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Blessings on the Waves: Miraculous Encounters of Japanese Pilgrim Monks during Sea Voyages Transmitting Dharma from Southern Song China

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Abstract: The maritime route connecting the Chinese continent and the Japanese archipelago facilitated a significant exchange of commercial goods and sociocultural knowledge throughout the Southern Song dynasty. Within this context, Japanese pilgrim monks traveling along this route acted as key conduits for the transmission of Buddhist teachings. Their journeys profoundly influenced the establishment and development of new Buddhist monasteries in Japan. Focusing on biographical accounts that portray the experiences of these pilgrim monks during their twelfth- and thirteenth-century sea voyages, this paper aims to explore how these accounts drew on intertextual links with existing Buddhist records to fulfill the compilers' intentions. Specifically, this paper examines the structure and sources of biographical accounts detailing miraculous encounters between pilgrim monks and Buddhist deities during perilous situations at sea. By interpreting the role of these deities in the corpus of Buddhist literature and within Japanese Buddhist monasteries founded by pilgrim monks, this paper argues that the increasing emphasis on pilgrim monks' attainment of divine protection in their biographical records suggests a growing concern for reinforcing the authority of their dharma lineages. Moreover, the composition and reception of these miraculous accounts reflected the changing religious needs and reshaped strategies for promoting specific Buddhist sects in subsequent periods.



Citation: Liu, Yi. 2024. Blessings on the Waves: Miraculous Encounters of Japanese Pilgrim Monks during Sea Voyages Transmitting Dharma from Southern Song China. *Religions* 15: 134. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010134>

Academic Editors: Albert Welter and James G. Lochtefeld

Received: 27 October 2023

Revised: 9 December 2023

Accepted: 18 January 2024

Published: 21 January 2024



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Keywords: Buddhism; Jiangnan; Pilgrim Monks

1. Introduction

During the Southern Song period (1127–1279 CE), an increasing number of Japanese Buddhist monks embarked on sea voyages to visit Buddhist sites in China, including famous mountains and influential monasteries. Referred to as *nissōsō* 入宋僧 (monks who travelled to the Song dynasty realm), these Japanese monks upheld a tradition dating to the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) when student monks boarded the vessels of *kentōshi* 遣唐使 missions to acquire new Buddhist teachings from China. Recent scholarship focusing on these Japanese monks has construed their purpose of travel as *junrei* 巡礼 (making a pilgrimage) and *denhō* 傳法 (spreading Buddhist dharma). Following the termination of the tributary relations between China and Japan, only a few Japanese monks continued journeying to the Northern Song (960–1126 CE) state. Diverging from their predecessors, these monks prioritized pilgrimages over seeking new teachings from specific Buddhist institutions. However, a shift occurred during the Southern Song, as an increased number of Japanese monks managed to reach the Chinese continent via sea routes operated by Song merchants. During their travels in the lower Yangtze region, these monks redirected their focus towards studying under revered monks in prominent Buddhist monasteries (Huang 2005, p. 190). While Japanese monks set sail on sea voyages with an intent to pursue religious progress through pilgrimage during the Northern Song, the quest for new Buddhist teachings, especially Chan teachings, motivated pilgrim monks to journey to the Chinese continent throughout the Southern Song (Zhang 2020, p. 50). Upon returning and establishing new institutions, these monks significantly influenced the religious landscape of

Japanese Buddhism by introducing new Buddhist theories, texts, and artifacts from the continent.

Benefiting from the establishment of a cooperative network, Japanese pilgrim monks strengthened their connections with Southern Song Buddhist communities through the convenient transportation provided by Chinese sea merchants. Developing during the tenth and thirteenth centuries, this network linked Chinese merchants with Japanese monks for their shared interests in commercial profits and religious progression (Li 2023, p. 21). To elaborate, Japanese monks relied on vessels sailed by Chinese merchants to fulfill religious needs such as pilgrimage and constant exchange of ritual objects and correspondence with the continent. Simultaneously, these merchants sought access to local authorities and resources through their association with monks. From the twelfth century onward, this network grew more intricate and advanced to obtain more social power. As Song merchants settled in Hakata 博多, they collaborated with Japanese monks to establish new Buddhist monasteries and cultivate relationships with local patrons (Li 2023, p. 94). The close ties between Song merchants and the religious institutions in Hakata proved mutually beneficial, with merchants receiving patronage and protection while the institutions gained profits from maritime trade (Cobbing 2013, p. 67). Notably, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Japanese elites known as *kenmon* 権門 became major patrons of maritime trade. The integration of Chinese merchants into the networks of local commercial agents in Hakata resulted in the development of the “Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network” (Von Glahn 2014, p. 273). Through this network, the maritime route between China and Japan functioned as the channel of commercial goods and religious knowledge, profoundly shaping cultural perceptions and activities among Song merchants, Japanese pilgrim monks, and the local communities in Ningbo 寧波 and Hakata.

Previous studies have examined the pilgrimage routes taken by these Japanese monks and their interactions with Chinese monks and literati. Meanwhile, scholarly discussions have emphasized the impact of these pilgrim monks on transmitting Chinese Buddhist dharma lineages to establish new monasteries in Japan. While the diaries written by Japanese pilgrim monks and their biographies composed by later followers serve as primary sources for analyzing their journeys, accounts describing their sea voyage experiences remain relatively unexplored. The diaries written by Japanese monks documenting their journeys to the Tang dynasty provide detailed records of their experiences at sea, including religious prayers and sacrificial offerings conducted by sailors, officials, and monks. These accounts of religious experiences during sea voyages provided valuable sources for monks and lay followers in later times to honor the sea journeys of their monastery founders—pilgrim monks who transmitted Buddhism from the Southern Song state. Significantly, within the biographies composed by these later followers, a distinctive characteristic is the prevalence of miraculous accounts. By portraying divine intervention, particularly the manifestation of Buddhist deities to ensure the safe voyages of pilgrim monks, these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies presented a popular plot narrating pilgrim monks’ experiences of perilous situations at sea. Focusing on the composition and reception of these biographies, this paper aims to explore how the connection between pilgrim monks and Buddhist deities became established through literary construction. Through comparative analyses of these biographies with preexisting Buddhist textual sources, such as *engi* 縁起 narratives and tales from Buddhist scriptures, this paper argues that the production and circulation of these miraculous accounts, representing newly established monasteries’ strategies for promoting the authority of their founders, aimed to reinforce the monasteries’ legitimacy drawn from acknowledged precedents of divine endorsement. Furthermore, with analyses of miraculous accounts elucidating the localization of Chinese deities in Japan, this research presents an instance of how the influence of Buddhist culture from the Greater Hangzhou region extended to the other side of the ocean.

2. Repertoire of Religious Knowledge Regarding Sea Voyages

For Japanese pilgrim monks who embarked on voyages to the Southern Song state, records from previous travelers were instrumental in acquainting them with various ways of managing unforeseen challenges at sea. Diaries authored by envoys and pilgrim monks during the Tang and Northern Song periods contain thorough descriptions of their experiences during sea voyages. In addition to vividly portraying violent storms and huge waves, these diaries also preserve valuable information about religious activities relevant to ensuring a safe voyage. These rites and practices were deemed efficacious in navigating ships through perilous conditions and safeguarding passengers during life-threatening moments. By analyzing the depictions of Buddhist activities during sea voyages as documented in these diaries, this section discusses the shared themes and materials utilized in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies of Japanese pilgrim monks. Essential practices for these monks during sea voyages involved reciting Buddhist scriptures and making offerings to deities, such as Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the Dragon King, constituting crucial knowledge for safe voyages.

