Chajang lamented that he had been born in a borderland. He longed to go to the West [to China, to participate in] the Great Transformation. In the third year of the Inp’yŏng reign period, the pyŏngsin-year [636], he received royal permission and, together with his disciple Sil and more than ten junior colleagues, went West, entering Tang, and visited Mount Qingliang [Mount Wutai].

On the mountain there was a clay form [statue] of the Great Saint Mañjuśrī. The traditions of that country say that the Lord Śakra, king of the gods, had artisans come fashion it. Chajang supplicated before that image for resonance from the unseen world. In his dream-state, the image rubbed his forehead and conferred on him a Sanskrit gāthā [verse]. When he awoke, he did not yet understand [what the verse meant]. When morning came, a strange monk came and explained it. Furthermore, [the monk] said, “Even though you study myriads of teachings, nothing will ever exceed this [gāthā].” Moreover, entrusting him with a kaṣāya [monk’s robe] and śarīra [relics], he vanished.¹

This anecdote about the aristocratic Silla monk Chajang’s worship of and spiritual encounter with Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva important to the Hwaŏm tradition, illustrates several of the themes with which this book is concerned: the adoption and adaptation of religious practices by elites and the role, in this process, of imported deities and systems of understanding the cosmos. This book deals with the origins, composition, and function of Buddhist cults in the early medieval Korean state of Silla (ca. 300–935).² In this connection it touches on a few themes and topics that inhabit the overlapping boundaries between several fields in the study of history and religion: questions of class and cultural context, the role of literature, and ritual studies. Fundamentally, it calls into question a scholarly assumption that the
nameless masses are responsible for the dissemination of “popular” religious practices and that those practices are a static heritage of man’s primordial polytheism.³ More precisely, it challenges the two-tiered model of religion that divides the concept into two distinct groups based upon imagined perceptions of religious practitioners: elite versus folk religion, intellectual versus popular religion, philosophy versus vulgar practices, and other such designations deployed usually as heuristic devices.

Although the limitations and inefficacy of the two-tiered model have been shown repeatedly by scholars in recent years—most notably in Peter Brown’s study of the cult of saints in Latin Christianity; Gregory Schopen’s work on the cults of the book, relics, and images in medieval Indian Buddhism; and Michel Strickmann’s research on the interconnections between Buddhist and Daoist rituals and medical practices in medieval China⁴—this model has been and is still pervasive among students of the history of religion.

The conventional wisdom offered by the two-tiered model is wrong. Neither material nor literary evidence supports its conclusions. In this book I demonstrate the role that religious and social elites played in the domestication of the religion. I also consider the place of objects, images and icons, dreams, spells, repentance rituals, and devotional practices associated with buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sundry deities in the religious life and organizations of lay and monastic Buddhists in Silla Korea between the sixth and tenth centuries C.E. The thesis of this work is that the popularity of Buddhist cults among Silla’s social and religious elites was the primary cause behind the successful domestication of Buddhism and that this form of the religion achieved its ultimate phase when codified with the observances of Silla’s Hwaŏm tradition, which provided a compelling vision of the relationship between ritual and reality by incorporating key cultic practices. The attractive potency and legitimating power of Buddhist symbols motivated the social and religious elites of Silla to rename the country’s famous sites in Buddhist fashion, re-inscribing the local geography as a past Buddha-land. In time this gave way to a Hwaŏm-inspired vision of Silla topography that imbued the country with a deeper religious significance that has remained to this day. The power and potency of these sites was made accessible to the people of Silla through cultic practices.

The practices of Buddhist cults became so ubiquitous in the traditions of East Asian Buddhism in succeeding times that we tend to take their presence for granted. Although the origins of some of these Buddhist cults in China and their importation and development into Japan have received a certain amount of scholarly attention, the Buddhist history and heritage of Korea have often been overlooked. This study seeks to recognize the contributions of Silla Buddhists to the shared East Asian
Buddhist heritage and to emphasize the vital role that cults and Hwaŏm symbolism played in Korean Buddhism.

