŏnhyo liked women and pleasantries, so he said to her jestingly, “Will you give me some rice?”

“No, I am sorry, I cannot,” she replied. “It is a lean year and beggars are not welcome.”

Proceeding further, he met a woman washing her menstrual band in running water under a bridge. She too he addressed in jest: “Let me have a drink of the cool water.”

“All right, come and drink,” rang out her clarion voice, and she scooped up some of the unclean water in a half-moon-shaped gourd and pressed it to his lips. Wŏnhyo drained the gourd and dipped more water from the mountain stream to quench his thirst.

As he did so, a blue bird in a pine tree nearby called to him “Come, my good monk Huichi-Hwasang!” and disappeared, leaving a woman’s shoe under the tree. When Wŏnhyo reached the temple he found another shoe, of the same size and shape, by the pedestal of the Kwanŭm Bodhisattva. He then realized that these shoes belonged to the two women whom he had met, and that they were both incarnate Buddhas.

Wŏnhyo wished to enter the cave and see the graceful figure of the living Buddha there, but a storm was raging at sea and his little boat almost capsized, so he was forced to desist.

Two different opinions have emerged as to these records in which Ŭisang was able to see the living Buddha while Wŏnhyo only saw an incarnation of Kwanŭm. One view is that anyone, regardless of their path, can find the truth. Those who assert this point have highly evaluated Wŏnhyo's public-oriented approach to conveying Buddhism.¹¹ Another group of scholars argues that in order to achieve nirvana certain ritualized processes must be carried out. For example, Ŭisang is said to have purified himself for a period of 14 days in order to meet the living Buddha. As such, the reason why Wŏnhyo was unable to see the living Buddha, these scholars maintain, may be due to his forgoing of the above-mentioned ritualistic processes. Thus,¹² for these scholars, Ŭisang should be held in higher regard. However, in my opinion, this debate is unnecessary as there are many ways to achieve truth.

Let us now turn to the question of how we should interpret the two women Wŏnhyo met in this tale. Wŏnhyo's flirtation with the woman harvesting rice in the field can be interpreted as a metaphor for sexual intercourse between man and woman, in that, this kind of sexual behavior is usually a productive activity, just like the sowing of rice. In this regard, the woman harvesting the rice can be interpreted as the mother of agriculture.¹³ Thus, why does Kwanŭm in this tale take the form of the mother of agriculture? Sex is an activity that is regarded as an obstacle to the attainment of truth in Buddhism. However, when this sexual behavior is related to women's bearing of children, it becomes one of the basic needs of life, just like the growing and harvesting of one's food. Thus, viewed from the vantage point of the mother of agriculture, sex is an essential activity in assuring the continuation of the universe. In this regard, it is not the action itself but the intention behind it that becomes the problem. Wŏnhyo's flirting with this woman is a metaphor for his weakness to the flesh. The woman's action of refusing Wŏnhyo's request for rice on the grounds that it is not ripe enough can be construed as the writer's intention of conveying that it is Wŏnhyo who has in fact not yet ripened enough.

The water the woman washing her menstrual band gives to Wŏnhyo is

also related to the latter's quest for truth. Wōnhyo is able to find the truth through the cleanliness and dirtiness of the water given to him by this woman. Here, the water given to Wōnhyo can be linked to women's menstrual cycle, which in turn can be linked to production. If this menstrual process was not externalized outside the woman's body, but instead unfolded inside the woman's womb, the expected result would be a child; and as such, the menstrual cycle itself could be seen as an act of 'cleanliness'. However, as seen in the case of Wōnhyo, who threw away the water given to him by the woman washing her menstrual band, this same menstrual cycle can also be regarded as a impure process when it is not linked to production. As such, while there is only one universal truth, it can be perceived in many different fashions depending on the prevailing circumstances. These two women who appear before Wōnhyo are regarded by the latter as little more than objects of fancy until he realizes that they are both in fact apparitions of Kwanūm, who then become objects of worship.

In *Songgaosengzhuan* (Buddhist Tales of the Song Dynasty) one finds a story in which Wōnhyo and Ŭisang travel to China in search for the truth. However, along the way, the two are besieged by a violent storm and seek shelter in a little cave. The next morning they wake and realized that their comfortable shelter was in reality a grave and that they had slept next to a skeleton. Unable to leave due to the poor conditions of weather, the two have no choice but to stay in the grave one more night. However, on the second night, their heretofore cozy shelter no longer feels as such, and Wōnhyo realizes that the key to enlightenment comes from one's own mind and that there is no need for him to continue his travels to Tang dynasty.