The sea voyage to China was portrayed as a life-risking experience fraught with unexpected dangers. A Japanese envoy, returning from a diplomatic mission paying tribute to the Tang court in 805 CE, described the days at sea as struggling against the tempestuous waves and teetering on the edge of life and death (出入死生之間, 掣曳波濤之上)¹. After setting sail, passengers' lives hinged primarily upon capricious winds and waves, capable of either driving the ship forward or causing it to sink. An earlier account from 778 CE detailed an envoy's experience of stormy waves shattering the ship's sails and flooding the deck with surging tides. Subsequently, thirty-eight Japanese envoys and twenty-five Chinese envoys fell overboard and drowned. The surviving envoys floated at sea for days without provisions until they eventually reached Higonokuni 肥後国 and survived². Due to unpredictable weather and other inevitable dangers during sea voyages, passengers aboard vessels were deeply concerned with securing good fortune and divine protection.

Religious relief, especially the act of praying, provided reassurance for envoys, monks, and sailors traveling between China and Japan through the maritime route. According to the diary written by Ennin 円仁 (794–864) titled *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡礼行記 [Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang in Search of the Dharma], during his voyage in 838 CE, after the ship set sail, the envoy initiated religious activities such as painting a portrait of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (C. Guanyin, J. Kannon), seeking advice from study abroad monks, and collectively reciting Buddhist scriptures and prayers (大使始畫觀音菩薩, 請益留學法師等, 相共讀經誓祈)³. When the ship encountered stormy weather, its mast was broken by strong waves, leading the ship to drift in the direction of the waves. As the deck was inundated by the tides, Ennin portrayed a scene where all the passengers on the ship prayed to Buddhist deities and other divinities they believed in (船上一眾憑歸佛神, 莫不誓祈)⁴. The act of seeking religious protection remained a significant memory for Japanese travelers who meticulously documented their experiences throughout their journeys to China.

As Ennin's diary recounted, religious activities invoking divine aid for safe voyages were performed most frequently at two critical moments. When the ship encountered stormy waves, risking potential sinking, passengers commonly turned to reciting the names of deities, particularly Avalokiteśvara, and making vows in prayer. Additionally, to attain a favorable tailwind, rituals of varied forms involving making divination, giving offerings, and observing a fast were essential practices to ensure a safe and smooth voyage. The outcomes of these ritual performances were predominantly effective and beneficial, as evidenced by Ennin's decision to document their significance. Moreover, Ennin's descriptions of other passengers' actions on the ship indicated their belief that the cessation of the storm and favorable sailing conditions directly correlated with the divine power invoked through religious activities. Passengers undertaking sea voyages often held a collective mindset of interpreting their safe arrival as evidence of divine intervention, likening it to "the deities providing aid 似有神理相扶"⁵.

Among the beliefs in divine protection at sea, the power of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was widely recognized for its efficacy in assisting passengers during the crisis of a shipwreck. Prayers to this Buddhist divinity, as illustrated in Ennin's diary, included chanting scriptures and invoking the name of Avalokiteśvara. During Ennin's voyage to the Tang dynasty in 838 CE, the envoy's act of drawing Avalokiteśvara's portrait also functioned as prayer (Hansen 2014, p. 78). When the ship encountered a heavy storm, the envoy tossed goods into the sea, pleading for survival by chanting the names of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and Bodhisattva Myōken (口稱觀音妙見, 意求活路)⁶. Subsequently, the storm subsided, and the envoy arrived in China safely. This practice of invoking Avalokiteśvara for assistance during sea voyages can be traced back to the fifth century, when Faxian 法顯 (337–422) recorded his chanting the names of Avalokiteśvara and the Chinese sangha, seeking blessing for a safe voyage during a heavy storm⁷. Additionally, in Jianzhen's 鑑真 (J. Ganjin, 688–763) biographical accounts, the practice of reciting Avalokiteśvara's name was performed by passengers when confronted with perilous waves.⁸ The collective practice of invoking Avalokiteśvara when facing the peril of shipwrecks was associated with the popularization of the belief in this deity. According to the "Universal Gate" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, those adrift in the waves can recite the name of Avalokiteśvara to reach the shallows (若為大水所漂, 稱其名號, 即得淺處)⁹. Following the guidance of this scripture, travelers who encountered the danger of shipwrecks frequently sought divine protection from Avalokiteśvara. As this Buddhist practice gained recognition as common knowledge among ship passengers, the belief in Avalokiteśvara became influential in seeking safety through prayers during voyages.

In addition to the threat of shipwrecks caused by stormy waves, the unfavorable direction of the wind was another situation that commonly prompted religious activities during Ennin's voyage. Individual prayers for survival during life-threatening moments at sea were directed towards passengers' respective divinities, whereas pleading for a tailwind demanded collaboration among sailors, officials, and monks. The concerted efforts in praying for a tailwind, as a communal experience shared by all passengers on board, manifested in various forms within Ennin's diary. In one instance, when lacking a tailwind, officials consulted with all the passengers and decided to implement a fast aboard the ship. Meanwhile, monks were tasked with chanting Buddhist scriptures and the Buddha's name to invoke favorable winds¹⁰. Accordingly, Ennin performed rituals from the *Consecration Sūtra* to pray for a tailwind. These rituals included the offering of five cereals, alongside offerings to the Dragon Kings from five directions and recitations of scriptures and dhāraṇīs¹¹. The cult of the Dragon Kings held great significance in sea deity beliefs, since they were pictured as dwelling in the sea and possessing the divine power of controlling the waves. Another record associated with the Dragon King in Ennin's accounts was the offerings made to sea deities for ensuring safe voyages. A reflective bead, a string of crystal beads, and a razor were presented as gifts respectively to the Sumiyoshi Daijin 住吉大神, the Dragon King, and the deity in charge of the ship¹². In another rite of offering, silk and mirrors were dedicated to the Sumiyoshi Daijin¹³. These records suggest that the notion of making offerings in exchange for favorable winds was widespread among travelers during sea voyages. Furthermore, the forms and materials of offerings reflects the integration of Buddhist monks' professional ritual skills and sailors' knowledge of navigation and indigenous deities.

While the divine power of sea deities was believed to be a pivotal factor affecting the weather and waves, the occurrence of other natural phenomena was perceived as signs related to various local deities. The ocean between China and Japan was considered a shared domain within the scope of divine powers controlled by sea deities, alongside indigenous celestial and terrestrial deities from both countries. According to Ennin, during his voyage when the ship's mast was struck by lightning, the crew interpreted this misfortune as an outcome of divine displeasure. Subsequently, the crew requested ritual specialists proficient in divination to burn incense on a tortoiseshell in order to discern the cause and resolution of this crisis¹⁴. Shortly afterwards, upon seeing black birds and hearing thunderous

sounds, passengers became frightened and deemed these occurrences as manifestations of a divine presence. In response to these perceived signs of danger, passengers made prayers together hoping to resolve the crisis. Additionally, rituals venerating the deity of thunder and the Sumiyoshi Daijin were conducted onboard, along with pledges made to Chinese mountain and island deities, the Dragon King, and Japanese local deities like Hachiman 八幡¹⁵. The rationale behind the extensive offerings to multiple deities stemmed from the incorporation of diverse beliefs regarding divine existence held by passengers. Interpretations of natural phenomena by different passengers resulted in the performance of varied forms of rituals aimed at ensuring a safe voyage. In other words, sailors and ritual specialists integrated religious traditions as part of their navigation knowledge. Meanwhile, the participation of monk experts in Buddhist rituals facilitated the incorporation of Buddhist elements in this repertoire of navigation knowledge.