**Buddhism as Cultic Practices and Rituals**

The Buddhism that entered the Korean peninsula was a cosmopolitan religion that linked the Indian cultural sphere with the Sinitic cultural sphere through Central Asia. Mahāyāna Buddhism practiced in China was not a simple, coherent belief system but a vast assemblage of practices. A richer picture of medieval Chinese Buddhism is now emerging in which cult and ritual play a central role in the dissemination of the religion. Although he is addressing Chinese perceptions of India, Michel Strickmann encapsulates a seminal aspect of the way that Buddhism transformed the religious practices of the Silla people:

> The therapeutic aspect of Buddhism, in the medical as well as the spiritual sense of the word, lent powerful support to capital formation in promoting the religion’s eastwards diffusion. But for the special circumstances attendant upon the end of Buddhism, which was also to be the end of the world, material means alone of dealing with disease were not adequate. It was necessary to channel the full resources of the spirit-realm against the demonic menace, and this could best be done through ritual. Indian scriptures offered potent *mantras* towards this end, each to be recited under the proper ritual conditions, and each embodying the concentrated force of a particular Buddha, Bodhisattva, or a benevolent guardian deity.

Buddhism provided the people of Silla, particularly social and religious elites, with a cosmopolitan weltanschauung that enabled them to assimilate Indian and Chinese culture and technology, both material and spiritual, and yet preserve many of their indigenous aristocratic traditions in a new Buddhist form. The ritual aspects of Buddhist culture that were indigenized by the people of Silla included new ways to generate blessings and benefits, quell demons and ghosts, deal with illness and death, and protect family interests. Catherine Bell’s theoretical work on ritual suggests that Silla society would have been profoundly changed in the process of acculturating new ritual practices: “Ritual can be a strategic way to ‘traditionalize,’ that is, to construct a type of tradition, but in doing so it can also challenge and renegotiate the very basis of tradition to the point of upending much of what had been seen as fixed previously or by other groups.”

The missionary monks who went from China and India to the ancient and early medieval Korean kingdoms of Koguryŏ (traditional dates,
37 B.C.E.–668 C.E.), Paekche (traditional dates, 18 B.C.E.–660 C.E.), and Silla not only brought the widely varying religious teachings attributed to the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, and his followers, but also technology, skills, rituals, and religious practices from throughout China and the Indian subcontinent. These skills, including the use of literary Chinese, had trickled into the peninsula in the sporadic waves of immigration from the Chinese cultural sphere over preceding centuries. It was, in fact, the transmission of Buddhism by royally or imperially sanctioned monks to the courts of the Korean kingdoms that truly began the process of normalizing relations between the Chinese dynasties and peninsular kingdoms during China’s period of disunion (ca. 220–589).

The Chinese monk Shundao (Kor. Sundo) introduced Buddhism to the Koguryŏ court, having been sent by the Former Qin emperor Fu Jian (r. 357–384), and, notwithstanding the fact that Chinese monks had been corresponding with Koguryŏ monks since the early fourth century, the religion was received “officially” by the king and made a state religion in 372.⁸ In 384 the Serindian monk Maranat’a (Skt. *Mālānanda), an emissary of the Jin dynasty, introduced Buddhism to the court of Paekche, where it was also made a state religion.⁹ Monks of various ethnic origins then traveled from Koguryŏ to bring Buddhism to the kingdom of Silla during the fifth century, but it was not officially accepted until about 535. For several hundred years, monks from the Korean kingdoms traveled to China and India in search of the Buddhist teaching and brought back Chinese and Indian culture and technology as well. This process was more or less concluded during China’s greatest cosmopolitan age of the Tang (618–907). Thus, Buddhist monks were the purveyors of Chinese culture—from architecture, calendrics, literature, and clothing to statecraft and government institutions—and Koreans, in turn, transmitted their knowledge and understanding of “Buddhism,” which included their mastery of Sinitic culture, to the Japanese islands. Monks sent under the direction of the Paekche king officially introduced Buddhism to the Japanese ruler in the mid-sixth century (552 or 538). Unofficial correspondence between monks on the continent and the peninsula and official diplomatic relations between the Korean kingdoms and Chinese states brought a flood of Chinese books and manuals other than Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, such as the Confucian classics and works on statecraft, which inspired the aristocratic rulers of the early Korean kingdoms to attempt to form centralized, authoritarian polities based on textual Chinese models.

