

PRESERVING THE LORE OF KOREAN ANTIQUITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE AND LOCAL SOURCES IN IRYŎN'S *SAMGUK YUSA*

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The *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, ca. 1282–1289) is not a Buddhist or nationalistic response to the *Samguk sagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms, 1136–1145). Iryŏn and his disciple Hon'gu compiled the *Samguk yusa* to present anecdotes from Korea's rich native and local lore and to demonstrate that the tales of Korea's founders were just as good as those of China. A more fruitful way to conceptualize the relationship between the *Samguk sagi* and *Samguk yusa* is to think of the former as more representative of official, Confucian, or central discourse and the latter as preserving the lore of Korea's antiquity. Although unavoidably influenced by Buddhist perceptions of the cosmos, the value of the *Samguk yusa* comes from its inclusion of many types of unofficial materials, including samples of local records, inscriptions, monastery records, strange tales, and songs in the vernacular. These local materials, filtered through the lens of Buddhist monks of the Koryŏ period, conserve something of the voice of ancient and medieval Koreans.

Keywords: *Samguk yusa*—sources, Iryŏn (1206–1289), Hon'gu (Mugŭk, 1250–1322), *Samguk sagi*, *Silla sui chŏn*

Iryŏn's 一然 (1206–1289) *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) has been characterized traditionally as a nationalistic or Buddhist response to Kim Pusik's 金富軾 (1075–1151) putatively China-centered Confucian *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms, 1145). This characterization, however, is a brash oversimplification because many scholars now appropriately question the Sinocentrism of the *Samguk sagi*. Although I do not believe that the *Samguk yusa* was written to rectify a perceived nationalistic shortcoming in the *Samguk sagi*, I will contrast the two documents somewhat in this paper because there is still some benefit in comparing their styles and content.

The *Samguk yusa* is significant not merely because it provides information about what Buddhists may have been doing during the Three Kingdoms period but, more importantly, because it preserves an impressive corpus of the legends, lore, and popular narratives of the Silla kingdom 新羅 (traditional dates, 57 B.C.E.–935 C.E.). About eighty percent of the text is material pertaining to the experiences of people of and sacred sites in Silla, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Although the general categories of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism have served scholars for many years to describe East Asian high culture, I think a more fruitful way to conceptualize the relationship between the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* is to think of the former as representative of an official, state-oriented (perhaps Koryŏ-centric) Confucian discourse, but the latter as promoting local discourse rather than Buddhist or nationalistic discourse. In this paper, I first briefly explore Iryŏn's connections to the provinces and explain my reasoning for depicting the *Samguk yusa* as local discourse. This will provide the historical context to explain why Iryŏn accentuates local narratives in the composition of the work. Finally, I will introduce examples of the different types of local materials privileged by Iryŏn as the sources of the anecdotes and narratives he includes and how he preserves local discourse in his use of non-official materials.

A QUESTION OF GENRE

When intellectuals wrote in premodern East Asia, what they wrote was in many ways determined by their choice of genre or the literary model they sought to emulate. Kim Pusik plainly stated—and scholars have clearly demonstrated—that traditional historiography based on Confucian moral principles provided the intellectual basis for the compilation of the *Samguk sagi*.¹ Nevertheless, based on

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¹ On the “Confucian” nature of the *Samguk sagi* see, for instance, Kim Pusik's memorial on presenting the *Samguk sagi* to the king translated in Peter H. Lee and Wm. Theodore de Bary, eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 1:257. See also Kim Chol-choon 金哲堧 (Kim Ch'ŏlchun), “Koryŏ chunggi ūi munhwa ūisik kwa sahak ūi sŏngkyŏk: Samguk sagi ūi sŏngkyŏk e taehan chaeinsik 高麗中期的文化意識과 史學의 性格—三國史記의 性格에 대한 再認識 (Cultural consciousness and characteristics of historical studies in the mid-Koryŏ period: A reconsideration of the characteristics of the *Samguk sagi*), *Han'guk sa yŏn'gu* 韓國史研究 9 (March 1973); reprinted in *Han'guk kodae sabŏe yŏn'gu* 韓國古代社會研究, by Kim Chol-choon (Seoul: Chisik Sanŏpsa, 1975), 387–427; see also Lee Ki-baik 李基白 (Yi Kibaek), “Samguk sagi ron” 三國史記論 (On the *Samguk sagi*), *Munhak kwa chisŏng* 文學과 知性 (Literature and Knowledge), Winter 1976; Shin Hyeong-sik 申滄植 (Sin Hyŏngsik), *Samguk sagi yŏn'gu* 三國史記研究 (Research on the

the considerable amount of material, art, epigraphy, and architectural remains that have survived until the present day, it is logical to conclude that Buddhism was a powerful and influential state religion during both the Silla and succeeding Koryŏ 高麗 periods (918–1392). When scholars look at the official histories, such as the *Samguk sagi*, however, Buddhist monks and Buddhist rituals are referred to sparingly. Scholars find at best a smattering of references to rulers' visits to monasteries, random, enigmatic accounts of state-sponsored rituals, and brief allusions to the activities of influential monks.² Hitherto, the conclusion scholars have most often drawn is that the absence of information about Buddhism portrays “Confucian” prejudice on the part of the authors and compilers against Buddhism. Then, when a Buddhist monk compiles and edits a work that covers much of the same period, as in the case of Iryŏn's *Samguk yusa*, and includes some myths and legends not included in the *Samguk sagi* and much more information about what Buddhists may have been doing, this work is heralded as “nationalistic” or “Buddhist” by contrast.³

Samguk sagi) (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1981); Kim Tai-jin, *A Bibliographical Guide to Traditional Korean Sources* (Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korea University, 1976), 11–17; and Lee Hai-soon, “Kim Pu-sik's View of Women and Confucianism: An Analytic Study of the Lives of Women in the *Samguksagi*,” *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 10 (1997): 45–64. In English, see Kenneth H. J. Gardiner, “The *Samguk sagi* and its sources,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 2 (1970): 1–42.

² Yi Chaech'ang 李載昌, “Samguk sagi Pulgyo ch'ojae puju” 三國史記佛教鈔在附註 (Selections on Buddhism from the *Samguk sagi* with appended notes), *Pulgyo hakpo* 佛教學報 2 (1964): 305–322. See also, Kim Hyot'an 金曉吞, *Koryŏsa Pulgyo kwan'gye saryojip* 高麗史佛教關係史料集 (Collection of historical materials related to Buddhism in the *Koryŏsa*), 2 vols. (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2001).

³ For discussion of the *Samguk yusa*'s being conceptualized as the Buddhist or nationalistic response to the *Samguk sagi* see, for instance, Kim Sang-hyun 金相鉉 (Kim Sanghyŏn), “Samguk yusa e nat'an'an Iryŏn ū Pulgyo sagwan” 三國遺事に 나타난 一然의 佛敎史觀 (Iryŏn's Buddhist historical view as manifest in the *Samguk yusa*), *Han'guksa yŏn'gu* 韓國史研究 20 (1978): 239–280, esp. pp. 244–245. See also Yi Namyŏng 李楠永, “Samguk yusa wa sŭng Iryŏn kwa'ui kwan'gye koch'al” 三國遺事와 僧一然과의 關係 考察 (A study of the relationship between the monk Iryŏn and the *Samguk yusa*), *Chŏrhak yŏn'gu* 哲學研究 2 (1973): 14–27; Kim T'aeyŏng 金泰永, “Samguk yusa e poinŭn Iryŏn ū yŏksa insik e taehayŏ” 三國遺事に 보이는 歷史認識에 대하여 (On Iryŏn's historical consciousness as seen in the *Samguk yusa*), *Kyŏnghŭi sabak* 5 (1974): 175–195; Kim Taesik 金泰植, “Samguk yusa e nat'an'an Iryŏn ū Koryŏ sidae insik” 三國遺事に 나타난 一然의 高麗時代認識 (Iryŏn's recognition of the Koryŏ period as it appears in the *Samguk yusa*), *Ulsan sabak* 蔚山史學 1 (1987): 21–43; Pak Sŭnggil 朴承吉, “Samguk yusa e nat'an'anŭn k'arisŭma ū ihae wa Iryŏn ū yŏksa ūsik” 三國遺事に 나타나는 카리스마의 理解와 一然의 歷史意識 (Understanding charisma appearing in the *Samguk yusa* and Iryŏn's historical consciousness), *Han'guk chŏnt'ong munhwa yŏn'gu* 1 (1985): 27–53; Mun Myŏngdae 文明大, “Samguk yusa t'apsangp'yŏn kwa Iryŏn ū Pulgyo misul sagwan” 三國遺事 塔像篇과 一然의 佛敎美術史觀 (The pagodas and images section of the *Samguk yusa* and Iryŏn's historical view of Buddhist art), *Misul sabak* 美術史學 2 (1990): 11–24; and Kim Tujin 金杜珍, “Samguk yusa ū ch'eje wa naeyong” 三國遺事の 體制와 내용 (The Structure and Contents of the *Samguk yusa*), *Han'gukhak nonch'ong* 韓國學論叢 23 (2000): 1–26.

Although functional, this is an overly simplistic interpretation. Despite much Confucian moralizing about such things as the issue of female sovereigns, there is no clear evidence that Buddhism is disparaged in the *Samguk sagi* or that the shortcomings of the Confucian point of view are somehow redressed in the *Samguk yusa*. The *Samguk sagi* does not really ignore Buddhism; it is just that Buddhist themes are not central to an “official history” (*chōngsa*, Ch. *zhèngshǐ* 正史): a genre that follows a prescribed formula. By selecting the title “*Samguk sagi*,” Kim Pusik draws attention to his adoption of the thematic organizational principles of Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (d. ca. 85 B.C.E.) *Shiji* 史記 (Historical Records) and Ban Gu’s 班固 (d. 92 C.E.) *Han shu* 漢書 (History of the Han), which had become more or less codified during the early Tang 唐 period (618–907).⁴ An official history is an expression of dynastic prerogative. It is a supreme manifestation of the ruling dynasty’s right to dictate what “real history” is and, as the Sino-Korean characters imply, it also means “orthodox history.” Hence, having been composed by a leading aristocrat at the behest of the Koryŏ king Injong 仁宗 (r. 1122–1146) between 1136 and 1145, Kim Pusik’s *Samguk sagi* represents the official or central discourse of the Koryŏ court and ruling aristocracy.⁵ Nevertheless, as Michael Rogers has shown, the *Samguk sagi* demonstrates a type of “national consciousness” within the framework of its genre. For instance, Kim Pusik’s use of the term “basic annals” (*pon’gi*, Ch. *benji* 本紀) to refer to the annals of Silla, Koguryŏ 高句麗 (trad. dates 37 B.C.E.–668 C.E.), and Paekche 百濟 (trad. dates 18 B.C.E.–660 C.E.) clearly illustrates that he conceived of the three Korean kingdoms as being on equal grounds with Chinese dynasties because the term putatively applied only to the annals of legitimate rulers of the Middle Kingdom. The term was not used by the compilers of the *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (History of Koryŏ) or *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 (Veritable records of the Chosŏn kings) in the Chosŏn 朝鮮 period (1392–1910). They used the more deferential term “hereditary houses” (*sega*, Ch. *shijia* 世家).⁶

⁴ For discussions of the standardization of historical genres see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, Revised and Enlarged, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monographs Series 52 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000), 501–507; see also Charles S. Gardiner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938; rpt. 1970), 86–105; Yang, Lien-sheng, “The Organization of Chinese Official Historiography: Principles and Methods of the Standard Histories from the T’ang Dynasty through the Ming Dynasty,” in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W.G. Beasley and E.G. Pulleyblank (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 44–59; and Kenneth H.J. Gardiner, “Standard Histories, Han to Sui,” in *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History*, ed. Donald D. Leslie, Colin Mackerras, and Wang Gungwu (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 42–52.

⁵ See Edward J. Shultz, “An Introduction to the *Samguk sagi*,” *Korean Studies* 28 (2004): 1–13.

⁶ Michael C. Rogers, “National Consciousness in Medieval Korea,” in *Papers of the 5th International*

By its very title, on the other hand, the *Samguk yusa* belongs to the Sinitic *yishi* 遺事 literary genre.⁷ *Yishi* was not a Buddhist genre because, aside from Iryōn, there is evidence of only one other monk who wrote a book in this genre in either China or Korea.⁸ Although the titles of at least twenty-five *yishi* are known in China from the mid-Tang through the Ming period (eighth–seventeenth centuries), only eight titles are extant. Some *yishi* were biographical in content, while others were in the form of diaries recounting momentous times or unofficial histories of reign periods. *Yishi* of this type make available important historical information that may have served as a source for official dynastic histories compiled by the conquerors, but they also preserve information not contained therein. In this respect they are important sources for historians because they provide nuance to the official records, typically in the form of supplementary details. There is no evidence that any of them were written to directly contradict or to provide an alternate view of an official history. It is conceivable that an *yishi* named after a reign period may have been compiled as an unofficial history of that period, but never as a response to an official history. Although lots of informal historical notes by administrators and scholars, as well as stele inscriptions, would have been available, the only official materials that would have existed at the time these *yishi* were made would at best be “veritable records” (*sillok*, Ch. *shilu* 實錄), the basic materials from which an official history is made by the succeeding dynasty. During the Tang dynasty and succeeding periods, however, “veritable records” were tantamount to state secrets; they were not widely known or easily accessible because they were not published for distribution.⁹ It is conceivable, nevertheless, that high-ranking court officials

Conference on Korean Studies: Korean Studies, Its Tasks & Perspectives (in Korean), 2 vols. (Sōngnam City, Kyōnggi Province, Korea: Han’guk Chōngsin Munhwa Yōn’guwōn [Academy of Korean Studies], 1988), 1:152–153.