Following the cessation of tributary relations between China and Japan, during the tenth and thirteenth centuries, Japanese pilgrim monks and Chinese sea merchants became the primary travelers boarding vessels that crossed the ocean. Acting in the role of envoys, Japanese pilgrim monks, such as Chōnen 喬然 (938–1016) and Jōjin 成尋 (1011–1081), continued to document their experiences of sea voyages. The diaries of Japanese envoys and pilgrim monks were important materials that potentially shaped the initial terrifying impressions of sea voyages for Buddhist monks who resided outside the Kyushu area and prepared their sea journeys based on written records. One piece of evidence demonstrating the utilization of these diaries lies in Jōjin’s account, noting a scene he observed during his voyage—birds fluttering around the mast—that was similarly depicted in Ennin’s *Nittō guhō junrei kōki*. Hence, for pilgrim monks who traveled during the Southern Song period, these earlier records could have had a substantial impact on their experiences of sea journeys.

As Ennin and Jōjin depicted in their diaries, the recitation of the Buddha’s name, mantras, and Buddhist scriptures was a commonly shared practice among pilgrim monks throughout their sea journeys. Conversely, other passengers aboard the ship engaged in diverse forms of religious prayers aligned with the traditions of their respective group identities. In the *San Tendai Godai san ki* 參天台五台山記 [Record of a Pilgrimage to Mount Tiantai and Mount Wutai], Jōjin commenced with the account of boarding the ship and departing to the Northern Song state in 1072. As a Buddhist monk affiliated with the Japanese Tendai School, Jōjin diligently followed his daily practice known as the “practices for seven two-hour periods” (七時行法), which included reciting a specific fascicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* and making offerings to Bodhisattva Cintāmanīcakra and Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. In addition to this daily practice, Jōjin separately chanted the Avalokiteśvara mantra and the vāyu mantra ten thousand times each day to pray for a safe voyage at sea (毎日念聖觀音呪一萬遍, 風天真言一萬遍, 祈乞海安)¹⁶. During days spent in an enclosed cabin and nights devoid of stars, Jōjin described himself as adhering to his Buddhist practices and refraining from distractions like alcohol, unlike his three companions. During the voyage, as the waves surged against the mast and the winds turned unfavorable, the crew became restless, resorting to prayers to the divinities and engaging in divination. Meanwhile, Jōjin stayed calm and repetitively chanted the name of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī on Mount Wutai, the names of ten thousand Bodhisattvas, and the names of five hundred Arhats at the Stone Bridge on Mount Tiantai more than ten thousand times. Subsequently, he recited the Acalaṇātha mantra and soon received auspicious omens in his dreams. The next day, as the weather turned better and favorable winds blew, Jōjin attributed these positive outcomes to the divine intervention resulting from his chanting ten-thousand times¹⁷. Although Jōjin followed different scriptures and deities compared to Ennin’s choices, their shared approach to prayer illustrates the continuity of a Buddhist tradition guiding pilgrim monks in handling perilous situations during sea voyages.

In addition to Buddhist practices, Jōjin documented the sailors’ expertise in navigating the ship. Techniques like observing the stars, islands, and conditions of sea water were efficient in estimating directions and locations in the ocean. Their expertise, as detailed in

the *Mengliang lu* 夢梁錄 (1274), empowered sailors to explain the meanings of natural phenomena such as winds, waves, and clouds¹⁸. As passengers on the vessels relied on sailors' knowledge of navigation for a safe arrival, sailors assumed responsibility for explaining occurrences and determining the necessity of religious activities to appease the divinities potentially obstructing voyages. Nevertheless, there were instances when sailors' expertise failed to handle severe windstorms, leading passengers to cling to the hope of divine protection. In the *Xuanhe fengshi gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 (1167), a Chinese envoy recounted the hardships and perils of a sea voyage as insurmountable without the blessings and assistance of divinities¹⁹. Therefore, prayers for divine blessings spread as crucial knowledge among sea passengers and played a significant role in their voyage experiences.

Correspondingly, Jōjin's descriptions of divination practices onboard indicate the circulation of ritual knowledge within the community of sailors and merchants. For religious rites conducted by the Song crew on the ship, Jōjin recounted that merchants and sailors offered chicken and wine as sacrifices to various divinities. Concurrently, they burned money and streamers made of paper while reciting the prayer text (以鷄酒祭諸神, 燒紙錢幡讀祭文)²⁰. Similarly, the practice of offering sacrifices to deities by Song merchants and sailors was documented in another pilgrim monk Kaikaku's 戒覺 (n.d.) *Tosō ki* 渡宋記. During his sea voyage to the Northern Song state in 1082, Kaikaku witnessed the ritual of offering wine and meat to the deity of wind at midnight. The captain adjusted his hat and robe before reciting the prayer text, while the sailors presented the wineglass in a basket. This ritual ended with a feast where all the passengers partook of wine and meat²¹. Accounts from Song literati's travel diaries, such as Lu You's 陸游 (1125–1210) *Rushu ji* 入蜀記 [A Journey into Shu] written in 1170, provide evidence that the practice of using animals as sacrificial offerings to pray for a smooth voyage was popular among Chinese sailors navigating inland waterways²². The repertoire of knowledge concerning praying for safe voyages, developed collaboratively by officials, sailors, merchants, and monks voyaging between China and Japan, significantly impacted the network within which the integration of Buddhism and religious beliefs held by different groups of people took place. Drawing from these existing accounts that detailed the religious world experienced by pilgrim monks, biographies produced by Buddhist monks and lay followers of particular monasteries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries served to promote their founders' sea voyages transmitting Buddhism to Japan.

3. Accounts of Miraculous Encounters between Pilgrim Monks and Deities

In contrast to diaries that offer firsthand accounts, biographies composed by later followers of Japanese pilgrim monks reflect the notions shaped by these followers' socioreligious contexts. A prominent characteristic of these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies lies in the depiction of pilgrim monks' sea voyages to the Southern Song state, which is interwoven with miraculous accounts. These narratives often featured pilgrim monks encountering severe weather during sea voyages and obtaining divine protection to ensure their safe arrival—a plot that was widely embraced and appreciated. Furthermore, the selection of materials to flesh out this plot—specifically, the arrangement of forms and contents regarding the divine manifestation—revealed the authors' intentions to associate pilgrim monks with particular deities and promote the religious prestige of monasteries established by these monks. As they transitioned from being pilgrim monks to founders of new monasteries, the historical accounts left by these monks underwent rewriting by later followers. These revisions aimed to position their founders within an enduring Buddhist tradition of disseminating dharma overseas.

The theme of divine protection frequently recurs in travel logs, diaries, and biographies related to Buddhist pilgrim monks. Distinctively, biographies of Japanese monks who experienced sea voyages to the Southern Song state depict the manifestation of deities as direct contact in realistic scenes, contrasting with the representation of divine intervention through signs of natural phenomena or the metaphor of dreams. Depending on the literary genre, travel logs and diaries authored by pilgrim monks often utilize signs and

metaphors as mechanisms to rationalize the manifestation of divine protection. For example, Jōjin attributed favorable weather at sea to auspicious signs stemming from the appearance of deities in his dreams. Earlier biographies of pilgrim monks, predating the Southern Song period, similarly exhibited the authors' attempts to phrase divine manifestations with ambiguities when narrating the positive resolution of perilous situations at sea. In Jianzhen's eighth-century biography titled *Tō daiwajō tōsei den* 唐大和上東征傳 (779), during a severe storm that threatened to overturn the ship, a celestial sound urged the passengers to stop tossing goods into the sea. Subsequently, a sailor claimed the presence of four heavenly kings safeguarding the ship. Several days later, four golden fish appeared and circled the vessel amidst the stormy waves. When the ship reached the shore, four white fish emerged, guiding it safely to the port²³. As this depiction implies, these four fish symbolized the incarnation of four heavenly kings²⁴. By following the plot set by the author, readers' interpretations and imaginations realized a concrete association between the fish and deities. The signs of natural phenomena offered sufficient space for reinterpretation, while the metaphor of dreams distinctly emphasized a liminal phase between reality and illusion. According to this biography, when Jianzhen and his companions faced imminent danger of dying of thirst at sea, a monk dreamed of an official promising to summon rain and provide them with drinking water. As foreseen, the rainwater arrived and rescued all the passengers on board²⁵. Portraying dreams as the supernatural realm facilitating interactions between deities and ordinary humans, biographies employed the metaphor of dreams to elucidate situations as if divine intervention took effect during sea voyages.