The promotion of Buddhism by royalty and aristocracy in many Asian countries created a cosmopolitan culture linking India, Central Asia, and East Asia in much the same way that Christianity unified and
defined the culture of medieval Europe. The kingdom of Silla was profoundly influenced by the diverse Buddhist culture of the continental kingdoms, and the cults of many buddhas and bodhisattvas began to develop during the sixth and seventh centuries. Like the Chinese and the Japanese, the Koreans of the Silla kingdom built massive monasteries in their capital to house large images of these deities, and carvings of buddhas and bodhisattvas in stone multiplied on rocky hills and mountains around the country. The cults of Maitreya, the future Buddha and lord of Tuṣita Heaven; Amitābha, the Buddha of the Western Paradise Sukhāvatī; and Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, in Silla, which shared similar practices, were the most diffused of the cults of buddhas and bodhisattvas during the Silla period. All of the cults included meditative and visualization exercises, devotional practices, such as making offerings and chanting the names of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the recitation of dhāraṇīs or Buddhist spells. When Hwaŏm Buddhism was established in Silla at the end of the seventh and early eighth centuries, it quickly became the most powerful and influential approach to Buddhist practice on the peninsula because of royal and aristocratic patronage. The purveyors of Hwaŏm Buddhism in Silla assimilated the practices and rituals of the preexisting cults of buddhas and bodhisattvas, thereby enabling Hwaŏm to develop into the most influential tradition in Korean Buddhism during the first half of the eighth century.

Exegetical Literature and Cultic Practices

Making merit and the efficacy of Buddhist practices appear to have been just as important to monastic Buddhist intellectuals as to lay Buddhists. For instance, in his Commentary on the Three Maitreya Sūtras (Sam Mirŭk kyŏng), the monk-scholar Kyŏnghŭng, who served as Silla’s supreme Buddhist overseer (kungno, “state elder”) in the late seventh century, provides a list of practices believed to cause rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven:

(1) The practice of discussing the precepts (tam’gye), which means acting in dignified manner without fail; (2) the practice of worshipping stūpas (kyŏngt’ap), which means sweeping stūpas and painting the precincts; (3) the practice of making offerings (kongyang), which refers to precious incense and wondrous flowers; (4) the practice of absorption (tŭngji), which means all samādhis enter the correct feelings (chŏngsu); (5) the practice of sūtra-chanting (songgyŏng); and (6) the practice of sūtra-recitation (tokkyŏng).¹⁰
It is clear that Kyŏnghŭng conceived of Maitreya worship as encompassing all facets of Buddhist worship. In a long passage explaining these six practices in greater detail he describes how the cult of Maitreya and the desire for rebirth in Tuṣita are conducive to the three essential goals of classical Buddhist practice, the three teachings—morality, meditation, and wisdom—and that all merit-making practices from the maintenance of stūpas to sūtra recitation can also be marshaled under its head. The first three practices are associated with the precepts or morality, the third with meditation, and the final two with the development of wisdom. He says that if you cultivate six or five practices you will be reborn in the highest grade of the highest class in Tuṣita Heaven, if you cultivate three or four practices you will be reborn in the middle grade of the highest class, and if you cultivate one or two practices you will be reborn in the lowest grade of the highest class.¹¹

Scholarship on Buddhism has typically subordinated descriptions of monastic exegetes’ interest in cultic practices to their doctrinal views and philosophical speculations. It is somewhat similar to the case of classicists’ discomfort with and disbelief of Augustine’s description of the efficacy of the cult of Saint Martin of Tours at the end of his philosophical masterpiece *The City of God*. This is the legacy of what Gregory Schopen calls “Protestant presuppositions” in Western scholarship that privileged idealized, canonical descriptions of what a monk is and does. Renewed interest in archeology, material culture, and the ritual dimension of religion are causing scholars such as Schopen to rethink the image of the medieval Buddhist monk:

A picture of the actual Indian Buddhist monk and nun is gradually emerging; he and she differ markedly from the ideal monk and nun who have been presented on the basis of textual material alone. The actual monk, for example, unlike the textual monk, appears to have been deeply involved in religious giving and cult practice of every kind from the very beginning. He is preoccupied not with Nirvāṇa, but, above all else, with what appears to have been a strongly felt obligation to his parents, whether living or dead. He appears, in short, as very human and very vulnerable.¹²