⁷ In the discussion that follows I have summarized information from McBride, “A Koreanist’s Musings on the Chinese *Yishi* Genre,” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 2006): 31–59.

⁸ The other *yishi* is the now-lost *Jiaoyuan yishi* 教苑遺事 (Memorabilia from the garden of the teachings, also called *Caoan jiaoyuan yishi* 草菴教苑遺事 and *Caoan yishi* 草菴遺事), which was composed by the Tiantai monk and Dharma Master Daoyin 道因 (1090–1167), whose self-styled pen name was Caoan 草菴. He hailed from Siming 四明 in Zhejiang province. Although lost, the text is attested in Tiantai literature of the Song period; see *Tiantai sijiaoyi yuangqi* 天台四教儀緣起 (Origins of the four-fold teaching of Tiantai), T 1931, 46.774a27; *Siming zongzhe jiaoxinglu* 四明尊者教行錄 (Record of the teachings and practices of the four famous Tiantai founders) 6, T 1937, 46.907c12, 916c16; roll 7, 931b6; *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (Chronicle of the buddhas and patriarchs) 1, 2035, 49.131c28–29; *Shishi jigū lue* 釋氏稽古略 (Explorations of the acts of the Monks) 4, T 2037, 49.872c18.

⁹ See Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official Histories Under the T’ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 119–187.

could write about events from memory if they so chose.

The style and composition of works in the *yishi* genre suggests that they are constructed in a manner much freer than official histories. *Yishi* may be written by or about people who are part of the central government, but these unofficial records are not official discourse and were probably never meant to challenge official discourse. Some authors may have hoped their writing in this genre would be used to provide a nuanced account of the life of the individual or circumstances covered by their work or perhaps to “cover one’s back” on political matters. *Yishi* may also include local discourse, and most examples in this type were apparently composed to entertain, instruct, and edify. The *Samguk yusa* shares some characteristics with this last type of *yishi*, of which there are two extant examples: (1) the *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi* 開元天寶遺事, compiled by Wang Renyu 王仁裕 (880–956); and (2) the *Qiantang yishi* 錢塘遺事, compiled during the early Yuan 元 period (ca. 1300) by Liu Yiqing 劉一清 (d.u.).¹⁰ Both were compiled to preserve narratives, anecdotes, and poetry from a past period: the famous reign of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (712–756) in the first, and the culture of Hangzhou 杭州, the Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279) capital, in the second. The *Qiantang yishi* is particularly important because, like the *Samguk yusa*, it was written after the Mongol conquest when some Chinese writers, like their Korean counterparts, may have been worried about preserving the memory of earlier times. This is a key issue with respect to my use of the concept of “local discourse.” Here I am using the term differently than how it is used in scholarship on Song-dynasty China, which recognizes the rise of “local consciousness” vis-à-vis the viewpoint of the central bureaucracy.

In premodern China this sense of pride in local history and narratives provided the impetus for an explosion of regional gazetteers in the Song 宋 (960–1279) and succeeding periods.¹¹ Although the evidence is sparse that such an

¹⁰ Liu, a native of Lin’an 臨安 (in Hangzhou), was associated with the Southern Song defense administration. He has much to say about the military defeats of the late Southern Song and resultant political intrigues. Since he was a native of Hangzhou, he probably recorded local lore among the elite who knew details about events. See Wu Feng 吳楓 ed., *Jianming Zhongguo guji cidian* 簡明中國古籍辭典 (Concise Dictionary of Old Chinese Books) (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1987), 208–209.

¹¹ See, for instance, Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou, Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Richard L. Davis, *Court and Family in Sung China, 960–1279: Bureaucratic Success and Kinship Fortunes for the Shib of Ming-chou* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); Patricia Ebrey, “The Dynamics of Elite Domination in Sung China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (December 1988): 493–519; Steven B. Miles, “Rewriting the Southern Han (917–971): The Production of Local Culture in Nineteenth-Century Guangzhou,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*

intellectual transformation occurred simultaneously in Korea during the Koryŏ period, it is possible if not probable that local elites were influenced by these Chinese developments—and, as we shall see, local records were an indispensable source for Iryŏn. Local autonomy had always been important in Silla and local rule continued in many outlying areas well into the Koryŏ period.¹² What I want to borrow from the Chinese context is the idea that “local discourse” is not an official statement. It is a more personalized or nuanced account of events, places, and occurrences from the perspective of an individual or a small group of individuals. Local discourse is also typically based on regional materials and oral traditions.

I also prefer the term “local discourse” because I am skeptical of using the word “nationalism” to refer to premodern Korea. The term has too much modern baggage, especially in post-colonial Korea. Koreans of the Koryŏ period certainly had developed a “national consciousness,” but ever since the seventh century social, religious, and political elites saw themselves as belonging to and participating in a cosmopolitan Sinitic culture and world order that transcended state boundaries, despite some local differences.¹³ Iryŏn uses a variety of words and terms to refer to what we might now call “Korea” or “Koreanness.” But can we be certain that is what he meant? Although I will certainly use the words “Korea” and “Korean” in this article, I feel safe to conclude that what I think Iryŏn meant is emphasis on local particularity within the context of Sinitic universality. Hence, I eschew concluding that the *Samguk yusa* is “nationalistic.”

The *Samguk yusa*, nevertheless, is distinct from the foregoing Chinese *yishi* in several ways: Although the former works have no real structure or order to their contents save a loose chronology, the *Samguk yusa*'s contents are organized in categories under titles reminiscent of classifications used in the Buddhist *Lives of Eminent Monks* (*gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳) collections and official dynastic histories; it is the only extant *yishi* that was compiled by a Buddhist monk; and it covers a period of history longer than any other *yishi*. The *Samguk yusa* is a small yet significant example of how Koreans can follow Sinitic literary culture, but do it in their own way and for their own purposes. In effect, the *Samguk yusa* is a work that is unique in many ways.

62, no. 1 (June 2002): 39–75.

¹² John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 27–28, 35–43.

¹³ See John B. Duncan, “Proto-nationalism in Premodern Korea,” in *Perspectives on Korea*, ed. Sang-Oak Lee and Duk-Soo Park (Sydney, Australia: Wild Peony, 1998), 198–221.

IRYŎN, HON'GU, AND LOCAL SOURCES

Iryŏn and his disciple Hon'gu 混丘 (also called Mugŭk 無極, 1250–1322) are the only two names appearing in the *Samguk yusa* as persons responsible for some level of its authorship, compilation, and editing.¹⁴ Both monks were well versed in the dominant literary discourse of their day because their funerary stele inscriptions report that both were chosen as the *optimus* (*sangsangkwŏ* 上上科) of the selective Sŏn Buddhist examinations (*sŏnbulkwŏ* 選佛科) held by the Koryŏ state in the capital, which attests to their literary talent.¹⁵ Both men were honored by the Koryŏ government and achieved the rank “Great Sŏn Master” (*taesŏn* 大禪師) during their lifetimes, which qualified them to serve as a royal preceptor (*wangsa* 王師). Although both of these men's names appear in the *Samguk yusa*, neither of their stele inscriptions mentions this title in the lists of these men's major literary works.¹⁶ Instead, these official monuments, which were composed by literati, record book titles in genres that accord with the dominant literary discourse of Chan/Sŏn Buddhism during the Song period: “recorded sayings” (*ŏrok*, Ch. *yulu* 語錄); “diagrams (or pictures/images/ portraits) of the patriarchs”

¹⁴ Iryŏn's authorship of the *Samguk yusa* is based on a single line of text right under the heading of the fifth roll: “Compiled by the Honored One of State (*kukchŏn* 國尊), Great Sŏn Master Iryŏn, Wŏn'gyŏng Ch'ungjo, Abbot of In'gak Monastery, of the Kajisan [Branch] of the Chogyŏ School” (國尊曹溪宗加智山下麟角寺住持圓境冲照大禪師 一然 撰). During the Mongol period, the title state preceptor (*kuksa* 國師) was changed to honored one of state (*kukchŏn*). In'gak Monastery is on Mt. Hwa 華山 in Kunwi county, North Kyŏngsang Province. It was affiliated with Kajisan, one of the Nine Mountains of the early Sŏn tradition in Korea dating from the late Silla and early Koryŏ periods. See *Samguk yusa kyŏgam yŏn'gu* 三國遺事校勘研究, ed. Ha Chŏngnyong 河廷龍 and Yi Kŭnjik 李根直 (Seoul: Sinsŏwŏn, 1997; hereafter SYKY), 5:377. Furthermore, evidence for Iryŏn's disciple Hon'gu's emending some earlier version of the *Samguk yusa* is based on two references. He contributed an annotated essay on the history of the transmission of Buddhaśāfira in Korea and appended an edited and amended version of a stele inscription dated to 1199 dealing with the life of the eminent monk Chinp'yo 眞表 (fl. eighth century) of Silla. Both of Hon'gu's contributions are marked by the phrase “recorded by Mugŭk” (*Mugŭk ki* 無極記), at the very end of the passage in question. See SYKY 3:266 (*Ch'ŏnbu sojang sari*); 4:367 (*Kwandong P'ungak Paryŏnsu sŏkkei*).

¹⁵ For an excellent study of the Buddhist examination system during the Koryŏ period, see Heo Heungsik 許興植 (Hŏ Hŭngsik), *Koryŏ kwagŏ chedosa yŏn'gu* 高麗科舉制度史研究 (Research on the Institutional History of the Koryŏ Civil Service Examination) (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1981), 167–199.

¹⁶ Ha Chŏngnyong's opinion is that because Iryŏn's name is mentioned only in the fifth roll of the *Samguk yusa*, it must have been the only section authored by Iryŏn. To him, this would explain why the *Samguk yusa* is not mentioned in either Iryŏn or Hon'gu's funerary stele inscriptions. See Ha Chŏngnyong 河廷龍, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an: Samguk yusa ūi p'yŏnch'an kwa kamhaeng e taehan yŏn'gu* 三國遺事史料批判: 三國遺事の 編纂과 刊行에 대한 研究 (Criticism of the *Samguk yusa* as a historical source: Research on the compilation and printing of the *Samguk yusa*) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2005), 16.

(*chodo*, Ch. *zutu* 祖圖); “gāthās” (*ke*, Ch. *jie* 偈) or Buddhist hymns, “songs” (*ka*, Ch. *ge* 歌), and “odes” (*song*, Ch. *song* 頌).¹⁷ These works demonstrate how Iryōn and Hon’gu participated in the “literary Chan” (*munja Sōn*, Ch. *wenzī Chan* 文字禪) fashion that characterized the Buddhist literature of the Song period.¹⁸ Because by these kinds of works they participated in the internationally-accepted cultural discourse of Sinitic Buddhism, these are the types of literature emphasized by the scholar-officials who drafted the official statements on these monks’ lives for their funerary steles.

Although these same documents emphasize the monks’ accomplishments in their official capacities, they provide hints of their connections to the provinces and to local discourse. For instance, Iryōn was born in Changsan District 張山郡 in Kyōngsang Province 慶尚道, purportedly in the same village as the famed Buddhist exegete Wōnhyo 元曉 (617–686) of Silla (now called Kyōngsan County 慶山郡). It is located southeast of Taegu 大邱 and west of Kyōngju 慶州 in North Kyōngsang Province 慶尚北道 in southeastern Korea. In 1214, at the tender age of eight,¹⁹ Iryōn went to live in Muryang Monastery 無量寺 in Haeyang 海陽, present-day Kwangju 光州 in southwestern Korea, and began to study writing. Following the example of Chinul 知訥 (1158–1210), from 1227 to 1237 he secluded himself in various mountain hermitages in southern Korea to cultivate his meditative skills. After being raised to the rank of Great Sōn Master, in 1261 the king called him to the capital to serve as an abbot of a monastery. In the winter of 1264, however, after making several requests to the king, he received royal approval to return to his hometown, where he eventually took the preeminent seat at Inhong Monastery 仁弘寺 in Sōnsan 善山. In 1277, the Koryō king Ch’ungnyōl 忠烈 (r. 1274–1308) commanded Iryōn to take up residence at Unmun Monastery 雲門寺 on Mt. Unmun 雲門山 in the Ch’ōngdo District 淸道郡 of North Kyōngsang Province, where Iryōn had personal contact with and

¹⁷ For Iryōn’s literary works see *Chōsen kinseki sōran* 朝鮮金石聽覽 (Comprehensive collection of Korean epigraphy), ed. Chōsen Sōtokufu 朝鮮聽督府 (Japanese Colonial Administration of Korea), 2 vols. (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1919), 1:472; cf. Tongguk Tachakkyo Pulgyo Munhwa Yōn’guwōn 東國大學校佛教文化研究院, ed., *Kankoku Bussbo kaidai jiten* 韓國仏書解題辭典 (Dictionary of Synopses of Korean Buddhist Books) (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1982), 121-122; for Hon’gu’s works see *Chōsen kinseki sōran* 1:603; Tongguk Tachakkyo Pulgyo Munhwa Yōn’guwōn, ed., *Kankoku Bussbo kaidai jiten*, 127.

¹⁸ George A. Keyworth, III, “Transmitting the Lamp of Learning in Classical Chan Buddhism: Juefan Huihong (1071–1128) and Literary Chan” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2001), 281–324.