Wōnhyo's awakening in the above tale is a clear indication of the fact that while there is only one truth in nature, this truth is perceived differently by different people and the distortion of truth causes people to lose their clarity and serenity. Thus, in my opinion, Kwanūm's manifestation as two different women before Wōnhyo can be regarded as a recreation of the story found in the *Songgaosengzhuan*.

Unlike the case of Wōnhyo, Kwanūm appears as herself to Ūisang. Prior to Ūisang's return to Silla he experiences earthly desires, where a beautiful woman appears before him as a test of his faith. In this regard, I am of the opinion that this previous temptation allowed Ilyon to have Kwanūm manifest herself in *Samguk Yusa* to Ūisang in her true form rather than as a woman. In *Songgaosengzhuan*, we find a story about a woman named Sōnmyo who fell in love with Ūisang when the latter traveled to Tang dynasty. However, Sōnmyo, unable to fulfill her love for Ūisang, becomes a dragon who protects Ūisang during his return to Silla and helps to erect Pusōk Temple.

The above story shows that Ūisang, unlike Wōnhyo, remained very dedicated to his meditation despite the tests. Nevertheless, he did not completely reject Sōnmyo's help when she became a dragon, which displays his ability to escape the trap of dogmatism.

While a beautiful woman can be an obstacle to those seeking the truth, she can also provide them with an opportunity to reach a higher degree of clarity. As such, while giving in to the pleasures of the flesh emerges as an obstacle to the attainment of truth, the obsession with doing away with these earthly desires can also emerge as another obstacle. The key to entering nirvana then lies in the attainment of a balanced awareness of how to control these earthly desires. Therefore, Kwanūm, who appears to the seekers of truth as a beautiful woman is helping these individuals achieve their proper path to spiritual awakening. Finally, in <Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains> Kwanūm appears before Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak as a woman in order to help them achieve the path to truth.

Monks Nohil Pudūk and Taltak Pakpak were good friends. Three years passed, and in the eighth year of King Sōngdōk (706) on Buddha's birthday a young woman of twenty came to the cell of Pakpak. She was not only a graceful and elegant beauty, but also fragrant with the scents of rock-orchid and musk-deer that emanated from her body in the twilight breeze. She sang a song in

a beautiful voice, which almost melted the lonely heart of the monk after his long celibacy, wishing to rest her weary feet in his cell. However, Pakpak refused her request, saying “A Buddhist temple, large or small, should be kept clean, and you are not qualified to enter my cell; Go away quickly lest your rosy flesh tempt my rising passion.”

The woman blushed with shame. And bent her steps to the cell of Pudūk where she sang her song again. Pudūk answered, “This is a holy place which must not be defiled by women. But to come to the aid of all creatures is one of Buddha’s commands, much more to hear the appeal of a woman who seeks asylum in this lonely valley. Come in. You can rest in my cell, though it is too bare and humble for a noble lady like you.”

The woman entered the cell and the monk lowered the wick of the burning candle in the niche and chanted Buddhist prayers without stopping a moment in order to keep the temptation of a woman out of his pure mind.

At midnight the woman called the monk and said, “I am sorry but I am going to have a baby unexpectedly and unfortunately in your presence tonight. Kindly bring a straw mat for me.”

“Women are most pitiful when giving birth,” said Pudūk. “Let me raise the wick of the flickering candle before I do as you ask. Ah, the baby is already born. I hear its loud cry.”

“Yes, the baby has been born sooner than I expected,” she replied, “Now please bring me a tub of hot water so I can bathe myself and the baby.”

Pudūk was ashamed at seeing the naked body of a woman and trembled from head to foot, but he took pity on her, and having prepared a tub of hot water, placed her in the middle of it and washed her milk-white body with trembling hands. He was astonished to perceive that the tub was filled with a sweet scent and that the water had changed into a golden liquid.

“You, too, bathe in this water,” the woman told him. The monk

was even more ashamed to bare his body before a woman, but he obeyed. As he bathed, he felt his mind becoming ennobled with a fresh spirit, his skin turned the color of gold, and the tub became a lotus pedestal.