Eminent monks and exegetes in East Asia were much like their Indian brethren described above. They were first and foremost practitioners who hoped to gain spiritual and thaumaturgic power from their cultic activities. Although these practices are usually labeled “popular Buddhism,” this designation is ultimately unsatisfactory and creates more problems than it resolves because it presumes that religious elites perform different Buddhist practices. The terms “popular” and “folk” give the impression that these practices were marginal or subaltern with
respects to the “great tradition of elite Buddhist scholars,” who purportedly indulged solely in philosophical musings on spiritual liberation and their concomitant ascetic and meditation practices. A review of the hagiography on the major figures in East Asian Buddhist history shows that this was far from the actual situation. The Chinese pilgrim, translator, and Yogācāra exegete par excellence Xuanzang (ca. 602–664), for instance, venerated Maitreya and worshipped Avalokiteśvara in a variety of practices, including spells and ritual procedures, throughout his life.¹³ Another monk, Daoshi (ca. 596–683) devoted an entire encyclopedia to canonical descriptions and stories devoted to all aspects of Buddhist practice and belief, *A Grove of Pearls in the Garden of the Dharma (Fayuan zhulin).*¹⁴ The aristocratic and intellectual monks of Silla, such as Chajang (d. between 650–655), Wŏnhyo (617–686), and Ŭisang (625–702), whose rituals and performances are described in the chapters that follow, were no different. Even the most renowned intellectual monks were intimately associated with various culturally informed, “popular” Buddhist practices. Thus, “popular Buddhism” is really mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the cultic practices that comprise it were promoted and patronized by eminent Buddhist exegetes and religious elites, aristocrats, and royalty.

In this book, literary materials are the primary sources used to construct episodic histories of the cults of Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara, and Hwaŏm Buddhism in Silla. As in the case of other studies of topics in Sinitic Buddhism, scholarly exegesis, hagiography, epigraphy, and the writings of literati are the most common sources.¹⁵ Although a complete picture of what Gregory Schopen calls “Buddhism on the ground” would also include a detailed discussion of art historical materials dating from the Three Kingdoms (traditional dates, 57 B.C.E.–668 C.E.) and Unified Silla (668–935) periods, some architectural and art historical material will be used to describe the way that Hwaŏm symbolism was assimilated to Silla’s topography.

The two main literary sources for the study of ancient Korea are the *History of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk sagi)* and *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk yusa).* The former was compiled by Kim Pusik (1075–1151) during the years 1136 to 1145 and follows the pattern set by Sima Tan (ca. 180–110 B.C.E.) and Sima Qian’s (146–86 B.C.E.) *Historical Records (Shiji).* As in the other Chinese dynastic histories in this genre, Buddhist themes are not treated in great detail and are ignored in many respects. Nevertheless, the *History* preserves important facts regarding the Silla royalty’s deployment of Buddhist symbolism in order to provide legitimacy vis-à-vis the powerful hereditary aristocracy.

Although late in comparison to such works as Daoxuan’s (596–667) *Further Lives of Eminent Monks (Xu gaoseng zhuan),* which was completed
in 649 and further revised afterward, and Kyōkai’s *Miraculous Stories of Japan (Nihon ryōiki)*, which was first compiled in 787, *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* is the major source of the hagiographical anecdotes that provide much of the detail in this book. It was compiled initially by the Buddhist monk Iryŏn (1206–1289), most likely in his final years after the devastating Mongolian invasion and subjugation of Korea in the mid-thirteenth century. The collection was further amended by his disciple Mugŭk (Hon’gu, 1250–1322) and also later by other unknown hands. The work of is a hodgepodge of legends of historical people, places, and events, short stories, local narratives, poetry, songs, and so forth, similar to some Chinese works of the *yishi* genre.¹⁶ Though most scholars trained in Korea do not question its validity, Western scholars are typically skeptical of the value of *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* not only because of its late date, but also because of its fanciful subject material and anachronisms.¹⁷ *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* was compiled originally during the mid-Koryŏ period (918–1392), but many of the narratives it includes are derived from accounts contained in earlier historical documents, biographies, stele inscriptions, gazetteers, and collections of wonder tales emphasizing the traditions and local discourse of the ancient Silla domain. Although the hand of Iryŏn and other later editors is obviously evident, *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* preserves much of the original language of its sources as far as such sources can be checked.¹⁸ Despite its shortcomings, and the inescapable fact that what was selected for inclusion in the text must have been influenced somewhat by concerns and interests dating to the Koryŏ period, I believe that it preserves much useful information on Buddhist cults in the Silla epoch when used carefully and judiciously.