¹⁹ For the sake of convenience I have translated the figures for ages as they stand in the Korean text, knowing that the traditional Korean and Chinese way of reckoning ages (*se*, Ch. *sui* 歲) describes a person as being one or two years older than he would be according to the modern western reckoning.

became a spiritual advisor to the Koryŏ king. This became especially pronounced in the summer of 1281 when the Mongols ordered the Korean navy to prepare for its second attempted invasion of the Japanese islands. Ch'ungnyŏl moved his court to Kyŏngju, the old Silla capital and eastern capital of Koryŏ, in order to oversee preparations and operations for what would be a disastrous invasion attempt. In 1282, Iryŏn was brought into the inner chambers of the palace as a special advisor to the king. Iryŏn requested (*ch'ŏng* 請) and received royal permission to return to the countryside to take care of his mother, who was in her nineties. Iryŏn's mother passed away at the venerable age of ninety-six in 1283, and this same year he took up residence in In'gak Monastery 麟角寺, on Hwasan 華山 in present-day Kunwi County 軍威郡 in North Kyŏngsang Province. After living in In'gak Monastery for five years, he fell ill in the sixth month [June–July] of 1289 and died later in the summer at the age of eighty-four, some seventy-one years after his ordination as a monk.²⁰ Clearly Iryŏn was a monk renowned for his literary abilities and who, though frequently compelled by the king to participate in official matters, preferred to pursue his monastic career and writing in Korea's southeastern Kyŏngsang provinces.

Hon'gu was born in Ch'ŏngp'ung District 淸風郡, which is located in present-day Ch'ungju 忠州 in Northern Ch'ungch'ŏng Province 忠清北道 in central Korea, on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month [26 August] in 1250. In 1259, when he was ten years old he became a monk at Muwi Monastery 無為寺 in present-day South Chŏlla Province 全羅南道 in southwestern Korea. After being named the optimus of the Sŏn Buddhist examination as a young man, he abandoned fame in the capital to study under Iryŏn in the provinces. He was made royal preceptor during the first reign of King Ch'ungsuk 忠肅 (r. 1313–1330, 1332–1339) and took up residence at Kwangmyŏng Monastery 廣明寺 in the Koryŏ capital. After living there several years, however, he transferred to become the abbot of Yŏngwŏn Monastery 瑩源寺 in Miryang 密陽, located near Pusan 釜山 in present-day South Kyŏngsang Province 慶尚南道. In the ninth month [October–November] of 1322 he moved to Songnim Monastery 松林寺 in North Kyŏngsang Province, where he passed away on the thirtieth day of the tenth month [8–9 December] at the age of seventy-three, after sixty-three years

²⁰ See *Chosŏn kinseki sŏran* 1:467–473; *Han'guk kŏmsŏk chŏnmun* 韓國金石全文 (Complete Korean epigraphy), ed. Heo Heungsik, 3 vols. (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 1984), 3:1067–1077; cf. *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsa* 朝鮮佛教通史 (Comprehensive history of Korean Buddhism), comp. Yi Nŏnghwa 李能和 (1869–1943), 3 vols. (Seoul: Sinmun'gwan, 1918; rpt. Seoul: Poryŏngak, 1982), 1:291–294, 3:358–364; see also Pak Yŏngdon 朴永惇, “Pogak kukchon pimyŏng (Pogak kuksa Chŏngjo t'appi) kot'appon e taehayŏ” 普覺國尊碑銘(普覺國師靜照塔碑) 古搨本에 대하여 (On the Old Rubbing of the Stele Inscription of Honored One of State Pogak [Pagoda Stele of Chŏngjo, State Preceptor Pogak]), *Kungmun yŏn'gu* 國文研究 8, nos. 1–2 (1980): 171–179.

as a monk.²¹ Like his mentor Iryŏn, Hon'gu was no stranger to the corridors of power in the Koryŏ capital, but he also preferred to pursue his monastic life in the Kyŏngsang provinces.

Having spent time in the capital both Iryŏn and Hon'gu would know something of the central discourse of the court, and they participated in the dominant literary discourse of Chan/Sŏn Buddhism. They could have enjoyed honors and lofty official positions in the Koryŏ capital, but instead both chose—or at least attempted—to pursue more secluded religious careers in the provinces. Although their preference for life outside of the capital was also probably a monastic conceit, ever popular on the peninsula since the time of Chinul, because monks are supposed to eschew the dust of the capital (viz. worldly honors and its accompanying political clout) for the purity of mountains, the fact remains that they were positioned in the provinces and had the opportunity to encounter the local literature and versions of stories. As both were schooled in literature as young monks in the Chŏlla provinces, they had strong connections to the countryside and chose to spend the final years of their lives in the old Silla heartland. There they would have encountered local anecdotes, narratives, and literary documents, as well as local monastery records and inscriptions. It is these types of materials that are often used in the *Samguk yusa* and make its composition distinctive and special when compared with the official, centralized discourse of the *Samguk sagi*.

DATING THE RECEIVED TEXT OF THE *SAMGUK YUSA*

Scholars are divided on the question of when the *Samguk yusa* was first compiled. My own conclusion is that Iryŏn probably began work composing and compiling his materials at the end of his life, sometime between 1282 and 1289, after Koryŏ's submission to Mongol suzerainty in 1259. He did not begin to compile the *Samguk yusa* by order of the Koryŏ king. There is no evidence that anyone at court knew of this work or regarded it as important if they did. If the *Samguk yusa* had been known, it would have been mentioned in Iryŏn's stele inscription. After his death the incomplete manuscript was further edited by Iryŏn's disciple Hon'gu, who was also responsible for a few additions to the manuscript prior to his death in 1322. The *Samguk yusa* was probably edited further after Hon'gu because its oldest extant complete recension dates to 1512.²² Frankly speaking,

²¹ See *Chosŏn kinseki sŏran* 1:602–603; cf. *Tongmunsŏn* 東文獻 (Anthology of Korean literature), 130 rolls, comp. Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正 (1420–1488), et al., 4 vols. (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe, 1999) 118:20b–22b (3:476b–477b); *Chosŏn Pulgyo t'ongsŏ* 3:364–66.

²² SYKY 5:437–438; see also Kim Tai-jin, *A Bibliographical Guide to Traditional Korean Sources*, 30–34.

although scholars, myself included, tend to attribute much of the composition and style to Iryŏn, we cannot be completely certain that Iryŏn is responsible for the present organization of the text. Several scholars have presented strong evidence that the Dynastic Chronology (*wangnyŏk* 王曆), which was placed at the beginning of the work in the 1512 recension, was not originally part of the *Samguk yusa* because there are several discrepancies between the information and diction contained in the chronology and the anecdotes in the Annals and Marvels (*keii* 紀異) section that follows. Kim Sang-hyun asserts that the chronological table was probably appended to an earlier version of the *Samguk yusa* by Iryŏn himself before 1310, but Ha Chŏngnyong proposes that it was not added until 1394.²³

THE PREFACE AND PURPOSE OF THE *SAMGUK YUSA*

Judging from its context, Iryŏn and the others responsible for the compilation of the *Samguk yusa* did so to conserve accounts of the marvels, anomalies, anecdotes, and local narratives of Korean antiquity and, by so doing, to demonstrate that local Korean tales of all types are of the same class and merit as those of China and are worth preserving and remembering for those reasons.

The preface to the *Samguk yusa* provides evidence of this agenda and alludes to Iryŏn's proclivity toward local discourse.²⁴ After citing a litany of examples from Sinitic literature and lore regarding the marvels and strange phenomena associated with the births of the legendary rulers of China's remote antiquity, he comments: "Narratives of this sort are really countless. This being so, what is so peculiar about the founders of the Three [Korean] Kingdoms all being born of divine wonders? This is [precisely] the reason why the divine and the marvelous

The recent research of Ha Chŏngnyong supports the general contours of this view. He proposes that the 1512 edition cannot be the oldest version of the *Samguk yusa* since it is cited in Chosŏn-period works as early as 1403. Although no one has claimed that there is a late-Koryŏ edition of the *Samguk yusa*, Ha suggests that the work reached its final form between 1360 and 1394, when it was published by Kim Kŏdu 金居斗. Kim published the *Samguk sagi* in 1394, and Ha conjectures that the first version of the extent recension of the *Samguk yusa* was published at the same time. See Ha, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an*, 116–120, 273–280.

²³ For an overview and analysis of the scholarship on these problems see Kim Sang-hyun, "Samguk yusa wangnyŏk p'yŏn kŏmt'o—wangnyŏk sŏnja e taehan ūimun" 三國遺事 王曆篇 檢討—王曆 撰者에 대한 疑問 (An Analysis of the Dynastic Chronology Section of the *Samguk yusa*: An Inquiry into the Compiler of the Dynastic Chronology), *Tongyanghak* 東洋學 15 (1985): 307–328; Ha Chŏngnyong, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an*, 17, 142–147.

²⁴ Ha Chŏngnyong suggests that since the preface does not contain a reference to the Yuan dynasty (Da Yuan 大元) it was either not composed by Iryŏn or that it was still a work-in-progress. See Ha, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an*, 25.

have been included in this record!”²⁵

The preface does not mention Buddhism specifically. Based on the fact that an *yishi/yusa* is not and never was a Buddhist genre of literature and that Iryōn is one of only a very few Buddhist monks who composed a work in this broad genre, the promotion of a Buddhist view of history recedes as the driving force behind the compilation of the *Samguk yusa* for another more general purpose: The preservation of the anecdotes and narratives from Korea’s antiquity.²⁶ Even so, Buddhist interpretations and conceptualizations of the divine and the cosmos, and particularly of the seminal role of Buddhism in ancient Korean society and culture, pervade the entire work. This is to be expected. By Iryōn’s time Buddhism was and had been the cultural, social, intellectual, and religious foundation of the Korean peoples for more than five hundred years. Native Korean myths and traditional narratives, such as the myth of Tan’gun 壇君, the legendary founder of the Old Chosŏn 古朝鮮 state (who, according to the legend was born ca. 2333 B.C.E.), would have persisted but these had been conceptualized in Buddhist terms and interpreted through the all-encompassing lens of Buddhist cosmology. To many readers the story is not “Buddhist”; however, a close reading of the language used to describe the realm of gods from whom Tan’gun descends is rife with Buddhist connotations.²⁷ Buddhist-inspired anachronisms were common and may have been necessary to provide context and meaning to readers who, at the time of the *Samguk yusa*’s composition, most probably would have been Buddhist believers of some sort. Hence, it is more likely that these anachronisms would have been expected by, hence invisible to, such readers.

Most of the scholars-officials and literati of the Koryŏ period, like their Song Chinese counterparts, retained some level of Buddhist orientation notwithstanding their training in the Confucian classics and their commitment to Confucian-style statecraft and family values.²⁸ This did not begin to change in

²⁵ SYKY 1:31–32.

²⁶ See McBride, “A Koreanist’s Musings on the Chinese *Yishi* Genre.”

²⁷ John Jorgensen has demonstrated that the Tan’gun myth as we have received it came to be infused with Tantric (he calls it “Esoteric”) symbolism and interpretations; see his “Who was the Author of the Tan’gun Myth?” in *Perspectives on Korea*, ed. Lee Sang-Oak and Park Duk-Soo (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1998), 222–255.

²⁸ For example, Su Shi 蘇軾 (Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, 1036–1101), who frequently consorted with Buddhist monks and who was widely believed in his own time to be Tao Qian 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶源明, 365–427) reincarnated; see Ronald C. Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994); see also Beata Grant, *Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994). For the case of Koryŏ, Yi Kyubo 李奎報 (1168–1241) wrote several pieces on Buddhist themes, such as an essay celebrating the publication of the first Korean Buddhist canon and the supplement of East

Korea until after the founding of the Chosŏn 朝鮮 dynasty (1392–1910), which, following the precedent set by the Ming 明 court (1368–1644) and literati in China, reoriented their culture and society away from Buddhism toward Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) revamped metaphysical version of Confucianism (termed Cheng-Zhu learning 程朱學, *Daoxue* 道學, *Lixue* 理學, “Neo-Confucianism”). Despite its inescapable Buddhist veneer, some present-day scholars assert that the main worth of the *Samguk yusa* is its preservation of the Tan’gun myth. Yet this view represents Korea’s modern, nationalistic approach to the founding of the state, which is to some extent a by-product of Korea’s colonial and post-colonial experience.²⁹ Korean elites during the Chosŏn period, such as Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正 (1420–1488), however, emphasized an alternate myth about a Shang 商 Chinese émigré named Kija 箕子 (Ch. Jizi), whose teachings helped “civilize” ancient Korea after his instalment as a ruler of Chosŏn by the Zhou in 1122 B.C.E. Kija appears in several old Chinese historical texts, such as the *Shiji* and the *Han shu*, and he is also mentioned at the end of the *Samguk yusa*’s entry on Tan’gun.³⁰ The Sirhak 實學 (practical learning) scholar An Chŏngbok 安鼎福 (1712–1791), for instance, disputed the importance and relevance of the Tan’gun story and pejoratively regarded it to be mere “monk talk” (*sŭngdam* 僧談).³¹

Iryŏn’s recognition of the marvelous, strange, and spiritual transcends Buddhism, but he does emphasize correspondence between native Korean narratives and those found in Buddhist literature.³² This may be another way of

Asian commentarial writings; see Peter H. Lee, ed., *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, Volume 1 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993), 398–401, 423, 426–427.

²⁹ For an essential compilation of nationalistic studies on Tan’gun see Yun Ihŭm 尹以欽 et al., *Tan’gun: kŭ ibae wa charyo* 檀君: 그이해와 자료 (Tan’gun: an understanding of him and relevant materials) (Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 1994).