Typically, the plot of miraculous accounts within these texts indicate that happenings in dreams can directly impact real-life situations. Through their literary compositions, these texts sought to convince readers to perceive their depictions of miraculous scenes as authentic. This narrative technique can be traced back to the *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 系觀世音應驗記 compiled between the fifth and sixth centuries. A passage from this text recounts the story of a fisherman who experienced a shipwreck and drifted until he reached an isolated rock at sea. In this desperate situation, this fisherman attempted to rely on belief in Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, as he had heard from others. With deep piety, he fell asleep and saw two people sail a small vessel to rescue him, blurring the line between reality and dreams (如夢非夢). Upon awakening, the fisherman found that the two people indeed existed, and he boarded their vessel to reach the coast²⁶. This genre of texts, known as the collected records of miraculous responses, has been prevalent since the belief in Avalokiteśvara spread and developed. Considering the similarities in the plots and skills of composing miraculous accounts, these *yingyan ji* (records of miraculous responses) might have potentially served as the prototypes for travel logs, diaries, and biographies written in later periods. With the ongoing utilization of miraculous accounts infused with abstract signs and metaphors, the structuring and mechanism of biographical narratives for Japanese pilgrim monks stabilized over time.

However, the miraculous accounts in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies composed for pilgrim monks who returned from voyages to the Southern Song state tended to use detailed and concrete descriptions to depict divine interventions. These accounts portrayed deities as not just uttering miraculous responses but also descending onto the ships of pilgrim monks and having dialogues with them. For instance, according to the *Shōichi kokushi nenpu* 聖一國師年譜 (comp. 1281), during Enni's 円爾 (1202–1280) voyage returning to Japan in 1241, near the coast of Goryeo, strong winds led to the sinking of two ships. In this critical moment, a woman appeared on the ship. Enni inquired about her presence, to which she responded, "I am Bodhisattva Hachiman. I am here to offer you protection 我是八幡大菩薩, 故來護師耳" and vanished²⁷. In addition to this example of receiving protection from a Japanese divinity, another miraculous account depicting pilgrim monks being rescued by Chinese indigenous divinities is presented in the *Banshū Katō gun Ōbe shō Kyokuraku san Jōdo ji kaso den* 播州加東郡大部莊極樂山淨土寺開祖伝 (1372)²⁸. Based on this biography, during Chōgen's 重源 (1121–1206) sea journey to the Southern Song in 1167, at the time when a strong gust of wind caused the ship to tilt to one side, a deity

adorned in red robes, accompanied by around eighty heavenly boys, appeared on board and proclaimed, “We are guardian deities of Mount Yuwang 吾是育王山之守護神也”. Receiving the deities’ blessings, Chōgen arrived in the Song realm smoothly²⁹. Distinct from earlier accounts in the *yingyan ji* texts and travel diaries, where divine intervention was indirectly expressed in varied forms, this thirteenth-century biography explicitly detailed miraculous responses in the form of deities’ manifestations to protect pilgrim monks from the danger of shipwrecks.

The plot of this miraculous account, wherein the deity appeared in human form, introduced his divine identity, stated his promise of protection, and disappeared immediately, can be related to the genre of *engi* (origin narratives). A similar account exists in the *Onjōji ryūge-e engi* 園城寺龍華會緣起 composed in 1062. This account states that during Enchin’s 円珍 (814–891) return voyage to Japan, an elderly man appeared on the ship and vanished after saying, “I am Shinra Myōjin. I will safeguard the dharma you transmitted awaiting Maitreya’s descending to the world 我是新羅明神也, 為和尚護持仏法期以慈尊出世”. The composition of this text, intended to promote the cult of Shinra Myōjin, employed a narrative technique portraying miraculous encounters as dialogues between monks and the incarnations of deities. This technique was efficient in consolidating the authority of Buddhist teachings brought by pilgrim monks and establishing a direct link between the founder of Buddhist monasteries and specific guardian deities. Since the early works of *engi* were composed in response to disputes questioning the legitimacy of certain Buddhist monasteries, *engi* narratives were intended to strengthen the authority of their institutions (Blair and Tsuyoshi 2015, p. 4). The thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies of pilgrim monks who journeyed to the Southern Song state thus were influenced by these *engi* narratives.

Considering the characteristics of *engi* narratives, their descriptions of miraculous encounters embodied the veneration of monastery founders, the assertion of sectarian legitimacy, and the claim of institutional superiority. Despite their credibility being in question, these descriptions stemmed from the religious knowledge prevalent within the authors’ sociocultural context and came into existence as responses or defenses against influential debates of their times. For instance, the *Onjōji ryūge-e engi* has been demonstrated to be a product of Enchin’s followers’ intentional appropriation of the cult of Sekizan Myōjin 赤山明神 related to Ennin. The composition and circulation of this text were associated with disputes between the Jimon 寺門 and Sanmon 山門 sects within the Tendai 天台 school (Kim 2019, p. 41). Accordingly, the *engi* narratives emphasized fulfilling authors’ religious needs more than presenting accurate portrayals of historical realities. Similarly, the selection of materials in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies of monks returning from the Southern Song state shows a deviation from faithful descriptions of their life events. For example, the aforementioned biography of Chōgen gave precedence to miraculous accounts rather than presenting his practical works (Goodwin and Wilson 2015, p. 114). Therefore, resemblances between these accounts in the *engi* texts and the biographies of pilgrim monks indicate a mutual interest in promoting new Buddhist monasteries established by these monks. Employing the recurrent theme of receiving divine protection to bring back Buddhist teachings through sea voyages, followers of these pilgrim monks strived to secure political recognition, economic profits, and religious prestige for their monasteries.

Due to the enduring influence of pilgrim monks who disseminated Buddhist teachings and founded monasteries in Japan, biographies detailing their lives were composed and preserved as texts embodying religious power. Among Japanese pilgrim monks who journeyed to China during the Southern Song period, approximately seventeen percent³⁰ had thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies that included depictions of miraculous encounters protecting them from the perils of sea voyages. Based on the sources of divine power, divine intervention within these miraculous accounts can be broadly classified into three categories: the appearance of a celestial body, the power of Buddhist treasures, and the manifestation of Buddhist guardian deities. Comparative analyses of different versions

of these pilgrim monks' biographies suggest a higher frequency of miraculous accounts in biographies produced by their subsequent followers than those collected in Buddhist historiographies, such as the *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書 (comp. 1322). Moreover, the inclusion of additional details in later versions of these biographies indicates the accumulation of multiple layers resulting from revisions made over different time periods. The complexity of these biographies is evident in the diverse range of source materials utilized. For instance, certain versions replaced the name of a deity with another one while retaining the main storyline. As these biographies were predominantly composed by followers of specific dharma lineages to serve their religious aims, the revisions made in different versions serve as valuable reflections of their changing sociocultural contexts. Using analyses of the sources these miraculous accounts drew on, the process of how religious authority was perceived and constructed by both the authors and readers of these biographies can be further understood.