Epigraphy from the Silla period, composed by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, has been preserved in various sources, such as monastic records (*saji*), and is compiled in a number of modern collections. Such literature provides much germane detail regarding religious communities and practices at particular religious sites. The shortcomings of *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* are remedied, in part, through this useful material. The collected writings of the Silla literatus Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn (857–d. after 908) are also particularly useful in fleshing out the nature of the Hwaŏm tradition in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Many of Ch’oe’s stele inscriptions and poems composed at Buddhist monasteries were preserved in several kinds of premodern sources, particularly those seeking to present noteworthy examples of literati writing. Ch’oe’s writings provide important information on the relationship between local elites, Buddhist cultic practices, and the Hwaŏm tradition.

Buddhist sūtras and sections of exegetical materials composed by Silla and contemporary Tang Chinese monks that treat Buddhist prac-
tices associated with the worship of particular buddhas and bodhisattvas are also frequently consulted. Such literature not only fleshes out what contemporary Buddhist monks thought appropriate practices were and the significance of cultic observances but also serves a useful heuristic device giving insight into how Silla Buddhists understood and applied Buddhist beliefs their own way.

**Buddhist Cults and the Hwaŏm Synthesis in Silla Korea**

It is commonly accepted that the actual establishment of Buddhism in Korea began in the sixth and seventh centuries when the doctrinal schools of Sino-Indian Buddhism were established in Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla. Silla’s unification of the Three Kingdoms by conquest in the mid-seventh century and close relations with Tang China thereafter are the background to the importation of new practice-oriented schools in the seventh and eighth centuries. Emphasis on “schools” defines Korean Buddhism until Sŏn (Chan/Zen) became the dominant form of Buddhism at the end of the Unified Silla period. This model of early Korean Buddhism not only fails to do justice to what Buddhists were actually doing but also projects artificial boundaries that obscure the mutual interaction between many groups of Buddhists. It likewise neglects how the aristocrats and royalty deployed Buddhist rituals, practices, and symbolism to provide legitimacy. My principal objective here is to rectify this outdated model by emphasizing the role of cults in the domestication of Buddhism. I will show how Buddhist cults were deployed by social elites and religious leaders first before passing down to the common people. I will start with the deployment of Buddhist symbolism and ritual practices by Silla’s royalty and then evaluate the cults of Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara as case studies. I will conclude by showing how the cosmology and widespread worship of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities associated with the Hwaŏm tradition provides the most compelling evidence of how Buddhism became completely entwined with Silla culture.

Chapter 1 reevaluates the introduction of Buddhism to the Korean peninsula and several ways in which the religion became inextricably tied to the Silla state. I identify various kinds of Buddhist symbolism and cultic practices that were deployed by the Silla royalty to legitimate the acquisition of power and by aristocrats to maintain their hereditary ascendancy and privileges. I emphasize interactions between the practices of native institutions and the nascent Buddhist church. I also address the role of native Buddhist propaganda suggesting how sites associated with pre-Buddhist religious practices were transformed and how Silla became portrayed as a land with an ancient Buddhist past, not as a barba-
rous country on the fringes of civilization. I likewise treat the position of rituals and monasteries associated with the protection of the state. A by-product of the topics covered in this chapter is clear evidence that the Buddhism adopted by the Silla state shares the same aristocratic characteristics as those observed in such early medieval Chinese states as the Northern Wei (386–534). Many Chinese Buddhist practices from the Northern dynasties probably entered Silla through the assistance of monks from the northern Korean state of Koguryŏ.

Chapter 2 examines the role of the cult of Maitreya in the domestication of Buddhism in Silla and describes how Maitreya worship, which was the dominant Buddhist cult among the Chinese Northern dynasties, encompassed several types of Buddhist practices. The early assimilation of the cult to the *hwaraeng* (flower boys) institution enabled Buddhist reinterpretations of native practices to permeate the sociocultural fabric of the Silla aristocracy and allowed Maitreya to become an important symbol of state protection during Silla’s conquest of the other peninsular kingdoms. Funerary practices involving images of Maitreya and the use of Maitreya as an object of vision quests punctuate early aristocratic deployment of the cult in the sixth and seventh centuries. The appropriation of Maitreya by the elite of Silla was the main reason why no millenarian revolution in Silla drew upon this imagery until the early tenth century. Commoners of Silla would have seen images of Maitreya at Buddhist monasteries, but there are no narratives that suggest they participated in the cult until the eighth century. In this connection I introduce ties between the cults of Maitreya and Amitābha. After Buddhism became established in Silla, the popularity of the cult of Maitreya enabled it to become a vehicle through which fashionable Buddhist repentance rituals linked to imported Chinese divinatory observances were introduced to Silla. The veneration of Maitreya with offerings of tea and song suggests ways in which Silla Buddhists adapted Chinese developments to suit their needs.