³⁰ Jizi is a common figure in the *Shiji* and *Han shu*, but his popularity is probably mainly due to the fact that Jizi appears in the *Yijing* (Book of Changes) as a figure mentioned in the chapter “Darkening of the Light” (*mingyi* 明夷) in the sentence *Jizi zhi mingyi* 箕子之明夷, which can also be read as “Jizi’s enlightening the benighted [barbarians in the East];” see Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, trans., *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, 2nd. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), 564–565. His connection to the ancient Koreans, the Nine Benighted Tribes (*jiuji* 九夷), is only made explicit in *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 28B:1658; 88:3599; and *Sanguo zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 30:850; SYKY 1:33 (*Ko Chosŏn* 古朝鮮); see Lee, *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, 8, for his teaching see pp. 19–20; for emphasis on Kija (Jizi) in the Chosŏn-period literature see, for instance, *Tongguk t’onggam* 東國通鑑 (Comprehensive Mirror of the Eastern Country [Korea]), compiled by Sŏ Kŏjŏng, et al. in 1484, 3 vols. (Seoul: Chosŏn Kwangmunhoe, 1911), 1:3–4 (*sŏ* 序 [preface]); see also Lee, *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, 512, 519, 535–536.

³¹ Yi Namyŏng, “Samguk yusa wa sŭng Iryŏn kwaui kwan’gye koch’al,” 16, 18.

³² See, for instance, SYKY 4:403–409 (Kim Hyŏn kamho 金現感虎); cf. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Broad Tales of the Taiping Era), comp. Li Fang 李昉 in 977–978, ed. Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹

validating Korean things in reference to the dominance of Chinese culture, but it is not nationalistic. Although some scholars treat such things as the preface and Tan'gun myth as evidence of nationalism, I am not convinced that nationalism is an appropriate term. During the Koryŏ period I believe there is evidence that a sense of Koreanness began to take form.³³ But this as well blends with the idea of local discourse because educated Koreans increasingly saw their country as belonging to a universal world order bound by Sinitic literature and customs.

Kim Sang-hyun also reminds us that we cannot be certain that Iryŏn regarded these fabulous stories as “historical fact” as we moderns conceptualize the idea. He maintains, however, that Iryŏn's preoccupation with these kinds of stories was meant to restore a more spiritual and miraculous view of the past vis-à-vis the *Samguk sagi* and *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* 海東高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Korean Monks), which he appraises as more “historical” in outlook.³⁴ I do not find this assessment completely persuasive, however, because it still seeks to place the *Samguk yusa* in direct confrontation with the *Samguk sagi*: a position never claimed by Iryŏn nor found anywhere in the text. Likewise, the *Samguk sagi* also preserves many narratives of doubtful “historical” authenticity and, in fact, buttresses material found in the *Samguk yusa* in many cases—particularly stories regarding the famous Silla general Kim Yusin 金庾信 (595–673).³⁵ Although the *Samguk yusa* should not be conceptualized as “history,” it nonetheless preserves information relevant to historical issues, particularly those associated with the comprehension of Buddhist teachings and practices by both elites and commoners in ancient and medieval Korea.³⁶

(Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1985), 429:3486–3488 (Shen Tudeng 申屠澄); SYKY 2:178 (Hu Paekche Kyŏnhwŏn 後百濟甄萱), alludes to the stories of the failed contenders for the realm Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 B.C.E.) and Li Mi 李密 (fl. 614–617); SYKY 3:286–291 refers to tales from India; and SYKY 5:397–398 contains a story about a monk from Kashmir. See also Hwang P'aegang 黃溟江, *Silla pulgyo sŏrhwa yŏn'gu* 新羅佛教說話研究 (Research on the Buddhist Tales of Silla) (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1975).

³³ See Duncan, “Proto-nationalism in Premodern Korea.”

³⁴ Kim Sang-hyun, “Samguk yusa e nat'an'an Iryŏn ūi Pulgyo sagwan,” 250, 278–279. What I mean by “history” here is the modern Western conceptualization of history that, itself, has emerged through a labyrinth of twists and turns in its own history. For a discussion of the problem of “history” from a Western perspective see, for instance, R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946, rpt. 1973).

³⁵ McBride, “Hidden Agendas in Life Writings on Kim Yusin,” *Acta Koreana* 1 (August 1998): 101–142.

³⁶ Kim Sang-hyun, “Samguk yusa e nat'an'an Iryŏn ūi Pulgyo sagwan,” 250–268. Kim emphasizes four categories of utility in his assessment of the *Samguk yusa* as a vehicle for understanding Iryŏn's view of history. First, he sees the *Samguk yusa* as espousing a “pan-Buddhist view of history” and an expansion of the territory of Buddhist history (pp. 250–252). Second, Iryŏn places emphasis on conceptualizations of Silla as a Buddhistland and on Buddhist practices for the

If we grant that Iryŏn's purpose was the preservation of native tales of the marvelous, miraculous, and strange—a genre that had always been extremely popular in the Sinitic cultural sphere—we are free to observe how Buddhism provided Korea, the state of Silla in particular, with cultural legitimacy in the form of divine protection collectively as well as spiritual experiences for Koreans individually. Iryŏn could not help but be didactic—most literature in the Sinitic world was to some extent—and, yet, Iryŏn's language is not anti-Confucian.

PRIVILEGING LOCAL DISCOURSE: THE SOURCES OF THE *SAMGUK YUSA*

The compilers of the *Samguk yusa* utilized their sources in a variety of ways to present their collective image of Korean antiquity. Four methods of citation are visible: (1) the piecing together of a story or subsection account (*cho* 條) using Chinese historical sources, which is usually found in the “Annals and Marvels” section to confirm the veracity of native traditions; (2) the allusion to various sources to promote indirectly a certain point of view; (3) the rendering of a judgment or opinion between two sources; and (4) the presenting of a straw dog first and then the anecdote the compiler wants to emphasize. For this reason, the subsections are typically more like annotated essays and composite, edited excerpts than passages merely lifted in a cut-and-paste manner directly from pre-existing sources, such as those found in a few of the Chinese *yishi*, even though there are several instances when whole passages are copied.³⁷ Iryŏn and Hon'gu, and perhaps others who worked on the text, utilized the panoply of literary and documentary sources available to them in the composition and compilation of the *Samguk yusa*.³⁸ Following the example of Kim Pusik's *Samguk sagi*, Iryŏn

protection of the state (pp. 252–258). Third, he suggests that Iryŏn criticizes wrong practices in the Buddhist realm and laments living during the time of the decline of the Buddhist teaching (*malbŏp*, Ch. *mofa* 末法) (pp. 258–263). Fourth, he suggests that Iryŏn recognizes or is conscious of the Buddhist practices and faith of the common people, mainstream Buddhism, which is a religion of promoting equality and seeking to alleviate the suffering of people and society (pp. 263–268).

³⁷ See Yi Sora, *Samguk yusa ūi sŏsul pangsik yŏn'yu* (Research on the narrative form of the *Samguk yusa*) (Seoul: Cheiaenssi, 2005), 224–226. For a study that analyzes Iryŏn's editing techniques with respect to still-extant literary sources see McBride, “Is the *Samguk yusa* Reliable? Case Studies from the Chinese and Korean Sources,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 11, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 163–189. For a comparison of the *Samguk yusa* to examples of Chinese *yishi* see McBride, “A Koreanist's Musings on the Chinese *Yishi* Genre.”

³⁸ For a list of all the sources cited in the *Samguk yusa* see *Samguk Yusa Saegin P'yŏnjip Wiwŏnhoe* 三國遺事索引編輯委員委員會 (Committee for the Compilation of an Index to the *Samguk yusa*), comps., *Samguk yusa saegin* 三國遺事索引 (Index to the *Samguk yusa*) (Seoul: Han'guk

judiciously mined most of the Chinese literature, official histories, and collectanea available to him during the Song period. But my concern here is with the native Korean documentary sources, including monastery records, Buddhist literary sources, and collections of miracle tales that he utilized.

Local Records

The most intriguing and problematic among the sources used by Iryŏn are the various local records he refers to under a variety of related terms all containing the word *hyang* 鄉 (Ch. *xiang*), which means “provincial” or “local.” The most commonly used term by far is “local chronicles” (*hyangjŏn* 鄉傳), which appears ten times;³⁹ and the remaining are “old provincial chronicle” (*hyangjung kojŏn* 鄉中古傳), an “old local record” (*hyang kogi* 鄉古記), and a “local record” (*hyanggi* 鄉記).⁴⁰ One scholar has asserted that the “local record” is an abbreviated reference to the *Silla kogi* 新羅古記 (Old Record of Silla), following the standard Chinese practice of abbreviating book titles, while another claims that *hyang* refers to Buddhist monastery records since references to *hyangjŏn* first appear in the sections dealing with Buddhist topics.⁴¹ The logograph *hyang* was also used by Koreans during the Koryŏ period to refer to Korea as opposed to China. If this was Iryŏn’s objective, he would be emphasizing their “Koreanness,” but I do not believe this was the meaning he intended. The context strongly implies the meaning of locally preserved records. Yi Sora asserts that when the *Samguk yusa* refers to a *hyangjŏn*: (1) it is typically cited along with an excerpt from Buddhist literature, such as a collection of monastic biography or monastery records, as the source record of a miraculous event; (2) the compiler is always doubtful of its “veracity;” and (3), aside from the account “Wŏn’gwang studies in the West,” the *hyangjŏn* account is always given first.⁴² I agree with her first and third observations but not completely with her second because in my reading of the material Iryŏn also uses information from *hyangjŏn* to conserve variations as well as to support his presentation of information. Some examples will be instructive.

Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn’guwŏn, 1980), 147–157.

³⁹ SYKY 3:213, 215, 216, 217, 273; 4:343, 347; 5:390, 392; as well as one “old provincial chronicle” (*ko hyangjŏn* 古鄉傳), 5:433.

⁴⁰ For the *hyangjung kojŏn*, see SYKY 5:392; for the *hyang kogi*, see SYKY 2:106; and for the *hyanggi*, see SYKY 1:93.

⁴¹ Yi Kangnae 李康來, *Samguk sagi chŏn’gŏron* 三國史記典據論 (A theory on the sources of the *Samguk sagi*) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1996), 185; Yi Sora, *Samguk yusa ūi sŏsul pangsik yŏn’gu*, 40–57, esp. pp. 53–54; see also Ha Chŏngnyong, *Samguk yusa saryo pip’an*, 156.

⁴² See Yi Sora, *Samguk yusa ūi sŏsul pangsik yŏn’gu*, 80–97; SYKY 4:315–326 (Wŏn’gwang sŏhak 圓光西學).

Iryŏn draws upon a variety of sources to construct his version of the famous story of how Silla's ruling aristocracy became convinced of the power of Buddhism: The martyrdom of the retainer Pak Yŏmch'ok 朴厭鬻 (Ich'adon 異次頓, d. 527/528). As his primary source text Iryŏn draws heavily from a "Community Compact for Burning Incense before the Tomb of [Pak Yŏm]ch'ok and Worshipping the Buddha" (*Ch'ok hyangbun yebul kyŏlsa mun* 鬻香墳禮佛結社文), which was composed by Illyŏm 一念 (fl. 806–821), a monk of Namgan Monastery 南澗寺. Iryŏn chose to follow this text because of its great detail in comparison to the similar, shorter version derived from Kim Taemun's 金大問 (fl. 704) *Kyerim chapchŏn* 雞林雜傳 (Miscellaneous Tales of Cock Grove [Silla]) that is preserved in the *Samguk sagi*.⁴³ He refers to *hyangjŏn* repeatedly (probably the same one) in interlinear notes, nevertheless, to provide greater depth and nuance.

The narrative begins by establishing that early in the reign of King Pŏphŭng 法興 (r. 514–540) Silla's high officials did not yet appreciate the importance of Buddhism's eastward expansion. The first reference to a local record appears in a note after the term "noted officials" (*myŏngsin* 明臣). Iryŏn uses it because it supplies the putative names of such officials who opposed the adoption of Buddhism by the Silla court: "The *hyangjŏn* says Kongmok 工目, Algong 謁恭, and the like."⁴⁴

The source text continues with flowery language reconstructing an appropriate dialogue between King Pŏphŭng and the young Yŏmch'ok. The young retainer promises the king that he is willing to offer his life so that Buddhism might prosper in Silla and suggests a scheme whereby the high-ranking aristocratic officials will become convinced of the power of Buddhism. He convinces the king to assert his royal authority by exacting punishment for their refusal to follow his royal order to build a Buddhist monastery. Yŏmch'ok himself will be the scapegoat, suffer the royal will, and be executed; but he promises a miracle to convert the unbelieving aristocrats. The second reference to a local record comes in a note following the king's questioning his ministers' desire to make trouble by

⁴³ *Samguk sagi* 4:36–37 (Pŏphŭng 15). There are essentially two differences between the *Samguk sagi* version and the main version presented in the *Samguk yusa*. In the *Samguk sagi* the events putatively take place in Pŏphŭng's fifteenth year (528) instead of his fourteenth year (527) and, when Ich'adon's head is cut off the blood gushes forth milky white in color only. There is no mention of his head flying off to Mt. Kŭmgang, which is apparently an addition to the story added in the eighth or early ninth century. The Kyŏngju National Museum displays a stele that was discovered at the ruins of Paengnyul Monastery 栢栗寺 on the Smaller Mount Kŭmgang 小金剛山 depicting Ich'adon's martyrdom (Ich'adon sun'gyobi 異次頓殉教碑). The stele, dated to 817 or 818, shows Ich'adon's head on the ground next to his body while the milky white substance bursts forth like a fountain from his severed neck. Because the inscription is badly effaced the inscription is nearly impossible to read.

⁴⁴ SYKY 3:213 (*Wŏnjong būngbŏp Yŏmch'ok myŏlsin* 原宗興法 厭鬻滅身)

not following his wish to construct a monastery.