Biographies recounting pilgrim monks' voyages returning from the Southern Song state often include miraculous accounts involving celestial occurrences, such as the appearance of stars and the moon. Since identifying stars is crucial for navigating at sea, these miraculous accounts are distinctive in connecting the knowledge of navigation with Buddhist beliefs. According to the *Sennyūji Fukaki hōshi den* 泉涌寺不可棄法師傳 (1244), when Shunjō 俊苧 (1166–1227) returned to Japan in the spring of 1211, the ship encountered a windstorm. While merchants on the ship were panic-stricken by the turbulent waves, Shunjō sat in the cabin and made prayers to the celestial devas and the Dragon Kings in the sea, pleading for their assistance in upholding their pūrvapranīdhāna (primal vow) to protect the Buddhist scriptures and statues aboard the ship. Suddenly, a star as large as a wheel descended onto the mast and the storm ceased. Describing this scene with the term *zuisō* 瑞相 (auspicious signs), miraculous accounts in this biography construed the shining star as a direct response to the pilgrim monk's fervent prayers. A previous account linking stars to safe voyages at sea describes the envoy who invoked the name of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and Bodhisattva Myōken for salvation. In the *Nittō guhō junrei kōki*, following this envoy's safe arrival in China, in fulfillment of his vow to these two deities, he ordered three Japanese painters to draw portraits of Bodhisattva Myōken and the four heavenly kings at the Kaiyuan 開元 monastery. Afterward, the envoy lighted one thousand lamps as offerings to these divinities, expressing gratitude for saving his life at sea. The envoy pledged to create life-size portraits for Bodhisattva Myōken, Bhaiṣajyaguru, and Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara upon returning to Japan. This account signifies the dissemination of knowledge regarding Bodhisattva Myōken's efficacy of blessing safe voyages, whereas the descriptions in Shunjō's biography suggest a notion that strengthens the correlation between stars and Buddhist divinities. Portrayed as indispensable factors, the intervention of divine power and the divine endorsement for transporting Buddhist scriptures were believed to ensure the safe return of ships to Japan.

Another miraculous account applying the term *zuisō* can be found in the biographies of Shinchī Kakushin 心地覺心 (1207–1298). According to his epitaph, inscribed between 1299 and 1303 and titled *Juhō kaisan Hattō Enmyō Kokushi toumei* 鷲峰開山法燈圓明國師塔銘³¹, Kakushin boarded a Song merchant ship returning to Japan in 1254. When their ship was caught in waves and storms, Kakushin assembled other passengers to recite the name of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. An auspicious sign occurred as the moon appeared above the sail and the wind ceased. Shortly afterwards, they reached Hakata smoothly. Although the biography of Kakushin in the *Genkō Shakusho* did not include this miraculous account, later biographies from the fourteenth-century *nenpu* and the sixteenth-century *engi*³² revised this account with additional details, such as a portrait of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara carried by Kakushin. It is particularly noteworthy that the sixteenth-century *engi* included a passage elucidating the emergence of the auspicious sign. This text not only attributed the appearance of the moon to a manifestation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara but also identified Kakushin as the incarnation of this deity. Correspondingly, the stormy waves were interpreted as the Dragon King approaching Kakushin to seek Buddhist teachings. Additional

descriptions incorporated into Kakushin's biography mentioned the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* and twenty life-sized wooden statues of arhats transported from the Southern Song state during this return voyage. Two fascicles of the scriptures were thrown into the sea as offerings to the Dragon Palace, while one statue remained on the ship to serve as a guardian deity upon the captain's request. This new plot woven by the fifteenth-century compiler illustrates the intricate layers within the biographies of pilgrim monks, especially after their acknowledgement as the founders of monasteries. Furthermore, the intention of promoting the scriptures and statues preserved in the Kōkoku 興國 monastery of Kii 紀伊 entailed a shift of focus in this biographical account where the founder's authority was extended to Buddhist objects revered in the monasteries.

Due to the belief that the ocean was the dwelling of Dragon Kings, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies of pilgrim monks often associated the wave conditions with the power attributed to these deities. According to the *Genkō Shakusho*, during Chinese monk Wu'an Puning's 兀庵普寧 (1197–1276) voyage to Japan in 1260, a sea dragon appeared atop the mast, clutching seven magnificent jewels. These miraculous accounts frequently connected the protection of Buddhist dharma by the Dragon Kings to sacred objects, such as scriptures, jewels, and śāriṛa stūpas. The power of Buddhist treasures was depicted in pilgrim monks' biographies as impacting the safe arrival of their sea journeys. Shunjō's biography provides another instance emphasizing the assertion that divine power was embodied in Buddhist treasures. In 1210, while Shunjō was preparing for his return voyage, a powerful hurricane hit the Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo) port, causing destruction to around eighty vessels. However, the ship carrying Shunjō's Buddhist scriptures and other texts remained intact. These miraculous accounts not only showcased pilgrim monks' authority to obtain divine protection but also underscored the authenticity and legitimacy of the religious objects they transported.

Similarly, a subsequent account of a śāriṛa stūpa also linked pilgrim monks' sea journey experiences with the material objects worshipped in their newly established Buddhist monasteries. According to the *Kaisan gyōgōki* 開山行業記 (1275), Jinshi Eison 神子榮尊 (1195–1273) traveled on a Song merchant ship returning to Japan in 1238 and encountered a windstorm that overturned several vessels. The merchant inspected the valuable goods carried on the ship and compelled Eison to cast the śāriṛa stūpa into the ocean. Subsequently, the wind ceased abruptly. Upon the ship's smooth arrival at the shore of Kyushu, Eison glanced back at the sea and saw a large turtle ferrying the śāriṛa stūpa towards him. This stūpa was eventually stored and worshiped in the Manju 萬壽 monastery of Hizen 肥前³³. The plot of this miraculous account represents the typical storyline of legends detailing the transmission of Buddhism to Japan. Deriving from the *engi* narratives, these legends depict Buddhist monks' sea journeys transmitting Buddhism to Japan. During these voyages, the Dragon King seized Buddhist treasures carried by monks but subsequently returned them (Abe 2018, p. 123). The Buddhist treasures, retrieved from the Dragon Palace, thus embodied divine power and effectively served as proof of the spiritual eminence of the monks, who were often revered as the founders of specific monasteries (Abe 2018, p. 128). By drawing from established literary sources, the miraculous accounts in the biographies of pilgrim monks could become more acceptable to their intended readers.

Two elements in this miraculous account—the stormy waves caused by the śāriṛa stūpa and the turtle's assistance in transporting it—might be derived from earlier texts in Buddhist scriptures. In the *Sāgara-nāga-rāja-paripṛcchā sūtra*³⁴, it is recounted that the Dragon Kings once beseeched the Buddha to retain the śāriṛa within the sea to aid in their pursuit of enlightenment³⁵. Correspondingly, the merchant's action, which forced Eison to throw the śāriṛa stūpa into the sea, could suggest a mindset that interprets the occurrence of the severe windstorm as the Dragon King's desire to acquire the śāriṛa. The omission of a clear explanation illustrating the connection between the casting of the śāriṛa stūpa and the cessation of the windstorm implies that this biography assumes familiarity with this plot among its readers as common knowledge. Moreover, the account of the turtle in the *Samyukta-ratna-piṭaka sūtra* narrates how a group of merchants acquired treasures

from the sea and subsequently had their vessels caught by a rākṣasa. Hearing the merchants' prayers for help, a large turtle approached their vessels and carried them across the sea³⁶. As this scripture claimed the turtle was the incarnation of the Buddha, the adaptation of this narrative in Eison's biography reinforced the authenticity of the śārīra stūpa in the Manju monastery by emphasizing its connection with the Buddha through intertextual links.