“Ah, wonderful sight!” said Pudūk. “Dear monk,” said the woman, “be seated on this lotus pedestal. I am Kwanūm Bodhisattva, the goddess of mercy, and I have come to help you become a great Bodhisattva yourself.” With these words the woman disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

On the following morning Pakpak, thinking that Pudūk had surely broken the commandment of Buddha and enjoyed the woman during the night, called on his fellow monk to remonstrate with him. To his astonishment his friend was seated on a lotus pedestal as a Maitreya Buddha, radiating brilliant light from his golden body.

Pakpak bowed respectfully and asked, “Who has made you a Bodhisattva?”

“A beautiful woman,” Pudūk replied. “she wanted to rest in my cell, so I allowed her to come in; she wanted to bathe after childbirth, so I gave her a hot bath; she told me to bathe in the same bath and in the same golden water, so I did, and I became a golden Buddha. As she left she said that she was the Goddess of Mercy. Because I showed her mercy, she returned my kindness by making me an image of mercy.”

“You are not only a kind-hearted man but a strong-hearted one as well,” said Pakpak. “As for me, I was too weak to resist her charming beauty, and turned her away for fear of falling in love with her and going to hell instead of heaven. My inhumane treatment of a fellow creature has lost me the golden opportunity of becoming a god of mercy.”

“Don’t be sad,” replied Pudūk. “There is still some golden water left in the tub in which you can bathe.”

Pakpak bathed in the golden, aromatic liquid, and the moment

he emerged from the tub he was transformed into another Maitreya and took a position facing his friend.

In this tale, although the woman asks both Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak for help, her higher level of spiritual awareness leads her to play the role of guiding these two monks own quest for the truth. She desired to help these two monks who had devoted themselves thoroughly to their pursuit for spiritual truth. The woman's pleading to help her in childbirth can be seen as an extension of Kwanūm's own desire to help them. Kwanūm's intention was not to select only one of them to become a Buddha, or to establish a spiritual hierarchy between them. Rather, she simply appeared before these two monks to help them both become Buddhas. After Taltal Pakpak refused her pleas, Kwanūm visited Nohil Pudūk and implored him to take her in. This imploration can be viewed as Kwanūm's desire to help these two monks; in other words, if she had been refused by both, she would have been unable to provide the help she wanted to give. Therefore, this tale should not be understood as being based on an attempt to establish a spiritual hierarchy.

The fact that the woman in this tale began to experience signs of childbirth and gave actual birth to the child while Nohil Pudūk was chanting deserves more in-depth analysis. A woman giving birth can be likened to the birth of a saint. The fact that Nohil Pudūk is unaffected by the woman's beauty is clear evidence that he has already attained a higher level of spiritual awareness. The test Kwanūm gives to Nohil Pudūk, in which she asks him to help her so that she can help him, convinces Kwanūm that Nohil Pudūk is worthy of becoming a saint. For his part, while Taltal Pakpak managed to preserve his purity by refusing the woman, he had not yet reached the level of awareness needed to become a Buddha without the help of Kwanūm, whom he had refused. This shows that an overzealous adherence to the need to remain pure is in fact another obstacle to the attainment of Buddhahood. Taltal Pakpak was able to eventually see that he had been unable to see the truth because he had fallen prey to another desire.

The lack of an explanation regarding the child Kwanŭm bore in this tale implies that the baby was in fact the two saints who had been reborn. Ilyon wrote the following poem in praise of Kwanŭm:

She wandered over hill and dale and under the lonely ten-ri pine
grove
To tempt the lonely monks in the night cells;
When she had borne two babies, she rose from her bath at dawn
And flew far, far away into the western sky

The last phrase of this poem seems to indicate that the two saints were reborn thanks to this woman's help. The dawn does not simply refer to the advent of a new day, it also refers to the fact that the two saints had left the dark world we inhabit in to travel towards enlightenment.

In <Kwangdök and Ömjang, Two Friendly Monks> Kwanŭm becomes the wife of these men as a means of helping them become saints. In this tale, Kwangdök's wife helps her husband to achieve Buddhahood, and after Kwangdök's death, helps awake Ömjang's soul and eventually enter paradise.

During the reign of King Munmu (661-681) two friendly monks lived in Kyöngju. Kwangdök lived in a quiet place in the western precincts of Punhwang Temple with his wife and made his living by weaving straw shoes, and Ömjang worked on a farm near a hermitage which he had built in the valley of Namak.