The *hyangjŏn* says: “The king’s order has been made known: it is his will that I [Yŏmch’ok] should commence work building the monastery. The officials started to remonstrate. The king then reproved [Yŏm]ch’ok angrily and punished him for falsely publicizing a royal order.”⁴⁵

In this case the local record preserves a different version of the story. Yŏmch’ok is presented as forging a royal order to build the monastery but his subterfuge is discovered. The key point of the officials’ aversion to the project, however, is the same. If Iryŏn did not want to preserve this variation on the story why present it? Furthermore, Iryŏn does not judge that the information is false, even though it differs from the other presumably older account found in the *Samguk sagi*. A third reference to a local record comes a few sentences later, after the main text reaches the climax of the story: Yŏmch’ok is bound by royal order in the presence of the officials, he makes a vow, and is beheaded by the executioner:

The *hyangjŏn* says: “The retainer [Yŏmch’ok] under oath said, ‘The Great Saint, King of the Dharma [Pŏphŭng], desired to promote Buddhism. I did not fear for my life. We had been bound by karma for many kalpas [eons] when Heaven sent down auspicious portents, manifesting them everywhere to the people.’ Thereupon his head flew away and landed on the summit of Mt. Kŭmgang.” The rest of story is well known.⁴⁶

In this variant version conserved by Iryŏn, the local record couches Yŏmch’ok’s actions in the language of Buddhist doctrine and emphasizes the Silla king’s intention to promote Buddhism. The local record also provides support for Iryŏn’s assertion that the monastery in question was not actually built until several years later. Following the statement that Hŭngnyun Monastery 興輪寺 was completed in 544 Iryŏn presents another note:

According to the *State History* (*Kuksa* 國史) and the *hyangjŏn*, as a matter of fact, the site was selected in *chŏngmi*, the fourteenth year of King Pŏphŭng [527]. There was a great felling of trees in Ch’ŏn’gyŏng (Heavenly Mirror) Forest 天鏡林 in *ŭlmyo*, his twenty-first year [535], and work commenced on the materials for the lesser and greater beams [of the structure]. Everything selected [for the monastery] was taken from the forest. [The stone for] the stairs, foundations, and stone niches was all quarried there. The monastery was completed in *kapcha*, the fifth year of King Chinhŭng

⁴⁵ SYKY 3:215.

⁴⁶ SYKY 3:215.

眞興 (r. 540–576) [544]. It is for this reason I have written *kapcha*. The *Lives of Monks* (*Sūng chōn* 僧傳) says the seventh year [546], which is a mistake.⁴⁷

The most difficult and important question regarding the *chōn* 傳 are whether these refer to actual written “chronicles” (Ch. *zhuān*) or to oral “narratives” (Ch. *chuan*). Scholars trained in Korea generally regard them all as written documents, as have been presented in the translations of the terms above, although some skeptical scholars feel more comfortable regarding these as traditional narratives written down by Iryōn. This terminological ambiguity is common in traditional Chinese literature as well. Works bearing this name are commonly referred to in gazetteers (Ch. *fangzhi* 方志) as an important source of local lore and factual information.⁴⁸ Because there are no examples of this type of literature remaining in Korea, it is impossible to make a conclusive statement. For the examples we have seen, however, I believe that Iryōn drew from local writings, such as those used as the basis of gazetteers in China. Because it is impossible to be certain when those writings were composed, they are less reliable than epigraphy. The oldest local record (*chōn*) probably dated, at earliest, from the late Silla period (ca. 780–935).

Epigraphy

The *Samguk yusa* uses epigraphy (*kūmsōngmun* 金石文) to a far greater degree than any other extant literary work from the Koryō period. This attests to the wide range of available inscriptions on stele, Buddhist images, bells, and reliquaries dating from the Unified Silla (ca. 668–935) through the mid-Koryō periods.⁴⁹ Epigraphic texts cited by Iryōn and Hon’gu include the following: the stele inscription of the monk Ado (*Ado hwasang ponbi* 阿道和尚本碑),⁵⁰ the inscription on the *sarira* container under the central pillar of the nine-story wooden pagoda at Hwangnyong Monastery (*Hwangnyongsa kuch’ūng’ap ch’alchu ki* 皇龍寺九層塔剎柱記),⁵¹ the inscription on the bell at Pongdōk Monastery (*Pongdōksa chongmyōng* 奉德寺鍾銘),⁵² the inscriptions on the Maitreya and Amitābha images at Kamsan

⁴⁷ SYKY 3:216.

⁴⁸ Personal communication with Dr. Robert E. Hegel, at Washington University in St. Louis, on 15 June 2004; see also Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 154–158.

⁴⁹ All of the extant Buddhist epigraphy to date has been compiled by Kim Yōng’ae 金煥泰 into the following modern compilation: *Samguk Silla sidae Pulgyo kūmsōngmun kojūng* 三國新羅時代佛教金石文考證 (Compilation of Buddhist Epigraphy from the Three Kingdoms and Silla Periods) (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992).

⁵⁰ SYKY 3:206–208.

⁵¹ SYKY 3:237; cf. Kim Yōng’ae, *Samguk Silla sidae Pulgyo kūmsōngmun kojūng*, 180–186.

⁵² SYKY 3:241.

Monastery (*Kamsansa Mirŭk Mit'a chosang ki* 甘山寺彌勒彌陀造象記),⁵³ all of which are from the Kyŏngju area, and the stone stele at the Paryŏn Vihāra [monastery] on Mt. P'ungak in Kwandong (*Kwandong P'ungaksan Paryŏnsu sŏkkei* 關東楓岳山鉢淵藪石記),⁵⁴ which is located in present-day Kangwŏn Province 江原道 in North Korea. A few of these epigraphic sources are still extant and provide important information on Iryŏn and Hon'gu's literary style and techniques of compiling and editing.⁵⁵

The following example of Iryŏn's version of the inscription on the Amitābha image at Kamsan Monastery is highly edited in comparison to the original. The original inscription, dated to 719, is too long and complicated to present here, however. Iryŏn elided much information and changed the order of many sentences. Only words not found in the original have been underlined to show a difference:

I, *chungach'an* Kim Chijŏn 金志全 once was Chief Steward, Chief Steward for the Wardrobe, and Gentleman in Attendance of the Chancellery concurrently. When I turned sixty-seven I retired from office and lived a leisurely life. I bestow the estate and paddies at Kamsan and found [this] *samghārāma* [monastery] on behalf of the Great King, the Lord of the Country, *ich'an* Kaewŏn 愷元, my deceased father Injang 仁章 *ilgilan* 一吉干,⁵⁶ my deceased mother, my brothers the *sosa* Yangšŏng 梁誠, the śramaṇa Hyŏndo 玄度, my deceased wife Korori 古路里, my deceased elder sister Kop'ari 古巴里, and on behalf of my wife Ahori 阿好里, and so forth. I also commissioned a stone image of Amitābha on behalf of my deceased father Injang *ilgilan*, who, when he became an old man and died, his ashes were scattered on shores of Yuban 攸反 on the East Sea. ([Iryŏn notes:] An investigation of the royal genealogy shows that Kim Kaewŏn was T'aejong Ch'unch'u's 太宗春秋 [=King Muryŏl 武烈, r. 654–661] younger son Prince Kaewŏn *kakkan* 角干, born of [Queen] Munhŭi 文熙. Kim Chijŏn is a mistake for Kim Chisŏng 金志誠, son of Injang *ilgilan*.

⁵³ SYKY 3:304-306; cf. Kim Yŏngt'ae, *Samguk Silla sidae Pulgyo kŭmsŏngmun kojŏng*, 68–73.

⁵⁴ SYKY 4:361-667; cf. Kim Yŏngt'ae, *Samguk Silla sidae Pulgyo kŭmsŏngmun kojŏng*, 93–109.

⁵⁵ See McBride, "Is the *Samguk yusa* Reliable?" 173–177, for a detailed analysis comparing the inscription on the Maitreya image unearthed at the site of Kamsan Monastery and Iryŏn's version of that inscription. I translated the extant fragments of the *Kwandong P'ungaksan Paryŏnsu sŏkkei* stele inscription (see n. 52), which dates to 1199. Hon'gu edited and added his version of this stele inscription to the *Samguk yusa* discussion about the Silla monk Chinp'yo 眞表 (active eighth century). My unpublished research on this inscription suggests that Hon'gu followed the original language of the inscription far more closely than the two primary examples we have from Iryŏn: the inscriptions on the Maitreya and Amitābha images at Kamsan Monastery (see n. 53).

⁵⁶ Reading *kan* 干 for *u* 于; following collation note 17, SYKY 3:305. This is a common error found in Chinese literature as well.

Yuban on the East Sea probably refers to Pömmi's 法敏 [King Munmu 文武, r. 661–681] burial on the East Sea.)⁵⁷

Without digressing into a detailed analysis of the inscription and describing the historical figures named in the text, we can see that Iryōn has preserved some of the basic language of the inscription. The part at the end in parentheses is an interlinear note. Some of the people are mentioned in other literature, most notably the *Samguk sagi*, but the significance of “Yuban on the East Sea” is not discussed anywhere else. Although the original inscription reads “Hūnji on the East Sea” 東海欣支 we would not otherwise make the potential connection to the underwater tomb of King Munmu without Iryōn’s conjecture. My research suggests that Iryōn typically took great liberty editing the prose of such inscriptions—far more than the one example we have from Hon’gu.⁵⁸ However, Iryōn conserves the main thrust of the language and does not falsify information disingenuously; he merely deletes information he does not want to preserve.

Monastery Records

Iryōn also alludes to many different monastery records (*saji* 寺志) all of which have been lost during the ensuing centuries. Some of the most interesting narratives in the *Samguk yusa* come from these documents.⁵⁹ The *Kamūn sajunggi* 感恩寺中記 (Record held in Kamūn Monastery) provided information for the miracle tale “Ten Thousand Waves Calmed by a Flute.”⁶⁰ The *Kūmgwangsa pon’gi* 金光寺本記 (Original Record of Kūmgwang Monastery) preserved a large measure of the information contained in the essay “Myōngnang and the Spirit Seal (Sin’in) [Tradition].”⁶¹ The *Paegwōlsan sojōn kogi* 白月山所傳古記 (Old Record preserved on Mt. Paegwōl) preserved the entire account of “The Two Sages of South White Moon [Mountain],” the engaging tale of the commoner monks Nohil Pudūk and Taltal Pakpak’s achieving Buddhahood in this life.⁶² A *Pulguk sajunggi* 佛國寺中記 (Record held in Pulguk Monastery) supplied the account of

⁵⁷ SYKY 3:305-306.

⁵⁸ I have an unpublished draft translation of the extant fragments of the *Kwandong P’ungaksan Paryōnsu sōkki* (see n. 54), which dates to 1199. Hon’gu edited and added his version of this stele inscription to the *Samguk yusa* discussion about the Silla monk Chinp’yo 眞表 (active eighth century). My unpublished research on this inscription suggests that Hon’gu followed the original language of the inscription far more closely than the two main examples we have from Iryōn: the inscriptions on the Maitreya and Amitābha images at Kamsan Monastery (see n. 53).

⁵⁹ Heo Heungsik, *Koryō Pulgyosa yōn’gu*, 793–94.

⁶⁰ SYKY 2:113 (*Man’p’a sikchōk* 万波息笛).

⁶¹ SYKY 5:382-383 (*Myōngnang sinin* 明朗神印).

⁶² SYKY 3:270-277 (*Nam Paegwōl i sōng* 南白月二聖).

“[Kim] Taesǒng’s Filial Piety toward Two Generations of Parents,” which chronicles the legendary origins of Pulguksa and Sǒkkuram.⁶³ An excerpt from the *Wǒlchǒngsa sojǒn kogi* 月精寺所傳古記 (Old Record preserved at Wǒlchǒng Monastery) comprises the account “The Five Saints of Wǒlchǒng Monastery on Mt. [O]dae,” a sacred Buddhist site named after Mt. Wutai 五臺山 in northern China.⁶⁴ The *Hwangnyongsa ki* 皇龍寺記 (The Record of Hwangnyong Monastery) provided the basis for Iryǒn’s treatment of “The Sixteen-Foot [Image of Buddha] at Hwangnyong Monastery,” one of Silla’s three sacred Buddhist treasures believed to protect the state from calamity and harm.⁶⁵

Let us consider a few examples. When Iryǒn uses information from monastery records, he usually refers to them in interlinear notes in the body of the text. They typically provide nuance to the version of the story taken as his primary text, and in some cases they are used to critique information presented in other sources. For instance, Iryǒn alludes to the *Tongch’ǒnsa ki* 東泉寺記 (Record of Tongch’ǒn Monastery) in order to provide exterior literary support regarding a location called the “Blue Pond” (Ch’ǒngji 清池) that he mentions in his account of “The Great King Wǒnsǒng (r. 785–798):”

The Blue Pond is the spring of Tongch’ǒn (East Spring) Monastery. The monastery record says: “The spring is the site where dragons of the East Sea come to hear the Dharma. The monastery was built by King Chinp’yǒng 眞平 [r. 579–631]. [It contains a hall dedicated to] the assembly of the five hundred saints⁶⁶ and a five-story pagoda. In addition, he [Chinp’yǒng] donated paddy land and people to it.”⁶⁷

From this note we may surmise that the people of Silla believed that an important function of the monastery was as a place where dragons, which controlled the rain and ocean travel, came to hear Buddhist sermons taught on their behalf. Also, we learn that the Silla king had given land and slaves to the monastery to provide revenue for its maintenance.