Another account adopting the plot of a turtle retrieving lost Buddhist treasures from the sea appears in the 1303 edition of the *Kenkyū gojunreiki* 建久御巡礼記 (1191). According to this account, Jianzhen carried three-thousand śārīras on his voyage to Japan, drawing the attention of the Dragon King, who summoned winds threatening to capsize his vessel. Shortly after Jianzhen threw the śārīras into the sea, a turtle emerged and transported the śārīras back to him³⁷. Notably, preceding editions of this text before 1303 solely mentioned Jianzhen bringing three-thousand śārīras to Japan and placing them in a stūpa shaped like a turtle. Furthermore, given that the records documenting the existence of this śārīra stūpa date back to 1116, these later accounts are proven as legends retrospectively composed to elucidate its origin (Wang 2010, p. 83). This variance in the inclusion of miraculous accounts among these editions signifies the prevalence of this plot, possibly influenced by Eison's biography composed in 1275. Further parallels between the miraculous accounts of Eison and Jianzhen lie in a later version of the *Tō daiwajō tōsei den* composed in 1322. Within this text, subsequent to losing the śārīras, upon reaching Japan, Jianzhen and his disciples conducted rituals invoking sea deities, made vows to establish a monastery to transmit the dharma, and recited Buddhist scriptures to gain merits for the sea dragons. Eventually, a turtle carrying the śārīras approached the shore and transformed into an elderly man, declaring his identity as the Dragon King³⁸. Evidently, materials added to this miraculous account of Jianzhen exhibited similar patterns present in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies of pilgrim monks returning from the Southern Song state. Therefore, the emergence of more biographical texts incorporating these patterns reflect the reception of these miraculous accounts among Buddhist monks and the community of lay followers.

4. Appropriation of Chinese Indigenous Guardian Deities

One distinctive characteristic of biographies describing pilgrim monks' sea journeys to the Southern Song state is that miraculous accounts predominantly feature in paragraphs recounting these monks' return voyages. While the travel diaries of pilgrim monks from the Tang and Northern Song periods elaborate on their prayers during voyages to China, these subsequent biographies placed greater emphases on their safe arrival at the shore of Japan with Buddhist teachings and religious objects brought from China. Drawing from earlier diaries of pilgrim monks, the miraculous accounts in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies strategically adopted preexisting plots and highlighted intertextual references. Hence, these biographies aimed to reinforce the authority of Buddhist theories transmitted to Japan and practiced within newly established monasteries. The appropriation of two indigenous Chinese deities from Mingzhou, Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli 招寶七郎大權修利 and Cishan Zhang Dadi 祠山張大帝, exemplifies how these miraculous accounts functioned in utilizing the traits of guardian deities to consolidate the religious legitimacy of a particular Buddhist sect. Accordingly, the growing interest in portraying the manifestations of divinities during pilgrim monks' return voyages to Japan arose from the practical need to affirm the authority of dharma transmission and secure patronage to support newly established monasteries.

The notion of interpreting the manifestation of Buddhist divinities as a recognition of Buddhist teachings and objects transported by the ships returning to Japan paralleled the mindset found in the Song dynasty tales. Accounts concerning voyages presented river and lake deities as possessing the capacity to judge the moral integrity of passengers. Consequently, the narratives of receiving divine protection to survive shipwrecks functioned as a means for Song literati to assert their moral superiority, distinguishing them from oth-

ers (Zhang 2010, p. 55). Thus, perilous situations during voyages were construed as trials to evaluate the specific characteristics of passengers, with divine protection symbolizing the successful accomplishment of this challenge. Moreover, stories of shipwrecks from the Song dynasty frequently illustrate the theory of karmic retribution through portraying miraculous encounters experienced by passengers at sea (Huang 2017, p. 199). According to tales from the *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, passengers who did good deeds and presented proper offerings to the divinities could gain divine protection during the peril of shipwrecks³⁹. The publicization of their biographies detailing experiences of enduring storms thereby served to affirm the divine approval received by pilgrim monks.

Apart from implying divine protection as authorization to disseminate specific Buddhist teachings in Japan, accounts describing the conversations between pilgrim monks and guardian deities reflected an intention to emphasize the deities' endorsement of newly established monasteries. According to the *Jianchang kaishan Dajue chanshi Lanxi heshang xingzhuang* 建長開山大覺禪師蘭溪和尚行狀 written around 1375, once when wandering on a mountain, Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (1213–1278) encountered a divine figure wearing a high hat. The figure gestured to him, saying that his destiny lay in the East, and vanished. Soon after, Lanxi visited a shrine and recognized this figure as Cishan Dadi. While residing in the Tiantong 天童 monastery, one day, Lanxi went to the port of Mingzhou to witness the arrival of a Japanese ship. This figure reappeared and urged him to depart for the East. Lanxi then offered incense at the shrine of Cishan Dadi at the port, vowing, “If I establish a Buddhist monastery, I shall invite you as the tutelary deity of the land 我若建立伽藍, 請汝為土地神.” Narratives of divinities giving signs to set sail for voyages can be traced to biographies of pilgrim monks who traveled to the Tang realm. As the *Tō daiwajō tōsei den* (779) recounts, Jianzhen dreamed of three officials in red and green robes bidding farewell to him on the shore. He believed this dream augured the success of his sea voyage. Another account of guardian deities and pilgrim monks in the *Tendaishū Enryakuji zasu Enchin den* 天台宗延曆寺座主円珍傳 (902) notes that Enchin dreamed of Sannō Myōjin 山王明神 informing him of an imminent departure to the Tang realm. Messages conveyed by divinities in dreams indicate a distinctive connection between pilgrim monks' sea voyages and the guardian deity worshiped in the monasteries they were affiliated with.

A historical precedent of the plot in which pilgrim monks made pledges to enshrined deities of indigenous land as the guardian deity of their newly founded monasteries is evident in the *Sekizan Daimyōjin engi* 赤山大明神縁起 (948). The vow made by Ennin at the Chishan 赤山 shrine states the following: “Upon returning to my home country, I will establish a Chan monastery to enshrine the Tripitaka, and I shall invite the deity of Mount Chi as the guardian deity protecting the dharma 我還本朝, 建禪院安置一切經等, 傍勸請赤山之神為佛法之鎮主.” Subsequently, an elderly man appeared and replied to Ennin that as the tutelary deity of Mingzhou⁴⁰, he would accompany Ennin to guard the dharma, manifesting himself as a local deity in Japan till Maitreya descended. Significantly, this account attributed the transportation of scriptures and statues across the seas to Sekizan Myōjin's efforts. The subsequent compilation, *Onjōji ryūge-e engi*, further developed this plot by depicting how Shinra Myōjin directed Enchin to establish a new monastery at a particular site and enshrine his received teachings there. With the connection established between the guardian deity and Buddhist objects preserved in the monastery, the authority of sectarian teachings found a stable source, which originated from the local manifestation of a Chinese indigenous deity.