Chapter 3 assesses the worship of Avalokiteśvara, which emerged as a cult easily accessible for people of all social strata in Silla during the seventh and eighth centuries. Available evidence demonstrates that supplication of this bodhisattva in Silla followed the recommendations for worship found in the chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* that encourages people to invoke the bodhisattva’s matchless power of compassion in a creative manner. In this chapter I develop the nature of the interrelationship between the cults of Avalokiteśvara, Amitābha, and Maitreya, which derives, in part, from the fact that the methods of worship of these three personages were roughly the same: verbal recitation of the bodhisattva’s or buddha’s name, visualization practices, the adoration of images, the commissioning of images, the chanting of spells (dhārāṇīs), and the
making of offerings of songs. The hagiographical accounts suggest that a proliferation of images, both icons and paintings, of the various incarnations of the bodhisattva—such as the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara or the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara—existed in royal palaces and in monasteries on the peninsula just as they did in contemporary China and Japan. Aside from making offerings of all sorts, including tea and songs in one’s native tongue, Silla Buddhists worshipped Avalokiteśvara through recitation of the Great Compassion Spell, a practice that has continued to the present. The promotion of the Avalokiteśvara cult by Silla monks steeped in the teachings of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* foreshadows the role that the Hwaŏm tradition will play in reconfiguring Silla’s Buddhist landscape.

Chapter 4 examines the origins and development of Hwaŏm Buddhism in Silla. I describe the growing importance of the sūtra in medieval China and the role played by Silla monks in the rise of the tradition in both China and Japan from the standpoint of practice primarily and also intellectual developments. I argue against the position that the Silla royalty in the eighth century drew upon Hwaŏm symbolism to bolster the power of an autocratic ruler at the expense of the hereditary elites. I demonstrate instead how aristocrats and religious elites together gradually promoted the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* as the most excellent explanation of the Buddhadharma and as a powerful talisman for the protection of the state by describing several projects of royal patronage directly associated with Hwaŏm themes. The evidence indicates that the promotion of Hwaŏm Buddhism increased after the royalty became dominated by a hereditary aristocracy. The importance of the disciples of Ŭisang, an early promoter of Hwaŏm Buddhism, is discussed, as is the role of Hwaŏm societies in the veneration of the founders of the Hwaŏm tradition in late Silla, especially in relation to the writings of the Silla scholar Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of three inscriptions on the backs of images of Vairocana, the central Buddha of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, in which the rhetoric on the decline of the Buddhist teaching and the cultic belief in the coming of Maitreya are combined using Hwaŏm imagery.

Chapter 5 provides several examples of how the Hwaŏm tradition was successful in organizing various Buddhist cultic practices within the conceptual framework of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. When applied to topography, Hwaŏm cosmology further reinforced native propaganda that sought to transform Silla from a backward country on the fringes of civilization to the status of a Buddha-land on earth and demonstrated that it was a country with deep connections to the past, present, and future of Buddhism. The importance and pervasiveness of Hwaŏm views in Silla are made manifest in hagiographical, epigraphical, and architec-
tural sources. To this end the chapter addresses the importation and appropriation of the cult of Mount Wutai (Odaesan) by royal monks of Silla and the establishment of royally sponsored rituals on the various peaks of the mountain range. The associated practices of erecting Hwaŏm monasteries on Silla’s five sacred mountains and of locating mountains mentioned in the *Avatāṃsaka Sūtra* in Silla are also examined. Hwaŏm and Pure Land symbolism became intertwined at monasteries founded by the royalty and elite and suggests ways in which cultic practices were combined under the umbrella of Hwaŏm cosmology. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the role of the Hwaŏm cult of the Divine Assembly that flourished in late Silla times. Because the Hwaŏm tradition was successful in accommodating Sillan particularity into Buddhist universality and providing meaning for elite Buddhists on multiple levels, it became the most dominant and influential expression of Buddhism on the peninsula.