One evening as the last rays of sunlight illuminated the silent treetops, Ömjang heard a voice: "I am going to the lotus paradise. Be faithful to Buddha and come to see me there soon. Goodbye."

Ömjang saw that a rainbow had made a bridge from earth to heaven, while sweet music played above the clouds. He envied his friend, who had gone to the world of eternal peace and comfort ahead of him, and sighed, "Ah! It is his voice telling me of his journey home to paradise. Indeed, we promised to inform one another of our final departure from earth to heaven, and now the

angels have taken him first.”

Early next morning Ōmjang visited the home of Kwangdōk and saw that he was dead. He helped the widow with the funeral arrangements, and afterward as night came on he sat down and talked to her.

“Now your husband is no more, would you like to come and live with me?”

“I am willing,” she replied.

“Come and lie with me! We will prove all the pleasures imaginable on the first night of our married joy.” And he began to undress her.

“I am blushing with shame,” she said, “and yet I pity you in your heated passion. You seek paradise with muddied soul, like a man who tries to catch fish by climbing a tree.”

“Kwangdōk did so,” he objected, “and yet he entered the lotus paradise. Why not I? I must enjoy you tonight as he did on many nights as man and wife.”

“My husband Kwangdōk,” the woman said, “lived with me for more than ten years, but he never slept in the same bed with me or embraced me in unclean passion. Every night he and I knelt erect and recited in unison the names of Ami-Tabul and the sixteen doorways leading to the lotus paradise. When he saw a vision of the wondrous world we redressed the balance of our bodies by sitting cross-legged with our thumbs and middle fingers almost touching, as Buddhist images do. He was a devoted follower of Buddha. Where else could he have gone but to the home of Buddha in the lotus paradise? You are running to the east while trying to reach the west.”

Ōmjang repented his sins and gave up his lust, concentrating on awakening his soul so as to be worthy to enter the gates of heaven, and at length he also entered the lotus paradise.

As in <Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White

Moon Mountains>, one of the tests a monk must face in <Kwangdök and Ömjang, Two Friendly Monks> is to control his desire for the pleasures of the flesh. Kwangdök's wife's provision of a lesson to Ömjang can mean that in order to overcome one's earthly desires and become a Buddha one must discard such desires altogether. However, the tale also tells us that Kwangdök, like Taltal Pakpak, would have been unable to enter paradise had he simply refused to accept the pleasures of the flesh in order to preserve his own cleanliness. The reason Kwangdök was able to eventually become a saint was that although his beautiful wife was at his side at all times, he was never tempted by her beauty and was able to continue his meditation. Consequently, Kwangdök came to see the true nature of his wife, that she was in fact Kwanüm, which allowed him to enter paradise. If this is the case, then the moment spiritual awareness is achieved is the point the seeker reaches a level of existential being where objects no longer appear to be simply present or absent. Thus, Kwanum's appearance as a beautiful woman and the challenges she poses to the seekers of truth can be understood as an attempt not simply to help these individuals their earthly desires but to facilitate their understanding of the essence of being.

In <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> Chosin has a dream about his life with his beloved wife, and it is through this dream that we come to see the process through which seekers achieve spiritual clarity. Although it is only a dream, the awakening it instills in Chosin is as meaningful as if it the events were real. Thus, we can construe that Chosin's imaginary wife is in fact a manifestation of Kwanüm.

During the Silla period when the Kings ruled in Kyöngju there was in Nalli county in Myöngju prefecture a manor belonging to Sekyu Temple (now called Hünggyo-sa). The abbot of this temple appointed a young monk named Chosin as the caretaker of the manor. No sooner had he arrived to take up his duties than he fell in love with the daughter of Kim Hün-kong, the county magistrate.

He knelt before the Goddess of Mercy and prayed to make this girl his wife before he entered the lotus paradise in heaven. But all in vain, the girl was betrothed to another man. When he thought of the blooming bride in her glittering jewels and compared the richly-dressed bridegroom with himself he shed tears of bitter despair.

Chosin writhed in an agony like that of death, complaining to Buddha for not answering his prayer. At last, worn out with weeping, he fell asleep in the Buddha Hall.

Suddenly an autumn breeze blew out the candles. Chosin looked toward the door, which was ajar, and as he did so it was flung open and there in the moonlight stood the bride, fresh as a rosebud in her wedding dress.

Chosin clasped his bride in his arm and danced with joy. Then he took her hand and led her from Buddha Hall and down a mountain path, until they reached a quiet valley near his native place. Here he built a snug cottage in the green forest.