The *Yǒngch’wisa ki* 靈鷲寺記 (The Record of Yǒngch’wi Monastery) preserves a different voice regarding the founding of this monastery. In Buddhist sūtra literature Yǒngch’wi (Ch. Lingjiu 靈鷲, “Numinous Vulture”) is always an allusion to Mt. Gṛdhrakūṭa, better known as “Vulture Peak.” Vulture Peak is a mythical

⁶³ SYKY 5:430-433 (*Taesǒng hyo ise pumo* 大城孝二世父母).

⁶⁴ SYKY 3:303-304 (*Taesǎn Wǒlchǒngsa oryu sǒngjung* 臺山月精寺五類聖衆).

⁶⁵ SYKY 3:233-236 (*Hwangnyong-sa changnyuk* 皇龍寺丈六).

⁶⁶ The five hundred saints (*obaek sǒngjong*, Ch. *wubai shengzhong* 五百聖衆) typically refers to the five hundred arhats.

⁶⁷ SYKY 2:130 (*Wǒnsǒng taewang* 元聖大王).

location where the Buddha Śākyamuni taught the *Lotus Sūtra* and many other important Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings and entrusted them to gods and bodhisattvas.⁶⁸ However, the Korean monastery record presents a narrative with strong local flavoring that attempts to provide a more local or folksy reason for the name of this monastery.

An old record preserved in the monastery says: “In *kyemi*, the second year (the original text wrongly says it was the first year) of the Yongchun 永淳 reign period [683], during the reign of the thirty-first ruler of Silla, the true bone King Sinmun 神文 [r. 681–691], the Grand Counselor Duke Ch’ungwŏn 忠元 took a bath in the warm well in the land of Changsan 菴山國 (this is the Tongnae District 東萊縣; also called the Land of Goosefoot Mountain 萊山國)⁶⁹ and, as soon as he returned to the city, he stopped to rest on Tongji 桐旨 field when he arrived at Kulchŏng (Bent Well) Station 屈井驛). Suddenly he saw someone loosing a hawk on a pheasant. The pheasant flew past Golden Peak and there was no trace of it for a long time.

“He heard the [tinkling of the hawk] bell and followed it. When he arrived in the vicinity of the well to the north of the Kulchŏng District Office [he found] the hawk perched in a tree and the pheasant inside the well. The water was turbid and the color of blood. The pheasant spread both of her wings: she was shielding two fledglings underneath. The hawk also, as if it were taking pity on them, did not dare seize them. When the duke saw it he took pity and was deeply moved. He performed divination and made a request regarding the site: [the divination] said that it is worth building a monastery. He returned to the capital and reported it to the king. They moved the district [office] to another location, built a monastery on this site, and named it Numinous Vulture (Yongch’wi) Monastery.”⁷⁰

Frankly speaking, the transformation of the story’s hawk into the vulture in the name of the monastery stretches the limits of reason. The people of Silla could surely tell a bird of prey from a scavenger, especially because they sent hawks and other hunting birds as tribute to Tang China.⁷¹ Such a story suggests instead how

⁶⁸ See, for instance, *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 4, T 262, 9.35a; *Zhen fahua jing* 正法華經 1, T 263, 9.63a; *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 14, T 293, 10.724a; *Dabaoji jing* 大寶積經 8, T 310, 11.42b, roll 10, T 310, 11.56c, roll 13, T 310, 11.71a, roll 117, T 310, 11.657a; *Da Amituo jing* 大阿彌陀經 1, T 364, 12.327b; and *Hailongwang jing* 海龍王經 1, T 598, 15.131c.

⁶⁹ This may also be a reference to this region as the famed Penglai, land of the sylphs (Penglai xianguo 蓬萊仙國).

⁷⁰ SYKY 3:311–312 (*Yongch’wisa* 靈鷲寺).

⁷¹ Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 94.

over time local tales and Buddhist symbols combined as Silla Buddhists sought to domesticate the religion by locating sacred sites of Buddhism firmly in their own homeland.⁷²

Buddhist Hagiographical Literature

Buddhist literary works were also crucial in the compilation of the *Samguk yusa*. Aside from the three Chinese *Gaoseng zhuan* collections available in his time,⁷³ Iryŏn is familiar with and refers to three different Korean titles of the same genre: a *Sŭng chŏn* 僧傳 (Lives of Monks), which is cited eleven times;⁷⁴ a *Kosŭng chŏn* 高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Monks), cited once;⁷⁵ and the *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* 海東高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Korean Monks), cited three times.⁷⁶ In Iryŏn's time at least two such works of Korean origin are known to have been extant. The first is the *Kosŭng chŏn* of Kim Taemun, now lost, which was known to Kim Pusik and mentioned in the *Samguk sagi*.⁷⁷ The second is the previously-mentioned *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* compiled by Kakhun 覺訓, a Hwaŏm monk, around 1215. The original was apparently five rolls in length, but only two rolls have been preserved.⁷⁸ Since Iryŏn uses many of the same sources as Kakhun, these two works present important examples of the way different writers utilized their sources in writing history and biographical accounts. Due to the way it uses these sources, Heo Heungsik appraises the *Samguk yusa* and other later late-Koryŏ

⁷² For a more detailed study of this process see McBride, *Domesticating the Dharma: Buddhist Cults and the Hwaŏm Synthesis in Silla Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, forthcoming, 2008), ch. 1.

⁷³ For Huijiao's 慧皎 (497–554) *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (comp. ca. 519–54), see SYKY 3:206, 290; Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (completed in 649 and further revised and edited later) was referred to by several names: the most common of which was *Tang sŭng chŏn* 唐僧傳, see SYKY 3:292; 4:341, 359; and 5:417–18; it was also called *Tang Sŏkkoŭng chŏn* 唐續高僧傳, see SYKY 4:315, and *Tang chŏn* 唐傳, see SYKY 4:325, 341, 343, and 347. Iryŏn never refers to Zanning's 贊寧 (919–1001) *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (compiled in 988, and further edited and revised afterwards) by name; he conflated it with the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* twice in his hagiography of the Silla exegete Wŏnhyo, see SYKY 4:347, where he mistakenly calls it both the *Tang sŭng chŏn* 唐僧傳 and the *Tang chŏn* 唐傳.

⁷⁴ SYKY 3:203 (in two places), 204 (in two places), 216, 218, 224, 232, and 5:384, 390, 416.

⁷⁵ SYKY 5:419.

⁷⁶ SYKY 4:326, 331, and 5:394; Ch'oe Namsŏn, *Samguk yusa: Haeje*, 29–30, only finds two citations for the *Haedong kosŭng chŏn*.

⁷⁷ See *Samguk sagi* 46:432.

⁷⁸ See Kakhun, *Haedong kosŭng chŏn*, 2 rolls, T 2065, 50.1015a–23c; HPC 6:89b–101c; Peter H. Lee, trans., *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks: The Haedong Kosŭng Chŏn* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969). For the textual history of the *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* see Kim Tai-jin, *A Bibliographical Guide to Traditional Korean Sources*, 18–23.

Buddhist texts as being of equal value to the *Haedong kosŭng chŏn*.⁷⁹ I will present evidence below that suggests the *Samguk yusa* is of greater value because it preserves passages from older sources in a manner more consistent than the *Haedong kosŭng chŏn*.

Sŭng chŏn are often the source of variations on anecdotes and tales. Iryŏn conscientiously refers to the information they contain even though he may be skeptical or critical of the version they preserve. For instance, Iryŏn's main version of the story of the slave woman Ungmyŏn 郁面 emphasizes the power of the practice of reciting the name of the Buddha Amitābha (*yŏmbul* 念佛). It tells how a slave woman, due to extreme piety and faith was able to be liberated by the power of her sincere chanting of Amitābha's name in the courtyard of the monastery where her owner belonged to a society of male practitioners that gathered to chant the name of Amitābha for ten-thousand days. Her owner did not allow her to enter the hall where the Buddha's image was enshrined. However, due to her sincerity and ascetic practice of gauging holes in her palms and passing a rope through them, which was tied to two poles in the monastery courtyard, all of the practitioners heard Amitābha's voice calling her to ascend the image hall and worship. Upon entering the hall at the bidding of the male devotees her body was lifted up through the roof past the roof beam and flew off to the west.

The version of the story in Buddhist hagiographical literature, on the other hand, portrays Ungmyŏn as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Kwanseŭm 觀世音) that temporarily backslid in his progress toward enlightenment:

According to the *Lives of Monks*: “The person [called] Tongnyang P'alchin 棟梁八珍 [“Eighth Jewel of the Roof Beam”] was an apparitional manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. Combining [all such transformation bodies] into a crowd there are a thousand. Separating [them] into groups they become two: one is arduous labor, the other is seminal cultivation. In the arduous labor [group], one who knew his responsibilities but did not keep the precepts fell into the path of rebirth as a beast of burden and was reborn as an ox at Pusŏk Monastery 浮石寺. He was entrusted with bearing the sūtras on a trip. Owing to the power of the sūtras he was reborn as a female slave in the house of the *agan* 阿干 Kwijin 貴珍 named Ungmyŏn. Entrusted with responsibilities she arrived at Mt. Haga 下柯山. In response to a dream she subsequently aroused the *bodhicitta* (*pal tosim* 發道心).⁸⁰ The

⁷⁹ See Heo Heungsik, *Koryŏ Pulgyo yŏn'gu*, 749.

⁸⁰ Arousing the *bodhicitta* (lit. “the thought of or aspiration toward enlightenment”) is the fundamental practice by which a Mahāyāna Buddhist believer becomes a bodhisattva. By arousing

agan's house was located not far from Amitābha Monastery (Mit'a-sa 彌陀寺), which was built for the Dharma Master Hyesuk 惠宿. The *agan* went to the monastery often to perform *yōmbul*. His female slave followed him and performed *yōmbul* in the courtyard.” The rest of the story is well known.

Unless we concede that Iryōn desired to preserve something of all the known versions of famous tales, it is hard to understand exactly why Iryōn felt compelled to include this variation. It may have been because it provides a compelling Buddhist interpretation of the story. Regardless, it portrays Iryōn as conscientiously sampling varying voices and allowing different voices to be preserved in his text.

Sometimes monastery records and *Lives of Monks'* records contain contradictory information. The following two short passages contain such information regarding the *bhadanta* Yōnhoe 緣會:

The *Record of Yōngch'wi Monastery* says: “Nangji once said that the site of this hermitage was based on a monastery from the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa. Excavations yielded lanterns and jars, two apiece. During the reign of King Wōnsōng 元聖 [r. 785–798] the *bhadanta* Yōnhoe came and dwelt in the mountain. He compiled the traditions of Master [Nangji 朗智] and spread them throughout the world.”⁸¹

Here the monastery record suggests that the monk lived at the end of the eighth century during the reign of King Wōnsōng and that he was instrumental in the compilation of the life story of the monk Nangji (fl. seventh century). However, in an interlinear note in his hagiographical account of Yōnhoe, Iryōn reports:

The *Lives of Monks* says: “King Hōnan 憲安 [r. 857–861] enfeoffed him as the royal preceptor of two courts and [gave him] the title ‘Radiance’ (*cho* 照). He passed away in the fourth year of the Xiantong 咸通 reign period [863].”

But this is in contradiction [to evidence which suggests that he was active during] the reign of King Wōnsōng. I do not know which is right.⁸²

the *bodhicitta* one embarks on the long quest toward enlightenment and in each rebirth develops the characteristics of a bodhisattva: These are the six *pāramitā*, the wholesome qualities or characteristics of advanced bodhisattvas: giving (*dāna*), morality (*śīla*), patience (*ksānti*, forbearance, acquiescence), effort (*vīrya*), meditative absorption (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). *Miaofa lianhua jing* 5, T 262, 9.44c; cf. Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1976), 249.

⁸¹ SYKY 5:414-415 (*Nangji sāngun Pobyōn su* 朗智乘雲 普賢樹).

⁸² SYKY 5:416 (*Yōnhoe tomyōng* 緣會逃名).

Iryŏn does his best to sort through the sources and portrays what he thinks is the most correct information. Although the context suggests that he disagrees with the information it preserves, Iryŏn does not ignore the hagiographical literature. He preserves it because it is important.

The *Silla sui chŏn*

Another important source for the *Samguk yusa* is the now lost *Silla sui chŏn* 新羅殊異傳 (Tales of the Bizarre from Silla).⁸³ This compilation of strange tales is loosely modeled on the myriad similar collections of transmitted wonders compiled in medieval China (ca. 317–907).⁸⁴ Traditionally it was attributed to the Silla literatus Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn 崔致遠 (857–d. after 908) and the Koryŏ scholar Pak Illyang 朴寅亮 (1047–1096),⁸⁵ although in the *Samguk yusa* Iryŏn suggests that at least one version was composed by a certain Kim Ch’ŏngmyŏng 金陟明 (fl. 1010–1083).⁸⁶ Because the premier narrative of the *Silla sui chŏn*—among the roughly thirteen extant fragments and quotations culled from eight later sources—is a tale concerning an amorous encounter between Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn and two female ghosts in China, Ch’oe probably did not author the compilation.⁸⁷ Some contemporary Korean scholars of the remaining fragments of the text have

⁸³ See SYKY 4:320, 331.

⁸⁴ For an interesting introduction to some of the earliest examples of this literary genre see Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). See also Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in Tang China: A reading of Tai Fu’s Kuang-i chi* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), for a study of Dai Fu’s 戴孚 (fl. eighth century) *Guangyi ji* 廣異記 (Great Book of Marvels). Tang-period tales from this and other sources were preserved, of course, in Li Fang’s 李昉 (925–996) *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Broad Tales of the Taiping Era, compiled in 977–978) in the early Song. Also during the Song period, Hong Mai’s 洪邁’s *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 collected many such tales. In late imperial China see such titles as Pu Songling’s 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 (Strange Tales from Make-do Studio, ca. 1715), Yuan Mei’s 袁枚 (1716–98) *Zibuyu* 子不語 (Stories Confucius Did Not Tell, 1788), and Ji Yun’s 紀昀 (1724–1805) *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (published ca. 1789–98). See Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. by J.R. Foster and Charles Hartman, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 447–448, 508–509.