Besides the narratives of pilgrim monks requesting Chinese indigenous deities to guard their newly established monasteries in Japan, accounts of Chinese tutelary deities offering to voyage to Japan with pilgrim monks represent another strategy of asserting religious superiority (Kawamura 1975). One particular version of Dōgen's 道元 (1200–1253) biography provides a detailed account describing the relocation of a guardian deity from China to Japan via a sea voyage undertaken by pilgrim monks. In the *Eihei kaisan Dōgen zenji gyōjō Kenzeiki* 永平開山道元禪師行狀建誓記 written between 1468 and 1472, when Dōgen set sail for his voyage returning to Japan in the winter of 1227, a deity appeared at the

side of the ship, declaring the following: “Master, I am the deity of nāga and deva. In China, I am titled Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli. Knowing that you have brought the patriarch’s dharma seal to your homeland, I will accompany you to protect the dharma. 弟子是龍天也, 在支那曰招寶七郎大權修理菩薩. 知師佩祖印還鄉, 隨師護正法.” At Dōgen’s request, this deity transformed himself into a small white snake and stayed in Dōgen’s bag. When sailing into the storm, Dōgen recited the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* and witnessed the manifestation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara of Mount Putuo 普陀 on a lotus leaf. Dōgen depicted a portrait of this Avalokiteśvara, later renowned as “Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara on a leaf 一葉觀音”. The miraculous accounts of these two bodhisattvas with inconsistencies in their plots imply a later integration of records collected from various existing sources. Since this biography directly connected Dōgen’s attainment of dharma transmission with the guardian deity enshrined in the newly founded monasteries in Japan, this miraculous account might be a later compilation intended to legitimize the bond between the founders of these monasteries and the guardian deities from China.

The plot depicting the dragon’s transformation into the form of a snake in this biography resembles an earlier account found in the *Foguo ji*. Faxian noted that a dragon with white ears resided in Sankassa and provided rainfall to protect the land from natural disasters. Buddhist monks established a shrine and regularly presented offerings to this revered dragon. Every year, at the time of summer retreat, this dragon transformed into a snake. Monks recognized its distinctive white ears and placed the snake in a jar. Remarkably, after circulating the jar among the monks to facilitate interaction with the snake, it disappeared. Elements involved in this account, such as the protection from the dragon and the transformation into a form suitable for a movable container, were further developed in miraculous accounts within the *Kenzei ki*. According to the *Chongbian zhutian zhuan* 重編諸天傳, the Sāgara is considered to represent the dragon manifestation of Bodhisattva Daquan⁴¹. The correlation between the dragon deity and Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli, as portrayed in Dōgen’s biography, was thus derived from enduring themes within Buddhist narrative tradition.

The Cishan Zhang Dadi and Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli possess the traits of both land tutelary deities and seafaring deities. Essentially, the divine power of these two deities functioned to safeguard the land and ensure safe sea voyages. Considering the common framework of pilgrim monks’ biographies, these traits were crucial for divinities who served as central figures in miraculous accounts. Accordingly, the reason for selecting these two deities in miraculous accounts related to pilgrim monks might lie in these distinctive traits, which distinguished them from other Chinese indigenous deities. Introduced into Japan between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, these two deities were enshrined in newly established Zen monasteries as guardian deities protecting the Buddhist teachings practiced in specific sects. In particular, Bodhisattva Daquan Xiuli was often paired with Daruma as the attendant divinities of the Buddha on the altars in most Sōtō Zen monasteries (Durt 1984, p. 128). Since the cults of these two deities were prevalent in the Jiangnan region, their transmission to Japan was under the influence of the Chan culture originating from the “Five Mountains” (C. Wushan, J. Gozan 五山) (Nikaidō 2015, p. 10). Therefore, the appropriation of these two deities, as seen in the pilgrim monks’ biographies, promoted their new identity as the *garanjin* 伽藍神 (guardian deity of the monastery) and emphasized their close association with the founders of monasteries.

While Zhang Dadi’s cult gained widespread influence in the Jiangnan region, Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli was revered as the tutelary deity of Mount Yuwang (Aśoka) in Mingzhou. Historical records suggest that the belief in this bodhisattva was popular during the Song dynasty but waned in the Ming dynasty due to the growing impact of Mazu’s 媽祖 cult (Nikaidō 2015, p. 31). However, inconsistencies in texts introducing the origin of this bodhisattva led to controversies over the name and identity of this deity⁴². Several texts compiled the records identifying this bodhisattva as the guardian deity of the Ayuwang 阿育王 monastery. However, limited evidence, such as a location named Daquan cave and poems referring to this deity’s name in the two gazetteers of

this monastery, could demonstrate the origin of this deity (Bingenheimer 2016, pp. 85–86). Nevertheless, as this deity's increasing impact in Japan and declining reputation in China indicate, the establishment of this deity in the Sōtō Zen monasteries incorporated this deity into their sectarian teachings by promoting the miraculous encounter in their founder's biography as the new origin of this deity.

Meanwhile, employing this strategy of reinforcing the authority of sectarian teachings through portraying divine endorsement from guardian deities, later biographies of Dōgen compiled in the seventeenth century replaced Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli with a new deity in the miraculous accounts. The original accounts in the *Kenzei ki* recounted that prior to Dōgen's return to Japan in 1227, when he was copying the *Biyān lù* 碧巖錄, Bodhisattva Daquan Xiuli came to offer him a torchlight and aided him in swiftly completing the copy. However, the biographies from the seventeenth century altered the identity of this deity to Hakusan Myōjin 白山明神 (Nakaseko 1993, p. 232). Through the integration of new materials into the existing framework and plot of pilgrim monks' biographies, these seventeenth-century biographies established new connections between the founder of Sōtō Zen monasteries and the Japanese indigenous tutelary deity. The change in the guardian deity's identity within the miraculous accounts thereby reflected the new religious needs emerging from the sociocultural context confronted by the seventeenth-century followers of these monasteries.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the production of biographies for pilgrim monks who transmitted Buddhism to Japan became prevalent during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as a response to the sociocultural circumstances faced by the monasteries founded by these monks. In contrast to diaries written by monks who journeyed to the Tang and Northern Song realm, these biographies emphasize miraculous encounters that occurred during pilgrim monks' return voyages to Japan. Within these miraculous accounts, divine intervention protecting vessels from shipwrecks manifested in the form of celestial signs and the appearance of divinities. Following a common plot of monks encountering perilous situations and obtaining divine assistance, these biographies aimed to strengthen the religious authority of pilgrim monks. Moreover, biographies of Chinese monks who voyaged to Japan and established new monasteries also included similar miraculous accounts. As Buddhist teachings transmitted from the Southern Song state by pilgrim monks became major practices in their newly founded monasteries in Japan, the authority of these monks was connected with the legitimacy of these monasteries. Hence, divine assistance in these accounts serves as endorsements from divinities, exhibiting the authenticity and significance of the teachings practiced and the religious objects revered within these monasteries. Correspondingly, these miraculous accounts elevated the prestige of specific monasteries by constructing a bond between their founders and divinities.