Time sped by like a warrior's arrow, and at last they had lived together in the forest for forty years, during which five children were born to them. They had been able to live for some time by selling the bride's jewelry, but at last it was all gone and they were reduced to abject poverty. There was not a grain of rice or barley in the house and the family had to subsist on grass and roots. Chosin hunted and cut wood as diligently as he was able, but he could not provide his now large family with even the bare necessities of life. He knew that killing the mountain creatures was against the commandment of Buddha, not to speak of the sin of living with a woman, but now he would have killed even human beings to keep his family from starvation.

The whole family wandered in rags through the mountain villages begging for food. As they were crossing Haehyön-nyōng their fifteen-year-old eldest son starved to death. With lots of tears Chosin and his wife buried the beloved child on the

mountainside and continued with the remaining four to Ugokhyōn, where they built a lowly cottage with a thatched roof.

More years passed. Now Chosin and his wife were as grey as if snow had fallen on their heads, and thin and pale as death. Both of them fell ill, while their children cried for food. Their ten-year-old daughter walked fifteen miles to the village begging for food for the family. She was bitten by a stray dog and collapsed in pain on her return. Tears streamed down the sunken cheeks of the aged couple.

At last, wiping away her tears, the old wife spoke to her husband: “When I married you in the flower of my youth and beauty, you kissed my blushing cheeks and called them roses. Then we had fine clothes to wear and good food to eat, and our married love deepened as long as the mellow wine flowed from our barrels, But now my rosy cheeks and cherry lips and the glow of strength in your eyes are gone. Nothing is left to us but sunken stomachs, the pains of old age, sorrow and the fear of death. No one in this wide world will give us so much as a night’s sojourn in a storeroom of a bottle of soy-sauce. We have become a laughing-stock.

“If we cannot feed our own children, how can we enjoy our remaining years in love? Coquettish smiles have vanished like dew, and the pledge of our love has fled like the pussy willows on four winds. The passionate, carnal desires of our green youth have led only to this bottomless grief of gray winter. It would be better to be a lone bird pecking at a mirror and calling for its mate than a pair dying with its young in hunger and cold. It is intolerable that lovers should meet in wealth and part in poverty, but such is the end our ill-fated love. Since there is no other remedy, let us kiss and part, each taking two of the children.”

Chosin consented, though he grieved deeply at the thought of parting from his loving wife and two of his children. “Farewell, husband,” said his wife. “I am going to my old home in the north;

you go south.” At this bitter parting, Chosin gave a great cry, and awoke.

While Kim appears in Chosin’s dream as his wife, her actual purpose in this dream is to guide Chosin towards his proper path in order to reach enlightenment. Kim’s words in Chosin’s dream can be interpreted as those Kwanūm wishes to tell all those who have become Buddhists but have been unable to discard their earthly desires. Chosin, although he had become a monk, was still unable to do away with his earthly desires. However, after having experienced all of the earthly pleasures in this dream, Chosin begins to experience all of the difficulties associated with living in this world and anguishes over the true meaning of life. At this point, Kim helps Chosin realize the path he must follow in order to find the truth. While there is no mention in this tale that Kim is actually Kwanūm, Chosin’s dream is included in <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk> because Kim’s behavior is reminiscent of Kwanum’s.

In <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk>, <Kwangdök and Ōmjang, Two Friendly Monks>, and <Nohil Pudük and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains>, Kwanūm manifests herself as a woman in order to facilitate seekers’ spiritual awakening. The reason Kwanūm extends her assistance to these individuals may be due to the importance and difficulty of overcoming earthly desires and finding the essence of being on one’s path to Buddhahood. While Kwanūm in many instances appears as a beautiful woman, there are examples where this is not the case. In <Kyōnghūng Meets a Holy Man> Kwanūm appears as a female monk who cures Kyonghung. Meanwhile, in the <Five Saints of Wōljōng Temple on Mt. Odae> she is an old woman.

During the reign of King Sinmun in Silla (681-692) a monk lived in Ungch’ōnju whose religious name was Kyōnghūng and whose family name was Su. By the time he was eighteen, he had mastered all three parts of the teachings of Buddha-sermons, laws,

and doctrines- and the world rang with his praise.