⁸⁵ *Haedong kosŏng chŏn* 1, T 2065, 50.1018a27 (Ado); cf. Lee, *Lives of Eminent Monks*, 52–53. See also Kim Tai-jin, *A Bibliographical Guide to Traditional Korean Sources*, 8–10.

⁸⁶ SYKY 4:331; see Ch’oe Kanghyŏn 崔康賢, “Silla sui chŏn sogo: churo kŭ myŏngch’ing kwa chŏja e kwanhayŏ” 新羅殊異小考—主로 그名稱과 著者에關하여 (A Study of the *Silla sui chŏn*. On Its Title and Author), *Kugŏ kungmunbak* 25 (1962): 147–163.

⁸⁷ For an introduction see, for instance, Frits Vos, “Tales of the Extraordinary: An Inquiry into the Contents, Nature, and Authorship of the *Sui chŏn*,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 5 (1981): 1–25; and Yi Kŏmguk 李劍國 and Ch’oe Hwan 崔桓, eds., *Silla sui chŏn chipkyo wa yŏkchu* 新羅殊異傳輯校와譯註 (Translated and annotated critical edition of *Silla sui chŏn*) (Kyŏngsansi: Yŏngnam Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 1998).

recently proposed that a purported original attributed to Ch'oe was continually edited and added to by these later writers, although the core work, they argue, dates to the late Silla period.⁸⁸ The *Silla sui chōn* is also important in that among all of the books known to be written or compiled by Koreans, it is closest to the *Samguk yusa* in purpose: the preservation of marvels, traditional tales, and stories of the supernatural.

This excerpt from the *Silla sui chōn* follows an exact transcription of the biography of the monk Wōn'gwang 圓光 (ca. 541–640) as found in the Chinese *Xu gaoseng zhuan*. Iryōn does this for an express purpose:

The old copy of the *Tales of the Bizarre* (*Sui chōn* 殊異傳) located in the house of Chōnghyo 貞孝, the retired tax administrator, records a “Biography of the Dharma Master Wōn'gwang” (*Wōn'gwang pōpsa chōn* 圓光法師傳) that says:

Wōn'gwang's secular surname was Sōl 薛 and he was a native of the [Silla] king's capital. He first became a monk and studied the Buddhadharma. When he was thirty-years of age, he thought he would find a quiet dwelling to cultivate the Path [toward enlightenment]. He dwelt alone on Mt. Samgi 三岐山. Four years later a bhikṣu [monk] arrived and dwelt not far [from him]. By himself he made a *arāṃya* [hermitage] and dwelt there four years. He was a strong and fierce man who was good at cultivating spell techniques. [One day], the Dharma Master [Wōn'gwang] sat chanting sūtras by himself at night.

All of a sudden he heard a ghostly voice calling his name [saying]: “Well done! Well done! Even though there are many [monks] who cultivate [the Path], those who cultivate [Buddhist] practices like you are rare indeed! Now look at that bhikṣu who is your neighbor. Cultivating spell techniques as a shortcut, there is nothing he gains. His tumultuous shouts are annoying to others' silent recitations. [Furthermore,] the place where he resides blocks the road I travel, so every [night] I have to make a detour. I am pretty fed up with him. Would you go tell him what I have said and ask him to move somewhere else. If he dwells here much longer I am afraid I will have to make him suffer the consequences of his sins immediately.”

The next day the Dharma Master went and spoke [to the bhikṣu] saying, “Last night I heard a god that said that you, bhikṣu, should move to another place. And if you do not do so you will suffer some misfortune.

The bhikṣu replied, “You have come here to practice but you have been deluded by a demon. Dharma Master, why do you worry about the threats

⁸⁸ Yi Kōmguk and Ch'oe Hwan, *Silla sui chōn chipkyo wa yōkchu*, 217-238; and Yi Kōmguk and Ch'oe Hwan, *Silla sui chōn koron* 新羅殊異傳 考論 (Studies on the *Silla sui chōn*) (Taegu: Chungmun, 2000), 19–32.

of foxes and ghosts?”

That night the god came again and said, “With respect to the matter I spoke to you about, how did the bhikṣu reply?”

The Dharma Master, fearful of the god’s wrath, replied saying, “After all I have not yet spoken [with him]. If I speak to him with strong words, how can he dare not listen?”

The god said, “I have already heard everything. Dharma Master, why do you need to compensate [for him]? Only be silent and behold what I will do.” [The god] subsequently withdrew and went away.

During the night there was a sound like lightning striking. The next day [Wŏn’gwang] gazed upon it. The mountain collapsed filling in the *aranya* where the bhikṣu dwelt. The god came again and said, “How do you like what you see?”

The Dharma Master replied, “What I see makes me very surprised and frightened.”

The god said, “I have lived for three thousand years and my divine skills are most strong. This was a small feat. What is there that is surprising about it? Aside from this, there are no matters in the future that I do not know and there are no things in heaven and earth that I cannot accomplish. Now, Dharma Master, if you only reside in this place, even though your practices benefit yourself there is no merit for the benefit of others. If you do not make a name for yourself you will not be able to choose an excellent reward. Would it not be better to mine the Buddhadharmā in China and lead [to deliverance] flocks of the deluded in [this land] East of the Sea (Tonghae 東海)?”

[Wŏn’gwang] replied, “Studying the Path in China was that which I originally desired, but the sea and land hinder and obstruct me and I am unable to get through by myself!”

The god described in minute detail a plan for him to follow to travel to China. The Dharma Master, relying on his instructions, traveled to China and remained there for eleven years. He became thoroughly conversant in the tripitaka and, in addition, studied the craft of the scholar-officials (*yusul* 儒術).

In *kyōngsin*, the twenty-second year of King Chinp’yōng [600] (The *History of the Three Kingdoms* [*Samguk sa*{*gi*}] says that it arrived the next year, *sinju* [601]), the Master intended to put his affairs in order and return [home] to the Eastern [Country]. He then returned to his [native] country following an emissary who had been serving at the Chinese court.

The Dharma Master desired to express gratitude to the god, so he went to the monastery on Mt. Samgi where he had dwelt previously. In the middle of the night the god also came and spoke his name saying, “How was your journey on the road over sea and land?”

[Wŏn’gwang] replied, “Having received your immense divine favor I

completed my travels in peace and safety.

The god said, “I also conferred the precepts on a god and, as before, made a binding promise to save them mutually in age after age.”

Furthermore, [Wōn’gwang] made a request saying, “Might I be able to behold your true visage?”

The god said, “If you desire to see my form, you should gaze at the limits of heaven in the east at dawn.”

The next day the Dharma Master gazed upon it. A large arm pierced through the clouds and touched the limits of the heavens. That night the god came again and said, “Dharma Master, did you see my arm?”

[Wōn’gwang] replied, “I saw it and it was very marvelous and extraordinary.” For this reason, [Mt. Samgi] is commonly called Mt. Pijang 臂長山 (Mt. Long Arm).

The god said, “Even though I have this body, I cannot avoid death.⁸⁹ In not many months and days I will give up this body on that ridge. The Dharma Master came to escort [the god’s] cloud-soul on its long journey. When the appointed time came [the god] said, “Come and see.” There was an old fox black as pitch; it only breathed slowly without ceasing, and then suddenly it died.

When the Dharma Master first returned from China, the lords and ministers of our court revered and honored him as their master. He constantly lectured on the scriptures of the Greater Vehicle.

At this time Koguryō and Paekche constantly invaded our border towns. The king was very worried about it and desired to request soldiers from Sui (This ought to be made Tang). He requested the Dharma Master to compose a missive begging for soldiers [to be sent as an expeditionary force]. When the august emperor saw [it], he took three hundred thousand soldiers and personally attacked Ko[gu]ryō. From this we know that the Dharma Master was extensively conversant in the techniques of the scholar-officials. He lived to the ripe old age of eighty-four and entered quiescence. He was buried to the west of Myōnghwal Fortress 明活城.

A little bit later in the text Iryōn provides his reasoning for including the full texts of the life of Wōn’gwang from the *Xu gaoseng zhuàn* and the *Silla sui chōn*.

In the *Tang Biographies* (*Tang zhuàn* 唐傳),⁹⁰ it says that he [Wōn’gwang] entered quiescence in Hwangnyung Monastery 皇隆寺, but I am not certain

⁸⁹ “Death” here is literally “the injury of being inconsistent, inconstant, or irregular” (Kor. *musang chi hae*, Ch. *wuchang zhi hai* 無常之害). “Being inconsistent” (Kor. *musang*, Ch. *wuchang*) is a common Buddhist term for that which is not constant or unchanging, and hence dies.

⁹⁰ This refers to Daoxuan’s 道宣 (596–667) *Further Lives of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuàn* 續高僧傳).

it is that location. I suspect that this is a mistake for Hwangnyong 皇龍 [Monastery]. It is like the example of Punhwang [Monastery's] 芬皇 being written as Wangbun Monastery 王芬寺 [in that same book]. According to the texts of the foregoing two accounts, [both] the Tang and the native [Silla accounts], both Pak and Sól are [given as] his surnames and [that Wǒn'gwang became a monk] leaving the householder [way of life] in the East [Korea] or in the West [China], as if he were two [different] people therein. Because I did not dare to arbitrate [between them], for this reason I have preserved both of them.

Nevertheless, all of the biographical records of that [country, China,] do not mention the events of Chakkap 鶻岬 (Magpie Slope), Imok 璃目 (Crystal Eye), and Unmun 雲門 (Cloud Gate). And yet Kim Ch'ǒngmyǒng, a man of our native [country], has mistakenly spread talk of the streets and embellished the text in his "Life of Master [Wǒn]gwang" (*Kwangsa chǒn* 光師傳) and carelessly recorded the historical traces of Master Poyang 寶壤, the founder of Unmun Monastery. Together they form one biography, but later they were selected by the author of the *Lives of [Eminent] Korean Monks*, who inherited these mistakes and recorded them; hence, people of this time have been much misled by it. For this reason, [in order to] distinguish between these, I neither added nor subtracted one character and recorded the literary details of the two biographies.⁹¹

Unlike Kakhun's *Haedong kosǔng chǒn*, which, as Iryǒn suggests, haphazardly combines legendary material from the *Silla sui chǒn* with more reliable historical information, Iryǒn preserves the strange tales as separate and distinct in the *Samguk yusa* so that readers will no longer be confused by the discrepancies between the Chinese and Korean biographies. Iryǒn is so concerned about keeping the stories straight that he says that in this case he has not altered a word. Although Iryǒn is suspicious of the veracity of the *Silla sui chǒn* story, he preserves it nonetheless because it tells something of the anecdotes and legends of locations in Korea.

Poetry: Native Songs and Encomia

A final important form of native literary material preserved in the *Samguk yusa* is the fourteen *hyangga* 鄉歌/響歌 (native songs), also called *saenae norae* 詞腦歌: songs and poems composed in the vernacular of Silla. The inspiration for six of these is Buddhist, while the remaining eight deal with a variety of native Korean topics including Silla's aristocratic *hwarang* 花郎 (flower boys) corps and shamanic and sexual themes, as in the most famous one titled "The Song of Ch'ǒyong"

⁹¹ SYKY 4:325–326.

(*Ch'öyong ka* 處容歌):

Under the bright moon of the Eastern Capital,
 Having caroused far into the night,
 I return home and behold, in my bed
 There are four legs!
 Two have been mine.
 Whose are the other two?
 Two had once been mine
 What shall I do now since they are taken?

The song is thought to have been composed in the year 879. According to legend Ch'öyong was a handsome man, one of seven sons of the Dragon King of the East Sea. Following Silla King Hön'gang 憲康 (r. 875–886) home from a royal excursion to a seaside village, he took up residence in the Silla capital and married a beautiful woman from a good family. Obsessed by the beauty of Ch'öyong's wife, an evil spirit transformed himself into a man and assaulted her while Ch'öyong was out drinking. When Ch'öyong returned and witnessed the scene he composed the foregoing song impromptu. It so moved the evil spirit that it went away.⁹²

Hyangga were written using the *hyangch'al* 鄉札 (poetic reading, lit. “local documents”) system of writing. It is a form of writing similar to the *idu* 吏讀 (clerical reading) system—the codification of which is attributed to Söl Ch'ong 薛聰 (ca. 660–730)⁹³—that uses some Sinitic logographs for their sound value and others for their meaning as in the ancient writing system used in Japan in composing the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Record of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of a Myriad Leaves, ca. 760). Although *idu* was used until the modern period to transliterate Korean names and titles in such things as official registers and documents, *hyangch'al* was used only for *hyangga* during the Silla and Koryō periods. Along with the eleven Buddhist *hyangga* preserved in the eleventh-century *Kyūnyō chōn* 均如傳 (Life of Kyūnyō [923–973]), scholars have a corpus of twenty-five writings in this genre from which to study the Korean vernacular of Silla and the early Koryō periods and the characteristics of ancient Korean poetry.⁹⁴

⁹² SYKY 2:138–140 (*Ch'öyongnang Manghaesa* 處容郎 望海寺). For an alternate translation see Peter H. Lee, *Studies in the Saenaennorae: Old Korean Poetry*, Serie Orientale Roma, vol. XXII (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orientale, 1959), 78–79.