Despite sharing a recurrent plot, these biographies differ in their selections of materials to construct narratives. Specific divinities are chosen as subjects of divine intervention in these miraculous accounts based on the varied sources of religious authority they aim to derive from. Comparative analyses indicate that these miraculous accounts were adaptations of preexisting narratives rather than original compositions. Drawing on themes such as blessings from Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the transmission of Buddhist treasures seized by the Dragon King, these miraculous accounts continued a narrative tradition rooted in the corpus of Buddhist literature incorporating *engi* and legends from scriptures. Although these miraculous accounts might be considered fabrications deviating from factual history, their depictions of encounters between monks and divinities remain within the rational scope of supernatural occurrences in their authors' and readers' religious world. Furthermore, these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century biographies portray weather conditions and religious activities during pilgrim monks' voyages in the same way as diaries written by earlier pilgrim monks. For example, records from these diaries also note the performance of rituals such as reciting scriptures and presenting offerings

as means of invoking divine blessings during perilous situations at sea. Therefore, these miraculous accounts can be interpreted as their authors' imaginative representations of the realistic experiences of sea voyages based on accounts provided by pilgrim monks and narratives pertinent to sea journeys transmitting Buddhism. Through intertextual connections, these biographies situate their descriptions of pilgrim monks into an enduring Buddhist tradition within which human experiences and divine intervention are intertwined. After the prevalence of these biographies, later versions of miraculous accounts provided additional details or altered the identities of divinities to rewrite these accounts according to their current needs. Possibly, these biographies might serve a devotional or memorial use among communities of later followers. Moreover, the reception of these biographies as either hagiography or unreliable historical accounts awaits further investigation.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- 1 延曆二十四年六月乙巳条 in *Nihon kōki* 日本後紀 (comp. 840). See Mori (2011, p. 342).
- 2 宝龜九年十一月乙卯条 in *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 (comp. 797). See Mori (2011, pp. 341–42).
- 3 CBETA B 18–95. 5a11–12.
- 4 CBETA B 18–95. 5b15–16.
- 5 CBETA B 18–95. 117a1.
- 6 CBETA B 18–95. 6b8.
- 7 See *Foguo ji* 佛國記. Original text: 法顯爾時亦一心念觀世音及漢地眾僧, 蒙威神祐, 得至天曉.
- 8 See *Tō daiwajō tōsei den* 唐大和上東征傳 (779). CBETA T 51–2089. 990b26–27.
- 9 CBETA T 9–262. 56c10–11.
- 10 CBETA B 18–95. 35a8–9.
- 11 Five cereals refers to rice, millet, broomcorn millet, wheat, and beans. The description of practicing rituals as per the *Consecration Sūtra* exists in two places in Ennin's diary (CBETA B18–95. 32a8–9 and CBETA B18–95. 32a15), both related to the prayers for a tailwind.
- 12 CBETA B 18–95. 33a9–11.
- 13 CBETA B 18–95. 34b16–17.
- 14 CBETA B 18–95. 36a14–15.
- 15 CBETA B 18–95. 37a5–11.
- 16 CBETA B 32–174. 341a25–26.
- 17 CBETA B 32–174. 341b22–c1.
- 18 See *Mengliang lu*, fascicle 12 for “jianghaichuanjian 江海船艦”.
- 19 See *Xuanhe fengshi gaoli tuijing*, fascicle 39. Original text: 臣竊惟海道之難甚矣。以一葉之舟, 泛重溟之險, 惟恃宗社之福, 當使波神効順以濟, 不然則豈人力所能至哉。
- 20 CBETA B 32–174. 341a22–24.
- 21 See the original text in Wang and Haruhisa (2004, p. 153).
- 22 See the *Rushu ji*, fascicle 5 for descriptions of the rite of *kaitou* 開頭.
- 23 CBETA T 51–2089. 990b27–c11.
- 24 In the biography of Situo 思托 from the *Yanli senglu* 延曆僧錄 (791). However, these four golden fish were referred to as the incarnation of the dragon who sought to snatch the śarīra carried by Jianzhen on the ship. See Wang (2010, p. 83).
- 25 CBETA T 51–2089. 990c11–21.
- 26 See Dong (2002) for the story of a man residing in Haiyan 海鹽 from the *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji*. Additionally, three other passages in this text recount the miraculous responses experienced by Liu Cheng 劉澄, Zhu Facheng 竺法純, and Liang Sheng 梁聲 upon chanting the name of Avalokiteśvara. The form of divine intervention they witnessed during the danger of a shipwreck included the appearance of two guardian deities, an empty vessel, and a shoal. Apart from this text, the other two collected works of Avalokiteśvara's spiritual responses titled *Guangshiyin yingyan ji* 光世音應驗記 and *Xu Guangshiyin yingyanji* 續光世音應驗記 also included stories of receiving divine protection during sea voyages.
- 27 Another version of Enni's biography describing this miraculous encounter can be found in the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 (comp. 1322), fascicle 7.
- 28 The *Banshū Katō gun Ōbe shō Kyokuraku san Jōdo ji kaso den* can be found in the *Jōdo ji engi* (comp. 1614). <https://lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/da/jodoji/> (accessed on 30 September 2023).

- 29 This miraculous account is not included in the biography of Chōgen in the *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書, fascicle 14.
- 30 According to statistics from Enomoto (2013), during the Southern Song period, around thirty-six Japanese Buddhist monks voyaged to China. Among these pilgrim monks, six of them had biographies depicting their miraculous encounters at sea. Moreover, during this period, nine Chinese Buddhist monks traveled to Japan to transmit Buddhist teachings. Two of them had portrayals of miraculous encounters in their biographies composed by later followers.
- 31 This epitaph was authored by Xijian Zitan 西澗子曇.
- 32 The *Juhō kaisan Hattō Enmyō Kokushi gyōjitsu nenpu* 鷲峰開山法燈圓明國師行實年譜 compiled by Shōkun 聖薰 after 1382. The *Kishū yuryō Juhō kaisan Hattō Enmyō Kokushi shi engi* 紀州由良鷲峰開山法燈圓明國師之緣起 compiled by Tokukyō Yūrin 德馨有鄰 between 1517 and 1518.
- 33 A slightly different version of this narrative can be found in the *Mizukamisen manjukaizan jinshizenji gyōjitsu* 水上山万寿開山神子禪師行実.
- 34 The connection between the *Sāgara-nāga-rāja-paripṛcchā sūtra* and ensuring safe sea voyages is evident in the edicts documented in fascicle 7 of *Shoku Nihon kōki* 続日本後紀 (comp. 869). One edict from 838 (仁明天皇承和五年三月甲申) states the failure of envoys' sea voyages to the Tang court resulted from the deficiency of merits that invoked the blessings of divinities. The emperor thus decreed the ordination of Buddhist monks to practice this sūtra in monasteries and shrines across Japan, aiming to pray for the secure arrival of these envoys. Another edict, issued one month later (四月壬辰), specified that the emperor commanded the recitation of this sūtra throughout Japan, starting from the month these envoys embarked for the Tang realm until the day they returned to Japan. See Lu (2019, p. 14).
- 35 CBETA T15-598. 152a6-10.
- 36 CBETA T4-203. 464b14-28.
- 37 The Maeda edition (前田家本) of the *Kenkyū gojunreiki*. See Wang (2010, p. 83).
- 38 The *Tō daiwajō tōsei den* authored by 賢位 in 1322. See Wang (2010, p. 83).
- 39 Reference as: “Zhao Shizao 趙世藻” in *Yijian yi zhi* 夷堅乙志, fascicle 4. “Lin Wengyao 林翁要” in *Yijian bing zhi* 夷堅丙志, fascicle 13. “Quzhenou Yangke 泉州楊客” in *Yijian ding zhi* 夷堅丁志, fascicle 6.
- 40 Other records in Ennin's *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* note Sekizan Myōjin as a deity from Dengzhou 登州 (present-day Shandong 山東).
- 41 CBETA X88-1658. 435a15-16. See Nikaidō (2015, p. 41).
- 42 Varied accounts regarding the identity of Bodhisattva Zhaobao Qilang Daquan Xiuli can be seen in the entries “Daquan Xiuli Pusa” and “Zhaobao Qilang” from the *Zenrin shōki sen* 禅林象器箋 compiled by Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1631–1744).

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