In the first year of Kai-yao (681) when King Munmu was on his deathbed, he said to his successor (King Sinmun), “Kyōnghŭng Pōpsa is worthy of the office of Kuksa (National Teacher); do not forget my command.” When King Sinmun ascended the throne he therefore appointed Kyōnghŭng to this office, with his residence at Samnang Temple.

But Kyōnghŭng fell ill and was confined to his bed for many months. Then one day a nun came to visit him, and said, “In the Hwaōm scripture there is a golden saying: ‘A good friend heals illness.’ Now you are ailing because of the melancholy and anxiety in your heart. If you laugh and forget everything you will be restored to health.”

And she brought out an eleven-faced puppet and made it perform humorous dances before Kyōnghŭng, with comic gestures and sarcastic gestures, scene after scene in rapid succession, until the monk nearly spilt his sides with laughter, and his health was immediately resorted.

The nun then bid him goodbye and went to Namhang Temple to the south of Kyōnghŭng’s temple. There she hid herself, leaving her staff in front of the picture of the eleven-faced Dharmas in the Golden Hall.

What is the meaning of Kwanŭm’s appearance in < Kyōnghŭng Meets a Holy Man > as a female monk who cures Kyōnghŭng? Simply put, Kwanŭm here shows the importance of possessing a free mind. Kyonghung’s appointment to the office of *Kuksa* caused him great stress. Kwanŭm’s appearance in this tale can be understood as a challenge and criticism on the notions of rank and power. Kwanum’s behavior in this tale is then to awaken Kyonghung from the trap of rank and power he had fallen into, a trap that represents another obstacle to the attainment of Buddhahood. In the <Five Saints of Wōljōng Temple on Mt. Odae> Sinhyo-Kōsa is forced to kill animals in order to take care of his mother

A hermit named Sinhyo-Kōsa lived in Kyōngju, where he dutifully cared for his old mother. Since his mother had to have meat with her meals or she would not eat, Sinhyo often went out hunting in the mountains and fields. One day he saw five cranes alighting on a rice paddy near a mountain path. He shot an arrow at them, but the startled birds flew quickly away, leaving a single feather behind. Sinhyo picked up the feather and covered his eyes with it, whereupon all the people he saw seemed to be birds and beasts. Without saying a word he cut a pound of flesh from his thigh and gave it to his mother to eat. He soon became a monk and made his house a temple.

When Sinhyo-Kōsa came to Hasol from Hyōngju and looked at people through the feather, they all seemed to be dolls. He saw an old woman and asked her where he could find a good place to settle down. She pointed to Sōrōng and said, “If you cross the mountain pass, you will come to a village facing north. There you will find a cozy cottage to live in.” And with these words she vanished like a mist. Sinhyo-Kōsa thought she must have been an incarnation of Kwanūm who had come to guide him.

With a light heart he went on his way and came to the thatched cottage, which he made his home. Wōljōng-sa was first built with a thatched roof by Chajang and then inhabited by Sinhyo-Kōsa.

Sinhyo Kosa’s sudden perception of every person as either a bird or a beast when he looked through the feather of the crane may have been caused by the fact that Sinhyo’s actions were those of a human. As a result, Sinhyo stopped hunting animals altogether and served his mother with his own flesh. And when he became a monk, Sinhyo turned his house into a temple. These positive actions could wash away his previous sins. Sinhyo eventually went out on a voyage of enlightenment searching for the place where he could once again see people in their true form rather than as animals. Sinhyo’s voyage can be perceived as the travels of a martyr who desires to atone for his previous sins and to become a true

human. During his voyage Sinhyo meets an old woman who is waiting for him in the place Sinhyo seeks, where he can see humans in their true form. Kwanūm tells Sinhyo where he should go to meditate, thus encouraging him to achieve Buddhahood.

Not everyone can become a monk, as to do so means to cut off one's previous existence altogether. When Sinhyo decided to become a monk, he must have undergone tremendous internal turmoil. Nevertheless, he never abandoned his quest for enlightenment. In this regard, Kwanum's appearance as an old woman can be viewed as her attempt to help Sinhyo see what he needed to achieve.

Why did Kwanūm choose to manifest herself as an old woman in this tale? In general, an old woman is usually regarded as possessing great wisdom. For example, in <Yōnhoe and the Munsujōm> an old woman helps Yōnhoe make the right decision. In the section about King Yuri found in *Samguk Sagi* an old woman appears as an advisor to the king of Puyō and again in <*Sojimaripkan*> an old woman corrects the king's improper behavior. As such, Kwanum's appearance as an old woman is her attempt to guide Sinhyo to Buddhahood.