⁹³ For Söl Ch'ong's biography see *Samguk sagi* 46:431–432; for a discussion of his contribution to the codification of *idu* see SYKY 4:348–350 (*Wönhyo pulgi* 元曉不羈).

⁹⁴ See, for instance, Peter H. Lee, *Studies in the Saenaennorae*. The two most important early contributors to the study of Korean *hyangga* (*saenaenora*) are Ogura Shimpei 小倉進平 (1882–1944),

By contrast, the *Samguk sagi* preserves a few poems, but all of these are Sino-Korean compositions following the established rhyming patterns of Chinese poetics.⁹⁵ By saying this, however, I do not mean to imply that Iryŏn eschewed Sino-Korean poetry. In the *Samguk yusa* he includes forty-eight encomia (*ch'an*, Ch. 讚): poems of praise that cap the presentation of an anecdote about an individual, sacred location, or object previously discussed.⁹⁶ For instance, the following is an encomium to the eminent monk Wŏn'gwang:

Sailing over the sea he was the first
to pierce the cloud of Han soil.
Several people came to dwell
and decanted clear perfume.
The footprints and traces of past years
reside in the green hills.
Kŭmgok and Kasŏ:
these affairs are worthy of mention.⁹⁷

It is not outstanding poetry by any stretch of the imagination. The encomium attempts, however, to condense the fame of Wŏn'gwang into an encapsulated statement. It alludes to his venturing to Chinese soil and to local locations made famous because of him. The next example is the encomium on the famous nine-story wooden pagoda at Hwangnyong Monastery, the state palladium of Silla. While the imagery and diction are more stimulating than the previous example it would be a mistake to think of this as excellent poetry:

Ghosts supplicate divine assistance
to suppress the imperial capital;

who initiated the study of early Korean poetry in his *Chōsen gogaku shi* 朝鮮語学史 (History of the Korean Language) (Keijō [Seoul]: Osaka Yago Shōten 1920; revised, Tokyo, 1940; rpt. Tokyo: Tōkyō Shōin, 1964), and his *Kyōka oyobi ritō no kenkyū* 卿歌及び吏讀の研究 (Studies on *hyangga* and *idū*), *Keijō Teikoku Daigaku Hōbun Gakubu Kiyo* 京城帝国大学法文学部紀要 1 (Keijō, 1929); and Yang Chudong 梁柱東 (1903–1977), *Koga yōn'gu* 古歌研究 (Studies in Old Korean Poetry) (Keijō [Seoul], 1942; revised, Seoul: Pangmun Ch'ulp'ansa, 1954). See also Adrian Buzo and Tony Prince, trans., *Kyūnyō-jōn: The Life, Times and Songs of a Tenth Century Korean Monk*, University of Sydney East Asian Series 6 (Canberra: Wild Peony, 1993), 92–95.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, the “Ode to Great Peace” (*T'aep'yōng song* 太平頌) composed for the Tang court by Queen Chindŏk (r. 647–654); see *Samguk sagi* 5:51–52 (Chindŏk 4) and *Samguk yusa*; SYKY 1:82–84 (both copied it from the Tang histories); or the five Sino-Korean poems composed by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn to be sung accompanied by native music at the Silla court (*hyangak chabyōng* 鄉樂雜詠), see *Samguk sagi* 32:319.

⁹⁶ For a list of the encomia see Ha Chŏngnyong, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an*, 176–180.

⁹⁷ SYKY 4:326 (*Wŏn'gyang sŏhak*).

Resplendent and luminous, glittering and bright
 sway the lofty tile rafters.
 Ascend and look down on [the world]—
 why would only the Nine Han submit?
 You begin to realize that heaven and earth
 by this prominent place are regulated.⁹⁸

Immediately after this poem Iryŏn provides an excerpt from a local gazetteer of Kyŏngju that explains the meaning behind the allusion to the “Nine Han [tribes]” (*kuban*, Ch. *jiuban* 九韓). According to the *Tongdo sŏngnip ki* 東都成立記 (Record of the Founding of the Eastern Capital), the nine stories of the pagoda were believed by people of the time to protect against invasion from Silla’s nine neighboring countries. Each story represents a people: “The first story represents Japan; the second, China; the third, Wu-Yue;⁹⁹ the fourth, T’angna;¹⁰⁰ the fifth, Ūngyu;¹⁰¹ the sixth, Malgal;¹⁰² the seventh, Tanguk;¹⁰³ the eighth, Yŏjŏk;¹⁰⁴ and the ninth, Yemaek.”¹⁰⁵ This local document is thought to have been first compiled by Anhong 安弘, with further addendums by later writers.¹⁰⁶

Medieval Chinese authors, dating back at least to Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), in

⁹⁸ SYKY 3:239 (*Hwangnyong-sa kuch’ŭngl’ap*).

⁹⁹ Wu-Yue 吳越 (Kor. U-Wŏl) refer the names of ancient states in Southern China: Wu refers to the Jiangsu region, in which Suzhou was the capital; and Yue to the Zhejiang region.

¹⁰⁰ T’angna 托羅 (Ch. Danluo) probably refers to the island people of T’amna 耽羅 on Cheju Island, which was subjugated during the Koryŏ period.

¹⁰¹ Ūngnyu 鷹遊 (Ch. Yingyou) means literally “hawk companions” and, hence, seems to refer to wandering pirates, freebooters, or bandit bands.

¹⁰² Malgal 靺鞨 (Ch. Mohe) refers to the Malgal tribes-people who were allies to Koguryŏ and who were the majority in the state of Parhae 渤海 (Ch. Bohai, 698–926), which was formed out of the carcass of Koguryŏ.

¹⁰³ Tanguk 丹國 (Ch. Danguo), literally country of the Tan,” probably refers to the Qidan 契丹 or Khitans who founded the Liao 遼 dynasty (907–1125) after the demise of the Tang.

¹⁰⁴ Yŏjŏk 女狄 (Ch. Nüdi) probably refers to the Nüzhen 女真 or Jurchens who founded the Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234).

¹⁰⁵ The Yemaek 穢貊 probably refer to two separate tribes in the northern part of the Korean peninsula and Manchuria, the Ye and the Maek, which are conflated into one tribe in some Chinese documents. The words are derogatory, lit. “dirty and wild tribes.”

¹⁰⁶ See SYKY 3:239. Anhong is thought to be another name for the monk Anham 安含 (d. 640), who, according to the *Biographies of Eminent Korean Monks*, served as an envoy of Silla to the Sui dynasty in 601 and returned in 605; see *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* 2, T 2065, 50.1021a; Lee, *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks*, 83–88. The *History of the Three Kingdoms* says that he went to China in 576; see *Samguk sagi* 4:40 (Chinhŭng 37). Since Anhong/Anham purportedly died before the idea of constructing a nine-story pagoda was considered by the Silla court (ca. 645), it is unlikely that this passage may be attributed to him. I conclude that the excerpt, at best, dates from the late Silla or early Koryŏ.

his composition of the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han, published in 445), began the practice of appending such “poems”—they are really more like comments in parallel prose—at the conclusion of their didactic biographical essays of historical persons. While such encomia are not common in mainstream Chinese literature from the medieval period, they do appear sparingly in the Chinese *Gaoseng zhuan* collections: Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554) only presented five in his *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Monks, completed ca. 519–554),¹⁰⁷ Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) two in his *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (Further Lives of Eminent Monks, completed in 649 and further revised and edited later),¹⁰⁸ and Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) five in his *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Monks Compiled in the Song, compiled 982–988 and further edited and revised).¹⁰⁹ Even in the new Chan Buddhist narrative literature of the early Song, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of the Transmission of the Lamp Compiled in the Jingde reign period, published in 1004), the author Daoyuan 道原 (d.u.) included only seven encomia.¹¹⁰ Most of the encomia preserved by these monks were not their own compositions, save for the case of a few by Huijiao. Iryōn, on the other hand, seems to be the author of most of the encomia preserved in the *Samguk yusa*.¹¹¹ Iryōn’s inclusion of celebratory poetry in this format is probably far less a result of his being an erudite Buddhist and probably has more to do with his participation in the common practices of people trained in the literary culture of the time.¹¹² By including these poems, Iryōn was able to

¹⁰⁷ *Gaoseng zhuan* 9, T 2059, 50.387c3–6, 387.10–13; roll 11, 399c1–5; 403c15–17; roll 12, 409a23–25; roll 13, 413b15–17.

¹⁰⁸ *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 5, T 2060, 50.465a8–10; roll 25, 647a10–11.

¹⁰⁹ *Song gaoseng zhuan* 4, T 2061, 50.17–20; roll 6, 741a19–20; roll 14, 791a2–3; 793b24–26; roll 24, 865a22–23.

¹¹⁰ *Jingde chuandeng lu* 1, T 2076, 51.205c13–15; 208c25–27; roll 2, 212a26–29; roll 7, 255a7–11; roll 10, 276a10–12; roll 14, 311b23–25; roll 25, 416c29–417a2. However, we should take note that the differences between Sino-Buddhist gāthā (*jie* 偈) and encomia (*zan*) are rather blurred in this composition.

¹¹¹ Ha Chōngnyong concludes that forty-four of the forty-eight encomia contained in the *Samguk yusa* were composed by Iryōn. See Ha, *Samguk yusa saryo pip’an*, 173–188. Kim Sang-hyun disagrees with Ha vociferously; see his “Samguk yusa ūi ch’an yōn’gu” <<三國遺事>>의 讚 研究 (Research on the encomia in the *Samguk yusa*), *Tongguk sabak* 東國史學 41 (2005): 1–28; and also his “Samguk yusa yōn’gu hyōnhwang” (The current state of research on the *Samguk yusa*), in *Iryōnhak yōn’gwōn kukche baksul palp’yo taehoe: Iryōn sōnsa wa Samguk yusa* (Center for Iryōn studies international conference proceedings: Sōn master Iryōn and the *Samguk yusa*), ed. Iryōnhak Yōn’gwōn (Seoul: Iryōnhak Yōn’gwōn and Han’gukhak Chungang Yōn’gwōn [Academy of Korean Studies], 2006), 51–58.

¹¹² See Ko Un’gi, “Samguk yusa ūi ch’ansi wa kŭ ch’ejasang yōkhal e taehayō” 삼국유사의 讚詩와 그 體裁上 역할에 대하여 (On the encomia in the *Samguk yusa* and the role from the standpoint of form/style), *Samguk yusa yōn’gu* 三國遺事研究 (Seoul) 1 (2005): 275–295.

demonstrate his literary prowess by creating word pictures that captured the true essences—or at least perceived significances—of the objects of his poems. In its own way, the evidence of Iryōn’s encomia reinforces my earlier assertion that the *Samguk yusa* was not composed in a distinctively Buddhist genre but was actually composed in the more free *yishi* genre.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Iryōn’s *Samguk yusa* was not intended as a “Buddhist” or “nationalistic” reprisal of putative shortcomings in Kim Pusik’s Confucian-oriented official history, but instead serves to preserve the lore of Korean antiquity by privileging the local discourse of the Korean people and much of his own unofficial voice. This view of the *Samguk yusa* is supported by the circumstantial evidence generated by Iryōn’s choice of genre: the Sinitic *yishi/yusa*. Such a view allows for a more nuanced understanding of the loose style, broad content, and stated purpose of the *Samguk yusa*’s preface. The emphasis on local discourse is buttressed by the fact that the two main figures associated with the work, preferred to spend much of their monastic careers in the southeastern Kyōngsang provinces, although both enjoyed some measure of fame in the Koryō capital.

Iryōn and Hon’gu (Mugŭk), the two known compilers and editors to have worked on the *Samguk yusa*, were accomplished literary figures in their own right during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Their major writings conformed to the dominant literary genres of Chan/Sōn Buddhism. If the *Samguk yusa* had been commissioned by the Koryō court, one would expect it to have been mentioned on one of their steles. That it was not serves as evidence that it was probably unfinished or, at least, not yet viewed as a major work by the scholarly and monastic elite associated with these two monks. Both of these men spent the greater part of their monastic careers away from the Koryō capital in the provinces where they would have been exposed to local literature in the form of sundry literary compilations, monastery records, stele inscriptions, and traditional narratives. These kinds of materials are the basis of many of the most memorable anecdotes in the collection.

Information from various sources of local literature is preserved in the text of the *Samguk yusa*: local chronicles, epigraphy, monastery records, Buddhist hagiography, collections of wonder tales, native songs in the vernacular of Silla and later times, and Sino-Korean encomia. All of these sources used by Iryōn, Hon’gu, and perhaps other unnamed compilers, preserve the lore of Korean antiquity and disparate voices that provide balance to our understanding of the culture and the memory of Korea’s Three Kingdoms period. Notwithstanding the nuance they provide with respect to the *Samguk sagi*’s presentation of Korean

antiquity, there is no evidence that Iryŏn or any other later editor to work on the document intended the *Samguk yusa* to challenge or redress the official position of the *Samguk sagi*. The fact remains, though, that the conservation of these local sources is in an edited format and filtered through the lens of a mid-Koryŏ period compiler. Iryŏn, nevertheless, conscientiously cited these local sources in many cases allowing modern scholars to imagine the original sources that must have been available for the *Samguk yusa* project. In some cases his quotations from these local sources appear genuine because he criticizes and amends them by appending contrary information in interlinear notes. Because these sources probably do not represent the official discourse of the state, they are of great benefit and value in understanding what local people of the late Silla and early Koryŏ period thought about and how they remembered Korean antiquity. By privileging local literature, Iryŏn's *Samguk yusa* preserves something of the voices of people we in retrospect think of as Koreans from ancient and medieval times.

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