Conclusion

The Kwanūm Bodhisattva is said to carry out two main roles: to help humans overcome their earthly woes and to guide seekers of truth on to the proper path to Buddhahood.¹⁴ In this regard, Kwanūm becomes the object of people's prayers regarding their earthly existence while also playing the role of guide to the path to paradise.

The roles Kwanūm plays in the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa* rarely go beyond the tales mentioned earlier. Kwanūm is described in *Samguk Yusa* as a Goddess who lifts people's suffering and as a guide to those seeking to attain enlightenment. In <Munho-wang, Pōpmin (King Munmu)>, <The Goddess of Mercy and the Blind Child at Punhwang Temple>, <Chajang Establishes the Buddhist Laws>, <The Three Portraits

of Kwanūm at Chungsaeng Temple>, <Paengnyul Temple> and <Minjang Temple> Kwanūm displays her power through Kwanūm Hall or the portrait of the Goddess of Mercy, or manifests herself as a monk sent to eliminate people's woes. Meanwhile in <Ukmyōn the Slave-Girl Who Entered the Lotus Paradise>, <The Fifty Thousand Images of Buddha on Mt. Odae>, <The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk>, <Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak, the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains>, <Kwangdōk and Ōmjang, Two Friendly Monks>, <The Five Saints of Wōljōng Temple on Mt. Odae>, and <Kyōnghūng Meets a Holy Man> Kwanūm appears as a living Buddha or a woman who guides individuals who seek truth to Buddhahood.

However, Kwanūm found in *Samguk Yusa* does not lecture people about the right path in accordance with Buddhist scriptures, nor is she consistent in her apparitions. Rather, she manifests herself in accordance with each individual's situation and displays her mercy and virtue.

Notes :

- 1 *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms (Bulkyō Yongō Sajōn)*, Kyungin Publishing Company, 1998.
- 2 In Kwan-han, *Analysis of Ancient Tales from a Buddhist Perspective*, Masters Thesis Korea University (*Kodae Sōlhwaūi Bulkyojōk Koch'al*), 1962; So Jae-young, *The Tales Found in Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Sōlhwaūi Yōngu)*, Masters Thesis, Korea University, 1963; Hwang Pae-kang, *Korean Buddhist Tales (Hanguk Bulkyo Sōlhwa Yōngu)*, Iljisa, 1975; Kim Young-tae, *Buddhist Ideology during the Silla Dynasty as Viewed through Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Chōnsūng Silla Bulkyo Sasang Yōngu)*, Sinheung Publishers, 1979.
- 3 Kim Hak-song, "The formation and transformation of the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Sojae Sōlhwaūi Hyōngsōng mit Pyōni Kwajōng)*", *Kwanak Omun Nonjip*, Vol. 2, 1977; Cho Dong-il, "The relationship between the tales found in *Samguk Yusa* and oral tales (*Samguk Yusa Sōlhwa Kujōnsōlhwa Kwanryōn Yangsang)*" *A Comprehensive Analysis of Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusaūi Chonghapjōk Kōmt'o)*, Association of Korean Studies, 1987;

- In Kwan-han, “The formation and development of Korean Buddhist tales (*Hanguk Bulkyo Sölhwaüi Hyöngsöng Kwajöng*)”, *Kumkang*, 1985; Cho Hui-woong, “The formation of the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa* (*Samguk Yusa Bulkyo Sölhwaüi Hyöngsöng Kwajöng*)”, *Issues Related to Korean Literary History (Hanguk Munhaksauüi Chaengjöm)*, Jipmundang, 1986.
- 4 Kim Yul-kyu, *Samguk Yusa and Korean Literature (Samguk Yusawa Hanguk Munhak)*, Hakmunsa, 1983; Song Hyo-seob, *The Tales found in Samguk Yusa and Semiotics (Samguk Yusa Sölhwawa Kihohak)*, Ilchokak, 1990.
 - 5 Lee Dong-hwa, “Analysis of the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa* (*Samguk Yusa Sojae Bulkyo Sölhwaë Taehan Ilkoch'al*)”, *Compilation of Essays related to Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Nonmunsön)*, Paeksan Archives, 1986; Ko Woon-ki, “Study of Ilyon’s perception of the world and his poems (*Ilyönüi Sekyeinsikgwa Simunhak Yöngu*)” PhD Dissertation, Yonsei University, 1993.
 - 6 Kim Young-tae, “Kwanüm ideology during the Silla dynasty (*Sillaüi Kwanüm Sasang*)”, *Bulkyo Hakbo*, Vol. 13 Institute of Buddhist Culture, Dongguk University, 1976.
 - 7 In Kwan-han, “Implications of various types of Kwanüm tales written during the Silla dynasty (*Silla Kwanüm Sölhwaüi Yangsnaggwa Üimi*)”, *Silla Culture*, Vol. 6, Institute of Silla Culture, Dongguk University, 1989; Cho Myong-suk, “Literary analysis of the Kwanüm tales found in *Samguk Yusa* (*Samguk Yusae Nat’anan Kwanüm Sölhwaüi Munhakjöök Yöngu*) ”, Masters Thesis, Chungnam National University of Education, 1994.
 - 8 Kim Heon-sun, “Feminism in Kwanüm tales and its characteristics during the Middle Ages (*Pulkyo Kwanüm Sölhwaüi Yösöngsönggwa Chungsejöök Söngkyök Yöngu*) ”, *Women and Oral Literature (Kubimunhakgwa Yösöng)*, PJ Book, 2000; Kihl Tae-suk, “Kwanüm’s female manifestations (*Yösöngüi Mosüprüo Nat’anan Kwanüm*)”, *Women and Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusawa Yösöng)*, Iho Publishing, 2003.
 - 9 Hong Ki-sam, “The Goddess of Mercy and the blind child at Punhwang Temple”, *Compilation of Essays on Korean Literature (Kukö Kukmunhak Nonmunjip)*, Vol. 17, Department of Korean Literature, Dongguk University, 1996; Shin Yon-woo, “Analysis of ‘The Two Buddhas of Naksan and Chosin, the Lovesick Monk’”, *Korean Folk Literature (Hanguk Minsokhak)*, Vol. 33, The Korean Folklore Society, June 2001; Park Kyung-ryeol, “The poem given to the two saints of the White Moon Mountains by a holy lady” *Korean*

- Literature (Kyöreö Munhak)*, Vol.27, Korean Literature Association (*Kyöreö Munhakhoe*), October 2001; Choi Kwi-mook, “Ilyon’s literary criticism as reflected in the Two Saints of the White Moon Mountains (*Samguk Yusa <Nambaekwölisöng>e Nat’anan Ilyönüi Munhakbipyöng*)”, *Korean Poetry (Hanguk Siga Yöngu)*, Korean Classical Poetry Association, August 2002.
- 10 Roh Seong-hwan, “The Kwanüm tales found in the Nihon Ryoiki (*Ilbon Yöngikiüi Kwanüm Sölhwago*)”, *Compilation of Studies Conducted at Ulsan University (Ulsandae Yöngu Nonmunjip)*, Vol. 13, Issue. 2, 1982; Kim Sa-yeop, “Analysis of Korean and Japanese Kwanüm tales (*Han•Il Kwanüm Sölhwago*)”, *Japanese Studies*, The Center of Research in Japanology, Dongguk University, 1992; Choi Jung-seon, *The Poetic Transformation of Kwanüm Tales Found in Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Kwanüm Sölhwawa Kü Sijökyönyonge Kwanhan Yöngu)*, PhD Dissertation, Yonsei University, 1998
- 11 Cho Dong-il, *Korean Tales and Minjung Awareness (Hanguk Sölhwawa Minjungüisik)*, Chungumsa, 1985, p.54.
- 12 Yun Joong-bae, “Minjung awareness as reflected in the Buddhist tales found in *Samguk Yusa (Samguk Yusa Kosüngsölhwaee Nat’anan Minjungüisik)*”, *Classical East Asian Literary Studies (Tongyang Kojön Yöngu)*, Vol.4, Association of Classical East Asian Literature (*Tongyang Kojön Munhakhoe*), 1995.
- 13 Kwon Oh-young, “The significance of birds and related rituals in Ancient Korea (*Hakguk Kodaeeüi Sae Kwannyömkwa Cheüi*)”, *History and Reality (Yöksawa Hyönsil)*, Vol. 32, The Association for Korean Historical Studies (*Hanguk Yöksa Yönguhoe*), 1999.
- 14 Kim Young-tae, *Buddhism during the Silla Dynasty (Silla Bulkyo Yöngu)*, Minjok Munhwa, 1987, p.233.